



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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

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(29 October 2016 to 18 November 2016)

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Official Report (Hansard)

Assembly Sittings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 7 November 2016

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Private Members' Business

On-street Parking

Mr Speaker: The first item on our Order Paper today is a motion on a review of on-street parking. The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. One amendment has been selected and published on the Marshalled List. The proposer will have 10 minutes to propose the amendment and five minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Humphrey: I beg to move

That this Assembly believes that the mandatory £90 car parking fine should be reduced significantly; further believes that greater flexibility needs to be introduced to encourage trade across Northern Ireland by allowing for the first 30 minutes of parking to be free of charge across our towns and cities, and for on-street parking time limits to be extended in rural towns and villages; and calls upon the Minister for Infrastructure to review urgently the contract for on-street parking.

Having met traders across this city and, in particular, those in the city centre, I am concerned about car parking in the city centre. In particular, I am concerned about parking in car parks and about what my party and I see as punitive fines for members of the public who return late to their parking space. My mailbag has received considerable correspondence about the issue, as, I am sure, have those of Members across the Chamber. I think that the fine of £90, if someone is late, is too much.

I think that the fine needs to be reviewed, and I welcome the fact that the Minister is here in his place. Even if that fine is paid within a fortnight, it is still £45. Someone being made to pay £45 for being late to their car parking space is, frankly, far too much.

We need to strike a balance that is right between making sure that people want to come to our city and town centres to shop, spend money and generate wealth there and those who want to see greater usage of park-and-ride developments. I very much welcome that as a way forward. We have a number of park-and-ride facilities around the Belfast basin for bringing people into the city centre. As Members will know, we do have issues in that Northern Ireland has a largely rural population, with people tending to travel by car. Whilst there has been great progress with bus and rail transportation, particularly with

Ulsterbus, we do not have the services that perhaps are needed to encourage people to come into our city and town centres. I should state clearly that I am speaking as a Member of the House and not as the Chair of the Infrastructure Committee, but, only a few weeks ago, we at the Committee listened to some arguments that were put forward by people who live in rural Fermanagh about the disconnectivity that there is of people who live in rural areas, even affecting getting in for a doctor's appointment never mind shopping or whatever in Enniskillen as the county town.

The pressures that our businesses currently face are pressures that are increasing. You only have to look at the arterial routes in the city centre of Belfast to know that those pressures are real. You see that through the number of shops that are closed. I do think that this Chamber needs to be much more responsive and listen to the views of traders.

Mr Clarke: I thank the Member for giving way. The motion talks about fines. Will the Member agree, from listening to shoppers, that the "redcoats", as they are often known, seem to be overzealous in how they do their jobs? We hear of people being fined for parking a few inches outside of the limits of a box. It seems to be more that they get an enjoyment out of punishing people than trying to work with people to bring them into our towns and villages.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Member for his intervention. Indeed, only last week, I witnessed a number of what the Member calls "redcoats" in South Belfast when I visited Sandy Row and saw the pressures there. It is the same in my constituency of North Belfast. I do think that we have to set guidelines, and those guidelines have to be adhered to. We do have to have laws that are implemented, and the House should be supporting those laws. We are calling for the Minister for Infrastructure to review the laws that are currently set out.

Given the other pressures that there are in our city and town centres from many aspects facing the business community, car parking is a key issue.

Mr F McCann: Will the Member give way?

Mr Humphrey: I am happy to give way.

Mr F McCann: On the back of the question that was asked by your colleague, I understand what he is saying. However, especially in the likes of Belfast, which is nearly all that we can speak about, an invasion takes place every day. People are crying out for redcoats to go in to help to deal with that.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Member for his intervention. The Member and I served on Belfast City Council at the same time, and he will know from his time there that small communities that abut the city centre, like Sandy Row, lower Falls, Brown Square and the Markets, are under pressure when people come seeking free parking there and not having to face any fee at all. Sometimes, people, many of whom live in settled communities like those and who are older members of the community, simply cannot get their car near their own door. Going back, there were a number of pressures that were recognised by the then Department for Regional Development when its Minister was Minister Murphy. However, those solutions were not solutions either because they gave people permits to park outside their own door and they could not be given certainty that they could park outside their own door. That is why the review is timely.

Look at the city centres. Along with my colleague Mr Stalford, I met some Belfast city centre traders only a few weeks ago and heard about the pressures that they are under. Members from those parties on Belfast City Council that took the recent decision can explain the reasoning behind it, but the town and city centres that surround Belfast will be rubbing their hands at it. They are offsetting the costs of parking and allowing people freer access to their town or city centre to help boost their economy in the run-up to Christmas. I have seen stuff on Facebook recently where people who, for example, represent Lisburn are making the point, "Come to Lisburn, and you will get free parking". The decision by Belfast City Council seems to be wrong-faced, but, as I said, the parties who made it can explain the reasoning behind it.

Mr Stalford: I thank Mr Humphrey for giving way. The Member referred to the situation with the redcoats on Sandy Row. The actual problem is that the redcoats do not go into the likes of the housing estate off Sandy Row and instead spend all their time on the arterial route. We see that on the Lisburn Road as well. The consequence of their focusing on arterial routes is that people who want to stop there and spend their money in the shops are discouraged from so doing.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Member for that. If Members are honest, they will say that that is something that they have heard across the city. As Mr McCann said, I can speak only for this city and the city centre of Belfast.

The other thing that Members need to bear in mind is that, because we are a rural economy, many people travel to our town and city centres in cars from rural parts of Northern Ireland. I did a wee tour on Saturday morning and went over to Boucher. I saw that, in and around Boucher Crescent where there is free parking, the car parks were completely full and the roads into those car parks were completely full. The number of cars there from the Republic of Ireland was hugely noticeable. We know the benefits that border towns such as Enniskillen, Newry and Londonderry have been receiving because of the exchange rate between the pound and the euro at this time. There was a piece on the news only last week about the benefits to the Newry economy in particular. Are we going to discourage those people who are travelling in their cars to our town and city centres by having this £90 parking fine?

There should be some flexibility for people who are a few minutes late, but, if people are significantly late and taking up a parking space that others could be using, yes, they

should be fined. I would argue against myself if I did not make that point. However, £90 is just too much. For a working person with a young family, £90 is too much. We do not know the circumstances in which those people can be placed. There should be flexibility around timing, the amount of the fine and people not being able to park inside the box. We have all arrived to park in a space and found a car parked outside the box and into your space. We know how annoying and difficult it is when you cannot get a space anywhere else and are trying to navigate into a tight spot. There needs to be flexibility around those things.

Mr F McCann: Will the Member give way?

Mr Humphrey: I will give way.

Mr F McCann: The motion calls for a review but goes on to predetermine the outcome of any review. The Minister has said that he is up for reviewing it. We should therefore support the amendment. We will then get a review, and we can all take part in the review process.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Humphrey: I am not sure that the motion does have a predetermined outcome. We are asking the Minister to show some flexibility around the issues that I have set out. I very much welcome the tone of the debate so far —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Humphrey: — and took great pleasure in proposing the motion.

Mr Lynch: I beg to move the following amendment:

Leave out all after "Assembly" and insert

"recognises the vital importance of adequate and affordable on-street parking for the growth and development of our town centres; notes the need for the Minister for Infrastructure to review the provisions for on-street parking; calls on the Minister for Infrastructure to carry out an investigation into the reduction of mandatory car parking fines; and further calls on the Minister for Infrastructure to look at options to review on-street car parking fees and times."

I will speak in support of the amendment and against the motion. Ba mhaith liom cúpla rud a rá faoin rún. I will speak first on a number of issues to do with the motion. Overall, I think that it is populist in nature. We all know — indeed, I have found out to my own cost on a number of occasions — that, if you pay the initial car-parking fine within 14 days, it is not £90 but £45. The Member who spoke previously said that himself.

12.15 pm

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. I accept that, if it is paid within two weeks, the fine is £45, but I have had a number elderly people come to my office in a state of distress about these issues. Also, when you have a working-class family or a single-parent family who are under pressure, £45 is also a huge amount of money for them to find in the run-up to Christmas.

Mr Lynch: I thank the Member. I understand what he is saying, because our constituency office has similar types of people coming in. I was on the Regional Development Committee when the measure was brought in, and one of the things that we argued at the time was that it should not be a revenue-raising mechanism. The £45 offer is there

to encourage people to pay promptly. I have been caught once or twice in that situation.

The second issue is allowing the first 30 minutes of parking to be free across our towns and cities, as outlined in the motion. That would be totally unmanageable, and it is unrealistic. It would need many more redcoats or enforcement agencies to enforce.

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lynch: Yes.

Mr Clarke: I am listening to the Member saying that it would be unworkable. Maybe you are going to elaborate on how it would be unworkable, given that all we are asking for is a review of the fines. It is going to take the same number of redcoats; all we are suggesting is that the fine should be less.

Mr Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. On a number of occasions this morning, DUP Members have said that all they are looking for is a review. The DUP motion does not ask for a review; the amendment might ask for a review, but the motion asks for the fine to be reduced.

Mr Speaker: I note the remarks of the Minister.

Mr Lynch: I accept and welcome the —

Mr Humphrey: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I am thankful to the Minister for his intervention and am happy to provide some clarification. I made it clear that we wanted, as part of the review, the fine to be looked at. So, I do not see any contradiction between my position and that of the Minister, quite frankly.

Mr Speaker: That is not a point of order, again.

Mr Lynch: As the Minister outlined, all those issues can be taken into account in the review.

As I said earlier, it would take many more traffic wardens to enforce the initial 30 minutes. You can imagine traffic wardens running back and forth to see whether the 30 minutes had run out. Again, how much would that cost? That would have practical issues around enforcement.

The aim of parking enforcement is to reduce the number of vehicles that are illegally parked. There are limited numbers of spaces in our towns and cities, as I know from Enniskillen. The issue is the effective use and management of the spaces. There is a need to tackle congestion and, at the same time, have affordable town-centre parking. In Enniskillen, it is £1 for five hours' parking; some do not agree with that, but the traders mostly accept it. I have spoken to traders in Enniskillen, where a new bypass is planned. A small number have said that the bypass would lose them business, but the majority argue that easing the traffic benefits the economy. If the new bypass gets the go-ahead, the through traffic in Enniskillen will be taken out of the town, easing congestion for those travelling there for shopping and trading.

The increase in fines for penalty charge notices (PCNs) in 2012 has worked in that the number of illegally parked cars is reducing. As I said earlier, it would be virtually impossible to manage having the first 30 minutes of parking free, which is what the motion proposes. Rural towns and villages operate one- to two-hour waiting times. How long do people want? The proposer of the

motion spoke about people going to doctor appointments, and I know that people go into towns to get a haircut or whatever, but the current contract does not prevent any changes to waiting time and fines.

Our amendment recommends that a review takes place, as the Minister said. However, any review will need to be based on evidence and focus on reforms that work in the interests of managing limited on-street spaces effectively, improving the flow of traffic and enhancing the towns and cities that we live in.

Sinn Féin is calling for a review, and all the issues which the sponsors of the motion have outlined, and will outline, can be taken in that review. I think that this is a sensible way forward for the issue and I ask the House to support the amendment.

Mrs Palmer: There is some merit in the motion and in the amendment. All of us should be seeking to ensure smooth traffic flow in our towns and cities and that people can access parking spaces so that they can do business. It is essential that we support local traders and ensure that our town centres remain vibrant. However, we have to strike a balance because every car in a parking space means that that is one parking space that cannot be used by another motorist or shopper. It is important that we have proper regulation to ensure turnover and not have a large number of motorists driving around town centres searching for parking spaces because people are not moving from them.

I have a number of points to make. I ask the proposers of the motion to state what would be a more appropriate figure than £90. In any case, we should point out that, whilst the charge is indeed £90, if payment is received within 14 days of receiving a penalty charge notice, or within 15 days by letter, a 50% discount applies. You have to pay £45. That has been outlined in the debate thus far. The discount is offered to ensure prompt payment, and the 50% reduction seems to me to be exactly what the —

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mrs Palmer: Yes.

Mr Humphrey: I steered clear of setting out a figure to the House even though invited to do so by Mr McCann. We do not want to predetermine the outcome. In calling for a review, we want the Minister to have exactly that flexibility, but I think that a figure of £30, reduced to £15 if paid within the fortnight, would be sensible.

Mrs Palmer: I am happy to take that on board.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mrs Palmer: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The 50% discount is offered to ensure prompt payment, and it seems to me to be exactly what the proposers of the motion are calling for in terms of the charge being reduced significantly.

For some reason, this appears to be a DUP acting-alone motion, away from its coalition partners who control the Department responsible. One might reasonably have expected the DUP to run the motion past Sinn Féin before tabling it. Instead, we have a Sinn Féin amendment before us, which also takes a sensible approach. As you would say, it is probably not joined-up government.

Obviously, it would be great if we could free up parking everywhere, 24 hours a day. Nobody likes to pay for parking but, by the same token, people also want to

access parking at locations convenient to where they want to shop or do business.

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mrs Palmer: Yes.

Mr Clarke: The Member talks about freeing up parking and how people want parking spaces that are convenient. Nothing in our motion suggests that we are going to prevent that. All the motion indicates is that the punitive fine of £90 should be reduced because it is too expensive, particularly in rural villages. This is supported by the traders in our small towns, the people who depend on motorists stopping in those spaces and paying those fines. Traders are supporting us in wanting to reduce the cost for people to park on the street.

Mrs Palmer: Thank you. It leads us to look for a comprehensive set of measures, which could include looking at reducing business rates in small towns and villages. We are certainly open to the review of parking charges and measures as to how we can support town centres. There is certainly merit in exploring the impact which a comprehensive strategy would have. However, that is wider than what the motion before us calls for. We should also remember that most of the car parks were transferred to local government and are now run by councils, so they would obviously have to be consulted for their views of any overhaul. Indeed, devolving parking to councils is something that must be considered seriously.

With regard to the call for on-street parking time limits to be extended in rural towns and villages, as I have already stated, nobody likes to pay for parking but, by the same token, people want to be able to access parking at locations where they want to do business. Extending time limits could cause congestion, causing greater inconvenience for people who want to park but are unable to find a space. We must be aware of the law of unintended consequences.

Finally, we agree with the call on the Minister for Infrastructure to review urgently the contract for on-street parking, which is also reflected in the amendment.

Mr McCrossan: I am delighted to speak on the motion, not only as the SDLP spokesperson for infrastructure but as someone who, like many in the House I suppose, has been at the tail end of the odd fine now and again. I almost feel that I own a part of the tarmac in the car park outside my office in Strabane.

As we approach the busy Christmas period, this is a debate that we should be having. It is a very important one and is an issue that causes considerable frustration to many throughout our constituencies. It impacts heavily on those who are less financially well off, particularly the elderly, as Mr Humphrey mentioned, and single parents — people who are struggling to keep their heads above water or, in what will be a very cold winter, put fuel in their oil tanks at home. The debate is an important one, and I am glad that it has been brought to the House.

On-street parking is vital for many of our towns and villages in managing the flow of traffic effectively and supporting the local economy by providing parking access to our town centres. It is vital that this balance is struck proportionately and that people are not penalised for wanting to shop in town centres that are facing considerable challenges in trying to keep their

heads above water in a very difficult economic climate, particularly in my own town.

I must remind the Chamber that, in 2012, fines were increased from £60 to £90 and that the then Regional Development Committee Chair moved a motion to block that change. Ironically, that Chair followed his party and voted against this amendment, yet here we are today with the DUP spinning busily around the proverbial roundabout proposing this motion, which it could have prevented four years ago. It is all very well saying that we are very concerned now, but it is four years too late when many people have been facing considerable stress in relation to what is a £90 fine.

Make no mistake about it: it is a £90 fine, because although there is a 14-day window, and that is the issue, many people who are paid monthly and are struggling cannot afford to pay that fine within two weeks. No one in the House will disagree with that. I ask the Minister to consider that when he reviews these circumstances.

Turning to the motion, I am not wholly against on-street parking restrictions because they are vital for the proper flow of traffic through cities and town centres, particularly in Belfast where there is considerable congestion. Each and every area has its own circumstances and, as the Member for Fermanagh said, different councils have taken different approaches. For instance, in the immediate aftermath of the reforms, Derry and Strabane District Council took away the five-hour car parking slot for £1. Omagh District Council kept it, but, having spoken to traders in Omagh, I know that it has caused them considerable difficulties with turnover and flow. There are considerable concerns in that regard.

I am concerned that fines are not handed out in a fair and proportionate way. We have all witnessed to some degree, redcoats, as they have been called in the House, handing out tickets for the slightest mistake. That causes concern for people, particularly those who may have difficulty in getting back to their car, whether they are elderly or a mother shopping with her children during the day. They might be 10 minutes over and have to pay a significant fine as a consequence. Is that realistic or necessary? Absolutely not. It is more about the approach to handing out fines.

I am aware that many people in my constituency have questioned the integrity of parking enforcement officers. I am sure that redcoats' jobs are not easy. They are doing what they are told to do, but some go way beyond that; you would almost think that they were commission-based.

Mr Stalford: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCrossan: Absolutely.

Mr Stalford: Does the Member agree that one of the reasons why people question the integrity of the system, if not the people implementing it, is that in certain parts of Northern Ireland your chances of being hit with a fine are considerably higher than in others? The Lisburn Road has become something of a golden goose for the redcoats.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McCrossan: Absolutely, there are certain areas. I remember a particular redcoat in the Strabane district who was almost handing them out like raffle tickets at one stage, and her colleagues had to pull her back slightly. It

damages those people's safety as well, and it is deeply frustrating having been on the tail end of it on one or two occasions.

I fully support providing the first 30 minutes free of charge, as it would be of huge benefit to town centres such as Strabane and Omagh. I am being parochial, but I am sure that, right across the board, not many will disagree.

12.30 pm

(Madam Principal Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

Mr F McCann: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCrossan: Absolutely.

Mr F McCann: Can the Member tell us how that would work in practice, especially if you have town centres that are packed? You would probably have to triple the number of redcoats to keep the thing on balance.

Mr McCrossan: Every council area has a different approach to this. I am aware of some that have provided free parking, and it has worked considerably well. That puts those town centres at a distinct advantage over, for instance, mine in Strabane or Omagh. We need to address this, and a more local approach needs to be taken. I believe there could be some accommodation. As Glyn Roberts said today, it would be hugely welcome.

Mr Dickson: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCrossan: Yes.

Mr Dickson: I am concerned that the discussion that we have been having has been primarily, it sounds to me, in relation to off-street parking. The motion and the amendment are in respect of on-street parking and only on-street parking, so perhaps, when Members address that issue, they could address that issue.

Mr McCrossan: Yes, it is taken on board, but I think it is a wholehearted debate in relation to parking generally.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr McCrossan: I will indeed. I think we are all aware of the points and how it affects our constituents on the ground and that the fines are far too heavy.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr McCrossan: We need a review and —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Ms Kellie Armstrong.

Mr McCrossan: — I support the amendment.

Ms Armstrong: Thank you, Principal Deputy Speaker. As Alliance spokesperson for infrastructure, I confirm that we will not support the motion. With reservation, we will support the amendment.

Before joining the Assembly, I had the privilege of working in the field of transport for almost 16 years. For the last nine of those, I worked in partnership with organisations to improve access to services for older people and people with disabilities. During that time, the issue of on-street car parking featured regularly in our considerations.

On-street car parking can create havoc for citizens. Being able to find an appropriate car parking space can be a problem, but, for many with disabilities and for families with young children, it is bad parking that causes most concern and danger. The reason I cannot support the motion is the populist request to reduce parking fines. Let me be clear: I do not like parking fines. No one likes parking fines, but, if you park correctly, you do not get a fine. If you park badly, you will get a fine. That fine needs to be enough of a deterrent to stop people parking badly in the first place. The current fine level is enough to make a driver think twice about parking where or when they should not. I do not agree that the fine should be reduced, as that would reduce the deterrent.

As I said, Alliance will support the amendment with reservation.

Mr Stalford: Will the Member take a point?

Ms Armstrong: Not at this point.

I said "with reservation" because the amendment suggests the Minister should investigate a reduction in mandatory car parking fines. I agree that the Minister should review car parking fines. However, this should not be an investigation just to reduce fines but should consider if the level of fine is enough to be an effective deterrent.

Why is it important that we deter people from parking badly? Bad parking forces mums to push a pram into the middle of the road. Bad parking forces people with visual impairments to go onto the road. Anybody who wants to find out more about this can contact Guide Dogs, who can show you just how difficult it can be. Bad parking prevents people who use wheelchairs from being able to use public footpaths. Bad parking takes up two spaces, preventing others from being able to park on-street. Bad parking blocks a bus lane, creating havoc for all road users at rush hour. Bad parking is the driver who decides to park in a clearly marked disability bay or on yellow lines. Bad parking is the fault of a driver who does not care who takes a risk. Bad parking happens when people are not deterred.

The mandatory fine is there to deter bad parking because of the negative impact it has on many people whom I have worked with over years. I encourage those looking to reduce parking fines to speak with the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) and review their annual Baywatch reports, which highlight bad parking across Northern Ireland. With respect to a period of —

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Ms Armstrong: Not at the moment.

With respect to a period of free on-street parking, I cannot support the 30 minutes specified in the motion. As a driver, I love free on-street car parking. In the villages and towns in my constituency of Strangford, there is free parking all day. In all those towns, you are permitted free parking up to a fixed time, and that time is set on the basis of local factors. In parts of Newtownards, you are allowed to park up to 60 minutes, but in other parts it is all-day free parking.

There are three controlled parking zones in Northern Ireland: Belfast, Lisburn and Newry. That is where this takes effect.

Mr Stalford: Will the Member please give way?

Ms Armstrong: I will give way.

Mr Stalford: I appreciate the Member giving way. The Member says that fines work. If fines work, why are my constituents in the city centre communities in the Market, Sandy Row and Donegall Pass tortured with people parking illegally? If fines work, the problem should not exist.

Ms Armstrong: I agree, and —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member will have an extra minute.

Ms Armstrong: Thank you. I agree, but in 2012, when the fines of £90 were introduced, it fell dramatically. Residents' parking schemes need to be brought forward, and I will come to that.

Thirty minutes' free car parking in areas sounds good until you consider that the time specified will not help mums or dads to get their pram out of the car, get their child unplugged from the car seat, go to do whatever they need to do and be back and do the reverse of that within 30 minutes. The amendment calls for a review of on-street parking times; indeed, by having a review, the Department can consider whether there are any negative impacts, such as the one I just outlined, for people with dependants. Section 75 comes into play here, folks.

A review can also take into consideration all the businesses that are being negatively impacted on by parking arrangements. Local rural shop owners have come to me to say that all-day free car parking hurts their businesses. In the village of Kircubbin, for example, shop owners are losing business because some commuters leave cars on the street while they take the bus to work. Other shop employees leave their cars parked all day and block access to local shops. In some villages, they want to see the introduction of limited free parking in conjunction with residents' passes to ensure that residents do not face the issues faced in the controlled parking zone areas.

Parking is an emotive subject. Bad parking causes difficulty for other road users, particularly pedestrians. A responsible Government must, therefore, consider putting in place deterrents to prevent people from taking risks and putting others' lives in danger. None of us likes parking fines, but, if the fine is high enough, it makes drivers think twice about parking dangerously or badly. Let us have a review of free parking, and let us ask local businesses what they think. Let us also consider the wider issue of sustainable transport and how we will reduce emissions. Let us consider how we can prevent our towns and villages being clogged up with on-street parking and plan our parking better.

Mr Easton: There is real concern, especially among local businesses in our towns, that current parking issues and car parking fine levels hamper trade and cause real hardship for some of those businesses. In Bangor, there have been serious issues with the lack of available car parking provision for Main Street, with such provision having been taken away under the recent public realm work. To bring shoppers back into our struggling town centres, there need to be incentives for shoppers to do so. It is not enough for businesses to put sales on continually; the public need and want easy access to parking, which will enable our town centres to compete with out-of-town shopping centres that offer attractive free car parking, which gives them an unfair advantage.

As is the case in England, Northern Ireland's towns and cities have suffered from significant decline over many

years, principally due to the increased presence of out-of-town retail developments. That was a key conclusion in the Northern Ireland Assembly Social Development Committee's inquiry into town centre regeneration in 2009. There needs to be a rethink on the lack of free car parking spaces, a rethink on the level of fines and a rethink on the amount of time someone can have access to a car parking space free of charge. Shoppers want to be able to come into our towns in a way that does not cause them hassle and lead to complications, and the only way to do that is to encourage them in through easier parking.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Member for giving way. The point that I wanted to make to the Member for Strangford, who would not give way, is that, in the Member's constituency of North Down — in Bangor and Newtownards, for example — people can park for up to one hour free, as he outlined. Why is it, do you think, that that does not apply to people in some of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland in the city of Belfast? Surely there is a clear imbalance. Does the Member agree?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Easton: Thank you. There certainly seems to be an imbalance across Northern Ireland. There does not seem to be the same approach. That needs to be addressed urgently.

A negative and costly experience in any town will have an impact on someone's decision to return to shops there. That is coupled with the extortionate fines being handed out to those who are only minutes late back to their car: they get £90 fines. That, however, is reduced to £45 if it is paid within a certain number of days, which, I believe, is 14 days. A total of £4.5 million has been raised from parking penalty charge notices from 2015 up to March 2016. That figure was given in response to an Assembly question from my colleague Carla Lockhart. I found it disturbing that the response to the question stated:

"Therefore the revenue received from parking PCNs is required to finance the services my Department provides."

It is deeply worrying that the Department for Infrastructure is relying on penalty charge notices. In my opinion, overzealous car parking attendants are actively competing to raise as much revenue as possible as an alternative source of income for the Department. That is wrong. It sends out the wrong message, damages local businesses and needs to be addressed.

In fact, it was the then Ulster Unionist Regional Development Minister who announced — without any shame, I might add — his intention to generate income of £2.1 million from off-street car parking charges in provincial towns and from on-street charges.

The majority of on-street parking is free, with exceptions in Belfast, Lisburn and Newry. Usually, drivers are allowed to park for one hour before having to move. In my opinion, that needs to be reduced to 30 minutes to encourage more people to go into their town to get their messages and move on so that others can then afford of the same time, thereby encouraging quick access and helping more people to afford parking. I do not see the need for drop-off points, such as the one created in Main Street, Bangor, which took away further car parking spaces, was not

even wanted by traders and is still abused by delivery van drivers who cannot be bothered to go to the loading bays at the rear of the shop premises.

The Department remains the transport authority and retains responsibility for on-street parking. It is vital that the Department starts to listen to the needs of local businesses in struggling town centres, and that means working with councils and preparing local transport strategies. I understand that the Department is looking at this, but it is taking far too long. It needs to take an approach much more quickly, as time is everything to local businesses. A Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association (NIIRTA) report recommended 80 policy priorities for local economic development and that DRD devolve on-street car parking to councils to give them more responsibility for developing the potential of their towns. Councils should give discount on their off-street car parks at key times, such as Christmas and other festivals. Free one-hour on-street car parking in 30 towns should continue. Indeed, it should be extended to all towns, including Belfast, Lisburn and Newry, but lowered to 30 minutes.

Mr F McCann: Will the Member give way?

Mr Easton: Sorry, I am coming to the end.

In conclusion, urgent action is required to reduce the burden of fines and increase flexibility in order to encourage shoppers into our town centres. Transport NI should start to listen for a change. The Minister needs to move quickly and look at this as a matter of urgency for our local businesses and shoppers.

Mr Robinson: Representing a constituency with a large rural economy, I fully understand the motion and happily support it. In many of our rural towns, street parking is essential for businesses to remain viable. In our medium-sized and larger towns and cities, which have substantial car parking availability, the need for a pragmatic approach is plausible. That is why I see a period of free parking as an encouragement to shoppers to use the car parking provided rather than blocking side streets.

The motion states that the first 30 minutes should be free, but I am aware that smaller towns would like that period to be extended. As our economy begins to grow, we should encourage the population to come into our towns and spend money in the shops, socialise and have a meal or a coffee, though I fully appreciate that online shopping is a reality and here to stay. However, limited free parking and lower fines could help to boost the retail sector by encouraging footfall on our streets as the economy grows. It would mean more employment in retail and less dependency on benefits — a win-win situation.

My office deals with many people who are irate at the price of a parking ticket. This does not mean that they or I condone illegal parking, but I believe that the penalty should be lower. I have been told very definitively what people think of the fine level. Punishment can still be applied but at a level that would be seen as more appropriate. For many — unless you are Stephen Nolan — £90 can mean real financial hardship, even when the individual accepts that they were in the wrong. I ask the Minister to carefully examine the motion, taking into consideration the impact that parking fines and the cost of car parking has on rural towns, and to proactively address the problem as a matter of importance in developing our town centre economies. I support the motion.

Mr Smith: The motion calls for tactical changes to address what is a strategic problem. Of course, the lack of free car parking is a source of competitive disadvantage for our town centres as compared with out-of-town shopping centres with plenty of free parking. However, if the objective of the motion is to encourage trade across Northern Ireland, it is very one-dimensional in its approach.

12.45 pm

My colleagues Jenny Palmer and Danny Kennedy submitted an amendment calling for on-street car parking to be included within a comprehensive set of measures to encourage greater trade in our cities, towns and villages, but unfortunately it was not taken. The motion calls for a review, which we are happy to support. However, we have issues with some aspects of the motion and believe that the amendment provides a more rounded and practical way forward.

The motion proposes that the £90 car parking fine should be significantly reduced, but figures released by the Department last year showed that only 7% of penalty charge notices were paid at the full £90 rate, with a further 3% paying an additional penalty to make a headline cost of £135. Sixty-seven per cent, two thirds, paid the discounted fine of £45 for payment made within 14 days of the PCN being issued. The remainder of those who were fined were either in the process of challenging the fine, and many of them managed to evade it, or were part of a small 5% who were in various stages of debt recovery.

Mr Stalford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Smith: Yes, certainly.

Mr Stalford: Will the Member agree that one of the things that really frustrates people about the system is its total inflexibility? For example, I was dealing with a constituent whose care worker was fined because her car was parked where it should not be while she was in his house administering medication to his wife.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute. I will just remind Members that they should not refer to amendments that have not been accepted.

Mr Smith: Duly noted, Principal Deputy Speaker. I take Mr Stalford's point. Certainly, there needs to be flexibility in the system. That is why a review is required. I am sure that the Minister will weave that into his proposals. The bottom line is that the £90 fine is paid only by a very small minority. I am not sure how the reduction to the headline rate would improve the situation. There is no doubt that a lack of free and accessible car parking is an issue for shoppers and traders, but, as I said earlier, this needs to be looked at strategically.

What role can improved public transport, for example, play in bringing shoppers into town centres and making towns more attractive by reducing traffic congestion? If the disincentive to park badly, causing inconvenience and potentially danger to others, is reduced, what would be the negative impact on town centres resulting from this proposal? What package of improvements is needed to incentivise retailers and traders to locate in town centres with the ongoing growth in online sales in so many sectors? I know that the Finance Minister is reviewing non-domestic rates and the issue is a priority for the Committee for Finance as well. At one of our recent meetings, the

research pack highlighted the difference in rates bills of a traditional retailer and an online trader with similar turnovers. The example that it used, which is maybe not a great one for Northern Ireland, was Harrods versus the online retailer ASOS. Both companies have similar turnovers — £716 million for Harrods compared with £769 million for ASOS — but Harrods pays rates of £11.5 million per year while ASOS pays less than £1 million. I appreciate that these are not on the same scale as Northern Ireland, but the example effectively illustrates the problem.

Therefore, there needs to be a holistic approach to town centre development and car parking. While car parking plays a significant role, it is only one factor in a range of many. If we really want to localise on-street car parking and provide a tailored solution to each town and area across Northern Ireland, we need to devolve the power to local government. Councils will then be able to provide a bespoke service that suits the requirements of the town centres in their areas. This solution is supported by NILGA, NIIRTA and, as I have noticed in previous debates, many in the Chamber. The proposal for the first 30 minutes to be free affects only, as many have said, Lisburn, Newry and Belfast. I think that that further illustrates the need for local solutions to local problems. Until that long-term solution can be implemented, I would support —

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Smith: I am finishing now. I am sorry.

I would support a full review of on-street car parking by the Minister for Infrastructure. I hope that the Minister can outline his proposals to do this in his response to the debate.

Mr McNulty: I welcome the debate and support the motion. Complaints about parking fines, tickets or overzealous parking enforcement officers — “redcoats”, as they have been called in the Chamber — are issues that come into every one of our constituency offices.

Time and time again, we hear of inconsistency in the approach to parking enforcement across the North. Shopkeepers say that the redcoats drive trade out of our town centres and into out-of-town multinational retail parks. While the multiples play a vital part in our economy, we must do more to protect and grow our town centres, indigenous businesses and our SMEs. Traders, particularly small, independent retailers, find it tough enough to survive at the minute. They are competing with online shopping, the upwards re-evaluation of business rates a couple of years ago and the parking regimes in many of our towns and cities.

As we are all aware, responsibility for off-street parking transferred to councils last year. It is seen as a success, giving local authorities the power to use reduced-rate parking incentives as a way of attracting shoppers into our towns and villages. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has set parking fees at 40p an hour or three hours for £1 in Newry. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council has opted for 30p an hour or five hours for £1 in Armagh city. That is local decision makers making decisions that best fit their area.

No one likes to get a parking ticket. When someone is unfortunate enough to get the dreaded note under their wiper, we want them to learn a lesson. We do not want to deter them from entering our town centres in the future.

On-street parking is charged for in Belfast, Lisburn and Newry, whereas it is free, with time restrictions, across the rest of the North. Those paying for on-street parking pay between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm. The SDLP wants to see the current regime reviewed. The system for charging and fining must be fair and equitable. One frustrating complaint that I have had is from delivery drivers, especially in Newry. They constantly tell me that they find it increasingly hard to make a delivery without getting a ticket.

Mr F McCann: Thanks for giving way. You said at the start that you supported the motion, but you then called for a review. That is what the Minister advocates.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute. Beidh nóiméad sa bhreis ag an Chomhalta.

Mr McNulty: Correction: I support the amendment.

The redcoats are not only driving customers out of towns but disrupting the daily operation of business. What is more frustrating is the inconsistency. One attendant can be accommodating one day whereas a different attendant the next day can be ruthless and completely inflexible. I am mindful of the tough job that parking enforcement officers have and of the fact that they are trying to earn their corn.

We need to see the system reviewed. We need to take on board the views of motorists, traders and delivery companies alike. We need to see engagement with local government, town centre groups and Chambers of Commerce. We need to ensure traffic turnover while accommodating the needs of shoppers. Can the fee be reduced? Can the time to pay a reduced fee be extended from two weeks to one month? Do we have enough parking available in our cities, towns and villages? I want to see a review of on-street parking charges, particularly those in Newry. Why does charging happen in Belfast, Lisburn and Newry but nowhere else? Is it really necessary? A serious discussion is needed. Let us have it, and let us engage with those whom I have mentioned. I support the amendment.

Mr Dickson: I will be brief. My speech is primarily to support many of the points that my colleague Kellie Armstrong raised. I will concentrate on the proposal for the first 30 minutes of on-street car parking being free. That would prove incredibly problematic for the Minister, the Department, officials and, ultimately, those who have to enforce it on the ground. We all know that the traffic wardens have a route that they follow. They will know instantly when somebody has put a ticket —

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Does he agree that the economies of Belfast, which is the economic driver for the region, Lisburn, which is an important and growing city, and Newry, which deals so much in cross-border trade, are vital? How does what he says apply in Bangor and Newtownards, where the first hour is free? Is he not arguing against himself?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Dickson: I am not arguing against myself — I am arguing that we want to make this clear. We need clarity on parking. When somebody parking on the street buys a ticket and puts it on their windscreen, the parking enforcement staff know when that person commenced their parking. If the first 30 minutes were free, it would be very difficult for them to know when that time started, particularly in Belfast and other towns where on-street

parking is important to create a flow and changeover of people parking. That is the real lifeblood for shops and businesses and for appointments and cash machines on the street that people are required to use.

Members have said today that they do not relish the thought of having to pay a parking fine. No one relishes the thought of having to pay a parking fine, but, unless the penalty — everybody knows what the penalty will be — is a large sum lodged in your head and very clearly known, then it fails to act as an appropriate deterrent. There is a derogation; it is reduced to £45. People accept that that is a reasonable sum to pay in the event of default.

There are also very clear guidelines. There are Members in the Chamber who have tried to throw up some smoke and mirrors in terms of the operation of parking enforcement officers. The reality is that they work to very strict guidelines on the amount of additional grace time given, which is exactly 10 minutes. My concern is that if we start to confuse all of those elements, we make it more difficult for the parker, for enforcement and for shoppers and those who wish to trade on high streets and streets across our province where these rules are applicable.

The Alliance Party, as my colleague has said, will not support the motion, but we will support the amendment because it invites the Minister to provide further clarity but does not require him to reduce the penalty.

Mr Hazzard: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion today. There appears to be an awful lot of confusion between on-street, off-street and the entire issues that we are discussing today.

As Minister for Infrastructure, I have overall responsibility for ensuring that we have an efficient and safe transportation system in the North. This includes ensuring that vehicle drivers have access to the various business and retail sectors in our town and city centres. In order to deliver this, my officials and their service providers have two tools at their disposal, namely, parking provision and the associated tariffs and parking enforcement. Correctly levelled tariffs are aimed at ensuring there is a turnover of parking provision whilst, at the same time, allowing vehicle users enough time to go about their daily business.

I welcome the opportunity to debate the issues relating to adequate and affordable on-street parking for the growth and development of our town centres. I have listened with interest to the issues and concerns that Members have raised. The main issues of concern relate to the current cost of a penalty charge notice (PCN) and the provision of cheaper and longer on-street car parking. Our aim is to reduce the number of illegally parked vehicles on the road. We want to reduce congestion, thereby improving the vitality of our towns and cities. We do not want to issue PCNs, but if we have to, we will. We want everybody to park properly; that has to be the message that is heard today.

The cost of a PCN increased to £90 on 1 June 2012, and it is discounted to £45 if paid within 14 days. Indications are that this charge is having the desired effect of discouraging people from parking illegally, as the numbers of PCNs issued per annum has declined. The overall trend of the number of PCNs issued has been downwards, even though car and van ownership continues to increase, and that is an indication that the deterrent nature of the cost of a PCN is having a positive effect. The number of penalty charge notices issued has fallen from an all-time high of

163,000 in 2007 to 110,000 in 2015, despite the number of vehicles rising in that same period by up to 5%.

The area in which on-street charges apply is called a controlled parking zone (CPZ). We have three in city centres here, namely Belfast, Lisburn and Newry.

1.00 pm

The pay-and-display machines currently in use in our controlled parking zones cannot be configured to allow the tariffs to be charged in this way as they are not designed to accommodate a multi-layered range of tariffs. To carry out parking enforcement for any system introduced that offers the first 30 minutes of parking free would be extremely resource-intensive. This is because traffic attendants would be required to undertake a series of additional observations to enable them to determine the validity of parking times being claimed.

Currently, traffic attendants patrol streets in controlled parking zones two or three times per day by adhering to predetermined schedules known as beats. Each beat has been designed to optimise the resources available to obtain maximum efficiency and effectiveness. When patrolling the streets in a controlled parking zone, traffic attendants must check each parked vehicle for evidence of a valid parking ticket ie that a pay-and-display ticket has not expired or that it has an equivalent cashless parking session logged. This involves traffic attendants making a single pass of each street as they continue to patrol the remainder of their beat. Then, as part of the cyclical process, they will repeat this process later in the day to deal with any vehicles with expired parking time and record details of any newly parked vehicles.

The success of any restricted parking facility relies on effective parking enforcement. For the enforcement of any system that enables free parking for the first 30 minutes to be effective, traffic attendants would be required to return to each street on multiple occasions to carry out checks on each vehicle to determine the validity of its parking status. This would be detrimental to our ability to meet all the enforcement demands across each CPZ and in other critical situations which rely on parking enforcement, such as urban clearways and arterial routes. Offering free on-street parking in this way would also create a negative impact as a result of drivers circling the controlled parking zones to avoid parking in charged off-street car parks where the 30-minute free parking rate would not apply.

Turning to the review of the parking enforcement contract; the current contract with NSL Services for the provision of parking enforcement and car park management services commenced on 30 October 2012 for an initial four-year term and has recently been extended by mutual agreement for a further three years. That contract does not affect any decision my Department may take in the future relating to the cost of a PCN, on-street parking tariffs or limited waiting times.

Turning to comments made by Members today, William Humphrey, in a gallant effort to step in for Edwin Poots who was due to kick off today's session, mentioned traders. It is an emotive issue that comes up time and again, but we need to look at evidence. I have yet to see studies, reports or evidence that lead me to believe that we should do one thing or another and it is something that I want to address.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for giving way. If you go into Belfast — and I speak as a Belfast representative — then the number of shops that have closed is noticeable, particularly in the traditional shopping areas such as Donegall Place and Royal Avenue and so on. There has been a shift towards the new Victoria Centre. When you talk to the Chamber of Commerce and businesspeople, as we did a few weeks ago, and when you look at the shops that are empty, the traffic chaos, the buses that are unable to get round and the people who are unable to flow into the city to do their shopping, you can see that the city centre traders are really under pressure. In Northern Ireland, we do not have a level playing field as regards Belfast, Lisburn and Newry: those city centres are under real pressure.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that interventions should be short.

Mr Hazzard: The Member mentioned improving the flow into our cities but the DUP is suggesting here today that we take away or reduce one of the tools we have to deter people from parking in urban clearways and main arterial routes — the £90 or £45 charge. I know that £15 has been thrown out by the DUP today but, if we reduced it to that, I would be very worried at the impact it might have on urban clearways and main arterial routes.

Ms Dillon: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Hazzard: I will indeed, yes.

Ms Dillon: I heard the £15 amount thrown out as well, and some people might say that that would be cheaper than paying in a car park and that they could park wherever they want. I am not sure that it would be much of a deterrent in the city centre.

Mr Hazzard: I thank the Member for her intervention. Again, it raises an important point.

The comments of both Kellie Armstrong and Philip Smith helped to shine a light and bring a bit of reason to this debate, especially those from Ms Armstrong with her background in community transport. I listened with great delight to an awful lot that the Member said. The central message was that you get a fine only if you park illegally; if you do not park illegally, you do not get a fine.

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hazzard: I am sorry, but I want to go on. Members complained about the black-and-white nature of this, but it is because we are talking about laws: if it is illegal to park in a certain fashion, it is illegal to park in a certain fashion.

Many Members touched upon — this will be part of any review — the need to look at a differential penalty system. Parking two or three inches outside a parking bay should not carry the same weight as blocking a main arterial route into the city. I am more than happy to look at that. Certainly, for me, that would be part of a wider review that the amendment calls for.

Mr Clarke: Will Member give way?

Mr Hazzard: Yes, go ahead.

Mr Clarke: Minister, I am a bit annoyed about the term “illegal”. Yes, in definition it possibly is, but we are talking about individuals who have been at an appointment that has overrun and have come back to their car park five minutes

after the time has expired. We are talking about flexibility. A £90 fine may be reduced, but that is still excessive.

Mr Hazzard: The Member is being misleading. There is a 10-minute observational period. A person coming back after five minutes will be totally fine because there is a 10-minute observational period. The observational period has to come to an end; we cannot have it being 20, 25 or 30 minutes as you start eating considerably into another hour. There is a 10-minute window, and there is flexibility in the system.

You can appeal, and there are three stages. You can challenge, and it is dealt with within 14 days of receipt of the PCN by the parking enforcement unit; the second stage is representation, which is dealt with between days 14 to 30 by the enforcement unit; the third stage is appeal, which is dealt with by the parking penalty tribunal. There are flexibilities, and each appeal is considered on its merit. It is not accurate to suggest that there are not sufficient flexibilities in the system.

Mr Durkan: The Minister talks about flexibilities in the system. We are aware of the reduced penalty available to people who pay within 14 days. Will the Minister consider introducing new flexibility and giving people a bigger window when they can avail of the reduced fee, maybe 28 days, so that people who are paid monthly or those on low incomes can avail of that reduction?

Mr Hazzard: I thank the Member for his intervention. The Member has flagged up why there is worthiness to a review, but we should have a review that looks at all the issues and not simply, “Let’s reduce parking fines”. Let us look holistically at all the issues to see the best way forward.

Another issue raised was that, somehow, this is a cash cow for the Department and that it is about raising money for the Department. In the years ahead, certainly while I am Minister, I hope that no PCNs are made. I hope that people park within the law and that there is no revenue at all coming from this area for the Department.

It is the same with bus lanes. I hope that people do not have to pay the sort of money. Again, to go back to the remarks of Philip Smith, and this gets to the heart of the discussion, the motion is a tactical error to a strategic problem. There is a certain validity in looking at the strategic issue of on-street car parking and the way forward, and that is certainly something that I am happy to do. At the heart of the motion —

Ms Bailey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hazzard: Sorry, I want to finish this. At the heart of the motion is a seriously misguided logic. The four pillars of the motion collapse under even a cursory examination of the evidence, leaving the motion entirely unworkable, unmanageable and full of unintended consequences for our attempts to improve traffic flow and to breathe life into town centres.

In conclusion, I am happy enough to look at a review; it is certainly something that I will take forward. However, my review will be based on the principles of evidence, focused on reforms that work in the interests of managing limited on-street spaces effectively, improving the flow of traffic, and conducive to town-centre growth and vitality.

Mr F McCann: The Minister raised a number of the issues that Members brought up about the motion, so I will try to condense what has been said and the issues that have

been raised. I have no doubt about William Humphrey's sincerity because we all deal with difficult problems in centres, and he spoke of the fines being punitive and talked about the need for balance and that the additional penalty of £45 needs to be reviewed.

Seán Lynch said that the motion is populist and that the fine of £45 is to try to reduce problems and is only increased to £90 when people do not pay.

Jenny Palmer said that there is merit in both the motion and the amendment, but she went on to say that the amendment, because it takes in a review, is probably the best way forward.

Justin McNulty said that there are inconsistencies in the approach across the North. He talked about trading competing with online shopping and said that we need ways to encourage people back into town centres.

Stewart Dickson said that 30 minutes' free parking would be problematic for the Minister and that there needs to be clarity on these matters, especially when free parking is available. He also said that £45 is a reasonable sum of money when you consider what it is there to do.

Alex spoke about the serious issues in Bangor. I would have been surprised if he did not raise the issue of Bangor in the midst of his speech; in fact, I am surprised that he did not get a couple of other parts of his constituency into it also. He made a point about the difficulties that people face, especially when shopping, and about trying to encourage people back in to shop. He also spoke about overzealous parking attendants, which seemed to be a theme that ran through many of the issues that Members raised.

George Robinson said that he represents a large rural constituency where on-street parking is essential in towns and villages and that we should, again, encourage people to come into towns. He also said that a reduction in fines would be a great help, but punishment could still be applied on certain occasions.

Philip Smith said that the amendment offers a more rounded approach. He gave statistics on the payment of fines and said that there are very few who do not pay. He said that a review is required, and he is sure that the Minister will take that on board.

If I have left Members out, I apologise. The Minister said that he would do a review and take on board what Members said here. He said that the review will be wide and encompass everything.

I will just make a few points.

Mr Poots: Thank you very much for giving way. On the basis of the last figures that I found available, which were for 2012, it was costing over £9 million to NSL. Given that there are 115 operatives on the streets of Northern Ireland, do you think that £80,000 per redcoat is good value for money and, therefore, that the matter should be reviewed?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Beidh nóiméad sa bhreis ag an Chomhalta. The Member has an extra minute.

Mr F McCann: I take on board what you are saying, but I think that it has been mentioned here that, when the Ulster Unionists were speaking, they did not speak about when their party member was the Minister and what was done then. Certainly, the DUP did not say that this could

have been dealt with when it had the Ministry the last time around.

I think that what the Minister is offering here is a balanced way out of this. He is offering to do a review that will allow Members — certainly, the Committee will take it on board — to have an input. It is about trying to find a happy medium that does not punish people unduly, which encourages people back into town and city centres, and which deals with the serious problem of people parking and blocking communities in city and town centres unduly. What we need is a free flow of traffic in many of those centres, and the only way that you can have that is by ensuring that you have in place procedures that allow you to deal with what people would call illegal parking.

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr F McCann: Yes.

Mr Humphrey: The Member, like me, has the honour to represent the great city of Belfast, and he talks about the free flow of traffic. The difficulty in encouraging people to park their car and travel into Belfast city centre is the fact that there is a continual logjam of buses in the city centre, preventing a free flow of traffic and people from going into the city centre to shop and support the local economy. Does he agree with that?

Mr F McCann: I agree that there have been problems with buses in the city centre for many years. I think that there has been a reduction and that, in a number of parts of the city, the rapid transit scheme will be another plank to encourage people to use public transport to come into the city. What the Minister and all Ministers who have held the post have said —

1.15 pm

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr F McCann: — is that we need to encourage more and more people to use public transport. If we can crack that nut, we can start to tackle and defeat the problem of parking in city centres, town centres —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr F McCann: — and villages.

Mr Stalford: Having listened to the debate, I think that it is unfortunate that so many Members appear to have missed the point of the wording of the motion. It clearly calls for a review. It does not prejudge the outcome of that review; it calls for a review.

Parking is an enormous issue in South Belfast. I think particularly of the communities that I represent in the city centre area in Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Market, where people are tortured as a consequence of people using their neighbourhood as a car park. Various Members have told us that there has been a reduction in illegal parking: I have to say to the House and the Minister that that is not the experience of the people living in the Market, Sandy Row or Donegall Pass. The experience of people living there is that, despite the fact that fines went up — we were assured that that would be a massive deterrent to illegal parking — the problem has persisted. The Minister is, of course —

Ms Hanna: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he agree that there are no activated residents' parking schemes in Northern Ireland and that it is time for the Department to formalise one? We appreciate that there are some problems, but those could act as a model for others.

Mr Hazzard: On a point of order, Madam Principal Deputy Speaker. That is not true.

Mr Stalford: I have asked the Minister an Assembly question and hope that he will respond positively to Pakenham Street off Donegall Pass being treated as a pilot for residents-only parking. It is something that people want to see, and, if it is got right, it will help —

Mr F McCann: Will the Member give way?

Mr Stalford: One second. If it is got right, it will help to alleviate the suffering of the inner-city communities that are afflicted by excessive parking. I give way.

Mr F McCann: I have been involved with those communities, and I can understand what you are saying. William spoke earlier about the communities that are invaded every day. A Sinn Féin Minister brought the issue of residents' parking to the fore, but it fell apart because a number of residents' groups would not accept some of the passes that were offered, although they had been offered a pilot scheme for a year in which that could all have been worked out. We need to get them back and make an offer again. A couple of weeks ago, the Minister announced that he had brought in a residents' parking scheme in Derry. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that, if they are making interventions, they need to be brief. I also ask Members to talk through the Chair.

Mr Stalford: The Member has made his point and eliminated the chance for me to make a few of mine. I am grateful to him for that contribution.

As my colleague William Humphrey said, Belfast city centre is vital, so Belfast City Council is able to provide all the services that it does to all the people throughout the city. At present, our arterial routes — I think particularly of the Lisburn Road — are being damaged because of the excessive zeal being shown by parking enforcement officers. If you speak to traders on the Lisburn Road, they will tell you that that is the case.

People would welcome the idea of the first 30 minutes of parking being free. It would allow them, in the case of, say, the Lisburn Road, to park, visit one or two shops and then get back in their car and get out. It would also help those in Sandy Row in a fortnight's time —

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Stalford: In a minute. In a fortnight's time, it would also help those in Sandy Row to park and go into the office of their local DUP Assembly Member and have a conversation for half an hour and then leave without the risk of being fined by a parking enforcement officer.

The fact is that the appeal process, which the Minister referenced, is a joke. I would be interested to hear in raw numbers and percentage terms the number of appeals that are upheld. During the debate, I referenced a case that I dealt with in which a care worker visiting an elderly man was fined because part of her car was on a double yellow line. She was fined even though she was in a house

administering medication to an elderly person. It is the total inflexibility of the system that lots of people —

Ms Dillon: Will the Member give way?

Mr Stalford: I do not have time. I am sorry; I would.

Lots of people find it very frustrating. People want more flexibility in the system, and that is what our motion calls for. Even though the fines went up, the parking problems persist. It is having a damaging impact on the city centre by discouraging people from going there. I have spoken to traders who have said that. I never thought that I would see charity shops on Royal Avenue, but that is what Belfast city centre has been reduced to. We need to take action in this area not only to protect our vital city centre trade but to give people a fair shake.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 57; Noes 32.

AYES

Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Ms Archibald, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Ms Dillon, Mrs Dobson, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Ford, Ms Gildernew, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Long, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Mr McGlone, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Mr McKee, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Mullan, Mr Murphy, Mr Nesbitt, Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Ms Seeley, Mr Smith, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Lynch and Mr F McCann.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lyons, Mr McCausland, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr Robinson.

The following Members voted in both Lobbies and are therefore not counted in the result: Mr Agnew, Ms Bailey

Question accordingly agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly recognises the vital importance of adequate and affordable on-street parking for the growth and development of our town centres; notes the need for the Minister for Infrastructure to review the provisions for on-street parking; calls on the Minister for Infrastructure to carry out an investigation into the reduction of mandatory car parking fines; and further calls on the Minister for Infrastructure to look at options to review on-street car parking fees and times.

Addressing the Past

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. As two amendments have been selected and are published on the Marshalled List, an additional 15 minutes has been added to the total time. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. The proposer of each amendment will have 10 minutes to propose and five minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes. Before we begin, the House should note that the amendments are mutually exclusive, so, if amendment No 1 is made, the Question will not be put on amendment No 2.

Mr Attwood: I beg to move

That this Assembly believes in a victim-centred approach to addressing the past and that victims and survivors should have a meaningful input to the content and design of legacy proposals; further believes that justice, truth and accountability, acknowledgement and support for victims and survivors are essential elements in a comprehensive approach to the past; notes the comments by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on a public phase on legacy proposals; and calls on the British and Irish Governments for an urgent, renewed effort to conclude legacy issues, including the further development of the proposed roles and powers of the Oral History Archive, Historical Investigations Unit, Independent Commission on Information Retrieval and the Implementation and Reconciliation Group and rejects any attempts by the state, state agencies, illegal groups and others to evade justice, suppress the truth of and resist accountability for the past.

First of all, I confirm that we accept the Sinn Féin amendment, which adds a little to the motion, and oppose the DUP amendment, which changes a lot in the range of the motion.

Last week, I was talking to a senior person in one of the Governments who confirmed that they expected that, within the next few weeks, the British Government would enter the “public phase” that the Secretary of State has been referring to, whatever that means. Given that and the centrality and enduring nature of the issue, it is an important time for the Assembly to touch on and have a debate in relation to these matters so that on the far side of the public phase, whatever that might be, the outcomes do not once again let victims and survivors down, cause them exasperation and, most of all, cause them new and higher levels of hurt. The next few weeks will be vital in how we comprehensively and ethically deal with the issues of the past.

If we are going to deal with the issues of the past, we should try to be informed by a number of principles. First, the highest standards of justice, accountability, truth and acknowledgement should prevail. Secondly, victims should be consulted and be involved in and participate in the design of any legacy proposals. Thirdly, through and beyond the legacy mechanisms, whatever they end up being, doors should not be closed to victims, not least because of a lack of proper financial support for those mechanisms. On the far side of and through those processes, we need to deal with the issues of intergenerational trauma and experience, advance national

reconciliation and healing and ensure that individuals and communities get the full opportunity through those mechanisms to deal with the issues that they face.

Let us be clear: the thresholds around truth, justice, accountability and acknowledgement have been degraded from those advanced, for example, by Eames/Bradley. Each time we have entered into conversation with parties in government, we have ended up with a degradation of the strength and quality of the Eames/Bradley proposals of all those years ago. Consequently, even at this eleventh hour, I ask the two Governments and all the parties to attempt to improve and upgrade the proposals that are forthcoming in respect of dealing with the past so that the architecture of legacy measures up to the needs of the victims and survivors of the legacy of the last 30, 40 and 50 years.

I note that once again, even on this issue, we are being denied the opportunity to hear a response from any Minister, including the Minister of Justice. That is to be deeply regretted. The reason I say that is that, if we are going to navigate through the next number of weeks properly, we need to learn from the lessons of a year ago. What are the lessons of a year ago from the aborted negotiations around Fresh Start? First, this time a year ago, time was spent in the negotiations undoing the damage that was done to dealing with the past arising from private conversations between the Northern Ireland Office and the DOJ that produced, at that time, proposals that would do damage to a comprehensive way of dealing with the past. Yet, that is what we have at the moment. There have been private conversations going on for at least the last six months between the NIO and the DOJ for which the Minister of Justice refuses to account in any shape or form, at any level, to the Assembly or the people of Northern Ireland. When she is asked about these matters, she says, “Ask London”.

The second lesson from a year ago is on the lack of transparency. I wait to hear from the DUP and Sinn Féin in that regard, but, when the British Government produced a second draft legacy Bill, they shared its contents in full or in part with the DUP and Sinn Féin but not with any of the other parties and maybe not even with the Irish Government, who should have joint custody and stewardship in taking this forward. Are we going to have a rerun of last year’s NIO/DOJ conversations with a lack of transparency about what is coming forward?

1.45 pm

Thirdly, we must not have what we were close to having last year: a *fait accompli*, where a smaller number of parties and one Government decide what the outcome is, over the heads of other parties, other Governments and, crucially, victims and survivors. I hope that there is learning in relation to all that and that those errors and fault lines of last year are not repeated.

The SDLP has said that, in writing and in person, to the two Governments and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland over the last number of months. On the matters that I am about to raise, we have not received any detailed or satisfactory answers. In Fresh Start, the SDLP submitted seven papers to the three Governments, some of which were shared with others. In those papers, we outlined how to upgrade the proposed legacy mechanisms and, without being exhaustive — some people, especially

on the British side, will say that we are being exhaustive — these are matters that now need to be dealt with.

For example, will the Implementation and Reconciliation Group (IRG) be in statute and have full powers to talk to any person or organisation in order to interrogate thematic issues from the past? Will it have access to any and all relevant information in so doing? Will the Historical Investigations Unit (HIU) be able to investigate cases that need to be investigated, rather than have its role and mandate constrained on some spurious basis, not least in collusion cases? Will the issue of funding be dealt with? Since the Stormont House Agreement, when moneys were agreed in respect of legacy, there are new and inescapable pressures in relation to Stakeknife, legacy inquest, mental health, demand for the Victims and Survivors Service, the volume of cases to go through the HIU, and the potential role of the IRG? Will funding measure up to all those needs? Will disclosure be dealt with once and for all by the British Government, not in a way to protect its self-serving interests but to satisfy the needs of truth, justice and families, victims and survivors? And so on and so forth, in respect of all the legacy matters.

In concluding, let us be clear about one of the fundamental fault lines in the legacy discussions: those who did the worst over the years of conflict, and those who know the most about the truth of all of that, have the least intention to account in relation to the legacy mechanisms. There are too many vested interests at the heart of legacy, where the interest of the few will be greater, or is in danger of being greater, than the interests of the many victims and survivors. That is the truth behind the national security issue: that the British Government do not wish to account for that which may be criminal, embarrassing, callous or brutal, that went on with their knowledge during the years of the conflict. Similarly, terror organisations may wish to share at an institutional level corporate memory of what the leadership of illegal organisations did during the years of conflict, but they will not cross the line when it comes to damage to their reputations or self-serving needs.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Attwood: When it comes to those issues, there is one, perhaps final, chance to get it right. Let us not squander that opportunity; let us stand up unambiguously for the needs of victims and survivors.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up. I call Paul Frew to move amendment No 1.

Mr Frew: I beg to move amendment No 1:

Leave out all after the first "proposals;" and insert

"further believes that all parties should work towards an early resolution of these matters; and welcomes the Government's proposals to consult on a way forward."

Let me say at the outset that I agree with a lot of what Mr Attwood said, as it resonates with me. I yearn for the day when we get this issue dealt with. I am sure that every one of us has met, spoken to, or even has family members who are victims or who are involved in a victims' group. We have all met them and seen the pain in their eyes and heard it in their voices when they talk about their loved ones and how they miss them.

However, it is also a truth that not all victims want and need the same thing. That is something that we need to be very mindful of when we proceed along this path. It is also clear that, on these issues, trust has been and probably will continue to be a massive issue. In fact, it is a massive barrier to moving forward. The fact is that not all victims' groups want or need the same thing. Even within victims' groups, there are victims and survivors who do not want or need the same thing. It is a massive issue for us, the leaders, who are trying to move Northern Ireland forward, working with the UK Government. The Irish Government also have a massive part to play in this moving forward as regards their role in the Troubles. With all of that, trying to get a resolution and agreement has, to this point, proven to be remarkably difficult.

What are the needs and wants of victims and survivors? Some want truth, and that is a massive area. Some want justice, some want truth without justice and some want justice with truth. This is a massive issue moving forward. What does our party want? Our party wants a resolution to this; of course we do. We want to remove some of that pain for those people who suffer this every single day. Ultimately, however, we see that this cannot move forward without justice being upheld. Justice must be seen to be done. The rule of law must be upheld without fear or favour to anyone — and I mean anyone, whether you were part of a terrorist organisation or you were a part of the security forces and you stepped out of line and broke the law. The law is there to protect the citizens of every nation. It is important that, as we move forward, the rule of law is maintained and justice is seen to be done.

This is a remarkably sensitive area. It has proven so difficult to move forward from the ceasefires and the various agreements to now. We are edging forward, although, of course, we are not going quickly enough. That responsibility lies on every single person in this House and on every single party. That is why I am speaking to the amendment that our party put forward:

"further believes that all parties should work towards an early resolution of these matters; and welcomes the Government's proposals to consult on a way forward."

If we go into the public sphere on this, we should let the people see what is on the minds of the Governments. Let them judge for themselves how much or how little progress has been made or what more needs to be done. That is a very important issue, but nobody in this room, whether you are in government or in opposition, should shirk that responsibility.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for giving way. The content of the motion is extremely detailed. It is an extremely constructive motion, which goes into many of the aspects that have been worked out over a number of years and which are well established for a comprehensive framework for dealing with the past. Will the Member tell the House and the public why the DUP felt the need to remove the vast majority of the content of that motion and replace it with a very short, abstract, early resolution for an issue that has been dealt with for years and which, I think, is at risk of actually offending victims and survivors in our community who are well past an early resolution of these matters?

Mr Frew: I thank the Member for his intervention. I hear what he is saying, but this is about a holistic approach.

There is detail in the motion, but it does not mention all of us working together. I am not saying for one moment that this stuff should not be done. I am not saying that this stuff should not be in our thoughts or in the motion. What I am saying is that the issue has to be moved forward with a holistic approach. Everyone must be brought along and come with us. Whilst there is a lot of good in all this, it has to be the Fresh Start Agreement. I am not too sure whether the Member wants another intervention, but would he like to explain to the House his party's settled position on the Fresh Start Agreement, the same as every other party in the House? With the agreements already sought within that agreement, we believe that that is where we need to go. It is OK to include bits of the Fresh Start Agreement in a motion, but let us take the whole Fresh Start Agreement forward. Let us try to get a resolution to these issues once and for all, and then maybe victims will get some closure.

What Northern Ireland and what victims and survivors have come through over this generation is beyond explanation. Some of our young people do not even realise the horrors that have been inflicted on our people over the past 40 years. A light must be shone on all this, and the truth must come out. Justice must be done. That is the only way in which we will ever be able to move forward with any confidence. The moment that we trade justice is when we are in big trouble, and I believe that there will be no closure for the many victims and survivors in Northern Ireland.

We stand here today determined to resolve this issue. We stand here today wanting to resolve these issues. We are happy to stand over the work that we have done to date. Can we do more? Of course we can. Every single party and every single Member in the House can do more and work harder to resolve these issues. We will not be found wanting when it comes to trying to resolve the issues. We will work hard for all the people of Northern Ireland and all the victims to whose doors terror has been brought.

We will support the security forces and their work throughout those terrible years to keep the public safe and out of harm's way. A debt of gratitude should leave the House today for the service of people in the security forces and the role that they played in keeping us all safe. That should never be forgotten. That can never be rewritten, and it is important that we acknowledge it here today.

We hope for the support of the House for our amendment.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Tosnóidh Tráth na gCeist ag a dó. Question Time will commence shortly. The debate will continue after Question Time, when the next Member to speak will be Gerry Kelly, who will move amendment No 2. The House may take its ease.

The debate stood suspended.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

The Executive Office

Royal Prerogative

1. **Mrs Dobson** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister who provided the advice that the royal prerogative could be used to appoint the new Executive press secretary. (AQO 567/16-21)

Mrs Foster (The First Minister): We were advised by the head of the Civil Service that we could use the prerogative powers conferred on us by section 23(3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to make an order that would enable us to make such an appointment. He took advice from his Civil Service legal advisers before informing us. The appointment was then made under the provisions of that order. Therefore, the prerogative was not used to directly appoint the Executive press secretary; he was appointed under an enabling provision lawfully made using the prerogative power.

Mrs Dobson: I thank the First Minister for her answer. Given that the now-in-post Executive press secretary is undertaking cross-departmental engagement with the media, especially on behalf of the Department of Health, can the First Minister give an indication of the financial savings that Departments will realise as a result of the new appointment?

Mrs Foster: Of course, we are looking at the Executive information service (EIS). Indeed, following the director's retirement, a structural review is ongoing. The role of the press secretary is to do what the Member outlined: to work right across government so that we have a cohesive approach to the media; and to ensure that, instead of the sometimes glib and trite understanding of what is going on up here, there is a more in-depth understanding of the challenges that face the Executive and how we intend to deal with them. Yes, the press secretary was very much involved in the launch of the Bengoa report and the action plan from the Minister of Health. He will be involved in many other initiatives as well. I am sure that there will be cost savings, but, of course, that was not the main reason why this gentleman was appointed. He was appointed to create a more in-depth understanding among the general public of what the Executive are doing in their policies. The role of the press secretary is very clear. It has been set out in the many answers that we have given about his job title and job specification, and he will work to that specification and that job title.

Mr McPhillips: I thank the First Minister for her answers so far. Last week's High Court decision was significant in that it disallowed the use of the prerogative power to rush through the triggering of article 50. Considering such developments, what is the Executive parties' plan should there be a vote in Westminster on triggering article 50?

Mrs Foster: Last week's court ruling was that article 50 had to go back to Parliament, but, as the Prime Minister

has made very clear, Brexit will still continue because that was the expressed will of the British people in the referendum on 23 June. Whilst the mechanisms may change, she is very clear that Brexit means Brexit. We are very focused on our engagement, and the deputy First Minister and I will be in London this Wednesday, along with our colleagues from Scotland and Wales, to meet David Davis. We have a Joint Ministerial Committee to deal with those European matters and very much look forward to that positive engagement.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the First Minister for her answers thus far. Can she confirm that no one has sought to legally challenge her use of the royal prerogative? Can she further confirm that the first post-1998 use of this power was by Ulster Unionist and SDLP Ministers?

Mrs Foster: Thus far, no one has taken me to court for the use of the royal prerogative. I suppose that there is always time. Of course, the Member is right to say that this is not the first time that the royal prerogative power has been used; it is the fourth time since devolution returned to Northern Ireland. The first time it was used was by the then First Minister, David Trimble, and deputy First Minister, Seamus Mallon. As I said, it was used by us for the first time since I became First Minister when we appointed the press secretary.

There is no mystery in the use of the power: it was given to us under the Northern Ireland Act, as I indicated, and is there for all to see.

Mr Allister: Why was the opinion of the Attorney General not sought before the decision was taken to exercise the royal prerogative? Would it not have been most appropriate to get the benefit of his opinion?

Mrs Foster: I suppose that we could have asked the Attorney General for his opinion. At the time, we thought that we would ask the head of the Civil Service whether we could use the power. He checked with his legal advisers and came back with the answer that it was available for us to use. We could easily have asked the Attorney General; there is no mystery in any of this.

Dr Farry: Given that one of the implications of the High Court ruling in London on the use of the royal prerogative to trigger article 50 was that the Government in London do not have the right to legislate where legislation already exists, does the First Minister have concerns over the legality of the decision to use the royal prerogative in Northern Ireland in relation to the press secretary?

Mrs Foster: No, I do not have any concerns. We took advice from the head of the Civil Service, who took legal advice. This use of the royal prerogative is under an enabling power set out in section 23(3) of the Northern Ireland Act. So, there is legislative cover, if he wants to go down the line of the court case in England. I have no difficulty in saying that we used the prerogative in the appropriate way.

Fresh Start Panel Report: D2

2. **Ms Armstrong** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the specific proposals and methods of evaluation that have been developed to meet recommendation D2 of the Fresh Start panel report on the 'Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups' to measurably

reduce segregation in education and housing and set ambitious targets and milestones to achieve measurable progress as quickly as possible. (AQO 568/16-21)

Mrs Foster: The Executive action plan, which was published in July, sets out how we intend to take forward and implement all the recommendations in the three-person panel report, including arrangements for reporting progress. On good relations, we are committed to building on existing strategies and will give them ongoing consideration. Together: Building a United Community includes the establishment of 10 shared education campuses and the creation of 10 new shared housing schemes, and we are making good progress on them. Five shared education campuses are being progressed at the Moy, Limavady, Ballycastle, Brookeborough and Duneane/Moneynick. Following a third call for applications, we expect to announce the successful projects in May 2017. Under Delivering Social Change, we have a £25 million project to incentivise shared education partnerships between schools and to enhance opportunities for children and young people to learn together regardless of their religious or cultural background. Some 314 schools are engaged in 134 partnerships, and a further call for applications has been made. The shared neighbourhoods programme is also progressing well. Two schemes at Ballynafoy Close on the Ravenhill Road and Manse Court in Saintfield have been completed. A further two schemes are near completion and six others are under construction. The Executive will consider in due course how to build on this significant success.

Ms Armstrong: I thank the First Minister for her answer. What impact has the withholding by the UK Government of their contribution to funding for the action plan in the report had on delivering the recommendation?

Mrs Foster: As I said, we are progressing well on the shared education piece. I am pleased with the number of projects for which funding has been made available, including one very close to my heart in Brookeborough. It is good to see them progressing well. Under Delivering Social Change, we have been able to give £25 million to incentivise shared education between 314 schools, which, as I think she will agree, is a very good march forward. Shared housing is also moving along very well. There has been good progress made on the sharing front. Of course, there is always more that we would like to do, but we will continue to push ahead on this agenda.

Mr Smith: Following the disclosure by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that, in the last year alone, over 400 people who claimed homelessness cited paramilitary activity, how does the First Minister think that the Executive's strategy will deal with this behaviour, given that the first draft has already been rejected by the Government as falling short?

Mrs Foster: Of course, his characterisation is wrong — the Government in Westminster have made that very clear — but I would expect him to characterise it in that fashion. Yes, I was rather alarmed to hear those figures last week. When I made enquiries into what the Housing Executive is doing on the matter, I was told that it has been able to, under Fresh Start allocations, draw down £498,000 — not an insubstantial amount of money — to deal with three programmes: one on community empowerment; one on re-imaging communities, which will try to deal with some of the issues that led to those people being rehoused; and

one on bonfire management, which always becomes a very topical issue at a particular time of the year, not just in the House but in councils across the piece. Work is ongoing, with the Housing Executive in the lead, to deal with community tensions and community programmes.

Again, we all have to take leadership roles on the matter. It is what we need to do in the Assembly: give leadership; say that those activities that are going on, sometimes at a very low level, are completely unacceptable; and try to move people away from those activities to more progressive and positive matters. The programmes come into their own in and around re-imaging. I saw some of the very good work that went on in the past with those projects through the Department for Social Development, as it then was. Those projects are now being put forward through the Fresh Start Agreement.

Mr Attwood: Given the report to the Assembly by the Minister of Finance that London will not release in-year moneys to deal with the issue because of the lack of a detailed action plan and that, one year ago this week, the DUP and Sinn Féin had a fanfare of promotion for Fresh Start, do you feel embarrassed today?

Mrs Foster: No. I do not feel embarrassed at all, because, as I have just told you, £498,000 has been drawn down under the Fresh Start Agreement to help people in communities right across Northern Ireland under three Housing Executive programmes. That is just one part of A Fresh Start. Why would I be embarrassed about that? I am not embarrassed about it at all. In fact, it is something that we should celebrate.

The money that he refers to is, of course, money that will be rolled forward into next year. Sometimes, people have this thing and think that we have lost money because a programme has not been pulled together. I would much rather that the programme be the correct one and that it really can deliver for communities. In that respect, we will be able to pull the programme together and take advantage of that money, which, as I say, has not been lost but has simply been rolled forward, so that we can deliver in a more positive way for the communities involved.

Programme for Government 2016-2021

3. **Mr Swann** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any discussion that they have had with the Minister of Finance in relation to the Programme for Government 2016-2021. (AQO 569/16-21)

Mrs Foster: We are taking a collaborative approach to developing the Programme for Government. There is regular engagement with Executive colleagues, including the Minister of Finance, on the draft Programme for Government that was agreed by the Executive on 27 October 2016. Those engagements will continue as we put in place plans to realise the programme's outcome of societal well-being. Clearly, there is a connection between work on the Programme for Government and work on the Budget. Once we have greater clarity regarding our funding envelope, which will be after the Westminster autumn statement, we will carefully align the Budget with the Programme for Government.

Mr Swann: I thank the First Minister for her answer. She referred to work on the Budget and Programme for Government. Has she had any discussions with the

Finance Minister on setting aside money for the financial implications of the renewable heat incentive scheme?

Mrs Foster: That is a very creative way in which to get the renewable heat incentive scheme into First Minister's questions. We are engaging weekly with the Finance Minister on the Budget. That will become a lot clearer once we have had the autumn statement, which is at the end of this month. Then, we will be able to align the Budget with the Programme for Government and, indeed, deal with any other demands on the Budget.

Mr Irwin: Can the First Minister indicate whether the Ulster Unionist Party made a substantive response to the Programme for Government and, if so, whether there were any ideas in it worth taking on board?

Mrs Foster: Yes, I can. This is the response to the Programme for Government from the Ulster Unionist Party. The first page is a commentary on the Programme for Government. Most of the second page is the same. The response has one — one — item that the party wanted to bring to the attention of the Executive.

I will read it out with your permission, Mr Speaker:

"In the spirit of constructive opposition, we offer one important addition to the 14 outcomes listed on page 12 of the Programme for Government framework".

2.15 pm

Bear in mind that it has had months to put together its response to the Programme for Government. This is what we get:

"In recognition of the legacy of the Troubles, we suggest the outcomes should include specific references to victims and survivors beyond the general comment 'We care for others and we help those in need'".

And it gives us draft wording. That is it. That is it in terms of the Programme for Government. That is it in terms of what one of the Opposition parties has to say in relation to the Programme for Government. That is it.

Mr McGuigan: How has the decision to adopt an outcomes-based approach been received during consultation?

Mrs Foster: It has been received very well, apart from that response from the Ulster Unionist Party. Eight hundred and ten consultees have put forward their views. Most of them are a little bit longer than that. The deputy First Minister and I were at a conference organised recently in Belfast that was attended mostly by local government and the third sector. Attendees warmly welcomed the outcome-focused approach and the very collaborative way in which we are taking forward the Programme for Government. I think that most people recognise the need to work not just across government but outside of government if we are going to make a real impact with what we want to do for Northern Ireland.

It has been received very well. The second iteration is now out for consultation. I encourage everyone to look at it and bring forward their ideas. That consultation ends on 23 December, just before Christmas.

Ms Hanna: I thank the Minister for her answers so far. I noticed that one of your colleagues asked about the

SDLP's responses. We put in 50 suggested legislative initiatives that the Government could take. I do not blame the Ulster Unionists; they are not there to be a think tank for you. As with the Bengoa report, I did not see any financial allocations. Will you outline what financial provision will be made over and above recurrent spending to address specific Programme for Government priorities?

Mrs Foster: I do not know whether the Member was in the House when I said that we are waiting on the autumn statement at the end of November so that we can align the Budget with the Programme for Government. That, of course, is what we intend to do. I welcome the fact that the SDLP made suggestions. That is what opposition is meant to be about. I note that she gave cover to the Ulster Unionist Party by saying that it is not there as a think tank. It is there as an Opposition, and it is meant to put forward an alternative. It has not done so. Until it does, it should reflect on that.

Mr Dickson: First Minister, are you not somewhat embarrassed by the way in which you seemed to sneak out the latest emanation of the Programme for Government on a Friday before a holiday? Much more importantly, is there not a paucity of targets in the document that has been delivered? I understand the point about finance, but surely a Programme for Government must have targets in it.

Mrs Foster: I am certainly not embarrassed about putting the document out. There was a press release that went out. I am sorry if the Member was off on his holidays and was not able to read that. I cannot answer for the media. If they are not interested in covering the Programme for Government going out in its second iteration, that is a matter for them, not for me.

NI Bureaux

4. **Mr Logan** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the current operations of the Northern Ireland bureaux. (AQO 570/16-21)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Executive's three overseas bureaux in Beijing, Brussels and Washington DC play a pivotal part in our strategic international engagement. The primary role of developing Government-to-Government relations is hugely important in underpinning the work of Invest Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Northern Ireland businesses and our universities on the global stage. Our international offices are in regular contact with decision makers in government and influential international organisations in their respective regions. That has assisted the Executive in realising key Programme for Government targets.

Mr Logan: Thanks to the First Minister for her answer. I am sure that she agrees that the Washington DC branch does great work to promote a positive image of Northern Ireland to America. Will she assure us that, regardless of the result of the presidential election, the Washington DC branch will continue to do its work?

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for his supplementary. I know that he was recently out in Washington on a US Consulate-led programme and was able to see, first-hand, the work that goes on by our colleagues in Washington. I am always amazed at the amount of ground that they are able to cover with a relatively small team of staff. They hosted five ministerial visits in 2015-16 and a total

of 34 visits by over 200 people from Northern Ireland society including two Assembly Committees, the PSNI, the Policing Board, universities and a lot of the councils who send out delegations. They sponsor, or part sponsor, a lot of events and are, essentially, our eyes and ears not only in Washington DC but in New York and Canada. They spread themselves very thinly but very effectively and do a marvellous job.

Ms J McCann: Will the Minister give us an update on her proposed visit to China in December?

Mrs Foster: The deputy First Minister and I intend to go to China at the beginning of December. We hope to officially open the Beijing office, although it has been open for a while now, which is our Northern Ireland Executive office in China. We also hope to go to Shanghai and Shenyang in the north-eastern province. While we are there, we hope to sign a memorandum of understanding with regard to even deeper ties with Shenyang because Shenyang is a sister city of Belfast and does a lot of good work.

I understand that the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust has just returned from China and that that was a very successful visit. We will keep on. China is a huge market. It is a very long way away but we believe that, in conjunction with the very effective consul general in Belfast, there is a lot of very good business to be done.

Mr Aiken: I thank the First Minister for her answers so far. What assessments have been made of how other non-EU countries engage with Brussels and the EU institutions, and what lessons is she drawing regarding our Brussels bureau post-March 2019?

Mrs Foster: The Brussels office, just like our Washington and Beijing offices, is really our eyes and ears in Brussels. It is doing a very good job at the moment bringing back intelligence and information on what is happening. With the vote on the 23 June, there is a lot happening in Brussels — that is the understatement of the year. It is important that we get that information back to us. Obviously, post-Brexit, we will have to look at the relationship and whether we need to have the Brussels office, but that is something that will come after the Brexit negotiations have finished and we have exited Europe.

Mr McGlone: Will the Minister advise on the guidance that has been provided to officials overseas in those bureaux on the issue of Brexit in order that, if questioned, they have a consistent and clear response?

Mrs Foster: Their position is the position of the Northern Ireland Executive: that we will do what is best for the people of Northern Ireland in these negotiations and that we will move forward and try to get the maximum amount of market access. That, of course, is still our position with regard to the negotiations and it is the message that we will be taking to David Davis on Wednesday when we have our Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) meeting.

We are also looking for new opportunities in the post-Brexit world and have asked our officials in the offices to make sure that they are alert to all of them because a lot of our companies are looking for opportunities beyond Europe. I was delighted to see Brendan Mooney of Kainos as part of the Prime Minister's trade delegation to India. He is an award-winning member of the business community here and we wish him well and hope that he is able to access more business opportunities for Kainos which we

are very proud of — a Belfast-born company doing global business.

Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme

5. **Mr McCartney** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the vulnerable persons relocation scheme. (AQO 571/16-21)

Mrs Foster: Mr Speaker, with your permission I will ask Junior Minister Ross to answer this question.

Mr Ross (Junior Minister, The Executive Office): Just four days ago, the fifth group of refugees arrived here through the scheme. Each new arrival will receive the same care and support as previous groups to integrate and start their lives anew. We are very proud of the part that we have played in the vulnerable persons relocation scheme. With our partners from the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector, we have shown that we can make the scheme work here successfully. People here have been very welcoming to those families in their time of need and we will continue to welcome refugees on a phased basis over the coming months.

Mr McCartney: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. I thank the Minister for his answer and add my gratitude, particularly from the people in Derry, for the good work carried out by many individuals and organisations in welcoming refugees. Can the Minister give an update on how the complex needs of many refugees are being addressed on an ongoing basis?

Mr Ross: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. Through the scheme, we are making sure that they are welcome in local communities, and we are working with communities to address their many complex needs. Over the course of the vulnerable persons relocation scheme, we have been able to welcome just short of 300 individuals. They all have very different needs, and we have been trying to support them through various offices in the Executive Office and wider government to make sure that any specific needs that they have are dealt with and that any local issues that they have can be resolved at local level.

Ms Bradshaw: Thank you very much for your answers to date. Following on from the question on NGOs and the sad news last week that the Northern Ireland Council For Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) will have to close its doors, how will you ensure that the NGOs have sustained funding to support them? The problems will not be dealt with very quickly.

Mr Ross: I thank the Member for that, not least because it gives me an opportunity to thank Patrick Yu for his contribution over many years as the chairperson of NICEM. It is important to put on record the fact that NICEM has received a considerable amount of money since the minority ethnic development fund was conceived in 2001; in 2015-16 alone, the group received £90,000. Members will be aware that the minority ethnic development fund has become an increasingly competitive process. In 2016-17, there were 99 applications, of which 32 were successful, for a fund worth just over £1 million. NICEM made two applications, was advised that it had been unsuccessful and was given feedback on those applications.

I point out to the Member that, although NICEM has decided that it is no longer capable of continuing as an entity, we have seen many new groups emerge during

that time. Those groups provide support to and reflect the needs of their members, not least in lobbying government and being a critical friend of government. I see more organisations being able to access funding than before, and I am confident that those organisations — not least through the racial equality subgroup — will make sure that their voice is heard and that they can work alongside government to address the needs of the people whom they represent.

Abuse: Financial Redress Schemes

6. **Mr McPhillips** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the provision of financial redress schemes for the victims of historical institutional abuse. (AQO 572/16-21)

Mrs Foster: Mr Speaker, with your permission, I will ask junior Minister Ross to answer that question.

Mr Ross: The chair of the historical institutional abuse inquiry, Sir Anthony Hart, is due to deliver his report and recommendations to the Executive in January 2017. Late last year, the inquiry took the unprecedented step of gathering additional evidence through a targeted consultation with victims and survivors on financial compensation and other forms of redress, and the outcome of that consultation exercise will undoubtedly inform its recommendations. We must wait to see what Sir Anthony recommends, so it would be inappropriate to pre-empt the inquiry's findings or any future Executive decision by speculating now about redress or potential models of redress that the Executive may agree upon.

Mr Speaker: We have time for a quick supplementary and a quick response from the Minister.

Mr McPhillips: We look forward to the report very soon. The First Minister and the deputy First Minister will be aware of Margaret McGuckin's comments that the financial redress scheme would cost in the region of £20 million to £30 million. Can the First Minister outline how confident she is of securing that funding? Will it be in the next financial year, and will it be ring-fenced or subject to budgetary constraint?

Mr Ross: Again, I do not want to pre-empt what the report will say in January, nor do I want to pre-empt what the Executive will agree in response to it. I point out to the Member that considerable funding is available at present and the Executive Office is providing support services to victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse. Since January 2012, for example, we have been able to provide crisis counselling through Lifeline — that is, face-to-face, by phone or at the offices in Belfast and Londonderry; since October 2012, we have been able to provide a drop-in centre for Survivors (North West) in Londonderry; and, since August 2013, we have been providing support services to victims and survivors through Contact NI as well. There is also a small grants scheme that has allowed us to fund four victims' and survivors' groups since 2016-17, namely Survivors and Victims of Institutional Abuse (SAVIA); Survivors (North West); Rosetta Trust; and Birth Mothers for Justice NI. Without wanting to pre-empt the result of the report in January — I do not want to make any comment — I want to just put on record the amount of support that we are giving to victims and survivors at present.

2.30 pm

Mr Speaker: Members, that ends the period for listed questions. We now move to 15 minutes of topical questions.

United Airlines: Belfast to Newark Route

T1. **Mr Nesbitt** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the First Minister was surprised by the collapse of the proposed support package for the United Airlines Belfast to Newark route. (AQT 416/16-21)

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for giving me the opportunity to speak about this, because this was something that we were essentially forced into at the end of the summer when United indicated that it was going to leave Northern Ireland unless there was some intervention from government. The Economy Minister came to the Executive, and he had a package proposed. He had to do it very quickly, and it was worth doing. It was the right thing to do at the time, but unfortunately the European Union did not agree with us. It has decided that we cannot proceed with what it calls a state aid, and because of that United quickly took the decision, paid back any money it had received and will leave Belfast International Airport at the beginning of January, if my memory serves me right. I regret that deeply, because it was a very important direct link to North America. Because Newark is one of those hub destinations, it was really our entry into the whole of North America, and it is deeply regrettable this has happened.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the First Minister. I am sure she will recall that Sir Reg Empey as ETI Minister was able to fund routes by putting the money into the marketing rather than directly into the flights, and she may care to comment on that. Was she satisfied the Executive could have monitored how the money was used to ensure that United did not turn it into straight profit?

Mrs Foster: Yes. We spent some time going through this with United. Of course, it would have been some feat to spend £9 million on marketing, which was why the Economy Minister put forward the programme that he did. It was the right thing to do. Of course, if we had not been in the European Union, we would have been able to do it, and that is the fundamental nub of all of this. If I was to look for a practical expression of state aid bureaucracy, here it is.

Libyan-sponsored Terrorism: Compensation

T2. **Mr Butler** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what engagement the First Minister or the Executive Office have had with Her Majesty's Government regarding compensation for victims of Libyan-sponsored terrorism. (AQT 417/16-21)

Mrs Foster: I have had a range of interventions through my Westminster colleagues; indeed, my deputy leader, Nigel Dodds, has been heavily involved in the Libya compensation issue. I deeply regret that the Government have taken a particular view on the matter. They should reflect on it, reflect on the work that the Select Committee has been engaged in and think again about the Libya compensation issue.

Mr Butler: I thank the First Minister for her answer. The First Minister will be aware that Lord Empey has

introduced a cross-party Bill that would see Libyan assets frozen in the UK used to pay compensation to its victims. Can she confirm Executive support for that legislative attempt to finally provide some justice to the victims of Gaddafi-sponsored terror?

Mrs Foster: Although it does not sound like it today, I understood that Lord Empey was in another place and not in the Assembly. We have had a lot of mention of him from the Ulster Unionist Party. Certainly, I will support any attempts to make sure that those who have suffered at the hands of Gaddafi's state-sponsored terrorism will be able to benefit from any compensation.

Bengoa Report: Executive Support

T3. **Mr Maskey** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how the Executive might be able to support the implementation of the Bengoa report. (AQT 418/16-21)

Mrs Foster: The very important issue on the Bengoa report is the fact that this is not just for the Department of Health; we believe that it is a matter for the entire Executive to take forward. We are very aware that, if we do not try to manage the health service, there will be a breakdown in the next 10 years, and that is what, I think, Professor Bengoa referred to as the "burning platform".

Unless we intervene and do something, the health service will require most of our block grant. Apart from that, we need to be able to deliver a better, sustainable service to our patients as well. We as an Executive believe that the way to do that is to follow through on the Bengoa report. It will take some time — two mandates of this place. In fact, this is the first time that we as an Executive or, indeed, any Executive before us, as I understand it, have taken such an approach over two mandates. We believe that it is that important to set the trajectory and where we are going over the next 10 years, and I wholeheartedly support it.

Mr Maskey: I thank the First Minister for that fairly comprehensive answer. Notwithstanding the very complex nature of all this and the very significant challenges in the time ahead, is she confident that the report and its conclusions can be fully implemented in due course?

Mrs Foster: I am confident because, as I understand it, the clinicians are absolutely ready for change and want change to happen. It is they who come to us in our constituency offices and say that change needs to occur. It fits in very well, I have to say, with the way in which we are progressing with our Programme for Government as well: it is about outcomes. What outcomes do we want for the health service over the next 10 years and, indeed, beyond? When we get to the end of the 10 years, we hope that we will have a health service that is more efficient and, importantly, more effective for the citizens who live here. We are very much signed up to the Bengoa report and the implementation plan. I hope that the whole House will get behind what is very critical infrastructure for us moving forward.

Ashers Bakery: Court Judgement

T4. **Mr Kennedy** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for the First Minister's response to the recent Ashers bakery court judgement. (AQT 419/16-21)

Mrs Foster: Of course I was disappointed that we did not get a different result, but we have to abide by the court judgement. I think that one of the most interesting

parts of the court judgement is the way in which the court commented on the role of the Equality Commission in the whole case. I understand that the costs that the Equality Commission has run up to date are well in excess of £100,000. I have to ask this question: where is the balance in dealing with faith communities in Northern Ireland? I will be asking the Equality Commission to comment directly and give me some feedback on that.

Mr Kennedy: I thank the First Minister for her answer, particularly on that issue. Does she share my personal view, which was highlighted in the court judgement, that the Northern Ireland Equality Commission has “created the impression” that it:

“was not interested in assisting the faith community where issues of this sort arose.”?

What action does the First Minister intend to take to address that?

Mrs Foster: I agree with the Member, and it is very telling that three very senior court judges made that commentary. Indeed, I think that they go on to say that they had seen evidence of only one letter in which the Equality Commission had been involved. It is incumbent on the Equality Commission to indicate to the Executive how it intends to remedy what has been pointed out to it by the court and what affirmative action it intends to take in terms of faith communities, because there is certainly a chill factor there for faith communities. That is communicated to me weekly, and the commission has to take notice of it.

NICEM: TEO Action

T5. **Mr Dickson** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, given the major gap that has appeared in the policy and advocacy role for ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland due to the lack of funding for the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM), what the Executive Office will do to ensure that that policy and advocacy role can be fulfilled and to state whether a recovery programme exists for NICEM. (AQT 420/16-21)

Mrs Foster: I will ask the junior Minister to answer that question.

Mr Ross: I touched on this earlier. The point is that NICEM applied for funding along with everybody else and was not successful. It was given feedback and then appealed the decision, but the original decision was upheld. I would point out that, since NICEM came into existence, a plethora of new organisations has emerged. They represent different ethnic groups across Northern Ireland, and we are a much more diverse place than we ever were before. I do not think that there will be a “gap” in that sense. I think that that gap has been filled by other organisations that are participating with government in the racial equality subgroup. They are making sure that their voices are heard and representing the views. Whilst it is disappointing for NICEM — I paid tribute to Patrick and do so again — a sufficient number of new groups have emerged to make sure that nobody is left behind and that the voice of ethnic minority groups in Northern Ireland is heard at the highest level.

Mr Dickson: I thank the junior Minister for that response. He is correct that a number of new groups have emerged, but I think that the clue is in the title of NICEM: it is the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities. It is the

umbrella organisation for all the organisations that he referred to. It is important that that umbrella role is retained in Northern Ireland to represent all those new, emerging voices.

Mr Ross: If you talk to representatives of some of the other organisations that have emerged, they will tell you that, sometimes, they saw NICEM not so much as an umbrella, but, increasingly, as in competition with different groups. That is not what it initially set out to be.

I am confident that, through the racial equality subgroup, and through all those different organisations and communities making sure that they work with and implement the racial equality strategy, they will be represented and listened to. Whilst I again acknowledge the role that NICEM has played over many years in Northern Ireland, at times as a lone voice, that is no longer the context in which we operate. We have a number of new organisations that will make sure that that work continues as we move forward.

Mr Speaker: Mr Edwin Poots is not in his place.

Thalidomide Scandal

T7. **Ms Armstrong** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions the Executive Office has had with the appropriate bodies to obtain pecuniary compensation for the survivors of the thalidomide scandal, given that the First Minister will be aware of the challenges facing those survivors, with many of them living with unique and complex needs and significant financial strain. (AQT 422/16-21)

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for her very timely question. Directly after Question Time, I am meeting some of the victims of the thalidomide scandal, and I very much look forward to getting an update from them on their Germany case. I understand that they have made representations to the European Union and, indeed, with my colleague Diane Dodds, were able to get some traction there on their cases. As I said, I very much look forward to the update that I will receive from them in a couple of minutes and to seeing what I can do to assist them in their action against that Government.

Ms Armstrong: I thank the First Minister for her answer. As she mentioned, the German Government are facing increasing pressure from the EU and could be forced to recognise their responsibility to help survivors. As the First Minister said, she will hear an update, but, as the issue has been going on for a number of years, is she able to give any assurances that, regardless of the decision, she will do what she can to ensure that thalidomide victims in Northern Ireland are sufficiently compensated?

Mrs Foster: Of course, that is what I want to hear. I want to hear from them what their current position is. I read Mrs Fenton’s story on the BBC website and learned how the thalidomide crisis has impacted her in a very personal way and what it means for her today. I want to hear how she is coping with everyday living. They will certainly find me someone who wants to be of assistance, whether that is in relation to the German Government or to the very specific needs that they might have in Northern Ireland.

Mr Speaker: I call Mr Attwood and inform him that he may not get a supplementary.

Anti-poverty Strategy

T8. **Mr Attwood** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for the First Minister's view on the publication of an anti-poverty strategy. (AQT 423/16-21)

Mrs Foster: As the Member knows, we believe that the anti-poverty strategy was covered in other documents, but the court took a different view. We will continue to work with and across Departments because, of course, that is what the new Programme for Government is all about: making sure that we address all the issues, not just in one Department but across government, and it is no different for the anti-poverty strategy.

Mr Speaker: Time is up.

2.45 pm

Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Mr Speaker: The Minister has given notice to the Business Committee that she is unavailable to answer questions. The Minister for the Economy will therefore respond to questions on her behalf.

Farmers: AFSB Comments

1. **Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment of the recent comments made by the chair of the Agri-Food Strategy Board, at the meeting of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on 6 October 2016, that there are too many farmers in Northern Ireland. (AQO 581/16-21)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister for the Economy): The Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister is aware of the recent remarks by the chair of the Agri-Food Strategy Board on the structure of the local industry. As the Minister previously said in the Chamber, she is focused on championing and strengthening the position of all farmers in Northern Ireland. The future of the industry is dependent upon building a resilient, sustainable, competitive and forward-thinking sector, and she will not be selective about who she supports.

That is why the Minister is working with colleagues across the Executive to deliver the many actions detailed within the Executive response to 'Going for Growth', which are intended to assist the agri-food sector in realising its ambitions and maximising its potential contribution to the local economy. Farmers in particular will benefit from various schemes under the rural development programme, especially the farm business improvement scheme, which aims to build knowledge and expertise, improve innovation and cooperation and support capital investment in modern, fit-for-purpose infrastructure and equipment.

The Minister was delighted to launch the capital component of the farm business improvement scheme on 31 October. That initial phase is worth some £40 million and represents a significant investment in the future of farming here.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister for his answer. In his role as Economy Minister, he is co-sponsor of the Agri-Food

Strategy Board. Does he agree with the chairman's comments about the number of farmers in Northern Ireland?

Mr Hamilton: I share the views of the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister, who, I think, responded at the last Question Time to a question posed by Mr Swann on this very issue. I fully agree with what she said in the Chamber that day, and I reiterate today that she wants to see a strong, robust, resilient and sustainable farming sector across Northern Ireland and she will have no favourites in and will not be selective about who she supports to achieve that ultimate positive aim.

The Member is right that I am co-sponsor of the Agri-Food Strategy Board with the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister. Whilst in this instance I do not agree with what the chair said to the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee, it is worth acknowledging the positive role Mr O'Neill has played down through the years in the industry and right across the sector in a range of different roles, particularly the role he has played of late as chair of the Agri-Food Strategy Board in developing the 'Going for Growth' report, which points to a very positive and ambitious vision for the future of the agri-food sector in Northern Ireland. Whilst I, like a lot of people, may not agree with everything people say, I am happy to work with those who want to make that positive contribution to the sector and industry. In spite of what was said, I think that is where Mr O'Neill's heart clearly lies.

Mr McNulty: Does the Minister agree with the UK's farming Minister, George Eustice, when he says the agriculture industry will have to:

"move away from the notion of subsidies"?

Mr Hamilton: I was at a breakfast meeting hosted by Diane Dodds, our MEP, at which Mr Eustice made a range of comments, including some not dissimilar to that the Member read out. It is entirely for Mr Eustice to come forward in the context of the UK exiting the European Union with positive remarks about seizing the opportunities that presents and with positive ways in which the whole system of farming and the agri-food sector in Northern Ireland and right across the United Kingdom can be supported. I look forward to playing my part as Economy Minister, and I know the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister is already incredibly active in working with Mr Eustice, who she has met on, I think, several occasions, to impress upon him the importance of the sector here in Northern Ireland and the need to have a good support system in place that can ensure our agri-food sector and, indeed, our fishing sector can thrive — not just survive but thrive — as the UK exits the European Union.

Ms Dillon: I know you are not the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister, but I would certainly like to hear you say a wee bit more about farmers. I recognise that you are the Economy Minister and therefore may have an eye to that more than to farmers, but I am concerned about what Tony O'Neill said. I do not disagree with you in a lot of what you said about him. He is very good at what he does, and I think he has a lot to bring to the Agri-Food Strategy Board. However, the farmers out there are, quite rightly, very concerned by what he said. What assurances can the Minister give us that farmers will get the support that they need from the Department going into the future to ensure that they have equality of production and sustainability?

Mr Hamilton: You will not hear me, in whatever role I am performing, stand up and agree with what Mr O'Neill said about the number of farmers that are needed in Northern Ireland. I will reiterate again the views that the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister expressed in the Chamber already. She wants to see a strong sector and will not support one sector over another. She will not be selective about whom she supports to achieve her ultimate aim of having a strong, resilient, sustainable farming sector in Northern Ireland.

Mr O'Neill said what he said. I do not agree with what he said, nor does the Minister, and we have made that pretty clear. I may not be the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister, but I know a bit about the farming sector, and people in it are not shy about coming forward and saying what they believe, and I am sure that many of them have already made their views very clear to Mr O'Neill about what he said. Therefore, what was said has been said. It cannot be unsaid, but we need to move forward and continue to work with Mr O'Neill and the Agri-Food Strategy Board, which I have had the pleasure of meeting since taking up post as Economy Minister, to implement the recommendations contained in 'Going for Growth' for the sector to go from strength to strength.

Sustainable Land Management Strategy

2. **Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs how she plans to implement the sustainable land management strategy. (AQO 582/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: As the Member may know, Minister McIlveen received the sustainable agricultural land management strategy at the launch event at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) in Hillsborough on Friday 21 October. Minister McIlveen and her officials will now consider the report carefully, examining the potential implementation of the recommendations to deliver her Department's vision of a thriving and sustainable economy, environment and rural community.

It is clear that significant resources would be required if all the recommendations were to be implemented. In a time of scarce public finances, finding sufficient funding streams to match the ambition of the report will be challenging, but the Minister and her Department appreciate that supporting growth in the agri-food sector also means supporting the environment that sustains that growth.

Significant investment will also be required from the agri-food sector. However, if we can show clearly that such investment from the public and private sectors will have tangible and lasting rewards, making the case for funding will be much easier. However, it may be possible to carry out phased implementation of the report that will help inform consideration of wider-level implementation.

Mr Irwin: I thank the Minister for his response. Will he outline how the Department could fund the implementation of the land use strategy?

Mr Hamilton: At the launch back in October, I understand that the Minister gave a very clear commitment that she will carefully consider not only the report, and that is what she is doing at present, but how the recommendations can be implemented. That includes considering how it might be funded, of which there is a range of different ways. Bearing in mind that we are in times of some constraint with our

budgets, and may be so for some time yet, she is mindful of that but is still looking at imaginative and creative ways in which she might be able to fund this important piece of work.

The Department could consider using existing funding mechanisms; for example, the rural development programme or the environmental farming scheme, where there seems to be an alignment. Both could be used. She could, as I said in my original answer, carry out a phased implementation to help inform consideration of wider and more full implementation. There are business development groups in place at the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) that could help provide feedback on the roll-out of larger-scale projects.

Finally, as a report has been developed in response to a recommendation contained in the Agri-Food Strategy Board's Going for Growth report, there is a reasonable expectation that the agri-food industry will make a significant contribution to the implementation of the strategy, particularly when, as I mentioned already, evidence can be shown that it produces better outcomes and more productivity for the agri-industry. It is therefore something that I am sure that the industry will be keen to be involved in.

Mrs Dobson: Given the often overbearing nature of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and its unwarranted treatment of farmers, what assurances can the Minister give that the strategy will not result in further hounding of the farming community?

Mr Hamilton: I am pretty sure that the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs would not want to implement anything that was over-bureaucratic and would put more of a burden of red tape and regulation onto the farming industry. As I understand it and as I indicated to Mr Irwin, the objective of the strategy has been about trying to sketch out a direction of travel and put in place an action plan that will lead to more productivity while understanding that that productivity will, in large part, depend on looking after the environment from which the agri-food produce comes.

As I have said before, I know that the strategy flows from a specific recommendation in 'Going for Growth'. That, of course, was a document that was produced with input from the farming community, with some former presidents of the Ulster Farmers' Union, for example, sitting on the board. I am sure that they will have been mindful of the issue of bureaucracy when they came forward with the recommendation. I know that the land management strategy group, headed by John Gilliland, was careful to take and consider the views of the farming community. I think that that is reflected in the recommendations in the final report. I am sure that the Minister, in trying to take forward the report, which she is now considering, will be exceptionally mindful of that and will not want to put in place something that has a positive aim but might have some negativity in the way in which it might be implemented.

Mr McMullan: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. Minister, you are aware that, increasingly, there is a two-tier system in farming, with hill farming and lowland farming. Can you guarantee to the House that any strategy that is brought out will not affect the hill farmer and his unique way of farming?

Mr Hamilton: As I said in response to Mrs Dobson, I am sure that the Minister will not want to implement a strategy

that has negative impacts on any sector of farming, never mind a negative impact on the environment in which they farm. I am sure that the points that the Member raises in respect of hill farming will be carefully considered by the Minister. As the Member will appreciate, she only received the report in the last couple of weeks. I think that the group is to present to the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee in the not too distant future, and I am sure that those are issues that you might want to take forward in discussion with the group when it comes before the Committee, bearing in mind the consideration that it will have given to the issues as it was developing the report. I am pretty sure that the Minister, if she was here, would say that she does not want to implement anything that will negatively impact on any aspect or area of our farming community.

Mr Mullan: I appreciate that the Minister of Agriculture and Rural — whatever the title is — has a lot of reports to consider. *[Laughter.]* Can you give us any indication of when, after finishing all her consultations, she proposes to bring forward her proposals around the sustainable land management strategy to the House for discussion and debate?

Mr Hamilton: I do not blame the Member; I struggle with the title myself.

The Member will appreciate that the Minister received the report on 21 October, which is not that long ago. I am sure that the Member and the House will indulge her and allow her to take some time to carefully consider all the recommendations. As I pointed out in response to Mr Irwin's original question, it is important that she bears in mind the cost implications of implementing it. It would probably be unwise to come forward with a report if she had no understanding or appreciation of where it might be funded from, so she will need to take that into consideration as well as all the wider impacts that Members have raised. If the Member gives the Minister some forbearance, having received the report only on 21 October, I am sure that she will not delay in coming forward with her consideration and, more than that, her conclusions and her way forward in implementing the strategy.

TB Strategic Partnership Group

3. **Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on the work carried out by the TB strategic partnership group. (AQO 583/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The TB strategic partnership group was established in 2014 to develop a comprehensive and practical long-term bovine TB eradication strategy and implementation action plan, to progressively reduce TB levels in the Northern Ireland cattle herd and, ultimately, to eradicate the disease here. TB is an extremely complex disease. There are many different factors that contribute to its spread, and new research and evidence about these factors is emerging all the time. The group has been tasked with developing a long-term strategy, which will set out how we should tackle bovine TB over the coming decades. It is therefore imperative that the group is afforded the opportunity to get this right to ensure that its recommendations are sound, evidence-based and sustainable in the long term. In order to do that, the group engaged with a wide range of stakeholders: scientific and veterinary experts, representative organisations and

interested parties. It spoke to international experts dealing with bovine TB in other countries and consulted on the emerging recommendations in its interim report in 2015. Having considered the responses to the consultation, the group further developed its thinking and has now engaged independent consultants to evaluate its recommendations. Minister McIlveen has already held an introductory meeting with the group, and it has recently written to the Minister to outline its plans to formally present her with its strategy and associated implementation plan in December. The group is also liaising with the AERA Committee to arrange a briefing on its final strategy.

3.00 pm

Mr Frew: Can the Minister update the House in any way on the test and vaccinate or remove project, which is currently going through DAERA and is something that I pushed very hard when I was Chairperson of the ARD Committee?

Mr Hamilton: I recall the Member being Chair of the ARD Committee and this being an issue that he took an interest in at that time. It is an issue that has such a devastating impact on many farmers. Obviously, it also has a significant impact on the public purse because of the compensation scheme.

The five-year wildlife intervention research programme was designed to consider the effects of a test and vaccinate or remove approach on badgers in areas, first, of high confirmed levels of TB, secondly, where there is a high cattle herd density and, finally, where there is a high badger density. In year 1, there were 630 badger captures, 280 of which were unique. At that time, there were no badgers removed, as the Member will be aware. However, all were sampled, microchipped, vaccinated and then released, and that gave baseline data for the rest of the project. In year 2, there were 692 captures, 341 of which were unique. The reports from years 1 and 2 have now been published on the DAERA website. In year 3, the project ran from 16 June until the middle of October this year. There have been some issues with a shortage of vaccine, and the Welsh Government kindly stepped in and helped out the Northern Ireland Department with a supply of vaccine. The Minister is considering options for year 4 to ensure that there is sufficient vaccine in place.

Mr McKee: Does the Minister accept that eradication of TB and not just reduction must be the Executive's goal? Will the Minister commit to making that a target in the next Programme for Government?

Mr Hamilton: As I have said already, the Minister wants to have the ultimate aim of eradicating the disease. She knows, now as Minister but also as a constituency member, the devastating impact that diagnosis of bovine TB can have on a farm and a farming business as well as the cost that it has to the public purse, not least to her Department. Ultimately, eradication is the Minister's aim.

As I have outlined, she will wait for the group to come forward with its final report and, most importantly, the implementation plan, which will lead to not just reduction but hopefully eradication. The Member will know from his background that this is deeply challenging. It is something that many jurisdictions are dealing with and struggle to deal with; that is the important point. England has taken one approach, and Wales is taking a different approach. Northern Ireland will have to take an approach that is

tailored to our circumstances. However, be in no doubt that, notwithstanding all the difficulties and challenges that will be inherent in it, the ultimate aim is eradication of the disease from Northern Ireland.

Mr Boylan: I congratulate the Minister on the way he has performed so far. Can he outline the cost of TB to the Department and whether he plans to review the current compensation measures?

Mr Hamilton: I do not have the exact figures here, but I will make sure that they are provided to the Member and the House. The approximate annual cost is £30 million and has been fluctuating around that figure over the last number of years, so, when I say that it is a huge cost to the public purse, those figures bear that out.

My understanding is that the Department has some baseline funding for compensation for TB but always exceeds that on a year-to-year basis. The former ARD Minister sitting in front of the Member will recall having to make bids on a pretty regular basis, and I remember, as Finance Minister, having to meet those bids from monitoring rounds for compensation over and above what was already in the Department's baseline.

It has been costly. It has fluctuated over the years, but it has been between the high 20 millions and the low 30 millions a year. That is unsustainable in the long term. It is important that the plan that has been put in place is evaluated and that the Minister looks at the strategy group's report and, more importantly, implementation plan and takes that plan forward with the aim of reducing bovine TB, and thereby reducing the bill, over time and ultimately eradicating it so that there is no bill for the Northern Ireland Executive.

Mr McGlone: What recent discussions has the Minister or the Department had on the availability of the bacillus Calmette-Guérin vaccine to prevent the spread of TB in the badger population? I appreciate that you may not have the answer at your fingertips, Minister.

Mr Hamilton: I suspect that I know as much about that as the Member. *[Laughter.]* He is absolutely right: I do not have that information, either in my head or in front of me, but I will make sure that the Minister writes to the Member in good time and provides him with that information.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme

4. **Mrs Barton** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs when she will make a decision on future funding for the areas of natural constraint scheme. (AQO 584/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Minister McIlveen announced in June that she will not reduce the basic payment scheme to fund an areas of natural constraint scheme under pillar 1 of the CAP. She also announced at the time that there would not be a pillar 1 to pillar 2 transfer to fund an areas of natural constraint scheme in pillar 2 under the rural development programme. The Minister is still considering other options that might be available.

Given the pressure on the budget of both the Department and the Executive, providing any additional support will be challenging. Long-term value for money cannot be ignored, nor can the redistribution of pillar 1 moneys, which is already occurring as a result of the transition towards flat rate support in pillar 1.

Mrs Barton: As you said, Minister, the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister keeps saying that she is considering options, but that is of little comfort to our farmers and landowners who are waiting for a decision. As the Economy Minister, can you give us a decision on the funding?

Mr Speaker: The Minister is not here to answer in his role as Economy Minister.

Mr Hamilton: Thank you for that, Mr Speaker. The Member has tempted me into committing my colleague to certain things, which is a very dangerous position for a Minister to be in. I am not going to do that, as guided by the Speaker.

I understand why the Member asked the question. When I look at the data in front of me on the current area of natural constraints scheme, I see that businesses in her constituency — some 2,708 — have received support of around £5.3 million. So, I understand why the Member would ask the question and ask it in the way that she did.

The Minister is, rightly, taking her time to carefully consider the issue. She has made it clear what she is doing. As I outlined in my answer to the substantive question, there is a very good reason why she does not want to fund a scheme under pillar 1 and why she does not want to do a pillar 1 to pillar 2 transfer, namely because of the pressures that are already on pillar 1. Therefore, she is looking at other options that might be available to her.

I accept that there will be many, including many of the Member's constituents, waiting for an answer and hoping for a positive one, but I am sure that the Member will appreciate and understand, and therefore communicate to those people, that there are good and valid reasons why the Minister has not agreed to fund a scheme out of pillar 1 or to switch from pillar 1 to pillar 2.

Like all Ministers, her budget is under immense pressures elsewhere, but be assured that the Minister is taking her time to carefully consider what options might be available to her, including a bid during the upcoming Budget round.

Ms Gildernew: In light of what the Minister has said, are he, as an Executive Minister, and the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister aware of the importance of the areas of natural constraint scheme, especially with the fear and concern that is out there in light of the EU referendum result?

Mr Hamilton: The Minister is aware of the concerns that farmers in many parts of Northern Ireland have about a new scheme. That is why she has not ruled out a scheme completely; she has carefully considered it, notwithstanding the restraints and pressures that she faces on her budget. There are very valid reasons why she has decided not to take the money from elsewhere. The Minister is taking her time to look at other options. I am sure that, in due course, she will come forward with her finalised view in respect of what the future might hold.

Connswater River

5. **Mr Douglas** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs what action her Department is taking to improve the water quality and habitat conservation of the Connswater river. (AQO 585/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The main actions taken to improve the water quality and habitat conservation of the Connswater are delivered as part of the north-eastern river basin management plan. Measures involve working to improve understanding of the pressures in the area and improve the evidence to target actions in an effective way. Most of those measures require working with other Departments or organisations, and key to delivery is active engagement with stakeholders through partnerships and catchment projects. Specific actions include working with the water industry to minimise the pollution risk from combined storm overflows, which are points on the sewerage network designed to overflow in the event of blockage or very wet weather. Other actions include providing guidance and information to help communities protect and enhance local streams and rivers in the urban environment.

Examples of specific actions in the Connswater include: rubbish removal from the river; areas of semi-natural habitat created; management and control of invasive species; and new, improved bridges and crossings. As part of the greenway project, large areas of the rivers have been improved by removing sections of historic concrete channels and creation of more natural river courses. Over time, that will improve the biodiversity and water quality of the rivers.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is currently working with Northern Ireland Water to address a number of discharges to the Connswater. The pollution hotline number is publicised on signage within the Connswater greenway to allow the reporting of pollution. NIEA is a key partner in the Department for Infrastructure's Living with Water programme, which aims to contribute to the improvement in the quality of water in the Belfast lough catchment area, which includes the Connswater. NIEA officers continue to have good links with Connswater Community Greenway staff, and it is hosting a stakeholder workshop on 15 November for the north-eastern catchment area at Mossley Mill to identify future partnerships.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. The Minister mentioned the clearing up of some rubbish on the Connswater river. Certainly, with regard to the Sam Thompson bridge, some people talked about it as a bridge that goes nowhere, but we have had nearly 500,000 people walking over it. I welcome the work that has been done there. Will the Minister outline to the House what progress has taken place with the flood alleviation scheme?

Mr Hamilton: I know the Member is very familiar with the greenway, probably as much from cycling around it. I look forward to cycling its full length when it is constructed. One of the benefits of the overall project has been the flood alleviation scheme. Significant parts of east Belfast's flood alleviation scheme are being delivered as part of the Connswater Community Greenway project. The overall scheme sees an investment of £12 million to alleviate the impact of flooding on nearly 1,700 homes. It is due to be completed early next year. Some 270 properties adjacent to Orangefield Park and Victoria Park are already benefiting from upgrades. That was a £1.7 million element of the overall project.

This is good and positive work, and I know that the Minister particularly wants to welcome the good collaboration that there has been among a range of Departments, including our own, and also with Belfast City Council and the Connswater Community Greenway Trust.

Mr Speaker: I call Mr Seán Lynch. I advise the Minister that we need a quick response.

Mr Lynch: Will the Minister assure the Assembly that water quality and habitat conservation will continue to have priority in all our inland waterways?

Mr Hamilton: I am sure that the Minister will always want to ensure that water quality is one of the things highest on her agenda as she is looking to fulfil her duties to protect and enhance our local environment.

Mr Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We will now have 15 minutes of topical questions.

Climate Change Legislation

Mr Durkan: It is fair to say that, today, the Minister has demonstrated that he is capable of answering questions on anything apart, maybe, from how he voted on Brexit.

T1. **Mr Durkan** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, given that it is almost a year since the historic COP21 agreement and that it is a few days since that agreement came into force, to outline the Executive's view on the need for Northern Ireland-specific climate change legislation. (AQT 426/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his initial remarks.

I have always believed — I think that it is the Minister's view as well — that Northern Ireland does not need specific climate change legislation. Legislation to address climate change is already in place in the form of the UK's Climate Change Act 2008. Given the Member's past job as Environment Minister, he will be aware of the ambitious long-term targets in that legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% from 1990 levels by 2050 across the UK. It also makes it a requirement for Northern Ireland to produce a climate change adaption programme that addresses our particular risks and opportunities. Northern Ireland continues to play its fullest role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions as part of the overall UK reduction. The latest greenhouse gas inventory, which was published in June 2016, shows a reduction of 17.4% from 1990 levels. Updated projections published last year show that we are broadly on track towards achieving our Programme for Government target, which was set by the previous Executive, of a 35% reduction by 2025.

The Member is or ought to be well aware of the particular circumstances and issues that face Northern Ireland's much larger agri-food industry compared with those across the water, issues in the manufacturing sector of our economy and issues with transportation. I do not want any Northern Ireland-specific climate change Bill being passed that would impede our economic development or have the perverse consequence of increasing problems elsewhere. If our agri-food industry cannot grow, we will have to import food from somewhere else, which will impact on carbon and greenhouse gas emissions elsewhere.

3.15 pm

Mr Speaker: I remind the Minister of the two-minute rule.

Mr Durkan: I thank the Minister for his answer. He will be aware that we are the only region on these islands that does not have its own specific climate change legislation. Our reliance on the agri-food industry, for example, is very similar to that of the Irish Republic. Does he accept at all

that Northern Ireland-specific climate change legislation and Northern Ireland-specific targets for the reduction of emissions could and should be beneficial to our economy as well as to our environment?

Mr Hamilton: If others have decided to do something, that is entirely a matter for them; that is what devolution is about. It is for us to decide in Northern Ireland what we want to do for Northern Ireland and not slavishly follow what others do. We are making good progress. The Member mentioned targets, and I remind him that the last Programme for Government had a target of a 35% reduction by 2025 and all the indications are that the Executive are on course to have that 35% reduction on 1990 levels in place by 2025. I do not accept — I am sure that the Minister would agree — that there is a need for Northern Ireland to have its own legislation. Northern Ireland is making a contribution, as the evidence shows, and it is doing so as part of the overall UK legislation.

Farm Business Improvement Scheme: Business Development Groups

T2. **Mr K Buchanan** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on how the Department plans to open up and allow more dairy and pig farmers to join the discussion groups under the farm business improvement scheme. (AQT 427/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Member and many others in the House will know that, on 27 October, the Minister announced that the farm business improvement scheme's business development groups would reopen to dairy and pig farmers in the middle of November. The business development groups bring farmers together to share knowledge and skills to help them to make informed decisions about adopting new technologies and developing their businesses. This additional tranche is aimed at dairy and pig farmers because, as the House will know, farm-gate prices for both sectors have been below the cost of production for a significant time. Further details on the reopening of the business development groups scheme will be published in the coming weeks and will be made known through the farming and agriculture press.

Mr K Buchanan: I thank the Minister for his answer. Many pig farmers will welcome the news. Does he agree that the pork industry welcomes the efforts made by the Minister, who is visiting China, on their behalf to open new markets for Northern Ireland?

Mr Hamilton: The Minister is in very regular contact with the pork industry and is aware of its export aspirations. She is working very hard on an ongoing, regular basis to target access to key strategic markets, including her mission to China. She is there at the moment, which is why she is not here. She gets to go to China, and I get to come here and talk to you. The world is ill divid, I think. She is there, of course, to promote the best of what Northern Ireland has to offer and to help to move forward the final approval for export of Northern Ireland pork to China — and a very lucrative market it is anticipated to be. There are estimates that it could be worth an additional £10 million to the pork industry in Northern Ireland. Given where prices have been for some time, that would be a most welcome boost to the industry here in Northern Ireland.

Prior to leaving on her mission to China, the Minister met the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Pork and Bacon

Forum, who indicated that the industry was very supportive of her mission, as am I, not just generally but particularly in my role as Economy Minister. It is incredibly important that we begin to look beyond not just our own region and the British Isles but well beyond Europe, particularly to strong and emerging markets such as China. That is particularly true for the agri-food sector, for which there are huge opportunities in markets such as China and elsewhere.

Mr Speaker: Mr Edwin Poots is not in his place. Question 4 has been withdrawn.

Farmers: Subsidies

T5. **Ms Mallon** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, in reference to a question asked by Mr McNulty, whether the Minister for the Economy agrees with the position of the British Minister with responsibility for farming, George Eustice, that we should end the notion of subsidies for our farmers. (AQT 430/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I do not think that I have ever had the chance to say this in the House: Mr Speaker, I refer the Member to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Ms Mallon: I will go back to Hansard, but I asked the question again because I am still unclear. May I, then, ask the Minister whether the Executive stand over the Agriculture Minister's statement during the referendum that agriculture here relies on subsidies and there is no reason why they would cease outside the EU? Given that, can he shed any light on how much will be given in subsidies to Northern Ireland farmers and for how long post any Brexit?

Mr Hamilton: Regardless of whether the UK is in or outside the European Union, we have an agri-food sector and industry that require support. I know that the Minister is working very hard in close consultation with the industry in Northern Ireland. She and I co-chair a Brexit consultative committee that brings together stakeholders from across the sector to take their views and the temperature of the industry to identify the challenges and opportunities for the sector in Northern Ireland. Amongst the issues that they and others raise with us is the need to have a support scheme in place post the UK leaving the European Union. I look forward to that being much less bureaucratic and much less difficult to operate than the scheme currently in place.

Reeves's Muntjac

T6. **Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs what steps the Department is taking to eradicate Reeves's muntjac, given that she will be aware of its prevalence in the Strangford constituency. (AQT 431/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for raising the issue, which is one that the Department is very aware of. As the Member identifies, it is an invasive species native to parts of Asia, and one wonders how it ended up in Northern Ireland. The species was introduced, I think, in the early 20th century and has since spread rapidly. It negatively impacts on woodland and is a cause of increased traffic collisions. The Department is taking a number of actions, including specific action at local level, surveillance activity and research when necessary. The Department has also

developed an exclusion strategy and contingency plan for a range of non-native deer, including the muntjac.

The Member mentioned my Strangford constituency. The Mount Stewart muntjac action group was established in 2010 in response to increased sightings in the area. It comprises departmental officials, academics, estate landowners and environmental NGO interests. A muntjac deer action plan for the Mount Stewart National Trust site and adjacent properties was developed and is being implemented by National Trust and Forest Service staff along with five registered volunteer marksmen approved by the group's selection criteria.

Mr Wells: I am sure that the Minister is not having sleepless nights about the issue, but it is serious in the sense that the species is causing severe damage to forestry and farmland in the rest of the United Kingdom. Has he any idea or can the Northern Ireland Environment Agency give us any indication of how many Reeves's muntjac there are in Northern Ireland?

Mr Hamilton: I do not have a number. There are some estimates around identifying areas in which it is located, and the Member mentioned the Ards peninsula, where there is a concentration of them. I do not think that anybody knows exactly how many there are, but there have been 103 reported records of muntjac deer sightings, on the database of the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording. However, not all these records have been verified and, of course, there could be duplicate sightings contained within that. There is a significant enough issue. It has been identified as an issue and a problem by the Department, hence our work on the Mount Stewart group that I mentioned, and we will work very closely with all the stakeholders to do our very best to eradicate this very worrying, troubling and dangerous invasive species.

Snares: Complete Ban

T7. **Mrs Long** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether the Department has any intention of introducing a complete ban on the use of snares, given the concerns expressed by members of the public about the continued use of snares, with recent research showing that not only are they indiscriminate and cruel but they are an inefficient method of pest control. (AQT 432/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I recognise, as I am sure the Member does, that the issue of snares is very emotive. On one hand, many animal welfare groups will argue that their use often results in the indiscriminate suffering and killing of non-target species such as badgers, hares or even, on some occasions, domestic pets, and such groups have long-standing campaigns for an outright ban on snares. On the other hand, you will get land managers, farmers and country sports organisations seeing snares as a very necessary and cost-effective means of protecting livestock, particularly lambs, and game birds from foxes.

In Northern Ireland, the use of snares is regulated by the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which has been subsequently amended. There was a debate during the passage of welfare of animals legislation in the House in the previous mandate on the continued use of snares. That primarily involved arguments around the welfare concerns that the Member has spoken about, and the usual arguments were put forward. The Assembly obviously

decided that snares should remain a legal means of capturing pest animal species, and, given all that, my understanding is that the Minister has no plans to ban snares. Therefore, there are two basic options left. One is to maintain the status quo and the other is to introduce additional measures along the lines of looking at the system a lot more to try to see if anything can be done to improve it in whatever way possible but short of an outright ban.

Mrs Long: I thank the Minister for his response. Clearly, it is disappointing, because I think that an outright ban would be better given that, whilst they may be cost-effective, snares are an inefficient means of pest control. When does he expect the Department to be able to bring regulations forward to potentially limit the use of snares and introduce further restrictions to limit cruelty, for example, regular checks on snares and limitations to closures?

Mr Hamilton: The Order gave the Department powers to set certain standards in the use of snares. The Order places additional requirements on anyone who uses snares, including that all snares must be fitted with permanent safety stops and must not be set in a manner where the animal is likely to become fully or partially suspended. The draft order requires the agreement of the Assembly to be brought into force by way of affirmative resolution, and I am aware that the Minister's predecessor in the Department of the Environment undertook some further consultation with stakeholders after the public consultation finished to assist the then Minister in deciding a way forward. The Minister has, I understand, decided to take the Snares Order forward, and officials are working on the legislation. I will ensure that the Minister writes to the Member to update her on the timescale for that.

Mr Speaker: Members, that concludes topical questions. Time is up.

3.30 pm

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

Economy

United Airlines

Mr Speaker: Ms Sinéad Bradley has given notice of a question for urgent oral answer to the Minister for the Economy. I remind Members that, if they wish to ask a supplementary question, they should continually rise from their place. The Member who tabled the question will be called automatically for a supplementary.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister for the Economy to outline all conversations and communications he has had with the European Commission regarding the legality of the bailout of the United Airlines Belfast to Newark route prior to and after issuing ministerial direction.

Mr Hamilton (The Minister for the Economy): It is important to recognise that we were not obliged in this case to notify the European Commission of the support to United Airlines, as it was our view that the agreement did not meet the criteria to be considered as state aid and therefore did not require Commission approval. At the request of United, the agreement with it required engagement with the Commission to confirm the position on state aid. We had indicated to the Commission back in August that we would engage on the agreement, and, in September, my Department provided a paper that had been agreed with United setting out, for the purpose of getting certainty on the position, the case for support.

Members will also recognise the tight deadline set by United to agree support for the route. When United indicated to us during the summer that it was considering reallocating the plane, we had to act quickly to put in place an agreement to sustain the route, and that was achieved in mid August. Given the deadline for putting the support in place, there was no opportunity during that period to engage with the Commission before then.

We recognised from the outset that the agreement would be of interest to the Commission and other airlines, and therefore the value of meeting the Commission. The meeting took place on 27 October and involved officials from my Department and representatives of United. At the meeting, my Department was informed for the first time that a complaint had been received by the Commission. The Commission also indicated that it was under a duty to investigate the complaint and that its initial assessment, although not a formal legal position, was that state aid was present. In the light of the Commission's viewpoint on the support, United decided to terminate the agreement at the end of last week and returned in full the one payment that had been made.

Ms S Bradley: I thank the Minister for his answer. If I am right, he has told us that no conversation happened before the ministerial direction, which I find quite disturbing. I put it to the Minister that this is our only direct air route from Northern Ireland to the United States. There was no room for a blunder, and yet a blunder there was. Can the Minister advise on what urgent action he has taken, along

with the Executive, to address the issue and ensure that we have a direct route to the United States as soon as possible?

Mr Hamilton: I share the Member's regret at losing the flight, but she cannot have it both ways. She cannot argue, on the one hand, that it is important that I, in my role, and the Executive as a whole step in and take action to try to maintain the route — the Member acknowledged the importance of seeking to maintain a daily direct transatlantic route — and, on the other hand, with the set of circumstances that we faced back in the summer, which was effectively an ultimatum from United Airlines, that we should not have moved to take the requisite action. Ultimately, it did not work out on this occasion, but, faced with the same set of circumstances again, I would do the same thing. The reason for that is that I am charged in my job to stand up and fight for Northern Ireland. Faced with the circumstances that we were in over the summer, I put in place a package of support in conjunction with the International Airport, which we work with very closely. On this occasion, it did not pass muster with the European Commission, for which, of course, the Member and her party are great cheerleaders. By the indication that it gave during the meeting on 27 October, it effectively scuppered our one and only direct transatlantic flight. I am sure that the Member will reflect on that point.

The Member has issued statements over the past couple of days indicating that we were reckless with public money. I hope that she and her party will recognise that, because we knew that the agreement would be of interest to the Commission and given that United wanted to take a view from the Commission — this is why we were not reckless and did not do the wrong thing — we put in place very clear criteria to ensure that, if the Commission said that there was state aid present, the Executive would get all the money paid back with interest.

Therefore, the one payment of \$1 million that has been made to United Airlines is, I understand, coming back to us with interest today. The Member should reflect on that when she talks about the Executive and me being reckless on the issue.

Mr Aiken: I thank the Minister for his comments. I am sure that the Minister, with me, would be considerably concerned about the impact that this is having on the airport and Northern Ireland's reputation. My specific question is around who raised the issue with the EU Commission. Going forward, one of the things that we have considerable concern about is what is increasingly being seen to be a Dublin Airport Authority cartel and the attempts to stifle Northern Ireland air traffic. Does the Minister agree with me that what we need to be looking at doing as part of a revised strategy is the removal of air passenger duty, improving the communication links to the airport and doing something about that unfair competition?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his comments and regret about losing the flight. As I pointed out in my original answer and in statements issued at the end of last week, we did not believe that this was an issue of state aid. The Member will know that state aid is built upon unfair competition. We did not believe that a situation where we have only one daily flight — seven flights a week — to the States was in any way unfair competition with an airport in Dublin where there is, I think, 155 flights a week. Clearly, no other airports in Northern Ireland — the City of Derry Airport or Belfast City Airport — provide flights to North

America. Therefore, we did not think that there was an issue around state aid and competition. That was the no-aid argument that was put to the European Commission at the insistence of United Airlines. It wished to go to the Commission to confirm that. That was the basis on which we engaged with the European Commission, culminating in the meeting on 27 October that I have outlined, where the indication was given by the Commission that this package of support was non-compliant with state aid.

The Member mentioned air passenger duty. It is worth noting again that this flight benefited from having no air passenger duty. I cannot remember when the legislation passed through the House. I think that it was about 2011 or 2012. I think that sometimes the issue of air passenger duty in respect of long haul, given that we have not secured any other direct long-haul flights, is overstated. It was important in trying to keep this flight, and we did keep it for a lot longer, but clearly it has not worked to attract other flights. In respect of short-haul flights, the Member will be aware, given that the International Airport is in his constituency, that over the last while, through the efforts of the International Airport, there has been attraction of a significant number of additional flights which are affected by APD. Obviously those airlines are not being put off.

I think that we all have concerns about the impact that Dublin Airport is having. We need to start seeing it less as our direct competition. It is an airport that has, I think, 30 million passengers going through it annually versus roughly 10 million passengers going through Northern Ireland airports combined, although that has been on the rise. What we need to do, and what I will seek to do in this post, is try to get the airports — I know that they see themselves as being in competition, and they are, in many respects — to work more closely together, treat them all collectively as strategic assets for the Northern Ireland economy and get them all to work for what is best for Northern Ireland without always looking over our shoulder at our perceived competition in Dublin.

Mr Dickson: Thank you, Minister. Is the reality of the situation that you raised unrealistic expectations with both Belfast International Airport and United Airlines by your action in taking the ministerial direction? Is the reality of the situation that what we actually need is a clear economic strategy for Northern Ireland that will deliver jobs and businesses, which will drive businesses to want to have air connectivity to the United States and beyond? A clear economic strategy is what will deliver sustainable airlines to us in Northern Ireland.

Mr Hamilton: I do not accept the argument that we raised unrealistic expectations with anyone, not least the International Airport or United Airlines. I hope that the Member appreciates from what I have said already that we worked very closely in conjunction with the International Airport. We spent many hours face to face and on the telephone working with the International Airport to develop the support package, which I think has been, unfairly for the International Airport, characterised as an Executive support package and misses the point that a substantial part, one third, of the support package was coming from the International Airport itself. It was very committed to this. It wanted to do this. It saw it, as I did, as incredibly important for Northern Ireland. That is why we worked very closely together. We will continue to work closely together, even in spite of the setback, to try to improve

Northern Ireland's air connectivity. I did not raise unfair or unrealistic expectations with the International Airport, which we work very closely with. United, the Executive and my Department came to the same conclusion around a no-aid argument. It was at United's insistence that we double-checked this with the European Commission. Unfortunately, that is where it went awry; bureaucrats in Brussels have, effectively, put the dead hand on it.

Separating the economic strategy point out a little, I absolutely agree that we need an economic strategy. We have one in place, and we are in the process of refreshing and renewing it. I look forward to it being published in the not-too-distant future and to the Member's wholehearted support for the refreshed and renewed strategy. The Member is right, in a sense. If we want to do lots of things in our economy, not least improve our air connectivity, those will be helped by a growth in our economy. Our economy has grown in recent times. I am very pleased with the growth that we have had in our economy; it has grown by 1.6% in the last year. The Member is right: we need to, in some ways, change the sector of our economy and support strong and emerging sectors that will improve it as a whole and act as a bit of a magnet for more direct air connectivity not just to North America but to a range of important airports around the world.

Mr Clarke: I am sure that it is not lost on the Minister that the first two Members to ask questions would, only some months ago, have supported the faceless bureaucrats and dictators of Europe who interfered in the good decision that the Minister and his Department made to secure that airline. Given that they interfered and made that decision, how hopeful is the Minister that something can be done to restore that route or encourage some other airline to operate in and out of Belfast International Airport and restore that route back to Northern Ireland?

Mr Hamilton: The Member makes a fair point. Some have extolled the virtues of the European Commission in the Chamber in recent days. When they are next thinking of doing that, they should bear this in mind as it is perhaps the perfect example of the heavy hand of Brussels coming in and impacting negatively on Northern Ireland. We are told that Europe is a friend of Northern Ireland, but here we have our only direct transatlantic link being, in effect, scuppered by the intervention of Brussels bureaucrats.

The Member asks a perfectly natural question in the circumstances: how can we seek to replace the route? It will be challenging to replace the exact same route, but that does not mean that we are not working very hard to try to find similar replacements. I have had conversations even in the last week with the airport about other airlines that may be interested in doing direct transatlantic flights from Belfast. I will continue to follow those up over the coming days to try to secure them. It would be good news and a boost for Northern Ireland if we were able to do that. It is challenging and difficult, but one of the things that the package of support that we put in place for United did was to show many airlines around the world that Northern Ireland is open for business and is looking to attract more direct air routes to all parts of the world. There are more new airlines coming forward. Whilst this is clearly bad news and a setback for the International Airport and Northern Ireland as a whole, it has at least had the benefit of raising our profile in the airlines sector. Many airlines are approaching different airports in Northern Ireland to see whether they

can come into Northern Ireland and what sort of assistance we, as an Executive, might be able to give them.

Ms Archibald: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. What will the impact of the loss of that direct flight be in the short term?

Mr Hamilton: In the very short term, the route continues until, I think, 9 January. It has been a very beneficial route for Northern Ireland. We have been able to use it to promote Northern Ireland's reputation as being open for business. Many of our inward investors have used it on some of their trips here. I have had the opportunity in this job to speak to many existing investors and some potential investors who have come to Northern Ireland to look at what we have to offer. There is a mixture as to where those businesses fly in to.

3.45 pm

Whilst this is a blow — I would not stand here for a second and try to suggest to anyone in the House that it is not a blow or a setback for Northern Ireland — we have to acknowledge that it was not used by every inward investor, every company in an inward or an outward trade mission, or by every tourist. If it was, we would not be losing the route; it would have been much more viable than it was. Yes, it does have an impact; it is certainly the case that it has an impact. As I said to Mr Clarke in response to his question, we will work very hard to make sure that any impact is mitigated as quickly as possible by trying to attract other routes to North America and indeed to other key hubs around the world.

Mr Allister: The Minister said that this went to Brussels because United wanted clarification. Did you also say that, separate to that, there was a complaint? If so, who was the complainant? With regard to the airport as a whole, has there not been a failure for many years both before and, sadly, since the return of devolution? There has been an absence of a strategic holistic approach to the development of the International Airport with regard to its communication and rail links — nothing. Its roads are as they were 10 or 20 years ago. Has there not been a holistic failure to develop the airport and that, in part, is a contribution to its dwindling prospects?

Mr Hamilton: The Member asked several questions. First, we went to the Commission at the insistence of United. We both believed, and we strongly believed, that it was a no-aid argument, but they wanted to clarify that point, and that is why we went to the Commission. Otherwise, as the Member will know with his familiarity with the European Commission, there would have been no requirement for us to go to the Commission, but it was their insistence that we did that, and we obliged.

I did say that, as the Commission confirmed in its statement on Friday evening, there was also a complaint separate to that process. We are not privy to who the complainant is. Another one of the oddities of the European Commission's process is that we, who have put the package of support in place, are not allowed to know who our accuser is. We could surmise and suggest who it might be. It could possibly be another airport; more likely, in my view, it was another airline. My conclusion is that no matter who it was, they are no friend of Northern Ireland. We may not find out who it is. I would be very interested in finding out who it is, but we may not, given that the

Commission confirmed on Friday evening that, because of United's action in withdrawing the flight, the case is now closed. If I learn differently, I may inform the House.

With regard to the overall position and the development of the airport, I am not going to point fingers backwards or sideways, but I think that the Member's point is right, even though I do not necessarily agree with the way in which he made it. I tried to say, in response to Mr Aiken, and indeed in response to Mr Aiken's questions on the issue some weeks ago, that perhaps in the past because we have three airports in Northern Ireland we left them to their own devices somewhat. I do not think that that is right. We have a stake, as an Executive, in all those airports performing to the best of their abilities, and we should support them in doing that. Within the remit and responsibilities of my Department, my view is that we should treat the airport as a strategic asset for Northern Ireland. The Member will appreciate that it is not a simple matter of going in and addressing all those issues in one go, but I would like to see many of those issues dealt with. I am seeking to work much more closely with them, but also collectively, to develop all the airports in Northern Ireland so that they can reach their full potential and benefit the whole of the Northern Ireland economy.

Mr Agnew: The benefits of this flight have been repeated over and over again in the House. What hard evidence do you have that there were direct benefits of the flight? What was the magnitude of that direct benefit, and what cost-benefit analysis was done when he and the Executive agreed to this extra subsidy over and above the existing air passenger duty subsidy? If you are seeking to attract other flights, will you open such business cases up for public scrutiny? If you want us to conclude that you have not been reckless with public money, surely we need to see that detail. Otherwise, the suspicion is that not only is Northern Ireland open for business, but it is wide open.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to come to a question.

Mr Hamilton: We may have found the complainant in the far corner. It is hard to take criticism from the Member, who is part of the political movement that rates air travel as the lowest priority of any mode of transport. The Member would probably have us tootling about on bikes everywhere and not going in cars, buses, trains or planes at all. The Member's criticism does not rest easy.

The Member talks about reckless use of public money, but we were foresighted enough — even though we believed that it was a no-aid issue, with United asking that we go to the Commission — to ensure that there was a clause in the contract specifying that if it fell awry and United Airlines pulled out, we would get all of our money back, which is what we are getting back, with interest. By any definition, that would not be considered a reckless use of public money. In my view, it was a good use of public money, because of the importance of having the route. The evidence of its importance is evident in the House today, in that everybody, with the exception of the Member and maybe one other, thinks it is a good thing to have the route, and a good thing to have more direct routes to North America and elsewhere.

Clearly, it had a benefit in three ways, through inward investment, inbound tourism and keeping trade links in place. I am very much focused, in this job, on expanding Northern Ireland's trade opportunities. I am not sure whether the Member is supportive of expanding and

improving Northern Ireland's sales outside of this region, but if he was, he would appreciate that better air connectivity is very much part of doing so. That is why — as I said to other Members — I am going to work with the airports to develop new policies and interventions that can step in and try to attract more routes to key hubs and key markets around the world.

Mr Lyons: The vast majority of Members across the Chamber understand the importance of having a direct air route to the United States, so I commend the Minister and the Executive for the work that they have done so far, because I am sure there would be an awful lot of complaining and yapping from that end of the Chamber if the work had not been carried out during the summer.

Further to the response that the Minister gave to Mr Clarke, can he assure us that he will put energy and effort into securing a replacement for this route? If it is not possible to get a route from Belfast to Newark, perhaps we can cast the net a little to some of the other hub airports in the United States, such as Boston or Atlanta, Dulles or Philly?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his comments. To the list that he put on record, I add my thanks to the International Airport for all of its efforts both in lobbying and, ultimately, putting its money where its mouth was. The Member is right: Members will understandably want to come to the House and ask questions about why it did not work out or why it did not work on this occasion, but they would have done a lot more complaining — justifiably so — if we had not stepped in during the summer to put in place a package of support that ultimately kept the route for longer than it might have been there; we had hope of keeping it for a three-year period.

In respect of attracting more, I was remiss in not saying this to Mr Clarke, but the Member will be aware that I recently indicated my intention to establish an air routes task force, although it is not set up yet, to look at, develop and devise new policies, new strategies, new interventions and new measures of support that we can put in place to attract new air routes to Northern Ireland, regardless of the airports, so that we can improve our air connectivity. I look at other airports around the world, including the United Kingdom and Ireland, that are able to attract routes even though their markets are smaller than ours. That is not on the basis of us having some sort of smaller or inferior economy, as Mr Dickson suggested; it is because of the support provided to them. We need to be cleverer, we need to be smarter and we need to devise new policies and interventions that will secure those sorts of routes, embed them in Northern Ireland and benefit our economy, tourism and trade as a result.

Mr Durkan: Can the Minister tell the House how much funding has been received for our airports over the years from those faceless bureaucrats in Europe, through various structural and transportation funding programmes?

Mr Hamilton: I do not have that information with me, but I am happy to write to the Member and provide him with information about how much of our own money we were getting back from Brussels via that route.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. I commend him and the Executive for standing up for Northern Ireland and trying to save this key route. I am glad that he has put on record his thanks to the airport

and, in particular, to the management. I was in touch with the managing director over the weekend, and management is devastated by the loss.

The Minister mentioned the air routes task force and the efforts to create new routes. Will he give us an update on the efforts that have been made to open other routes to Northern Ireland from places such as China and the Middle East?

Mr Hamilton: Understandably, given the news last week, there has been a focus and emphasis on ensuring that we develop new routes into the US, which is an incredibly important trade destination; in the last year, exports to the US increased by 74%. It is by far our biggest inward investor; some 185 US companies have invested here. It is understandable, given the loss of the Newark flight, that people will want to see how quickly we can replace that or have a similar flight.

The Member is right: other markets around the world are key to growth in the global economy. She mentioned China: the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs is in China this week trying to open up China for pork exports from Northern Ireland. That area is clearly worth our consideration as to whether there is availability for a route. The Member also mentioned the Middle East. That part of the world, in spite of recent setbacks with oil prices, still has a booming economy that is growing very fast, and it is keen to have a post-Brexit free trade agreement with the United Kingdom. I visited the Middle East a few weeks ago, and part of the conversation was on air connectivity. There are lots of fast-growing airlines in that part of the world that are looking for bases in this part of the world to fly on to North America and elsewhere. It is not just about America; it is about places like Canada, the Middle East, China and elsewhere. It is about getting Northern Ireland better connected to key and, in particular, growing markets around the world.

Mr Speaker: Members, that concludes this item of business. I ask the House to take its ease while we change the top Table.

4.00 pm

Matter of the Day

Violent Incidents in West Belfast on 6 November 2016

Mr Speaker: Mr Alex Attwood has been given leave to make a statement on the violent incidents in west Belfast on 6 November 2016 that fulfils the criteria set out in Standing Order 24. If other Members wish to be called, they should rise in their place and continue to do so. All Members called will have up to three minutes to speak on the subject.

Before we begin, I advise Members of the need to take care in their contributions today. I say that because it has been reported in the media that there has been an arrest in connection with one of the incidents. In accordance with my responsibilities under Standing Order 73, I caution Members to be particularly careful that they say nothing in their contribution that might prejudice the outcome of those active legal proceedings. I remind Members that I will not take any points of order on this or any other matter until the item of business has been concluded.

Mr Attwood: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is important that this Matter of the Day was accepted, because it is important that the House shows its support for and solidarity with not just one family, arising from last night's terrible incident, but other families who, in recent weeks, have also lost a loved one and are grieving. It is important that the House has the opportunity to send a united statement of support and solidarity to those families and to people in West Belfast who have been witnesses to, close to or affected one way or the other by the recent killings in the constituency and by other incidents there over the last number of weeks, including a purported paramilitary attack last night not far from the scene of the latest killing.

It is also important that we take the opportunity to stand in solidarity with the people of West Belfast, who, over many, many years and in recent days, have continued to show resilience and fortitude in the face of people who are involved in activities that are utterly unrepresentative of and against the wishes of the community of West Belfast. Those involved in the purported paramilitary incidents represent nobody but themselves and act solely on behalf of themselves. They are on the backs of the people, and the organisations involved in activities up to and including murder should get off the backs of the people because the people have no time or place for what they do.

It is also important to say to everybody — every citizen, every organisation and every community representative — that any genuine information needs to be brought to the attention of the police. The police said last week that, in respect of the tragic murder of Joe Reilly, they were following active lines of investigation. Given that the police have said that, there is a responsibility on each and every citizen with any genuine information to provide that to the police in order to ensure that those responsible for any and all of the recent terrible activities are identified, arrested, prosecuted and imprisoned for the crimes that they have committed.

Last night's incident was another terrible one, and it involved a man who, by all accounts, was very well regarded and well known. The House should send to

his family and all families affected its sympathy and condolences.

Mr F McCann: I echo Alex Attwood's words. Over the past number of weeks, a number of incidents have taken place in West Belfast in which young people have been shot by people who represent nobody. Last night, as word travelled round, I received several calls from people in and around the Springfield Road, informing me that someone had been shot. They pointed out to me that these people represent nobody. After another incident last week, my colleague Jennifer McCann told these people to get off our backs and that we were about building for the future, not dragging people back to the past.

I received phone calls last night from residents of Divis Tower to inform me that an incident had taken place and that a body had been found in suspicious circumstances. I was in Divis Tower this morning, and people were shocked to learn that James Hughes had died in those circumstances. I have known James Hughes for many years. He was a huge man in stature. He was also a very gentle human being. He was a very spiritual man, who had a good word for everyone. I know that Alex Maskey knows the family very well. I send our deepest sympathy to his family for what has happened and ask the Chamber to stand with us in sending our deepest respect and sympathy for the loss of a loved one.

Ms Bradshaw: I want to place on record the deep sadness of the Alliance Party at the news of the murder of Mr Hughes last night. We condemn the murder in the strongest terms and commend the PSNI for its swift action in bringing forward its investigation. We encourage any witnesses to cooperate with the police in any way they can to bring forward information. Justice has to be done for the victim and his friends and family, who have our sympathy.

I also want to place on record our complete revulsion at the paramilitary-style attack on a young man in west Belfast last night. I pay tribute to the health service, which is caring for him, and reiterate our call for the complete and absolute end to all paramilitary activity.

Mr Allen: I thank the Member for West Belfast for bringing this very important matter to the House. It is with disappointment that, once again, we in the House are discussing evil and bad matters in Northern Ireland and not the good that Northern Ireland has to offer.

My sympathies are with the family of the man who has lost his life, and I urge anyone with any information about the shootings and violent incidents in west Belfast or, indeed, throughout Northern Ireland to bring that forward in an attempt to help us remove these individuals from our streets. As a society, we must do much more than just condemn these incidents. We must work together and show solidarity with the victims. No matter what they are alleged to have done or what they were involved in, it does not give anybody an excuse to take the law into their own hands. They must be removed from society and taken off our streets.

Mr Carroll: I offer my absolute condemnation of the shooting in the Springfield area of west Belfast last night. We are not sure why it happened, and the usual rumours are swilling around. I want to point out that I find it incredibly ironic that groups that are critical of repression, often rightly so, are willing to engage in a so-called punishment system that even the most hard-

right of governments would blush at. It is a system based on punishment without trial or jury. It is wrong, unjust and needs to stop. More than that, it has to be said that punishment shootings and killings do not work. They have nothing to do with ending crime, improving communities or lifting them out of the misery and isolation they often find themselves in. Instead, they have everything to do with the control of communities and with who is top dog and gets to control whatever spoils are to be made.

It starts with the shooting of someone who is alleged to be drug dealing or engaged in antisocial behaviour. Some people will turn a blind eye and might say that he or she deserved it. What happens when you get involved in an argument with one of those paramilitaries or fall foul of them for some asinine reason? You too will find yourself before that punishment system with no trial, no jury and no right of appeal. It happens to people and ruins people's lives, and that is why we cannot give an inch to it.

There is no place for guns on the streets of west Belfast, or anywhere else for that matter, be they in the hands of paramilitaries or those in the payment of the state. People Before Profit is very clear on that. We are for the disbandment of paramilitaries and of the war machine of the secret state that, itself, has been so implicated in paramilitarism, up to its neck in murder and collusion and the deaths of hundreds of people without trial or appeal and that has never been called to account for its actions or decommissioned. As far as People Before Profit is concerned, the condemnation of paramilitarism heard in the Chamber today rings hollow unless Members will also condemn the continuing existence of state paramilitaries and bring to justice those who propped up paramilitaries on both sides during the conflict while being in the payment of the state. If we are serious about not going back to the bad old days, we need to deal with both.

Mr Speaker: That concludes that item of business. I ask Members to take their ease while we change the top Table.

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

Private Members' Business

Addressing the Past

Debate resumed on amendment No 1 to motion:

That this Assembly believes in a victim-centred approach to addressing the past and that victims and survivors should have a meaningful input to the content and design of legacy proposals; further believes that justice, truth and accountability, acknowledgement and support for victims and survivors are essential elements in a comprehensive approach to the past; notes the comments by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on a public phase on legacy proposals; and calls on the British and Irish Governments for an urgent, renewed effort to conclude legacy issues, including the further development of the proposed roles and powers of the Oral History Archive, Historical Investigations Unit, Independent Commission on Information Retrieval and the Implementation and Reconciliation Group and rejects any attempts by the state, state agencies, illegal groups and others to evade justice, suppress the truth of and resist accountability for the past. — [Mr Attwood.]

Which amendment was:

Leave out all after the first "proposals;" and insert

"further believes that all parties should work towards an early resolution of these matters; and welcomes the Government's proposals to consult on a way forward." — [Mr Frew.]

Mr Kelly: I beg to move amendment No 2:

Insert after "issues"

"prior to any public consultation".

I thank the Members who brought forward this motion on addressing the past. It is very timely. Indeed, a number of Members and parties have brought forward motions on legacy issues, which we will deal with today and tomorrow.

For more than a decade, Sinn Féin has consistently proposed the creation of an independent international truth commission. That was outlined during the 2009 Eames/Bradley consultation process. We have argued that such a process must be independent of the state, independent of combatant forces and independent of political parties. We reject all attempts to create and sustain a hierarchy of victims, and all processes should be victim-centred and deal with all victims of the conflict on the basis of equality. Although we continue to believe that an independent international truth recovery process offers the best way forward, we have signalled our intent to progress the issue of legacy by agreeing to proposals outlined in the Stormont House Agreement of 2014.

The Stormont House Agreement articulated a victim-centred approach — indeed, I think that all parties articulated that — to addressing the past, promising victims and families meaningful input. That has ramifications for a number of issues. Disclosure is essential, by way of family reports and meaningful consultation by the Historical Investigations Unit (HIU) with families of victims during the investigative process.

When staffing the Historical Investigations Unit, it needs to be ensured that its investigative teams fully meet article 2 compliance under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). There need to be comprehensive family reports for those families from the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR). I point out the lack of any appeal mechanism for those reports in the draft legislation that was produced.

There needs to be access to competent legal representatives for the families. If there are any closed material procedures, which are basically secret courts, those representatives must have passed the requisite vetting procedures, but, more importantly, the families must have confidence in the individuals who would represent their interests in any closed material procedure. Access to legal aid should be on a statutory basis, and there needs to be total clarity around any proposed appeals mechanism and its underpinning principles and criteria.

The Stormont House Agreement achieved consensus on the broad architecture of a suite of options, including justice; information recovery; enhancement of the coronial courts; storytelling; and provision of high-quality services for victims and families. All such options need to be addressed, and the mechanisms established, enhanced and adequately resourced. Without the resource, we can go nowhere.

It is clear from what I am saying that Sinn Féin welcomes the SDLP motion and Alex Attwood saying that he will accept our amendment. The British Secretary of State has outlined plans for a public consultation on addressing the past, and we have highlighted the need for a serious attempt by the British Government to resolve key outstanding issues prior to any public consultation. To date, we have not experienced any serious attempt by the British Government to do so.

So, our purpose in putting as our amendment the short addition of "prior to public consultation" after "issues" in line 7 is to make that point.

For this reason, I hope that those who will vote for the motion — the SDLP and others — will support the Sinn Féin amendment. We have been given indications that the SDLP at least will do that.

4.15 pm

Logically then, we ask that the DUP amendment be rejected, as the intent is, at best, watering down the proposal and inviting publication of a flawed document, which will further demoralise the long-suffering families waiting for the structures that can bring them truth. Paul Frew said that there was a lot of disagreement between families, even within families, and different groups that are involved. I agree with that. Where I am inclined to disagree with him is that he let me point out that truth is the one thing. He has spoken to as many families as I and others in this Chamber have, and truth is the one thing that is consistent. It is the one thing that they demand and the one thing that everyone wants. The purpose of setting up the structures that we are talking about here is to get at that truth. I agree with him: once you get the truth, it does not necessarily mean that you will have reconciliation or even that you will have justice. But it is the one thing that every victim and survivor that I have ever spoken to has asked for.

Mr Frew: I thank the Member for giving way on this very sensitive and important issue. Does the Member also recognise that many victims and survivors know the truth, some way, somehow, yet they seek justice and cannot get justice at present?

Mr Kelly: Yes, I understand that. I agree with him on the point that, no matter who you talk to and, as I said, even within some families, people want different things out of this process. The idea of the architecture of the Stormont House Agreement was to set up a number of possibilities so that all those issues could be dealt with, from justice through to the ICIR, oral history and the other aspects of those structures. The purpose of doing that is that we can try to deal with all the issues. It may be an impossible task, and all the parties agreed at least to the structures being set up. Now we are facing a blockage, mostly, or maybe entirely, from the British Government, to attempts to get those structures set up, and that is what we want to do. So, I support the Sinn Féin amendment to the SDLP motion.

Mr Nesbitt: I support the motion, with some reservations with regard to definition of language, which I would like to work through. We all talk about a victim-centred approach, and that is fine, but, as a victims' commissioner some years ago, amongst the many sad stories that I heard was one, which I will not rehearse in full again in this House because I have previously, of the widow who had lost her husband over 30 years previously. For that time, she had held on to the one crumb of comfort that, while he was shot at point-blank range, he was dead before he hit the ground. That was her crumb of comfort for over 30 years until the Historical Enquiries Team reviewed the file and informed her that he lay bleeding to death, screaming her name, for 20 minutes before he passed away. So, although we can be victim-centred, we must realise that there are unintended consequences for individuals, and we must have the support mechanisms in place for individuals who receive such unwelcome and unexpected bad news.

The motion talks about giving a "meaningful input" to victims and survivors, and we now have that architecture in place with the commission and the service and particularly with the victims' forum, consulted by the Victims' Commissioner, but there is a question here. The 2006 Victims and Survivors Order gives a principal aim to the commissioner to:

"promote the interests of victims and survivors".

The question is this: does that mean that you simply listen to victims and survivors and then try to deliver what they are asking for, or do you analyse what they are asking for and perhaps make the difficult decision of saying, "What is in your best interests is not necessarily what you think you want"?

The Secretary of State is considering some form of public consultation. We await, somewhat intrigued, to see how he intends to progress that. We think that it should come first, and, therefore, we will not be supporting the Sinn Féin amendment. There is, perhaps, a case of, "Be careful what you wish for" here because, if he consults publicly and very widely, I think that we all recognise that there is a generational issue in that there are many young people for whom the Troubles is not a lived experience. Their attitude to dealing with the past may be significantly different to that of the majority of Members of this House. What we do expect of the Secretary of State in bringing forward any

proposals is that they are, as he has said, "fair, balanced, impartial and" above all "proportionate".

I hear again in this debate that we do not want a hierarchy of victims, and the Ulster Unionist Party subscribes to that: no hierarchy of victims. The danger is that we have some sort of hierarchy of investigations. At the moment, many who were waiting in line for the Historical Enquiries Team (HET) now have nothing, while others have recourse to other bodies and processes up to and including public inquiries.

The motion talks of justice, truth, accountability and acknowledgement. I have no particular difficulty with that, but I note that it is a variation of the needs assessment of the Victims' Commission, which talked about a three-pronged approach: truth, justice and acknowledgement. It seems to me that if we, as politicians, put a focus on acknowledgement, we could indeed perhaps start to shift this problem.

We would like further development of the proposed roles and powers of the new bodies agreed at Stormont House and, perhaps, to some extent, later in Fresh Start. Finally, there is this idea that we will reject any attempt to evade justice or suppress the truth. We agree with that, but we take that language to mean that the SDLP wishes to reject the use of public interest as an excuse not to tell the truth. If that is the meaning of what it is proposing in the motion, we are more than happy to support that. In conclusion, we will support the motion but not any of the amendments.

Mr Lyttle: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion. I think that it is a constructive and timely motion. The search for a comprehensive framework on addressing the past remains, and I think that the key aspects of the motion are worthy. We do need a victim-centred approach. We do need a comprehensive approach. It is urgent, and we do need to conclude legacy issues on the frameworks that have been put in place for some years around the Historical Investigations Unit, the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval and the Implementation and Reconciliation Group and around a search for improved services and storytelling and oral archiving experiences. We in the Alliance Party, of course, firmly reject any attempt to evade justice as well, so we are content to support the motion and, indeed, the amendment that seeks a conclusion on these issues prior to public consultation.

However, we will not be supporting the DUP amendment, which, I have to say, adds no value whatsoever to the motion or to the debate today. In putting forward the DUP amendment, Mr Frew asked whether the Alliance Party supports the Fresh Start Agreement on dealing with the past. The Fresh Start Agreement, which was signed as long ago as November 2015, says nothing on dealing with the past other than that the parties were not able to reach agreement on the establishment of new bodies to deal with the past and to support the provisions of the Stormont House Agreement and to reflect on how we can move forward to achieve legislation to that regard. The Stormont House Agreement is now two years old, and the then Alliance leader, David Ford, rightly dismissed that as a false start, not a fresh start, for victims and survivors.

Indeed, I am starting to wonder whether we have got to the point where the DUP thinks that, if it just keeps staying "fresh start" for long enough, the community and the parties in the Assembly will believe that it is actually a fresh start despite a lack of substance in much of that

agreement, especially on such a sensitive and complex issue.

Many in our society and internationally have spent days, weeks and years dedicated to finding a comprehensive framework for dealing with the past. Healing Through Remembering, Eames/Bradley, Amnesty International, the Haass process and the Stormont House Agreement have all been driven by the courageous perseverance of many victims and survivors across our community, in particular the Victims Forum. It was an inspiration to meet the Victims Forum during the Haass process. Despite their fundamental differences and the extremely challenging experiences and trauma that members of that forum had been through, they were able to make constructive proposals on which a lot of the frameworks are now based. They convinced me that it would be morally wrong for the Executive, the Governments and the Assembly not to deliver on that comprehensive framework.

I know that there are some in our society who say that we should now draw a line under the past. I can understand where they are coming from to a certain extent, but I challenge anyone to meet the inspirational victims and survivors in our community and not conclude that, as the motion states, we have to urgently redouble our efforts to implement that comprehensive framework. It is also vital for wider peace and progress in Northern Ireland. I believe that there would be fundamental social and economic consequences for everyone were we not to put the framework in place. The Alliance Party has consistently supported and worked for a comprehensive framework based on improved access to justice, information services for victims and survivors and wider reconciliation.

I proposed a motion on a comprehensive framework five years ago, in October 2011. I worked tirelessly with many people in the Chamber and across our community on the Haass talks process. It brought forward substantive proposals. We do not have time today to go into those in detail, but it is clear that Executive Ministers and the UK and Irish Governments have a moral obligation to dispense with the delay and to deliver on the proposals. It is urgent for victims and survivors, but it is also urgent for our society and every member of it.

Mrs Cameron: There is no doubt that Northern Ireland has come a long way in its recent history. We can all relate to the horror stories of atrocities happening on our doorsteps. I, for one, am grateful that my children's generation and beyond do not have to directly experience what we did. That said, a vast number of people in our society directly experienced horrific violence and continue to live with the consequences on a daily basis. Whilst we have moved on significantly, issues surrounding our past continue to overshadow many of the positive steps that we have taken and hold Northern Ireland back from truly moving on. Having made significant progress on a number of issues in the Stormont House Agreement, talks faltered again when trying to address legacy issues and how they should be dealt with. The Fresh Start Agreement of last November again sought to make progress on the matter and recognise that there will be no quick fix in how we address our past.

Moving forward is a huge work in progress and one that all parties must fully engage with. It is ironic that the party proposing the motion has disengaged from government and removed itself from the process of making progress

happen. My party's amendment refers to how all parties should work towards an early resolution to these matters. The Opposition's failure to engage in the process will surely further delay any work to take the issue forward. I urge them to reconsider their position if they are truly committed to dealing with the past and moving forward.

Dealing with the past is hugely emotive. The suffering of victims and their families is not something that can be quantified or measured. It cannot be switched on and off, and it is intensely personal. In dealing with the past, those who have been directly affected should be front and centre of any decisions and outcomes. It is vital that we move on but equally important that we address our past. I use a well-worn quote by the philosopher George Santayana:

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

We never, ever want to return to the dark days of Northern Ireland's past.

4.30 pm

I support my party leader's position that we must never use any investigation to attempt to rewrite the past. It cannot be forgotten that 90% of deaths during the Troubles were terrorist-related. I am not suggesting that the other 10% of deaths caused any less hurt or distress to the families involved, but I am keen to put it on record that any inquiry or inquest should not be used as a platform to romanticise terrorism or denigrate and demonise our security services, who put their lives at risk on a daily basis to protect us.

As I have already touched on, grief and suffering are intensely personal matters, and there will be no one-size-fits-all solution to dealing with the past. In moving forward, it is imperative that we listen to what victims and survivors want and need. Any inquest or inquiry should not be an exercise in lining the pockets of solicitors and barristers; it should be a mechanism by which those affected can gain the appropriate support and clarity to assist them in moving forward.

The past is something that cannot be ignored and will continue to be a spectre at the table of Northern Ireland's future until it is properly and appropriately dealt with. I am aware that our new Secretary of State has engaged with victims and survivors. In his own words, he found that to be:

"a profoundly moving and affecting experience."

I hope that that will be at the front of his mind and that he will fully engage in assisting the Assembly to quickly progress the issue through government and provide the financial support required to take it forward. There is a tangible desire to address the past, and that momentum should be encouraged to reach a long-awaited conclusion. I support the amendment.

Ms J McCann: Like my party colleague said, I think that our amendment adds something to the motion, so we will support the motion but oppose the amendment from the DUP.

As people have already said, victims of the conflict have a right to the truth about the past. We, as a party, have consistently said that we do not have any desire to score points on the issue, particularly in debates like today's. I am glad that it has been quite measured; some of the debates we have had on the subject have not been. It

is very important that, no matter what we send out from the House, we say that we want a process that delivers for families. It is not about point-scoring or making party political points.

In order to advance reconciliation, it is important to address the hurt and division that has taken place to ensure that the conditions that created the conflict in the first place will not be repeated. We must all recognise that it is very important to the many people who have lost loved ones that they are able to pursue truth, justice and information recovery. The Member for Strangford is not here, but he mentioned young people looking in at the debate. In the cases of the people I know who still seek truth and justice about what happened to their loved ones, actually their grandchildren are the ones who have the passion and are behind the campaigns. Very clearly, there is a need for us to come to some conclusion on this and deal with it, because it will go down generations; people are not going to just forget about it.

Mr Lyttle: Will the Member give way?

Ms J McCann: Let me finish first, and I will see how far I get.

There is a need for the establishment of a comprehensive process that seeks to investigate the nature, the causes and the consequences of our recent conflict, and there are many families across society, in all of our communities, that suffered immense loss and harm. There are also many competing narratives and views and experiences of that conflict, and, on the reconciliation journey, all identities and cultures need to be given equal respect. We have said time and time again that we will promote and defend the rights of all victims and not support a process that allows discrimination and a hierarchy of victims to be introduced.

We are almost a year on from the Fresh Start Agreement, and there has still been no meaningful engagement from the British Government in serious negotiations around the impasse on their national security veto and other outstanding issues. We fully appreciate the hurt and frustration felt by victims and survivors at the end of the recent phase of negotiations. Again, it did not produce the outcome that they deserve and need.

In the past, national security has been used in a blanket fashion to prevent families from maximum information disclosure, and, as such, it was and continues to be unacceptable to many victims' families and campaign groups. In our negotiations, we put forward a number of options to try to get through the impasse, including an appeals mechanism, which my colleague, the proposer of the amendment, has just described, but they were not accepted. Since the end of the negotiations, we have engaged with officials from both the Irish and British Governments on occasions too numerous for me to remember. We are still trying to resolve outstanding issues.

The mechanisms of the HIU, the ICIR, the IRG and the Oral History Archive, which were agreed in the 2014 Stormont House talks, would see a number of processes being made available to families. As my colleague said, we had consistently called for an international independent truth recovery process. It is a compromise for people, but it is more than that. These are mechanisms so that families can get some sort of closure. During the Stormont House talks, those were the mechanisms that, from the suite of options available, we felt would help families to

have a choice as to which road they want to take. They would give families access to justice; information recovery; enhancement of the Coroners' Courts; storytelling and archiving their experiences; and the provision of high-quality services, which cannot be missed either.

Am I near the end of my time?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): The Member's time is nearly up, yes.

Ms J McCann: Just to conclude, I think that there is an emphasis and an onus on us, which is why our amendment was tabled. Before we go to public consultation, we need to agree the mechanisms. We cannot let people down again. We cannot raise people's hopes and go out there again for something that is unacceptable to families.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): The Member's time is up.

Mr Beattie: I thank Mr Attwood for proposing the motion. It is an important motion. It is one of the core issues. If we do not deal with our past, we will never produce a better future for our society. We really need to deal with it.

Interestingly, I listened to the news today, and it was full of talk about parking fines. Important as that issue is, there was nothing about this debate. I wonder whether our media and society in general are slightly bored of the talking shop that we sometimes turn into, and what they really want is action. I get a sense from the motion and from listening to everybody here that there really is a will for action.

When I read the motion, I was struck by the first sentence, which contained the phrase "victim-centred". I have been thinking about the word "victim". I wonder whether the whole of Northern Ireland is a victim. Are we all victims? Is everybody in the Chamber a victim? Are we all held by our past? In some ways, I think that we are. I remember, as a 10-year-old in 1975 — I know that people think that I do not look old enough — that knock on the door and my mother crying as she was told that her brother had just been murdered by the IRA or by somebody else under that flag of convenience. But he was murdered. Am I a victim? I do not feel like one and do not think that I am one, but people in my position may well feel that they are victims, and they are right to feel that way. Everybody will take it slightly differently, as I do, but my family in general feel like they are victims.

The definition of a victim in the Victims and Survivors Order 2006 is quite broad and takes in many thousands of people who are victims. That is only the tip of the iceberg, because there are many thousands more. Everybody must be really mindful about what they say so that we do not create more victims. Victims are presenting with mental health issues 10, 20 and 30 years after an incident. The number of victims in Northern Ireland is increasing rather than decreasing. I listened to the Kieran Conway interview on 'HARDtalk'. I have to say that it was so ill-advised that that man will have created victims. People will have listened to what he said, and he will have created victims. That is why I say that we all have to be extremely mindful of the words that we choose. I need to be extremely mindful of that as well.

What does a victim want? I look at the three main categories of victim. Of course, I am putting people into blocks, and every victim is different. The first group wants justice, and there should be no barrier to that

justice — absolutely none. It does not matter that you were a member of the state forces and broke the law; you should be held to account. If you were a terrorist or a paramilitary, you should be held to account. There should be no block to justice for the victims who want it. It must be fair, proportionate and balanced. What is the difference between the murder of Pat Finucane and the murder of my Uncle Samuel? Absolutely nothing. They were two heinous, horrendous crimes. There is no difference whatsoever, and that is important to remember. There should be no hierarchy of victims. Let us not politicise victims to make a hierarchy.

The second group of people just want to know what happened to loved ones in their last moments. They want to know, and they want acknowledgement that somebody did something wrong at a particular time. That is important.

The third group of people are those who just want to move on with life. We have to give them the ability to move on if that is what they want and if we are really to be victim-centred.

As far as the amendments are concerned, I will be honest. I am really sorry, but I cannot support the DUP amendment because it is, in truth, a little bit wishy-washy. I cannot support the Sinn Féin amendment because public consultation is important. Loyalist and nationalist groups need to be part of this. Communities in Ballymurphy, Shankill, Kingsmill, Bogside and Enniskillen are all victims and must be part of it, so we need that consultation. I support the motion.

Mr Eastwood: It is unfortunate that we have to come back to these issues and air them so many times when the people who matter most, the victims and survivors, have not got any real resolution to them. I am encouraged by Mr Beattie's words: it is good to hear that people will support the idea that there will be no hierarchy of victims. No matter who pulled the trigger, we have victims right across our community, and that has to be at the heart of how we approach the issue.

This is the biggest unresolved issue from our peace process. It is very unfortunate, and it is a real stain on our political and peace process that we still have not resolved it. How much longer do we need to leave the victims outside the room? How many more family members do we need to watch go to their grave without fulfilling the promise that we would seek truth and justice for their loved one? All of us in the Chamber work with victims every week, and all of us understand the pain that victims and survivors are going through. All of us, I think, are coming at this from the right place. However, none of us should feel OK about the fact that we still have not resolved the hugely important and difficult issues that it is absolutely necessary to resolve.

We have been from the Good Friday Agreement to Eames/Bradley right through to last autumn's Fresh Start proposals, and, every single time, we have given the victims some level of comfort or confidence that we were going to resolve their issues. We all know now that they are absolutely sick of being re-traumatised and, year after year, being put through the same public airing without any real solution. This has to be the phase where we move to the endgame.

I am happy to hear from the Secretary of State that we are moving into a public phase, and I want that to happen sooner rather than later.

But we cannot come up to this issue again saying we are going to resolve it and then not resolve it. We cannot leave the victims at the top of the hill any more times.

4.45 pm

It is important to say this: many people of my generation, and of most generations, say to me, "Why don't you just move on? Why don't you stop talking about the past? Why don't you just draw a line in the sand and forget about it? We all want to move on". That is a very understandable point of view, but I think they are wrong. We have all done all right out of this peace process. We are all in this Assembly; we are all moving on. But all of us, especially us, those who are elected to represent our society, owe the biggest debt to those who have been left behind by our peace process. We owe the biggest debt to those who suffered most, particularly those who were not involved at all. We have a responsibility to ensure that no longer do we have to come to this Chamber to debate these issues, to re-traumatise people, but that we actually solve the problem, that we give them a route to the truth, justice, information or whatever it is that those individuals seek and deserve.

It has to be noted as well — sometimes it is forgotten — that we have a fragile peace here. Nothing is certain. Anybody with access to a history book understands that. If we continue to try to bury this issue, it will pop up in a way that we cannot control. In Ireland, the past has a terrible way of creating a dangerous future, so all of us have a responsibility to resolve that.

The British Government have gone quiet. I have had some great meetings with James Brokenshire. He has gone quiet in the last number of weeks and months. He has a responsibility to bring us to a resolution on all these issues. Disclosure is a major sticking point in this, but disclosure goes both ways. Everybody, whether they were state or non-state actors, has a responsibility to come forward with truth and information to allow all our victims, no matter who they are, to get some respite after all this.

Mr E McCann: I want, first, to make a specific point, and I make it on behalf of the WAVE Trauma Centre and Alan McBride, who was, of course, bereaved in the Shankill bombing. I would like the Executive to answer — not here but somewhere — why there has been no provision for people who suffered injuries in the conflict to the extent that they have been unable to work and, therefore, unable to build up an occupational pension. Some of them, now in their late 50s and in their 60s, find that because of that, they have to rely on basic benefits. Why should that be? This is a relatively small matter with a relatively small amount of money. Why has it not been addressed, despite the fact that Alan McBride and many others have been pleading for years to have something done about it?

That having been said, I want to move on to the broader question about a victim-centred approach to the past. You cannot have a victim-centred approach unless the victims get the truth. In my estimation looking forward, and I do not do much gambling these days, the odds of the victims of the conflict in the North getting the truth is as close to zero as makes no difference. Does anybody seriously believe that the British Government at this stage of events are going to tell the truth about the behaviour of their secret forces in colluding with murder over 40 years? Does anybody seriously think that they are going to tell the truth

about that? They are not. This business of national security — it goes beyond that. They have never told the truth about their involvement in murder throughout their period of empire and the rest of it. They are not going to do it now.

I heard a suggestion made a few minutes ago that the new Secretary of State, Mr Brokenshire, has a positive approach to this sort of thing. No he does not. I sat with the relatives of the Ballymurphy massacre, as did others, just across the way a couple of weeks back with Mr Brokenshire. Not a flicker of concern showed on his face throughout a meeting that lasted more than an hour. Not a word that he said gave any comfort to the people who were looking for the truth about why their loved ones were killed, shot down by members of the Parachute Regiment in August 1971. Mr Brokenshire is not a friend of the victims. As far as I am concerned, he is a despicable individual who could not care less about the people of the North of Ireland, including the victims of Northern Ireland. And why should he? Why should he? The British Government could not care less about their own people across the water who died in the conflict.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): Order. I ask the Member to resume his seat.

I know that the Member is relatively new to the House, but there are terms that are not acceptable when describing individuals. I caution the Member about his use of language, particularly the reference that he made to the Secretary of State.

Mr E McCann: If it is out of order to refer to Mr James Brokenshire as a "despicable individual", I will withdraw it, if that is your ruling, Mr Deputy Speaker. You can stop me saying it, but, I will tell you this, you cannot stop me thinking it and you cannot stop hundreds of thousands of other people in this society thinking it.

I mentioned a moment ago, just before you spoke, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the British Government do not care about victims across there. I have had occasion in the recent past to speak to victims of the Birmingham bomb. People were out for a night in Birmingham city centre in November 1974 and were blown to bits. For example, Maxine Hambleton, 18 years old, went into a pub to deliver a message and was blown to smithereens. She was a girl, a young woman who harboured no hatred towards anybody on this island and who had no involvement of any kind in the events that we are discussing here. She was blown to bits. What succour has her family got from the British Government? They have been lied to. I have spoken to them. Lied to by the cops — the West Midlands Police. Lied to by the courts and by judges. Lied to by the Home Office. Lied to by the press. The truth has been kept from them. I mentioned Maxine Hambleton, and I hope that her sister Julie will be in Derry in the last weekend in January to speak to the Bloody Sunday relatives about the fact that they have in common that they have been lied to and despicably treated by the Government. The British Government will not tell the truth about their role here.

We have the Oral History Archive, the Historical Investigations Unit, the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval and the Implementation and Reconciliation Group — this alphabet soup of agencies and units. I do not know what these things mean, and I have got a bit of an interest in this.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for giving way. Far be it for me to stop you in your flow, but a lot of the proposals were put forward by victims and survivors, many of whom form the Victims Forum and have courageously worked to make some of the proposals. Does he accept that some people feel that some of those groups may improve access to justice and information and that they merit some consideration?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): The Member has an extra minute.

Mr E McCann: I think that they are all good, every one of them. I am positive about every one of them. What I am saying is that they all depend on the truth being told by the perpetrators and by the political representatives of the perpetrators. There is no sign whatsoever of that happening.

I agree with the Member who said that perhaps we are all victims. I sometimes think that half this country is in bits as a result of the conflict and the other half does not care. That is the situation, and it goes down to maybe eight-, nine- and 10-year-olds. They are affected by it because their parents were affected by it, and you do not need to have lost a member of your immediate family to be traumatised by it. Loads of people are. Hundreds of thousands of people are. They are not being treated fairly. There is no sign that they will be treated fairly either by the Government or by the leaders of paramilitary organisations. Victims are being treated despicably. The best thing that they can do is stay on the streets, stay fighting and put pressure on from below on Governments, paramilitary leaders and the rest. That is the only thing that will work.

Mr Allister: With the victim-makers at the top and heart of government in Northern Ireland, anyone who thinks that their innocent victims are going to get a fair deal is deluded, just as they will take no comfort from the platitudes of a bomber and of a killer who have spoken in the Chamber today. Right at the heart of this injustice for innocent victims is the pernicious definition of "victim" that rules in this land, that which obscenely equates perpetrator and victim-maker with those whom they make victims.

So long as that is the definition in the law of the land, there will be no fairness, no justice, for innocent victims. Frankly, it is only innocent victims I care about. I have no brief for the victim-makers or for those who inflicted on themselves their injury: they got their just deserts. I do care, however, about their innocent victims, and unless and until we bring justice to the definition of a victim, which this motion and amendments do not even mention, we will go round in circles and deliver nothing for innocent victims.

Yes, many pay lip service to the need to change the definition of a victim and to right that great wrong, but it is lip service. Take the DUP. It has had multiple opportunities — at St Andrews, at Hillsborough, at Stormont House, in the Fresh Start talks — to make the definition of a victim a red-line issue, but never once did it do so. Lip service was easy; doing something that might threaten their love and lust for power was far too hard an ask. So, we are in this vicious circle. Innocent victims continue to suffer the injustice of the definition that attends them.

Under these proposals, that will be compounded through a body with a grand-sounding name, the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval. That is an odious suggestion. The rules that govern it will set the scene

for a rewrite of the history of the Troubles. They proffer the victim-makers the opportunity to give, in secret and anonymously, their selective account of who they murdered and why they murdered them, and they can justify it. None of what they say needs to be corroborated; none of it can be tested; none of it can be used against them. Indeed, the very victims they made cannot be told who said what about their relative and why they were killed. What a perfect setting for the rewriting of history.

That will then be tapped into by a further body, the Implementation and Reconciliation Group, which, at the end of the process, will take up the themes — you can guarantee that alleged collusion will be one of them — that they have been fed from this rewriting of history. Then innocent victims are supposed to applaud and think that they have been granted something wonderful. They have —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I ask the Member to bring his remarks to conclusion.

Mr Allister: — been granted something wholly negative, not positive, and will continue to be, unless and until the issue of definition is addressed.

Mr Poots: I welcome the opportunity to speak on this issue. I have a lot in common with what Mr Allister has just said. Where does the truth lie in these matters? The fact is that the IRA was responsible for over half the murders during the Troubles. When it comes to truth recovery, will there be books, turned over by the IRA, telling us who did what and why, why particular people were targeted and who gave the instructions? Of course, everybody knows the answer to that question. The answer is that no books will be turned over in aid of truth recovery, but there will be an obsession, a drive and a push to recover all the information that is available on the side of the security services. There will be none of it on the side of paramilitaries; so, 90% of the victims out there who we are talking about will not get any truth but we will have a rigorous pursuit of the security services on behalf of the 10%. I have to tell you, folks, "That ain't possible and it ain't going to happen". It is not a fair and equitable way with which to deal with it.

5.00 pm

Mr Eastwood was one of the people who brought forward the motion. I regret that he is out of his seat at this moment. Mr Eastwood carried the coffin of an INLA man. I find that particularly offensive. One day, as a boy, I came home from school to discover my mother in a particularly distressed state. She was in a particularly distressed state because my dad, who was a DUP councillor, came out of the Belfast market and was shot at by the INLA and she did not know what the circumstances were when I came home. Fortunately, while the vehicle was hit, he was not. I have no truck with, or succour for, those who support the INLA in any way, shape or form, whether that be by carrying a coffin or anything else. I will not find out the absolute truth of what happened that day; who ordered it and who pulled the trigger, but I did happen to find out materials and issues relating to it. Unfortunately, we do not have an evidential base to go through with, but I believe that the person who carried out that action is now dead. He was a Mr O'Reilly who was shot in Drogheda in an INLA feud along with another member of the INLA.

When we talk about victims, we want real truth for victims. When Sinn Féin can step up to the plate and tell us that it will be honest, unequivocal, open and truthful and not obey the code — this famous code that those former members of the IRA have to abide by — we can make real progress. I do not believe —

Lord Morrow: Will the Member give way?

Mr Poots: Yes, certainly.

Lord Morrow: I think that the Member comes very close to the real issue here. There are too many — and I suspect that there are more on the other side of the House than on this side — who seem to think that everybody who lost their life was a victim. Some were victims of their own despicable behaviour. I challenge the SDLP to tell us today whether it is saying to us that everybody who died in the Troubles is a victim despite the fact that they were taken out by their own gun.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): The Member has an additional minute.

Mr Poots: Thank you for that.

The key point here is that unless the people on the paramilitary side come forward and tell the truth, the recovery system will not be an all-encompassing and equal system.

The other side of the House is constantly talking about equality. Are we going to get that equality? Will the paramilitaries speak up and tell the truth? They have never told the truth in the past. That is just the case. Mr Adams will not even admit that he was a member of the IRA, yet we are expected to believe that they will tell us the truth. If you want to give us the truth, let us see it kicking off. Let us see how it will happen. Let us see it commence.

All that I can see is a means of going after the security services and their role in the Troubles and, by doing so, paint and project them as the bad boys, the black boys and the people who were doing wrong — when, in actual fact, they stood in the way of anarchy in this place — and, as a result of painting them in that way, rewrite history and say, “Do you know what? Republicans had to step up to the plate and defend our community against these bad and evil people”. That is not going to happen. I know that that is the motive of individuals inside and outside the Chamber, but it is not going to happen. We will resist that at every opportunity. We will resist the blackening of the security services. They were the people who stood between us and anarchy and who stood in defence of the people of Northern Ireland and beyond. I am eternally grateful for everything they did to ensure that people like us have the opportunity to speak in a democratic forum here today.

Mr McCartney: In the main, it was a fairly even-tempered debate; there was even a moderate approach to the issue. I think that most Members who spoke addressed the core issue. However, it was unfortunate that, near the end, after Jim Allister spooked the horses, we had a return to the rhetoric of the past, which served no purpose in trying to address something that is very difficult. It is an issue that has focused the minds of most of us on trying to come up with a resolution to deal with what people broadly call the legacy of the past.

We welcome the fact that Alex Attwood accepted our amendment in the spirit in which it was made, which was

to try to strengthen the motion. It is a fairly reflective motion; I think that most Members accept that it is well grounded and well intended. I regret that Mike Nesbitt and Doug Beattie do not get the reasons why we put in the amendment. It was not in any way to try to postpone anything; we are trying to ensure that, after the British Government fulfil their responsibilities, there should be consultation, not the other way round.

Paul Frew proposed the DUP amendment. I think that he accepted that there was nothing in the SDLP motion that he disagreed with, although he certainly had issues and reservations. My appeal is that we should not allow the House to divide on minor issues that have been outlined today. We should all be focused on trying to address the issues on behalf of what people call victims and survivors. Unfortunately, near the end, we heard the politics of division, which is not in the best interests of victims, no matter how people want to define them. Interestingly, in one part of today's proceedings, Members talked about no one being beyond the law, but other Members started to believe that the people whom they represent, whether they are the good guys, the bad guys or however you refer to them, can step outside the law. That is not how we should approach this. The motion is well grounded and well centred in its approach.

Gerry Kelly outlined our position. We have argued, as far back as Eames/Bradley, that perhaps the best way to approach this would have been an independent international truth commission. However, we have all seen over recent times, particularly with the Stormont House Agreement and the Fresh Start Agreement, that people have different ideas. We all have to come together to provide a framework in which we can face up to the challenges that, undoubtedly, there will be while having the victims foremost in our minds. Paul Frew is right: there is no single voice from or approach taken by all victims or victims' groups. However, I think that all of them would urge us to ensure that we come up with a process from which as many of them as possible get truth and justice. The Fresh Start Agreement and the Stormont House Agreement laid the framework in which that could happen. That is not to say that many victims' groups do not have criticisms, but I think that, in the main, they believe that the framework sent a clear signal that we are going in the right direction. That is the approach that we should take.

Of course, there are principles on which all this will be founded. It has to be independent. There should be no room for partisanship or for it to serve narrow self-interests, including those of the state, armed groups and political parties, and even, as someone said, economic interests. That is how it should be taken forward. It should be victim-centred. People might have different definitions of what that means, but equality should be at its core. Sometimes people hear about the idea of rewriting the past. There can be no rewriting of the past. History is there for us all to examine. We will certainly come at it from different perspectives, but the victims and people seeking truth and justice are entitled to mechanisms that deliver it. None of us should put any obstacles in the way of allowing that to happen. In our opinion, the British Government have tried to do that, and Eamonn McCann outlined some of the issues with regard to the sort of cover-all of British national security interests.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I ask the Member to draw to a conclusion.

Mr McCartney: I urge people not to divide on this issue. Support the motion, support our amendment and do not divide.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I call Mr Sammy Douglas to make his winding-up speech on amendment No 1. Mr Douglas, you have up to five minutes.

Mr Douglas: I thank all Members for their contribution to what has been a relatively constructive debate today. We are debating issues that are often very personal and very sensitive. While doing that, we should be looking to see how we can put victims and survivors at the very top of our agenda or, as my colleague Pam Cameron said, to the front of how we progress and move forward; it is a thread that has been going right through the debate.

There is a programme on television called 'Pop Goes Northern Ireland'. It shows all the songs from the 70s and 80s etc, but also gives a flavour of just what Northern Ireland and other parts of the UK were like during the bad old days. If anything, it shows just how much we owe the victims when we see the carnage that was created across our streets in Northern Ireland. This debate today is very much about putting right the wrongs of the past. The thread that has been going through this is that we need to make decisions; we need to get this sorted.

Someone from the opposite Benches mentioned that this has been going on for far too long. We have been here so many times before. It reminded me of one of those Proverbs:

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick."

For many victims and survivors, their hopes have been put on hold, put to the side and deferred in many ways. If anything, the debate today must be about how we address this situation. It has been going on for far too long. We understand the complexities and the sensitivities, but we need to move on. Many people have been saying that we are focused on building a better future for Northern Ireland, but that this must include victims and survivors if we are to make any progress.

Mr Attwood — I think he has left the Chamber — highlighted the importance of victims and survivors in the design of any proposal. I thought that was a good suggestion because we do not want this to be a top-down approach. We want to listen, as Mr Allister said — not just to listen, but to make progress to ensure that we are making the decisions about taking this forward.

Pam Cameron mentioned that we need to make significant progress, as outlined in the Stormont House Agreement. She made a very good point in saying that there is no quick fix. Although it is taking so long, we need to get it done right, but we need to have that sense of urgency as well. The suffering of victims and families cannot be quantified; that was a good point that was made. They should be front and centre of any consultation and implementation. She picked up that there is a desire in the Assembly to deal with the past and move on.

Eamonn McCann — he is away as well — talked about truth. He was very cynical that any of the victims will actually get truth. He talked about the British Government and said that there is no way that the British Government

will come up with the truth. My colleague Paul Frew made reference to the truth coming from the Irish Government as well. There are a number of actors in this but, ultimately, it is getting the truth from many of those angles.

I thank Paul Frew for proposing our amendment. He agreed with a lot of what Alex Attwood had said and made the point that we all know victims and we all know survivors. Just to look at the pain in their eyes, we do not understand how many of those people have suffered and continue to suffer.

He talked about our needing to move Northern Ireland forward. The British and Irish Governments have a very difficult task, but we need to get that agreement.

5.15 pm

Mr McCrossan: I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this all-important debate. Over 3,500 people here were killed and thousands more were injured during those very dark days. Local businesses and livelihoods were destroyed, and sectarian entrenchment deepened to an unprecedented scale, which, in homes and throughout our communities, we are still living with today in the politics of the North. The British state responded heavily and, in many cases, unjustly. Many civilians suffered physically through maiming and disability, while, for many others, the mental flashbacks continue to haunt their very existence. An estimated 200,000 people were impacted in some way by the Troubles, and they are struggling to access basic care and support services. I have seen this at first hand in my constituency and home town of Strabane and throughout West Tyrone.

Needless to say, the Troubles resulted in a terrible loss of life; too many families are still seeking truth and justice for the deaths of their loved ones 18 years after peace has been delivered. In the years following the Good Friday Agreement, we have seen very little agreement on many, many issues. There is little common ground between the Government parties about how and what we commemorate, remember or, perhaps, conveniently forget and, significantly, who should be called to question, either legally or morally, for the many deaths, injuries and atrocities. We have witnessed inquiries into the grievous crimes committed on Bloody Sunday, and we have had other inquiries and investigations by the Historical Enquires Team and the Police Ombudsman, along with a number of inquests and civil cases, all leading to limited prosecutions.

There has been a series of political attempts to address the legacy of the past, most recently with the Eames/Bradley talks, right down to the proposals in the Stormont House Agreement. Eames/Bradley was a high-water mark in providing the most coherent and effective way forward in scale, powers and ambition, but, in each subsequent conversation or round of talks, this threshold has been degraded substantially, and we have to ask ourselves why.

While political parties and the British state all say that they are committed to the idea of some sort of truth and reconciliation, none of them really wants their own past to be dredged up: all of them have something to answer for. Sinn Féin hides behind the mantra that the IRA no longer exists, despite the gross atrocities that the IRA caused, while others have questions to answer, none more so than in relation to the Omagh bomb in my constituency. It raises

the question of what exactly Sinn Féin is scared of. What skeletons are still left in the cupboard? What about abuse cover-ups? What about Jean McConville? What about the disappeared? The IRA inflicted great pain and suffering across the North and on its own people, yet Sinn Féin is still found wanting in answering the most fundamental questions. These people still need closure on the deaths of their loved ones.

The British Government also have a lot to answer for, as Mr McCann mentioned very passionately: the internment of hundreds of innocent civilians without due process, trial or charges, and the litany of human rights abuses carried out by the British state behind closed doors in places like Castlereagh. We have the so-called hooded men, a shoot-to-kill policy used against innocent civilians, and we have had atrocities such as the Ballymurphy Ten and Bloody Sunday. That is not to mention the dealings of operatives such as Freddie Scappaticci — agent Stakeknife, as he is known — who was an alleged high-ranking British agent in the Provisional IRA who was responsible for an estimated 50 murders.

Against that backdrop, it beggars belief what the past can bring up and what has been hidden, but there seems to be little appetite for such emanating from Whitehall, nor is there much prospect of implementing —

Mr Frew: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCrossan: I will not; I have a lot to get through.

There is not much prospect of implementing the Stormont House Agreement due to the historical and, perhaps, more recent acts of some political parties and the lack of willingness to unearth the truth. The Stormont House Agreement provides for some £30 million to deal with the past. We all know that that is nowhere near enough to deal with the demand for services. Due to the Troubles, hurt, pain and suffering are embedded in our society, as evidenced by the fact that requests for services go up by almost 30% year on year. As more and more people come forward, there is not the capacity to deal with such demand for justice services, health services or social services — services that, 18 years later, should be in place.

Mr Frew: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCrossan: I will not. We have witnessed stall after stall, and it has become clear that there is little appetite for full, rigorous and comprehensive unearthing of the past among the governing political parties or from Westminster. Some simply have too much to hide, and some have too much to lose.

I turn to Members' individual contributions. From my party, Alex Attwood, in moving the motion, noted the importance of dealing with the past in its many manifestations. He questioned the budget made available through the Fresh Start Agreement, which is insufficient to have any meaningful impact, and he urged support for today's motion calling for the Executive to act as a matter of urgency.

Mr Frew outlined the DUP's position, stating that there needs to be a holistic approach to dealing with the past and that this must be a matter of urgency. I do not think that any of us will disagree with that.

Mike Nesbitt, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, gave some personal accounts of the issues facing victims and

highlighted the importance of having support mechanisms in place for the many people and families impacted by the past. He further stated the need for a three-pronged approach of truth, justice and acknowledgement. I think that we can all agree with that approach.

Lord Morrow: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCrossan: I have a lot to get through. Chris Lyttle, from the Alliance Party, criticised the Fresh Start Agreement and the lack of action flowing from it. He stated that we need to redouble our efforts in tackling the past. He specifically mentioned the important work of stakeholders in pushing the agenda to Stormont.

In a very emotional statement, Doug Beattie gave a personal account of victimhood and mentioned his Uncle Samuel.

The SDLP leader stated that we cannot leave victims behind and said that there is a great need to solve the issues of the past. He said that disclosure is crucial and that everyone involved has responsibility for that.

Mr McCann passionately questioned the integrity of the current Secretary of State and gave a considerable analysis of his view of him.

Mr Allister questioned the actions of a party in the current Government.

Mr Poots, my party leader, Colum Eastwood, and many Sinn Féin Members discussed disclosure. Let me make it very clear that disclosure is not a one-way street: it is not just about the British Government; it is about the many violent organisations that existed also coming forward with the truth. The SDLP has been very consistent in relation to that.

In answer to a point that Mr Poots made about my party leader, let me be very clear that the SDLP has never in its entire existence supported violence. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): Order.

Mr McCrossan: We have never supported any violent organisation. To use your former leader's phrase, we have "Never, never, never" supported violence, and we will never support violence. I totally reject Mr Poots's comments.

Finally, the SDLP —

Mr Frew: Will Member give way?

Mr McCrossan: I will not. The SDLP cannot accept amendment No 1, which was tabled by the DUP. However, we see no reason to reject amendment No 2, which was tabled by Sinn Féin. Therefore, I urge support for the motion and for amendment No 2.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): That concludes the debate. Before I put the Question on amendment No 1, I remind Members that, if it is made, I will not put the Question on amendment No 2.

Question put, That amendment No 1 be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 34; Noes 59.

AYES

Mr Anderson, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting,

Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lyons, Mr McCausland, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Poots, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McQuillan and Mr Robinson.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Ms Archibald, Ms Armstrong, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Ms Dillon, Mrs Dobson, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Ford, Ms Gildernew, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mrs Long, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Mr McGlone, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Mr McKee, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Mullan, Mr Murphy, Mr Nesbitt, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McGrath and Mr Mullan.

The following Member voted in both Lobbies and is therefore not counted in the result: Mr Allister

Question accordingly negated.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): We now move to the vote on amendment No 2. I have been advised by the party Whips that, in accordance with Standing Order 27(1A)(b), there is agreement that we can dispense with the three-minute rule and move straight to the Division.

Question put, That amendment No 2 be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 46; Noes 47.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Ms Archibald, Ms Armstrong, Ms Bailey, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Carroll, Mr Dickson, Ms Dillon, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Ford, Ms Gildernew, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mrs Long, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Mr McGlone, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Mullan, Mr Murphy, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr O'Dowd, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Ms Sugden.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Kelly and Mr McCartney.

NOES

Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mr Butler, Mrs Cameron, Mr Chambers, Mr Clarke, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lyons,

Mr McCausland, Mr McKee, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Poots, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Smith, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr Robinson.

Question accordingly negated.

5.45 pm

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly believes in a victim-centred approach to addressing the past and that victims and survivors should have a meaningful input to the content and design of legacy proposals; further believes that justice, truth and accountability, acknowledgement and support for victims and survivors are essential elements in a comprehensive approach to the past; notes the comments by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on a public phase on legacy proposals; and calls on the British and Irish Governments for an urgent, renewed effort to conclude legacy issues, including the further development of the proposed roles and powers of the Oral History Archive, Historical Investigations Unit, Independent Commission on Information Retrieval and the Implementation and Reconciliation Group and rejects any attempts by the state, state agencies, illegal groups and others to evade justice, suppress the truth of and resist accountability for the past.

Mr Lyttle: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The First Minister and Justice Minister were present for a vote on the most recent motion on the serious issue of addressing legacy issues for victims and survivors in our community, yet not one of them was able to offer an Executive response to that motion. Is the Deputy Speaker willing to review ministerial responses to debates in the Assembly?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I thank Mr Lyttle for his point of order. It is a matter for Ministers to respond, directly or otherwise, to statements in the House.

Adjourned at 5.50 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 8 November 2016

The Assembly met at 10.30 am (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Mr Agnew: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I have been following the selection of motions for debate and the parties that table them, and it seems to follow almost exactly the speaking list order, which is loosely based on d'Hondt. By my reckoning, that means that the Green Party should today be in a position to pick a motion for business in two weeks' time. Will you confirm whether that will be the case? How can a party that is not represented on the Business Committee access its entitlement to choose motions for debate?

Mr Speaker: You are aware of the procedures for the Business Committee. If that item appears on the agenda, the Business Committee will no doubt deal with it.

Mr Allister: Further to that point of order, I have been a Member for over five years, and, in that time, I suspect that we have debated in excess of 500 motions. Never once have I been permitted the privilege of proposing a motion because of the closed shop that operates in the selection of motions. That is linked to the fact that those of us in this corner of the House are denied representation on the Business Committee, which makes the choices. When will that inequity be addressed?

Mr Speaker: Mr Allister, you, maybe above all Members, know the procedures of the House and the Business Committee. The matter has been raised by the Business Committee, which has taken and will take decisions on it.

Mr Attwood: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I refer you to the Hansard report of yesterday's legacy debate, during which a DUP Member made explicit reference to an SDLP Member. Following the explicit identification of that SDLP Member, the Member opposite said the following:

"I have no truck with, or succour for, those who support the INLA in any way, shape or form, whether that be by carrying a coffin or anything else."

The key words are:

"those who support the INLA in any way, shape or form".

I ask the Speaker for an urgent ruling, if possible today, on the comments made by Mr Poots, in which he claimed that a member of the SDLP supported the INLA:

"in any way, shape or form". — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 120, p40, col 2].

I cannot express to you, Mr Speaker, the gravity and seriousness of those words and the importance of your ruling on the matter.

Mr Speaker: I will review Hansard accordingly and get back to you ASAP, Mr Attwood.

Executive Committee Business

Child Support (Deduction Orders and Fees) (Amendment and Modification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

Mr Givan (The Minister for Communities): I beg to move

That the Child Support (Deduction Orders and Fees) (Amendment and Modification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

These regulations, which came into operation on 23 May 2016, enable my Department to waive collection fees for child maintenance in certain cases. My Department will be able to offer those clients the chance to demonstrate a change of behaviour, if an application is made to the 2012 scheme. That process is referred to as the segment 5 compliance opportunity and will be offered where certain criteria are met. Segment 5 clients are those who have paid maintenance by an enforced method of payment, or who were subject to other enforcement action on their old child support cases.

Let me set out the context. A comprehensive review of the child maintenance system began in 2012, with the aim of incentivising parents to collaborate in the best interests of their children. Aligned with this is the need to move away from the idea that a statutory child maintenance scheme should be the default option for separated parents. To achieve those aims, a programme to close all existing Child Support Agency (CSA) cases began in June 2014. Closing cases gives parents the chance to consider which arrangement best suits their circumstances for the future. Child Maintenance Choices, a free and impartial service, also ensures that parents have the necessary information available to help to inform that important decision.

Parents who believe that a statutory solution would be best for them can still apply to the new 2012 scheme, which is operated by the Child Maintenance Service. New simplified calculation rules and improved IT systems are delivering better outcomes for parents and children. However, fees and charges help to incentivise parents to consider closer collaboration and to use a direct pay service. The fees also provide a contribution towards the cost of running the service.

Encouraging parents to cooperate when arranging child maintenance payments is likely to lead to less confrontation between parents, and that is in the best interests of their children. When approaching case closure, I am, of course, aware of the need to minimise the risk of child maintenance payments being disrupted, particularly in cases where money is flowing only as the result of enforcement action being undertaken on the old CSA case.

Segment 5 cases will be the last segment of cases to be closed. They include cases where money is flowing as a result of enforcement action. However, it is important to give parents, who may have previously been in conflict, an opportunity to avoid charges, as well as a further chance for cooperation. In recognition of that, the Child Maintenance Service will introduce a new positive test of compliant behaviour for those non-resident parents. This is known as the compliance opportunity, and it will take place during the first six months of the 2012 scheme case for this group. During that time, the non-resident parent will be required to pay half of their maintenance liability via the

collection service by a non-enforced method of payment, such as direct debit.

To ensure that the parent with care is protected, a deduction from earnings order will be issued to the non-resident parent's employer. That will collect the other half of the ongoing maintenance liability directly from the non-resident parent's wages wherever that is possible. This payment safeguard aims to minimise disruption for the parent with care during the compliance opportunity. Where the non-resident parent misses even one payment, they will fail the compliance opportunity, and prompt action will be taken to resume collection of the full amount of maintenance to ensure children do not miss out. This maintenance will be recovered by the enforced method of payment already in place, with the collection and enforcement charges applied. Only in circumstances where the non-resident parent is not at fault will an exception be made. If all payments are made, they will pass the compliance opportunity and will have a chance to continue paying child maintenance directly to the parent with care in future.

The outcome of the compliance opportunity will inform the decision over whether the 2012 scheme case should be a direct pay arrangement, which does not attract collection fees, or a collect and pay arrangement, where the Child Maintenance Service manages collections and the usual fees are charged.

It was initially proposed that the compliance opportunity be offered in the final six months of the closing CSA case. It would have been offered to all clients regardless of whether they intended to apply to the new 2012 scheme. This would have involved expending resources unnecessarily, including further significant investment in the CSA computer systems, which are close to their retirement date. However, the compliance opportunity will now be moved to the first six months of the new case on the 2012 system. It will only be offered to those who choose to apply to the 2012 scheme before their CSA case closes and cannot agree on whether their new case should be managed on the direct pay or the collect and pay service.

The Child Maintenance Service will administer cases on the collect and pay service for the duration of the compliance opportunity, which allows an enforced method of payment to be used as a payment safeguard. Ordinarily, these actions would attract collection and enforcement fees on the 2012 scheme. However, a compliance opportunity protects the interests of the parent with care and can help maximise the number of effective arrangements on the new 2012 scheme. Therefore, the fee waiver set out in these regulations is required in order to be fair to both parents while testing the reliability of the non-enforced payments. This is necessary to ensure the successful delivery of this essential measure. I stress again that the driver in all this is the interests of the children. Their interests are paramount.

These regulations will also make some technical amendments to clarify that existing rules governing regular deduction orders and lump sum deduction orders can include collection and enforcement charges. Regular deduction orders and lump sum deduction orders are enforced orders that are used to secure child maintenance liabilities by deducting money directly from non-resident parents' bank accounts. The provisions in these regulations will ensure that the Child Maintenance Service is clearly

able to collect fees alongside the maintenance liability and collect CSA arrears that have been moved to the 2012 scheme. This is in line with existing policy, and these provisions aim to put the legal position beyond doubt.

Ms Gildernew (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Communities): Go raibh míle maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. The former Committee for Social Development considered the SL1 relating to these regulations in March 2016 and was content with the policy objectives of the proposed legislation. The rule was brought before the Committee for Communities in June 2016, and the Committee had no objection to the rule. Members may be aware that, in June 2014, the former Department for Social Development began its programme of ending non-resident parent liabilities on all existing cases on the legacy schemes following the introduction of the new 2012 scheme administered by the Child Maintenance Service.

The Committee considered that the intention of the regulations to waive collection and enforcement fees on the 2012 child maintenance scheme for a specific group of cases was a positive step, allowing time for the most appropriate payment option to be determined. The Committee is content that the regulations support the efficient management of cases and help to minimise the risk of payment disruption. Most importantly, the Committee is content that the regulations are designed to maximise the collection of child maintenance and that fees will only be payable by clients who require services to support their payments. The Committee also noted that the regulations also contain provisions to make minor technical amendments to existing child support regulations. Therefore, the Committee for Communities recommends that the statutory rule be confirmed by the Assembly.

Ms Armstrong: As has already been noted, these regulations will make modifications and amendments to permit the Department to waive collection and enforcement fees on the 2012 child maintenance scheme. This is an important area to tackle, given the difficulties that can currently exist in ensuring that many of the 92,000 single parents in Northern Ireland receive money from non-resident parents.

The regulations emerged from Westminster earlier this year, and provide an opportunity for non-resident parents who have not been paying child maintenance to do so. That is a vital first step hopefully to create a more robust system that ensures that financial obligations to parents and children are met.

10.45 am

How many of us here have encountered frustrated parents on both sides of the argument? We have encountered those who have struggled to engage with absent parents to commence payments and parents who have been pursued relentlessly to make payments. The Alliance Party welcomes today's measures, given that 60% of lone parents are in debt, economically disadvantaged, struggling with childcare payments or navigating a benefits system that is under constant revision by the current Tory Government.

A different approach to making sure that non-resident parents are paying their fair share is welcome and to be encouraged. As I said, 60% are facing debt and hardship, and that is having a negative effect on them and their

children. Today's move has the potential to encourage better adherence to committing to payments.

Despite the positives, it is essential that we note that decisions and changes coming from Westminster at the minute are rash and being taken in haste. That was most notably demonstrated by the recent Concentrix debacle, which had a tremendous impact on many single parents. My office, and my colleagues' offices, received a huge number of calls, ranging from anger about decisions to downright bizarre situations. Accordingly, we must be mindful not to offer too much flexibility, which would impact on the payments being received and could harm those whom we are aiming to protect.

My party colleagues and I support the regulations. However, the Assembly must acknowledge that the measures could provide too much scope and fail those whom they are hoping to protect — the very opposite of what the regulations set out to do.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Child Support (Deduction Orders and Fees) (Amendment and Modification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Private Members' Business

Ending All Forms of Paramilitarism

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. As two amendments have been selected and are published on the Marshalled List, an additional 15 minutes has been added to the total time. The proposer of the motion will have up to 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. The proposer of each amendment will have 10 minutes in which to propose and five minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

The House should note that the amendments are mutually exclusive, so, if amendment No 1 is made, the Question will not be put on amendment No 2.

Mr Dickson: I beg to move

That this Assembly believes that, 18 years after the Good Friday Agreement, all paramilitary organisations should have ceased to exist; notes the Fresh Start panel report on the 'Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland' and the lacklustre response from the Executive; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Minister of Justice to produce a substantive response to the report, which contains clear targets, timescales and resources for implementation, identifies which Departments have responsibility for specific actions, and commits to developing a protocol on state and public-sector engagement with individuals with perceived paramilitary connections.

The Alliance Party motion that I have proposed is to end all forms of paramilitarism. My party, for quite a number of years, and when in and out of government, has resolutely opposed paramilitarism and unambiguously supported the rule of law and human rights. In the wake of the murders in the summer of 2015 and the resultant political crisis, Alliance proposed a fresh commitment to tackle and disband paramilitaries — necessary to reinforce the rule of law and to complete the move to a normal society. Ministerial walkouts, and Ministers walking in and out, highlighted, for the public at least, how serious the issue was being taken at the time. Next week sees the first anniversary of the so-called Fresh Start Agreement, but recent events leave open the question as to how genuinely committed some political parties and Ministers are. I quote the agreement itself:

“to achieve a society free of paramilitarism ... challenge all paramilitary activity ... challenge paramilitary attempts to control communities”.

The work of my party colleague, the former Justice Minister David Ford, during the Fresh Start negotiations drove forward plans to deal with paramilitarism. We supported the three-person panel on paramilitarism and welcomed its report. However, we are highly sceptical about the Executive's action plan response. That action plan was produced in June 2016 and is clearly very weak. In May, our party's negotiations, submitted to the DUP and Sinn Féin in relation to the Executive formation and the possibility of Alliance potentially taking up the offer of the Department of Justice, were, in part, based around a strong and robust action plan on paramilitarism. What we

have seen very clearly is that any Alliance Justice Minister could not and would not sign up to a weak plan. Even the UK Government agree with us on that, because they are not prepared to advance the appropriate funding.

The action plan is deficient in many, many ways. There is a clear lack of strategic analysis and the plan does not produce clear targets, timescales or resources for implementation.

Mr Givan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dickson: No, I will not.

The plan fails to identify which Departments have responsibility for specific actions. Often, it reads as if the Executive are trying to tick off recommendations by cross-referencing them to existing policies and programmes. There is little evidence of fresh thinking or a willingness to even engage in that. Perhaps the recommendations are too difficult for the DUP and Sinn Féin to contemplate.

The Alliance Party motion was, in fact, submitted before the Minister of Finance announced that the UK Government funding would not be released due to an undetailed action plan. At this point, I would like to thank SDLP and UUP colleagues for their amendment to update the motion and to state our support for that amendment, but this debate is about so much more than the lack of UK funding. It is about the predictable and consistent failing of the Executive to achieve anything resembling a substantive response to paramilitarism. Moreover, the credibility even of this poor plan hangs by a thread.

Alliance recognises the reality of engagement with some people, particularly those with a paramilitary past who are working to improve their communities. We are not being naive. Northern Ireland does have a unique problem with paramilitaries and criminal activity, but you cannot use this as a reason not to have clear objectives. However, when we see Government Ministers, including our First Minister, posing for photographs with current paramilitaries, a wrong and destructive message is being sent out. This is a clear example of why the proposals around protocols for dealing —

Mr Stalford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dickson: No, I will not.

This is a clear example of why the proposals around protocols for dealing with paramilitary structures are so important. Everyone, from Ministers to public agencies and in between, needs to have a list of dos and don'ts. This is essential for a credible action plan. It needs to be in Northern Ireland's psyche what each one of us should do when we encounter paramilitaries and how we deal with them. One of those dos and one of those don'ts will be taking photographs. How do the Executive think law-abiding people feel when they see people getting a hand up who take the law as guidance and as something to dispense with when it is convenient?

Mr Stalford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dickson: No, I will not.

For Alliance, this proposal in relation to the protocol, which we suggested in 2015, is an absolute central plank of a new way forward that gets away from the gatekeepers and empowers alternative voices in the community. It is more important that it is not seen simply as a matter for the police and other criminal justice agencies but that it covers

the entire public sector and makes it clear to bodies such as the Housing Executive and district councils what are the appropriate ways to engage.

I turn to the Sinn Féin amendment. We will not support it, because it weakens the motion. It aims to dilute a motion that calls for less weakness and for a strategy, timescales and implementation in the planned Fresh Start process. For example, section A4, which addresses youth intervention programmes, throws up a number of problems. The issues that permeate the action plan are the lack of timescales and the remarkable lack of detail in the action plan as to when anything will happen or how long it will take on nearly every single point.

Another problem is with youth intervention. It is often too late to intervene by the time young people are introduced to the criminal justice system. We need to work in communities at an early stage to deliver proper communities away from paramilitaries.

Other examples of flaws are in sections A1 and D1 of the action plan. Instead of a comprehensive rethink, with fresh thought on how to progress the disbandment of paramilitaries, we see the lazy recycling of existing strategies. Perhaps if the Programme for Government had not been so poor, the Executive could have made a real attempt to integrate strategies. Instead, there is a box-ticking exercise in the action plan to try to make it look more complete.

We need strong Executive action to implement the plan. There is a danger that tackling paramilitaries will simply fall to the Department of Justice. That would be a mistake in two ways. First, paramilitarism cannot be tackled by Justice alone. When paramilitaries hold communities hostage, disrupt businesses, affect our infrastructure and harm our young people, they hold Northern Ireland back from reaching its potential. The second issue is a more practical one: the pressures on budgets both in the justice system and the PSNI.

Mr Frew: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dickson: No, I will not.

We cannot expect the Department of Justice to take on the additional burden of our expectations on ending paramilitarism with reduced resources. I will come back to this point later. The action plan on tackling paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime, needs to get back to the recommendations of the report on the 'Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups'. It is remarkable that two different names are even used. "Disbandment" represents action and outcomes, whereas "tackling" is representative of the Executive's weaker aims.

The Executive also need to stop legitimising paramilitaries in Northern Ireland by supporting pop-up groups through roundabout funding. How can legitimate social investment fund projects hope to work when they are discredited by a small minority that are moonlighting as defenders of their communities? It is 18 years since the Good Friday Agreement. We need to get money past the gatekeepers of disadvantaged communities. We need to get the money to the residents, tried-and-tested charities and community groups, not to individuals who will misuse the resources. Bona fide groups, such as the Churches and charities, have been battling for 40 years on the ground against paramilitaries and their insidious and corrosive activities.

They should be awarded funding, not pop-up community groups created to deal with this money.

We hope that, with a more detailed and thoughtful strategy for combating paramilitaries in Northern Ireland, the UK Government will then release funding. I have stated that Alliance has worked in the past to combat paramilitarism in Northern Ireland. Importantly, we have provided a number of suggestions to the Executive on working more effectively towards disbanding paramilitaries in Northern Ireland once and for all. We need smart, strategic thinking and a plan that will work. The duty of MLAs, Ministers and the Opposition is to —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Dickson: — promote lawfulness and to stop rewarding to those who subscribe to lawlessness.

Mr Beattie: I beg to move amendment No 1:

Leave out all after "believes" and insert

"that 22 years on from the ceasefires, and 18 years since the Good Friday Agreement, all paramilitary organisations should have ceased to exist; condemns all paramilitary activities; notes the Fresh Start panel report on the 'Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland' and the lacklustre response from the Executive; regrets that the Executive have allocated only £3.8 million of a potential budget line of £10 million in this financial year; further notes the statement of the Minister of Finance that British Government funding to address paramilitary activity will not be released until the Executive agree a more detailed action plan on tackling paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Minister of Justice to rectify the inadequacies of the action plan by producing a substantive response to the report, which contains clear targets, timescales and resources for implementation, identifies which Departments have responsibility for specific actions, and commits to developing a protocol on state and public-sector engagement with individuals with perceived paramilitary connections."

I move this amendment on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party and the SDLP, and I thank Mr Dickson for proposing the motion. I am glad he sees that our amendment adds to the motion and can support it.

I am naturally an optimist: for me, the grass is greener on the other side, and the glass is always half-full rather than half-empty. Some people will say that is because I view things in a simplistic way, through primary colours, but maybe it is because of my background. I look to mission command for a series of tasks, both specified and implied, and then I look at an end result. For that end result, all you need is a time that you want it for and the resources that you need, and then you will achieve your mission.

11.00 am

If I am really honest, and I will be, about this action plan for dealing with paramilitarism in Northern Ireland, I am absolutely pessimistic. I really am pessimistic. I take no joy in saying that I am pessimistic. I see 43 recommendations, but I do not see any unifying factor. I do not see any momentum. I do not see any urgency. What I see is 43 mini-plans, all working in isolation. That will not get us

to where we want to be. Here is the thing: in five years, when we have not achieved what we have set ourselves to achieve, it will be the Executive parties that point the finger at the Justice Minister and say that she is at fault because she is taking the lead on this issue. I thank the Justice Minister for being here to listen to the debate. I genuinely thank you.

What makes me feel pessimistic? I will tell you what makes me feel pessimistic: the funding. There was an expectation that there would be £5 million from the Executive, topped up with £5 million a year from Westminster, to help to tackle paramilitarism. That was the expectation. Yet, we intend to spend only £3.8 million of that £10 million in the first year. The Finance Minister says that it is because Westminster will not release the money because the plans are not developed enough. I have a tendency to agree with him. I look at some of the money that is being spent; for example, by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Three programmes on community empowerment, re-imaging communities and bonfire management are being delivered by the Housing Executive at a cost of £498,000, but it has not —

Mr Stalford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Beattie: Just a moment. It has not spoken to the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition, which is doing the same body of work. It is naturally not joined-up. I will give way now.

Mr Stalford: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. I asked Mr Dickson to give way three times, and he refused. The reason why I wanted him to give way was that — you mentioned the re-imaging of communities run by the Housing Executive — when people from the Alliance Party get on their high horse about people being in pictures with others who are accused of paramilitary associations, perhaps they would like to google some of the re-imaging projects that have operated throughout the city of Belfast.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Beattie: Thank you for remotely using me to ask the Alliance Party a question. I am sure that the Alliance Party will be able to answer that question in due course.

I also look at the money being spent by the PSNI on:

“Policing with the Community – to establish a framework which will enable the operationalisation of policing with the community in those communities still adversely affected by paramilitarism.”

What on earth does that even mean? I can hardly even say it, for goodness' sake. Yet, I will stand and say that I am looking at plans for the Probation Board that include the roll-out of the enhanced combination orders. I think that that is a good thing.

Here is where I have real concern: we are talking about ending organised crime, paramilitarism and criminality, yet we have not funded the NCA at the very start. The NCA brings a certain expertise and strategic intelligence; its *raison d'être* is dealing with organised crime, and we have not funded it. It did put in for funding but was taken out because it is a non-devolved body, so it has to apply through the PSNI to get funding. It did not get it because the Department of Justice believed that its bid was speculative. Really? Is it not working here already? Where we have £1.123 billion going to the PSNI for:

“Dedicated investigative capacity to tackle paramilitarism and organised crime”,

none of that money is going to the NCA. I find that absolutely extraordinary.

Transition is incredibly important. I understand where former paramilitaries and terrorists want to move on with their lives; they leave that behind them and they want to move on. I can understand that. If they really want to transition, they need help. Support for transition is under B1, which states:

“The Executive should urgently adopt recommendations by the Review Panel that (a) the Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998 (FETO) should be amended; (b) the employers' guidance should be implemented in respect of public sector recruitment and vetting; and (c) that there should be greater transparency over all these issues.”

The action plan says “urgently”.

The action plan came out on 19 July, and it was not urgent enough.

Have the Executive engaged with the ex-prisoners' working group to address the issues identified relating to access to financial services, including lending, insurance, adoption and travel? What is the incentive for people to really transition if we are sitting on our hands and not giving them tools to help them? We need to help them, and we need to do it quickly. We need time frames and timescales. When will the process be completed? Will it be in five years, 10 years, 15 years or 20 years? When will we say whether or not it is working? We do not know, because we do not have any time frames. We are kicking the can down the road.

At the end of the year, we will produce a public awareness campaign costing £530,000. Awareness of what? Is it awareness that we do not want paramilitarism? I think that our country knows that. We do not yet have the structures in place to deal with it. We have seen that because we are spending only the meagre amount of £3.8 million. It is not working.

Mr Frew: Will the Member give way?

Mr Beattie: Sorry, I cannot.

I will not be thanked for this, but I am going to say something because it has to be said: Sinn Féin has an inability to distance itself from the dissidents. It can use words like, “They are traitors to Ireland”, but I understand how hard it is. Some IRA members whom Sinn Féin knew have bled into the dissidents, so it has a real issue. On the other hand, we have the DUP paying off paramilitaries: £1.7 million was given to Charter NI. Guess what? Over £500,000 of that is going on management costs.

Lord Morrow: Will the Member give way?

Mr Beattie: Sorry, I cannot.

I am told, “All this is going to happen, but, actually, we're dealing with paramilitarism anyway; it's one of the things we normally deal with”. Do you know what? Tell that to the 400 families who have been forced out of their homes. Tell it to the victims of punishment shootings. Explain it to the families of Michael McGibbon, John Boreland, Joe Reilly and prison officer Adrian Ismay. It is not working.

What do we need to do? I am always told that we have to give alternatives. Here is my alternative: let us fund the PSNI properly. Let us bring it up to the manning levels as set out in the Patten report. Let us re-institute neighbourhood policing. Let us get police into our neighbourhoods again to listen to the communities, take those people off the streets, arrest when necessary and control if possible. We need to set out targets, timelines, outcomes and unifying factors.

This is not just an attack on the Executive, although it will clearly sound like it. I am trying to get people to gel and move this forward so that they look at the problems and say, "Well, that hasn't worked. Let's do something that does work". Good work is going on. I am looking at Mr Frew, who wants to ask me a question.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Beattie: As the head of the Justice Committee, he is doing good work.

I support amendment No 1 and the motion.

Mr Kelly: I beg to move amendment No 2:

Leave out all after "Groups" and insert

" and the publication of an Executive action plan; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Minister of Justice to ensure the full and robust implementation of all 43 recommendations in a manner that aligns resources with needs, is prompt and innovative, engages and empowers communities, builds unequivocal commitment to the rule of law, supports transition, tackles criminality and that addresses the systemic issues that perpetuate paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime."

In the Chamber, we have a motion and two amendments. All three have things in common. After listening to Doug Beattie, I find that there are some things that I agree with and some that I do not, but I will get into that later. I am a wee bit worried that the Alliance Party seems to wring its hands because it did not get the Justice Ministry.

The fact that there is agreement is not surprising. We have the Fresh Start panel report that the Executive and other parties accept. We are all, by and large, agreed that, whether it is 18 years after the Good Friday Agreement or 22 years after the ceasefires in 1994, all paramilitary organisations should disappear and be disbanded — full stop. That is what we all agreed to. The big question is about the best way to achieve that goal in the shortest time and with the resources available.

The Executive have an action plan and a ring-fenced budget. There is a lot in one of the amendments — I think that it is the SDLP and UUP amendment — about what has been spent. However, there is a ring-fenced budget, so the money is there to deal with the problem: there is £50 million to achieve that. The motion and the Opposition amendment, each in its own way, seem simply to want to attack — even though Doug denies it — the Executive's action plan, as opposed to giving specific ideas of how to assist realistically in the implementation of its 43 recommendations.

The focus of the action plan is on tackling paramilitary activity. I want to deal with that as well because the difference between tackling and disbandment was raised. These are illegal organisations, and, therefore, there is a law to disband them. Tackling it is how you process down the

road in order to tackle paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime throughout the North. I emphasise the word "tackling" because this will be a difficult process and wishing that such activity would disappear just will not hack it.

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kelly: You can spend your own time on bombast and attacks on people instead of taking up mine.

That is why the Sinn Féin amendment:

"calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Minister of Justice to ensure the full and robust"

Lord Morrow: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kelly: I will not — a stand-in for Jim Allister is all I need.

"the full and robust implementation of all 43 recommendations in a manner that aligns resources with needs, is prompt and innovative, engages and empowers communities, builds unequivocal commitment to the rule of law, supports transition, tackles criminality and that addresses the systemic issues that perpetuate paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime."

That is joined-up thinking. That is outcomes-based. That is co-design involving partnerships, including the community. Initially, what is required is the development of an implementation plan that designates the imperative of an adequately resourced community response alongside a robust criminal justice response for tackling paramilitaries, paramilitary activity and organised criminality in all areas. The criminal justice response could help to create the space and lay the groundwork for community initiatives to kick in. This will not be blamed on the Justice Minister only; we are very, very aware that this involves many other aspects of Departments and the community itself.

Communities and communal initiatives need to be innovative and adequately resourced, with community input an integral aspect of any genuine co-design approach to formulating the response. Communities must be empowered to build and develop levels of confidence in our new policing dispensation, our criminal justice system and our peace and political processes while helping to deliver an unequivocal commitment to the rule of law. Communities should not be told that they must do it; they should be empowered to do it. Communities can also assist in the process of isolating and marginalising paramilitary and criminal gangs operating from within communities but engaging in anti-community activities such as punishment beatings, shootings, extortion, robberies, drug dealing and worse. All these activities undermine the morale, cohesion and quality of life of working-class communities who already suffer from the ravages of socio-economic deprivation, generational educational underachievement and unemployment. Such issues create the conditions that feed, develop and sustain paramilitarism and criminality.

Any meaningful attempt to tackle such activities needs to focus on the causes of the problem, not the symptoms. The vast majority of people in working-class areas — in fact, in any area or class — whether they are nationalist, unionist or other, want to be rid of the scourge of paramilitarism and organised crime, but they cannot do it alone. We must empower communities to engage with the young people who constitute one of the most vulnerable

sections of society in relation to such activities. The criminal gangs clearly target our young people with the lure of the easy money that accrues from gang activity, and that is juxtaposed with life on the margins where people have low self-esteem, are devoid of hope and have been robbed of developing their full potential in life.

We must attempt to align initiatives with other political interventions to ensure a sustained and concentrated onslaught against deprivation and youth marginalisation. This strategy, in coordination with other political interventions, must make a difference in the areas where paramilitarism and criminality are most prevalent. Qualitative change is essential for these communities. A key aspect of the strategy to tackle paramilitarism and crime is the requirement for the full integration of former prisoners of the recent conflict. I am glad that Doug Beattie raised this issue.

That is those who now play a positive and productive role in society, not those who do not. You need to make the difference between people who are having a positive role, whatever their history, and those who are not. The blanket approach to ex-prisoners is absolutely wrong. It does not work and is detrimental to moving the process forward. Many have played a key role in consolidating our peace and political processes. I can already hear the moans and groans of the middle-class politicians with tunnel vision; those who do not experience the daily effect on their lives. In nationalist and republican working-class areas, many ex-political prisoners are leaders of great positivity.

11.15 am

Doug Beattie raised this, and, although I agree with things that he has said, he is absolutely wrong on this. You cannot just say, as an opinion, that Sinn Féin has not distanced itself from dissidents. I presume you are on social media — I am just speaking personally, never mind the rest of Sinn Féin. All you have to do is go on social media to see the attitude of dissidents to me — I am an ex-prisoner; I am not naive; I know what the craic is — and to realise the distance. We are hated. Dissidents hate Sinn Féin more than they hate the British that they claim to be opposed to. When you make a statement like that, you need to have a basis on which to say it. We have said it time and time again, and I will say it again now: I condemn them, absolutely and unequivocally. When you come in and say things like that, you need to have some sort of evidence behind it.

Many ex-prisoners continue to encounter barriers to full participation in society, for example, identifying obstacles to employment, financial services, adoption, international travel, and other issues. Those obstacles also impinge upon the freedoms and rights of prisoners' family members. So, it is not just the ex-prisoners; their families are also attacked through this. They have no court convictions, but they are discriminated against solely on the basis of their relationship with a former prisoner.

Again, I mention Doug Beattie — I thank him for this — who raised the issue of the protocols that were put in place. They were very good protocols, and I agree entirely with you that they should be re-enacted, because they worked and were seen to work and be helpful in transition and reintegration.

Such obstacles should be removed if we are to facilitate the reintegration of former prisoners and their families who fully support our peace and political processes. Equal citizenship should extend to every citizen.

This brings me to the final clause in both the motion and the Opposition's amendment, and it relates to one of the recommendations of the report about developing protocols. It states:

“a protocol on state and public sector engagement with individuals with perceived paramilitary connections.”

I find the word “perceived” to be crucial in this. What does it mean, and who will be the arbiter of it? Surely not the media or politicians, and I say that as a politician. This could become a charter for discrimination, and the dogs in the street have no legal standing in the matter. Perception can become reality, but that does not mean that perception is always reality. We need to take a view of individuals, of people involved — whatever their history — and how they will be able to assist in what we are trying to do with the panel report through this motion. We all know and agree on where we want to get to. There is a plan —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Kelly: — and we should all be working together on that plan to achieve that goal. I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr Frew: I welcome the debate. It is always good to make sure that we are trying our best to relieve our community of paramilitary activity. That is something that we have been fighting for, tooth and nail, since our inception as a party, all those years ago. It is a complex issue, which will not be resolved by a simplistic motion from an opposition party, rounded up with the other opposition parties, that says, “You are not doing enough; you need to do more, and we are not happy”. Well, none of us should be happy that there are paramilitaries on our streets, that there are gangsters on our streets, and that there is organised crime on our streets.

The motion speaks true: it is 18 years after the Good Friday Agreement. Amendment No 1 speaks true: it is 22 years on from the ceasefires. I know from growing up that more people were recruited into loyalist paramilitary organisations after the ceasefires than at any period during the Troubles. What does that say about the parties that are now criticising the Executive for their action plan that was launched in July? If you want to talk about failure, that was failure.

Who was in charge during the ceasefires? Who was in charge when paramilitary prisoners walked out of prison with their fists clenched, with their hordes cheering and cachinnating. Who was in charge then? Have we not been picking up the crap and the pieces since? Have we not? We will continue to do that work, because it is worthwhile. We see the pain on our working-class streets. It is OK being in your ivory tower. It is all well and good to say, “We want this motion supported and paramilitarism to end”. Why did it not end with the ceasefires? Why did it not end when the Good Friday Agreement was signed? Simply because the issue is more complex than that.

Of course there needs to be a justice element. In fact, I would go so far as to say that it was the intelligence services that brought about the ceasefires. It was not political statements or political agreements; rather, it

was the intelligence services strangling the terrorist organisations to a point at which they could not operate. There will always be a justice solution to this.

Lord Morrow: I thank the Member for giving way. This is a point that I tried to make earlier, but no one was in the mood to give way.

When, for instance, the SDLP and Sinn Féin weld to demand that children's play parks be named after terrorists, does that help the situation? What sort of message does that send out to the law-abiding community?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Frew: Thank you, Mr Speaker. That is an absolutely valid point, Lord Morrow, and I thank you for making it. No one here can turn around and say that he or she is clean when it comes to this sort of thing. Look at the SDLP leader, the SDLP party and what they have done since the ceasefires and the Good Friday Agreement; they, they should be taking a good look at themselves.

I do not blame just the UUP for letting the prisoners out —

Mr Stalford: I appreciate the Member giving way. I see that Mr McCrossan thinks that this is terribly funny. I wonder whether he was laughing as much when his party was campaigning for the release from prison of dissidents.

Mr Frew: I noted that, when Mr McCrossan was speaking yesterday in the House, his language was violent. He should have taken interventions, but he ran away from doing so. He should be ashamed of his language yesterday, as should his leader, because his language was also violent at times. He was talking about kicking doors in on Downing Street. What sort of language is that?

There is a lot that I agreed with in Doug Beattie's contribution, but how can you say that we should spend £10 million this year urgently but in the next sentence say that the apparatus and arrangements are not in place to spend that money? Why would you throw money away foolishly without knowing whether the checks and balances are in place to achieve what you are trying to achieve? That is just nonsense. It is silly.

I am running out of time, but I will say that Doug's language around Charter NI was irresponsible. It is not a terrorist organisation. It is a community group made up of civil servants, community activists, trade unionists and a Church minister. Where would we be if those people were not in Charter NI?

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Frew: We need to make sure that we encourage such groups. We need to make sure that they do the work on the ground and that we are behind them, working with them, to support them. I would like "big house" unionism to get out of its ivory tower and see the work that is being done on the ground.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr McPhillips: I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate today, and I support the motion. The SDLP has come in for a great response from the DUP Benches, so I will start by making it clear that those involved in any kind of paramilitary activity serve no purpose and have no place in a modern Northern Ireland, be they republican or

loyalist. Paramilitary groups were not justified in the past and certainly are not in the present or the future.

Mr Frew: Will the Member give way?

Mr McPhillips: It is a damning indictment of this institution that, 18 years after peace was delivered through great men like John Hume and others, paramilitary groups still have such influence in our communities. We have been very clear that we in the Assembly cannot sit back and allow paramilitary groups to use the tactics of fear and intimidation to extort and control our communities as they line their own pockets. Those same groups have terrorised communities across the North. They have held them back, with no respect for the rule of law, through arbitrary killings and so-called punishment beatings. In fact, studies from 'The Detail' show that, from 2006 to 2015, 22 people lost their life to paramilitaries; there were over 1,000 shootings and bombings and 787 punishment attacks; and nearly 4,000 people were forced from their home by paramilitary organisations. Last year, we had the murder of two high-profile republicans that threatened to bring down these very institutions. I think that it is fair to say that paramilitary organisations are very much alive and well in the North of this island. Last week, we saw a 'Belfast Telegraph' report that, last year alone, 433 people sought emergency housing due to paramilitary intimidation. In 2016, how can such action be tolerated, never mind accepted, and how can paramilitaries be allowed to get away with such criminal acts?

On the monitoring arrangements, I welcome the three-person panel's report on paramilitary activity in the North and the proposals brought forward. As the report makes clear, tackling paramilitaries requires a concerted effort by the Government, but, instead of taking positive action, they have been found wanting on delivery.

Mr Frew: Will the Member give way? He will get an extra minute.

Mr McPhillips: OK. I will give way.

Mr Frew: Thank you very much. I commend the man's bravery; I wish that some of his colleagues would take the same option. After everything the Member has said, why on Earth would he support the naming of a play park after a paramilitary?

Mr McPhillips: First and foremost, I am not going to stand here as a member of the SDLP and take lectures from the DUP. I am a member of the nationalist community and have lived through the history of the Troubles. I remind the DUP of the Third Force and organisations like that. You have had truck with paramilitaries for years, so do not lecture the SDLP.

As the report makes clear, tackling paramilitaries, as I said, requires a concerted effort by the Government, but they have been found wanting on delivery. They have failed to produce a detailed plan that was meant to deal with one of our most chronic and embedded issues. It is inadequate and badly lacking. How do the Executive intend to promote the North of Ireland as a new, vibrant society when they fail to deliver on a robust plan, which has resulted in the Westminster Government withholding funding? The failure to act holds many communities back, as paramilitaries' criminality deters investment, jobs and, importantly, reconciliation. Their activity only strengthens a deeply

entrenched mentality of “us and them” and has absolutely no purpose but to hold back people and communities.

These communities still have the dark shadow of paramilitaries hanging over them, due to the inaction of this institution and the current Executive. Paramilitary groups feed off the deprivation that further compounds the situation that many young people find themselves in, especially in poorer communities. Paramilitaries limit educational outcomes, quality of life and social mobility among our young people, who are impressionable and are attracted into a life of thuggery and crime, rather than staying in education. That is a huge issue and concern, and action needs to be taken urgently to give those young people the chance to change their lives for the better and allow them to contribute to society. This cannot be acceptable and cannot be allowed to continue.

11.30 am

The supposed Fresh Start Agreement was meant to be the final straw for paramilitaries. We have yet to see that work out. We often hear from the Chief Constable and others that the PSNI is not equipped to tackle paramilitary organisations in the North, so I ask the Minister this: what additional funding have the PSNI and the NCA received since the Fresh Start?

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr McPhillips: We often hear that we need a multidisciplinary approach to paramilitaries and that —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr McPhillips: — we need to move communities on, through education and support. I completely agree with that. It is also high time that some political parties dealt with their past and that the Assembly dealt with the issues of the disappeared and the abused.

Mrs Cameron: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the matter.

By and large, paramilitary activity is something that has all but disappeared from our television screens and newsfeeds. Whilst we have not heard so much in the way of shootings, bombings and assaults in the last number of years, which is, of course, to be welcomed, that does not mean that the paramilitaries have gone away.

The behaviour of paramilitaries has become much more sinister and insidious in nature. Many communities live with an undercurrent of fear exerted by members of paramilitary organisations who seek to exercise control over areas and those living there. My constituency office regularly deals with complaints about the appearance of murals, flags and sectarian graffiti from both sides. In most cases, those who contact me know who is responsible yet are too frightened to report it for fear of repercussions, and, in many instances, they do not even want to reveal their identity to me when they make the complaint. That level of fear in our communities has no place in Northern Ireland, and I welcome any steps that we can take to alleviate it. It is fairly damning that, rather than the regular reprisal attacks of the past, the majority of paramilitary assaults now take place against members of their own communities. Be it through intimidation, punishment beating or kneecappings, the fear that is exerted over people is unacceptable.

The wider issue is, of course, the involvement of former paramilitaries in organised crime. Cigarette and fuel smuggling, counterfeit goods, drug dealing, racketeering and prostitution have all thrived in Northern Ireland in recent years under the guise of paramilitary activity.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Member for giving way. I listened intently to the SDLP Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone and agreed with much of what he said. Sadly, he would not take an intervention. Would the Member agree with me that, given what the Member has said, it is all the more bizarre that, for a long time, the SDLP refused to support the introduction of the National Crime Agency to Northern Ireland to help the PSNI tackle crime in Northern Ireland?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mrs Cameron: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I also thank the Member for his intervention and agree wholeheartedly with his comments.

Paramilitary activities are certainly not unique to Northern Ireland, but our legacy has perhaps afforded a degree of protection to those involved. I sincerely hope that a significant portion of the Fresh Start funding is allocated to deal with that area. Close working between the NCA, HMRC and the NIEA will help to make organised crime activities a lot less appealing. Alongside a more community-centred approach to policing, we should work towards a societal change, where reporting organised crime is not something to be apprehensive of.

‘The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups’ identified the worrying correlation between educational underachievement in young people and the increasing likelihood of joining a paramilitary reorganisation. That perfectly highlights the need for a holistic approach to ending paramilitarism. Unfortunately, there is no easy fix for the problem, and it will require input and work from every Department. In the case of educational underachievement, there are obvious factors for the Department of Education to look at, but there are also aspects for the Department for Infrastructure and the Department for the Economy to look at in the areas of addressing community engagement and providing appropriate further education and training opportunities amongst other things.

The Programme for Government sets out a variety of actions that will seek to move us towards a more inclusive society and one in which paramilitarism will naturally weaken and decline. If we combine that with the ongoing T:BUC programme, we are in a strong position to build a Northern Ireland free from the shadow of paramilitarism.

The role of women in ending paramilitarism was another key aspect identified in the report. Women have been universally acknowledged for their positive contribution to peace building and post-conflict reconstruction, and we have a further opportunity for community engagement by supporting women to help develop networks to assist in the transition from paramilitarism.

I realise that this is only the beginning of a journey and that there will be a tremendous amount of cross-departmental work ahead before we can see an end to these activities. Let us face it: if the solution to the issue were simple, it would have happened years ago.

This requires a generational change that is unlikely to happen in this mandate. That said, the Fresh Start report gives us the skeleton of change and a set of recommendations that will help us to move forward to a Northern Ireland free from paramilitary influence and the organised crime associated with it. As we move forward with the recommendations, I look forward to the meat being added to the bones and seeing a strategic, sensible plan to help our communities to grow and to put our past behind us.

Mr McGuigan: Unsurprisingly, I intend to speak in support of my party's amendment. I begin by saying that, 18 years on from the Good Friday Agreement, there are no reasons why any person, young or old, should end up in jail, take a life or lose their own life on this island for political purposes. However, there is every reason for people, young or old, with a political outlook to engage in politics, in activism and in their communities to help those communities and us all to create a better place for everyone to live in. To that end, the Fresh Start panel recommendations covering the four key areas — promoting lawfulness, support for transition, tackling criminality and addressing systemic issues — and the 43 action points that flowed from them are important and key areas of work.

The Government have a responsibility to support and protect our community. That is why the Executive agreed with the work of the panel and produced an action plan entitled 'Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime' that allows for greater coordination across Departments, the PSNI, the justice system and civic society to achieve those aims. It is why the Executive have pledged substantial funding. That, in my view, is not a lacklustre response.

Although I do not have time to go through all the 43 key action points, I want to highlight a few issues. As already highlighted by Doug Beattie and my party colleague, the report recognised the difficulties faced by former prisoners and identified and made recommendations to address those problems. Such obstacles must be removed if we are to facilitate the reintegration of former prisoners and their families who fully support peace and the political process. On that note, I also commend the positive contribution to building peace by many ex-prisoners, and I endorse the comments made by the deputy First Minister in the Chamber on 17 October on the same subject:

"On the republican side, there are many ex-prisoners who have been convicted of many things and all of them make a powerful and positive contribution to developing communities and their capacity."

Mr Stalford: I appreciate the Member giving way. I have a very brief point. The Member talked about ex-prisoners who support peace and moving things forward. How hypocritical, therefore, does the Member think it is that one of the Opposition parties, which lambastes the Executive for lack of action in this area, also campaigned for the release of Gerry McGeough from prison, a man who tried to murder a DUP councillor?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McGuigan: The comment that I am reading is actually in response to a question that you, Christopher, asked the deputy First Minister. I will finish that comment:

"Just as important, they work on a cross-community basis with many individuals who, previously, would

have been considered as enemies." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 119, p19, col 2].

The point of this key action in the plan is very important. This aspect will help former prisoners and those who demonstrate that they want to make a transition, so that they will not be marginalised if they sign up to peaceful and democratic means to effect political change.

To end criminality, we need communities to support and trust the PSNI, and we need the same support for and trust in the criminal justice system. On top of that, I welcome the recommendation in the plan that the Executive will put a dedicated fund for restorative justice initiatives in place and will provide enhanced resources over longer periods to deliver positive outcomes for individuals and communities. I also welcome that the Department of Justice will carry out a feasibility study to identify best options for a new centre for restorative excellence.

Common throughout the report and plan is the importance placed on working with and in communities to achieve transformation. As has been stated by everybody, community input is vital, and resourcing community initiatives that help to tackle economic deprivation, unemployment, educational underachievement, lack of social cohesion and other things that create the conditions in which young vulnerable adults can be lured into thinking that gang activities are an easy option are vital as well. The plan identifies not only that but the need to work with education and statutory services to focus on the vulnerability of some young people who join groups and engage in criminal activity.

Given that four debates on the past will take place here over two days, I also note and agree, as stated in recommendation D3, that there remains a need to resolve the outstanding issues relating to the past. That is a key recommendation to help everyone to move forward, and I hope that it is resolved satisfactorily. I take the opportunity to welcome the Ballymurphy families who are here today, and I wish to show solidarity and support to them and their campaign.

I agree with all the contributors today who pointed out the seriousness of the issue. I do not, however, agree with the negativity attached to the motion or shown in the Chamber. It is clear that the Executive, in words and actions, recognise the importance of the issue and have a commitment, with actions and accountability to implement it. A cross-departmental programme board has been established to drive forward commitments made in the Fresh Start Agreement and delivery of the action plan. I note the deputy First Minister's comments here on 17 October on the Independent Reporting Commission:

"The British and Irish Governments signed the treaty required to provide for the body on Tuesday 13 September, and we understand that supporting regulations have been laid before the British [and Irish] Parliament[s]". — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 119, p20, col 1].

He said that proposals would be brought forward —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr McGuigan: — to put the commission in place before the end of the year. I support our amendment to the motion.

Mr Douglas: I rise not only as a member of the Justice Committee but as a representative for East Belfast, where we have had difficulties for many years since the ceasefires 22 years ago. There is no doubt — this is coming through clearly — that the vast majority of our society wants rid of the scourge of paramilitary groups of whatever persuasion. Communities want them to go away, the police want them to go away, and the Assembly wants them to go away. Many paramilitary members who have done their time in jail also want them to go away; they want to live in a normal society. I am not talking about every person who has been involved in paramilitary activity or every person who is a member of a paramilitary organisation.

I agree with Doug Beattie when he talks about the notion of transition and helping those who want to go away and get off the stage. I say today very clearly that some of the people I know in East Belfast are on the right road and want to get rid of paramilitary activity in their communities. However, the simplistic notions that government strategies alone will solve the issue or that £5 million is spent in this financial year or the next are clearly fanciful. Huge amounts of European Peace moneys were invested in peace building for prisoners and their families and for groups that said in those days that they wanted to go away. Twenty-two years on from the ceasefires, however, we still have paramilitaries on our streets. As my colleague Pamela Cameron said, if the solution to the issue was so simple, it would have happened years ago.

I go back to the notion of transition. At a recent Justice Committee meeting, officials were very helpful, and we went through a range of issues on the transition of paramilitary groups and the amount of money that was available and the amount of money that we had not applied for. At that meeting, we agreed that the officials would report back to us regularly. We want to get the process under way as quickly as possible, but it will not happen overnight. As many people have said, it is a complex issue, and, as we all know, there are paramilitary groups within paramilitary groups. The plan needs to be carefully thought through, with actions and outcomes clearly mapped. It will not go away by throwing money at it. Any funds used in the process need to be carefully considered. Money has already begun to be spent on dealing with the issue both from the perspective of encouraging those involved to move away from such activity and in additional and specific funding to assist the criminal justice agencies.

I agree with Doug Beattie that we need to make sure that we get the right investment into the criminal justice agencies that need help and support to get rid of this major situation.

11.45 am

Yesterday, we had a debate about victims and survivors, and we need to keep them at the forefront of any debate because the last thing that we want to do is to be insensitive to the people who have suffered the most by bringing them back to the past as a result of the things that we say in the Chamber or because of our actions. What can we do to support communities and efforts to bring paramilitary activity and criminality to an end? There are a number of good examples in east Belfast. You will be aware of a whole range of initiatives by the Inner East Forum, community activists, churches, the PSNI and others to deal with the difficulties at interfaces and with

flags and emblems, bonfires and other issues. Those are the sorts of organisations that we need to fund so that the money does not go directly to paramilitaries.

The majority of politicians, whether those at Westminster who belong to Northern Ireland, councillors or MLAs, know the paramilitary leaders in our constituencies.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Douglas: The question is this: what are we doing to encourage those people to turn away from criminality? What are we doing to encourage them to get involved in the Fresh Start Agreement? Finally, what are we doing to offer solutions to the Justice Committee and the Justice Minister?

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Beggs: I support the motion and the amendment tabled by the Ulster Unionist Party and the SDLP. I am glad that the proposer of the Alliance Party motion has bought into that amendment.

Eighteen years after the Belfast Agreement and the end of the conflict, why do we have any paramilitaries? Why are there any still around? That is a fundamental question. I thank NICVA, which, in partnership with The Detail, has used the open data that is becoming available — we need more open data from government — to highlight the scale of paramilitary activity over the past number of years in its report on paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland, which Richie McPhillips mentioned earlier. Some 80 convictions have been secured; there have been 22 murders and almost 4,000 reports of people being forced from their home; and 8,500 arms and 495 kg of explosives have been seized. They must all go away or be forced to go away. Time is marching on, and I believe that it is time for additional resources. My colleague Doug Beattie mentioned his disappointment that, of a potential £10 million, only £3.8 million has been drawn down. Surely, more could have been done, given the time that has passed and the time that there has already been to plan how to tackle the problem.

The PSNI believes that some 33 organised criminal gangs with direct links to paramilitaries operate currently. Are they paramilitaries or are they organised crime gangs? I am afraid that the distinction is not seen by anyone who faces their wrath. There have consistently been about 50 dissident republicans and about 50 loyalists in prison over the past number of years. Why are there any? There should not be any paramilitaries. Clearly, we need additional specialist resources to address —

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Beggs: Yes, I will.

Mr Humphrey: The Member has posed a number of questions that are absolutely valid. I mean this in all sincerity because, like him, I was a member of the Ulster Unionist Party in 1998 when the Belfast Agreement was agreed, and, like him, I voted against it in the party and in the country: all these years later, can the Member, when he is posing those questions, tell us his solutions? Why does he think that we still have this problem?

Mr Speaker: The Member will have an extra minute.

Mr Beggs: I will come to that later in my speech, when I will suggest some things.

One of the suggestions is that we need to draw in additional specialist resources. Additional community policing, with the support of the PSNI and the community, has been mentioned as a way to make sure that the community is policed. It is important that we draw in specialist support from the National Crime Agency, which has experts. Often, the agency has not looked at crime gangs because they are just below the threshold at which it would become involved. Why is some of the money not being used to help the police to draw in that specialist expertise to follow the money, do detailed surveillance and identify those who are involved in organised crime? That is my disappointment.

There is a very evident difficulty with a rise in paramilitary activity in my constituency. Over the summer, we had the public massing of a mob in a dispute between sections of the breakaway south-east Antrim UDA. In 2014, there was a 70-strong mob with hammers, swords and golf sticks out in public in daylight showing a very public face of paramilitarism, which is normally underground. They are challenging the law and the justice system, and we, as a community, need to respond.

Like Sammy Douglas, I have been contacted by many members of paramilitary groups who want to leave. However, regrettably, once they join, they are not allowed to leave and are coerced. In my constituency, those in the south-east Antrim UDA have already got the message that they must turn up at an event or get a beating. We talk about gangmasters, and there is a degree of that going on here. Those at the top who have the power and money do not want to give up that money and power. We, as a community, must draw on all the public resources to follow the money and undermine those who are at the top and controlling people often against their wishes, just like the Mafia does.

There are still the paramilitary murals. Good work has been done in the Re-imaging Communities programme, but, sadly, additional paramilitary murals have been erected in recent times. There is the one in Greenisland. There is also a very public one in the Craigy Hill estate, the south-east Antrim provost gunman, which has been a blight on that community for several years. We, as a community and a Government, must do something to address that. There is very weak community infrastructure in many of the disadvantaged communities where paramilitaries operate. There needs to be community planning in a manner that draws in all the public agencies —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Beggs: — the Churches and members of the local community to address the needs of those communities, so that no one group controls any community, we draw everyone together to address the needs of the community, and we remove the paramilitaries through policing and the creation a positive alternative.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Dr Farry: It is worth noting that this is the first proper opportunity that the Assembly has had to discuss the panel report and the Executive's so-called action plan since their publication in the spring and summer of this year. That the Executive have failed to provide their own opportunity in that regard during that period is, in itself, a damning indictment of the problems around accountability.

This is, of course, a serious issue that continues to afflict our society. It is important that we bear in mind the context in which we are discussing this matter. Eighteen years on from the Good Friday Agreement and 22 years on from the ceasefires, too many communities in Northern Ireland continue to be under the grip of paramilitaries. This has a corrosive effect on our society as a whole and, in particular, the individuals who are most directly affected by it. It is a corruption of the rule of law. In practice, the rule of law does not entirely hold in certain areas, and we do not have a normal society. This impacts on people's individual human rights and their opportunity to develop to their full potential and play a full role within society, as they continue to exist under the boot of illegitimate social control that exists in many areas. It also impacts on our economy. The very clear and visible signs that parts of Northern Ireland are de facto no-go areas are a deterrent to investment and the improvement of people's economic opportunities.

The more immediate context, of course, is last summer's political crisis. At that time, there was a lot of indignation about the effect of paramilitaries on our society and people saying that something must be done. Therefore, we had the Fresh Start Agreement and these commitments. If you want to take a very cynical view, you could view what has been produced so far as a box-ticking exercise, the outworkings of the necessary steps that had to be taken to keep the political show on the road rather than a genuine commitment to a clear and new way forward in addressing these issues.

I hope to be proven wrong in that regard, but, from what I have seen, that is very much a view that people could easily come to.

What we have before us is a very weak action plan. The panel report was robust, but the action plan is weak. It is important that we recall why the action plan is weak. It does not have a proper strategic analysis; it does not have proper targets; it does not have a proper implementation plan; and it does not indicate the resources that will come forward. It is very much a tick-box exercise, as my colleague Stewart Dickson stated, where, in essence, we try to shoehorn the different recommendations in alongside the existing policies and practices of Departments rather than showing evidence of a rethink and of applying some of the advice from the panel and seeing how we can do things differently. We are simply saying, "We are covered on that recommendation. We are fine, and we don't need to do something else".

There is also the notion that the timescale was too rushed and that this was the best effort we could make in the available time. Who set the timescale? It was the DUP and Sinn Féin in Fresh Start. They set the end of June as the deadline for the action plan. There is also the notion that we are being somehow critical of the Executive because they cannot spend all the money during this year, and we are told that it is no good throwing money at a problem and that we have to ensure that money is spent wisely. I agree with that, but the fundamental issue that they have to pick up on is that the UK Government are saying that the action plan itself is not good enough. That is a UK Government, who, many would argue, have, at times, had an overly pragmatic approach to dealing with paramilitaries because they wanted to keep the political show on the road. When the UK Treasury says that there is a problem, we need to take heed keenly. It is also worth bearing in mind that 'A

Fresh Start' refers to other actions that need to take place to get a robust plan to tackle division in our community. That is directly linked to the strategy on dealing with paramilitaries, and there is no evidence of it being taken forward.

I want to focus my closing remarks on the need for the protocol. The protocol is a fundamental recommendation in the panel report. We see evidence of why it is needed when Ministers engage with current paramilitaries — I say "current paramilitaries" and not "people with a past". When you are pictured with current paramilitaries and accept and justify that, you undermine the Government's effort to tackle paramilitarism. It sends out a signal that other voices in communities do not matter and that those people are the gatekeepers and the ones that you cherish. There is no point in saying that Charter NI won funding fair and square —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Dr Farry: — the DUP has actively made efforts to fund Charter NI for many years, never mind about level playing fields.

Ms Sugden (The Minister of Justice): Northern Ireland has come a long way since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement 18 years ago. A different and better Northern Ireland with a strong Executive, a functioning Assembly, a new Opposition and commitments to exclusively peaceful and democratic means is a reality. That the Executive were so ready and willing to accept all the recommendations made by the three-person panel on tackling paramilitarism is a clear indication of how far we have come. That we needed a three-person panel to investigate ways of tackling the scourge of paramilitaries in our communities nearly two decades after the Good Friday Agreement shows how far we still have to go.

Northern Ireland, thankfully, is a very different place today, and whatever causes people once thought they were fighting for or whatever threats they thought they were defending against are no more. There is no role for self-serving paramilitaries; they have no part to play in our communities. Let us call them what they are: criminals. They are criminal gangs who inflict fear and harm on the communities that they claim to protect and serve. They peddle drugs to our young people, launder fuel, sell counterfeit goods and engage in all forms of criminal activity. The cause they promote is personal gain, lining their own pockets at the expense of the community. I want to see an end to that. I want to see communities that are free from fear and coercive control. I want to see communities where people can live in peace and where our young people can lead fulfilled lives, secure good employment and not be drawn into criminality.

12.00 noon

Mr Allister: Will the Minister give way?

Ms Sugden: Not just yet.

I want to see communities where people respect the law and each other. I want to see confident and capable communities in which everyone can play their part. I want to see an end to paramilitary-style assaults because they are crimes affecting real people who are often left with life-changing injuries, sometimes as payment for drug debts. They are real people, not just crime statistics. Regrettably, another instance of that nature occurred at the weekend. I

want to see communities make that transition, and I want to see individuals make that transition. To them, I say this: "You cannot be a community leader and engage in illegal activities, because you are a criminal, and your community does not want you".

Unfortunately, Northern Ireland is no different from anywhere else in the world. Organised crime, drug dealing, people trafficking and all other types of crime exist everywhere. However, we have the added difficulty of dealing with the recent past and the challenges that that brings. The paramilitary groups that still exist include elements whose path of transition has been crime, but others see their role in post-conflict society as a positive one, helping to promote their culture and identity whilst building communities in a positive way.

In tackling paramilitarism and organised crime, we take on some of the most difficult challenges that we face. We received the panel report at the end of May, accepted its recommendations and moved quickly to publish an action plan agreed by all stakeholders with a role in delivering the recommendations. As I said at the time, it would have been irresponsible for us to claim that the action plan was anything more than a high-level direction of travel. It was acceptance, and that is a huge leap forward. Our work did not end with the action plan in July; it only began then, and it continues. Rushing to spend money as a superficial sign that we are taking action is not the way we are prepared to go, and that is why it must be done right this time. There is no overnight solution to the problem.

Mr Ford: Will the Minister give way?

Ms Sugden: Not just yet.

Some of the recommendations in the report will be difficult to achieve and even more difficult to embed and sustain. Some will take a long time, because tackling paramilitarism and organised crime requires the Executive, the Assembly, local government, law enforcement, statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, charities and the community to work together over a sustained period to make it happen. We need to achieve the Programme for Government outcomes, where the ultimate measure that matters is the impact on people's lives and create the society that we envisage, where there are jobs and education, good housing, better health and improved prosperity for all. We need to create the conditions where there is no space in our communities for these criminals to act, where lawfulness is respected. It is by joining the action plan on tackling paramilitarism with the Programme for Government and the many other initiatives that exist that we will defeat crime and create the sustainable, stronger and safer communities that we all want. It is difficult, laborious work that requires dedication and a relentless focus on achieving outcomes. The problems that we need to tackle are deep-rooted and are associated with decades of conflict, poverty, and lack of opportunity and aspiration in those communities, but it is only by tackling those problems that we can succeed in tackling crime.

Let me be crystal clear: this is not a tick-box exercise or a shopping list of recommendations with a price tag against each one. This is not about what we will do to communities; it is about enabling, facilitating and nurturing communities to do it for themselves and about delivering long-term societal change. It takes time to build the relationships to make that happen. It will require new

approaches, innovative ideas and some risk-taking and a leap of faith for those who have seen and heard it all before, so that they understand that this time it is different.

We need a strong and clear approach on paramilitary activity and organised crime, but, unless we understand the barriers to change and take the opportunity offered by the panel's report, we will not ensure that that change is delivered. We need to offer communities a different vision for the future and support the transition to it. As a society, we can say that we all want individuals to play a role in the transition, fulfil their potential and make a contribution. Fresh Start gives our communities a choice. It is the opportunity to choose a path that will transform their community and, ultimately, the lives of each and every individual in it.

There will, however, be those who choose to remain engaged in criminality, and they will be subject to law enforcement. Our law enforcement organisations need and deserve our support. Asking people to report illegal activities to the PSNI is perfectly reasonable, and supporting law enforcement when they need action is the right thing to do. The role of law enforcement is to tackle blatant criminality and to demonstrate to communities that those activities are not to be tolerated.

I was really pleased that the motion was tabled today. It gives us as a Government a chance to send a positive message to our communities about the need for change, the support we will give to communities and the lines in the sand on criminality.

I appreciate that Members are keen for details and that, rightly, they want to know what the Executive are doing. We will, of course, provide more details and updates on progress as it happens, but please appreciate that we are not taking a simplistic approach and support us in this work that is vital for all our communities. Premature attacks serve only to undermine public confidence in what we are doing, and that serves no purpose.

Let me turn to some of the practical details. As Members know, there is £50 million of funding over five years to dedicate to this work, half of which was put up by the Northern Ireland Executive and the other half by the United Kingdom Government. I hope, with what I just outlined, that Members will understand why, in July, when we completed a high-level action plan, that we did not rush to spend money. I make no apology for that. We will need to spend every penny of that money, and we are committed to spending it on the right things at the right time.

Spend will be based on need, and, in a programme of this nature, that need does not break down into five annual neat £5 million parcels. We did not, therefore, draw down money from the Treasury, and, as we still have to complete a lot of early work, we will not do so this year. I spoke with the Secretary of State, James Brokenshire, recently and will do so again this week. I am working with the Secretary of State and the Northern Ireland Office, and we are all dedicated and committed to achieving the same aims. The Northern Ireland Office has a seat on the programme board and is fully engaged with what we are doing.

When the action plan was published in July, there was work that we could start straight away; we did that, spending just under £4 million. Money has been allocated to purchase equipment for Forensic Science Northern Ireland to help to reduce delays in the justice

system. The equipment is on-site and undergoing tests and calibrations, and it will be operational before the end of next year. The first part of the public awareness campaign envisaged in section A, which aims to raise awareness about organised crime and explain the links to paramilitaries, will begin in December. We are working with our justice system partners on delivering initiatives to speed up justice, including the next phase of the Ards indictable cases project, which will go live in May, and implementing committal reform around the end of 2017.

We have established the joint agency task force, and Minister Fitzgerald and I have regular discussions via the IGA mechanism. We have also started work on developing concerted law enforcement activity, with just over £1 million being made available to the PSNI this year for work to tackle organised criminality. We are developing a programme for women in our communities, which is being taken forward through a process of co-design with the aim of starting the work in April. We are supporting the Probation Board with funding for two successful pilots aimed at reducing reoffending. These are Reset, which is an innovative adult mentoring scheme for offenders subject to post-release licence; and a pilot of enhanced combination orders, which provides alternatives to short-term custodial sentences. We are supporting the Housing Executive to roll out community projects based on community empowerment, re-imaging and bonfire management. We are investing in scoping studies on a centre of excellence for restorative practice, and policy development on issues such as organised crime legislation is under way.

We are also now looking at the very hard part of this work: engaging communities, joining up with other initiatives, connecting with other Departments' plans and linking up with the Programme for Government. Whilst there is much that we can do around law enforcement and other Executive-driven activities, it is fundamentally in the communities in which criminality exists that change needs to happen. That is the challenge that we have set for ourselves. It is what makes this plan different and is the only way in which criminality can be dealt with. I hope that what I outlined provides assurances that we are serious, have made a start and are dedicated and committed to delivering for our communities.

Had the motion not used the word "lacklustre", I would have supported it because I, like every Member of the Assembly, want an end to all forms of paramilitarism. I believe that we are on the right path and that good work is already under way. I will, therefore, support amendment No 2 because it is only through engaging with and empowering communities by supporting the rule of law and tackling criminality that we will make real progress on dealing with paramilitary activity and organised crime. That is precisely what Fresh Start envisaged, and that is what the Executive will deliver.

In conclusion, I thank the Members for bringing the debate to the Chamber and for the opportunity to demonstrate that we are committed to addressing the issues associated with paramilitarism. We have come a long way but there is such a long way to go. I repeat: let us not send mixed messages to our communities about how serious we are. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that, as Justice Minister of Northern Ireland, I am committed, along with my Executive colleagues, and I ask the Assembly and the communities

that we represent to play a role in how we can move forward in tackling organised crime and paramilitary activity.

Ms J McCann: I have heard no one argue against the thrust of what has been said. Most Members are calling for an end to paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime throughout the North, which is what the Executive's action plan also aims to do. As with all action plans, there needs to be an implementation plan for how it will be done. More importantly, this needs to be structured around the 43 recommendations, as a number of Members pointed out, because it is very important that they are implemented.

The reality, as a lot of Members said, is that this has to be done within a framework that has total community involvement. That, alongside the criminal justice response, has to be at the core. Time and time again, when looking at issues right across criminality and even antisocial activity, we have seen that there needs to be a holistic response and buy-in from all the statutory agencies and communities in order to tackle any of those problems. I do not see this as any different in terms of the framework.

It is important that communities have the resources. Very often, we see a lot of volunteers on the streets, particularly at weekends, dealing with issues. They are expected to consistently give up their free time, and it is important to recognise that that is not sustainable. Communities need to be involved not just in the delivery stage but in the design and implementation stages. We need to empower communities. If we are to assist in delivering the type of society that we want — one that tackles this type of criminality and anti-community activity — everybody has to be involved.

Members mentioned a number of vulnerable groups, particularly our young people, who can be targeted by sinister individuals. We see all the time how young people can be caught up in paramilitary activity. It is the individuals, families and communities on the ground who see that and it is they who are impacted, so we need to involve young people as much as possible, particularly in the programmes of intervention that we want to take forward.

Gerry Kelly, who proposed our amendment, mentioned not only an outcomes-based approach and joined-up thinking but the importance of a co-design approach that will empower communities. It is OK for us to say, from up here, to the communities that will marginalise the criminal gangs, "That's what you need to do". People need to go into those communities and see how it impacts on them and, more importantly, how they respond. Our communities are resilient in standing up to this type of activity, although they can be fearful of it.

Gerry Kelly mentioned the positive and productive role that ex-prisoners have played in society. Doug Beattie, in his disgraceful contribution, talked about Sinn Féin not condemning dissident republicans. In particular, my colleague Gerry Kelly has been demonised. People in the Chamber know that we have consistently condemned — you have only to look at our record. We have been at the forefront of communities, standing with the residents who have been targeted by these people. That was a bit of a cheap political point.

Lord Morrow: Will the Member give way?

Ms J McCann: No, I will not. I would not get to finish.

Philip McGuigan spoke about promoting lawfulness, support for transition, tackling criminality and addressing

systemic issues. He mentioned a cross-departmental programme board that will allow for coordination across Departments. He also said that any initiatives have to tackle economic deprivation, unemployment and educational underachievement. Other Members mentioned that as well.

Our amendment is saying that while responsibility rests with the Executive Office and the Department of Justice to fully implement —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude her remarks.

Ms J McCann: — all 43 recommendations, it is clear that any implementation plan must have buy-in from the community.

Community initiatives need to be adequately resourced, and there needs to be meaningful input to any co-design approach, as I said.

12.15 pm

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Attwood: Can I make one point? There is a common approach, whether it is Gerry Kelly, Sammy Douglas, the Minister, Doug Beattie, the SDLP or those who are speaking to a very good Alliance motion, and there should be no doubt or ambiguity to anybody listening to this debate about the commitment to dealing with paramilitarism and organised crime. The two issues are the scale and the speed of the response. As we know from recent events and from many events before, criminality and paramilitarism — two years since the twentieth anniversary of the first ceasefire and two years before the twentieth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement — are enduring and embedded. It should be about scale and speed, but I am afraid that we do not have the scale and clearly do not have the speed.

I want to make one comment in passing about what the DUP is at today and yesterday. It is quite clear that the Government parties are beginning to feel the pressure because of multiple reasons and events. Sinn Féin is better at disguising it, but the DUP cannot disguise it at all, and the aggression and interruptions reflect the fact that the DUP is beginning to get it in the neck and is not happy about it. The person who most reveals that is the man who is smiling at the moment, Paul Frew. He is not inclined to be bombastic, yet yesterday and today he has been, in my view.

Mr Frew: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: It is very revealing about the DUP approach. The Government parties are beginning to feel under pressure. I will give way to the Member.

Mr Frew: I thank the Member for giving way. How could the Member describe my contribution yesterday as "bombastic"? We were talking about addressing the past and about victims. I did not use bombastic language yesterday at all, and my tone could not have been described as bombastic.

Mr Attwood: I refer to the Hansard report.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Attwood: Thank you.

I refer to the comments of other Members who are selective and partial in their memory. The difference

between the SDLP and the DUP, when it comes to things of the past that we have got wrong, is that we stand up and apologise and acknowledge it. Others continue to pretend that they did not commit any error.

I want to deal with the substance of the matter. You cannot escape from what the Minister of Finance said to the Chamber during his statement on October monitoring. He said:

"The Secretary of State has advised that UK Government funding will not be released until the Executive agree a more detailed action plan." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 119, p165, col 2].

So, £5 million that could have been available this year is not available this year because there is not a more detailed action plan. The Minister who chairs responsibility for this, although it is an Executive-wide responsibility, cannot run or hide from that fact that the Secretary of State says that money will not be released until the Executive agree a more detailed action plan. I remind the Minister of what she said and what the First Minister and deputy First Minister said on 19 July about the action plan being a:

"challenging and ambitious programme of work",

and so on and so forth. While she has been valiant in her defence of what has happened, the Minister cannot reconcile the fact that, on one hand, in July, she said that there is a challenging and ambitious programme of work, yet the Minister of Finance, without dissent from the British Government line, says that funding will not be released until the Executive agree a more detailed action plan. That is the issue. The issue, Minister, is scale and speed, and the British Government are saying that there are issues with scale and speed. There are issues with scale and speed because paramilitarism and criminality are continuing to embed in our communities rather than be purged. The next time the Minister and the Executive come here —

Ms Sugden: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: I will not give way because I have too much to say.

The scale and speed must be the defining features of what is happening. Let me give you some examples in that regard. The NCA, in October of last year, made a bid for moneys. It was then told by the British Government that it was illustrative and had to withdraw the bid. Here we are, 11 months later, and the NCA has still not got a penny for the work that it is responsible for and is undertaking.

Let me deal with the issue raised by the Members opposite. We agreed to the NCA in February 2015 because there were levels of accountability; it could do its work properly subject to oversight by the Policing Board. At that stage, unlike Sinn Féin — strangely, the DUP have nothing to say to Sinn Féin about the NCA — the SDLP voted in favour of full powers for the NCA. The point is that, since then, when it comes to the issues of scale and speed, the NCA has not got one penny extra to deal with organised crime. The Minister will say that it is being dealt with now. It should have been dealt with last October; then it should have been dealt with last May; certainly it should have been dealt with before now.

Let me put down a marker: there is error and damage in some of the panel's report, which we have accepted —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Attwood: It refers to "ambitious" programmes for "communities in transition". Are we about to see social investment fund 2? Are we about to see more funding for the likes of Charter NI?

Mr Lunn: I thank everybody who has contributed today. Alliance proposed the motion to highlight concerns over the delay in meaningful action since the Good Friday Agreement, the ceasefires and, more recently, the so-called action plan and Fresh Start Agreement. I think that it is accepted around the Chamber that things have been less than perfect, to put it very delicately. We refer in our motion to the "lacklustre" response of the Executive. The Minister took exception to that. I cannot think of a better word. It has been lacklustre. It is slow. Mrs Cameron referred to the achievements of T:BUC. T:BUC has moved at a snail's pace since it was supposedly brought into effect. We need a debate on T:BUC some time just to see where we are with it, because it has been a complete shambles.

Mr Ford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lunn: Who was that? Oh, yes. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Ford: I would like to clarify the timescale. I am grateful to my colleague for giving way, although the Minister did not want to take any interventions on grounds of time. We should, however, give her some credit: at least there is a Minister in the Chamber, unlike yesterday. Paragraph 4.3 in section A of 'A Fresh Start' says that:

"Before the end of June 2016,"

— not in mid-July —

"the Executive will publish an action plan including all of the above measures, together with timescales for implementation."

— which were totally lacking in July. So much so that in July the foreword, signed by the three Ministers, said that:

"a more detailed internal action plan including timescales and costings will be submitted to the Executive for consideration in due course."

We all know what "due course" means from this Executive.

Mr Speaker: I do not suspect that Mr Lunn will object, but interventions should be short.

Mr Lunn: It is about quality as well, Mr Speaker. *[Laughter.]* That was extremely good quality.

I will try to move on. We think it is time for the decisive movement called for in both the motion and the amendment. The inadequacies of the action plan, which have been recognised by the British Government, as various people said, need to be addressed. The plan will not be funded until it is detailed. Very importantly, the last line of both the motion and the first amendment talks about:

"developing a protocol on state and public-sector engagement with individuals with perceived paramilitary connections."

Mr Kelly had a difficulty with the word "perceived". I have a difficulty too, but I am probably coming at it from a different direction. If known paramilitaries, who are named weekly in the Sunday press, do not challenge the accusation

levelled against them, that goes beyond perception. They think that they are above the law. That is really what we are talking about here: being above the law. That part of the motion calling for a protocol is difficult.

Mr Stalford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lunn: No, sorry. Maybe later. Let me move on.

The extent of engagement that is regarded as acceptable between us or community workers and paramilitaries, either ex- or current, is a matter of judgement.

It is a judgement call whether to get your photograph taken with a known paramilitary, even at the launch of a funding event. I think that the First Minister made a serious mistake there, but that is the way it is. We all have to make judgements on whom we deal with and whom we talk to.

It is important to spell out what we are dealing with here and the emphasis on the word "paramilitarism". The Sinn Féin amendment at least mentions "criminality and organised crime". Paramilitarism, if it ever had any validity, was founded on the need for defence, volunteer activity, some sort of pseudo-military structures, the use of force to further political aims and the defence of or ending of the union. There was never a need for this. The organisations involved, whether loyalist or republican, inflicted more terrorism and human misery on their own communities in the guise of defence than the perceived enemy, who were doing the same thing, ever did. They leached off their communities — they still do it — by criminal activities that have nothing to do with defence or paramilitarism, such as extortion, drug trafficking, protection rackets, human trafficking and prostitution — the list goes on and on. They continue to do so. I forget who mentioned the statistic that over 400 families in the last recorded timescale had had to leave their home and be rehoused as a consequence of paramilitary pressure.

The notion of defence, famously repeated by Mr Dee Stitt about a band being part of the defence of north Down, when the organisation to which he allegedly and unashamedly belongs controls the illegal activities in the estates of that area and others, is utterly disingenuous and needs to be called out for the smokescreen that it is. So-called paramilitary leaders, brigadiers, officers commanding or whatever with no visible income except from nebulous community activism have grown fat and wealthy. They live lavishly. They have business and property interests, the financing of which has been derived from the very communities that they claim to protect. It really is time to stop pussyfooting around. The notion that paramilitary criminals should have any role in turning around the communities that they have such a grip on is ridiculous.

The first amendment adds detail to our motion, and we have no dispute with it. It is welcome that the need for clear targets and timescales is emphasised and a confirmation that this is really about organised crime.

I want to move on to what people said. Apologies to those whom I do not mention. Doug Beattie started off his speech by referring to the fact that he was inclined to look at things through rose-tinted glasses. All that I can say is that, after two minutes, he took them off and told us the way it is. Without going into detail, I thought that his contribution was excellent.

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

Mr Kelly started his speech by accusing us of tabling the motion as some kind of hand-wringing exercise because we did not get the justice Ministry. If he and his colleagues in the Executive had accepted any of our five-point plans as the price for taking the justice Ministry, we would have taken it. What is on the table here is one of the points on which we were demanding action.

Paul Frew made the point, which is often made, about who was in charge at the time of the Good Friday Agreement and the ceasefires — that is OK — but he also praised Charter NI as a benevolent organisation run by people who really mean very well. He listed the church people, community associations and so on. He did not mention the fact that it is headed by a known UDA member and there are other paramilitary or ex-paramilitary members on the board.

Mr Stalford: Will the Member take a very brief point?

Mr Lunn: Make it brief.

Mr Stalford: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. I served as a councillor for Balmoral. Prior to that, the councillor for Balmoral was Alderman Tom Ekin. Tom Ekin, who has significant business interests in Sandy Row, worked very closely with people from a paramilitary background to help them to transition. He was pictured with them. He made a positive contribution to the community. Some of those people have since been named in newspapers and their reputations maligned.

Mr Lunn: Thanks for that.

Pam Cameron said that the issue of paramilitarism had largely disappeared from our TV screens but acknowledged that that did not mean that it had gone away. Clearly, it has not. Again, I refer to T:BUC because she did. T:BUC is a non-event so far.

12.30 pm

Sammy Douglas made the point that a lot of paramilitary members who had spent time in jail and come out have become contributors to society. That is great; that is what we need to encourage, whether or not they have been in jail. If the ones who have been in jail have learned their lesson, come out and become valued members of society, there is a message in what we are trying to do. We want to see more of them put in jail for the activities that they have inflicted on this community for many years and continue to do so. They thumb their nose at the law, and the police, under present restrictions, do not seem to be able to do very much about it. We should give the police the tools that they need to take decisive action.

Mr Attwood is absolutely right: we need to fund the NCA. That organisation could, perhaps, make inroads into this nonsense. It is a plague on our society; we do not need it. Every country in the world has criminality and criminal gangs, but we, for some reason, still call it "paramilitarism". That is disgraceful. These people are organised crime gangs, criminals, gangsters and thugs. It is time that we took decisive action to get rid of them from our society —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): I ask the Member to draw his remarks to a close, please.

Mr Lunn: — take them off our streets and let our communities get out from under their jackboot. I support the motion and amendment No 1.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Before I put the Question on amendment No 1, I remind Members that, if it is made, I will not put the Question on amendment No 2.

Question put, That amendment No 1 be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 36; Noes 57.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Durkan, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Hanna, Mr Kennedy, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr McCrossan, Mr McGrath, Mr McKee, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Mullan, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Butler and Mr McNulty.

NOES

Mr Anderson, Ms Archibald, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Ms Dillon, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Ms Fearon, Mr Frew, Ms Gildernew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Mr McElduff, Mr McGuigan, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr Maskey, Mr Middleton, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Murphy, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Poots, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Ms Ruane, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Kelly and Mr Robinson.

Question accordingly negatived.

12.45 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): I have been advised by the party Whips that, in accordance with Standing Order 27(1A)(b), there is agreement that we can dispense with the three-minute rule and move straight to the Division.

Question put, That amendment No 2 be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 56; Noes 36.

AYES

Mr Anderson, Ms Archibald, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Ms Dillon, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Ms Fearon, Mr Frew, Ms Gildernew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Mr McElduff, Mr McGuigan, Mr McMullan,

Mr McQuillan, Mr Maskey, Mr Middleton, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Murphy, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Poots, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Ms Ruane, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Kelly and Ms J McCann.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Durkan, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Hanna, Mr Kennedy, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr McCrossan, Mr McGrath, Mr McKee, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Mullan, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Dickson and Mr Lyttle.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): As the Business Committee has arranged to meet at 1.00 pm, I propose, therefore, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm. The first item of business when we return will be Question Time, so the Question on the motion will be put after Question Time.

The debate stood suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 12.57 pm.

On resuming —

2.00 pm

(Madam Principal Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

Oral Answers to Questions

Finance

Small Business Rate Relief Scheme

1. **Mr M Bradley** asked the Minister of Finance whether there will be an extension to the small business rate relief scheme beyond March 2017 to continue the regeneration of town centres. (AQO 596/16-21)

13. **Mr Humphrey** asked the Minister of Finance for an update on the review of the small business rate relief scheme. (AQO 608/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir (The Minister of Finance): It is an almost empty Chamber, which does not do these questions justice. With your permission, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle, I will take questions 1 and 13 together.

The business rate relief scheme will be continued for another year to allow time for the recommendations from the policy evaluation to be introduced. This work was undertaken, as you know, by Neil Gibson's economic policy unit at the University of Ulster — it is not actually his economic policy unit, but he heads it. The study found that although the current scheme was a useful intervention during the recent downturn, it did not have an enduring economic impact on the local economy or those who gain from it. It was simply spread too thinly. Accordingly, I would like to bring forward a more targeted scheme, and I will bring proposals to the Assembly later this month — next week, I hope — on a range of measures that, taken together, will help to stimulate economic activity.

Mr M Bradley: I thank the Minister for his answer. As he knows, we will host the Open golf championships in 2019, which is an opportunity to sell Northern Ireland plc. We need thriving town centres to showcase and, hopefully, entice our visitors to come back. I welcome the Minister's answer and look forward to his response in the near future.

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I thank the Member for his supplementary. I had the great pleasure of visiting Portrush the week before last to see the early preparations for the Open. I was very impressed by the commitment of not only Royal Portrush but the community to making sure that the benefits of the Open will be felt in Portrush, in particular, and across the region not only in 2019 but in the period ahead. It was very clear to me that there are still a number of properties in Portrush — you mentioned there, but it is true across the piece in many of our villages, towns and cities — that we want to encourage people to bring back into use, especially retail properties. In that regard, the urban development grant, which I do not have responsibility for, will, I think, play a huge part. That shows the necessity for joined-up government action.

Everything that I put forward must have Executive agreement, and, of course, the Assembly Committees will have their say as well. With the permission of the

Assembly and the Executive, I will take some measures, and I hope that they will emphasise the fairness of the rating policy. We are talking here about business rates for non-domestic properties, but there is also the question of how we get a fairer system of domestic rates. We bring in £1.2 billion at the minute, and I know that you would like to see fairness.

There is also the idea of seizing opportunity. If young people are looking at an empty shop unit, whether it is on the Ormeau Road, in Ballymena or in Enniskillen, and saying that they would love to set up a business there, how can we give them the spur and encouragement to do that? It is my intention to put forward more recommendations in that regard.

Mr Chambers: I know, from years of personal experiences, that businesses across north Down are really feeling the strain of the rates burden. Therefore, it is essential that the Assembly continues to provide some support for them. Will the Minister explain whether he has considered providing any temporary support for sectors that may be most disproportionately affected by the changes in support under the small business rate relief scheme?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Thank you for raising that issue. I have visited Bangor as well. I had a lunchtime meeting with those involved in the hospitality business. It started out quite well; then, after 30 minutes, we got on to rates, and the second 30 minutes were more heated and contentious.

The problem is that we want to raise that £1.2 billion. We are trying to share the burden in an equitable fashion, but we have a tax on business, and that is called rates. I am not in favour of another raft of temporary measures, but I am impressed by the proposals put forward by Hospitality Ulster and NIIRTA under Glyn Roberts. I have listened very carefully to them, and I think that they talk a lot of sense. Hospitality is a big part of the small, independent economy of north Down, and Bangor in particular. They say that, if we do more for the hospitality providers, it will help tourism. Then we will get another example of a joined-up economy and joined-up government. I listened very carefully to the presentation that they made. I caught just a little bit when I attended the Finance Committee and Hospitality Ulster and NIIRTA were making a presentation there as well. I have to say that I do not agree with everything that they said, but I hope that, in short order, we can bring forward proposals that are more focused on independent retailers and, in particular, on the hospitality sector.

Mr Lynch: When will the Minister announce his vision for the rates system?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I am hopeful that we will do that next Tuesday. I want to cover a number of areas, and some of them came up in the study carried out by the University of Ulster. In particular, it said that the existing small business rate relief scheme is too diffuse and not focused enough, and I am taking that on board. I also like a proposal that they brought forward, which was about a special focus on geographical areas that perhaps have not prospered as much as we would like. So, I hope to bring forward those proposals next Tuesday, I believe. There will be plenty of time for the Assembly and the Executive to consider them. I hope that there will be buy-in. I think that everybody realises that the worst of the recession is over, thank goodness. We have an opportunity now to accelerate the

recovery and move forward at pace. Any proposals that I bring forward will have that at their very heart.

We will try to get the balance right. We want to raise revenue for these vital public services that everyone is demanding. No one is suggesting that we cut the funding to any front-line services. If we have to raise that revenue, we will need to find a fair and proportionate way to do that.

Ms Bradshaw: Do you believe that the regeneration Bill should be brought forward? How do you feel it could and should interact with the small business rate relief scheme?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Alliance Party is always extending and expanding my powers into other Departments. As you know, I and my party wish to see a stepping-up of the pace of transfer of powers to councils in particular. I am a fan of the 11 councils, and I have met them to ask them if they will do more, and if they do more, we will meet them halfway.

The vital thing for all of us at the minute — I say this to every Assembly Member because I know that you are deeply engaged in your constituency — is that we need the councils and councillors to be more ambitious in the time ahead. Part of that is that they need to have more powers, but they should not be held back. I meet some councils that are not as ambitious or bold as others. My view is that every council needs to be as bold as possible in its vision and plans for the future. They should not be waiting for the Assembly to do more, and we will do more; they should be asking us to partner them in every way possible. Now is not the time, in my view, to sit on your hands.

Rating: Empty Premises

2. **Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Finance whether he will consider an exemption to the rating of empty homes legislation to address cases where following construction of a replacement farmhouse, the old farmhouse remains on the valuation list but is no longer occupied or under any planning requirement for demolition. (AQO 597/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I can appreciate that farmers who vacate an old farmhouse will not be happy paying rates on it whilst it lies empty. However, this is something that all owners of empty homes face, and they have the same choice of letting it out, selling it on or continuing to pay the rates. If we were to grant an exemption, I think that it would have to apply to everyone holding a vacant residential property. To do so would lose the Executive many millions of pounds a year in revenue, and that money, as I said earlier, helps pay for essential public services and investment — health, education and everything else that we have responsibility for. Our local councils would also lose out. That said, if the farmhouse is in poor repair and is no longer habitable without substantial restoration work, it can be removed from the valuation list and rates will not be payable. In assessing whether a property can be occupied as a home, Land and Property Services will take into account the character of the property and whether a reasonable amount of work would render it habitable.

Mr Irwin: I thank the Minister for his response. Currently, a valuation of £20,000 or more makes a property liable for empty homes rating. Will the Minister look at the possibility of raising this threshold? I think that the threshold is very low, and, in effect, it means that many of the houses — there was one particular incident this week where a house has not been lived in for 32 years and, still and all, the

owner received a £3,100 rates bill for five years' back rates.

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I vowed not to introduce more reliefs in the short time ahead. We will come forward with some proposals around small businesses. If the Member wants to write to me in that regard, he may do so.

He should be aware that I do receive a fair bit of correspondence on this. It strikes me as genuine correspondence from people who are in hardship, who have moved into a new home, as you say, maybe a generation ago. They find that it is not easy or possible to rent the home. They have no family who wish to use it, and, therefore, they have been left with a problem that is not easily resolved, and they end up paying a bill each year for which they do not feel they get a reward. I am not minded right now to increase the threshold, but I am aware of that hardship. If the Member wants to write to me, maybe we can explore certain instances within that.

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle agus gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo. Can the Minister inform the House whether he is considering any further exemptions on rating? I am thinking, for example, along the lines of credit unions.

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabhail leis an Chomhalta as an cheist sin agus as a chuid físe. I thank the Member for his visionary powers, because it just so happens that his Committee has written to me to ask whether I would consider rate relief for credit unions. That followed hot on the heels of the first letter that I received, also from the Committee, asking for relief from corporation tax for credit unions. I have no doubt that they will mount up as well. The Member, in his city, has made a big contribution to the credit union movement on this island. I think that credit unions do a great job for society and the community. I am happy to look at it. I am a member of a credit union. When they are managed prudently, they sometimes make some money and distribute that to their members. I think that, like everyone else, they have to make a contribution to keeping the lights lit in the public services that we have. I have received the letter, and I am happy to receive any further representations, but I would not make any promises. I would not make any withdrawals on this particular answer just at the minute.

Mr Boylan: Does the Minister consider that there is sufficient support for farmers in relation to rate relief?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I do not think that anyone believes that rate reliefs are sufficient in their sector, but, of course, farms and related buildings are not subject to rates at all. As well as that, for a farmer who needs to live on or near his or her farm, a reduction of 20% is applied to the capital value of the farmhouse. To use the term that Mr Durkan used, there are, in my view, generous reliefs for agricultural land and for farmhouses at this time.

Mr Kennedy: Will the Minister take the opportunity to review the legislation governing the effective date at which a new property or domestic dwelling becomes eligible for the payment of rates and at least issue fresh guidelines?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I am happy to look at all those issues, and this is another issue that has come up in relation to the immediate payment of rates. I am looking forward to the day when some Member stands up and says that, because we need more money for education, for health or for

economic regeneration, they are suggesting somewhere that we remove a relief from. I am not going to be that person just yet, although I will have some views on it next week. I am not happy to review the change suggested by the Member at this minute, but I am sympathetic. On the other hand, someone will have to pay the rates to keep this society going forward. When I reduced to zero the rates for community and amateur sports clubs, that was welcomed universally, but we are also going to have to find a way to say that we think we can find extra money, not more reliefs, from the community to fund the services that the community needs and demands.

Subcontractors: Prompt Payments

3. **Mr Poots** asked the Minister of Finance how his Department ensures that the main contractors on public-sector contracts are paying subcontractors promptly for their work. (AQO 598/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: It is public procurement policy that first-tier subcontractors are paid within 30 days, and the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) has implemented a range of measures to ensure that subcontractors are paid promptly.

Most recently, this has included the successful rollout of project bank accounts, as the Member will be aware. However, it also includes other practical measures, such as a requirement for project managers to monitor subcontractor payments at monthly progress meetings with the contractor. There is also a requirement for the client, main contractor and subcontractors to honour payments as they fall due by signing a fair payment charter.

2.15 pm

Mr Poots: Thank you, Madam Principal Deputy Speaker. I apologise for not being in my position for a question yesterday.

The Government's record in ensuring that main contractors are paid quickly is good, but I think that main contractors are using subcontractors for banking purposes. You mentioned project bank accounts, which I think are used in a very limited way in the maintenance sector in particular. On the maintenance sector, will the Minister give us some assurance that subcontractors will be paid promptly by the main contractors and that people will not be out hundreds of thousands of pounds for several months when others have already been paid by the Government for the work carried out?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I thank the Member for his apology and remind him that questions are supposed to be brief and to the point.

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I, too, thank the Member for his supplementary. This issue of payment to subcontractors and those farther down the line has really been in use since the Celtic tiger collapsed and a lot of people were left in the lurch. It has come up on my watch on several occasions, so there are a lot of people concerned about this, especially where public money is being spent. Our purpose when carrying out infrastructural investments is that we get the money paid promptly to the main contractor, but we want that money to be cascaded down through the entire value stream and worker stream of the contract. I want to make sure that that happens. Patsy McGlone had a separate meeting with me as the head of

the all-party group on construction, and we touched on this issue and the issue of retentions. The Member will know that it can sometimes be a burden on those farther down the work chain if they are waiting for retention money when it does not really make much sense. So, yes, I think that, with public money, we are good at making sure that we have the right impact and that people are paid promptly, but I am happy to look again at the maintenance side if the Member thinks that we are perhaps not just as efficient as we would like to be in that sector.

Mr Aiken: Will the Minister seek to publish the payment guidelines and the timing of major payments across government that are made within 30, 60 and 90 days? I understand that that is practice in GB, and it would go a long way to helping people to understand whether Government are making prompt payments and further payments downstream.

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Mr Aiken, I am very happy to encourage that to happen if it is not at the minute. I have met the key group from the construction industry at least twice. I have gone out to visit some of the representatives, including those from the quarry industry, on-site in Maghera and east Belfast. In concert with Executive Ministers, I am resolved to, first, make sure that we green-light, start and deliver projects. The other thing is that we need to get the money spent. I would like to encourage anything that helps transparency in that. I think that the industry accepts that there is really no sense at all in our trying to provide an economic stimulus to the construction sector by green-lighting projects if the money is not then spent and allocated promptly.

Mr Kearney: A Aire, ar an ábhar cheannann chéanna agus a thóg Edwin Poots, an dtiocfadh leat cur síos ar na smachtbhannaí a chuirtear i bhfeidhm ar na comhluchtaí nach n-íocann fo-chonraitheoirí s'acu in am? Minister, building on Edwin Poots's question, can you explain to us what sanctions are in place for firms that fail to pay their subcontractors in good time?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Cinnte. Bless you to the Chair of the Committee as well. Glacann mo Roinn agus an Coiste Feidhmiúcháin an-dáiríre le comhluchtaí nach n-íocann a gcuid fo-chonraitheoirí in am. Feictear seo sna hiarmhairtí do ghnólachtaí a ghlacann páirt i gcleachtas den tseort sin maidir le conarthaí Rialtais, nó d'fhéadfaí teastas míshásúil feidhmíochta a bhronnadh orthu. D'fhéadfaí go gcuirfead cosc ar na gnólachtaí a fhaigheann a leithéid de theatas cur isteach ar chomórtais soláthair phoiblí ar feadh tréimhse nach faide ná trí bliana. The failure of a firm to pay its subcontractors promptly is a matter that the Executive and my Department take very seriously. The ramifications for firms that engage in such practices in government contracts reflect that, as they may be issued with a certificate of unsatisfactory performance. Receipt of that certificate can result in a firm being excluded from public procurement competitions for up to three years.

Brexit: At-risk Projects

4. **Mr Smith** asked the Minister of Finance, other than the York Street interchange, what Executive projects are at risk following the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. (AQO 599/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Thank you, Mr Smith. As you are aware, I met David Gauke, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury,

on 24 October. The British Treasury continues to refuse to guarantee that it will replace EU funds that are lost after the exit from the EU — if it happens. The British Government need to underwrite not only funds up to the point of leaving the EU but income streams that would have been available to us afterwards. There remains considerable uncertainty for projects without that guarantee of continued funding and without confirmation of the date of leaving the EU — if that happens. “Considerable uncertainty” is diplomatic language; I was away for a short period, and I see that things have become even more confused in my absence.

The York Street interchange project remains a priority for the Executive and for me, and the Member will have heard me say that publicly. In view of that, a joint working group involving my Department, the Strategic Investment Board and the Department for Infrastructure has been established to look at that project.

Mr Smith: I thank the Minister for his answer. As recently as 25 October, James Brokenshire said that the Treasury will:

“guarantee funding for structural and investment fund projects signed before the UK leaves the EU, even where projects continue after we leave.”

I am holding a copy of a press release dated 15 March 2016 from the then Minister for Regional Development, Michelle McIlveen, in which she explicitly states that construction will commence in 2017. Will the Minister tell me whom I should believe — the Treasury or the Executive — as both cannot be right on the funding of the York Street interchange scheme?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: In all cases where there is a difference of opinion, Philip, do not believe the NIO or the Treasury. When David Gauke had that meeting, he had the Secretaries of State for the devolved regions in there as well, who were reasonably mute during the meeting. The situation is summed up by the following analogy: if I wanted to build a house and had the money to build 60% of it, that would be great, but would I really do it if I did not have a guarantee on the other 40%? Some of our transport projects in particular, which date out a while, would perhaps not even go out to tender, and Europe would not request bids for them, until 2018. There is no certainty on that 40% so that you can build 100% of your home. There is no certainty that that money would be delivered and that letters of offer would be signed off before there is an exit — if there is an exit — by the British from the EU.

I have enormous sympathy with you being caught between the NIO and the Executive or me, but I assure you that you will always find a safe berth here. You should place your trust in the Finance Minister at all times.

Mr Kelly: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for his answers up to now. Will he give an update on Peace and INTERREG funding?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I thank the Member for his question. Two Fridays ago, we met at Greenmount campus in County Antrim to discuss EU funding. Representatives attended from across the North and further afield. They are worried not only about EU funding but about government investment plans. I said then — I will say it again — that this Executive is 100% committed to the flagship projects. That includes the A5, the A6, the Belfast transport hub, the

mother and children's hospital, the college at Desertcreat and the regional and subregional stadia.

The groups that gathered want that reassurance because they understand that it is not about EU funding only; we need a joined-up approach to growing the economy. After that meeting, we guaranteed that letters of offer would go out for the moneys that I have direct responsibility for: INTERREG and Peace funding. You will be pleased to know that government does not stop just because I am out of the country, and letters of offer issued last week to INTERREG and Peace projects.

Ten INTERREG letters of offer will issue in the week beginning 7 November, which is this week. I believe that they are now in the post or have gone out. They include the Swell project, which comes under the environment theme; the Co-Innovate/InterTradeIreland SME project; five health projects; and three greenway projects. On 2 November, the first Peace II steering committee committed to £13.4 million for the Victims and Survivors Service. I apologise for that long answer.

Mrs Little Pengelly: I am sure that the Minister will accept that EU funding guarantees are an issue not just here but across the United Kingdom when it comes to protecting infrastructure projects and ensuring that that pipeline continues. I am concerned by what the Minister said about that —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Has the Member a question?

Mrs Little Pengelly: There have been attempts by Treasury to clarify and guarantee. What further actions are you taking to satisfy the Department and the Executive that the guarantees are there to ensure that those projects can go ahead?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I accept their guarantees, despite my earlier comments to Philip. When the British Government say that they will guarantee the moneys until an exit, if it happens, I accept that. However, there are two areas that we disagree on.

The first relates particularly to large infrastructure projects. If the letters of offer are not issued by the time of an exit, which could be March 2019 for our friends in England and Wales, the Government will not guarantee funding. That is a gap, and they need to fill it. As well as that, they need to give us a guarantee now that, when the CAP money disappears, they will replace it. That is essential because 10% of the payments for agriculture from the EU that go towards what you call the UK end up here. A Barnett consequential would mean that only 3% ended up here. We need the British Government to close that gap as well. They need to guarantee that all the funding we receive at the moment under EU programmes will continue to flow here. I say that particularly in relation to many of the groups that I met — whether they were from the Bogside, Tiger's Bay or south Armagh — at Greenmount College. They are already looking ahead — some to Peace and INTERREG, some to other funds — and asking, “What happens if we are pushed out of Europe? Who will guarantee the funding to the Cedar Foundation, the WAVE Trauma Centre or Relatives for Justice?”. The answer is that the British are refusing to guarantee that.

I accept it when Chancellor Hammond says that, until exit, he will stand over signed letters of offer. However, he

needs to go further and say that he will stand over letters of offer, particularly for large infrastructure projects, signed after that. Then, he needs to tell us how he will fill the gap in the time ahead.

Mr Allister: Clearly, it is not, but should it not be beneath the Minister to scaremonger on this issue? The Chancellor's commitment is very clear —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Has the Member a question?

Mr Allister: He will underwrite projects signed until the date —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Has the Member a question?

Mr Allister: I am seeking to ask a question, if I might be permitted. He will underwrite projects signed to the point when the UK leaves — and we will leave.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member come to his question, please?

Mr Allister: It is not to the point of letters of offer; it is to the point of projects signed —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I call —

Mr Allister: — and that clearly extends to the interchange at York Street as much as to anything else.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member come to his question, please?

Mr Allister: Are the Minister and his colleague in the Department for Infrastructure simply trying to drag their feet to make a case against Brexit?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member come to his question rather than making long statements?

Mr Allister: If you had listened, you would know that I have asked it.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Minister, if there is a question there, you might wish to answer it.

Mr Ó Muilleoir: There is a great saying in Irish, aithníonn ciaróg ciaróg eile, which means that one beetle recognises another. However, I certainly do not recognise myself as a scaremonger, but I know one person in the House who has a good reputation in that regard.

The issue remains, Mr Allister, although it is great that you have the certainty that no one in London can give us. Brexit means Brexit, but it is an omnishambles that has got more confusing in the last seven days. Regardless of what you wish to happen, I am interested not in scaremongering but in getting the facts and getting a guarantee. As I said to Mr Smith and others, I am happy with the guarantee over Peace and INTERREG money until the date of an exit. However, I am not happy that the British will not guarantee letters of offer and contracts that are signed off after a departure. They need to guarantee them so that we can plan to build, as I said, 100% of the house, not 60% of it. That might work where you are from, but, where I am from, we build the roof as well.

2.30 pm

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We will now move on to topical questions.

Councils: Regeneration Powers

T1. **Mr Attwood** asked the Minister of Finance whether he agrees that the transfer of regeneration powers to our councils would help them to be, as he said earlier, bold in vision while not sitting on their hands but working in partnership, and will he make that representation to the Department for Communities. (AQT 436/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I thank the Member for his question. I do not make a lot of representations to other Departments; usually, they make representations to me. However, since my appointment, I have had a scale of engagement with councils that, I think, you would accept is unprecedented for a Finance Minister. I have visited Mayor Wales in Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and Lord Mayor Kingston in Belfast City Council. I have been to see Chairperson Fitzpatrick in Newry, Mourne and Down District Council several times, and I have visited Fermanagh and Omagh District Council. I am, I think, a booster for councils, and I am an advocate for more powers. Yes, I would like to see the rapid speeding-up of their ability to make a major contribution to the economic growth of our area. I do not spend a lot of time making representations, but my record shows where I stand on councils having the ability to match their ambition in the time ahead.

Mr Attwood: I thank the Minister for his answer. I hope that the good engagement with councils will now translate into good representations to communities. At the same time, does he agree that city deals are another mechanism whereby councils in the North, on a regional or city basis, can access funds in order to regenerate their cities? In that regard, is there a change of heart in the Department given what appeared to be resistance, certainly at an official level, in the previous mandate to city deals for Northern Ireland?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. A young councillor whom you may know called Tim Attwood is a strong advocate for city deals. I met him at a meeting that I had with the councils in Lisburn, and I attended a partnership panel chaired by the Minister for Communities, Paul Givan, recently where we engaged with councils. I have an open mind on city deals, and I know that some of our friends across the water have embraced them more vigorously than we have. I have said previously to Councillor Attwood that if councils want to bring forward proposals, they should.

I have certain reservations about falling back and asking our friends in London to grant us and be dependent on them for a stepping-up of the pace of growth in Belfast, Derry or other areas. I have an open mind on the issue, and I am quite happy for people to bring proposals forward, but, of course, they will not go to me; I suspect that they will go to the Executive Office or Minister Hamilton first.

Budget 2017: Inflation Impact

T2. **Mr Smith** asked the Minister of Finance, given that the Bank of England has projected that consumer

price inflation will rise to 2.7% in the final quarter of 2017, what impact that will have on next year's Budget. (AQT 437/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: If you had said it was the Bank of Ireland, I may have been more solicitous to your question. In all seriousness, my Budget is my Budget, so the rate of inflation will not affect the cash that we have at hand. However, you know the dangers of inflation. It will put pressure on the public wage bill, because people will say, with much justification, that the cost of living is going up and, therefore, I need an enhanced wage bill. Inflation may push up the cost of food — we have already seen that — and some of this is a consequence of Brexit. I am not sure what side Mr Smith was on at the time — whether he was for “Remain” or “Leave” — but I suspect that he is all for “Leave” now. Some of the spike in inflation is and will be due to the uncertainty surrounding a Brexit.

Is a little bit of inflation good? I think it is. If inflation goes above 2% — that has been the watchword for Governments across Europe — and surges ahead, in my view it will certainly be bad news for those who are at the bottom of the economic ladder and those who are already struggling with their household bills. Some of that we have control over, but much of it we do not. In the time ahead, I think you will agree, we need to make sure that our own economy picks up pace and speed and provides more jobs and opportunities, so that we are not caught in the vice of growing inflation at the same time as the recession that is about to hit us as well.

Mr Smith: I thank the Minister for his initial answer. Officials recently before the Finance Committee indicated the Executive Budget would face a further reduction or pressure of 4.4% next year. Is there any provisional indication of what impact this, along with, presumably, additional spending for the Health Department on the back of Bengoa, will have on other Departments' baselines?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I am always hopeful that, when Mr Smith gets up, he will tell me that he has been speaking to the Treasury and has made representations, to use the word of Mr Attwood, in relation to the Budget cut.

It is not a 4.4% cut next year, but over the period of this mandate, between now and 2020, the resource budget will be subject to a 4%-plus cut from London. That, indeed, is a major challenge to all of us. As you know, wages are going up at least 1%, and there is pressure for an additional increase above that. So, we are under enormous challenges.

I said to Mr Gauke, when we met in London last week, that the greatest thing he could do to provide an economic stimulus would be to say that there would be an end to that austerity agenda, because that is the austerity agenda continuing. It may be austerity lite, but it is continuing, and it is a direct instruction and mandate from London over which we have no say — that is, that we have to cut our resource budget by 4%.

I know that UCUNF went to the dance with the Conservative Party. I do not know how relations are. Maybe you have moved on to another partner, but if you have any influence, I suggest you apply it to Mrs May and Mr Hammond to say to them that we are under enough pressure in balancing our budgets, building our economy and building a shared future without this 4.1% cut.

USA: Cultural and Historical Connections

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Clare Bailey is not in her place. I call Nelson McCausland.

Mr McCausland: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. The Finance Minister is a person who has considerable interest in links between Northern Ireland and the United States of America. He is also very conscious of —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Has the Member a question?

Mr McCausland: That is a question. I am getting to the question.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member ask his question?

Mr McCausland: Yes, I had to preface it with just a line or two. I am sure if you bear with me for a moment —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member will come to his question or else I will call somebody else.

Mr McCausland: Yes. I think a little bit of opportunity for me just to preface it with one or two sentences —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I hope the Member is not challenging the authority of the Chair.

Mr McCausland: No, I am simply trying to get asking my question.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can the Member come to his question, please?

Mr McCausland: I will as soon as I get an opportunity, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Finance Minister is very aware of the strong cultural links between Northern Ireland and America and also the potential for culture as a source of soft power.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Could the Member come to his question or I will call the next person?

T4. **Mr McCausland** asked the Minister of Finance, given that half of the people on the island of Ireland are of Scots-Irish descent, to outline his assessment of the potential to utilise those cultural and historical connections for the economic benefit of Northern Ireland. (AQT 439/16-21)

Mr McCausland: I think that does, in fact, constitute a question.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can I remind the Member that questions are supposed to be brief and to the point?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Mo bhuíochas fosta leis an Chomhalt. In the US, as the Member will know, 33 million people ascribe themselves as having an Irish-American identity and about seven million as Scots-Irish. The opportunity to leverage the great sympathy and support that we have among that Scots-Irish cohort in the US has still not been fully seized. I believe it is not only about tourism. It can translate into educational links, economic partnerships and investment.

The greatest impact that we can make when we travel to the US is not when we deliver a message that is targeted at just the Irish-American or the Scots-Irish but when we talk about Planter and Gael together; that is the type of message. Scots-Irish and Irish-American together are much stronger than either apart.

Mr McCausland: Some might argue that the Gaels were Planters as well. Would the Minister undertake to work with the relevant folk in the Department for Communities and the Minister there, who have responsibility for the Ulster-Scots Agency, to see if additional resources could be afforded to enable it to work up additional work in that context because of the fact that the budget of the Ulster-Scots Agency is so much lower than the budget for Foras na Gaeilge?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I think that emerged as a complaint rather than a question. I have recently written to the board, and I am happy to widen the discussion to include its approach to the US. If it is any help, I will make myself available as a resource. I have been promising to go to Atlanta, in particular, and Nashville, and I have never made that visit.

I believe that more can be done, and I hope to get a response from the board to the letter that I sent. Perhaps we can widen out the discussion to include the US.

Marriage Equality

T5. **Ms Seeley** asked the Minister of Finance, in the light of a question she previously asked about marriage equality, for an update on the commitment that he made. (AQT 440/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Yes. I thank the Member for her question. As she may have read or noted, I brought forward to the Executive, not last week but the week before, a proposal that I be allowed to bring forward a consultation on a marriage equality Bill. That was voted down in the Executive, and, therefore, I cannot proceed, as Minister, with that Bill. I therefore hand the baton, as it were, over to the private Members. I know that a number of private Members wish to bring forward a Bill on marriage equality, and that, of course, will have my support.

Ms Seeley: I thank the Minister for his answer, but I am disappointed that that was the response from the Executive. Was the issue of marriage equality raised during his recent visit to the US?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Yes. The Member should not be disappointed about these matters. As another famous Atlantan said:

“the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.”

I am confident that, in this little part of this small island and these islands, we will see marriage equality.

Yes, this issue does come up in the US. It comes up in San Francisco, which is probably the capital of diversity in the US. I was there last week. There is a great belief that the prosperity of Silicon Valley, San Francisco, is based on what Richard Florida refers to as the three T's — technology, talent and tolerance. Each is equally important to me. You will find that many of our friends in the US, to use your words, are disappointed that we have not made enough progress on this issue, because it is seen very much as a civil rights issue in the US. I have no doubt that many of the companies that I have met would be heartened. It is of interest that, in recent years, it is the large companies and, in some cases, large multinational companies such as Citigroup in this city that have made a strong stance in support of diversity. I have no doubt that they will, in the appropriate time, make their views known.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Edwin Poots is not in his place.

Prison Service/PSNI Equal Pay

T7. **Mr T Buchanan** asked the Minister of Finance, given that, in recent correspondence about pay for those in the Prison Service and the PSNI, he said that he was discussing the matter with the Secretary of State, James Brokenshire, for an update on what progress has been made. (AQT 442/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I thank the Member for his vigilance and commitment to this issue. I wrote to the Secretary of State, and the ball is in his court in relation to an equal pay settlement for the cohort of workers that you referred to. I have not received a satisfactory answer at this time, but I will certainly keep in touch with him on the issue. As he is aware, there is no obligation in statute on the Executive to make that payment, but I am aware that many Members feel that there is a moral commitment. Unfortunately, moral commitments are not exactly the same.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Stewart Dickson.

Mr Dickson: Thank you very much.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Gabh mo leithscéal. Sorry, Mr Dickson. I forgot to call Mr Buchanan for a supplementary. My apologies.

Mr T Buchanan: I thank the Minister for his response. Will the Minister give a commitment that, if progress is not made soon with the Secretary of State on finding money for this, he will have further discussions with his Executive colleagues on how funding can be found for this matter?

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I admire your doggedness on this issue. The advice, as you know — former Minister Wilson was very firm on this — is that if we open this genie's bottle, we have no idea what it will cost the Executive and whether there will be retrospective claims from other areas and from other public servants who did receive payments. I will give you this guarantee: I will stay on Mr Brokenshire's case until he has given us the reply that we need on this matter. The ball is firmly in his court, and he needs to step up and give us the answer. He needs to meet his obligations.

2.45 pm

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Stewart Dickson for a very brief question. There will not be much time for an answer, but I want to give you the opportunity to ask a question.

York Street Interchange

T8. **Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Finance whether we can be assured that neither he nor the Minister for Infrastructure is playing political football with the York Street interchange project and their Executive colleagues and that they are making genuine efforts to secure the appropriate financing to place the project rightly where it should be. (AQT 443/16-21)

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: A very brief answer, Minister.

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I do not want to cry foul, but, as you know, I do not play political football.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: We now move on to questions —

Mr McCausland: On a point of order —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: No points of order are taken during Question Time.

Health

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Jonathan Bell, who is not in his place. I call Philip McGuigan, who is not in his place. I call Tom Buchanan, who is in his place.

ME: Specialist Services

3. **Mr T Buchanan** asked the Minister of Health to outline the specialist services available for people diagnosed with myalgic encephalopathy. (AQO 613/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Health): Since 2013-14, the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) has provided funding to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust for a pilot condition management programme with specialist knowledge and expertise in helping people diagnosed with ME. ME patients, as recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), were placed on supported self-management programmes specifically adapted to take into account their unique needs and offering lifestyle advice and coping techniques in 12 sessions. The pilot was successful and is now funded recurrently. A similar model is in place in the Belfast Trust. The Health and Social Care Board is working at present to recruit a regional medical lead for ME, and, when successful, it will consider how best to deliver the specialist ME knowledge and expertise across all remaining health and social care trusts.

Mr T Buchanan: I thank the Minister for her response. Does she agree with me that Northern Ireland needs a specialist consultant in the field, given the number now suffering from ME? Will she consider bringing forward someone of that calibre for this condition?

Mrs O'Neill: When taking decisions on the way forward, it is important that we evaluate what has been done. The pilot will feed into the evaluation and allow us to assess what is required. Suffice to say, the board is working to recruit a regional medical lead. I think that that answers your question.

It is important that we continue to support those with ME. There has been investment over the past number of years, and it is important that we continue to build on that good work, in the spirit of Delivering Together — our new way of working — and design services that are fit for purpose and meet the needs of those who suffer from ME. When designing those services, we need to listen to patients, carers, families and staff who provide services on the front line.

Mrs Dobson: Now that the ice is finally beginning to thaw around support and services for people suffering from chronic illnesses such as ME, what guarantees will the Minister give that the charities fighting so hard will be fully involved in design and delivery?

Mrs O'Neill: I am not sure what the Member means when she says that the “ice is ... beginning to thaw”, but involving patients, carers, families and service deliverers in the design of services is at the core of the new way forward. The strategic direction, which I have set out, very clearly puts the needs of the patient at the centre of decision-making. It is really important that people feel ownership, understand why things are done in a certain way and are part of designing the care pathway that they will need to use. As we go forward, the service is very much patient-centred, but, in order for us to be successful in delivering better outcomes, we need to listen to everybody's voice.

Mr Sheehan: What condition management programmes are offered to ME patients?

Mrs O'Neill: All health and social care trusts offer condition management programmes to help participants with a range of health problems to better understand and manage their conditions. Only the Belfast Trust and the Northern Trust offer specialist programmes for ME patients. Those are 12-week, voluntary, work-focused programmes to help participants with a range of health problems to understand and manage their condition, become engaged in more meaningful activity and return to work or training, either now or in the future. Examples of condition management programme sessions include problem management; assertiveness; building confidence and self-esteem; healthy lifestyle; getting a good night's sleep; stress management; managing low mood and depression; fatigue management; anxiety management; pain management; back care; and what is next after the condition management programme (CMP).

The programmes also receive funding from the Department for Communities and are targeted to persons with a variety of long-term health problems and primarily to those in receipt of health-related benefits.

Mr Durkan: The Minister touched on my question at the end of her answer. What ongoing engagement has she had with the Minister for Communities regarding improving the condition management programme?

Mrs O'Neill: As I said in the previous answer, the Department for Communities obviously funds those whole areas of work that I set out. That is really important. Going forward with a new-style Programme for Government that is very much outcomes-focused will allow us to work collectively a lot more. I think we will see in the Programme for Government how Departments need to interact. We do not have the luxury of working in silos. We have to work together. For me, the need to coordinate, collaborate and ensure that we design services and support people is key, whether that be within the health sector or working in conjunction with the community and voluntary sector. I think the Department for Communities and I will have a lot of overlap in how we can support people better. I am looking forward to that.

Ms Bradshaw: Minister, I ask you to go back to your original statement on recruitment of a regional medical lead for the Belfast Trust. Given that it has been trying for months to recruit that lead to no avail, will you comment on what your Department is doing to try to address the issue?

Mrs O'Neill: As a member of the Health Committee, the Member will be very aware that there are recruitment difficulties right across the piece. It is very difficult to recruit into posts, but we have to keep trying. We cannot

just say we have not been successful one time and then give up. We will have to headhunt people where necessary. We have to do absolutely everything we can to attract the right clinicians to support the population here. I am assured that the board, in conjunction with the trust, is doing absolutely everything it can to make sure we recruit someone into that post. I am very happy to update the House on progress on that in the future. I think it is important that we establish that regional medical lead. It will allow us to give confidence to patients that there is regional oversight and one medical lead and that that will filter right across, no matter where you live in the North.

Ulster Hospital: Delayed Discharges

4. **Mr Chambers** asked the Minister of Health to outline the total number of delayed discharges in the Ulster Hospital in the last 12 months. (AQO 614/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department set the following targets, which set out reasonable timescales for the discharge of patients from hospital. They are that 90% of complex discharges from an acute hospital take place within 48 hours; no complex discharge should take more than seven days; and all non-complex discharges from an acute hospital should take place within six hours. There were a total of 32,288 discharges from the Ulster Hospital in the 12 months from 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2016. Of those, 4,443 did not meet the targets.

The HSCB and PHA regional unscheduled care team has developed a number of work streams to support improvements in patient flow and has been working with the South Eastern Trust to put in place structures and systems to ensure that discharges occur as soon as medical advice allows to maximise the efficient use of hospital beds and deliver the best use of resources to patients.

The pressures on the health and social care system that contribute to delays in discharging patients from hospitals are further evidence of the need to transform the way we deliver our services. That is why the vision for the future of health and social care services that I set out in 'Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together' places patients at the centre of service delivery and seeks to reform community and hospital services so that they are organised to provide care when and where it is needed.

Mr Chambers: Minister, you previously told me that there were over 17,000 days of discharge delays at the Ulster Hospital, which is an astronomical figure. Can you detail what extra steps your Department and the neighbouring trusts have actually taken to improve the provision of social care places outside the hospital setting? Will the information revealed by today's RQIA report have any bearing or influence on the urgency by which you are going to look at the obvious problem of delayed discharges in the Ulster Hospital?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind the Member that questions should not be read and that it is one question. The Minister can choose which question to answer.

Mrs O'Neill: The RQIA report that has been published is the result of an inspection that was carried out in the Ulster Hospital during a four-day period back in February this year. The report of that inspection has been published today, and the trust now has an obligation to submit a formal quality improvement plan to RQIA to set out how it is going to address the recommendations that have been

made and the timescales for completion of any actions. It is important to note that, whilst there are a number of recommendations that must be addressed by the trust, inspectors did not find any issues that required escalation to the trust or the Department. That is important. It is also important to say that, since the inspection was held in February of this year, improvements have already been implemented in a number of areas. The trust was not sitting back and waiting for the report to be published today; it has already been very active in doing whatever it can to deal with the issues highlighted in the inspection.

I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to go to the Ulster Hospital last week and shadow an ED nurse. To me, those people are absolutely amazing. They are under such pressure and work day and daily to support patients. Their enthusiasm, even though they have all those challenges, was brilliant to see, as was their commitment and dedication. They were telling stories about how, when they were under pressure in wintertime, staff gave up their own time to come in and help out, which is a testament to our healthcare staff. Whilst there are lessons to be learned in the RQIA report — the trust will set out its plan for how it will do that — I am confident that it has been working continuously since that inspection to improve where it could in advance of the report being published.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for her answers. We welcome the considerable investment in the Ulster Hospital and the ongoing programme there, which is amazing. We really recognise —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member come to his question, please?

Mr Dunne: — the progress that has been made.

My question follows on from the RQIA report that the Minister mentioned. Does she recognise the need to address the shortage of junior doctors and other staff, particularly at weekends and at night?

Mrs O'Neill: Yes. The increase in the number of patients that the Ulster Hospital has seen over the last number of years is significant. It is maybe the largest increase in any trust area. That shows the pressure that the hospital is under. That, combined with an ageing population and people presenting with more complex needs, leads to all the challenges that it has.

There are considerable workforce issues across all trust areas, which is why we need a properly targeted workforce plan to attract more junior doctors and the right staff to work in the right areas at the right time. There have been some advancements around advanced nurse practitioners, but how can we use other professionals to complement the whole team? The board and the trust are working on that in relation to the Ulster Hospital. I commend the Ulster Hospital for the work that it has been doing all year and for the improvements that it has made since the inspection. It will continue to do more and make sure that it has first-class services for people who present and need its services.

Ms S Bradley: Does the Minister accept that a large number of the delayed discharges are due to the fact that there are insufficient staff and resources for community care packages? What direct action is she planning to deal with that matter?

Mrs O'Neill: There is a range of reasons for delayed discharge, including some that are complex. A list would

include no capacity among domiciliary care providers; no residential home, nursing home or elderly mentally ill (EMI) beds available; people with more complex conditions needing essential equipment because adaptations to their homes are not complete; and no inpatient palliative care arrangements or home/community-based palliative care arrangements, maybe because not enough suitable step-down beds are available.

There is a combination of factors in delayed discharge. We want to try to improve the whole system. When we talk about the future, we talk about whole system transformation, and these issues will be key to that. If something is not right in the community, it will have an impact on whether people can be discharged, so we have to come at this holistically. That is the plan that we set out in 'Delivering Together', and it is how we will change the whole piece. We cannot concentrate on one element of the system when every other part of the system has a knock-on effect.

Ms Seeley: I thank the Minister for her answers so far. She outlined some of the complexities with discharge. Will she outline some of the actions being taken to reduce discharge delays?

Mrs O'Neill: The trust is continuing to work to address all the pressures that I outlined. It is working really hard to improve patient flow through the hospital and into the community. Over the past number of years, the trust has been working closely with the board, other trusts, GPs and the south-eastern locality network to develop services in response to pressures on acute services. A number of initiatives have been introduced to help to improve flow and provide services in the community to assist hospital discharge in the north Down area or to avoid admission.

They include things like new discharge models such as the integrated discharge hub, discharge to access model, domiciliary referral hub and a discharge lounge; full utilisation of intermediate care beds; development of an enhanced care-at-home model that provides higher-intensity care at home for older people; home from hospital domiciliary care pilot; enhanced falls service in partnership with the Ambulance Service; additional clinical staffing to manage periods of peak demand in the emergency department and across the whole hospital site; additional multidisciplinary staff support including extended weekend and evening pharmacy, diagnostic, social work and allied health professionals; and multidisciplinary teams established to expedite the discharge of people with complex needs.

I recognise that there are pressures in domiciliary care and the wider support system. That is why we will bring forward in March next year the reform of adult social care, which is currently being developed with proposals for reform to ensure that we have an effective and sustainable system of care and support in the future. As outlined in my vision, I am committed to ensuring that I consult on the reform proposals in March or April of next year.

3.00 pm

Health Trusts: Mileage Policy

5. **Mr Clarke** asked the Minister of Health whether she has any plans to review the mileage policy in relation to essential car users in health and social care trusts. (AQO 615/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The mileage rates are not set by me; they are set by the management and staff side representatives from England, Scotland and the North of Ireland in partnership through the NHS Staff Council. The council reviews the rates twice a year on the basis of the motoring costs that are published by the AA, in order that they can be moved up or down in line with the current motoring costs. All HSC employees are reimbursed for miles travelled in the performance of their duties that are in excess of the home to agreed work base return journey. Normally, the miles eligible for reimbursement are those travelled from the agreed work base and back. The current rate of reimbursement for privately owned cars is 56p per mile up to 3,500 annual miles and 20p per mile thereafter.

Mr Clarke: I thank the Minister for that answer. I put on record my disappointment that the Minister would not meet me to discuss the issue. Given that some people, particularly those in the crisis team, travel well in excess of 10,000 miles per year, which drops them to 20p per mile, does the Minister agree that it is unfortunate that those who work in that difficult circumstance, covering most parts of Northern Ireland, actually subsidise the health service by using their own cars?

Mrs O'Neill: I thank the Member for his question. I have so many requests for meetings that I could not possibly meet everybody, but I gave consideration to your letter. You wrote to me on the issue at some stage in the past. It is important that staff are supported; it is really important that they are supported to do their job well. That was key in Delivering Together and how we go forward. We have to support our staff; they are the biggest asset of the health service.

In relation to the policy around the mileage, it is not something that I set. I could give it consideration if it was something that I set. Perhaps, if we had that power devolved and it was in my capability, I could do something about it. The Member has raised the issue that he is concerned about rural workers, and that is a legitimate concern. I will not be found wanting in my support for those staff, if there is ever an opportunity for me to feed into the policy development. Obviously, with the AA setting the rates, it is difficult to step outside that. It is also not something that I am being lobbied about by unions, for example, who are part of the staff side negotiation, but let us keep it under review. I want to do everything I can to support the staff out there who do excellent work, and I particularly understand the challenges for those who work and look after people in rural areas.

Ms Dillon: Will the Minister advise when the last review was carried out?

Mrs O'Neill: In line with the collective agreement, a review of mileage rates was conducted in November 2015 using AA information on fuel prices over a 12-month period ending in October 2015. It was found at the time that fuel price changes were insufficient to trigger a change in the mileage rates as there was no change to the mileage rates in use across the HSC. It was not possible for a review to be carried out in May 2016 as intended, as the AA had not published updated information on fuel costs. As an interim measure, the NHS Staff Council put forward a proposal that, if there is a change in rates following the next review in November 2016 — this month — the change would not be backdated, avoiding the need for either the recovery of overpayments if the rate goes down or the calculation of arrears for reimbursement should rates go up. The HSC

joint negotiation forum's executive committee agreed the proposal at its 25 July meeting this year.

Mr McGlone: Mo bhúochas leis an Aire as na freagraí. The issue around discharges was referred to earlier, and part of the problem for discharges is the lack of available domiciliary care provider packages. What input does the Minister have to ensure consistency of terms and conditions of employment, including mileage, in the independent domiciliary care provider sector, which is leading to problems with discharges?

Mrs O'Neill: I agree with the Member on the previous question, when the problem of being unable to secure proper domiciliary care packages was highlighted. The Member will also know that, on many occasions, I have said in the House that domiciliary care workers are the backbone of the health service. The workforce is predominantly female, they are the lowest paid in the health service, and, when they pay for their mileage out of their own wages, their wages go down even further.

I am about to take receipt of a review of domiciliary care, and I look forward to delving into it. More domiciliary care workers should be employed in-house in the health service. We have a relationship with the independent sector, where the majority of domiciliary care workers are employed, and quite often they do not receive payment for mileage. That leads to problems with recruitment, particularly in rural areas. People cannot go out because they are already on a low wage and the cost of mileage brings it down even further.

We can do more. Along with the domiciliary care review and the adult social care review that we will have next year I want to see a changing picture where we have more domiciliary care workers employed by trusts. We should, as far as possible, employ the majority of them. It may not be possible for financial reasons, but I certainly want to change the current picture, where the majority are outside the health service and the minority are inside it.

Mr Smith: I thank the Minister for her clarification of mileage rates for domiciliary care staff, and I welcome the fact that a review is under way. Can the Minister confirm that she supports domiciliary care staff being reimbursed for mileage? Can she also confirm that she has lobbied hard, and will she tell me what she has put in place to ensure that contractors are forced to reimburse their staff fairly?

Mrs O'Neill: I am in constant conversation with the Finance Minister about procurement and how we can secure better terms and conditions when we have to go to the independent sector. If we are serious about supporting the lowest-paid workers in our society, we should ensure that, when we procure services, we do them justice by making sure they are part of the contract. Obviously, we are in a difficult financial situation, and domiciliary care provision is fragile at times. We need to ensure that we do it in a proper and planned way. I am absolutely supportive of domiciliary care workers receiving a fair wage for the work that they do.

Primary and Community Care: South Belfast

6. **Ms Hanna** asked the Minister of Health whether the Health and Social Care Board plans to commission a consultation on the direction for primary and community care infrastructure in South Belfast. (AQO 616/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Neither the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) nor the Belfast Trust has any current plans for major primary and community care infrastructure developments in south Belfast that require consultation. The Health and Social Care Board is aware that a number of GP practices in south Belfast have been approached by a developer who intends to redevelop the King's Hall site at Balmoral. Some GP practices have verbally expressed an interest in moving to the new site, but, to date, only one proposal has been submitted to the HSCB to relocate.

The extent of consultation required by the HSCB will depend on how many practices make an application to relocate. If further proposals are received from other GP practices in the south Belfast area, this is likely to impact more than the relocation of one practice and, therefore, additional consultation would be likely. The process would include seeking the views of patients and local communities through letters to patients and focus groups to assess impact, including in relation to section 75 groups, and to understand issues and how to mitigate them.

Ms Hanna: I thank the Minister for her answer. She will be aware of the proposals for a major private healthcare park in south Belfast. Could she confirm that her Department has not had contact with the developer, and does she agree that a population plan will be required to make any reasonable decision on the proposal?

Mrs O'Neill: I personally have not had any engagement with private providers. I am obviously aware of the situation and aware that one GP has expressed an interest; they want to go. If you are going to have a wholesale move to that site, it is really important that we consult people so that they understand and are on board and think it is the right thing to do. If we are going to plan services together, we have to have that consultation.

The patients' voice needs to be heard as does the local elected representatives', and everybody needs to be part of the conversation. To date, only one GP has expressed an interest in relocating. It is obviously a decision for the others, but they would have to come through a consultation process and they would have to approach the board. I do not envisage that anything will happen in a haphazard way. It will have to be a planned, managed change, if there was going to be a change.

Mr Middleton: I thank the Minister for her answers so far. Can the Minister outline whether she plans to follow through on the previous Minister's plans for the Health and Social Care Board?

Mrs O'Neill: I can. I have said that the board will close, but I want to do that in such a way that staff are informed and brought along on the journey. There are opportunities for us to streamline how we do things. I set out that 'Delivering Together' was all about changing systems, but there are some structures that needed to change, and the board was one of them, and there was plenty of consultation on it. The board will close, and, over the next number of weeks, I intend to engage directly with board staff about what will go where.

There are two things that we need to have a strong focus on: performance management and financial issues. Alongside that we need regional oversight. We could elaborate on the work that the PHA does and incorporate it there, but I want to talk to staff first. I owe them the courtesy of talking about their future and where they will be moving.

For some time, they have been sitting in limbo waiting to see what happens next. I want to talk to them, but I will keep the Health Committee informed about what happens next. It is my intention to move on that immediately and talk to board staff to bring them up to speed.

Mr Kearney: Mile buíochas duit, a Aire, as ucht na bhfreagraí go dtí seo. Minister, what other primary-care infrastructure projects do you have in place at this point?

Mrs O'Neill: As well as the pilot projects in Lisburn and Newry, the new centre in Omagh is progressing really well; that is part of the Omagh local hospital project, which had an overall capital investment of £85 million. The new health and care centre opened in Banbridge in January of this year at a capital cost of £16.5 million, and a new £25 million health and care centre opened in Ballymena in February of this year. Both schemes were funded by traditional capital.

Whilst work on the development of business cases for new projects has been temporarily paused pending the evaluation of the Lisburn and Newry projects, the Health and Social Care Board has commenced work on the preparation of a regional services needs analysis for respective trusts' local commissioning group areas that will inform decisions regarding the future infrastructure requirements in each area.

Health: All-Ireland Approaches

7. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Health for an update on the progress being made in identifying further potential for all-Ireland approaches to health. (AQO 617/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The main opportunity for further all-Ireland collaboration is in the delivery of health services and rests in the total size of the population on the island. Increasingly, medical specialities require relatively large population groups in order to meet clinical standards that require higher numbers of procedures to be carried out by clinicians in order to deliver better outcomes for patients. When we look at the population across the island, it is clear that we have a sustainable population base on which to provide many of those specialist services.

In addition, the opportunity to combine North/South investment means that we can better afford new health service developments. For example, we have committed together over £100m to deliver children's congenital heart disease services, through an all-island network, and radiotherapy services in Derry for cancer patients from the north-west.

My Department has carried out initial scoping of further opportunities that allows us to build on the current work programme to deliver better health and well-being outcomes for people across Ireland.

I intend to discuss these further opportunities with Minister Harris at our next North/South health and food safety sectoral meeting, which is tomorrow. Our initial scoping has identified opportunities for collaborative working in specialities such as human organ transplantation, services for people who have rare diseases, the emerging field of genomic medicine, a networked approach to major trauma, and, in mental health, particularly in respect of perinatal mental health, eating disorder services, and services for children and young people.

I want to commend the substantial work that has been done by the health authorities, North and South, to date and to state my commitment to support them to take their efforts to the next level. At the heart of this collaboration is putting the interests of patients first and foremost by delivering safe, high-quality health services that will provide mutual benefits for patients, North and South.

Mr McElduff: I ask the Minister whether she and her Department are identifying potential new areas for North/South cooperation in this matter?

3.15 pm

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can the Minister give a brief answer?

Mrs O'Neill: Yes, I can. I look forward to speaking to Minister Harris about that tomorrow. I set out some of the really good work that has already happened, but I think that there is so much more scope and opportunity, particularly with mental health, perinatal mental health and children and young people's services. I think that there is scope there. When Minister Harris and I agree a formal programme for scoping out those areas, I will be very happy to update the House on the work that we will take forward.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions.

South West Acute Hospital

T1. **Mr McPhillips** asked the Minister of Health for an update on the future of the South West Acute Hospital in Enniskillen, especially in relation to acute services, stroke services and the recruitment of staff. (AQT 446/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: First, I put on record my thanks to the wonderful staff at the South West Acute Hospital (SWAH) who provide brilliant services every day. I know that the management, the Department, the Western Trust and all the agencies involved are working really hard to make sure that we develop services.

As for the direction of travel for some of the areas, there is so much scope in the South West Acute Hospital. Service transformation will provide major opportunities for the hospital, but we are all aware of the challenges we face, including with recruitment and retention. We have to address those challenges, which is why we will do some work on workforce planning. There are also great opportunities now that Ulster University has produced its strategic outline business case looking at proposals to create a new medical school in the north-west. All those things combined mean that there is a positive picture for the future of the South West Acute Hospital.

Mr McPhillips: Thanks to the Minister for her answers so far. She will be aware of a letter that she sent to the chief executive of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council that states that she cannot force:

"junior doctors to locations that are unpopular due to geographical remoteness, weak training experience or lack a supportive environment".

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can the Member come to his question, please?

Mr McPhillips: Will the Minister clarify those comments? Does she accept that they will be seen by many as pre-empting the closure of acute services in SWAH?

Mrs O'Neill: The short answer is no. It is unhelpful, to say the least, for the Member to try to grab a cheap headline in his local papers for one week in a way that lets staff feel that their jobs will be in jeopardy and that makes patients feel that their services will be in jeopardy, when, very clearly, transformation points to the need to specialise and to the fact that there are opportunities for the South West Acute Hospital, which is not, indeed, what the Member suggested will be the case. I suggest having a wee bit of positivity and support for the staff who work really hard. I think that it is really unhelpful to take the approach that you have taken for a cheap headline.

As we go forward, I have set out some of the areas where I think that there is real potential. The fact that Ulster University is looking at developing a medical school in the area shows that there is a commitment to the long-term future of attracting staff into the area. There are, of course, challenges in attracting staff into the area; that has been known for many years. There is, however, a workforce issue right across the piece.

Let us look at other ways. Just because one way that was suggested is not the way that I think that we need to go does not mean that there are no other ways to do it. The fact is that a training school will be up there, and evidence shows that medical staff will stay where they are trained. There is a body of evidence to show that. If, instead of getting cheap headlines, we do all those things, are positive, work in partnership and support the highly trained and dedicated medical staff, clinicians and all the people who work up there, the people of the area would be better served.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Question 2 has been withdrawn. I call Roy Beggs.

Mr Beggs: The Northern Ireland Audit Office published a report today on emergency hospital administration. It indicates that some 1,700 patients remained in hospital for more than a week when they were ready for home. It also highlighted that Antrim hospital —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can the Member come to his question, please?

Mr Beggs: — has as many as 37% of patients who were not seen within four hours.

Hospitals: Delayed Discharges

T3. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Health to advise how delayed discharge is adversely affecting our hospitals and A&E departments and to state what she is doing about it. (AQT 448/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I think that I answered that question during Question Time, but I will comment on the delayed discharges. The Audit Office report that was published today clearly sets out the figures that the Member referred to.

The most common reasons for delayed discharge vary in each trust; there are different reasons in different trust areas. I set out them out previously. They include capacity in domiciliary care, care planning being incomplete and no nursing beds being available. All those things lead to delayed discharges.

The report has been published, and lessons are always learnt. It is really important that trusts continue to do absolutely everything they can to avoid delayed discharges. I think they are trying to do everything they can. New initiatives are being looked at for how they can do that; for example, can they have a discharge area that people could be moved to? There are all sorts of issues. There could be family issues or people not being picked up in time. There is a whole raft of reasons. It is important we improve discharges so that we can allow the flow across hospitals to be as effective as possible, we are not blocking beds and staff are not frustrated by all that. I think the Audit Office's report allows us to learn lessons.

Mr Beggs: The report also highlighted the need to enable GPs and other healthcare professionals to provide additional services locally. Does the Minister recognise the benefits of developing modern healthcare and well-being centres in areas such as Larne and Carrickfergus? What capital and resources are going to be committed to enable local GPs and other healthcare practitioners to deliver that?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Minister can choose which question to answer.

Mrs O'Neill: It is really important that we invest in primary care. Very clearly, what I set out last week or the week before in 'Delivering Together' shows how we are going to plan services for the future. We have to do that collectively, and we have to do it holistically. You cannot look at one element of the health service on its own; you have to look at the whole thing in the round. If we are to be successful in dealing with blockages in hospitals and increased numbers going into hospitals, hospitals should absolutely be the last port of call and services should be available in local communities.

To transform the system, that is where we have to invest. I have clearly set out my stall about the fact that I will do that. Only then will people feel confident with and feel they have ownership of the new models. That includes things like acute care at home, which allows people to stay in their home more and have the support they need there. We need to do a lot more of that. We also need to invest in primary care and our GPs, and I clearly set out how we will do that. We are going to have a named health visitor, social worker and district nurse working with every GP practice. That will change the whole picture of primary care.

We are not going to achieve all those things overnight, but with a fair wind and people really working together and being true to partnership and collaboration, I think we will see a very different picture in primary care. That will help patients to achieve better outcomes, avoid unnecessary admissions to hospital and obviously help with the flow throughout our hospitals.

Bengoa Report: Service Reconfiguration

T4. **Ms Archibald** asked the Minister of Health when she intends to consult on Professor Bengoa's criteria for service reconfiguration. (AQT 449/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: In the statement I made to the Chamber on 25 October, I announced that I would publicly consult on the criteria. The consultation will begin this week and run through to early January 2017. Patients, service users and all stakeholders will have the opportunity to submit their views in writing on the criteria.

I have to say that I have been encouraged by the positive response to my vision to date. Delivering Together has received quite a lot of positive feedback, and I want to make sure that absolutely everyone has their say on the criteria for assessing the sustainability of health and social care services, which, if adopted by my Department, will be at the heart of informing future decisions to be taken about reconfiguring HSC services. Therefore, I urge everybody who has a stake in ensuring that we build a sustainable health and social care system to respond to the consultation and make sure their views are heard. I will certainly take all those views on board before finalising my Department's future policy on the criteria as they stand.

Ms Archibald: I thank the Minister for her response. That is very positive. Will the consultation also include public meetings so that people can make contributions in that way?

Mrs O'Neill: Yes, I am going to do that. As part of the process, there will be a series of public meetings; there will be consultations right across the North. That will be a real opportunity for people to put forward their views, as well as providing a forum to allow people to ask questions on the criteria and engage directly with the transformation team officials from my Department. I will release details of the consultation meetings, including venues and times, by week commencing 14 November.

Dalriada Pathfinder/Living Well Moyle

Mr McGuigan: A Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle, I begin by apologising to you and the Minister for not being in my place when I was called earlier.

T5. **Mr McGuigan** asked the Minister of Health for her assessment for the potential of the Dalriada pathfinder project and the Living Well Moyle project in assisting community well-being and health for the people of Ballycastle and the surrounding areas. (AQT 450/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I absolutely recognise the positive benefits of the Living Well model with its focus on health and well-being outcomes for individuals, and also the role that the local community plays in helping to achieve those outcomes. Living Well Moyle, which was established by the Dalriada pathfinder group, aims to improve people's health and well-being and their experience of health and social care, as well as reducing care and support. The pilot will employ a community navigator to work with service users to identify health and well-being outcomes and who will then work with the local community to identify how existing community resources can help achieve those outcomes.

It is anticipated that the service will deliver improved outcomes for people using the service as well as savings to the HSC. This is exactly the type of project that I want to see developed and explored. I want to see innovative new ways of working being tested and, where projects produce good outcomes for people using services, I want to see those being scaled up. This is a key commitment in my vision for the HSC, and I intend to take that forward.

Mr McGuigan: I thank the Minister for her enthusiastic endorsement of the project. Does she intend to be at the launch later this month?

Mrs O'Neill: Yes, I am looking forward to attending the launch on 30 November. The aims of the model, including prevention and the promotion of empowerment and well-being, are very much in line with the direction in which

we need to go in transforming the HSC, as I outlined in 'Delivering Together'. I have always said that if something works well we should scale it up and do more of it, so I am really looking forward to getting out to take a look for myself to see how effective this is and to listen to people and engage, because sometimes when you read about something and then actually go to visit it and see it for yourself, it comes alive a lot more.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I am finding it a bit difficult to hear the Minister. I ask Members to refrain from speaking, or else leave the Chamber.

Paediatric Cardiac Surgery

T6. **Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Health for an update on how the £42 million for paediatric cardiac surgery that was announced on 4 July 2016 is being spent, given that she referred earlier to all-island health models, with paediatric cardiac surgery already an agreed model for all-island health. (AQT 451/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I know that the Member has a keen interest in the issue. The announcement was a positive one that allows families to stay on the island of Ireland when they need to have treatment. Often, the surgery is significant, and people have to leave their families, and perhaps kids, behind and go to England. It is really important that we do all we can to support those families. This is a practical example of all-island collaboration.

A lot of good progress is being made to establish the appropriate structures, and securing the necessary funds was obviously a key part of that. I am also very conscious that we remain reliant on the majority of urgent and elective procedures for local children being carried out in England, so we have a few years before we get to full capacity. It is important that we continue to push forward progress on the surgical side to allow us to have those surgeries on the island as quickly as possible. In the interim, the Belfast Trust continues to operate a service level agreement with Our Lady's Children's Hospital in Dublin.

The progress is great, and you mentioned the figure in relation to the spend to date. I do not know what that figure is off the top of my head, but I am happy to provide it to you. I am most interested in getting to full capacity as quickly as possible and that nobody has to travel unnecessarily to receive the treatment. I can only imagine, as a parent, what that would be like. We need to continue to push that project forward. It is a really good example of all-island collaboration, and I want to do a lot more of it to support families.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister, as a parent who has made that journey. The capacity of Our Lady of Lourdes in Crumlin seems to be one of the limiting factors in getting this model up and running. Can the Minister give us any update on how she is progressing that with Minister Harris and when we will see the outcome?

Mrs O'Neill: I can, and I will be in a better position to update the Member after I meet Minister Harris tomorrow, as this will be one of the areas that we will be discussing at the North/South Ministerial Council in relation to progress to date and what the challenges and barriers are. We have set out our stall on the phased basis, but there are capacity issues in the hospital in Dublin. That was all part

of the plan; we knew that. As quickly as I can possibly get to the stage where we are providing full capacity on the island for families such as yours, it will be a true positive outcome.

I am committed to making sure that we do everything we can, working with the Children's Heartbeat Trust, because families come together to talk about, and share, experiences and lobby for the service to happen. I will continue to keep in touch with the Member on this.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Iarraim ar Declan Kearney. I call Declan Kearney for a very brief topical question.

Mental Ill Health: Prisons/Youth Justice System

T7. **Mr Kearney** asked the Minister of Health for an assessment of the mental ill health problems in our prisons and youth justice system. (AQT 452/16-21)

3.30 pm

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: May we have a very brief answer?

Mrs O'Neill: I will try to summarise. Recent incidents underline the need to address the mental health problems that exist in our prisons. I have said that mental health will be a priority for me, and I am considering a number of policy proposals, but, in the interests of time, I will write to the Member to give him a more detailed breakdown of the assessment.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I thank the Minister for that. That concludes Question Time.

Mr McCausland: On a point of order, Madam Principal Deputy Speaker. May I ask that the Speaker review Question Time today in Hansard? Some Members were permitted to preface and contextualise their question with a couple of sentences without interruption, some Members managed it with interruption and some of us were interrupted in the first sentence. I therefore ask that the Speaker review Hansard with a view to us having more consistency in how these matters are dealt with. It is important to be able to contextualise questions, and that is why Members right across the Chamber do so.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I will certainly be asking the Speaker to review today's Hansard. The Member knows full well that the Speaker's ruling is final on all questions of procedure and order and that, when in the Chair, Deputy Speakers and the Principal Deputy Speaker have the same authority. Let us move on.

Mr Lyttle: On a point of order, Principal Deputy Speaker. You may be aware of an increasing perception that the Executive will do whatever they can to evade the accountability of the Assembly. It is, I presume, the role of the Speaker to assist us to achieve such accountability, so I am at a total loss as to why the Speaker rejected my request today for a question for urgent oral answer to the Education Minister on what action he has taken to avert teacher industrial action in our community. We have the bizarre situation in which the Education Minister has given interviews to the media in the Great Hall of this Building but no statement to the Assembly on this urgent issue. I ask the Speaker —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: May I interrupt the Member, please? Decisions on questions for urgent oral answer are a matter for the Speaker. It is not in order to challenge them. Let us move on.

Mr Lyttle: Principal Deputy Speaker, may I request some guidance on what constitutes a question for urgent oral answer, given that I can see no more urgent issue than the one facing our schools at this time?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member is an experienced Member of the House, and he is very aware that all he needs to do is go to the Business Office, which is very accessible. Let us move on.

Private Members' Business

Ending All Forms of Paramilitarism

Debate resumed on motion, as amended:

That this Assembly believes that, 18 years after the Good Friday Agreement, all paramilitary organisations should have ceased to exist; notes the Fresh Start panel report on the 'Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups' and the publication of an Executive action plan; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Minister of Justice to ensure the full and robust implementation of all 43 recommendations in a manner that aligns resources with needs, is prompt and innovative, engages and empowers communities, builds unequivocal commitment to the rule of law, supports transition, tackles criminality and that addresses the systemic issues that perpetuate paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly believes that, 18 years after the Good Friday Agreement, all paramilitary organisations should have ceased to exist; notes the Fresh Start panel report on the 'Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups' and the publication of an Executive action plan; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Minister of Justice to ensure the full and robust implementation of all 43 recommendations in a manner that aligns resources with needs, is prompt and innovative, engages and empowers communities, builds unequivocal commitment to the rule of law, supports transition, tackles criminality and that addresses the systemic issues that perpetuate paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime.

Legacy Inquests

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. Two amendments have been selected and are published on the Marshalled List, so an additional 15 minutes has been added to the total time. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. The proposer of each amendment will have 10 minutes in which to propose and five minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes. Before we begin, the House should note that the amendments are mutually exclusive, so, if amendment No 1 is made, the Question will not be put on amendment No 2.

Mr Kearney: I beg to move

That this Assembly endorses the five-year plan, advanced by the Lord Chief Justice in consultation with victims' families, to deal with the backlog in legacy inquests; and calls on the British Government, in recognition of their obligations under article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to provide the funding required.

Members, yesterday we had a very temperate debate and agreed a motion on addressing the past. I hope that we can achieve a similar consensus on the motion this afternoon. It has been drafted to try to achieve that objective. Unfortunately, the amendments tabled distract from achieving the desired and required consensus.

In October 2015, the Assembly debated a Sinn Féin motion that called for our coronial court system to be resourced to function in a timely and effective way and to address outstanding legacy inquests. There was agreement during that debate that victims' families deserved the support of our local political institutions in having access to the necessary coronial mechanisms, with properly resourced legacy inquests key to that. In the previous 10 years, only 13 legacy inquests had been heard.

Later, in November 2015, the Fresh Start Agreement approved a framework to deal with the past, including addressing the issue of legacy inquests. The Fresh Start Agreement created the potential for victims to effectively pursue truth recovery and justice for their relatives. Importantly, it opened the door of hope for victims' families. However, during those negotiations, the British Government withdrew the political commitment that they made the previous year, 2014, to ensure that there would be maximum information disclosure to families. They insisted on having a national security veto, and they refused to draft the appropriate enabling legislation. That is the reason for the current impasse on legacy issues, and, unfortunately, it is directly attributable to the negative influence of the Ministry of Defence and the security services over this British Government's policy. The effect of all of that has been to compound families' disappointment and anger. The impact of the veto and the associated impasse affects all sections of our community, nationalist and unionist.

Mr Ford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kearney: Not at the moment.

Over one year since that October 2015 debate and the Fresh Start Agreement, victims' families are still being failed, and for no good reason. Sinn Féin submitted proposals on how to address and end the impasse, and the British Government should answer publicly now why they reject that template. National security is a smokescreen. There is no arguable way in which the disclosure of information about the actions of state forces or agents 20, 30 or 40 years ago could in any way undermine British national security in the present day's geopolitical context.

I hope today that a similar consensus can emerge from this debate in support of the Lord Chief Justice's plan to deal with the backlog of legacy inquests and in calling on the British Government to recognise their obligations and release the required funding. Victims currently have no option other than to pursue the truth individually through the courts. The only article 2-compliant mechanism that exists in the North and is available to them is the legacy inquest, and there are now 56 legacy cases relating to 97 deaths, representing citizens from nationalist and unionist backgrounds, including groups such as the Ballymurphy massacre families and the Kelly's bar families.

Last February, the Lord Chief Justice proposed to fast-track these cases, which date back 45 years to 1971. He believes that, with PSNI and MoD cooperation and the release of the necessary funding, that could be completed in five years. The Lord Chief Justice has requested £25 million in immediate funding, which he suggested could come from the £150 million politically committed by the British Government in 2014 to address dealing with the past. The British Government, however, are now blocking this approach by refusing to release those funds.

Mr Ford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kearney: Not at the moment. I have a lot to say, but, if I have time, I will. I will talk to you later.

The British Government are using the DUP refusal to discuss the proposal at the Executive as a bogus excuse for doing so. The stance adopted by the British Government is an absolute disgrace because, regardless of the political disagreements in the Chamber and the Assembly or the disagreements in the Executive, the British Government have an international obligation to ensure timely and effective investigations into legacy issues that are compliant with article 2 of the European Convention. That is not an optional extra.

I charge that, after 45 years, it is well past time for the British Government to ensure that the coronial system here is capable of satisfying its article 2 obligations.

As the Lord Chief Justice reminded us in September, the pressing need to make progress was recognised by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Its last report said that it was essential for the British Government to take all necessary measures to ensure that the legacy system here was properly resourced and staffed to enable investigations to be completed. Now, the Lord Chief Justice has engaged extensively on his proposals. Experts like Nils Muižnieks, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, and Pablo de Greiff, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights, have advised on the principles that should underpin article 2-compliant legacy inquests here. Importantly, the Lord Chief Justice has also engaged with victims' families. His approach has helped

to restore a level of confidence in our justice system here in the North. To paraphrase Sammy Douglas yesterday, the Lord Chief Justice's proposals actually help to restore and not defer hope. He has found a solution to the crisis facing our coronial system and the lack of available legacy inquests.

The motion seeks cross-party endorsement of the Lord Chief Justice's plan and for the British Government to comply with their article 2 obligations. The effective blocking of the Lord Chief Justice's proposals by the Government is wrong — quite simply, wrong. It constitutes malign political interference in developing a resourced and article 2-compliant coronial system here. That is why more than 30 families from nationalist and unionist backgrounds are now taking legal action against the British Government's refusal to meet their human rights obligations. It is offensive to human and democratic rights that those families have to go to court to secure access to legacy inquests. I can think of no other democratic society where that would have to happen. That shocking reality ought to concentrate the collective mind of the Assembly today. We should show cross-party political leadership on the issue.

Members, in today's debate, we should avoid the temptation to indulge in point-scoring, political recrimination and "whataboutery" [*Laughter.*] In case the naysayers at the other end of the Chamber did not know, the reality is that the blame game is a dead-end street. We all know that we do not agree on the past. We have rehearsed our multiple narratives — you have your narratives also — many times before. However, we owe it to the families being denied legacy inquests to show that there is the potential for a resolution of the issues that can transcend political differences. As more time passes, family members are beginning to die. Important witness evidence is being lost. Another generation is being denied closure, and that, Members, is not a laughing matter.

The Lord Chief Justice's proposals are a road map to the solution. Failure to agree is to fail the families once again. We should unite in bringing pressure to bear on the British Government to release the funds and meet their obligations. Yes, that will test the commitment of the state and its agencies to dealing with the past, but that is not what the motion is about; it is about information recovery and justice. It is about speaking truth to power. As the families have told me, legacy inquests should be treated as a free-standing issue.

This is about restoring confidence in the justice system here in the North. In conclusion, I quote directly some of the words of Lord Chief Justice Declan Morgan:

"We need to deal effectively with our past ... We cannot do that if we leave any section of our society behind. ... We cannot move on while we remain under the shadow of the past. Nor should we. But time is not on our side."

As I have said, time is not on the side of victims' families. Movement on legacy inquests is urgently required.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Kearney: That is what the families deserve, and that is what we, collectively, should deliver.

3.45 pm

Mr Beattie: I beg to move amendment No 1:

Leave out all after "Assembly" and insert

"notes the five-year plan, advanced by the Lord Chief Justice in consultation with victims' families, to deal with the backlog in legacy inquests; cautions against a continued hierarchy of investigations; further notes that the closure of the Historical Enquiries Team has left a large number of people without access to any review or investigation into their loved one's murder; and calls on the Executive to bring forward proposals that are fair, balanced, impartial and proportionate."

It is interesting: I am sitting across the room from Mr Kearney, and, at one time, we would have been physical enemies; now we are probably just political adversaries. The only thing we fire at each other is insults, which is a darned sight better than bullets. I am absolutely clear that you are passionate about getting justice for the people you represent and all people in Northern Ireland, and I hope you can look at me and see that I am exactly the same and want to get justice as well. We have been able to move on, but many of the victims, not just those who are looking for legacy inquests, have not been able to move on and have not been given justice. This is an important debate, and I acknowledge that.

The problem is, in Northern Ireland, we have politically entrenched positions, where our views are intractable. You are looking at one narrative — you have explained that — and I am possibly looking at a different narrative. That creates issues.

Ms Dillon: Go raibh maith agat. I appreciate you giving way. Giving justice to one family, one set of families or one set of victims does not remove the opportunity for other victims to get justice. The debate is not about getting justice for one so that nobody else can get it; it is about dealing with this issue. That is something that needs to be addressed in the Chamber. We are not talking about justice for one against another; it is justice for everybody.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask all Members to make their comments through the Chair.

Mr Beattie: I cannot disagree with that. You are absolutely right: it is justice for everybody. If it is not justice for everybody, what is the point?

There needs to be clarity and a little bit of lateral thinking if we are to get away from the intractable positions that we are in. We will lead victims down a cul-de-sac, and I am fearful of leading them down a cul-de-sac once again. Some will think that the issue is simply the state not giving up information because, they say, of national security. In some cases, the state is absolutely right not to give information if it will cause the death of an individual — we have seen that — or where there is an issue of national security. However, if it is not giving information to save its blushes and embarrassment, it should give it. Everybody is accountable. Soldiers are accountable for their actions in Northern Ireland, and, if they go outside the law, they should be held to account, as should paramilitaries and terrorists. I have said that on many occasions, but there are mechanisms that help release the information to help with some of the inquiries.

Some will say that the stumbling block is purely that the Westminster Government will not release the funding for the legacy inquiries. I sat with the Ballymurphy families and listened to their testimony. It was a harrowing testimony. I did not feel comfortable when I left the room having heard it, but it was important to hear it. They asked the Secretary of State very clearly, "Will you release the money?". He said, "If the Executive ask me for the money, I will release it". That is what he said, and he said it on three occasions. This will help to bring clarity: let the Executive make a statement on where the issue lies that prevents them from asking for the money. If somebody is blocking it —

Mr Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr Beattie: I cannot, sorry.

If somebody is blocking it, bring it out so that we all understand what the issue is. I think I know what the issue is, and, on that, I probably sit with the DUP in many ways. The stumbling block is equality and parity and getting a system that is balanced, fair, impartial and appropriate for everybody. A lot of people see the legacy inquiry as something that gives a leg-up to one group while pushing the other group to the side. That might be a perspective, but, out in society, that is what people see.

To be article 2 compliant does not mean that you have to have a legacy inquest; it says that you have to have an independent investigation or inquiry. That is what it states; that is what you need, especially if a state actor has been involved. However, state actors were involved pretty much in every death during the Troubles. In July 1983, four UDR soldiers were killed when their unarmoured vehicle went over a mine. The state failed to protect them. Why are they not on the list of legacy inquests? In the Shankill bombing, it is thought that Stakeknife was involved. He was a UK human intelligence source, so there may have been state involvement. Why is that not on the list of legacy inquests? We can probably say that in an awful lot of cases. That is why I say that we need lateral thinking on how we get round it.

Each side is entrenched. We are entrenched in our position that everybody should get an equal shout at this, and others are saying, "No, let us get these legacy inquests up and running because the state was involved and it owes them." I can see both sides of the argument.

Our judiciary is impartial and independent. We need to respect that, and I hope that we all do. It is important that people understand that it is up to our Executive and Assembly to find a way. Nothing stops us from bringing out a bespoke way of dealing with these issues. The Historical Investigations Unit can be independent within the confines of it. We can use that to give everybody the same thing. That is incredibly important.

I have said this before and I say it again: I respect our justice system, our judges and their independence. We talk about the Lord Chief Justice's five-year plan: what is it? I have not seen such a plan. I have seen a statement and some paper articles, but I have not seen a plan that lays out how the Lord Chief Justice will deliver those inquests in five years. That is fundamental to your motion:

"That this Assembly endorses the five-year plan"

We have not seen it. It has not been published. Is the plan predicated on the assumption that inquest reform is the only option? Does it propose only non-jury inquests?

What about requests for juries? What about multiple-case hearings? Will the inquest hear all the Ballymurphy families at the same time or individually? We do not know because we do not know the plan. We have not seen it. What about witness protection? What about if somebody is called to one of these legacy inquests, and he is infirm, he sees a doctor and the doctor says that he cannot come. Will there be a judicial review? Will that stretch things out? Can we get this done in five years?

The point I am making is that I have not seen and do not understand the details of the Lord Chief Justice's five-year plan. Therefore, we are debating something that we have not seen and which has not been brought before us.

I will go back to the very start, if I may, and say that I want justice for all, and I do not think that anybody should be able to avoid justice. This is not arguing for arguing's sake. This is not countering a motion with an amendment just for the sake of it. As passionate as Mr Kearney is about his motion and the people he is dealing with, I am the same, as are other people. That is important. As an Executive and an Assembly, we need to have lateral thinking and come up with something that works for all and not just for some. That is key.

Unfortunately, I cannot support the motion.

Mr Attwood: I beg to move amendment No 2:

Insert after "inquests;"

"notes the call of the Lord Chief Justice that the local Executive, legislature and the British Government should, as a matter of urgency, play their part in the release of moneys; further notes that the Executive have failed to agree a request to the British Government to release funding further to the Stormont House Agreement proposals;"

I start where we should start and end: with the victims and survivors who, over many years, have campaigned and are now within touching distance, on one level, of having a proper inquest into incidents in the past. When I meet any families who are dealing with their pain or are heading towards an inquest, be that the Shankill families, the Ballymurphy families or those of members of our party who were victims of killings in the murder triangle in previous years, I always remember the words of an ancient Greek, who said:

"Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God."

If there are any people and families in Northern Ireland who give expression to that wisdom, it is the families who have been campaigning for inquests, truth and accountability, and who have been relentless in so doing. I hope that, wherever we divide on this, we always remember that.

We will not be supporting the Ulster Unionist amendment because it removes the critical point, which is that this matter now falls to the British Government to resolve and they should resolve it now. However, I must ask Sinn Féin and Gerry Kelly in particular to reconsider not supporting our amendment. Our amendment contains the words of the Lord Chief Justice. They are not my words or the SDLP's words; they are the words of the Lord Chief Justice. Earlier this year, on the subject of the release of moneys, he said:

"I therefore call again on the local Executive and legislature, and on the UK Government, to play their part as a matter of urgency."

Those were his words, not mine. By relying on his judgement and all that he said about managing the issue, that should be a matter that should be supported rather than rejected. I ask Sinn Féin to consider that matter between now and the end of the debate.

What is this debate about? It is about two Governments refusing to live up to the requirements of the rule of law, the need for truth and international standards. The failure in the Executive here is with the DUP. It is the DUP, Mr Beattie, that is blocking this matter processing through the Executive. It is not Sinn Féin or the Justice Minister; it is the DUP. That is a failure to listen to the directions of the Lord Chief Justice and to live up to the rule of law and international standards. However, I do not think that we will convince the DUP to change its mind, because I am sure that the Justice Minister and Sinn Féin have tried mightily to do so. In the absence of one Government, because of the DUP veto, failing to live up to the requirements set by the Lord Chief Justice, it falls to the London Government to live up to those requirements. That is what the Lord Chief Justice said in his statement earlier this year when he called on the London Government to fulfil their responsibilities as a matter of urgency.

The fact is that the British Government have not done so, and the fact is that the Secretary of State meets victims and survivors and then denies them. I want to acknowledge that Mr Beattie was at the meeting when the Ballymurphy families met the Secretary of State. When he made it very clear that he was not listening to them, they made it very clear that they were not going to listen to him any longer, and we all walked out. He meets and then does not listen, and he does not live up to his responsibilities under international law and as the representative of the British Government to release moneys in relation to this matter. He should hang his head in shame that, on the one hand, he invites victims to meet him and, on the other hand, does not heed what they request.

We say to the British Secretary of State: do not deny the families, do not deny the Lord Chief Justice and do not deny international requirements. If that is what you do in respect of funding inquests in Northern Ireland now, what are you planning when it comes to what might be an imminent public phase of the consultation on legacy proposals? Will you again have a consultation on legacy proposals that denies families, denies the rule of law and denies international standards? That is the message that you are sending out by refusing to take up the challenge of the Lord Chief Justice and the failure of the DUP to respond to the request to release moneys to the inquests.

The SDLP met the Secretary of State about the matter, and we told him bluntly, "If you give a veto to a party in Northern Ireland on this, you give a veto to other parties on other matters". We know from history that you do not go down that road.

4.00 pm

The issue of inquests, of course, is a touchstone of three other fundamental issues on dealing with legacy. The first is that the Lord Chief Justice has made it clear that he needs multiple millions of pounds to take forward his

legacy work. Mr Beattie has left the Chamber, but the High Court, through Lord Justice Kerr, called in barristers and solicitors representing families and the state and interrogated them on what was happening on inquests. The Lord Chief Justice is not making this up as he goes along. He had formal hearings through Lord Justice Kerr, and he then had separate meetings with the families to outline what his programme of work might be. He has indicated that he needs multiple millions of pounds, and, since the British Government said they would give money for legacy not only has that request come in but the Stakeknife money's request came in, which is £35 million for up to seven years, and so on and so forth. The British Government, in dealing with inquests, also need to deal with money for not just inquests but everything to do with legacy. The budget required to deal with that has escalated over the last number of years beyond what it was in even Stormont House. If, on the far side of this, the Lord Chief Justice says, "I'm not getting the multiple millions of pounds to do my work", the Chief Constable is not getting the money to do Stakeknife and the rest of us are not getting the money to do all the legacy proposals, we will let down victims and survivors even more than we have in the past. If the Secretary of State recognises his error and the fundamental offence he is causing in not dealing with inquests now, when he deals with it, if he ever deals with it — if he ever stands up to the DUP veto — he must deal with the money.

The second relevant issue on inquests was spoken about at length by Mr Kearney. Inquests are about much more than disclosure, and legacy is about much more than disclosure, important and central though it is. The experience with inquests has been the resistance of the state to providing the information in good time and in full so that it can then be shared as fully as possible with other people. That is the experience of inquests. The Lord Chief Justice was trying to navigate through that in a way that got it to a better place. If, on the far side of this, that is the approach of state authorities to disclosure or the approach of those who were in command and control of any organisation, state — the Government or their agencies — or paramilitary, during the years of conflict about their role and orders on anything that happened around murder and atrocity in Northern Ireland, we will let down victims and survivors again. If inquests are dealt with, let the issue of disclosure be dealt with. Otherwise, we are just selling something to people that they will see through on day one, and their hurt will be compounded.

The third issue — this is a reflection on the families — is that, if we do not support the families through all the legacy mechanisms — the history archive, the HIU, the ICIR, the IRG and the inquests — with money, advice, assistance and representation —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Attwood: — they will not believe the process is wholesome and worthwhile. Let that also be dealt with if the Secretary of State ever gets around to making the right call on the issue.

Mr Frew: Thank you, Deputy Principal Speaker — sorry, Principal Deputy Speaker. I always get that mixed up.

We will not support the motion or any of the amendments, although I will place on record sincere gratitude for the way

that most Members so far have spoken on this sensitive issue. I also commend Doug Beattie for what he said about equality. He gave me a compliment earlier, so I will have to return that favour. What Doug Beattie said today is very close to our position.

People throughout the ages have fought and campaigned for equality. Is it not just as important to fight for the victims and survivors to ensure that they have equality and to make sure that justice is served? Nowhere in that statement does it say that one set of victims should be left behind or treated differently from another set of victims. That is the crux. When some system, Government, Department or judicial system leaves victims behind or puts other victims at a higher level, more hurt and more pain are placed on those victims.

I have worked throughout the years with some of the family members of the Teebane victims. It was horrendous. I remember the day well. I was in the development where one of the victims lived. I saw the police cars going up first to speak to his wife. I was only out on the pavement in a parked car when it all happened. I quickly realised that the atrocity had taken place and quickly realised, too, that I had lost a friend I had grown up with. I have been working with those family members ever since, especially since I became involved in politics. You can rest assured that, when there is some outcome or something is completed and the victim and survivor of that atrocity, whatever it may be, comes forward and there is a briefing and someone says, "We have got this and we have had this and we are still not satisfied", it puts a dagger even further into the hearts of those victims and they feel forgotten — even more so. Every victim who was involved in the Troubles and every survivor who got caught up in the Troubles need to go forward, but how do we pick and choose?

I know that the legacy inquests are a special category, and there is an onus on the Government — on both Governments, in fact — on the issue. I would like to see them moving forward, but look at what money and resources we have — £150 million. Would £150 million look at 56 cases? I do not know. Does anyone in the House know?

Mr Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr Frew: Yes.

Mr Kelly: I thank the Member, and I agree with a lot of what he says about victims. Any victim has to have our sympathy. I know that he and his party talk a lot about judicial processes: will he accept that the inquests that we are talking about are judicial processes? I think that you said a moment ago that they were a different situation. Some of the relatives are in the Chamber today, and they have been waiting some 45 years for this. It is a judicial process. This is not something that had to be searched for but something that existed and is being held up. Is the Member arguing that that should be held up on the basis of other victims? I have sympathy for all the victims in these cases, as he does.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Frew: No, I am not saying that it should be held up; I am saying that the legacy inquests should continue. Three have been completed this year, and the Lord Chief Justice says that he will complete two next year. I asked

the previous Justice Minister — I could ask the current Minister this today — at the Justice Committee whether he was sure that all the muscle and sinew of his Department and the police force was going into tackling paramilitarism and crime.

The Minister said, and I remember it well, that you have to be careful about how you answer that, because resource is limited. That is the crux. A lot of this comes down to cost. We have to make sure that we treat people fairly and equally. The Lord Chief Justice said:

“It is impossible to see how the issue of legacy can be moved forward politically without progress having been made on the new legislation” —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Frew: He said:

“It is impossible to see how the issue of legacy can be moved forward politically without progress having been made on the new legislation and in the absence of a clear assessment of the costs involved in implementing all of the elements of a legacy package.”

It is important that we move forward together —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Frew: — in agreement to make sure that we serve all victims.

Mr Ford: Today we have all shown our concern for the victims of the past by adopting three somewhat different approaches. The Sinn Féin motion endorses the Lord Chief Justice's plans for inquests and then calls on the British Government to provide funding for them, but it says nothing at all about Executive responsibilities. The Ulster Unionist amendment only notes the Lord Chief Justice's plans, although, in proposing it, Doug Beattie did not seem to know what he was noting, and calls on the Executive to produce a balanced plan to move forward in all areas of dealing with the legacy of the past. The SDLP amendment endorses the Lord Chief Justice's plans and notes the failure of the Executive to deliver so far, while also putting responsibility on the British Government to deliver.

It is absolutely clear from what has been said that the Executive have failed to live up to their responsibilities and deliver. As the memory of the Stormont House Agreement of two years ago and of the so-called Fresh Start of one year ago fade, we are still doing nothing to meet the needs of victims. When the Lord Chief Justice, at the beginning of September, made his speech to start the legal term, he said something extremely significant. I think that some people, because of the measured language that he uses as a judge, did not notice the significance of his criticism of the Executive for their failure to deliver. It is now a year since he was given responsibility for the Coroners' Courts and since he, Lord Justice Weir and a number of other judges — it was Lord Justice Weir, Mr Attwood, not Lord Justice Kerr. You downgraded Brian Kerr, but we will not worry about that. It is absolutely clear that the work being done to review the possibility of progress in all outstanding inquests — a lot of good work has been done to move things forward by the judiciary, including by a number of judges who have taken responsibility for inquests, the Courts and Tribunals Service and policy staff in DOJ —

has been let down by the failure of the Executive to agree any way forward.

The First Minister and the deputy First Minister had a paper from me as Minister of Justice before the election that they would not table at the Executive. They then would not enable me to take an urgent decision. It is absolutely clear from what emerged during the election campaign that the First Minister is the person exercising the veto. The British Government may or may not be hiding behind that, but it is absolute nonsense to suggest that the veto at this stage lies anywhere other than with the First Minister.

Mr Kearney's rant blaming everything on the British Government was perhaps inevitable coming from a Sinn Féin spokesman, but maybe we should let him into a secret: in April 2010, justice was devolved to the Assembly. It is a Minister of Justice and the Executive in Northern Ireland who bear responsibility for moving things forward. Yes, the funding is supposed to come from the Treasury, but the rant on what the British Government should be doing rather suggests that Mr Kearney and possibly other Members from Sinn Féin do not believe in the devolution of justice at all.

We all know that there is a non-aggression pact in the Chamber and, indeed, other places between Sinn Féin and the DUP, but it is carrying that to extremes for either party to suggest that the fault for the blockage at the present time lies anywhere other than with the DUP. If the First Minister had not blocked progress on the initial package to start the inquest process, we could have got the process under way and delivered something for some families. Indeed, the DUP could then have said to Sinn Féin, “We have delivered something. Now you start delivering on your side”. However, by digging her heels in, the First Minister has guaranteed that nothing at all will happen.

Mr Frew may talk about the costs and how far £150 million would go, but the DOJ knew at the time of Fresh Start that £150 million would not be adequate for all that was needed under legacy. As long as the Executive fail to take any steps whatsoever, they have no prospect of getting any more money released from the Treasury. We certainly need some initial action from the Executive. At that point, money may be forthcoming from the Treasury, but unless we have something rational being done here, we will not get the opportunity to ask the Treasury to pay what it should be paying.

4.15 pm

I understand the points made by the Ulster Unionist Party about the hierarchy of victims, but, at the moment, there are people whose inquests could proceed if the money were released, and they are being let down by the system because of the failure to agree on that money. That is why it is simply not realistic to blame others.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Ford: The clear point is that, if we are to recognise responsibilities, we must ensure that the Executive and, subsequently, the UK Government act —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Ford: They must move on it now.

Mrs Cameron: As with yesterday's motion on addressing the past, we must recognise the importance of legacy inquests in helping Northern Ireland to progress. It is a massive issue that continues to prevent us from moving forward and one which must be addressed and dealt with in a respectful and impartial manner. It is clear to me that the structures in place are the stumbling block that is holding up many of the processes. I believe that there is the political will to resolve the issue but that the current system has been caught up in dealing with incredibly complex and sensitive cases involving vast amounts of information. The judicial will to move forward, that of the Lord Chief Justice Sir Declan Morgan, is also very clear, and I would like to acknowledge the work that he and his staff have already done to progress matters.

Given the current difficulties that surround legal aid, I feel that we are using a disproportionate amount of money to look at state-related cases rather than using it for day-to-day policing. This focus has also led to families and survivors of non-state-related cases feeling ignored and excluded from the process. We need a resolution for all victims.

As I mentioned yesterday, the pain and suffering of those who have lost loved ones cannot be quantified or measured. It is therefore equally important that everyone, regardless of the circumstances, is dealt with on an equal footing. No one family's suffering is greater than that of another. As we are all acutely aware, how we deal with the past is a matter on which we have squared the circle in the 18 years since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. We must reach agreement on how best to address legacy inquests and deal with the huge backlog of cases in order to allow victims and survivors to move on.

The Lord Chief Justice's five-year plan focuses on the establishment of a dedicated legacy inquest unit overseen by Mr Justice Colton. All cases would be reviewed and managed before being transferred to the coroner for hearing. As presiding coroner, Mr Justice Colton would see all related material in an unredacted format and work to ensure that the victims remained central to the process.

Under the current system, only 13 legacy cases have been delivered in the last 10 years. That situation cannot continue. It is completely impractical if we are ever to move on. It is clear that in order to progress towards resolution, greater financial means must be allocated to engage the human and technological resources required to competently complete the work. Addressing legacy inquests is key to moving forward. However, without the additional funding, we might not be able to carry these out in an appropriate timescale. We cannot continue to fail victims and prolong their pain through not coming to a satisfactory conclusion.

I am aware that the Justice Minister is equally frustrated by the current situation and is keen to advance the Lord Chief Justice's five-year plan. I appreciate that she has met the Secretary of State to discuss that. I am also aware that the First Minister and deputy First Minister have had in-depth and ongoing discussions with the UK Government. I trust that these will continue in order to secure the necessary funding to bring these outstanding legacy inquests to a close.

In closing, the need to provide independent, impartial and inclusive legacy inquests is indisputable. I fully appreciate that there is much more to dealing with the past and legacy inquests than there is time to go into today, but for the

victims and survivors of Northern Ireland's past, I cannot stress enough the need to bring these matters to a close. I believe that the Secretary of State is committed to seeing this happen. Whilst it will be a process that could take a number of years, at least, for the victims, an assurance that an inquest for their loved one is imminent might be a step in the right direction. The finances needed to take this forward are required urgently. I trust that the discussions between the Secretary of State, the First Minister and deputy First Minister will be positive and that the inquests can finally begin to move forward.

Ms Boyle: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this very important motion on legacy inquests. I thank my party colleagues for bringing the motion to the House today.

Over the course of yesterday's debate and thus far today, a lot has been said about the past. However, many families have waited and waited. Many members of those families are no longer with us. We remember them here today. Families have heard from the Lord Chief Justice, Declan Morgan, on the future of legacy inquests and how they will be dealt with through the vision of a five-year plan. They hope that they may now get the truth and justice that they rightfully deserve.

Last Friday in my constituency, I spoke with the families of Tobias Molloy and Eamonn McDevitt. They have welcomed the Lord Chief Justice's five-year plan and the review led by Judge Reg Weir. The families conveyed to me that, after almost four decades, they feel more confident and have confidence in the justice and inquest systems. However, that came with a caution: they are concerned about the resources in relation to legacy inquests. It is their understanding that, unless the resource issue is resolved, only two further legacy cases can be conducted.

The Lord Chief Justice's approach to the issue and his extensive engagement with the families has helped to restore a level of confidence in the criminal justice system. The Lord Chief Justice and his staff have to be commended for that. The opportunity may be undermined if the provision of adequate resources is not forthcoming. Indeed, it could cause significant damage to public confidence in the rule of law in general. We know that around 54 legacy cases relating to the deaths of 97 people from different backgrounds could be completed within five years if the PSNI and the British MOD were fully cooperative with the Coroners Service and the funding was provided. The British Government must immediately release the £50 million in funding for legacy inquests that has been requested by the Lord Chief Justice. If the British Government are serious about dealing with the past, they need to commit to an immediate and intensive negotiation on dealing with the legacy of the past, as my party colleague Declan Kearney stated earlier. The British Government have an international obligation to undertake timely and effective investigations compliant with article 2. They cannot delegate their responsibility to the Assembly. The Irish Government cannot be let off the hook either; their silence on the issue is deafening. As co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent agreements, they need to step up to the plate and challenge the British Government over their continuing failure to live up to their commitments on dealing with the past.

All the families have felt long-running frustration and a deep sense of anger about the failure to deliver prompt and

effective inquest proceedings. The Ballymurphy families have been waiting for 45 years on an article 2 compliant inquest into the death of their loved ones. Their walkout of the meeting with Secretary of State Brokenshire on 19 September reflects the frustration felt by all the families over the continued refusal of the British Government to honour their state obligation to deliver on the issue. The Lord Chief Justice's five-year plan demonstrates to families that they may now be on the cusp of getting near to the truth and justice for their loved ones. They must not be failed. Sinn Féin believes in justice for all.

Mr Kennedy: We have now had three motions here in just two days that have all touched on aspects of dealing with our past. This issue has been talked about for many years in the Chamber. I am sure that there is an amount of public frustration because of how much talking there has been and how little action. We await to see whether the Secretary of State comes forward with a public consultation. There will be much interest to see what form, if any, that takes and whether it leads to any progress on these issues.

We in the Ulster Unionist Party have long argued that legacy issues should have been included in the package of measures for dealing with the past that was discussed during the three talks processes of recent years. We see no reason why, if a Historical Investigations Unit and an Independent Commission on Information Retrieval were to be formed as part of a comprehensive way of dealing with the truth and justice aspects of our past, legacy Coroners' Courts could not sit as part of that. There should be no hierarchy of victims and no hierarchy of investigations.

It would be concerning that, even if a comprehensive package of bodies were to be agreed, some people would have an extra option for investigation that others would not have access to. If the aim is to find an all-encompassing way to deal with our past that allows equal opportunity for those seeking truth or justice, keeping legacy inquests outside of this tent seems to contradict the motivation. We want to know more on why anyone would be so opposed to this. Surely that would signal a lack of confidence in the proposed HIU.

We must bear in mind the people who have been left with no option of review since the Historical Enquiries Team closed its doors. Those people were patiently waiting for the HET to work its way through its caseload, getting ever closer to a review for their loved one until that hope was removed. Those people have been left in limbo. They are ageing and fearful that they may never find out the truth about what happened to their loved ones and why, and they may never have a chance of finally seeing justice done.

The present situation is clearly unsatisfactory and imperfect, and there are issues to be addressed. I want to highlight some of the imperfections of the present situation. The House will know that I have long been involved in the campaign for truth and justice for the Kingsmills families, who were devastated after the massacre by the IRA of 10 innocent Protestant workers in January 1976. I again pay tribute to those families, the sole survivor, Alan Black, and the groups and individuals who have supported the campaign and their persistence and dogged determination to pursue justice. After a prolonged public campaign and battle, we eventually succeeded in having a fresh coroner's inquest convened. This has been hearing over the past few months. However, just one week into the fresh inquest, it had to be stalled because

of new evidence relating to the existence of a palm print, which led to the reopening of the criminal investigation of Kingsmills. On the face of it, this should have been a welcome development, except that the existence of the palm print had long been known about, and we might have expected earlier progress in the criminal investigation in the 40 years since the horrific events of Kingsmills. Understandably, families and campaigners are rightly concerned and cynical about the resulting delays and that the public hearings of the inquest are currently on hold. Clearly, this is an unacceptable situation for the families, and it must be addressed as a matter of urgency. It is time for the truth about Kingsmills to finally emerge, however difficult and inconvenient.

The wider point relevant to this debate is that the current system is clearly unsatisfactory but any new system must be properly and fairly structured; we must avoid, at all costs, any attempt to rewrite history.

Mr Lunn: Before I came in here today, I was approached in the Great Hall by a couple of men who I should have recognised but, to my shame, did not. They were two representatives of the McGurk's Bar families. There was an atrocity there in 1971. I imagine they are in the Public Gallery, and it is good to see them again. They gave me quite a detailed account of their position on the lack of progress on that particular incident. I said that I would read it and raise it here again.

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

As I went upstairs, I was shown a copy of 'The Irish News'. There is an article in it that says that the army file on McGurk's Bar will not now be released until 2056. For those of you who doubt your arithmetic, that is 85 years after the event took place — 85 years on. There will not be anybody left with any recollection of what happened.

4.30 pm

What does that say to me? I try to keep an open mind on these things because there are always two sides, and sometimes what appears obvious is not what actually happened and vice versa. It says to me that the authorities and the army have something to hide. Why would you want to bury something for 85 years?

Other people have mentioned the Ballymurphy families, and it is well known that I have been supportive of them for quite a few years now. I pay tribute to Doug Beattie, who is the second member of the Ulster Unionist Party to go to see them. Danny Kinahan's visit lasted only 10 minutes, but Doug went for a whole session — and a particularly revealing session it was, too.

Not for the first time, we went to see the Secretary of State; actually, it was the first time with this Secretary of State. He listened, he talked, and he said that he could do nothing. Once again. He said it with a bit more grace than his predecessor, I will say that, but, frankly, it was a major disappointment; another setback to a group of families that has been waiting 45 years.

Some of the people whom I have dealt with since my involvement with Ballymurphy began are now dead, and the contemporaries of the people who were killed are of an age — they will not last much longer. They are entitled to their day in the sun, to justice and to the truth about what happened. For the life of me, in the case of Ballymurphy,

I wonder — I have said it before — what on earth is there for the state to protect? In fact, there is nothing. What happened at Ballymurphy is self-evident. It is self-evident from the evidence in the army files, never mind in the other file, but there is plenty of evidence there. That is an inquest that could go ahead quite reasonably, and I am sure that there are others.

The Lord Chief Justice has weighed into this discussion in a very helpful way, and I am sure that he must be feeling quite disappointed at the turn of events and the fact that, frankly, the DUP is blocking the process once again. The motion refers to the European Convention on Human Rights, which states that, apart from establishing a right to human life and the state's obligations, it:

“requires an effective and proper investigation into all deaths caused by the state”,

as well as imposing an obligation to protect life.

What is the state? I am not a lawyer, but in this situation, to my mind, in European terms, the state must be the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Is it reasonable for the British Government to hide behind DUP intransigence? Or should they be bypassing the DUP and trying to do something about it off their own bat? That is what is needed here.

You might have thought that we were getting somewhere with the Stormont House Agreement, which set up the Oral History Archive, the Historical Investigations Unit, the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval, and the Implementation and Reconciliation Group, but a year later, Fresh Start watered it all down. What we are doing here is passing the parcel; it seems to be about anything but making progress. The people who put us here must be —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): I ask the Member to draw his remarks to a close, please.

Mr Lunn: — wondering what is going on here. I plead with everybody involved to try to move this process forward as quickly as possible.

Mr E McCann: I do not know whether many people take the trouble to read the Hansard report of the daily proceedings; I used to do it, but then I am a sort of political nerd and would not usually admit it to anybody. It is even worse than watching 'Stormont Today'.

If they had read yesterday's proceedings and then sat down tomorrow morning to read today's proceedings, the first thing they would think is that it was all one debate, because it is all about the past. It overlaps and interpenetrates in all these discussions about legacy and inquests and who is telling the truth — which nobody involved in these matters really is.

In one way, I agree with everything that is being said because everybody is saying that there should be no hierarchy of victims; everybody agrees with that. If we all agree on those things, what is the problem? Where is the difficulty if we move forward? The difficulty is political. The Sinn Féin motion does not even acknowledge or mention the fact that its partner in government, the DUP, is mainly holding this thing up and is responsible for the deadlock. It is one thing to move on from the past and all that and for all of us to be nice to one another and cooperating on the Executive, but, when that means that there is no movement for people who desperately need the truth to

be told outside, you have to question whether all this is worthwhile.

I agree with the Lord Chief Justice. We have already said that, which is terrific. Who could disagree, whether on humanitarian or philosophical grounds, with what the Lord Chief Justice said or with his proposals? Everybody agrees. I do not think that it will work; it will not work for the same reasons that we all, or some of us, spelled out yesterday that, if it is to be successful, it depends on the truth being told.

If the British Government and others had any willingness to tell the truth, they would have told it already. People are talking about all the money that needs to be involved, but sure if they had told the truth from the outset, there would be no need for any money to be spent. The only reason why these things take time and why lawyers earn fantastical sums of money is that nobody is coming clean.

We have had inquests. Remember this: some of the cases that we are talking about have already had inquests. A couple of weeks ago, I sat down, in connection with something that I was writing, and reread the inquest papers into the deaths of Mr Robert Johnston and Mr Robert McKinney in 1972. If you look at those deaths, you will see something interesting emerging.

There may be people here who do not know who Robert Johnston and Robert McKinney are. Think about it if you do not, as I am about to tell you who they are. They were murdered by the First Battalion, Parachute Regiment in the first week of September 1972 on the Shankill Road. Robert Johnston was a well-known character around the Shankill. Just before he died, before the bullet hit him, fired by — I could name the para but, do not worry, I will not — and blew his brains out, he was a man walking around. The last thing he shouted was, “I walked these streets in my bare feet in the 30s”. He was a well-known character who came out of his wee house in Manor Street and out of the pub. The other man, Mr McKinney, was back after 30 years in Canada. On his first day back in Belfast, he went out around the area where earlier there had been rioting, and he was shot dead. The two people who fired those shots had also been involved in Glenfada Park in the Bogside and Bloody Sunday. I know their names and know exactly what they did.

Why are those men forgotten? I will tell you one of the reasons why they are forgotten: the people who should have represented them and stood up for the interests and lives of working-class Protestant people in Belfast did not want to go against the state. They have said to me, “We could not do that, Eamonn, as we would have been seen to have been supporting the likes of you” — as he put it — “in Derry in relation to Bloody Sunday”. That political conundrum and political contradiction should be kept in mind when you are examining some of these cases.

My advice to relatives is to push it all the way, and I will be with you. There was also McGurk's bar and Kingsmills. Danny, tell the relatives — you are in touch with them and know them personally — that, if they want to come out and march with the rest of us on Bloody Sunday weekend in Derry, they will be made extremely welcome. I say the same to the Birmingham victims, people from McGurk's bar, Ballymurphy and all the rest.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr E McCann: Victims should stand together; it is not just a question of us standing together. The only way we ever get anything in this country is by going out, organising and fighting for it.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): The Member's time is up.

Mr E McCann: Victims should join together, and they will find a big enthusiastic welcome from people who would conventionally be regarded as being on the other side, so to speak. Let us do it together.

Mr Allister: It is indisputable that all are entitled to the truth just as they are entitled to justice, but does not end there, because the process that delivers that has to be fair and equitable.

In the debate, we heard some of the one-sided exposition of demands for legacy inquests. I am not disputing the need for legacy inquests, though I am not impressed that some of those demanding the loudest are those associated with an organisation that denied to its victims not just justice but the most fundamental right of all: the right to life.

I recognise that, in making its demand — I speak of Sinn Féin — it sees within that, of course, a stratagem for state bashing. It sees within it an opportunity to validate its determined rewriting of history, hence the enthusiasm for the legacy inquest system so that it can be abused in that sense and the information garnered can be put to the ends of state bashing that it wishes to advance. The same people have nothing to tell us. There are people on these Benches in this House — I am looking at some of them now — who could tell us a great deal about the innocent victims they removed from this scene of time but choose to keep those dark secrets in their heart, yet they are on the highest of horses demanding justice for those they present as the victims of the state.

Let me be very clear: I do not put on a par the eight IRA murdering men who went out to visit devastation and death in Loughgall with innocent shoppers going about their business on the Shankill Road or anywhere else, or innocent people sitting in a bar in Greysteel done to death by hideous terrorists. There is no comparison. Yet the hierarchy that has been created is that, for those who put themselves on the front line of terrorist activity, there must be legacy inquests, but for those whom they and their colleagues butchered — nothing. That is the hierarchy that has crept into this.

Therefore, the DUP is right to have vetoed the progress — if you want to call it that — on this matter until the inequality is recognised, but it was wrong at Stormont Castle to embrace the beginning of that inequality. In the Stormont Castle agreement of two years ago, it agreed £19 million a year to legacy inquests and £6.5 million to the HIU for the overhanging HET inquiries. There is a source of the inequality. That was agreed by the party that now has woken up to block the inequitable progress on this matter. Pity it did not waken up at Stormont Castle when it was agreeing those figures, but better late than never.

I am very clear that, yes, it is right that individuals are entitled to the truth, but there can be no hierarchy —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a close, please.

Mr Allister: — a hierarchy particularly inspired by engendering an opportunity for state bashing while ignoring the horrendous terror of the terrorists.

Ms Sugden (The Minister of Justice): I thank Members for bringing the motion to the Assembly, and I welcome the opportunity to debate this very important issue. My position is very clear: families have waited far too long for legacy inquests into the deaths of their loved ones. If we are ever going to bring some measure of closure to bereaved families, we need to reach political agreement on this and other legacy matters now. I have not experienced the loss of a loved one in the way that the families have, but I have met a number of family members who have lost husbands, daughters, brothers and sons. I have seen the very real pain and suffering that they live with on a daily basis, and they have told me of the stress and anguish brought about by this continued delay.

4.45 pm

What struck me is the similarity of the stories that the families bring to me, regardless of their background or the circumstances surrounding the death of their loved ones. They have all suffered unimaginable hurt and loss, and they acknowledge that no one's family is greater than anyone else's. We need to listen to the voice of victims' families and be guided by them. The management of these complex inquests is not easy, but the continuing delay is having an unacceptable impact, not only on victims' families but on our wider community and our justice system. It is simply not acceptable that some families have had to wait 30 or 40 years to have their loved ones' deaths investigated. For some, it has been too late. To make the progress that is so urgently needed, the legacy inquest process must be better focused, equipped and resourced to meet the needs of bereaved families.

The Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland was appointed as president of the Coroners' Court on 1 November last year, with responsibility for providing leadership to the judicial officers who act as coroners. He immediately commissioned a review of the state of readiness of the outstanding legacy cases, and that was undertaken by Lord Justice Weir in January. On that basis, and following a series of meetings in Strasbourg, the Lord Chief Justice proposed a new model for progressing legacy inquests. He concluded that, with the support of a properly resourced legacy inquest unit in the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service and cooperation from the relevant justice bodies, including the PSNI and the MOD, it should be possible to complete the existing legacy inquest caseload within a period of five years. Having discussed the Lord Chief Justice's proposals with him, I am confident that they provide the basis for transforming the way that we manage legacy inquests in Northern Ireland. His proposals, which should ensure that all the outstanding legacy inquests are completed within five years, offer real and tangible hope to victims' families that their cases will finally be brought to a conclusion. We owe it to the victims and to their families to make the Lord Chief Justice's vision a reality.

The Stormont House Agreement includes measures to address a number of issues relating to Northern Ireland's troubled past. It is the only mechanism that we have to provide some resolution for victims, and I will do all that I can to progress it. The Stormont House Agreement proposals may not give the families everything they want

and will not bring back their loved ones, but I believe that they will go some way to giving them what they need.

The Stormont House Agreement made proposals covering two areas that fall within my remit as Justice Minister, one of which is to improve the way that legacy inquests are concluded and the other to establish a Historical Investigations Unit. The UK Government subsequently held cross-party talks to consider how best to progress the existing commitments to address the complex issues relating to Northern Ireland's past. Those talks resulted in the Fresh Start Agreement. Whilst that agreement paved the way to resolving a number of difficult issues, including an end to paramilitarism, it did not address how we deal with the legacy issues of our past. However, discussions are continuing between the Northern Ireland Executive and the United Kingdom Government to resolve those outstanding issues, and I remain confident that agreement will be reached on establishing the new institutions proposed in the Stormont House Agreement and on improving legacy inquest arrangements.

Funding forms an important part of those discussions, including access to funds for progressing the Lord Chief Justice's proposals. The justice system was never funded to address legacy issues. This funding gap has exacerbated the situation and undermined our capacity to address this complex problem. I am working with Executive colleagues to resolve the outstanding issues and to secure the funding needed to allow legacy inquests to proceed in line with the proposals by the Lord Chief Justice. I have asked my Department to review the funding requirements of the Lord Chief Justice's proposals for legacy inquests, and that work is ongoing. However, it is important to recognise that any funding bid under the Stormont House Agreement will have to be agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive before being submitted to Her Majesty's Government as part of the overall funding package for dealing with the past.

Since the Lord Chief Justice's appointment, a review of the available resources has been undertaken, and he has made a number of significant improvements in advance of agreement on his wider proposals. In February, a High Court judge was appointed as presiding coroner to oversee the management of cases and consider issues relating to scope and disclosure. The presiding coroner, in conjunction with the Lord Chief Justice, determines which cases will be listed for hearing and when. A new coroner was also sworn in in February and a further coroner was appointed in April, bringing the Coroners Service back to its full judicial complement.

The Lord Chief Justice has assigned a County Court judge to deal with some of the more complex inquests. New counsel were appointed to the panel of counsel in November last year to provide advice to the coroner and to present evidence at inquests. In March of this year, a coroner's investigator was appointed to provide advice and guidance on appropriate and effective investigative opportunities in practice and procedures for inquests as required by the coroners. She also conducts investigative opportunities with the relevant legal officer.

In addition to those improvements, Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland was commissioned to undertake an inspection of the arrangements in place in the PSNI to manage and disclose information in support of

the coronial process in Northern Ireland, and its report is expected to be published in the near future.

Members will recall that the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service undertook a review of the overall operations of the Coroners Service, with a view to ensuring resilience in the service and to contribute to the development and implementation of arrangements for the processing of legacy inquests in the context of the Stormont House Agreement. Ten of the 13 recommendations arising from the review have been fully implemented and are already bearing fruit. Improved listing arrangements, for example, have helped clear the backlog and ensure the more timely progression of inquests, with fewer adjournments.

Progressing the Lord Chief Justice's proposals to streamline and reform the legacy inquest system is essential. However, progress in dealing with the past, including the Lord Chief Justice's proposed enhancement of the legacy inquest process, can be made only following agreement on the implementation of the Stormont House Agreement and the release of the associated funding that it provides.

Resolving the legacy inquest blockage is only one part of the necessary solution to dealing with the past. I am confident that the new Historical Investigations Unit, when established under the agreement, will make a real difference in progressing future cases and will ease the burden on coroners in conducting the often complex investigations that have fallen, by default, to legacy inquests in the past.

I am unclear from amendment No 1 —

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Minister for giving way. She has expressed confidence in the establishment of improved legacy inquest arrangements and the Historical Investigations Unit. To try to reassure victims, does she have any idea of timescales? When does she think that those will be put in place?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his intervention. Truthfully, I do not have a specific timescale for how we are going to progress legacy inquests. I have said in the House on previous occasions that I am keen for it to happen sooner rather than later. Unfortunately, that is the only answer that I can give now. I assure the Member and other Members that it is something that I am progressing with my Executive colleagues and the Northern Ireland Office in order to see how we can move forward with the Historical Investigations Unit and legacy inquests together.

I am somewhat unclear as to whether amendment No 1 is supporting the Lord Chief Justice's proposals. He is our most senior judge, so it is important that we listen when he makes proposals on such an important issue and that we act on his carefully considered recommendations. I am certainly not in favour of any hierarchy of investigations. I believe that all families should have access to a review or investigation of their loved one's death. That is why I support the full implementation of the Stormont House Agreement. It is only through its implementation that the outstanding investigations will be completed in a professional, impartial and timely manner.

Mrs Little Pengelly: I thank the Minister for giving way. On comments that were just made in the House, will the Minister confirm — especially in the context of there being no hierarchy of victims — that there is no profile that has

been, or had been, agreed over the last number of years on the financial arrangements between inquests and the HIU? That needs to be worked out very much on the basis that everything is moving forward together.

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for her intervention. I can speak for my time as Justice Minister by saying that I am not aware of anything particular about a hierarchy of investigations. I am merely referring to what the amendment refers to.

Mr Allister: Will the Minister give way?

Ms Sugden: Certainly.

Mr Allister: Would the Minister care to look at the schedule to what became known as the Stormont Castle agreement, the one that had to be squeezed out of the Executive parties and that sets out, in tabular form, £19 million of funds for legacy inquests, £6.5 million for the new Historical Investigations Unit for overhanging HET cases, and £5 million for Police Ombudsman's cases? It is there in black and white.

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his intervention. I think that he is alluding to the necessity for funding for addressing the past. Indeed, I agree that we need to resource properly all the mechanisms that we are taking forward in dealing with addressing our past. It is something that I and my Executive colleagues, and the Northern Ireland Office, are working towards progressing.

Mr Attwood: Will the Member give way?

Ms Sugden: One more time, sure.

Mr Attwood: I thank the Minister and appreciate the change from yesterday in her approach to taking interventions. When it comes to the release of moneys for legacy inquests, which the Lord Chief Justice said that he needed as "a matter of urgency", where is the impediment at an Executive level? If there is an impediment that you have no time frame for resolution, have you told the Secretary of State that it is your view, individually, that he should get on and fund now?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his intervention. I have made it clear to the Secretary of State that I believe that legacy inquests are a way of progressing this within a five-year time frame, and I have made my feelings quite clear about the fact that we need to fully resource it. I do not have that resource in my Department, so it has to come from a wider Northern Ireland Executive resource or outside of that, whether that is the Northern Ireland Office or elsewhere.

I can speak only about my time as Justice Minister. The previous Justice Minister mentioned what he felt the impediment was. Five months into the mandate, we are at the stage of looking at it again. We have to appreciate that we have another Secretary of State in position, and he will look at how he wants to progress it. It is a matter of process at this stage. Unfortunately, I cannot give you a time frame. I would like to be in a position to do so, but I assure the House that I am confident that it will move forward. I know that I have said this before, but in respect of how we deal with addressing the past, the Stormont House Agreement and Fresh Start Agreement are what was agreed, and we need to use both mechanisms so that we can finally move on.

I come now to amendment No 2, and I agree that, as mentioned, we need to support the Lord Chief Justice's proposals as "a matter of urgency". I have been clear on that from the outset, particularly in a number of meetings that I have had with the Lord Chief Justice. From my engagement with Executive colleagues and the Secretary of State, I know that there is a strong desire to resolve the outstanding issues and move ahead with the implementation of the Stormont House Agreement.

In conclusion, it is important that, when considering legacy matters, we keep the needs of the victims' families at the heart of our thinking. The continued impact of our current arrangements on victims' families and our wider community is unacceptable. Our justice system is neither designed nor funded to deal with the legacy of our past. We must act now to obtain adequate funding for the Stormont House Agreement institutions for dealing with the past, including improving our legacy inquest arrangements. We must act now to resolve the issues of our past and finally bring some measure of closure to those who lost loved ones as a consequence of that past. I am working with Executive colleagues to make progress on the establishment of the HIU and to obtain the release of funds to progress the Lord Chief Justice's proposals for legacy inquests.

I support the motion, and I will continue to work with Executive colleagues and Members to resolve this issue in an urgent and timely manner for the benefit of everyone in Northern Ireland.

Mr McGrath: At the start and end of the debate are the victims and their families. We must remember their pain and suffering, and, importantly, we must remember their future, which we have within our control to help or hinder. We have highlighted where we believe the problem lies in this matter. The DUP is refusing to allow a request for funding for the inquests, and that is a terrible failing of those families. I reiterate that the Secretary of State needs to recognise that he has the ability to unlock this scenario and deliver the funding required to address the concerns of families and victims. He must not allow the DUP to have a veto on the matter of legacy and inquests. To do so would set a dangerous precedent and set us back in this process rather than enabling us to move forward.

Some Members who contributed to the debate suggested that no one family's suffering or pain is greater than that of another. However, by wilfully blocking a resolution to any of these problems, we are failing and letting down all families, and that is unacceptable. We heard from Trevor Lunn how the Stormont House Agreement had offered hope. We suggest that there was also hope in Eames/Bradley and other initiatives, but the problem is that we continue to be let down, and that is unacceptable.

5.00 pm

I commend Mr McCann on his contribution, which was a powerful contribution. It highlighted to us the importance that the truth will be able to be heard and will help all of us to be able to move forward. He also made a powerful contribution on the point that all families and victims should work together because the collective voice, working as one, will help us to be able to unlock the funding that will deliver results and a resolution to these matters. I welcome the Minister's admission that families have waited too long to get a resolution to their suffering, and I

also welcome her determination to do all that she can to pursue the matter. However, I say to the Minister that you are not going to get a resolution from this Executive, so it may be a bit of a waste of time looking for that. You should be making your way to the Secretary of State to directly advocate for that money to be made available to the families of victims in Northern Ireland to help them get the truth that they require.

It is difficult for families of victims of the Troubles to move on without adequate and appropriate closure of the atrocities that the families endured. We need to see justice prevail, we need accountability, and we need acknowledgement. In short, for that, we must have the legacy inquests. It is time that we take narrow and vested interests out of this and work again to try to get a resolution for the victims and their families. In my constituency of South Down, we had many incidents and tragedies over the years. The people of Loughinisland suffered significantly when six local men were murdered in 1994. With the misery and suffering that the families of these individuals have had to endure, recent revelations of collusion, destruction of evidence and wilful interference have compounded the pain that they must face.

There must be closure. There must be conclusion to the outstanding issues, and there must be an apology for the wrong that has taken place. Inquests will allow this process to begin for dozens of families. The victims seek this. Their families seek it, and we must comprehensively and ethically address the past now. I believe that our amendment details the best way to achieve this, and I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): I call Roy Beggs to wind on amendment No 1.

Mr Beggs: I rise in support of the amendment in the name of my colleague Doug Beattie and others. I am conscious that I am thinking of the many victims in Northern Ireland as a result of terrorism over many years. Three and a half thousand people were murdered, and many were maimed, with the difficulties that that has caused for their families. Many have spoken of the legacy inquests, but I think that it is important that we also remember that there are many who have yet to have their case even reviewed since the end of the Historical Enquiries Team's activity. I am also conscious that many, many victims' families suffered loss and no one was ever brought before the courts. They have suffered loss quietly. The families have had to get on with life. There are many, many victims, and it is important in going forward that we do not create a hierarchy of victims. That is the reason behind the amendment to the motion in the name of Doug Beattie and my colleagues.

Going forward, we need a widespread agreement in a way that can gain support from everyone and take all victims forward. Doug Beattie touched briefly on the issue that information that might be released could lead to deaths, and this is not hypothetical but has happened in Northern Ireland. He is right to say that there are occasions when information should not be disclosed. He is also right to say that, if it is just about saving somebody's blushes, that is not due reason and it should be disclosed. He said that he was present when the Secretary of State indicated that, if the Executive collectively called for the release of money, he would give it to them. What he wants and what we want is fairness for everyone. If we can get that agreement, there is the potential of moving this forward for the benefit

of all victims. That is certainly what the Ulster Unionists want. The power is with our Executive in that. If you think of others as you argue your separate corner and reach agreement, there is the potential to move forward.

Doug also highlighted the danger of the five-year plan, the lack of detail and the cost. Legal cases are renowned for exceeding their time and their costs. What is important for justice in Northern Ireland is that other forms of justice do not suffer because of what might commence. It is important that there is a detailed and deliverable plan that deals with all aspects of justice.

As has been highlighted by a number of Members, Declan Kearney strangely directed all his fire at the British Government. Obviously, that was the non-aggression pact in action again. He failed to recognise that the Secretary of State has said that, if the Executive can agree, he will give the money. So, why is Declan Kearney not saying that the difficulty is with the Executive and ensuring that there is resolution there? He urged that the legacy inquests should be treated as a freestanding issue, but there is a real danger that we could end up creating a process that focuses on a relatively small number of Troubles deaths, tragic as each of those are for each of the families. Let us remember that 10% of Troubles-related deaths were a result of state forces. There is almost an implication that some are trying to minimise the impact of the 90% of deaths that were caused by republican and loyalist terrorist groups. It is important that there is justice for all of the other 90% who suffered as a result of terrorism and that there is a process for them to seek justice as they would wish. That was highlighted in particular by Jim Allister and Paul Frew. My colleague Danny Kennedy highlighted the issue of the Kingsmills families and the palm print that was known about but not progressed, and he stated his concerns about undue delays.

Many valid points have been made, but why can we not listen to what has been said? Why can we not agree a way forward that will meet the needs of all families rather than focus on a small number of families?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Will the Member bring his remarks to a close, please?

Mr Beggs: I urge you to support our amendment.

Mr Kelly: I have been taking copious notes, which is always a mistake. Members have repeated the words of other Members. I agree with Eamonn McCann — at least on this — that we have had the same debate over the last two days and that all the issues that we have been talking about have been the same.

A number of people have said similar things, but the Minister of Justice said that no loss is greater than another, and I absolutely agree with her. The difficulty, as we listened to Members in this debate was that, while we heard many say similar things, once they then elaborated, the truth of the statement was shown in its naked form. I point especially to Jim Allister, who has a clear hierarchy of victims and went out of his way to condemn people who were killed.

We have had the three debates over two days. This one was specifically about legacy inquests, and it is normal that we moved off that because the issues are all connected. However, this motion was about supporting action that has been taken.

Over the last couple of days, we have been talking about inaction. Here we have a Lord Chief Justice who took action. He came in as president of the Coroners' Court and was asked to do it in November 2015. By January 2016, he had instigated a review. I think that it was Justice Weir who was involved in that. The Lord Chief Justice met the Council of Europe. He met UN human rights bodies. By February 2016, he did what nobody else — certainly no Lord Chief Justice — had done before him by going to meet the families, who are suffering and have suffered over decades, to find out what their views are. He then said, "I can sort out the 56 outstanding legacy cases in the next five years because I have a plan". Indeed, the Justice Minister went through quite a section of that plan.

Doug says, "I need to see it", but I do not know why, because it was the Lord Chief Justice we gave the job to and he and the Courts and Tribunals Service are the ones with the expertise. He has said that he can rectify what has been missing in the past, and at the core of that, as was said many times over the last two days, was disclosure and the lack of it and funding. He called for money. He said that he could complete it in five years if he received £5 million per annum. If he does not get the money, as someone mentioned, perhaps only two further cases will be done. As someone else pointed out, only 13 cases have been done up to now.

There is the issue. There are people waiting. As I pointed out earlier, this is a coronial system. For the many families that have tried again and again and again to get something for their loved ones, we have for the first time — for some after 45 years — an action that will do that. What is the problem? We cannot get the resources.

Let me deal with why we tabled the motion in its current form, because a number of people have criticised us, saying that we are trying to avoid issues. Let me not avoid anything. Here is the issue: these are legacy cases, and the responsibility for them, under international law, is the British Government's. They are the ones who have to comply with article 2, and they are the ones who have the duty and the power to ask any other institution, including this one, to ensure that they also comply. It is their responsibility: it happened on their watch, and they are the people who have to pay the money; they are the people who have said that there is £150 million that should be used for legacy issues and have then refused to use it.

This is where I disagree with the two amendments. As they pointed out themselves, before they tabled the amendments, they knew that the Executive were not going to clear money for this. If the only issue was money and we had the power to give it, it would be given. The reason I disagree with the amendments and why we will vote against them is that they were put in as an attack on the Executive. Of course, the Executive cannot come to that conclusion, but we all knew that before. The SDLP acknowledges that and says, "So, we're not getting it there; let's get it from the British Government, because that's where it's supposed to come from". So, they agree with what we have said in our motion.

Mr Attwood: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kelly: I will.

Mr Attwood: Are you saying that the deputy First Minister has not had conversations with the First Minister and the Minister of Justice about bringing a paper to the Executive

in order to make that request to London? Is that what you are telling us? If so, there might be some validity in what you say, but it is the understanding of everybody that there have been conversations to try to get something through the Executive. In the absence of that happening, it should go through London.

Mr Kelly: First, I am not on the Executive — neither are you — so I do not know what is happening there. I do not know why you are challenging this. You, Eamonn McCann, and a number of other people said that the difficulty is that we are afraid to say that we cannot get the money through the Executive. I am saying it: we cannot get the money through the Executive., but I am pointing out, as you did, that this is the responsibility of the British Government. The British Government have the money: there is £150 million for legacy issues, and they should release it. End of.

Mr Ford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kelly: Why not?

Mr Ford: I appreciate the Member giving way. Of course the British Government have responsibilities for article 2, but it is also clear, given that his party was party to the Fresh Start Agreement, so-called, and the Stormont House Agreement, that that work was to be done by the Executive and then funded by the British Government.

Mr Kelly: I am glad that the ex-Minister of Justice came in. I presume that he remembers that he was on the Executive and could have had some influence on this. Yet, now that he is off the Executive, he is trying to blame everybody who is on it.

Mr Ford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kelly: No, I will not give way again. I have already given way.

There are two or three issues that were mentioned by a number of people. One is the hierarchy of victims, which we have mentioned many times. Another term that was used was the hierarchy of investigations, which was used mostly by unionists. I want to deal with some of that in this way.

5.15 pm

I am glad that people are starting to use our terms — equality, balance and all that — because I believe in the equality of victims, balance and all that. However, when you talk about the hierarchy of victims and the hierarchy of investigations, you need to know what you are talking about. For instance, conservatively speaking, there was something like — *[Interruption.]* Do you want to speak up, Chris, or do you want to listen?

Mr Lyttle: Not really, no.

Mr Kelly: OK. Well, leave then. Do the right thing.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Could remarks be addressed through the Chair, please? There should be no interruptions from the Floor while a Member is speaking.

Mr Kelly: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Let us deal with the hierarchy of victims. There is a conservative estimate that 25,000 people from the nationalist community went through jails. That means that there are 25,000 files, and, if they were charged with more than one thing, you can multiply that number by 10. When you talk about information and the lack of information, how many of the

state forces went through the courts? If you want to talk about equality, justice and people's rights, have a think about that. If we want to deal with equality in those terms, there is a lot of catching up to do.

With respect to equality of investigations, let me repeat what I said earlier. This is the coronial system. It is supposed to be working from the start. We are not talking about truth recovery processes or anything like that. We are talking about something that existed and was then refused. Earlier, our colleague Trevor Lunn reported what they now say about information on McGurk's bar: we will not get it until 2056.

There is one thing that I disagree with Eamonn McCann on, and I am quite surprised at him. He talks as though it is impossible to get at the truth, yet the Bloody Sunday inquiry did that, and we are getting investigations going. We are able to set up these institutions. What he is doing is almost saying to victims, "You will never get what you want", whereas I am saying that we can do this and get it —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Will the Member draw his remarks to a close, please?

Mr Kelly: — but it needs people like the British Government to give the resources needed and also, frankly, to tell the truth.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Before I put the Question on amendment No 1, I remind Members that, if it is made, I will not put the Question on amendment No 2.

Question put, That amendment No 1 be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15; Noes 73.

AYES

Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Butler, Mr Chambers, Mrs Dobson, Mr Kennedy, Mr McKee, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Aiken and Mr Kennedy.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Anderson, Ms Archibald, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Carroll, Mr Clarke, Mr Dickson, Ms Dillon, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Durkan, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Ms Gildernew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mr Hamilton, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Mr McElduff, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Mr McQuillan, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Middleton, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Mullan, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Poots, Mr Ross, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Kearney and Mr Sheehan.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): I have been advised by the party Whips that, in accordance with Standing Order 27(1A)(b), there is agreement that we can dispense with the three-minute rule and move straight to the Division.

Question put, That amendment No 2 be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 20; Noes 68.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Carroll, Mr Dickson, Mr Durkan, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Hanna, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr McGrath, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Mullan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McGrath and Mr Mullan.

NOES

Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Ms Archibald, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mr Butler, Mrs Cameron, Mr Chambers, Mr Clarke, Ms Dillon, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Ms Fearon, Mr Frew, Ms Gildernew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Mr McElduff, Mr McGuigan, Mr McKee, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr Maskey, Mr Middleton, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mrs O'Neill, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Poots, Mr Ross, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Smith, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Kearney and Mr Sheehan.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): I have been advised by the party Whips that, in accordance with Standing Order 27(1A)(b), there is agreement that we can dispense with the three-minute rule and move straight to the Division.

Main Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 43; Noes 45.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Ms Archibald, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Carroll, Mr Dickson, Ms Dillon, Mr Durkan, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Ford, Ms Gildernew, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McElduff, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Mullan, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mrs O'Neill, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Ms Sugden.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Kearney and Mr Sheehan.

NOES

Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mr Butler, Mrs Cameron, Mr Chambers, Mr Clarke, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mr Hamilton, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lyons, Mr McCausland, Mr McKee, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Poots, Mr Ross, Mr Smith, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Aiken and Mr McQuillan.

Main Question accordingly negated.

Assembly Business

Mr Aiken: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Point of order.

Mr Aiken: Can I have a bit of quiet? *[Interruption.]* I would like the Speaker to rule on whether the First Minister and the Economy Minister misled the House yesterday by their comments in which they stated that EU bureaucrats were responsible for the ending of the United flights from Belfast to the United States. However, it has now come to our attention that the EU Commission did not make any ruling on this issue and that it was the Executive and the airline that made the decision instead. I would like a ruling on that.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): If the Member has written verifiable evidence of that, I suggest that he supply it to the Speaker's Office for the Speaker to adjudicate on.

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

Motion made:

That the Assembly do now adjourn. — [Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy).]

Adjournment

A2 Dual Carriageway Junctions: North Down

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): In conjunction with the Business Committee, I have given leave to Mr Gordon Dunne to raise the matter of improvements to the A2 dual carriageway junctions in North Down. The proposer of the topic will have 15 minutes.

Mr Dunne: I welcome the opportunity to bring this important matter to the Assembly, and I thank the Minister for his attendance in the Chamber. I am somewhat disappointed that he did not accept an invitation to view the road. However, it is early days, and, maybe after the debate, he will spend some time looking at the issues that we raise.

The A2 Bangor to Belfast dual carriageway is one of Northern Ireland's busiest roads, with up to 45,000 vehicle movements per day over a 24-hour period. As many will know, this road features regularly on traffic bulletins with traffic tailbacks at Holywood and the Rathgael Road junction often mentioned on our airwaves, practically every morning from Monday to Friday. There are sections of the dual carriageway from Holywood to Tillysburn and Bangor to Ballyrobert. However, a key section of the road from Marino to Ballyrobert has no central reservation. This is a particularly dangerous section of road, with cars turning right into various entranceways and roads with no central turning pockets. There are two particularly dangerous junctions along the A2: Carney Hill and Larch Hill. Indeed, a recent petition, with the signatures of over 50 people living in the Carney Hill area, demanded action following a recent tragedy, when a lady sadly lost her life at this section of road earlier this year on a notorious bend known as the Devil's Elbow. The junction urgently needs to be made safe for local residents who have expressed their very real concerns and fears at using the junction daily. A section of adjacent land was acquired some years ago by the then DRD Roads Service, but nothing was done and nothing has been done to date to improve the junction. It is so bad that the planners will not allow any further approvals that require this exit to the A2 dual carriageway to be used. We require realignment of the junction, with a possible tie-in to the traffic lights at the Seahill junction. We need investment to make this road safer for all.

The Larch Hill junction, which has been adopted by Transport NI (TNI), is also very dangerous. Vehicles entering from the Belfast direction have to stop in the outside lane of a busy dual carriageway and wait for a gap to cross. This is an extremely dangerous manoeuvre, which has, unfortunately, been the scene of many accidents that have been far too common in recent years. Drivers exiting Larch Hill take their lives in their hands, with a substandard sight line to the right that needs to be improved. Perhaps the A2 roadway could be lowered to improve the sight lines. A small section of the slip lane to the left would improve safety for vehicles turning left towards Belfast.

The Kinnegar junction, which has been in the news recently, is also a very dangerous section; indeed, we recently witnessed a multi-car accident there involving six vehicles. Vehicles turning into Kinnegar Road have to sit on the outside lane with a restricted approach and no turning pocket, putting motorists coming from Bangor at risk. The Seapark Road, which leads to an attractive place for many visitors and residents, particularly in the summer months, with its spectacular coastal path, is another dangerous junction onto the A2 dual carriageway. I presented a petition to the former Minister for Regional Development, Danny Kennedy, requesting the installation of traffic lights at the junction. At the time, Transport NI recognised that the sight line to the right was substandard, but, again, nothing has been done by the Department, leaving a dangerous junction onto the carriageway. As I said, this carries over 45,000 vehicles each day.

I turn now to ongoing maintenance. In recent years, the Department has really neglected this road. For some time, sign maintenance has been totally inadequate. Warning signs for upcoming traffic lights — for example, close to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, which we are fortunate to have in our constituency — have been left dirty, unreadable and obscured by overgrown trees and hedges. This is another extremely dangerous location, which has seen fatal accidents over the years. Signs have been damaged, are missing and have not replaced for some time, despite being regularly reported to the TNI section office.

The maintenance of this road is a real issue. Grass cutting on the A2 is of great concern to many residents, and it comes up every year. The Department's target is for five cuts a year, yet large sections only received their second cut at the end of October. The grass was cut only once during the summer, when the roads were left in a dangerous condition. Elected representatives had to plead to get grass cut at dangerous junctions, including the first entrance into Holywood at Palace Barracks, which is extremely busy coming from Belfast on the A2.

North Down rightly prides itself on being a tourist area, attracting many visitors to Bangor, Crawfordsburn, Holywood, Donaghadee and Millisle.

Other roads, such as the A1 Hillsborough to Newry road, the M1 and the M2, as I understand it, all have different maintenance contracts where the grass is cut and maintained on a regular basis. As we have all witnessed — I witnessed this over the past summer — different standards are being maintained on some roads compared with those on the A2. I therefore urge the Minister to look at the use of a maintenance contract for the A2 Belfast to Bangor dual carriageway.

6.00 pm

I also bring to his attention a problem we have with a local garage, Ballyrobert garage, actually loading and unloading vehicles on the carriageway. I am aware of a pending planning application on improving safety at that junction, and I trust the planners will look sympathetically at it when it comes forward.

In summary, Minister, we need investment in this section of road. We need to see junctions upgraded, in particular at Larch Hill and Carney Hill. We need an in-depth study carried out on this road assessing all the risks

and measuring how to reduce them. It should include all junctions from Ballyrobert to Holywood, which are particularly dangerous to those using the road, as there is no central reservation.

There needs to be a review into how routine maintenance is carried out on the A2, with consideration given to moving to a system similar to that on the A1, M1 and M2, given the significant volume of traffic on the A2 and the real risks that exist to those carrying out maintenance work, who now require a buffer-type vehicle. In many cases lanes are closed, which restricts the flow of traffic.

We need investment in proper maintenance of this road with regular grass cutting, weed control, gully emptying and sign maintenance. In the long-term, we need to see progress on the extension of the Sydenham bypass or to see it upgraded to three lanes to relieve the problems of congestion at Dee Street bridge.

North Down residents deserve better, and I trust we will again see improvements made. I again thank the Minister for his attendance, and I look forward to hearing of progress on the important issues raised. I trust this matter will be taken seriously.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I advise the House that all other speakers will now have approximately five minutes.

Mr Chambers: I thank my colleague Gordon Dunne for bringing this Adjournment debate. I know that Gordon, along with myself, has had a long-time interest in this particular roadway. I place on record my appreciation of the Minister being here this evening to listen to the debate.

Over the last few days I have been checking some statistics and so forth, and I came across a Hansard report of a debate that took place in the Chamber in 2002. The topic was the A2. A certain Mr Peter Robinson was the Minister for Regional Development at that particular time. As I read it, I saw that the theme running through the debate was the sad and unacceptable loss of life occurring on the A2 on a regular basis. That loss of life is still a feature of this road.

That became more than just a paragraph in the local paper for me when a very dear friend, Norma Diffley, a long-time resident of Groomsport, was a victim in a collision that involved another vehicle allegedly crossing the carriageway at the devil's elbow in early January this year. Mr David Catherwood, a gentleman I was aware of, had his life taken from him as he rode his bicycle on the A2 near Cultra in July.

As Gordon said, parts of the A2 from Bangor to Holywood are a dual carriageway, and they provide a degree of protection from crossover collisions. That stretch stops at Ballyrobert. The other portion of separated traffic flow is the stretch into Holywood from Seapark. It is not coincidental that the two fatalities this year were on that three or four-mile stretch of unseparated carriageway. Up to 45,000 vehicles a day pass each other when travelling in different directions. They pass each other within a few feet, and they are travelling at up to 50 mph or a closing speed of 100 mph. One moment of inattention, a tyre blowing out or something like that affords no hiding place from a horrendous collision.

The reality is that the stretch of the A2 from Ballyrobert to Seapark really is not fit for purpose if you genuinely

value the safety and the lives of road users. If you were planning that road at the moment, it would not get off the drawing board, because it would not meet any of the best practice. Traffic separation is essential to make it a safer route. If that means vesting parts of people's gardens, will we as elected Members support that? We cannot ask the Minister to do certain things if we are not prepared, in the long term, to support him.

Right-turners present a challenge. We need to encourage and advise people using the road to advertise their intentions as early as possible if they are going to make a right turn, because that manoeuvre brings with it the danger of a high-speed rear shunt.

At a recent Question Time, the Minister answered a question about the A2. He said that a survey was carried out in 2011 and identified two junctions that needed improvement: Ballyrobert Road and Ballymoney Road. Five years on, the statutory process, I believe, is still to begin, funding has to be secured and priority has to be confirmed. I sympathise with the Minister in finding the funding for those things because funding is already tight in North Down, even for fixing potholes. Anyone with an interest in road safety and who has any budgetary influence with the Executive really does need to help the Minister to secure this funding.

We have a policy to encourage cycling, and I admire the hardy souls who use that road on two wheels; I also fear for them. The current arrangements — should I say no arrangements? — are not an acceptable situation. Painting a cycle lane will not cut it; physical separation is required for cyclists as well.

We have to pay a compliment because, over the years, things have been done to make the road safer; we have to acknowledge that. There are more traffic lights, and the average-speed cameras have made a big difference. A lot of people question whether they actually work or not, but they have slowed up the speed on that road.

In conclusion, I ask the Minister to give a bit more consideration to the Craigtanlet roundabout to maybe get some more traffic off the A2 and ease the sheer volume of traffic using it every day.

Dr Farry: I also thank Gordon Dunne for bringing this important Adjournment debate before the Assembly. At the outset, I recognise that there are no easy answers to the problems that we are setting out here today. At the very least, we and, in particular, the Minister must acknowledge that the status quo is simply not sustainable for the A2. Creative minds, including the suggestions that have come from MLAs today and elsewhere, need to be corralled, and some further remedies, building on what Alan Chambers said, need to be taken forward as soon as possible. I also appreciate that there are constraints on resources.

In essence, we have what is now one of the major roads in Northern Ireland, given the volume of traffic. Outside the context of the motorways and the Westlink, it probably rivals the A1 in terms of the record volume of traffic. The importance of what we are talking about here is massive, and we cannot ignore it. Clearly, we have a situation, in terms of the volume of traffic, where the road has developed without further or sufficient recognition being taken of the character of the area around it and the fact that it is a residential area. To take things to an extreme level, on what is a major commuter route, with a huge

volume of traffic, we have a situation where people are making manoeuvres in and out of driveways that back on to portions of the road, never mind the road junctions themselves.

In essence, there are two competing requirements here. The first is how we best combat congestion, which is probably a debate for another day, but the paramount interest has to be that of road safety, given that the situation is getting critical.

Although I appreciate that major accidents can come in waves, we have had a clear uptick this year, and the risks and dangers there are very clear for all of us to see, particularly those of us who use the road on an ongoing basis. We will have to consider the provision of some dedicated right-hand-turn facilities at certain points along the road. It may even be that we have to make it illegal to make right-hand turns at certain places and request that, as happens in other situations, people go to a safer junction and double back to make what will, in due course, become a left-hand turn.

Reference has been made to some of the really difficult junctions, in particular between Ballyrobert and Holywood. I want to add to that concerns about the entrance to the Kinnegar area, which is, in theory, blocked off by safety barriers. Those maybe give it the air of being a dual carriageway, but it is nonetheless a very difficult junction, where cars often come around at speed. It is officially a 40 mph zone, but, as we know, the speed limits are not always obeyed, and cars can very quickly be confronted with another car waiting to make a right-hand turn into Kinnegar. That junction is difficult enough as things stand, but, as the Minister will be well aware, the MoD announced yesterday that it intends to sell off some property. There is now the potential for the Kinnegar base to be sold off, and the likelihood is that it will be used for housing, which will place further and greater pressure on the area.

It would also be useful if the Minister could clarify the point that was made by Gordon Dunne about the garage and car showroom at Ballyrobert. Although I concur with him about the potential planning application resolving the issue, I ask the Minister to clarify the legal situation with cars being loaded and offloaded at that point, given that elsewhere there would be indications if there were a blockage on a road; for example, if roadworks were taking place.

It is also worth briefly putting on record that the A2 cannot be seen in isolation. There are also the issues with the Sydenham bypass, which needs a third lane added right through to Dee Street. That is a problem. The Rathgael Road in Bangor perhaps does not have the same number of road accidents as the A2, but it is essentially a C-class rural road that has developed over the years because of the volume of traffic using it. More and more housing developments back on to it, including the site of the Helen's Wood proposal. Again, that is a situation —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Dr Farry: — that will not be sustainable.

Mr Easton: I congratulate my colleague for securing the Adjournment debate. I recognise that the A2 is the busiest road that we have in North Down, and it is perhaps one of the busiest in Northern Ireland. It has a bad history of

accidents, and that has been the case in recent times as well.

The introduction of the speed enforcement camera system — a series of cameras on the A2 dual carriageway between Bangor and Belfast — has been an important weapon in fighting against speeding drivers and in helping to reduce some accidents. Rather than flashing drivers who are speeding at a fixed point, the system monitors the rate of every car over a certain distance, and that has helped to reduce the incidences of speeding on the A2. However, we are only too aware that there have been several fatalities in recent times. Those include the death of a 75-year-old woman following a two-vehicle crash, which was mentioned, and the death of a cyclist aged in his sixties who died after being hit by a car.

The A2 Belfast to Bangor road carries approximately 45,000 vehicles a day and has many junctions. I am aware that Roads Service has longer-term plans, including proposals to widen the busiest section of that route, the Sydenham bypass, to three lanes in each direction to improve capacity and reduce delays at peak times. I also understand that it has long-term plans to improve a number of junctions between the Holywood to Ballyrobert section of the A2 to improve road safety. Some of the junctions have been mentioned, and if, as Dr Farry mentioned, the go-ahead is given for new houses as Kinnegar, there will have to be a major overhaul of the A2 to ensure that it can cope with the huge number of houses that will be built on such a big site. We have also mentioned Ballyrobert, where a car business is planning to extend. We need to ensure that the proper facilities are in place at that junction to cope with that.

Roads Service has also identified a potential improvement on the Carney Hill junction to provide a right-turn pocket from the Belfast direction to reduce the risk of rear-end shunts. However, this scheme seems unlikely to proceed in the foreseeable future due to the limited availability of funding. Maybe the Minister will give us an update on that. If he does not know, perhaps he will come back to us.

6.15 pm

I feel that more can be done to make the A2, in general, safer for drivers. A central reservation barrier should be erected at the Devil's Elbow in particular. The bend is severe, and there have been many accidents at that point.

There are also maintenance issues, such as getting the grass cut, which is causing a hindrance for drivers. As my colleague mentioned, hedges are blocking signs, and that needs to be looked at.

One death on our roads is too many. If anything can be done on the A2 to increase safety and save a life, I urge the Minister to take what steps he can to do that.

Mr Agnew: I start by thanking the Member who secured the debate that brings the Minister here today. Indeed, I thank the Minister for his presence. I will not repeat everything that has been said. The point is well made: it is a busy road and a dangerous road. We would like to hear from the Minister what can be done to improve safety.

The first issue I dealt with was when looking at parking issues with Seapark residents, exiting on to the road was raised by a number of them. Since then, as other Members said, the junctions at Carney Hill and Larch

Hill have been brought to my attention. Alan Chambers made a good point: if we were building the road today, we would not pass the current set-up. It would not pass current standards. I back his point about the need for the separation of cyclists. The recent death of a cyclist on the road has already been mentioned.

The road runs between our capital city and our largest town. It is busy, and it should be an infrastructure priority. Safety should take priority over speed. I ask the Minister to look at what assessment can be made of the existing junctions and, where possible, at what physical measures can be put in place to mitigate the current dangers. I also ask him to look at the speed limits. Anyone who drives along it regularly knows that the speed limit goes from 60 mph to 50 mph to 40 mph to 30 mph and then back up to 40 mph, 50 mph and 60 mph. The message that a lot of people get is that it is a 60 mph road, and they drive close to that speed for most of the stretch. That is certainly not appropriate in all places. Mr Easton said that the speed cameras have helped in that regard, but the road is treated like a dual carriageway, and many seem to drive at 60 mph along almost the full length of it.

I ask the Minister to look at the speed limits and at what physical measures can be put in place to mitigate the dangers. We cannot come back to the Assembly continually. As mentioned, in 2002, other Members here said that there had been too many road deaths then. There are too many road deaths, Minister, and, if you could help, we would gratefully appreciate it.

Mr McNulty: I also thank the Member for securing the debate, and I acknowledge the presence of the Minister. I speak in the Adjournment debate on behalf of the SDLP. I also do so as a member of the Committee for Infrastructure.

The A2 dual carriageway is the main corridor from Bangor to Belfast and goes through Holywood and Cultra. It is the main route to tourist attractions including the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Helen's Bay and Crawfordsburn. The A2 Belfast to Bangor road is part of the strategic road network and carries about 45,000 vehicles daily. Rarely does a morning go by in which we do not hear about delays, or even an accident, on the road.

Sadly, we have heard of very serious road accidents this year. As mentioned a number of times already, in January, a 75-year-old lady lost her life following a car accident.

In July, another death occurred. This time, it was a cyclist who was travelling towards Bangor in the early hours of the morning. It is sad to have two deaths happening on the same stretch of road in such a short period. Without further safety improvements, we run the risk of further accidents and deaths on the carriageway.

The subject of the debate mentions the junctions of the road. The road has many twists and turns, which makes pulling out of or into those junctions much more perilous. The A2 dual carriageway had average speed cameras introduced a number of years ago, as mentioned, which has helped to reduce risks for motorists by encouraging reduced speeds. However, as has also been mentioned, there remain a number of dangerous junctions that need improved, and we support Mr Dunne's calls for road safety improvement on the road.

I must highlight the SDLP's wider concerns about road safety. There are many roads across the North that require road safety upgrades. Every death on our roads is one too many. I believe that the Minister for Infrastructure must make road safety the highest priority and ensure that all our roads are safe to travel on.

In conclusion, we welcome the opportunity to contribute to today's Adjournment debate, and we put our support behind Mr Dunne's proposals for improvements in relation to the safety of the road.

Mr Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure): I congratulate and thank the Member for raising the issue. At the outset, I will touch on a few remarks just in case I do not get time to get to them at the end. I will be more than happy to review Hansard if I miss any and go back to officials with them.

To start with Justin McNulty's point, road safety is absolutely a priority of mine. Every couple of weeks, when I see the statistics coming into my office about fatalities and serious accidents, it is personal to me. I had a younger brother who went out one night and never came home. He was killed in a road accident. So, road safety is absolutely a priority for me, and it has been for my Department and for previous Ministers. Be absolutely assured that whatever we can do on road safety, we will do.

Alan Chambers talked a little bit about the Craigtanlet roundabout, and there is a particular case in point. There are competing priorities in the North Down region that the division is looking at, so if money is taken from one area and put to another, things will suffer and areas will lose out, but the A2 and the need to upgrade safety is very much on the horizon.

Mr Chambers and Steven Agnew mentioned the importance of segregated cycling lanes. I will look to work with the local council in the North Down area, especially on that corridor between Belfast and Bangor. I publish my greenway strategy tomorrow, and part of that is different schemes in that particular part of the world that I think will go some way to alleviating that problem because more can be done in that regard.

Steven Agnew and Stephen Farry also touched on speeding and driving practice. It is important to stress here too that that is an issue for the PSNI. There could be engagement with the PSNI if you are saying that there are habits of speeding in that particular corridor, and if drivers' practice is not what it should be that should be addressed. It is important to remember — it is in no way a reflection on those who sadly lost their lives — that we know that 95% or more of fatalities and serious road accidents are caused by the driver and the driver's practice and a mistake or whatever made by the driver. It is nothing to do with the road or how a road is engineered. So, we should bear that in mind also.

I am more than happy to pick up the issue of Ballyrobert garage with officials afterwards. I am not aware of anything that has been done to date on that particular one.

With regard to development and bringing more houses in, and there was reference to MOD plans etc around Kinnegar, we know, and it happens in other places, that planning conditions can be put in place to say that, if there is going to be a huge increase in houses, there needs to

be improvement to the road as well. So, that is something that we are more than happy to look at going forward.

As I said, if I have missed anything out, I am more than happy to review Hansard, and if any Member wants to correspond with me to raise anything, feel free.

As Minister for Infrastructure, I am very aware of the strategic importance of the A2 Belfast to Bangor road. As has been mentioned, the road carries in excess of 45,000 vehicles per day and upwards of 5,000 vehicles per hour at peak times. It is obviously a very busy road and one of the key routes on our trunk road network.

I would like to clarify that I have taken this debate to concentrate on the stretch of the A2 in the North Down constituency between Tillysburn and the Bangor ring road, a stretch of just over eight miles. As has been pointed out, the road has four lanes along most of its eight miles, and a proportion of this is dual carriageway. Travelling from west to east from the junction with the A55 outer ring at Tillysburn, the road is a three-lane dual carriageway to the Holywood Exchange grade-separated junction. After this, the road is a two-lane dual carriageway continuing past Holywood before reducing to a single carriageway with four lanes to the east of Holywood at the junction with Whinney Hill. The character of the route changes from here, with the presence of a number of private accesses and a series of signal-controlled junctions. This continues to Ballyrobert, where there is a second length of dual carriageway, which continues to the grade-separated junction with the West Circular Road at Bangor, which is also known as the Bangor ring road. I appreciate that most people in here probably know that better than I do.

The speed limit varies along the road. The national speed limit applies to the two-mile stretch of dual carriageway between Tillysburn and Holywood. There is a 40 mph speed limit between Holywood and Cultra. This one-mile stretch has a plethora of accesses, with seven junctions, five of which are signalised, and there is also a pedestrian-controlled crossing close to Seapark Road.

The next section, between Cultra and Ballyrobert, is three miles long with a 50 mph speed limit. There are 11 junctions, four of which are signalised. The final stretch is the two-mile long dual carriageway from Ballyrobert to Bangor, where the national speed limit applies.

With such a large number of junctions and traffic signals in a relatively confined stretch of road, it is obvious that the balance of safety and traffic progression is a difficult one to accomplish, but it is a balance that my Department's Transport NI works daily to achieve. There are average-speed cameras along the entire length of the road, and these bright yellow structures serve to make motorists aware of their presence. I think that it is pleasing to say that they have had such an effect in the north Down area. Having said that, it remains a very busy and intricate route, which demands full attention from those making their way, especially at peak times.

Regarding safety, I am sure that we all recognise the collisions that have occurred on this road, including the two tragic fatalities that happened this year. There are investigations ongoing, and it would not be appropriate for me to comment further at this time. However, as I did at the outset, I can assure those families affected that my traffic engineers will engage fully with the PSNI to consider whether there are any viable measures that

could be introduced to avoid collisions of a similar nature in the future. Road safety will always be a priority for this Department.

Over the past three years, there have been 85 collisions recorded at the 25 road junctions along the route. From the information received from the PSNI, the vast majority of collisions result in injuries that are classified as "slight", and the cause of these collisions fall into these three main groups: 30 were attributed to driving too close, 17 to the driver's attention being diverted and 24 to drivers not taking care, which means emerging onto the road or crossing, turning or changing lane on the road.

Members will be aware of the many measures that my Department has taken to educate road users with the intention of reducing collisions and injuries on our roads. The statistics serve to reinforce the messages from the Share the Road to Zero initiative and the importance of the responsibility that drivers have to take care for themselves and other road users. That is a message that I would like to reiterate today as we move into the winter season, with darker days and inclement weather affecting visibility. Driving conditions will be more difficult, so extra caution will be required by everybody using our roads.

Members will be aware of the many measures that have been introduced to improve safety along the A2, including the three grade-separated junctions at Holywood Exchange, the Folk and Transport Museum and at the junction with the Bangor ring road. We have also installed signals to control the traffic at 12 of the 25 larger junctions to improve safety and traffic progression. There are a large number of coloured high-friction surfacing zones, which also serve to highlight the proximity of junctions and to improve safety. These measures, along with the speed limits and a wide-ranging programme of traffic signs and road markings all along the route, serve to enhance and improve the safety of the A2 along its entire length. There is also a comprehensive programme of inspection and maintenance to ensure that the road surface is maintained to a high standard.

My Department's traffic control centre also plays an important role in monitoring the road from a safety and traffic progression perspective. The control centre is generally operational from Monday to Saturday and also operates on Sundays, as required, to handle traffic disruption in response to planned roadworks, events or anticipated increased traffic flows such as in the run-up to Christmas. Staff at the control centre monitor a number of CCTV cameras along the A2 between Belfast and Bangor and use this information, based on actual traffic flows, to continuously update traffic signal timings at the junctions along the route.

This live, up-to-the-minute programming of signal timings ensures that the road operates at its maximum efficiency. The control centre also provides live traffic information via the Trafficwatch NI website and on social media such as Twitter so that road users can be informed of the decisions and plan their journeys more effectively.

6.30 pm

It is important that we also touch on wider transport issues. I can advise Members that the numbers of passengers using the train service between Bangor and Belfast have increased significantly, especially at peak hours. There

has been an increase of some 20% in passenger journeys over the past five years alone. That reflects the growing importance of our rail infrastructure serving commuters in this part of the world. We often go to improve the roads and road safety, but, sometimes, the answer is off the road and in different modes of transport. We can do more on that between Bangor and Belfast. There is an appetite in north Down for various types of transport, and the answers to some of these problems may lie there.

I recognise that public representatives have raised their concerns about traffic progression and collisions at a number of junctions. We receive many requests, and I can advise that there is a process in place whereby engineering staff review collisions with the PSNI with a view to identifying any common causes that could be addressed by engineering measures.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I ask the Minister to conclude.

Mr Hazzard: I can add that my Department has long-term plans to improve a number of the junctions along this route to improve road safety. A route study was carried out on the A2 in 2011, and a number of junction improvements were identified. Two particular schemes at Ballyrobert Road and Ballymoney Road have been taken forward to detailed design.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): Order. The Minister's time is up unfortunately.

Adjourned at 6.32 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 14 November 2016

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Ms Armstrong: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Minister for Infrastructure has issued a written statement, the content of which is embargoed until after 12.00 noon tomorrow. There will, however, be questions to the Minister for Infrastructure at Question Time today. That means that Members are unable to scrutinise the Minister on something of regional significance and public importance, contrary to Standing Order 18(2). On several occasions, the Alliance Party has attempted to get the Minister to give a formal statement on the matter and has today tabled a question for urgent oral answer to your office for consideration. I ask you to confirm what action you will take to defend the right of the Assembly to scrutinise the work of Ministers, particularly on matters of such public importance.

Mr Speaker: The Member is aware that, on a number of occasions, I have indicated to Ministers, including by writing to the First Minister and deputy First Minister, that statements, when possible and convenient, should be made to the Assembly. I have followed the matter up with the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Mr Attwood: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker, which was well made, we have a situation in which Ministers do not attend debates in the Chamber and do not make statements to the House on critical matters and when issues have been raised about questions for oral answer being put to Ministers on the Floor. In those circumstances — this is why I welcome the meetings that you will have with party leaders — is there not a strategic issue with the Assembly's ability to fulfil its legal and statutory functions and a danger that it is being prejudiced and damaged? That needs fundamental consideration by you and the House.

Mr Speaker: You mentioned that we will be having a meeting with party leaders, and I accept that that matter is a potential one for the agenda. You also know — I said this to Ms Armstrong — that I have encouraged Ministers to provide information in a timely way to the Assembly so that it can operate in an effective manner over the mandate.

I am sure Members are aware of the other channels of communication that they have, and I urge them to follow those channels.

Mr Swann: Further to that point of order, as Question Time for the Department for Infrastructure is up today, how will the Speaker or Deputy Speaker rule if the Minister is questioned on that issue?

Mr Speaker: That is a matter for any Member asking a question of the Minister, and it is for the Minister to decide how they feel able to respond to that question. I leave it with the Member for future consideration.

Mr Dickson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Further to the issues that have been discussed, at what stage will you run out of patience with those Ministers who will not come to the House? You indicated that you asked them to come. At what stage will you exercise your power to make them come?

Mr Speaker: I do not have the power to make a Minister come to the Chamber. That is at the discretion of the Minister. I indicated to you that I have written to Ministers asking them to come to the Chamber.

Speaker's Business

Mr Speaker: Before we commence the agenda, I want to briefly say that it has been disappointing that, of late, Members have been frequently breaching our procedures by challenging standard procedural decisions, my authority and that of the Deputy Speakers, both inside and outside the Chamber. Indeed, I have had occasion to write to two Members about challenging the authority of the Chair following last week's business.

As I made it clear to party leaders in a letter of 21 October, Members who challenge the authority of the Speaker or the Deputy Speakers, whether inside or outside the Chamber, need not expect me to be sympathetic towards them in future business. I have discussed this with the Deputy Speakers, and I am increasingly concerned about this and about Members seeking to involve us in issues that are properly for Ministers or, indeed, party political debate. Many points are being raised with us at the minute, but I warn Members that we will be proactive in relation to any abuse of procedures towards the Chair.

Committee Business

Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill: Extension of Committee Stage

Mr Eastwood (The Chairperson of the Committee for Communities): I beg to move

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 23 February 2017, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill (NIA 02/16-21).

At the outset, I declare a family interest in this issue.

The Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill was referred to the Committee for Communities on 28 September 2016, and its Committee Stage is due to conclude tomorrow, 15 November 2016. The Bill has generated considerable interest, not least because it is generally accepted that our licensing laws need to be updated. While the Bill has been long awaited, it is important that the Committee takes the necessary time to get it right. We have received over 30 submissions and taken oral evidence from 18 stakeholders, with further evidence sessions planned. However, the issues are complex, and it is only proper that we scrutinise the Bill as comprehensively as we can. Therefore, at its meeting on 20 October 2016, the Committee agreed to table a motion to extend the Committee Stage to 23 February 2017 but with a view to dealing with the Bill as quickly and comprehensively as possible.

On behalf of the Committee, I therefore ask the House to support the motion.

Ms Gildernew: I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on the motion.

The Committee has been busy scrutinising the Bill and the submissions it has received and speaking to stakeholders. While we are delighted to get the opportunity this early in the mandate to discuss the legislation, and we are keen to deal with it as quickly as possible, it is only right that we take the time to do it properly and end up with good legislation. I am happy to support the Chairperson on this and ask for an extension of the Committee Stage.

Mr Eastwood: I am grateful for the widespread support from right across the Chamber. *[Laughter.]* We look forward to carrying on our important work on the Bill.

Resolved:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 23 February 2017, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill (NIA 02/16-21).

Private Members' Business

Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together and 'Systems, Not Structures: Changing Health and Social Care'

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to two hours for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. One amendment has been selected and is published on the Marshalled List. The proposer will have 10 minutes in which to propose the amendment and five minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Mrs Dobson: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the publication of Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together and 'Systems, Not Structures: Changing Health and Social Care'.

I welcome the opportunity to move this motion — the first opportunity that Members have to make substantive comments on the issue. I welcome, as I and my colleagues did on 25 October, the publication of the findings of Professor Rafael Bengoa and his panel. We had the opportunity to meet the panel at the health summit in the Stormont Hotel in February, and again for 45 minutes at the beginning of June.

The commitment of the expert-led panel was resolute, and I am sure we can all thank them for their many months of work. We welcome their conclusions, which, it must be widely noted, are similar to the findings of the three previous major health reviews in advocating a shift from acute to community care. The one thing that we can, with certainty, learn from history is that we never learn from history. I remember putting it to Professor Bengoa at the summit that reforming the health service was a little like repairing an airplane in flight. He and his panel have provided the Executive with the direction of travel. Therefore, the job of carrying out that reform lies with them.

The publication of Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together, and 'Systems, Not Structures: Changing Health and Social Care', marks just that: the publication of two documents. That is why the devil is in the detail, and, as yet, we have not been provided with that detail. I was somewhat surprised just how high-level the Minister's response was. She had the Bengoa findings for 10 weeks, yet even some of her more detailed actions referred only to further exploration and consultation. For instance, action point 12 announced the establishment of a transformation oversight structure by November. However, the Minister should really have been in a position to tell us, when launching the action plan, who was going to sit on the panel, how they would be selected and their terms of reference — an example of uncertainty and delay that could have so easily been avoided.

I still believe, however — and it is a point I have heard made several times since the publication of the documents three weeks ago — that it was galling that the very first action was, by January next year, to:

"Develop a comprehensive approach for addressing waiting lists".

I know that many were surprised at that.

No one disagrees that there is a problem, but most will have been shocked to learn that the Executive did not already have a plan in place to deal with it. Throwing money at it in-year, as happened in recent years, has not worked. Remember that £18.5 million of the £40 million last year was not spent on tackling waiting lists, because health trusts were not given enough time to spend it.

12.15 pm

Following the publication of the two documents last month, there has been some focus on the centralisation of services, so let me make the Ulster Unionist Party position crystal clear. We agree with localising where possible and centralising where medically necessary. What does that look like in reality? It means that we support some services that are being delivered in an unsustainable and unsafe manner coming together when there is a clear and compelling medical case for them to do so, but we will not support the word "unsustainable" being manipulated to suit the Department's agenda, as clearly happened with paediatric congenital heart disease services in Belfast.

One example of a service that we want to see kept as it is is the provision of emergency departments. There are nine type-1 sites in total, including the units at the Royal Victoria Hospital, and they are all under immense strain as it is. We do not need to think back too long to remember what happened at Belfast City Hospital. In the year before the closure of its emergency department (ED) was announced, the hospital had 45,000 attendances, yet, after it was shut, there was only a minimal increase in capacity at the Royal and the Ulster Hospital. No wonder the four-hour A&E performance in the Royal was only 69%. In the July before the City Hospital's A&E closure, it was 78%.

I will give an example of where the present decentralised service relieves pressure on the main specialised unit. That is in nephrology. From personal experience, my son was treated in the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children and then latterly in the nephrology unit at the City Hospital. That is a successful unit. Indeed, last year, it equalled the UK record for transplants performed in a single unit in a single day. Once successfully post-surgery and into a management regime of drugs, Mark was repatriated to the care of the Southern Trust at the nephrology unit in Daisy Hill Hospital in Newry, under the expert care of consultant nephrologists Dr John Harty and Dr Neal Morgan and their team. As a family and from our experience, we found this to be an excellent positive change for Mark. It also took pressure off the consultants and their team at the City Hospital, because, when we were attending the clinics in Belfast, immunosuppressive patients were effectively lining the walls waiting on their appointment. That is not a safe environment for patients who are susceptible to infection.

If the Minister is going to come forward with the business case, the funding and a plan to establish a centralised — I give this as one example — nephrology service, those plans will need to be funded and carefully planned, and the impact on patients, in the short term and the long term, will need to be taken into consideration. I give that as an example of precisely the level of detail that was missing from the Bengoa report and the Executive's responses. The principles are well established and widely supported, but the how, the when and the where have not been brought forward.

I will give a further example. When I was lobbying earlier this year on behalf of a constituent who needed an appointment with the regional immunology service, the Belfast Trust confirmed to me:

“With demand outweighing capacity, the current waiting time for an adult allergy appointment is up to 22 months.”

That is 22 months during which patients risk coming to harm. Indeed, the latest information, from July, shows that 1,094 patients were waiting longer than 52 weeks for an allergy appointment, and that is already a centralised service. Workforce planning, long-term budgeting and actions are required to fix a broken service.

So far, we have a 12-month timeline for a 10-year plan, with budgets at worst for one year and at best for three to four. If I could make one plea to the Executive today it would be this: bring forward the detailed, costed plans for reform and back them up with long-term budget, as in other regions.

There was initial disappointment that the announcement of the Executive's plan was not met, on the same day, by an injection of funding through the October monitoring round. Officials have since confirmed that the 18 actions are being managed within existing resources. I would, however, be grateful for clarity from the Minister on the comments of her officials at the Health Committee last week. They indicated to me that no monitoring round had been commissioned for January and that, given the overcommitment of the Executive, they did not envisage getting any additional allocations in January.

Stable budgets are one thing, but a departmental culture that embraces change and nurtures, rather than suppresses, the talents of healthcare professionals will achieve the best outcomes. As I put it to Dr McBride at Committee, back in June, the Department must loosen its iron grip. Accountability, certainly, but a stranglehold that stifles individual thinking will ensure that real and meaningful change simply drips down slowly — far too slowly. The Minister stated last week that it will take strong leaders to take forward transformation, and I agree. I do not envy for one minute the task of repairing the airplane in flight.

In conclusion, the future holds many challenges for our people, not least type 2 diabetes, liver cirrhosis, lung and heart disease and, of course, cancer, but the past shows a litany of failed opportunities to support and strengthen our health service. We welcome and will support the amendment from the Alliance —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude her remarks.

Mrs Dobson: I therefore urge the Minister to tell us the how, the when and the where to lift that uncertainty and to begin tackling the issue.

Ms Bradshaw: I beg to move the following amendment:

At end insert:

“; further notes that these reforms are based on expert analysis and must be implemented in a holistic manner without delay; and calls on the Minister to provide a detailed action plan for the implementation of the proposed reforms over the current Assembly term.”

I rise to propose the amendment and to support the motion. I welcome the Health Minister's presence in the Chamber for the debate.

It is important to put on record that the Assembly needs to get behind the principles of the transformation process. To make an obvious but important point, reform is a complex matter. It will be natural for people to oppose aspects of it, but change is always uncomfortable. It is not enough merely to say why change is necessary but that does bear repeating. First, there is the financial issue, which is often referred to. If we do not reform, we simply will not be able to afford our health service, which is free at the point of access, in 10 or 15 years' time. Secondly and more importantly, the system is in some ways broken; it needs to be mended. We need to centralise specialised services, as my colleague Mrs Dobson said, to maximise available expertise. We need to ensure that more is done at the point of entry to the system, notably within primary care, to direct people to the appropriate places. We need to invest more in health and well-being through preventative work, not least in mental health, to support people to manage their own health and the health of those they are caring for.

Our amendment calls on the Assembly to recognise the value of reform and the need to support it in principle and without reservation. Otherwise, the health service simply will not be viable, and the brilliant and very committed people working in it will not be able to deliver the results that they want to.

I have said before, and I say again, that if the Minister proceeds with the transformation process, she will have my party's support, even where measures are challenging. This does not mean that we will commit to support the Minister in everything she does, because we have not had a chance to see what exactly it is that she proposes. Her announcements so far have lacked full detail, but that is not unreasonable at this stage. However, we do want more meat on the bones in the very near future. It has been said that the transformation process will take two Assembly terms. Again, that is very reasonable. However, it should not be an excuse for not making considerable progress in the current Assembly term. We need clarity in the form of a full action plan. Where are the resources, and who will be responsible for different aspects of delivering reform? Not everything will run perfectly, but we need an action plan that we, as Members of the Assembly, can assess to make sure that the reform process is taking place. We also need to remember that this is not just about MLAs in the Chamber; this is about the general public and the people who use the health service. The general public are the most important aspect of this.

What should be in the action plan? First, we must have absolute clarity, which, to be fair, the Minister has already indicated she is prepared to give, as to where the differences are between her own road map and the report of the expert panel chaired by Professor Bengoa. I echo the comments of Mrs Dobson: it was truly an expert report, and we would be foolish not to follow it. I certainly put on record my thanks to Professor Bengoa and his panel for their work on it. The Minister has said that hers is the only road map in town. That may be wise, but we do need to be clear as to what that relates to with regard to the expert panel's report.

Secondly, we need a clear indication of the resource requirements for the transformation. It is not just about

financial resources but about personnel and the use of facilities. We need clarity, too, as to the resource that will be required throughout the Assembly term and beyond it. We need to recognise that it is necessary to know where it is coming from and that it has been guaranteed.

Thirdly, we need a series of actions and a commitment to clarity on how and, indeed, whether they will be delivered. Not everything will run smoothly, as I said. The implementation of the Transforming Your Care strategy was set back by uncertainty about what had been implemented. We know that things were implemented, but it was just not recorded very well. There was never any doubt that implementation was needed, but, as I say, people in the service were not sure what was happening a lot of the time.

Finally, we need clarity on who will be responsible for management of the transformation. Who will head up the transformation board that provides oversight and what level of expertise will be on the board? This issue of assigning responsibility goes further. We also need a recognition in the plan, in line with the report of the expert panel and indeed the Programme for Government framework, that this will not be solely a matter for the Department of Health. Children's health, the role of welfare and housing in health, well-being in the workplace and so on, fall to other Departments. Of course, many aspects of health, particularly health promotion, fall outside government altogether.

I think that this transformation is possible. However, it will take commitment, courage and clarity. Where those exist, my party will support the process every step of the way. Where they do not exist, my party will provide constructive challenge. I commend both the motion and the amendment to the House.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the proposers of both the motion and the amendment, especially the proposer of the amendment on her very positive contribution. It is good to see that. I always think that I am the only optimist in the room; it is good to see that there is more than one here. I also thank her for the amendment because it puts a little bit more meat on the bones of the motion. We will also support it.

I welcome the commitment by the Executive in their unanimous support for the implementation of the Minister's plan for the future of health and social care. As Chair and a member of the Committee for Health, in recent months, I, along with others, have had the great pleasure of meeting many groups, whether that be the BMA or the RCN, all the various AHPs, social workers, and other people who work in health and social care. During that journey over the past few months, I have seen a real difference and optimism in all those disciplines in health and social care.

On Friday afternoon, I attended an event here for the College of Occupational Therapists. It was launching a report on reducing the pressures on hospital admissions, which is something that we very much want to look at in the future of health and social care. It showed us again the innovative work that is happening day and daily amongst allied health professionals here in Northern Ireland. At times, we look at health and social care and say that we have not done anything or that it has been at stalemate. As someone who came from that background and has not worked in it for over five years, I think very differently. I see

so much innovative work taking place every day across primary and secondary care.

A couple of weeks ago, I had the pleasure of hosting a physiotherapy event. We heard from service users, who are probably the most important people to hear from in all this, especially with regard to self-referral in the South Eastern Trust, where, as I think that I have said here before, over 7,000 people have now used that initiative.

I would like the Minister to comment on rolling that out further. We have heard also in Committee about the pressures facing our GP services, and all our primary care services, and about how that vision for the future can make a real difference.

12.30 pm

I want to pick up on a few points. I was glad that Ms Bradshaw said that change is often uncomfortable. I think that that is one of the major dilemmas that we, as an Assembly, will have as we go forward in this mandate, and in future mandates, when it comes to health and social care. Mrs Dobson talked earlier about the closure of EDs; she said that she did not wish that to happen. It is very comfortable for me, as a Belfast MLA, to look at everything else around the rest of our Province and think that we could do something better, that we should close or move something, or that we should make somewhere a special hub for something. I can say that with great comfort because I know that I have absolutely everything on my doorstep here in Belfast. I am so glad to have that. However, I know from my DUP colleagues on these Benches that we will face problems. I think that the Minister will also face problems from her colleagues. We have tough decisions to make; there are really tough decisions ahead of us. However, I think that there is momentum and will; I have heard from everybody in the Chamber that they want to see change and want to effect it.

As I said before, I am glad that Ms Bradshaw brought forward her amendment, because there needs to be an implementation plan. That uncertainty will lead to some people becoming cynical, and not just Members but service users and those who work in the service. We need to see progress; we need to have something more stable in place. That goes for the budget as well. We had a witness session last week at the Health Committee to do with the budget. Quite frankly, it was not good enough. We need to see more and to have more ideas written down.

As I said earlier, I know from meeting people who work in social care and many service users over the past five or six months that there is an appetite and a hunger for change. There is also an appetite and a hunger in the Chamber for change. I add my support to the Minister for her long journey ahead —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude her remarks.

Ms P Bradley: I support the motion and the amendment.

Ms Seeley: I thank my colleagues in the UUP for bringing forward the motion, as it signifies a mature enough approach from them. Over the last number of weeks, that party has failed to embrace the report and the Minister's vision, despite the fact that it has been welcomed and embraced right across the sector as well as in the media and, most importantly, by patients, carers and staff. This is the mother of all opportunities, but opening comments

from the UUP suggest the same old negativity and, of course, a lack of any viable alternatives. The same old glass-half-empty approach will get us nowhere. We are extremely appreciative of the efforts, commitment and dedication of Professor Bengoa and his expert panel. Whilst our amendment reflecting that was not accepted, the Alliance amendment in some way attempts to acknowledge the expert analysis.

Bengoa's report administered a harsh dose of reality. In his report, he describes the health service as being on a burning platform and warns that change is inevitable. We have no choice but to implement change, but we have a choice as to the circumstances in which it is implemented: now, at a time when we can manage change whilst double-running our health and social care service, or later, following a system collapse, when we will be managing change in crisis.

The amendment states:

"reforms ... must be implemented in a holistic manner without delay; and calls on the Minister to provide a detailed action plan for the implementation of the proposed reforms over the current Assembly term."

The Minister has acted without delay: she has outlined the plan for the next 12 months and will build on that plan in January, and she has committed to reporting to the House every six months. It makes you wonder whether the parties sitting outside the Executive have been listening. That said, given that the Minister is already doing what the amendment calls for, we have no issue with supporting today's amendment as well as the motion.

Our demographics have changed so drastically in the last 20 years, yet our health and social care service has remained static. People are living longer but with much more complex needs. Therefore, it is vital that our health and social care service responds to that. The vision that the Minister has outlined aims to tackle waiting lists, improve access to GP services, achieve parity of esteem for mental health, raise the attainment of looked-after children, reform adult social care and support, develop a workforce strategy, fully realise the potential of community pharmacists, as well as avail itself of the many invaluable community services and good practices that are already out there. Her plans are ambitious; but then they need to be.

Professor Bengoa, in comments to the Committee, suggested that the implementation of the Minister's vision had the potential to result in the delivery of a world-class health and social care system. He said that the Minister had gone further than any other equivalent European Minister he had ever worked with. These words should inspire confidence across the political divide. Of course, there have been opportunities for change in the past, but change is a brave choice. It can be slow and frustrating and it is certainly not populist. That is why it is vitally important that we do not play politics with this. Countless Members will speak today and each of them will note the pending crisis in our health service but a Minister alone cannot deliver the change that is needed; we must all put our shoulders to the wheel. As politicians, we must lead this change and engage our communities early, most of whom are already ahead of us.

I urge Members to consider what is more important: populism or patient well-being; convenience or

quality; cheap headlines or action. If we are serious about improving patient outcomes and tackling health inequalities, then we need to get behind this vision. In the short term, we must allow the Minister the space to engage meaningfully with health and social care staff and patients so that, in partnership, her vision can be built on, advanced and grow and develop to ensure that the end result is a world-class health and social care system that will be the envy of the world.

Mr McGrath: I welcome the opportunity to discuss the important motion today and the fact that my Ulster Unionist and Alliance colleagues have brought it to the House. Maybe the first thing to note is that in the interests of openness and transparency — something that this Executive is not particularly good at — it has taken an Opposition party to bring the substantive discussions here today.

Any effort to improve the health of people is essential and is required. I worry about reports that are published and then become bookends or dust gatherers. We have had Delivering Better Services, Transforming Your Care, the Donaldson report and now the latest, the Bengoa report. This series of reports is only useful if it provides a concrete blueprint for what must be done for the future of our health services and then our actions. It has been said that this report is more a direction of travel than defined proposals. I hope that it will not be interpreted as a report of wishy-washy aspirations and, instead, is something that will deliver.

Ms Dillon: Will the Member give way?

Mr McGrath: I will, very quickly.

Ms Dillon: The Member is right that we have had all those reports but none of them were under this Minister. I think that the Member will agree with that.

Mr McGrath: I thank the Member for her contribution. We are discussing the report, not the Minister, so we will stick to the topic.

I welcome many elements of the report but, again, it would be difficult to argue with any elements in the report. We want a healthy population, of course; we want people to live longer, of course; we want people to access proper, decent expert healthcare when they need it, of course; we want people to avail themselves of services at home where possible and not in hospital, of course; we want to challenge the root cause of many illnesses presenting to our health service by challenging poverty, dealing with obesity and improving a healthy and fit lifestyle, of course. Who would not?

I am a little concerned that this report tells us much of what we already know and not very much of what we have not yet got. What is it that we need? We need to see ambulance response times improved in rural areas; they get you to the hospital. We need emergency departments that can cope and do not have long queues. Maybe you could reopen the Downe accident and emergency unit, which would help. We need to stop seeing trolleys in the corridor as acceptable healthcare. We need more consultants who can screen and direct patients to the care that they need. We need beds available for patients who need them. We need elective surgery waiting times slashed. We need outpatient appointments in a reasonable time.

We need proper community care for people at home, not a 10-minute dash-and-run service that leaves our elderly bewildered rather than cared for. We need to treat

staff with dignity and decency, pay them a fair wage and reimburse them for the costs of their work. It is not fair that some people in our health service are out of pocket when they go to work. I could go on and on.

I read the report and worry that Bengoa has said much, but I wonder whether he really said anything at all. Where are the concrete outcomes? Where are the timescales? Where are the measurables? Are they financed? Are they ready to go? I do not envy you your work, Minister; you have a mammoth task ahead. Help was sought and it produced this report, but I wonder whether it is really the help that we need.

I hope that we will not just be kicking problems down the line and that we have the plans to deal with them. It has taken years to build up, but to take 10 years to sort the problem out is a bit long. It is a disservice to our people and their healthcare workers to say that it will take that long, and we need something quicker in the short term.

The lack of clarity on the financial element of the report is also of concern. There is a complete lack of an estimate of the costs associated with the process and/or an indication of where the money will come from. With no money being requested by the Department of Health in the October monitoring round to deal with the urgent waiting list crisis that we are facing, the lack of detail on the costs of delivering the much-needed action plan promised in the report is a bit worrying.

I conclude by echoing the sentiments of my colleague Mr Durkan on the launch of the report and by reaffirming the SDLP's commendation and support of our healthcare staff on their vigorous work providing healthcare across the North. The work and effort of our healthcare workers is second to none, and it cannot be put on them that their efforts do not translate to a first-class health service. We remain optimistic that the process will begin to resolve the problems faced in Health and Social Care, and we look forward to seeing an action plan and detailed costs going forward. Of course we pledge to work constructively with the Minister.

Mr Middleton: I welcome the opportunity to speak today. I also welcome the publication of the reports from the expert panel and from the Minister. I thank the expert panel for the work that it carried out, and I also thank the Department for setting out a pathway for implementing this change.

The expert panel's report has a clear statement:

"The choice is not whether to keep services as they are or change to a new model. Put bluntly, there is no meaningful choice to make. The alternatives are either planned change or change prompted by crisis."

The Chair touched on the fact that, as members of the Health Committee, we meet with various groups weekly. Last week, we had a stakeholder event with a wide representation of groups. They made it very clear to us that they recognise the change that has to happen. It is very disappointing that, so far, the tone from the Opposition parties — I do not include the Alliance Party in this — has been very negative. The report has been out only for a matter of days, and they have not given it a chance. When you reflect on that and get behind the public and professional opinion —

Mrs Dobson: I thank the Member for giving way. I am somewhat surprised that the Member mentions our tone. We welcome the findings of the Bengoa report, but we are asking for the details of a costed and funded plan. Surely you agree that that is essential in putting patients first.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Middleton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. That is not the point that I was making; I was referring to the negative tone. It is unfortunate that there has been a knee-jerk reaction to the publications; we have seen it in the media. Unfortunately for some Members, they should reflect on the position of the media, get real with the facts and wait for a response from the Minister.

Mr Durkan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Middleton: No, I am going to try to make some progress. The expert panel's report makes the challenges very clear, and it also makes it clear that we need to draw on the experience of those who already deliver care and take on their expertise to build on the existing foundations. We have to remember that much positive work is already happening in the health service, and we should not be running it down. We are here to make sure that the work continues while also reforming it and making it better. We need to communicate the plans, of course, and the Minister has done that so far by outlining the 12-month vision and the need for additional transitional funding. The transformation board will see all this through.

12.45 pm

Innovation was touched on by my colleague, the Chair of the Health Committee, and I think that it is no longer acceptable that we keep doing things as they were, just for the sake of it or for the fact that we have been doing it for 20 years. We need to look at innovative ways of doing things and we know there is much innovation within our health service at this minute in time.

We need to address elective care performance, and we know that a strategy is going to be released in January on how we address that. Of course, the difficulty will be trying to address the waiting times and ensuring that we push forward with the transformation. That is where we need clear leadership, not only professional or clinical but political leadership. The Executive have given a clear commitment to showing that leadership, and we also need to see that from others outside of the Executive.

To keep staff on board, it is vital that the Minister keeps ensuring there are conversations happening with the staff and that they feel valued and are kept up to speed with the changes that are required. With all of the recommendations in the report, the clear outcome is that there is a willingness among the staff to make the change that is required. The Health and Wellbeing 2026 vision outlines the pathway and how we are going to make these changes.

We must recognise the challenges of population change and the health inequalities which exist within our communities. It is no longer acceptable that, if you live in a certain community, your access to services is going to be different or you are going to be disadvantaged. We know that, in some communities, you are twice as likely to die from smoking or you are three times as likely to

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die from suicide. These health inequalities are no longer acceptable.

These reforms will see that our communities get the health service that they deserve. We have to recognise that finance alone will not solve this. We need to fully implement what the report says, and we look forward to working with the Minister to ensure that it happens.

Mr Milne: I thank you for the opportunity to speak on the motion and in support of the tabled amendment. I commend the Minister, Michelle O'Neill, on launching Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together, a 10-year vision to transform the North's health and social care system. As we know, this is an opportunity for a fresh start supported by the Executive and is not just the will of one Minister or Department.

Minister O'Neill's vision was compiled after considering the report, 'Systems, Not Structures: Changing Health and Social Care', by a panel of experts led by the highly esteemed Professor Rafael Bengoa — a report which has received considerable support for the need for change from vast numbers of people working in our health and social care sectors, including the BMA and AHPS, who signalled general approval.

Our Health Minister has stated on previous occasions that the system itself is now at breaking point and facing a number of challenges, not least the demographic changes and considerable health inequities which continue to persist. It is well past the time to organise services in a way which does not constrain transformation or our ability to provide a higher-quality service. There can be no doubt that we need to support people to keep well in the first place and that, when we need care and support, services should be safe and of the highest quality.

I agree with the Minister that our focus must move from one which is based on action-based targets to one based on patient outcomes and co-production of services. Healthcare professionals and staff across the relevant sectors are working harder than ever to deliver high-quality care and support to patients and carers, but they have to work in a health and social care system designed to meet 20th-century needs that does not work in the 21st-century world.

Changing the health system is the right thing to do, this is the right time to do it and it is much needed by service users. Change must be planned, managed and incremental. It will not happen overnight. This will take time, resources and the support of staff as well as everyone who uses the health and social care services.

We must avoid playing politics with health. We all need to support evidence-based decisions when presented.

Mr Beggs: I, too, support the motion in the name of my colleague Jo-Anne Dobson and others and, indeed, the amendment proposed by the Alliance Party.

Health is not just about statistics; it is about real people's lives and how we must act to improve the quality of those lives. There are recommendations in the Health and Wellbeing 2026 report that are aimed at helping to stabilise, reconfigure, improve and transform the health service, but what we need is a much more detailed action plan on how that will be delivered and improved rather than just this high-level strategy. Until that is seen, there will not be a clear picture that will give the public the confidence that it will be followed.

The very first recommendation is to develop a comprehensive approach to addressing waiting lists. Why have our Executive allowed our waiting lists to deteriorate to such an extent? Totally unacceptably long waiting lists are causing stress and anxiety to constituents. Undue delays in patient treatment can sometimes mean greater likelihood of an individual coming to harm, with many facing a short-term adverse impact on the quality of their life, and there may even be longer-term impacts because of delays in treatment. There are additional visits to A&E and costly unplanned admissions to hospital. I can think in particular of one constituent who recently contacted me about her 111-week waiting time. She is a relatively young person who was working successfully and saving a little money, but, as a result of waiting for an operation, she has had to stop working and is unemployed. She is living life in pain, and, instead of contributing to our society, she is on a 111-week waiting list. That is unacceptable.

Going forward, we must learn from previous strategies. I look back in particular to the period 2011-15, when Minister Poots led with the Transforming Your Care proposal. I can see much of the content of that running over into the new document, which has the same general ideas. However, Transforming Your Care did not materialise in the way that was envisaged. New and improved services were often not supported and delivered. There was a significant proposal through invest to save to make new money from the Department of Finance available for improvements, but under former Ministers Edwin Poots and Simon Hamilton that money was diverted from those improvement schemes into the normal, run-of-the-mill activity. I want to know what the detailed action plan is. How can we ensure that, unlike Transforming Your Care, the improvements are deliverable and this is not just another high-level strategy?

Mr Stalford: I appreciate the Member giving way. He paints a stark picture of the situation confronting the health service. I am sure he will agree that the problems he identifies began way before 2011.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Beggs: The Member is right: Michael McGimpsey warned that, when the Executive were inadequately funding our health service, there would be problems. Exactly as he indicated, in the latter part of the last Assembly in particular, there were difficulties, and that is exactly when the waiting lists got out of control. The Member is right: it was predictable, and the Executive were warned about it by Michael McGimpsey.

I am aware that the Bengoa report aims to look at new models of care, and we eagerly await further details. Clearly, there is a need to improve local care in the community. Certainly, I am aware of difficulties with the current funding arrangement, with constituents frequently having difficulty getting support to allow their loved ones to live safely in their own home. I suspect that is largely because of the funding arrangements, whether imposed directly by the Department or ignored, which are unable to attract new staff into the agencies that provide that support.

In my constituency of East Antrim, we are, to a degree, bereft of secondary care. We do not have the support that exists in many other locations. East Antrim does not have an accident and emergency unit, a minor injuries unit or any of the new all-singing, all-dancing health and well-

being centres. There is a need for investment in capital and resource to ensure that the new multidisciplinary teams that are being talked about can be delivered locally so that all health professionals can work closely together and improve the service. I hope that that will be delivered as a result of the proposal, but we need the detailed plan.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Beggs: I urge Members to ensure that it will be delivered and not just talked about, as previous schemes were. We need delivery, not just strategies and consultations.

Mr Sheehan: I could spend the whole of my five minutes talking about all the negative aspects of the health service, but there is no point in doing that. I prefer to accentuate the positive. Everyone in the House knows a good news story about the health service and of someone who has been helped. Sometimes we hear of almost miraculous recoveries of people who have had to be dealt with by the health and social care system. I can think of nothing more important than the health of our citizens, and that includes the delivery of health and social care to them. I pay tribute to all those who work in the health and social care system: the clinicians, the nurses and all the ancillary staff. The staff and the great work that they do is one of the most positive things that we could talk about.

In a sense, there is nothing really new in 'Systems, Not Structures' from Bengoa. There have been other reports — we have heard mention of the Donaldson report and Transforming Your Care — but none has been implemented, whether because the will, the resource or whatever else was not there, but what those reports do, along with the new report, is create a framework or route map through which the health service can be transformed. On this occasion, it is clear that there is a commitment to implement change and follow the direction of travel prescribed by Professor Bengoa. That commitment is evident from what we have heard from the Minister and the Executive.

Dr Farry: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. I want to tease out the implications of what he says. He said that there was now support from the DUP on the Executive for delivering this version of reform, but he also said that the report was very similar to other, previous reports under DUP Ministers. By implication, is he saying that Sinn Féin is at fault for failing to support the DUP Ministers and that we have missed the opportunity to get on with this over the past number of years?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Sheehan: I thank the Minister for his intervention. I am not so sure that that is the case. However, I do not want to hark back to the past. The Minister —

Dr Farry: Member.

Mr Sheehan: The Member was on the Executive as a Minister, so maybe he is more informed on those issues than I am.

Professor Bengoa said in Committee a couple of weeks ago that many other regions and countries were trying to bring about change in their health system. Some are doing that by throwing resources and funding at it, while others are doing it by trying to transform the system while not providing resources. Professor Bengoa said that this region was unique, in that we are intent on having

transformation and providing additional funding. If that is not a measure of the commitment of the Minister and the Executive, I am not sure what is.

1.00 pm

I represent a constituency that has some of the worst health inequalities across these islands, and, unless there is transformation, those health inequalities will continue to grow, waiting lists will get longer and the percentage of the block grant going towards health and social care will increase. There is only one solution, and that solution is transformation.

Let us all draw a line here today. I have listened to a number of speakers so far, and I did not detect any opposition to the need for radical transformation of our health and social care system. In fact, health, in a sense, is a unique issue. Every one of us sitting here today and every person listening to the debate will be affected by ill health at some time, whether it is them, members of their families, their friends and so on. As I said in the debate last week, ill health does not discriminate along party political lines.

I make this appeal every time I talk about a health issue in the Chamber: let us all work together. This is an issue that affects all of us. It is absolutely right that the Minister should be held to account, as every Minister should. There is absolutely no doubt about that, but health is unique in that it affects us all, and, if we all work together, we can make more progress, not for ourselves but for the people out there whom we represent. I will leave you with that thought. Working together is the best way to resolve all these problems.

Mr Durkan: I rise in support of the motion and the amendment. Mr Sheehan said that he did not detect any opposition to the need for radical transformation: that is fair enough, and it is because there is none. I do not think that anyone in here or anyone anywhere could oppose the notion that our healthcare system needs to be reformed. We see that every day, we hear that every day in our constituency offices, we might hear it around our kitchen tables and we hear it over the air waves.

Many people have to live with the fact that the healthcare system that we have allowed to evolve is far from perfect and is not fit for purpose, but, for some time, we have been promised a magic bullet that will cure all the ills in our health service. It is fair to say that, since May, any criticism or question that has been levelled at the Department of Health or, indeed, the Minister — I do not think that there has been much in the way of criticism of the Minister — has been responded to with almost a stock answer that the Bengoa report will sort that out.

Mr Stalford: I appreciate the Member giving way. He will also want to reflect, I presume, on the comments of his Opposition colleague Mr Beggs, whose stock answer any time the problems that existed prior to 2011 are pointed out is, "Michael McGimpsey asked for more money". The beauty of the Bengoa report is that it is institutional reform plus additional investment.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for the intervention; I am not sure that I thank him for the extra minute that he has got me, right enough. I concur with his view that there is more to this than more money. It is about how we do things

differently, not how we spend more money on doing the same old things.

A lot of expectation, anticipation and suspense was allowed to build up around Bengoa and then, when it was published, the fact that it was so similar in many respects to reports that we had received, read and seen before meant that there was almost a bit of an anticlimax. I found that to be the case very much among the media, in that they were almost searching for negativity in reaction or response to the report. I have to say in response to Mr Middleton's remarks that they did not really get much negativity from me nor, I believe, from my Opposition colleague, as he described Mrs Dobson. We asked questions around the lack of detail in the report, and it would be a dereliction of duty not just of us as Opposition MLAs but of any of us here, as MLAs and public representatives, not to ask questions about how the plan will be implemented and delivered and how it will improve healthcare for those out there who need it and those of us in here who, undoubtedly, will need it someday.

The problem with the past reports to which this is so similar has been the failure to implement them. Mr Farry made an interjection highlighting the fact that we have been told a lot that it is different this time because this is a report that the Executive fully endorse. I do not recall the Executive not endorsing Transforming Your Care, for example. Let us make sure that it is more than the Executive endorsing this plan.

Dr Farry: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. One of the most bizarre things about our system of government is that the issues regarding health reform were not brought to the last Executive. There was zero discussion on any occasion around Transforming Your Care or Donaldson; the discussion was purely around money. It is perverse in a society like ours that we do not discuss the big issues. Only the transactional business is brought to the Executive, and nothing strategic was ever discussed.

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his intervention. I assure him that it will be different this time, now that we have done away with those pesky parties.

A Member: Hear, hear. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Durkan: We have certainly expressed a bit of concern about the lack of specifics in the report. The amendment calls for more meat on the bones, as I did on the morning of the report's publication. It is important that we see that soon and give certainty to people and to places that might have concerns about the future of facilities in their area. I think that that is inevitable, given the reconfiguration of services that is necessary and will, ultimately, whatever way it is dressed up, lead to the closure and withdrawal of services from areas. While Bengoa will form the foundation of the Minister's vision or the Minister's policy, we will not allow Bengoa to be a fig leaf for every difficult or unpopular decision that has to be taken by the Minister or any health trust, wherever it may be.

There is a need for so much. We spoke about the reconfiguration of services. There is a need for improved care in the community, improved primary care, an enhanced role for GPs and an enhanced role for community pharmacy and allied health professionals. Those enhanced roles have to be matched by enhanced resources.

I am conscious that I have not that long left, so I will touch on one more thing. On the morning of the Minister's statement, she said, in response to a question asked by Mr Carroll, that she was working towards a position where we did not need to use the independent sector. Is that applicable across the board? I think that she answered that on dealing with elective surgery and waiting lists, but is it applicable in social care too? Is it applicable to nursing homes and residential homes, where statutory provision is extremely poor and is currently being closed by stealth?

Mr Carroll: I thank the Members who brought the issue to the Assembly. In the aftermath of the publication of the strategy, there has been a lot of discussion about the Bengoa report itself. We all know that the health service is in crisis. We know that our hospital waiting lists are dangerously long. People wait years to be seen by a specialist or to be operated on; indeed, my nieces and nephews have, unfortunately, been sick in the last week and have waited long hours to be treated in the children's hospital. Recently, I was contacted by a father whose five-year-old child had been waiting for 18 months for an important operation on her mouth. That is completely unfair and unacceptable, but, unfortunately, it is a widespread problem that people have to wait long periods of time.

It is a shocking indictment of the current state of affairs that we have a postcode lottery whereby, if you are from an area of high deprivation and poverty, you have to wait longer to be treated. If you live in a place like West Belfast, you will wait longer than those in other, wealthier areas in the North. It is a shocking disparity that needs to be tackled. The reason people are stuck on the waiting lists is that we have seen systemic cutbacks over the last several years. We saw the City Hospital's A&E close, putting huge pressure onto the Royal. We saw a reduction in the number of beds available for patients. We saw a privatised recruitment selection problem, where there is a long and often complicated process to recruit staff.

Indeed, the shortage of staff is leading to the closure of the Meadowlands unit in Musgrave Park Hospital, which has been in the news recently.

Cutbacks and not enough staff are leading us down the road where services are being reduced or stopped altogether. Some say that it is intentional, others that it is bad workforce planning. Staff are doing tremendous work; they are the lions in our health service, but they are under huge pressures. Many health workers are working against the clock, working long hours and not taking breaks just to provide the service that they are so committed to. We are also seeing people retiring and either not being replaced at all or, increasingly, replaced by agency staff. This casualisation of the workforce must come to an end. Paying tens of millions of pounds to recruitment agencies, which are making an amazing fortune out of this process, needs to come to an end; it needs to be tackled immediately.

Millions of taxpayers' pounds should be put into the health service and not into the pockets of recruitment agencies or private companies for that matter. Just last week, we saw Richard Branson, a multimillionaire, get his hands on a huge section of the health service. We have to be clear that private companies that are designed to make profit at all costs should have absolutely no role in our health service. We have to ask this question today: will this strategy and the implementation of this document

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proposed by the Minister and backed by the Executive address the problems that we are experiencing, or will it lead to a further cutting back of our health service and a further encroachment —

Ms Dillon: I thank the Member for allowing the intervention. I accept what you are saying, and using private healthcare is certainly not the answer that we want to see. However, do you not accept that the child whom you spoke about who is having to wait 18 months will have to wait a lot longer if the Minister does not use these methods in the short term in order to reduce waiting lists?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Carroll: I thank the Member for her point. However, the point is that the money should be redirected back into the health service and not into the hands of private companies. Recruit more staff into the health service and reduce waiting lists.

In the general debate, there has been much talk of the experts and the expert panel. Those people are no doubt highly qualified in their fields, but who knows better how our health service runs and can be improved than the people who work at the coalface? The trade union movement has been excluded from the process. It spoke at the Health Committee and said that it has had no representation on the expert panel. It is shocking that organisations that represent tens of thousands of healthcare staff have not been front and centre in this process. We hear the talk of the rationalisation of our health service. You can butter it up whatever way you like, but, for me, this is code for cutbacks. How can we improve our health service and cut waiting times by cutting our health service? It cannot be done. We need to put money in to defend our services. The underlying language in much of this report follows an NHS template from England, where we see daily reports of organisations —

Mr Stalford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Carroll: I will not.

We see daily reports of organisational meltdown, financial crisis and privatisation surrounding these new structures, and that should cause us great concern. Nye Bevan, one of the key architects of the NHS, said that the NHS will survive if there are people around to defend it. I hope that, over the next few weeks, the people will get out and campaign to defend our NHS. They will have support from People Before Profit in that process.

Mr Allister: There is probably no sector more afflicted with all the buzzwords that have become fashionable, like “transformation”, as if that is going to cover up the failures of the past and deliver a new utopia. We have to ask more probing questions. For example, did the previous Executive lead us in the right direction of providing basic healthcare by reducing the number of hospital beds by over 10% and then being surprised at the logjams — the near traffic jams — of people on trolleys in the corridors of our hospitals? The answer to all that now is, “Let us grab some nice buzzwords like ‘transformation’ and ‘improving outputs’”, from the very people who delivered much of the shambles that we have been afflicted by in recent times. I have to say that I see, essentially, in the Bengoa report and in the consultation document of last Friday, a stratagem for stripping out services from many of our

hospitals that they presently provide, and it is being done on a well-trying template.

The consultation document is a perfect example and model of this. In order to obtain the preordained outcomes of reducing and stripping out facilities in hospitals, you have to build a case — as they built, sometimes in a quite phoney way, in respect of the Belfast City Hospital emergency department for example, the closure of which was meant to be temporary but which was to avoid a consultation. The words used were “It’s not safe” and “We can’t get the staff”. We had an experience with the Causeway Hospital in Coleraine when it was going through a dark patch. There were those who were trying to diminish it, and the claim was, “We can’t get the staff”. Of course, that was rectified, because it could be rectified. However, very often, when the Government wants to do something, they set up the various criteria to fit into where they want to get to. That is why these criteria are so much about safety and about being clinician-led, as if that is the answer to everything. Most clinicians want a handy time in terms of if they can all work in the greater Belfast area then they will all choose to work in the greater Belfast area.

1.15 pm

So, devising the consultation document in those ways is geared, I suspect, to producing a stratagem of stripping out services in many hospitals. Where that concerns me the most is in respect of our rural community. This is the Minister who, when she wore the agriculture hat, brought the Rural Needs Bill to the House. She told us during the debates on that that:

“The key principles of the Bill mean that rural issues will be embedded, as a matter of course, in the development and delivery of all government strategies and policies; ... government will take a joined-up and collaborative approach in taking account of rural needs when designing public services.” — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 113, p316, col 2].

It sounds great. Where did rural proofing come in the consultation that was issued on Friday? It was tucked in as a little afterthought on page 20. It was tucked in in terms in which it is quite clear that, “Yes, we will go through the motions, but we will not pay any heed”, because it contains the key phrase:

“fully engage in consulting rural communities before finalising the service change.”

In other words, “We are going to make the change, then we will consult with the rural communities, and then we will finalise the change.”. Where is the embedding that was promised by this Minister in respect of rural proofing?

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Allister: Indeed, where is the rural proofing in Bengoa’s report? Did he ever even consult with rural interests? So, I fear that all of that is feeding into a reduction and diminishing of services for many of my constituents who live in rural areas.

Mr Speaker: The Member’s time is up. I call the Minister of Health, Mrs Michelle O’Neill, to respond to the debate. The Minister has up to 20 minutes.

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Health): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I am a bit hoarse, so bear with me. I thank the Members who have contributed in a positive and constructive way today. I am very keen to keep talking and to keep coming back to this conversation as we transform our health and social care. The prize at the end of that transformation will be better patient outcomes, and that is the prize that we all need to work towards.

I very much welcome the fact that the Alliance Party has brought forward an amendment, because it puts a bit of meat on the bones, as the original motion merely notes the publication of the report. I will correct the Member who proposed the motion and said that this is the first time we have had the opportunity to debate the issue. I think you will find that it is not. I have been to the Health Committee — I know you were in China at the time — but we discussed it then, and we discussed it here on 25 October, the day that I launched the report.

I launched my ambitious 10-year approach to transforming health and social care, Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together, as well as the expert panel's report, 'Systems, Not Structures: Changing Health and Social Care'.

I am grateful, as I said, for the opportunity to set out once again the key elements of the approach. Many Members have read and had time to digest both documents over the last number of weeks, although I question whether some Members have read the report in its entirety. I have heard some of the contributions and comments, and I very much doubt that they have, because a lot of people are missing the point. I will take the opportunity again today to rehearse some of the key issues in order to make sure that Members are fully briefed and absolutely understand the direction of travel, but I will not rehearse all the detail that I have gone into on previous occasions.

We all agree that the case for change has been very well made. An ageing population is good news for us all and is testament to the hard work and dedication of all those working in our health and social care system, but it also presents capacity and demand issues. Our system was designed to meet the needs of a population in the 20th century, so it is logical that it is struggling to cope with 21st-century needs and expectations. Waiting lists have continued to grow — I have always said that that is totally unacceptable — but that is only a symptom of the problem that we face. Health inequalities, which some Members referred to, continue to divide our society. In 2016, it is absolutely unacceptable that our socio-economic status dictates our health outcomes, whereby those living in the centre of this city can expect to live nine years less than those who live a few miles up the road.

Like those who came before me, I have invested in front-line service development and improvement initiatives. While that has alleviated some of the pressure on the system, it has by no means fixed the underlying issues. Current delivery models continue to have a negative impact on the quality and experience of care across the North. Those models of care are not only outdated but unsustainable. If we continue to do more of the same, by 2026 the HSC will need 90% of the Executive's budget merely to stand still.

Mr Stalford: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way; I asked Mr Carroll from West Belfast to give way, but he would not. Does the Minister agree that, if you are going

to stand and say that we should be investing millions more in the health service, it would be helpful to the debate if people gave us figures for the level of additional investment that they want to see?

Mrs O'Neill: Obviously, I totally agree with that. It is very easy to stand on the sidelines, chirp away and say, "This is what we should be doing", and write to me all the time about waiting lists and how unacceptable you find them. However, if we do not have real and meaningful transformation or concrete plans to transform the piece, we will not be able to assist all those people — mothers, daughters, sons — who find themselves waiting to be seen by our health service, so transformation is absolutely key.

It is not my intention to paint an overly pessimistic picture of health and social care, but I want to emphasise to Members that, if transformation does not happen, we can expect to see health and social care services in further significant decline. Health is a basic human right, and I believe in a universal health service based on need and free at the point of delivery. My overriding ambition is for all of us to lead long, healthy and active lives. I want a future in which people are provided with the necessary information, education and support to enable them to keep well in the first place. When care is needed, it should be safe and of a high quality. Those who use services and, indeed, those who provide them should be treated with dignity, respect and compassion. I listened to Mr Allister's comments about quality and safety. Patient safety has to be paramount and the first consideration in any service that we provide. I will very much be guided by that principle.

My vision, and the transformation journey that we have embarked on, is ambitious — rightly so. It will require whole system transformation across primary, secondary and community care, and a radical change to the way in which we plan, design and provide services. Holistic transformation will allow new and innovative ways of working and for patient-centred models of care to flourish. Moving away from a model of activity-based performance to one of performance measures based on patient outcomes will allow health and social care staff to provide the right care at the right time and in the right place. We will explore where all-island services can be further developed to bring mutual benefit for patients on this island. We have already initiated a programme of work with counterparts in Dublin to explore all-island services, including transplantation, rare diseases and perinatal mental health services.

By implementing new models of care and increasing our regional and all-island networks for specialist services, we will not only deliver better outcomes for patients but alleviate pressure on vital acute services. That will include reducing hospital admission rates, speeding up hospital discharges and reducing the lengths of stay for those patients who need to go into hospital. To begin this journey, I have already set out some key actions. I have agreed to increase the number of GP training places to 111 — 12 next year and 14 the year after that; commissioned five training places on the advanced nurse practitioners programme; and continued investment in practice-based pharmacists. I am also reviewing the role that physician associates could play in our system.

I am committed to investing in the workforce of the health and social care system. Our staff are our greatest asset, and I recognise that they are under significant pressure.

I have witnessed over the last number of months the outstanding work of HSC staff and the positive impact they have on people's lives. I am, therefore, committed to developing a workforce strategy by spring 2017 and a range of other immediate actions to start to address some critical workforce challenges. However, I recognise that some of the long-term systemic workforce issues we face will take time, leadership and sustained effort to resolve.

Securing better health and well-being outcomes for patients and other people who use health and social care services will be at the centre of the transformation programme I have announced. The experiences and needs of service users and their families will, therefore, be at the forefront of shaping our new service model. I am committed to ensuring that the HSC works in partnership with service users to design and implement the lasting and meaningful changes we need to improve health outcomes for our population. That is what I mean by the term "delivering together".

This new way of engaging patients is built on the principle of co-production. That will underpin how we engage service users in the future in designing new services and treatment pathways or at the point of care. Patients and service users have a vital contribution to make to transformation. I have already embarked on a period of engagement with those who use services and with staff right across the HSC to listen to their views on the future of health and social care services.

We need greater collective clinical and professional leadership throughout the HSC supported by skilled and able managers. That is why I have asked my officials to develop a system-wide HSC leadership strategy to be produced by next summer and why resources will be invested to support staff and leaders to develop the necessary skills and behaviours that will be crucial as we move forward.

We must all accept that the role of hospitals will fundamentally change. Hospitals are not always the most appropriate place for all care to be received, and, where it is safe to do so, people should expect to be treated in a setting closer to home. For some, attending medical appointments or receiving treatment can be a daunting and sometimes stressful situation. There is strong evidence that concentrating specialist procedures and services in a small number of sites produces significantly better outcomes. It is the opposite in our current system, where emergency and planned care services are mixed together because they are located in the same facility. That perpetuates our long waiting lists, and system-wide backlogs are created. By further developing ambulatory assessment and treatment centres, we will allow health and social care professionals to assess, diagnose and, where appropriate, provide same-day treatment to patients. Elective care centres will be developed to carry out less complex planned treatments right across the North. The establishment of those dedicated centres will be a resource for the region, and the way they operate will be designed around patients. It is well-evidenced that that type of configuration of services can reduce waiting times and prevent the system backlog we experience today.

I want to see a health and social care system that is efficient and sustainable, where best practice is the norm and investment is made in areas that will positively impact service users. We should have a system that encourages

innovation, and, where there are good pockets of work that are co-produced and show high-quality patient outcomes, we should be able to scale those up at pace.

I am determined to realise the potential that modern information technology provides. Making better use of technology and data is essential if we are to move forward to a model focused on service users, utilise our entire information resource to better inform the treatment of patients and free up health professionals' time to care.

I have said it before, and I will say it again: it is a privilege to be the Minister of Health, and I am committed to this programme of transformation and the principles of co-production. I am determined that Delivering Together should not be put on a shelf and forgotten about but is used as intended, which is as the road map for transformation. As the Health Minister, I will lead this work with energy, passion and pace. Last week, I launched the public consultation on the criteria for assessing the sustainability of health and social care services as recommended by the expert panel in its report. The consultation will run longer than the normal eight weeks to take account of the Christmas period and will include a series of consultation meetings right across the North to allow as many people as possible to contribute. Further information on the dates, venues and invitation arrangements for those meetings will be announced shortly.

This week, I will be launching my Department's paediatric hospital and community-based services strategy and the paediatric palliative and end-of-life care strategy. Those documents will set out the approach for further improving the delivery of services over the next 10 years, subject to securing the transformation investment required to implement the strategies. Both strategies will be taken forward fully aligned with the priorities and objectives for transformation set out in Delivering Together, with the clear aim of delivering better health and well-being outcomes for children in the North.

1.30 pm

Later this month I will launch a new diabetes service framework that will realise a vision of care designed to transform services for people living with diabetes or at risk of developing diabetes, subject to securing the necessary investment. I will launch a public consultation on proposals to modernise the delivery of pathology services. That will involve building a sustainable, high-quality pathology service designed to support the vital area of diagnostics well into the future.

I have been really encouraged by the positive response that I have been receiving to the vision document 'Delivering Together', but I want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to have their say on the criteria for the sustainability of services, which, if adopted by my Department, will be at the heart of informing future decisions about reconfiguring services. Since the launch, I have spent considerable time engaging with staff and service users across a range of locations and settings, including Craigavon Area Hospital, the Ulster Hospital emergency department and Old See House, an integrated community mental health centre. Their reaction to my vision and the expert panel's report have been overwhelmingly positive, and they tell me their appetite for change has never been stronger. That is only the beginning, as I plan to ramp up this type of engagement.

I have committed myself to chair an advisory board that will provide the strategic leadership and oversight required to deliver the transformation. Membership of the board will be drawn from the field of independent experts, unions and user representatives, along with the permanent secretary of my Department. The structure will also include a transformation implementation group responsible for driving forward the transformation programme led by my permanent secretary. I will continue to work with Executive colleagues and Members to secure the additional funding necessary to facilitate transformation, manage backlog and maintain current services. I reaffirm my commitment to update the Assembly every six months on the progress of the transformation process. We must all realise that change cannot happen without investment. Investment not only takes the form of pounds and pence but is about political and system-wide leadership, finding the time to change and making a conscious effort to break down silos to move to regional and all-island approaches where necessary.

All of us have an important role to play as we embark on this journey. I will not shy away from the difficult conversations and decisions. I ask all Members to match my resolve. In Delivering Together we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform our HSC into a world-class service. I look forward to working constructively with all Members who want to deliver better positive health outcomes for all who may need our health and social care systems in the months, years and weeks ahead.

Dr Farry: I thank the Minister for her comments and her commitment to work with the Assembly and give frequent reports to the Assembly and the Committee, setting a positive example in that regard. If we are to see this generational change in our health and social care system, we need to find as wide a political consensus as possible because there are some difficult decisions coming down the line.

I want to echo what my colleague Paula Bradshaw said at the start: we in Alliance are not interested in being simply opposition for opposition's sake. We are always constructive, and we are willing to support the Minister and Executive in delivering the new vision and ensuring that we see positive change in our health system — provided, of course, that the reports are followed through and expert advice is given its proper place and guides us in the way forward. I note the comments from Catherine Seeley, I think it was, about Sinn Féin opposing populism in this regard. That is an important statement, and we look forward to that being the way forward.

As many people have said, the current approach is not sustainable. That lack of sustainability applies in two respects. One is that we are not getting the best outcomes and results in the system. It is not as good as it could or should be. Secondly, our finances are in a difficult and challenging situation. On the basis of the current configuration of the health system, we are looking at healthcare inflation in the region of 5% to 6% per annum, which is well in advance of the ability of the Executive to invest resources. Therefore, we need to have a proper discussion of finances.

The need for the 10-year implementation plan has been well received by the Assembly — we certainly welcome and endorse the response — but it is important that we recognise the financial issues, which have not perhaps been teased out as much in this debate as I would have liked. We need to focus a bit on the finance. We have to

accept that there is a need to invest further in our health and social care system in order for it to become more effective and sustainable. We have to invest in that transformation process, but how much it will cost and where we find that money are the key issues that will face us. Christopher Stalford and the Minister were right to challenge Gerry Carroll on how much he wanted to see invested in the health system, but, equally, they have a duty to spell out how much the transformation outlined in the reports will amount to and where they intend to find the money.

The DUP and Sinn Féin went into the last election with a commitment to spend an additional £1 billion on health by 2021. That is a nice round number that takes into account healthcare inflation, but we need to know today whether that commitment still stands and how they intend to separate that commitment from the wider financial context that we face. Even in the current financial year, in which the health system got, I think, a 2% increase, that still fell short of healthcare inflation, so the system is already facing challenges this year. Even that modest increase in health spending came at the expense of virtually every other Department facing a cut. We know that, over the mandate, our block grant is set to flatline at best, but we are now faced with the effects of Brexit, and the impact on the UK's public finances are very uncertain; indeed, there are warnings of an even bigger black hole opening over the coming years. The implications for Northern Ireland are unclear.

We also have the potential wider implications of funding a lower rate of corporation tax to help transform our economy. We may need to invest further in agricultural subsidies locally if that funding is cut off from Westminster. One thing is clear: we will not get our share of the £350 million a week repatriated from Brussels. There is also the uncertainty around the current in-year situation, in that healthcare inflation is running at 5% to 6%, with a budget increase of 2% and very little in monitoring round bids. That indicates the potential for a black hole to open during this financial year pre-reform, and we need to consider how we will manage it in-year.

Finally, in looking ahead to implementation, it is important to bear it in mind that this has to be a cross-cutting issue —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Dr Farry: — that touches on all Departments. At this stage, the implementation plan solely deals with health issues. We need to see a lot more cross-cutting activity for all Departments.

Mr Butler: I welcome the opportunity to wind on the motion brought to the House by my party colleague Jo-Anne Dobson. I find it encouraging that there has been such a wealth of debate today. That shows a real appetite to tackle the problems in our health service.

All of us in the Assembly agree that the health service needs to change for the better. Standing still is no longer an option. There are too many people on waiting lists, and those who are on them wait far too long. The absence of a strategic workforce plan is contributing to a building over-reliance on locum staff and to targets being stretched. The implications are felt across the board, whether in A&E or care in the community. The people of Northern Ireland deserve a fully functional health service that not only delivers but is sustainable, accessible and affordable. For those reasons, I am encouraged that the Executive appear to be moving to address the issues with a high degree of priority.

I will focus on a number of points. First, I am encouraged by the content of both reports that we are discussing today. That is at odds with a number of Members' points. The outworkings of Health and Wellbeing 2026 have the potential to become the basis of a new framework of sustainable healthcare provision in Northern Ireland. The Minister has heard us call for more detail, and I hope that, over the coming weeks and months, that detail will be forthcoming.

The Minister will not be surprised to hear me raise the issue of mental health again.

Northern Ireland, as we know, suffers from a disproportionately high level of mental ill health compared with other parts of the UK and British Isles. Not only do we suffer unduly high rates of mental illness in our more deprived areas, but there is significant evidence to show that the legacy of the Troubles has significantly contributed to our mental ill health. The Ulster Unionists have been campaigning for and championing adequate mental health care provision for many years, and so I am particularly pleased with the commitments in the report to tackle mental health issues, including the commitments to additional funding for mental health interventions in primary care and to make available early support services, such as mental health hubs.

I agree with the sentiment espoused by the Minister that mental health care should have parity of esteem, but I urge her to start putting in place some measures to actually deliver it. As a starting point, I once again call on the Executive to recognise the merits of appointing a mental health champion. I recognise that the Minister has said that she is prepared to take up the role of a champion, and I commend her for that, but the gravity of poor mental health is so severe that we need an independent champion to ensure that the Minister and Executive are genuinely responding to the need.

On page 15 of the health and well-being report, the Department rightly identifies acute care at home as a service ripe for reform. With advancements in technology and telemedicine, it is much easier than even a few years ago for patients to remain in their own home. I urge the Minister to stick to her word and better integrate care at home with social care in the next three years. My main point in this respect is that the trusts must ensure that staff on the ground have not only the support but the time to deliver that service. Specifically, I remind the Minister of the report last year by the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland, which recommended that the NICE guideline NG21 be embedded into the standards for the delivery of domiciliary care, and that calls of less than 30 minutes' duration should not generally be used.

The Minister rightly identifies practice-based pharmacies as a means to alleviate some of the pressures facing general practice, but I urge her and her officials not to overlook the increasingly important role that community pharmacies can and do play in delivering a fully integrated service. Last week, I and many Members visited local community pharmacies, and we saw at first hand the role they play in, and the support they offer to, our communities. Therefore, I sincerely hope that the Minister is not minded to follow the reductions in community pharmacies proposed in England. When they were recently debated at Westminster, members of the DUP surprisingly

sided with the Government, which understandably raised some concerns in our constituencies.

Over the weekend, the Minister once again stated the importance of consultation and the necessity to take members of the public along on the journey with any proposed reforms. I urge her, however, not just to consult for consultation's sake, as Mr Allister said. I use the Lagan Valley Hospital as an example of when the local population was not treated with the respect it deserves. During summer 2011, Lagan Valley had its accident and emergency service reduced to daytime and weekends. At the time, staffing concerns were cited, and the people of Lisburn were assured that the decision was only temporary. Despite the supposed concerns of the Minister at the time, the opposite has happened, and the services have been further reduced. I use this only as an example of how —

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Butler: Yes, indeed.

Mr Allister: Does the Member recognise that saying something is temporary is a wheeze by the Government to avoid consultation? When a permanent closure is proposed, there is a formal consultation process; when they dress it up as temporary, they avoid that. That is what happened at the City Hospital and at Lagan Valley.

Mr Butler: The Member's point is well made; nobody in the House could argue differently.

At this point, I will recap some of the comments made by other Members. I commend my party colleague Jo-Anne Dobson for proposing the motion. A number of points stood out, none more so than her personal account as a mother of her family's experience of using today's overburdened and overstretched services, and the risks that sufferers and service users are exposed to. She talked about who, where and when, and the plan must get us to that level of detail.

Paula Bradshaw, in her amendment, called for recognition that care should be free at the point of access and that the service is broken and needs to be fixed. I agree. Paula also mentioned "the three Cs". I think that that is worth noting, especially by the Minister. She talked about commitment, courage and clarity. I can assure the Minister that she will get the commitment and courage from the House; all she needs to do is bring the clarity and detail.

1.45 pm

Mrs O'Neill: Will the Member give way?

Mr Butler: Yes indeed, Minister.

Mrs O'Neill: Does the Member agree with principle of co-production and co-design and actually listening to service users and patients and ensuring that we give them ownership of the care pathway that they take?

Mr Butler: I absolutely do. The core of this must be putting patients first. Nobody in the House will disagree with that. On the point about consultation, patients need to be listened to. That was the point that I made in my address.

I will pay very little time to this next bit, Mr Speaker. Two Members of the House wasted two of their five minutes to attack the Opposition. I thought that it was petty and very disappointing. I just wonder whether they wrote their

speeches together: it could be another way in which the Executive are working collaboratively behind the scenes. It is incredible. That is all that I am going to say about those two Members.

Mr McGrath talked about openness and transparency — two fantastic words. They are turning into buzzwords, really. We have heard about buzzwords. We really do not want to be faced, in a grown-up, modern-day Assembly in 2016, when we have moved so far in the past 18 or 24 years, with having those words being beat about the House. I would be really disappointed if, at the end of these four years, never mind 10 years, we are still talking about openness and transparency.

Another good one that was raised by Mr McGrath was ambulance response times. There is a disparity in the provision of healthcare in this country depending on where you live. We talk about the postcode lottery. I would keep a particularly close eye on that with regard to response times and how that is addressed. Thank you, Mr McGrath, for that one.

Gary Middleton — no, I will not go there. *[Laughter.]* What I will actually do is go on to Pat Sheehan because what Pat said at the start of his comments was that he was not going to waste his five minutes. I commend him for that. He did not waste any of his five minutes. He got straight to the meat. I commend him for that. He talked about transformation. He talked about detail, which we all know.

Mr Durkan, thank you. I always like listening to you. You can do it without reading, which is admirable. That will come with experience. Mr Durkan talked about failure to implement in the past and reiterated Stephen Farry's earlier point about previous reports sitting on the shelf and not really addressing the issues. We must indeed learn from the mistakes of the past.

I am sorry that I did not mention anybody else. There were plenty of other good speakers. In conclusion, we have heard many good points being raised on the motion, some critical and some commendable. I put it to the Minister of Health that, whilst nine or 10 years might seem like a long journey, the reality is that without clear signposting and clear measurable targets, I fear that the time will slowly slip away —

Mr Speaker: The Member must conclude his remarks.

Mr Butler: — like my time is slipping away now. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Question, That the amendment be made, put and agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes the publication of Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together and 'Systems, Not Structures: Changing Health and Social Care; further notes that these reforms are based on expert analysis and must be implemented in a holistic manner without delay; and calls on the Minister to provide a detailed action plan for the implementation of the proposed reforms over the current Assembly term.

Sporting Events and Activity-based Tourism

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. One amendment has been selected and is published on the Marshalled List. The proposer will have 10 minutes to propose the amendment and five minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who speak will have five minutes.

I call Mr Gordon Lyons to move the motion. Sorry — a change of order: I call Mr Gordon Dunne to move the motion.

Mr Dunne: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is confusing; there are too many Gordons.

I beg to move

That this Assembly welcomes the success that the Executive have had in attracting major sporting events in recent years and attracting visitors engaged in sports tourism; notes the high-value economic benefit that can arise from events-based and activity-based sports tourism; and calls on the Minister for the Economy, through his Department, agencies and the new tourism strategy, to promote and encourage growth in this sector.

I welcome the opportunity to propose the motion. Event tourism has been a real success story for us in Northern Ireland, with a host of high-profile prestigious sporting events being successfully held over recent years. The opportunities to bring events and people to our shores have increased dramatically with the normalisation of life in Northern Ireland. The Executive must be commended for helping to bring about the success stories that we have had of sporting events here in recent years. We all recognise the very real opportunities that now exist through our long tradition of sport and culture, which must be exploited and developed to ensure that we reach our full potential to bring tourists to Northern Ireland.

Sporting events and activity-based tourism can bring significant economic benefits to our country and economy. They can help to transform communities, regenerate areas, deliver much needed employment and inspire future generations. Although we have had considerable success in that sector over recent years, we must never be complacent. We must continue to strive for more events, bigger audiences and, ultimately, more investment in our economy.

To continue to attract top-level events to our shores, we need to ensure that the conditions are right and in place, and one of the key ingredients is getting the right infrastructure in place. We need to continue to invest in our road network, air links, ports, accommodation and telecommunications. Event tourism needs more affordable accommodation in close proximity to planned events. We have 13,560 beds available through the various accommodation sectors, with 7,860 of them in our hotels. It is most encouraging and very positive that there are nine new hotels and two large extensions planned in the Belfast area, which will create an additional 1,500 beds. In my constituency of North Down, a new 85-bedroom Premier Inn is planned for Bangor. It will be ideal for visitors, particularly competitors using the Aurora aquatic centre.

It is still in the planning stage, and I urge the Planning Service and the council to make it a priority.

Some of the very successful high-profile events that have been held over recent years include the Irish Open golf tournaments, the World Police and Fire Games, the Giro d'Italia, the Circuit of Ireland rally, the North West 200 and the Gran Fondo, to name but a few.

Mr Douglas: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dunne: Yes, I will.

Mr Douglas: Does the Member agree that the Giro d'Italia coming here in 2014 not only brought tourists but encouraged families and communities to get involved in cycling, which brings great health benefits?

Mr Dunne: I agree with my colleague, who, as I am sure you all know, is a great ambassador for cycling. I see him cycling around, particularly in his constituency of East Belfast.

The positive PR gained from those events for Northern Ireland plc cannot be overestimated. The television coverage and the live streaming beamed across the world from those events, which showcase some of our spectacular scenery, are very valuable and can act as a real magnet for tourism for the years to come. All those events attract competitors from right across the world, bringing them, their families and their teams to our country, often for the first time. Those visitors often go away with fond memories of having competed in a fantastic event, with top-class facilities and a magnetic atmosphere. They are also often touched by the warmth and enthusiasm of our people. They go home with fond memories and an experience that they can share around the world.

The ongoing success of our national football team is also a real success story. The fantastic performance of Northern Ireland in the European Championship, when they made their way through to the last 16, helped to put this country on the world map. The impact of the team and the fans was incredible, and many people across the world now know where Northern Ireland is for the right reasons. It is capable of doing something positive that we can now build on. The team's success can have a ripple effect across our community for years to come in inspiring young people and increasing participation in sport whilst attracting tourists here to help build our reputation.

Golf tourism is another growth sector. I welcome Tourism NI's strategic review in the sector, which aims to grow the value of golf tourism from £33 million to £50 million by 2020. We are the home of champions, and I know that many golf clubs have taken the initiative to build on the success of our home-grown golfing superstars. Holywood Golf Club, in my constituency, is an example of this. It has enjoyed great interest from tourists around the world — many from the United States — eager to see and play on the course where our own Rory McIlroy learnt his skills. I have no doubt that the investment in future Irish Opens and the Open, which is coming here in 2019, will help to further grow this sector.

Motor sport is another area where we have a proud and proven track record, not only in hosting top events but in producing top talent capable of taking on the world from Paddy Hopkirk to Kris Meeke in the present day. Rally Ireland had the honour of being a round of the World Rally Championship in 2007 and 2009, attracting huge interest

in this country. We have real opportunities to build on the success of events like the Circuit of Ireland Rally in recent years, or the European Rally Championship and to once again host the premier World Rally Championship in the future.

Events like the North West 200 and the Ulster Grand Prix also build on our proud tradition of road racing and attract thousands of spectators and competitors every year. Both events bring a great boost to our area and to our economy. I am aware of the exciting plans for a new hotel and visitor centre close to the North West 200 track, which I welcome and which can only benefit the local economy. There is also potential to develop our local racetracks like Bishopscourt and Kirkistown in order to, once again, attract top-level championships like the British Superbike Championship and the British Touring Car Championship.

There is no doubt that we have enjoyed considerable success in recent years in hosting major sporting events and attracting visitors through sports tourism. However, I believe that we have even greater potential in the sector and must continue to invest strategically to attract even more great events that will help to build and develop our country. I call on the Minister to recognise that and ensure that a new tourism strategy continues to promote and encourage growth in the sector.

Mr Speaker: 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 Mr Justin McNulty to move the amendment.

The debate stood suspended.

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

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): It is now time for Question Time, but, before I call the Minister for Infrastructure, Members will be aware that he has issued a written ministerial statement, which is embargoed until 12.00 noon tomorrow. I am aware that there is a listed question today on a related topic. Should it be reached, in light of previous rulings and the Speaker's response to Mr Swann's point of order at the start of this sitting, Members may ask questions and should take their steer on the extent of the embargo from the Minister.

I also remind Members of the Speaker's ruling on supplementary questions. Supplementary questions should contain no more than one enquiry, be brief and relevant to the lead question and not be read out. I hope that that is clear.

Infrastructure

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): It is time for questions to the Minister for Infrastructure, and we will start with listed questions.

Rivers: Pollution Safeguards

1. **Ms S Bradley** asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the action taken by his Department and NI Water to safeguard rivers from pollution by water treatment plants. (AQO 626/16-21)

Mr Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure): My Department provides the necessary funding and investment to enable NI Water to carry out its water and sewerage functions whilst protecting our environment. The Executive's current one-year Budget for 2016-17 has allocated, through my Department, £147 million for investment in water and sewerage services.

Since the creation of NI Water in 2007, continued investment in waste water treatment has resulted in significant improvements in the level of compliance with environmental discharge standards. NI Water is very mindful of the important role it plays in the protection of the local environment and operates an environmental management system to minimise the risk of chemical discharges from its assets.

Targets for reducing the number of high and medium pollution incidents are set by the NI Authority for Utility Regulation as part of the price control process, which involves consultation with the Environment Agency. Year on year, progress has consistently been delivered by NI Water in this area, outperforming the targets set. NI Water has invested nearly £500 million over the last three years specifically to improve the sewerage network system and waste water treatment works. With ongoing investment, NI Water will continue to improve waste water services for the people of the North.

Ms S Bradley: I thank the Minister for his answer. Considering that there have been at least three incidents

of river pollution, one in the constituency of South Down, which I am proud to serve, will he outline whether NI Water has inspected all water treatment plants? Is he satisfied that the level of fines imposed on NI Water is adequate?

Mr Hazzard: I thank the Member for her question. I was in China at the time of the spill that you refer to. I liaised closely with the Department's officials on what sort of clean-up programme was put in place, and I met NI Water officials on my return to find out.

Following NI Water's detailed investigation into the pollution incident at Annsborough — obviously, we are both alluding to Annsborough waste water treatment works — NI Water has undertaken to examine the dosing pipe arrangements at all other waste water treatment works where liquid storage units are being used and replace plastic pipe fittings with stainless steel fittings as appropriate. NI Water has also checked the spill protection provision at all sites where processed chemicals are used. If additional capacity or alternative arrangements are required, it will carry out any remedial work required. The company has also undertaken to survey drainage plans at waste water treatment work sites where processed chemicals are being used to ensure that the pipework configuration enables all spillages to be contained within the site.

Mr Chambers: I refer to the Cotton river in my constituency of North Down, which is suspected of being the source of pollution in Ballyholme Bay and causing the beach to fail to reach required standards. I understand that there is a waste water pumping station at Cotton and that Northern Ireland Water was recently fined £2,000, I think, for a pollution incident in that river. Does the Department have any plans to eliminate the problems with emergency overflows directly into the river?

Mr Hazzard: I thank the Member for raising this. Whilst I am not specifically aware of the particular site and river the Member is referring to, I am more than happy to correspond with him about it. It is very clear that whilst we have had a huge decrease in these instances over the years, we must do as much as we can, and certainly go as far as we can, to ensure these types of pollution incidents do not occur, and we need to take all available steps to do so.

Dr Farry: The Minister talks about the amount of money he is investing in improving the infrastructure, but does he also recognise that the nature of governance in NI Water actually constrains the ability of the Executive to invest as much as possible, given that NI Water does not have borrowing powers? What plans does he have to address this, bearing in mind that the Assembly recently was very concerned when the Office for National Statistics (ONS) tried to reclassify housing associations and take away their borrowing rights?

Mr Hazzard: I thank the Member. Certainly, as a former Minister, he will be well aware of the need for all Departments to look at and explore the ways in which we can increase the potential and ability of our arm's-length organisations and government companies to do what they can to deliver. There is no doubt that there are huge challenges, especially on the resource side, for a number of our bodies right across government, not just in my Department. We need to be innovative and creative around how we go about doing this.

NI Water has ambitious capital plans, not just for the city of Belfast but right across the North, which will take it into the

hundreds of millions if not billions of pounds over the next number of years. I have started discussions with NI Water officials to see how best we can meet those demands in the years ahead.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): We move on to the next question. Before doing so, I advise Members that question 12 is withdrawn.

Parking: Pakenham Street

2. **Mr Stalford** asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he will include Pakenham Street in Donegall Pass in the plans to provide residents' parking schemes. (AQO 627/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I can confirm that my Department is actively working towards introducing residents' parking schemes. As you may be aware, earlier this year I announced the start of a consultation period with residents in the Rossville Street area of Derry for a residents' parking scheme. You will also be aware that my Department has proposals for schemes in the lower Malone and College Park Avenue/Rugby Road areas of Belfast. I hope to make an announcement on these schemes later this week.

Transport NI officials are aware of a number of requests for a residents' parking scheme in Pakenham Street and have recently discussed this issue at a meeting with the Member and the Donegall Pass Community Forum and local residents. A scheme for the Pakenham Street area is dependent on the successful implementation of the initial residents' parking schemes outlined before.

Mr Stalford: I am grateful to the Minister for his reply. The Minister will be aware that the residents of Pakenham Street are living on the doorstep of a huge student accommodation development that is taking place. If anywhere meets the criteria for a residents' parking scheme, it is that part of the town. I urge the Minister to work closely with not only the residents of Pakenham Street but also the other areas that he has named to progress this issue that is really wanted in south Belfast.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): Was there a question there?

Mr Hazzard: I agree entirely with the Member. I am disappointed, as the legislation was introduced in 2007, that at this stage, nine years later, we are looking at the situation that we are only on the verge of introducing our first parking schemes. We need to do more. Certainly, I have set my officials the task to do more and to approach this in a problem-solving mood. We need to overcome objections, not just simply shelve something because of objections.

The figure for Donegall Pass was around a 14% response to initial consultation, with Pakenham Street being about 18%. We need to see a greater consultation and engagement with local communities. Of course, political reps have a role to play in this; to be out front and to lead it. I am aware the Member is trying to do that in that particular area. We want to see more of that. We need to see leadership from local political reps to drive some of these particular schemes forward.

Ms Hanna: Can the Minister advise what he sees as the next steps for the lower Malone and College Park/Rugby Road schemes, and are there any plans to review the consultation process, which currently can be derailed by

one objection from people who do not even live, or have an interest, in the area?

Mr Hazzard: The next step is that I will make an announcement later this week. Without prejudicing what I will say later this week, I will leave it at that. As I outlined to the previous Member, we need to do more. Objections can stall some of these projects and literally put a dead hand on them, and that is not just with regard to parking schemes but also significant safety upgrades such as the A26.

We need to find a way to engage properly, of course, with objectors and to listen to people, but we need to find a way to move forward, especially with residents' parking schemes. From 2007 until now is far too long to wait for some of these schemes to come live. Certainly, I will be doing all I can in the years ahead to ensure that we move forward with something. I would rather try something and have it not work, and go back to the drawing board and try again, than sit with nothing because we cannot get total agreement on the way forward.

Mr F McCann: I thank the Minister for his answers up to now. Will he give us details — I do not want him to pre-empt his statement later in the week — of any free residents' parking schemes that he may have in place?

Mr Hazzard: The policy for the introduction of residents' parking schemes was introduced in 2007 by the then Department for Regional Development. Since that time, despite considerable effort, no schemes have been implemented, due largely to a lack of local support from the residents concerned. Despite that, my Department is developing residents' parking schemes in Derry and Antrim as well as the two Belfast schemes in the College Park Avenue/Rugby Road area and lower Malone area. In line with the current budgetary constraints faced by all Departments, those schemes will generally have to be introduced on a full cost-recovery basis that will require a charge to be levied for a parking permit. The exception to that is any scheme lying either wholly or partially in a neighbourhood renewal area, which will be exempt from the permit charge. Where there is a charge levied, that has been set at £30 per resident's permit and is intended to cover the cost of the scheme design and the enforcement needed to stop others from outside the area parking there.

Mr Smith: Does the Minister agree with me that decisions relating to parking are best decided at a local level, and does he therefore support the devolution of those powers to councils?

Mr Hazzard: I see what he has done there. No, I think that, when it comes to parking especially, instead of having a patchwork approach to it by councils, central government still needs to take a strategic view of parking policies. When we take into account that on-street parking especially can have such an impact on traffic flows and congestion and that my Department is responsible for a strategic way forward on that, it is important that we have all the tools at our disposal. I certainly think that, working alongside local government, we can come up with policies that are fit for purpose.

Greenways

3. **Mr Murphy** asked the Minister for Infrastructure for an update on the development of greenways, including cross-border greenways. (AQO 628/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Last week, I published 'Exercise Explore Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways', which sets out my vision for:

"a region where people have ready access to a safe traffic-free environment for health, active travel and leisure."

The plan provides a framework to assist councils to develop their own local schemes as part of a greenway network for the North. It proposes a primary greenway network and a secondary greenway network that link together the entire region. It also includes cross-border links from Derry to County Donegal, Enniskillen to Sligo, Armagh to Clones and Newry to Dundalk. That is the first step towards creating a world-class greenway network that will be a welcome investment in rural development and active travel, providing for leisure and recreation, creating long-term employment and entrepreneurship opportunities and enhancing opportunities for tourism.

The strategic plan is not just about words and intentions. Alongside the plan, I announced 20 small grants to councils under the small grants programme for greenways, whereby I am providing a grant of up to £8,000 towards the cost of a greenway feasibility study. Providing support to councils in the development of greenways helps to increase safety for people using bikes, which is a key objective in the bicycle strategy. The use of active travel is also an aspiration in the Programme for Government, and better designed greenways are important in laying the foundations for longer, healthier, more active lives.

Mr Murphy: I thank the Minister for his response. He will know there has been widespread welcome for the initiative that he launched last week, particularly in my area, where the greenway alongside Carlingford Lough, which he will be familiar with, will connect with an bealach glas, which goes from Carlingford to Omeath, creating potential linkage right the way from Portadown to Carlingford. So, it is a very welcome scheme indeed. What total resource has the Minister set aside to deliver the project?

Mr Hazzard: The first element of funding is the 20 schemes that I have supported through a small grant of £8,000 towards the cost of a feasibility study along each route. So that is £160,000. Following receipt of the feasibility studies, up to four of the highest-quality proposals will be offered a grant of up to £25,000 to develop the detailed design further. Although that is only a small amount of funding, it will help councils to start the work of developing their local schemes within the framework for the strategic plan for greenways.

The strategic plan sets out a vision for the next 10 years, and there is a need to develop scheme plans over the next two or three years.

Funding for greenways is also available through the INTERREG programme, and I expect that a number of the cross-border projects may well be successful in securing financial support. For future years, I have some capital funding in my departmental plans, and I will seek to secure capital funding on top of that. There is no doubt that money is tight, but we must ask ourselves this question: can we afford not to invest in greenways? Although roads projects very often hog the limelight, greenways and other active-travel initiatives are truly transformative projects for communities, as well as personally for individuals.

2.15 pm

Mrs Overend: I thank the Minister for that information. In fact, it would be nice to see some greenways across the constituency of Mid Ulster. Will he consider supporting the extension of a cycle-hire scheme to outside Belfast to allow for a greater usage of greenways?

Mr Hazzard: Absolutely, if there is merit in doing so, and I have no doubt that there probably would be merit in doing so in a number of locations. One of the great strengths of greenways projects is that we connect all parts of the North to our large towns and cities. As I said, they can be truly transformative projects and community spaces for individuals and communities across the North. I do not have any particular plans for bicycle-hire schemes outside Belfast — they are an item for Belfast City Council — but I am more than happy to look at them if the Member wants to bring plans forward.

Mr Humphrey: The Minister will be aware that the Committee for Infrastructure recently visited the Connswater greenway, and I very much praise what has been an excellent example of joined-up government through input from local government, regional government and outside funders. Does he agree with me that further collaboration between councils, in particular through rural tourism partnerships in which councils come together, is a way forward in providing the economies of scale that can allow schemes perhaps not on the same scale as but along the lines of the Connswater greenway to be developed across Ulster for the benefit of our constituents?

Mr Hazzard: Absolutely. If I take my part of the world, south Down, two of the proposals would link the highly sought-after tourism area of Newcastle and the Mourne with the Connswater area. I have no doubt that the local council, working alongside Belfast City Council, will want to develop tourism potential along that route. That was the route used by the old Belfast and County Down Railway. It was a highly popular route for tourists to travel by train, not just to the north Down coastline but, as I said, into the Mourne area. I have no doubt that that type of project will be able to reawaken some of that tourism value in the area.

We only have to look at what is taking place in the west of Ireland with the Great Western greenway, which brings in tens of millions of euros to local communities that, until this point, were on their knees economically — small regional towns that are now coming back to life. There is no reason that we cannot do the same in the North.

Ulster Canal

4. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister for Infrastructure for an update on the Ulster canal. (AQO 629/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) has agreed a phased approach to the restoration of the Ulster canal. Phase one of the restoration of the south-western stretch of the Ulster canal from Lough Erne to Clones is under way and covers the 2.5 kilometres from Lough Erne to Castle Saunderson. That is expected to be completed in 2017. It is planned to issue a tender shortly for the next stage involving the construction of Derrykerrib bridge and the canal section. That will enable commencement of construction in spring 2017, with an estimated contract period of 18 months.

The Member will also be aware that, as part of 'A Fresh Start: The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan', the Executive and the Irish Government agreed to undertake a review to identify options for jointly developing future phases of the Ulster canal restoration project. In line with that, officials from my Department and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs are finalising a paper for consideration by Ministers at the NSMC plenary meeting to be held in Armagh on Friday. The paper will set out options for further development of the Ulster canal restoration project.

To inform the process, I, alongside Minister Humphreys, established the Ulster canal advisory forum to explore and examine ways in which to support and help advance the Ulster canal project; to examine possible funding options for the project, including the existing funding streams that are in place in public bodies and EU schemes that are open for applications for funding; and to consider the potential for private sector investment and patronage from philanthropic societies. The forum consists of representatives from local councils, sponsor Departments and Waterways Ireland. Interested stakeholders from other organisations will be invited to attend future meetings of the forum as appropriate.

The inaugural meeting, which Minister Humphreys and I chaired, was held on 23 September.

Mr Boylan: I thank the Minister for his answer. To follow on from that, the Minister mentioned the advisory forum. Will he indicate who the stakeholders are on that forum or who he intends to invite on to it?

Mr Hazzard: The following stakeholders are represented on the Ulster canal advisory forum: both sponsor Departments; Monaghan County Council; Fermanagh and Omagh District Council; Cavan County Council; and Waterways Ireland. Each council will be represented by two elected representatives and one official. Interested stakeholders from other organisations will be invited to attend meetings of the forum as appropriate. Those include but are not, of course, confined to Fáilte Ireland; NI Tourist Board; the Strategic Investment Board; the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government; SEUPB; and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council.

Mr McPhillips: Will the Minister give us an update on the total spend to date in and around the Derrykerrib/ Newtownbutler area on the project?

Mr Hazzard: I am sorry; I do not have those details in front of me, but I will correspond with the Member.

Mrs Palmer: I also thank the Minister for his answers thus far. Will the Minister give an assessment of the impact a reopened Ulster canal would have on income derived from tourism to the area in comparison with the regeneration and maintenance costs?

Mr Hazzard: Such analysis will be very much part of any business case and the economic impact of such works going forward, but there is no doubt — this is the case especially when you speak to Waterways Ireland and look at the development of blueways in particular, as well as our greenway potential, right across the island of Ireland — that there is huge potential in the restoration of the Ulster canal. That is why we have given it the focus we have. We touched on this with the greenways as well, but,

very often, the old canal lines and our old railway lines are sleeping relics of the past. I use that phrase all the time. Bringing them alive will have a massive impact on local communities, especially many in those areas that have been devastated by the economic recession. It is the likes of tourism that can breathe new life into them. I think it will have a hugely positive effect on local communities. If you take a town like Clones, which was once a bustling market town that people came to from all corners, you can see that there is great potential for the Ulster canal to breathe new life into it.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I remind Members wishing to ask a supplementary question to keep rising in their places.

Schools: Road Safety

5. **Mr Beattie** asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the measures he intends to take to safeguard children during term time in relation to safety on roads adjacent to schools. (AQO 630/16-21)

10. **Ms Ní Chuilín** asked the Minister for Infrastructure how he is improving road safety near primary schools. (AQO 635/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will answer questions 5 and 10 together. My Department has a statutory duty to promote and improve road safety and it does that through a wide range of rolling road safety educational activities and engineering initiatives. Children and young people are amongst the most vulnerable groups using our roads and, as such, must be taught how to use our roads safely in the vicinity of schools and beyond in the wider community.

Given that over 95% of road traffic collisions where someone is killed or seriously injured are due to human error, my Department challenges driver behaviour through the road safety campaigns, reminding drivers of their responsibility to themselves and other road users. Various protective engineering interventions have also been developed over the years through a range of initiatives that have culminated in the production of Transport NI's policy and procedure guide that traffic engineers can draw from when assessing safety at individual schools. Those measures include provision of enhanced signing and road markings; central islands; lay-bys; and traffic calming features such as road humps. The enhanced signing largely incorporates flashing lights programmed to operate during term times at school opening and closing times.

A more recent innovation has been the development of part-time 20 mph speed limits at schools, especially at schools on roads where the national speed limit applies. The speed limit at those schools is reduced to 20 mph at school opening and closing times during term times. I am particularly keen on this approach. However, the initial schemes have been expensive to provide. I have, therefore, asked my officials to consider refinements of the measure and to seek a more cost-effective approach that would facilitate an increased provision of a 20 mph limit.

I remain committed to continuing to work towards reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads, especially amongst vulnerable road users such as schoolchildren. I recognise the continuing challenges of preventing road deaths and serious injuries, and, as such, my Department

will continue to address the issues using all practicable methods.

Mr Beattie: I thank the Minister for a very clear and full answer. Many Members are concerned about our children outside of schools. In my constituency, we have a rural school with a 40 mph speed limit outside in a dangerous area, and outside our urban schools, parking causes near gridlock. Will the Minister consider promoting a society mindset change by creating a 20 mph speed limit outside all our schools as standard and making clearways in front of our schools at the start and end of the school day?

Mr Hazzard: I thank the Member for his comments, not just his question. I will certainly continue to do all that I can to promote the message that we must take care around our schools. On having a 20 mph zone around urban schools, traffic calming is very often in place in urban settings, and, because of congestion also, traffic speeds do tend to be quite low around urban schools. We have seen to date that, particularly on rural roads where the national speed limit applies, there is a danger. Of course, I have to operate within the legislation. It is not enough just to say this; I have to set down a process that fits in with the law. It is not enough just to have a speed limit if there is no legislative weight behind it. We have to find a way that does both. I have absolutely no problem championing the message, and I and my Department take any opportunity to say to people, "Take care around schools. Be aware that there are vulnerable people accessing that". There is a responsibility on all of us. Where death or serious injury is caused by a road traffic collision, 95% of the time it is because of human error. It is up to us to make the change.

Ms Ní Chuilín: On a similar theme, a Aire, can you give us a brief outline of some of the initiatives on road safety that are under way in schools?

Mr Hazzard: My Department provides a range of resources and schemes to be used by teachers to enable them to improve and embed road safety behaviours in children and young people. Among the others, these initiatives include the road safety teaching-aid calendar, a copy of which hangs on the wall of every classroom and nursery in the North. The enhanced cycling proficiency scheme is delivered in schools and, to date this year, approximately 320 schools and 7,500 children have been trained. The junior road safety officer scheme continues to grow in popularity, with more schools registering to join the scheme. Education packs are available in both hard copy and electronic version on the teachers' ICT network, C2K. These recent initiatives have been well received and, for the most part, early indications show a positive response.

Mr Dunne: Does the Minister recognise that, in the divisional offices, there are lists of proposed remedial works outside our schools that have sat and moved nowhere for many years? Does he now recognise that funding needs to be a priority to move forward these schemes?

Mr Hazzard: To be frank, there are lists in all of our divisions of particular works. Divisions prioritise on a number of criteria, prime among which will of course be road safety. The pot of money is only so much. I am aware of some divisions where there are of dozens of schemes that, if money allowed, we could roll out. We have to continue to assess and to spend our money appropriately, but there can be no doubt, certainly in my time in the years

ahead, that road safety has to be paramount. It certainly has to be prioritised to be top of the list.

Mr Mullan: Minister, I am aware that, in my constituency, there are many families who live just outside the three-mile threshold for free bus passes and, because of that, they have to walk across very dangerous roads to get to school. Will you consider looking at the criteria again in that regard?

Mr Hazzard: Free school bus passes certainly do not fall within my remit.

Mr Lyttle: What level of investment will the Minister be making in the Safe Routes to Schools programme? Will he introduce level 2 on-road cycle training for all P6 and P7 pupils in Northern Ireland to encourage active travel choices to school?

2.30 pm

Mr Hazzard: I will look at both in the time ahead. As we enter this budgetary period, it is probably not right for me to put a figure on the amount of money that I will spend. Safer routes to school and improved road safety around schools, especially our primary schools, will be very much part of my considerations. I have believed in higher proficiency for cyclists for a long time, and I will touch on it with the Education Minister in due course. If we can build that into a child's learning at an early stage, even if the child does not go on to be a cyclist on the road, they will, when they are driving, have a better awareness of all road users. It is something that we can build into the school curriculum at an early stage.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I call Mr Jim Allister for a quick supplementary followed by an equally quick answer.

Mr Allister: Can the Minister expand on what he was suggesting about the 20 mph limit? Is he minded to make that easier to attain? There are many rural schools — I was thinking recently of the Diamond Primary School near Cullybackey — where that is an issue, yet there seems to be a funding blockage.

Mr Hazzard: Yes, that is exactly what I am saying. I want the national speed limit to apply especially for primary schools in a rural setting. I want to make it easier to achieve the 20 mph status on rural roads. I want to do it in such a way that the speed restriction carries legal weight and is not simply a suggestion but a requirement for the driver to drive at that speed at school opening and closing times.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): That ends the period for listed questions. We now move to 15 minutes of topical questions.

Fuel Duty Rebate: Translink NI

T1. **Mr McGrath** asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he plans to restore the fuel duty rebate for Translink NI, which is the only public transport operator in the UK that does not receive such a rebate. (AQT 456/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As I mentioned in response to a previous question, it would be inappropriate, ahead of the Budget process over the next number of weeks and months, to delve into policies such as that. However, it is something

that I have discussed with Translink officials and the union in recent weeks, and it will be part of discussions.

Mr McGrath: The Minister will be aware that some of the ways to offset Translink's budget deficit may be to stop senior smart passes, cut bus services or raise fares. Would it cause the Minister concern if that happened?

Mr Hazzard: There is no doubt that all my arm's-length bodies are coming under increasing pressure. When we look at the effects of Tory austerity over the last five years or more and listen to the words coming out of the Tory conference and the mood music from London, we know that we face another decade of austerity. That will put huge pressure on our budgets, especially on the resource side. Whether it is Translink, NI Water or Transport NI, there are huge pressures there; we know that. We know that, in Transport NI, we have a structural maintenance backlog of £1 billion over the last number of years. We have to address that, but I have to be sure to do it in such a way that I do not rob Peter to pay Paul and that I can balance my resource budget right across and deliver the services that we all need in our society. We certainly do not want to leave people in rural areas, many of whom already suffer from a sense of isolation, more isolated.

Drinking Water

T2. **Mr E McCann** asked the Minister for Infrastructure how he squares the answer he gave earlier to Ms Sinéad Bradley about the adequacy of funding for Northern Ireland Water with the evidence given last week by the Northern Ireland Water CEO, Sarah Venning, to the Infrastructure Committee when she said that, without significantly increased funding, Northern Ireland Water is unable to guarantee the future quality or adequacy of drinking water. (AQT 457/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I thank the Member for his comments. I will check Hansard for this, but I do not think that I have ever uttered the phrase that the sums are adequate. I outlined the hundreds of millions of pounds that NI Water is investing in some of these capital works, and, while that is to be welcomed, we need to see much more investment. However, as per my answer to the previous question, our budgets are coming under huge pressure from Tory austerity in London. We know the impact of tens of millions of pounds being taken out of the block grant. Those reductions have had to come from somewhere. I want to give as much money as I can to organisations such as NI Water. We rely on good water and good waste-water services, and we need to maintain them.

Mr E McCann: In light of that, Minister, I will send you the Hansard report of the exchanges between Ms Venning and me. I will underline, if you allow me to, the point at which she agrees with me that without significantly increasing funding she cannot guarantee the quality of drinking water, the continuation of the supply or the management of waste water. Are you not being a wee bit complacent here, Minister?

Mr Hazzard: I am sure that Ms Venning would love to have plenty more money. I wish I had more money to give to Ms Venning, but, unfortunately, that is not the situation we are in. As I said, I will continue to work with NI Water and the regulator so that we get as much resource as we can afford to NI Water to deliver the service we have. NI Water ranks comparably with the vast majority of water providers

across Europe and does an outstanding job. In fact, the improvement in NI Water over the last number of years has been a huge success, and we should put that on record.

Parkgate Quarry

T3. **Mr Girvan** asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he has had an opportunity to look at the significant vehicular impact that the proposed quarry development on the Connor Road in Parkgate village will have, given that, according to the application, hundreds of HGVs will access the site on a daily basis. (AQT 458/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I have not had an opportunity to look at that. I have no doubt that the planners will take all those circumstances and likelihoods into account when making a ruling, as they do with any planning application. The Member is right: much as we want to promote and encourage growth, especially in rural areas, we need to ensure that towns and villages are not affected by a mass increase in industrial traffic. I am sure that this is something that the planning process will take full account of.

Mr Girvan: I thank the Minister for his answer. The application is not being dealt with at a local level; it is being dealt with at departmental level. As a consequence, I would like to know the Minister's view on the inclusion of what are termed "passing bays" on third-party land that the applicant may not have control over. Is it proper to do that in a major application?

Mr Hazzard: It would probably be more appropriate for the Member and me to correspond on the issue so as to not prejudice any final decision that I and my Department make on the application.

Rural Roads Initiative

T4. **Mr Milne** asked the Minister for Infrastructure for an update on the rural roads initiative. (AQT 459/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As the Member is aware, following the additional capital funding prioritised by the Executive for structural maintenance as part of June monitoring, I listened to concerns about the deterioration in rural roads and earmarked £10 million for the resurfacing of rural roads across the North. The rural roads initiative is a significant investment and is helping to address the rural roads in the worst condition, thereby helping to reduce a backlog of rural road resurfacing and repairs. The improvements target many short lengths of rural road in particularly poor condition, and it is estimated that around 1,000 locations on the rural road network will be improved. Transport NI divisions have finalised their programmes, with work well under way in most areas. As of the end of October, approximately 400 schemes had been completed across all divisions.

Mr Milne: Mo bhuíochas fosta leis an Aire. Thank you, Minister. Does the Minister agree that maintaining rural roads is as important as maintaining the main network?

Mr Hazzard: Absolutely. Maintaining the structural integrity of the entire road network is essential for social and economic well-being across the North and is a high priority for my Department. In this difficult financial period, it is, of course, necessary to prioritise resources, but for too long rural communities have dropped down the priority list. The rural roads initiative goes some way to addressing that imbalance and dealing with the maintenance backlogs that

have developed over recent times. Rural constituencies across the North will soon see the benefits. The initiative will not, of course, solve all the problems on our roads, but it is a very positive measure for addressing a clear need in our rural communities.

Chinese Delegation: Meeting

T5. **Mr McAleer** asked the Minister for Infrastructure to update the House on his meeting last week with a high-level delegation from China. (AQT 460/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: We had visitors from the China Investment Corporation — Chairman Ding and his team — which followed on the back of my visit to China, where, in Beijing, I had the pleasure of meeting President Tu of that investment agency. We met the delegation with the deputy First Minister and Invest NI, among other people. I am delighted to say that it was very positive. The Executive have taken great steps in recent years to develop links with China. To continue to develop them in the years ahead will be very important, especially on the back of the opening of a consulate in Belfast and an Executive office in Beijing. It is important to do that. To date, the message from the Chinese has been very positive. We touched on not just infrastructure projects but the great desire in China to trade. The Chinese see the quality of our organic and agri-food businesses in the North. It was a very positive engagement, which I hope will continue far into the future.

Mr McAleer: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he envisage that there will be further contact with the Chinese regarding investment?

Mr Hazzard: As Minister for Infrastructure, I intend to take every opportunity to discuss that with colleagues from everywhere and anywhere who want to look at what we do. It is not just about investment but about learning from experiences. Some of the agencies that we spoke to in China recently wanted to learn about car parking and traffic congestion. We were keen to learn about active travel initiatives. There is great positivity. The First and deputy First Ministers will travel to China next month, and Michelle McIlveen, the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, has just returned. As I said, China is fast becoming a global superpower, and it has been for some time. It would be remiss of us as Ministers not to engage with such a power.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): Question 6 has been withdrawn.

Autumn Statement: Funding

T7. **Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he is anticipating any funding from the Chancellor's autumn statement. (AQT 462/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: We are all probably anticipating a bit of funding from the Chancellor's autumn statement. As the Member indicates, there has been much speculation that some infrastructure stimulus will be announced. However, any notion or commentary on such an idea would be pure speculation at this stage.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Aire. Thanks very much, Minister. Has your Department or anyone acting on its behalf engaged with the Chancellor's office with a view to anticipating or putting together a request for such funding?

Mr Hazzard: As the Member is probably well aware, the Department continually engages with Administrations right across the devolved areas and with the Treasury, certainly on any issues coming out of Brexit. My Brexit unit in the Department is continually engaged with officials in London, and that will continue. As we move forward from the statement to our own budgetary process, it is important that we get as much money as we possibly can into my budget lines because we know that infrastructure is vital in growing a regionally balanced economy.

Rural Bus Routes

T8. **Mr Robinson** asked the Minister for Infrastructure what action his Department is taking to secure rural bus routes. (AQT 463/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Member refers to rural bus routes and the Department's relationship with Translink. I have had regular engagements with Chris Conway, the chief executive of Translink, since coming into post. As we enter into the budgetary process, those engagements will, obviously, increase as we look to set a budget line for Translink that can sustain bus routes, not just in urban areas. I am aware that, in recent times, there have been big announcements relating to the Belfast transport hub and rapid transit for Belfast city centre, but it is important that our rural services right across the North are protected and that we do all that we can to get vital, adequate funding into Translink to deliver them.

Mr Robinson: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he agree that rural bus routes help to maximise social inclusion where individuals do not have access to their own vehicles?

Mr Hazzard: Yes, absolutely, that is what public transport is all about. It is very important that we continue to see an increase in the number of people who take the opportunity to use public transport. Our Metro service is very popular in Belfast, and our Goldliner service is very popular with commuters, but we could probably do more with our Ulsterbus rural services. I think we need to look at ways to enhance and protect the services on offer and try to get as many people as we can using them.

2.45 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I call Mr Chris Lyttle for a quick question and an even quicker answer, with probably no supplementary.

York Street Interchange: Funding

T9. **Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister for Infrastructure to clarify the funding position for the York Street interchange project. (AQT 464/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Again, without stepping over the embargo on the ministerial statement tomorrow, I reiterate what I have said all along about the York Street interchange. It is strategically a very important project. It is a project I want to be able to deliver. I took the decision to lengthen the procurement period so that I can take all available advice.

We have seen that the landscape, even with Brexit, has changed, with High Court rulings since that decision was taken. I am hoping the Member will pay close attention to the ministerial statement tomorrow.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): Thank you. Time is up.

Justice

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I advise the House that questions 5, 9 and 11 have been withdrawn.

HIU Family Reports: Appeals

1. **Mr Maskey** asked the Minister of Justice what provision she plans to make available to people who wish to exercise their right to appeal Historical Investigation Unit family reports. (AQO 641/16-21)

Ms Sugden (The Minister of Justice): As Members will know, the Stormont House Agreement was an agreement between the Northern Ireland Executive and the British and Irish Governments. Since coming to office, I have been in discussion with my Executive colleagues and the United Kingdom Government to play my part in the delivery of the justice elements of that agreement.

Political discussions continue between Executive parties and the Secretary of State to finalise the outstanding policy issues. One of the issues under discussion is a proposed appeals mechanism on family reports. As that mechanism concerns material that would engage national security, the Secretary of State has been leading on its inclusion in a Bill to establish the Stormont House Agreement institutions for dealing with the past. I understand that the Secretary of State intends to consult before a Bill is introduced in Parliament. That should provide a vehicle for wider discussion, suitably informed by the Bill.

Mr Maskey: I thank the Minister for her response. Does she envisage that such a provision would be made on a statutory basis for those families that might seek to appeal those decisions?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. Again, when the Secretary of State moves to publish his Bill for consultation, there will be an opportunity to put those views forward. Any appeals mechanism would, I imagine, happen on a statutory footing.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the Minister. She will be aware that not all family members think the same way about justice and truth recovery. How can she ensure that family members who do not want information are not traumatised by having it forced upon them by siblings?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his question. He raises a number of points concerning the difficulties with addressing legacy issues. When we move towards setting up the Historical Investigations Unit, these are issues that we will definitely need to consider. I imagine that the director of the HIU will take them into account when deciding what cases to take forward.

Mr Bell: Does the Minister agree with me that most objective academic reports — those that I have read — suggest that 90% of all the murder during what was called the Troubles was carried out by non-state actors, more accurately termed terrorists? How can her Department ensure that we have an historical investigation into 90% of the terrorist murders and not investigations into only the 10% that involved any aspect of the state, which seems to be the case?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. I think that, in dealing with and tackling legacy deaths during our troubled period, we need to have a consistent approach. I would be keen to see the HIU move forward along with the legacy inquests. A number of these are outstanding. I believe the approach we have to legacy inquests needs to put victims at its heart.

I am keen to see this progressed as soon as possible, because that responsibility is still there. We will continue with the legacy inquests, but, as I have reiterated in the House time and time again, whether we do that in five years or 25 years, it is a matter of trying to progress this as soon as possible and get agreement on that. The responsibility for the HIU falls to the PSNI and the other justice agencies. As a Department and, indeed, as a Northern Ireland Executive, we are not resourced to do that. We need to find agreement on this as soon as possible, and I am working with my Executive colleagues, along with the Secretary of State and the Northern Ireland Office, to see if we can do that.

Mr Attwood: Given that your Department leads in the conversation with the NIO about the HIU, can you confirm to the House that you have seen the draft legislation? Are you or are you not making representations to London to ensure that all collusion cases can be investigated by the HIU, rather than what was in the draft last year, when fewer rather than more cases were to be investigated by the HIU? Are you personally making that representation?

Ms Sugden: I can confirm that I am working alongside the NIO to progress this as soon as possible. The Secretary of State has said publicly that he will move towards the draft consultation phase; indeed, I imagine that, during the process, there will be an opportunity to address some of the issues that the Member has raised.

Mr Lyttle: Can I ask the Justice Minister for her timescale for the establishment of the Historical Investigations Unit?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his question. I do not have a timescale for that until we can reach political agreement. Yes, those institutions fall under my remit. However, this requires the agreement of the Northern Ireland Executive alongside the Northern Ireland Office. Again, I maintain that I hope that this will happen, and I am confident that it will, because, either way, we are addressing these issues and, in order to address our past, we need to do it as soon as possible.

Hydebank Wood Secure College: Drugs

2. **Mr McGuigan** asked the Minister of Justice how her Department is addressing the availability of drugs in Hydebank Wood Secure College. (AQO 642/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Northern Ireland Prison Service has a zero tolerance approach to all drug misuse, both illicit and prescription, and alcohol misuse in prisons. Hydebank Wood College's drug and alcohol policy outlines four core tenets that have been designed to tackle the issues related to alcohol or drug misuse in the college. Number one is supply reduction, which is the steps taken to interfere with the supply of drugs coming into the college, including searching and the use of passive detection dogs; the use of CCTV; drug testing; closed visits where intelligence or evidence suggests attempts to obtain illicit substances through visits; banning of visitors found trying

to smuggle illicit substances into the college; training and drug awareness sessions for students; and joint initiatives with the PSNI. Number two, demand reduction, is about support services provided to men and women in Hydebank Wood by Start360. Number three, harm minimisation, is about comprehensive screening on committal by healthcare staff, detoxification, maintenance therapy and referral to the clinical addictions team and Start360. Number four, throughcare, is about pre-release planning with Start360 and referral to AD:EPT2. As a measure of the steps being taken to detect and deter the introduction of unauthorised articles into Hydebank Wood, there are currently two women in Hydebank Wood College sentenced to a period of custody for conveying a list-A article into or out of a prison.

Mr McGuigan: I thank the Minister for her answer. Following on from that, given that the availability of drugs has led to bullying and victimisation, what support is available for those in Ash House who suffer because of that?

Ms Sugden: One of the challenges with drug and alcohol misuse in prisons is that those things almost become a currency, and that leads to issues such as you have described, where we have seen the victimisation and bullying of students in Hydebank Wood. One of the initiatives that Hydebank has put forward is about challenging antisocial behaviour, and there is an opportunity there to encourage those who are being victimised to come forward to prison officers. It also enables prison officers to be trained in this type of prisoner behaviour to see if we can challenge it.

The difficulty with drug and alcohol misuse in prisons is that it is almost a microcosm of what happens in wider society. Regrettably, drug and alcohol misuse is on the increase, and stopping that manifesting itself in prison will remain a challenge. We need to remain vigilant. I outlined in my initial answer a number of the measures that we intend to use. It is something that we need to keep on top of, because prisoners will find other ways. We will keep a close eye on this, because we recognise the difficulties that it presents.

Mr McGrath: Following his reports on the deaths of Geoffrey Ellison, Patrick Kelly, Sean Lynch and Mr I, all of which have been published in recent months, has the Minister met the Prisoner Ombudsman to discuss the recommendations? Has she met the chief inspector of Criminal Justice Inspection following its report of 27 October?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his question. I have met the Prisoner Ombudsman in the past; indeed, prior to the reports being published, he sends me a copy so that I can issue them for publication. I am meeting Criminal Justice Inspection tomorrow, and we discuss a number of these issues. I put it on record that the reports, whilst highlighting some of the challenges that we face in prisons, are useful because they put forward recommendations. In particular, there were recommendations on substance misuse in the most recent Criminal Justice Inspection report that we, along with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, are working on to see how we can implement some of them.

Mr Robinson: Does the Minister have a figure for drug offences committed inside HMP Magilligan?

Ms Sugden: I do not have the figures to hand, but I reiterate my earlier point: drug and alcohol misuse in

prisons is a concentrated reflection of what happens outside. We need a wider concept of how drugs find their way into prison. As I said in response to Mr McGuigan's initial question, we have measures in place, but we are reviewing our drug and alcohol misuse policy to see whether there are better ways of mitigating that type of behaviour.

Mr Beggs: The problem of violence and drugs in English prisons has been highlighted recently; indeed, there was an announcement of 2,500 additional officers. Given that the problem also exists in Northern Ireland, whether in Hydebank Wood Secure College or in other prisons, are there plans to employ additional prison officers and to support staff members in the difficult task that they have to carry out?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his question. In addition to looking at the number of officers working in our prisons, we need to take a wider look at how to strengthen the training of the prison officers currently in position on that type of activity. It is something that I am keen to look at. I am keen to support prison officers in their role, with the aim of enabling them to mitigate the behaviour. It is something that we are always mindful of. We look across the water at how prisons operate in Great Britain. However, it needs to be noted that, in Northern Ireland, we work in exceptional circumstances and there are difficult challenges presented by the legacy of the past. As I said, moving forward, I am keen to explore this when the new director general is in position.

Hydebank Wood Secure College

3. **Mr Lynch** asked the Minister of Justice what she is doing to address the mental health issues in Hydebank Wood Secure College, following the publication on 27 October 2016 of the Criminal Justice Inspection 'Report on an unannounced inspection of Hydebank Wood Secure College'. (AQO 643/16-21)

Ms Sugden: My officials in the Northern Ireland Prison Service work closely with staff in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to facilitate appointments and treatment for students with mental health issues. Following the inspection, action plans have been compiled, and work is due to begin shortly to implement the recommendations. Work will take place between the Prison Service and the trust to ensure that the healthcare recommendations are taken forward. The occupational health team at Hydebank Wood has developed new, creative initiatives, including a student/staff choir, health promotion days and a sensory garden. Hydebank Wood is the first custodial setting in the United Kingdom to have a sensory garden, which will be used to help those with mental health issues.

3.00 pm

Mr Lynch: Thank you for that answer and your answers to date, Minister. When I was on the previous Justice Committee, I visited the prisons on a number of occasions and saw prisoners with vulnerabilities and mental health issues. Can the Minister outline what steps her Department is taking to ensure that there are sufficient alternatives for those types of prisoners?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his question. From a number of responses that I have given around the issue of mental health in prisons, the Member will be aware that I have been working with the Health Minister in respect

of tackling this particular issue. Ultimately, mental health issues in prison are a matter for the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. However, I am keen, as I said, to work with the Health Minister to see whether we can find a way to move forward in respect of alternatives to custody. Currently, those decisions would be taken by the South Eastern Trust, but I think that we need to find a new way of moving forward. Indeed, on a number of initiatives, I am keen to introduce an approach of problem-solving justice to perhaps, at the point of sentencing, look to see whether there are more appropriate forms of sentencing for offenders who present with particular difficulties. I have put on record before that I am also keen to look at this in respect of mental health.

Mr Butler: Is the Minister satisfied that she has sufficient funding resource in place to seriously address the issue of prisoners who are affected by poor mental health and well-being?

Ms Sugden: I am not sure that any Minister would admit to having enough funding resource to address this particular issue. I will have to work with the budget with which I have been presented. With mental health, there are other approaches that we could potentially take. I have said on record time and time again that we need to perhaps strengthen the skill set of prison officers with regard to how they identify mental health issues amongst the people in their care and how we can better facilitate prisoners to develop through their time in prison. We need to take a number of initiatives. It is heartening that we are focusing on mental health. Again, I have said in the House before that I believe that mental health is one of the lasting legacies of the Troubles. Indeed, we are starting to see that. In particular, I see it within my prisons.

Lord Morrow: Minister, it has been said numerous times in the House that mental health problems are very prevalent within prisons. If that is the case, can you give any indication to the House how prevalent it is and what you are doing to tackle that particular issue in the future? Do you believe that there are many prisoners in prison who should not be there?

Ms Sugden: A significant number of the prison population present with mental health issues; that has been demonstrated. I do not have the exact figure to mind, but it is considerable. Yes, I think that we do need to look at why we put these people into institutions, because I am not quite sure that they are the best place for them. However, as I said in my response to Mr Lynch, it is something that I will need to work on alongside the Health Minister because ultimately mental health, whether inside or outside prison, is the responsibility of the Health Minister. However, because there are such a significant number of such people in prisons, it is something that I am keen to take forward. As I have said time and time again in the past, these issues encourage people to offend. Ultimately, I want to ensure that it does not happen again. We need to look at mental health provision in prisons and perhaps even at whether they should find themselves in that environment.

Ms Bradshaw: I am very heartened by the tone of your answers to these particular questions, Minister. Have you had any conversations with the Probation Board on non-custodial sentences? I know that it is very keen to see you go down this line as well.

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for her question. Indeed, I have had a number of conversations with the Probation Board. It will be a key stakeholder in helping prisoners with mental health issues, particularly when they come out of prison. One of my difficulties around mental health is that we need to take a before-, during- and after-custody approach with people who present with these particular issues, because if we can ideally get to a situation where we have stabilised any issues whilst they are in our care, the difficulty is whether, when they come out of prison, that support is maintained. Hopefully, that will mean that they do not offend again. That is where the Probation Board comes in, as well as the various health trusts that the prisoners will go back to.

Prison Service: Pay Award

4. **Mr Beattie** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on her Department's negotiations with the Northern Ireland Prison Service on the annual pay award. (AQO 644/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I am keen to reach an agreement at the earliest opportunity on a 2016 pay award for Northern Ireland Prison Service operational staff. Given his role in respect of the Northern Ireland Civil Service pay policy, I have been in contact with the Finance Minister on a number of occasions, most recently at the end of last week. At the request of the respective staff associations, some staff have received payments in respect of contractual entitlements due, which is a one-step progression for qualifying staff in their August 2016 pay. Whilst recognising public pay policy constraints, I must also have regard to the different environment and challenges that prison-grade staff are working in and facing.

Mr Beattie: As ever, I thank the Minister for her answer. Of course, I knew the answer because I asked a question two weeks ago, and, since then, we have had prison officers removing their labour for 90 minutes, a death in custody and an ombudsman report on another death in custody. Today, we have prison officers balloting for industrial action.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I ask the Member to move to a question.

Mr Beattie: Will the Minister assure the Assembly that the Northern Ireland Prison Service and prison reform are not in free fall due to poor management and low morale?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his questions and his consistent focus on the issue. I am keen to ensure that prison officers are supported in the work that they do. I have reiterated that time and again in the House. I hope that my negotiations with the Finance Minister on how we can move forward on a pay policy will come to a conclusion. We expect to hear news of that after we have had our negotiations with the Prison Officers' Association and the Prison Governors Association. There is work to be done in looking after our prison staff. I hope to announce a number of initiatives that may do that. I assure the Member that I very much have the prison officers and the work that they do at the heart of things moving forward. It is something that I am keen to keep pressing on.

Mr Poots: Does the Minister recognise that she took over a Prison Service where the staff have been denigrated and

demoralised, and that, consequently, there is an urgency about addressing the issue to raise staff morale?

Ms Sugden: Indeed there is an urgency to address this issue. I have been treating it as a matter of urgency. As I said, my most recent conversations with the Finance Minister took place at the end of last week. I hope to see those coming to a conclusion very soon.

Mr Mullan: Minister, do you support the principle and the implementation of pay recovery for staff across your Department and justice agencies following years of austerity and pay restraint? Will the recovery commence in this financial year?

Ms Sugden: We need to be mindful that we still operate in challenging times, particularly in relation to budgets and public pay policy. We need to work within the guidelines. It is a valid point. I am doing all I can to ensure that our prison officers in particular are supported. Their role is a challenging one. Enabling them to move forward has to be about more than just pay rises; there needs to be support, training and development. It is something that I am keen to look at. Everything else will follow from it. Our prisoners will be better looked after as a result. I am taking an all-encompassing approach. Regrettably, it will not happen overnight, but it is something that I am working towards.

Mr Ford: Has the Minister been given any indication by the Minister of Finance that Prison Service grades will be exempt from normal Civil Service pay policy this year?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his question. I met the Finance Minister at the end of last week. Whilst negotiations are ongoing with the various associations linked to the Prison Service, it would be inappropriate for me to suggest what the outcome might be, but I am hopeful that, for the pay policy for the Prison Service, we will have a conclusion very soon.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): Question 5 has been withdrawn. I call Emma Little Pengelly.

Organised Crime

6. **Mrs Little Pengelly** asked the Minister of Justice what measures her Department is taking to address organised crime. (AQO 646/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF), which I chair, sets priorities to develop strategies and agreed actions to confront organised crime in Northern Ireland in all its guises. The Organised Crime Task Force undertakes regular threat assessments to identify known and emerging trends and threats and looks at how they may be tackled.

Since the Fresh Start Agreement, we also have the joint agency task force, and, unlike the OCTF, the new task force is operational. It is led jointly by senior officers from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, an Garda Síochána, the Revenue Commissioners and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. A number of other organisations, including the National Crime Agency (NCA) and the Irish Criminal Assets Bureau are also involved in this operational activity. Its first months of operation have seen many operations targeting the initial priority areas of rural crime, child sexual exploitation, financial crime, illicit drugs, excise fraud and human trafficking, and these have led to a number of arrests with prosecutions being taken forward.

There is a clear focus in the Fresh Start Agreement and the subsequent Executive action plan on tackling organised crime and criminality linked to paramilitary groups, and as part of the implementation of the action plan, the PSNI has set up a dedicated investigative capacity to focus specifically on those issues. In the action plan, we have made commitments to promote a stand against criminality and to promote a culture of lawfulness, including reporting such activity to the police. As part of our work to implement a Fresh Start, I will also be launching a public campaign before Christmas to raise awareness of the harm caused by organised crime and to encourage the public to support a lawful society and report information to the police. My Department is also reviewing the legislative framework with a view to consulting on proposals for new organised crime offences in early 2017.

Mrs Little Pengelly: I thank the Minister and welcome progress on this matter. Will the Minister clarify, in the context that organised crime here is often allegedly linked to paramilitary organisations, that the action plan under the Fresh Start commitment to tackle paramilitarism and organised crime is undergoing a process of co-design and consultation as recommended by the panel report and will she confirm that no plan has been rejected or money refused by Her Majesty's Government in relation to that?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for her questions. I can confirm all three. It is not the case that the Northern Ireland Office or the Secretary of State have refused any money. Indeed, they sit on our programme board and are working with us on when we want to draw this money down. We will not draw down money for the sake of the optics; we will draw it down for the sake of using it in the most effective and efficient way, and that has been the process to date. To clear up the confusion around the money that has been available from Her Majesty's Treasury: we have not drawn down money, and it is not the case that they have not given it to us.

Mr Boylan: I realise that the Minister has given us her action plan, but will she update the House on the discussions that she has had with the Irish Minister of Justice in tackling cross-border crime?

Ms Sugden: As the House is aware, I have a formal arrangement with the Tánaiste and Justice Minister, Frances Fitzgerald, in the form of an inter-governmental agreement. We met most recently in September to discuss a number of initiatives, particularly the joint agency task force and the work of the Organised Crime Task Force in respect of strategy and information-sharing. I will meet the Tánaiste again at the end of this month to go over similar issues. I have found the meetings very useful because we have shared interests in some of the issues that we both face. It is reflective of the new joint agency task force that came out of the Fresh Start Agreement, in that it was work that was almost happening anyway; however, this has put it on a formal footing. Indeed, we have seen some successes from that, so there is a real pragmatic opportunity in tackling types of organised crime because of the border arrangements. Again, my meetings with the Tánaiste, Frances Fitzgerald, have been very positive in how we do this moving forward.

Mr McCrossan: Minister, is it the case that no Fresh Start moneys will be allocated to the NCA to tackle organised crime in this financial year?

Ms Sugden: No, it is not the case. The NCA has not put a bid in for Fresh Start moneys since the money became available. Indeed, we expect a bid from the NCA to be forthcoming. When that happens, the Department and the Executive will consider that.

3.15 pm

Mr Allister: If the Minister heard this morning's BBC interview by Kevin Magee with a UDA member, she will be in no doubt as to the iron grip that these hideous organisations have on the community. Does she accept that the Executive's job of breaking that grip is made more difficult by pandering to those organisations? Does she accept that siphoning money to pay chief executives of other organisations, to individuals who are actually key paramilitaries or community workers, compounds the supposed attempt to deal with these organisations?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his question. I accept that tackling paramilitaries within communities will be really difficult due to the grip that they have on those communities. I spoke about this in my response to the debate on paramilitaries in the Assembly last week, and one of the challenges is about paramilitarism versus criminality. Indeed, the testament that we heard on the news this morning goes to show how challenging it is.

We need to be quite honest in how we approach it, and we should enable those who want to move away from this type of crime to do so. These people are a credit. It is not the case that we are letting anyone move forward on these initiatives, but it is something that we need to be really honest about with our local communities. It is going to be challenging and difficult and is not something that will happen overnight. The action plan that the Executive have published, and how we move forward on that, will go some way in tackling the criminality of these types of activity.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): That ends the period for listed questions. We will now move on to 15 minutes of topical questions.

Maghaberry Prison

T1. **Mr McKee** asked the Minister of Justice, assuming that the First Minister discussed with her the meeting that she had with the Prison Officers' Association in Maghaberry on 10 October to discuss a number of safety issues, to state her recommendations. (AQT 466/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his question. Indeed, I have had conversations with the First Minister about some of the challenges for prison officers and staff that are presenting themselves in my prisons. I am keen to tackle these particular issues and get to the root cause of the problem. We are working with the Prison Governors Association, which I met last week, and I also met with the Prison Officers' Association a number of weeks ago, to understand the problems so that we can find a positive way of moving forward.

Mr McKee: Thank you Minister for your answer thus far. Last week saw the death of a prisoner and the Prisoner Ombudsman's report on the death of another last year. Will the Minister outline what she is doing to address this failure to keep prisoners safe in custody?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his question. There have been a number of reports on tragic incidents

happening in the prisons. It is something that I am very saddened by and we need to take action. In the Prisoner Ombudsman's reports, he outlined a number of recommendations that my officials in the Northern Ireland Prison Service are working towards implementing. The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust also has a role in implementing them, so it is critical that both agencies work together to tackle the issues. As I have outlined again, a lot of this can be very much satisfied by how prison officers themselves are supported in looking after people in custody. We had a conversation earlier in Question Time about the mental health issues there and a lot of these incidents seem to derive from that.

I am very keen to work with the Health Minister, as I said. We met to affirm our commitment to this particular issue, but it has to be part of a wider holistic approach and that includes how prison officers can be better supported in the job that they do.

DOJ: Sickness Absence

T2. **Mr Kelly** asked the Minister of Justice whether she has an explanation for the very high levels of sickness absence in her Department, particularly in the prisons and youth justice. (AQT 467/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his question. There are significant levels of sickness absence in my Department in particular.

It points to the really difficult nature of the job, particularly in the Prison Service, which is perhaps why officers are taking sickness absence. It is a stressful job, and many of the reasons why officers go off sick is down to stress. I hope that we can address the issue, for prison officers in particular, with the modernisation programme that we are bringing forward. We have yet to firm up on the detail of other initiatives that will address sickness absence. I am putting a keen focus on how I can better support staff in my Department, and, hopefully, we will see the positive outworkings of that.

Mr Kelly: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for her answer up to now. Notwithstanding what she said about stress in the job, if it is a part of the job, will she elaborate on her strategy, and does she have targets for bringing down sickness absence?

Ms Sugden: We are in the very early stages of what we hope to do, particularly with the modernisation programme. The Member will be aware that we are in the process of recruiting a new director general, and I am keen to understand how he or she will lead on taking this forward, particularly from the operational perspective of Prison Service staff. We have yet to firm up the details of a number of initiatives. Hopefully, we can move forward as soon as we decide on the best strategy.

Prison Service: Staffing

T3. **Mr Aiken** asked the Minister of Justice to state the establishment staffing figure, meaning how many prison grade staff there should be, rather than how many there are, for the Northern Ireland Prison Service, not including civilian support staff. (AQT 468/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I do not have the exact figure to hand. There have been issues about maintaining that figure,

which in itself adds to the stress that prison officers face when we have those limitations. I believe that we are operating in a safe environment, but we need to look at the issue. Sickness levels can have an impact on the figure, and we need to find a way to mitigate that as much as possible so that staff are operating in a safe environment and prisoners are being cared for in an appropriate environment.

Mr Aiken: I thank the Minister for those comments. In the Ministry of Defence, there is normally a continuous attitudes survey that samples the views of key staff. Is there a continuous attitudes survey amongst prison officers, and, if so, as part of that, has there been any indication of how many staff are seeking early retirement?

Ms Sugden: Not that I am aware of. I could be wrong on that information, and, if I am, I will come back and correct my response to the Member. I am keen to understand individual officers' issues with their job. To an extent, it is not the problems that are the problem but it is how we deal with them. If we can get as clear a picture as possible, we can better support prison officers, who are then less likely to have work-related stress issues, which will, hopefully, mitigate sickness absence in the service.

Anti-Semitism

T4. **Mr Humphrey** asked the Minister of Justice, given that she will be aware that anti-Semitism is the oldest form of racism, with the appalling attacks on the Belfast synagogue, the graffiti daubed in Belfast city centre, the evil attack on the Jewish cemetery in Belfast City Cemetery and the email hate campaign against Rabbi Singer, whether her Department can do more to eradicate the scourge of anti-Semitism in Northern Ireland. (AQT 469/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his question. Indeed, hate crime is a scourge on our society, and the Executive Office leads on that area. The crime committed falls within my Department's remit, and, operationally, it is more for the PSNI.

As an Executive and an Assembly, we need to be united in the messages that we put out that this type of behaviour is not acceptable. We can all contribute to the message by continually condemning this type of attack and supporting these people, who are very much part of our community, and ensuring that the message is out there that this will not be tolerated in any way. Indeed, the Member will be aware that the close relationships with the PSNI can also encourage that. The PCSPs have done a lot of good work on this, particularly in North Belfast, which the Member represents, through the No Hate Here campaign. Again, we need to continually press the message. We also need to be careful with the language we use in the House so that we do not incite that type of behaviour. Again, I think we all have our part to play in that.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for her answer. Does she agree with me that people need to be careful with their language not just in the House but in the media and, indeed, in councils, where they put forward anti-Israel motions that have the knock-on effect of causing offence, annoyance and distress to Belfast's small but growing Jewish community? I have already invited the Chief Constable to join me on a visit to the synagogue. Will the Minister join me in meeting the Jewish community and the

Jewish Council at the Belfast synagogue at her earliest convenience?

Ms Sugden: I think everybody has a responsibility with the language they use in the type of leadership they want to take forward. Indeed, I am more than happy to join the Member on a similar visit, particularly given the attacks on Jewish graves. We made contact with the rabbi with the aim of making such a visit. So, I am quite happy to join the Member and the Chief Constable, if it will send across a united message about how we tackle that type of hate crime.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): Mr Nelson McCausland is not in his place.

Charter NI

T6. **Mr Stalford** asked the Minister of Justice whether she or her Department have ever received any complaint of wrongdoing or impropriety by Charter NI. (AQT 471/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Not that I am aware of, but I can probably confirm that. No, I do not think so.

Mr Stalford: I am grateful to the Minister for her answer. Does she agree with me that it is entirely wrong for elected Members in the Chamber to malign good people who are involved in the work of trying to move their community forward because of the inappropriate comments of one individual?

Ms Sugden: Yes, I agree that there is a lot of really good work happening within our communities, particularly on that type of issue. I think we need to be careful not to undermine that good work moving forward and not to make problems worse by manifesting them into something that is not the case. Indeed, a lot of the community organisations are best placed to do that work, given the communities they work with. Indeed, I have seen some of that good work on the ground as well, and I think we need to be supportive of that type of work.

McGurk's Bar Massacre

T7. **Ms Mallon** asked the Minister of Justice, in reference to the McGurk's Bar massacre legacy case in North Belfast, whether she is aware of the evidence uncovered through the efforts of relatives of the victims in a British Army ATO report, which confirms their long-standing view about the location of the bomb and whether she agrees that this warrants a fresh investigation by the Police Ombudsman. (AQT 472/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for her question. Indeed, she has approached me to talk about the issue. As always, I am keen to listen to the views of victims on this. I think that will better inform our legacy approach moving forward. The institutions agreed under the Stormont House Agreement will, I believe, enable victims to essentially get their issues on the legacy of the past addressed. I think that this reiterates that we need to move forward as soon as possible. Indeed, I encourage anyone who has a role in moving legacy forward to do so as soon as possible, because time is running out. I think the example the Member raised demonstrates how difficult these issues are. We need to do this so that victims are no longer suffering.

Ms Mallon: I thank the Minister for her answer. Will she consider at some stage meeting some of the relatives of the victims to listen to their case?

Ms Sugden: As the Member will appreciate, it is difficult for me to comment on those types of issues. Since becoming Minister, I have been keen to listen to the various victims represented on the various groups. I am happy to do that, yes.

Gerard Mulligan: Mental Health Assessment

T8. **Mr Sheehan** asked the Minister of Justice whether an appropriate mental health assessment was carried out upon the committal of Gerard Mulligan to Maghaberry prison. (AQT 473/16-21)

3.30 pm

Ms Sugden: My understanding is that that case is still under investigation. A number of processes have been put in place, including the Supporting Prisoners at Risk (SPAR) process. I think it is an active investigation, so it would be inappropriate for me to comment. If I am incorrect, I will come back to the Member with more details.

Mr Sheehan: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for her answer. Is she content that comprehensive mental health assessments and reviews are being carried out with all new inmates right across the prison system?

Ms Sugden: I thank the Member for his question. No, I think more work needs to be done. Over the past number of months, a series of tragic incidents have happened in custody. Recommendations in reports from the previous Prisoner Ombudsman suggest that there is more that we can do, not only in the Northern Ireland Prison Service but in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, which also has a role to play. Moving forward, it is a conversation that we will continue to have. We need to take action on it, so I am working with the Health Minister to see how we can best do that.

Prisons: Mental Health Assessments

T9. **Mr McCartney** asked the Minister of Justice whether she is satisfied that the process of assessment is rigorous enough and that we can assure ourselves that people are not being committed to prison who should not be committed to prison. (AQT 474/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I believe that there is more that we can do, because one death is one death too many. We need to have a really honest, critical assessment of how the processes take place so that we can ensure that we do not have another death in custody. There is more that we can do.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): A quick supplementary question, Mr McCartney.

Mr McCartney: Has the Minister anything in mind subsequent to this investigation — perhaps a review of the processes of committal?

Ms Sugden: More generally, we need to have a review of mental health in our prisons. That perhaps begins at the stage of committal but also during their stay in prison or, perhaps, going back to an earlier question, even before they get there. It is something that I am committed to doing. Ultimately, mental health, whether in or out of prisons, is under the remit of the Health Minister, so she will be critical in how we move it forward. It needs to be

tackled. It comes up time and again in the House, which I suppose is a good thing because it means that we are talking about it. We need to tackle it, so I agree with that.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): Order. That completes Question Time. I ask Members to take their ease while we make changes to the top Table.

(Madam Principal Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

Private Members' Business

Sporting Events and Activity-based Tourism

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly welcomes the success that the Executive have had in attracting major sporting events in recent years and attracting visitors engaged in sports tourism; notes the high-value economic benefit that can arise from events-based and activity-based sports tourism; and calls on the Minister for the Economy, through his Department, agencies and the new tourism strategy, to promote and encourage growth in this sector. — [Mr Dunne.]

Mr Dickson: On a point of order, Madam Principal Deputy Speaker. This morning, the Speaker very helpfully guided the House with regard to oral statements by Ministers in the House. Having had the opportunity to peruse Standing Orders, I feel that it would be helpful if the Speaker, as well as making requests of Ministers, would point out the veracity of Standing Orders. They state that in the circumstances where a Minister is free to attend the House — when we are not on holiday or closed down and it is a standing day of the Assembly — there should be no reason for a Minister not to make an oral statement to the House. I refer to an impending statement by the Minister of Infrastructure tomorrow that will be given in writing rather than orally to the House.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I thank the Member for his point of order. I will certainly refer the matter to the Speaker.

Mr McNulty: I beg to move the following amendment:

Leave out all after 'Executive' and insert:

“, tourist agencies and sporting organisations have had in attracting major sporting events in recent years and attracting visitors engaged in sports tourism; notes the high-value economic benefit that can arise from events-based and activity-based sports tourism; further notes the failure to publish a tourism strategy in the 2011-16 mandate; and calls on the Executive to agree and publish urgently a tourism strategy, which addresses the capital, resource, marketing, skills and training requirements of the sports events and tourism sector, to enable the Minister for the Economy, his Department, tourism agencies and sporting organisations to deliver real and sustainable growth in this sector.”

I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate and propose the amendment in my name and those of my party colleagues. I urge all in the House to support the amendment, which reflects the needs of the sporting and tourism sectors and matches our ambitions in this region. We must recognise the achievements of our tourist agencies and sporting organisations in helping to attract major sporting events. Our successes in promoting tourist events are in part due to the Executive but are also due to the sheer determination of our tourism agencies and sporting organisations. For that, we must be grateful. I thank the signatories to the motion for giving us an opportunity to talk about our great sporting record.

As has already been mentioned, over recent years, we have hosted prestigious events such as the Irish Open in 2012 and 2015, and we will do so again next year. We will also host the Open Championship in 2019. There is a bid in to host the 2023 Rugby World Cup. That is an exhilarating possibility and opportunity. The thought of having the All Blacks based in Armagh city is a mouth-watering prospect, and I am invigorated by the lasting positive impact that that could have on our young people. For all of Ireland, hosting the Rugby World Cup would leave a legacy that we could all be proud of.

We have hosted the World Police and Fire Games and the Giro d'Italia. That is not to mention regional events, which are home-grown and unique. While we do not hear about all those events, they include international fishing competitions on the River Bann and Lough Neagh; the Northern Ireland Countrysports Fair at Scarva; the ploughing at Mullahead; the Crooked Lake Triathlon; the UK Indoor Bowls Championships; point-to-points in places such as Farmacaffley; and, entirely unique to Armagh, road bowls or bullets. King of the road and all-Ireland championships are held annually in Tassagh.

In working to attract large-scale sporting events, we must look to the work already happening across the region in our local sporting organisations. It would be remiss of me not to mention the contribution of the GAA. In Armagh city alone, the Athletic Grounds attracts over 175,000 visitors a year, and, across County Armagh, over 300,000 people attend games throughout the year, yet that goes unrecognised across government. I must praise the Armagh county board on the work that it did to deliver a modern, fan-friendly stadium, not to mention the other clubs and county teams across Ulster. Only yesterday, I was at Páirc Esler in Newry for a game in which Kilcoo hosted Maghera in the Ulster Club Senior Football Championship, with upwards of 10,000 people paying for the privilege of watching amateur players in the comfort of a modern stand.

Although all those sporting occasions are a fantastic asset for our tourism offering, to date, the approach adopted in attracting global events has been too piecemeal. We have sought to attract one event at a time, without any strategic vision or direction. That is why Northern Ireland urgently needs a tourism strategy. Central and local government must work together with sporting bodies and organisations on large- and small-scale events. If we are to look at growing the market, we must be bold and ambitious in planning and in our support for such projects by way of marketing, promotion and capital requirements.

The region must host teams and games, but we need to develop our sporting, hospitality and transport infrastructure. If we are to host the Rugby World Cup in 2023, we need an hourly Enterprise between Dublin and Belfast. We must encourage new and exciting partnerships, where government and numerous sporting bodies can come together and develop facilities for training and hosting teams.

The legacy that these games can leave for our people is one of sportsmanship, social inclusion, a fitter and healthier population and one that recognises that sport unites us and brings out the best in us. All of that can be

achieved with an ambitious and accurate strategy that the Executive and the tourism sector support.

It is disappointing that the only notable development that we have had in recent times regarding inward tourism is the loss of the United Airlines route between Belfast and New York city. Maximising sports and event tourism relies on convenience and ease of travel for fans. Global events such as the Open Championship can have the transformative effect on local economies only if they are accessible in as few movements as possible for international travellers.

The loss of the United route is, therefore, extremely worrying, meaning that the US fans, a lucrative market, are less likely to make the journey if they have to travel through London or Dublin. It also underscores the critical need to improve the transport infrastructure throughout this island, as Dublin becomes the primary airport for US travellers. We need a reliable, hourly Enterprise service to be incorporated as part of any tourism strategy as a minimum.

As well as this, a potential UK exit from the EU poses huge challenges for Northern Ireland. Amongst them is the impact that it could have on our tourism industry and wider economy. With the uncertainty that the referendum result has brought, now, more than ever, the tourism sector needs the Government to create a favourable environment for tourism to expand, to flourish and to contribute to our local economy. The Executive must take the earliest opportunity to promote and enhance the tourism sector, and fundamental to this is the development of a tourism strategy.

Key amongst our proposals to protect and promote the tourism sector has been a long-term call for reduction in VAT on tourism and hospitality products, putting the North's services on a level playing field with those in the South. Harmonising this rate across this island is a no-brainer. Our debates on this issue have received cross-party support both here and in the House of Commons. It is disappointing that this proposal has not yet been adopted.

In conclusion, the SDLP, for our part, will continue to press for the introduction of a fit-for-purpose tourism strategy that addresses the capital, resource, marketing, skills, training and infrastructure requirements of the sports events and tourism sector. The Executive must do more to develop and support our tourism industry as a key economic driver, and, to do this, they must prioritise a tourism strategy, the aim of which must be to deliver real and sustainable growth. That is the aim of our amendment. This is a debate that we must continue in the months ahead. Attracting sports events is one thing, but leaving a legacy for all our people is another. We can and must do more for the betterment of everyone in this place. We can build an infrastructure to be proud of, a capacity in our sporting sector that means that we are the place to go for major sporting events. I look forward to the day that the legendary All Blacks perform a ceremonial haka on the historic mall in Armagh, when we welcome them to Ireland as their host city in the 2023 Rugby World Cup.

Mr Murphy: I support the motion. I think that it goes without saying that the experience over the last number of years of the great sporting events that have come to this part of the world is that they have raised our profile very substantially and have brought enormous benefit to the community. The proposer of the motion outlined a whole series of large events, and I was very proud to see the Giro coming

through Armagh and down through south Armagh. I think that the sense of a buzz in the community that that event created was one of the most exciting in the area that I have seen, certainly since my colleague and his teammates won the all-Ireland for Armagh in 2002. There was such a buzz around the community in relation to that event.

Of course we need to see those events happening, and we need to see the infrastructure that goes with them, but in my contribution to the debate, I want to focus on the smaller scale. Some of these events have been mentioned. I make no apology for mentioning, as the previous Member did, the Crooked Lake Triathlon in our village of Camlough. It started out as a very small community event, and, within five or six years, it was attracting 600-plus competitors from all across Ireland and right across other parts of Europe as well. It started with a local small committee in the community beginning the event, building their own capacity and organisational skills and creating an event that has become of almost international standard.

We recognise the headline events, with a big focus on the golf opens, the Giro, the Rugby World Cup and others, but we should also make sure that there is support in communities for small-scale events because those are the events that people who have moved away come home for. Those are the events for which people time their holidays to come back to Ireland. It is those events that bring communities together. As well as ensuring that councils have the necessary resource to support them, we should ensure that there are programmes, perhaps through the Department for Communities, for capacity-building in those communities to ensure that local people get the necessary skills. From that small event, we now have a water festival. The same group of people are bidding for the world ice swimming championships to be held in Newry in 2019. That will bring an international event, and it all came from a small community project. It shows you what is possible.

3.45 pm

The Member who spoke previously also touched on the GAA. When I have visited other countries, I have been very fortunate to go to their sporting events. I have been to baseball in America. I have been to pelota in the Basque Country, where we also saw handball being played. The GAA is a unique sporting organisation. Although it is a global brand now, it is unique to this island in that it is our sport and one that has developed here. More should be woven into a tourism strategy to promote the GAA and the attraction that it provides. We can see how much more of a worldwide attraction it has become since it went onto Sky Sports. My colleague in front of me, who is a keen cyclist, instructed me that I was to mention the Rás, which is a cycling event that is unique to Ireland. It has not as yet come North of the border, and we would like to see it come up here. There is a lot of work that can be done at the local level to ensure that the small events that bind communities together receive the proper support and the proper recognition in a tourism strategy.

I have to say that I struggle to see merit in the amendment. It appears to just, in a mean-spirited way, try to dilute any credit for the Executive and pass it onto organisations. Of course, the sporting organisations and the arm's-length bodies in Executive Departments do a huge amount of work, but they do so under direction from the Minister and agreed resource from the Executive. That did not stop a

former Minister in the previous Executive, who was sitting beside the Member who spoke previously but has now left, going out and firing a rugby ball about in front of the cameras when a planning decision was taken on Ravenhill and claiming the credit for that decision. I do not see the need to dilute any credit for the Executive in this regard.

On urgency, I would expect all the things that the proposer of the amendment said to be in that tourism strategy. I want to see a tourism strategy that is well done, timely and listens to the voices in today's debate and incorporates those into the tourism strategy. I want to see a proper strategy rather than an urgent one. I want to see one that gives the level of support that is required and recognises that events-based tourism is a growing force in tourism and attracting people and the well-being that that brings to host communities and communities generally in health and community cohesion. A tourism strategy must be done in a timely fashion, but it must be done properly.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can the Member bring his comments to a close?

Mr Murphy: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle.

Mr Chambers: There is nothing in the DUP motion that anyone could not acknowledge. There have been huge successes that have made us all very proud. However, I am disappointed that it makes no reference to the many organisers of major sporting events in Northern Ireland and those across the entire tourism industry who do so much to make a visit here an unforgettable experience, especially when an event or sport is the magnet.

The motion calls on the Minister for the Economy to promote and encourage growth in this sector. Does that mean that those who tabled the motion feel that he is not already doing what they request? It would be interesting if the Minister, in his contribution today, would share with us what he thinks he is not already doing that this motion will fire him up to now deliver. It is also a disappointment to me, as a new Member, to be reminded that such a success as our sporting events and activity-based tourism is not embraced by a specific tourism strategy, despite that having been talked about throughout the life of the last mandate and still being talked about today. I have the sense that this type of backslapping motion, with a call for the Minister to do what I would expect him to be doing already, serves only to feed into the perception held by many members of the public that this House is only a talking shop with no outcomes. That perception can be understood, even though we who serve here know that things actually do get done in the Chamber and in Committee.

At a meeting of the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association in October 2014, a report was produced on the topics that we are discussing today. It talked about events-based and activity tourism. It then referenced a third category, called nostalgia-based sports tourism. However, it said that this type of opportunity is not prominent in the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland.

Why do we not have a museum in Northern Ireland dedicated to the proud sporting achievements over many years of a population of 1.8 million people who box well above their weight on the international stage? Is there a sport organised in this country that has not produced a world champion, a record breaker or a medal winner? That success is replicated by our Paralympians. I know there is

a call for a museum of achievement that embraces sport, but we have a wealth of material in the sporting world and a story to tell that would fill two sports museums. The challenge will not be what to include; it will be what to leave out. Look at the success of the Titanic centre: a sporting museum could replicate that success and appeal to visitors attending major sporting events in our country and provide added value to their experience. Using some of the interactive technology deployed in the Titanic centre, a sports museum could be made a family-friendly must-visit for our citizens.

Nothing cuts across and makes a mockery of the divides in our society like sport. Let us use it to showcase all our sporting achievements on a cross-community basis. The material is there and the story is there; let us use it. The Ulster Unionist Party will support the SDLP amendment, and we call on the Executive to embrace our idea of promoting the establishment of a sporting museum. It makes no sense to continue to miss an opportunity that is sitting in our laps. Let us not dilute the opportunity by concentrating on a museum of achievement that would include sport. That concept would not add value for visitors at either an event or on a sporting activity break.

Mr McNulty referred to sport providing a legacy. We have such pride in the sporting achievements of all our sportsmen across this country in every discipline, and a sport museum would be a legacy for those people. I call on the Executive to embrace the concept. I also call on them urgently to stop talking about a tourism strategy and get one —

Mr Frew: Will the Member give way?

Mr Chambers: You will have your opportunity to speak.

Get a tourism strategy on the books now.

Dr Farry: I support the motion and the amendment. Before I make some direct points about the motion, I will reflect on some of the things that Alan Chambers has just said. There is a rather self-congratulatory tone to the motion, which is of concern in two respects. First, although it is welcome that we are having a debate in the Assembly on the economy, it strikes me that we are using precious time to discuss an issue where the supporters of the motion wish to pass on congratulations and recognise how well we have done. We are doing that at the expense of discussing some of the more pressing issues that face us, such as what we are going to do on an economic strategy, the implications of Brexit for our market access, the future of corporation tax, what we are doing on manufacturing and what we are doing on higher education funding. There are a lot of very important issues on the economy that we need to get our heads round.

Secondly, it is simply not good enough, when looking at the specifics of where we are with sport tourism, to sit back and list what we have achieved to date and say how great that has been for our economy and how we are now on the international map. There are some very particular issues that we need to address on that subject. First, as has been referred to by a number of Members, there is the absence of a tourism strategy. That is not a recent development; it is a long-running gap in the suite of strategies that an Executive should have in place. Clearly, a tourism strategy is a fundamental cornerstone of any wider economic strategy, and that is something that we need to address as soon as possible. Such a strategy also needs to reflect the all-island dimensions and the connectivity issues on the island.

We should also bear it in mind that tourism, as a sector in our economy, remains significantly underdeveloped relative to comparative jurisdictions elsewhere in these islands and internationally. There is significant room for growth, and obviously that should be a priority sector for the Executive and the Department. That demand is reflected by many across the sector, and it will have cross-cutting benefits in a range of areas.

It is also important that we look specifically at sports tourism. We talk about the high-profile events, but we must recognise that they tend to be variable. We will bid for those. In some, we will be successful; in others, less so. They will come to us very irregularly. If we are looking for sustainability we cannot build a strategy solely around those events. We need to ensure that there are proper spin-offs from the events that we manage to attract and ensure that we invest in a balance of reasons for people to come to Northern Ireland.

If we are looking at the specific issue of sustainability in terms of sports and events-related tourism, one of the key issues is the level of repeat visits by those who come for the initial sporting event and the recommendations that they make to their friends, colleagues and family members to come to Northern Ireland. In that regard, customer care will be very important. I encourage the Minister to look again at WorldHost training to ensure that we do as much as we can to maximise its uptake across the cities, towns and villages of Northern Ireland. We have seen some good examples in that regard. During my term of office, Derry city was the first jurisdiction in the entire UK to achieve the status of a WorldHost city. That was good. There are other issues around training. We need to see how we can support the sector in its desire to engage in work around apprenticeships and youth training. Clearly, it sees potential opportunities in that regard.

Gordon Dunne talked about the investment that has been made in stadia and hotels. We note and take into account what was said in that regard, but I need to stress that we missed an opportunity in Northern Ireland in relation to the development of a shared sports facility across the three leading spectator sports; instead, we went for three separate stadia. I do not wish to reopen old ground — that has now passed — but a single stadium would have brought us together in terms of sharing, but, more importantly, it would have brought us greater economies of scale in infrastructure and in the quality of that infrastructure. It is still a concern that Casement Park remains an outstanding issue. That would be the largest of the three stadia available to us.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Dr Farry: If we are to seek to attract a certain type of event, including the Rugby World Cup, developing Casement, albeit a GAA stadium, is of crucial importance.

Mr T Buchanan: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion. The great sporting activities that we have in Northern Ireland have been mentioned by various Members who spoke, so I do not intend to go into that except to say that we are proud or should be proud of the sporting professionals we have in Northern Ireland who represent it on a global basis.

I welcome the success that the Executive have had in recent years in bringing some fine international events

to the shores of Northern Ireland. By hosting those successful events, we have seen knock-on effects that have reverberated across the length and breadth of Northern Ireland in the growth of our economy. Some people might want to turn a blind eye to that, but it is the reality of the situation and is what happens through sporting tourism.

This year saw the opening of the newly refurbished and extended Waterfront Hall in Belfast and, of course, this is a foretaste of the growth that is happening in Belfast as a place for business tourism. Expansion and room for growth were necessary to facilitate the boom in business tourism in our capital city, and, already, Belfast is tipped to be a leading destination for business tourism. That in itself will maximise our potential for visitors to come with their families and come back again. Of course, that is what we need to do: we need not only to have visitors coming in but to have sufficient interest for them to come back and join us in Northern Ireland. Business tourism may prove to be one of the catalysts for boosting the wider tourism potential that Northern Ireland has to offer the world.

By the same token, as the vision for business tourism becomes a reality in Belfast, we need to merge government, businesses, local authorities and all organisations involved in tourism to get them to think on a much wider basis and facilitate the growth of the sporting tourism industry. While major steps have been taken to attract global sporting events to Northern Ireland for which the Executive must be congratulated, we have to recognise the potential for the future in this rapidly growing tourism market and tap into that on a broader scale.

4.00 pm

Just last week, my colleague Mr Hamilton attended the draw for the Women's Rugby World Cup 2017. That event alone, which will last for nine days, will generate almost £2 million for the local economy, not to mention the priceless publicity for Northern Ireland around the world after visitors attend the event and spread the word about our attractions and hospitality.

If we look at the North West 200 and the huge numbers of people that it attracts every year from across the world, surely we have to say that events like that are valuable assets to the local economy and provide valuable boosts to local industry. The domino effect of bringing large-scale events to the Province must not be underestimated. The power of seeing an event broadcast around the world against a backdrop of stunning scenery is priceless.

As part of a tourism strategy, we need to move with the times. We need to set the bar higher and lead the way in establishing events. We need to be more creative. We have marathons in Belfast, but I could not mention Belfast and the north-west without mentioning Fermanagh or south Tyrone and west Tyrone. There is no reason why an international marathon could not be run in west Tyrone or in Fermanagh or south Tyrone, where you have the beauty of the Sperrins and the lakes of Fermanagh. That would attract visitors, and attract them back again. Maybe that is something for the Minister to consider.

As part of a tourism strategy, we need to work alongside advertising and marketing companies, tourism agencies and hoteliers to come up with strategies to attract more people to Northern Ireland more regularly. It is imperative

that we are open to capitalise on trends and have the flexibility to work alongside ever-changing trends to implement ideas that are collated from a wide range of bodies that know the industry, having worked in it for many years.

Northern Ireland is an emerald in the crown of natural rugged beauty, and when we recognise the value of the product —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr T Buchanan: — that we have to sell to the world, we can truly grasp what a unique destination we have.

The year 2016 has been one of dramatic change on the political stage of the world. We should embrace these challenges —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr T Buchanan: — and look for the opportunities —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Carál Ní Chuilín.

Mr T Buchanan: — that will present themselves as a result —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Iarraim ar Carál Ní Chuilín.

Mr T Buchanan: — and push ahead for Northern Ireland to become —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr T Buchanan: — a leading global destination for sport.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Carál Ní Chuilín.

Mr T Buchanan: Thank you.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Ms Ní Chuilín: That was a marathon speech, Tom. Fair play to you. I also support the motion, and, just for clarification, when my colleague Conor Murphy was talking about his colleague in front of him being an avid racer, it was not me; it was Philip McGuigan.

I welcome the motion. It is a good debate that is looking at all the aspects that enhance our tourism product. Someone said that, at times, we are tabling motions that have no point. Lots of people could take that view about lots of things. People take the time to table a motion and there is then a debate, and it is always worthwhile. Even if we do not agree with it, it is still a worthwhile process.

I am heartened to hear, certainly with Justin McNulty's contribution, that the SDLP is now supporting the redevelopment of Casement Park, which I welcome. I found it completely ironic that some Members were complaining about a lack of investment in west Belfast — rightly so — yet one of the Members representing the SDLP — Mr Attwood — was one of the two Attwoods who stood outside Casement Park against the redevelopment. For me, that was a complete —

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for giving way. I am sure that the Member would recognise the right — indeed, the duty — of any of us as MLAs to make representation on behalf of constituents with concerns.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Tá nóiméad breise ag an Chomhalta. The Member has an extra minute.

Ms Ní Chuilín: Absolutely. To be fair, any of us could be in that situation. My difficulty was when the line was crossed in making representations, as he or anybody else is entitled to do. I found it disturbing that some were proactively arguing against such an investment. I welcomed the Member's intervention and his leadership on the issue, and I also now welcome his party's position.

I think the role of Casement Park in the Rugby World Cup for 2023 is absolutely critical. I look forward to the whole Assembly giving support to its redevelopment. Will it enhance tourism? It absolutely will. Will it add to the sports activity and potential events not just in west Belfast but in Belfast? Yes, it will. Will that improve good relations? In my opinion, it will. I grew up never putting a foot in Windsor Park, but now I do. I do not do it because I was a Minister; I do it now even though I am not. I do not go to soccer matches but to other events. When I was growing up, there were areas you just did not go to. I think that, if we are all honest, that was the case for many of us. Investment from our Executive in big infrastructure projects will help by not only creating awareness but attracting people to places and events that, in the past, they may not have considered.

The investment in the ladies' rugby has been mentioned. Next year, we will see the UEFA Women's Under-19 Championship, and, hopefully, the Assembly will give those women our support. They need it. I have witnessed world-class fishing competitions come to these shores, even to the waterworks in my constituency, which is a small lake. It was brilliant. It was a cross-community event. People from right across the island and from Wales and everywhere travelled for these events. Things like the Transplant Games and the recent world-class Irish dancing competitions in the Waterfront Hall are examples. There are many other things, even in rural communities, such as bike trails that have had investment from DARD and others, and there are water and marine activities. I think we have a lot here to enhance our tourist product. Can we all do more? Certainly. That is a given.

When I spoke to other Ministers, some of them would have given their eye teeth for the infrastructure and investment we have put into some of our areas to enhance tourist product. I also welcome the fact that, across the island, both institutions are working to look at events we can host in both parts of the island. That has continued and is a good thing. I believe that Tourism NI, Sport NI, the Executive and councils have a massive role to play. Local government has a massive role to play. I think that when we have joined-up approaches — I am seeing more of that — you will get more world-class events.

I will go back to a point that Conor Murphy raised. Do not lose sight of the small events. World-class events like the Olympic and Paralympic Games have inspired children and young people to get involved in sport. Some of the smaller events will do the same. We need to make sure that the infrastructure is invested in and maintained and that we create the opportunities not only for people to come to our shores but for our residents and citizens to make sure they, too, participate in some of these events. I, too, support the motion.

Mr Robinson: My East Londonderry constituency hosts the North West 200, the Northern Ireland Milk Cup and

the air show. It has top-quality golf courses, has been used as part of the Giro d'Italia route and is blessed with excellent salmon and trout fishing rivers as well as a stunning coastline that attracts sea angling. This is why I am particularly interested in speaking on this motion.

As my colleague Gordon Dunne said, we must also remember the recent magnificent achievements of our Northern Ireland football team in reaching the last 16 at the finals of the Euros. To add to that, we have had some great past sporting legends, such as George Best, Joey Dunlop, Alex Higgins and others, along with present sporting ambassadors like Rory McIlroy etc, who have put Northern Ireland on the sporting map.

As I have already demonstrated, much has been delivered and many events supported by the Executive. I congratulate them on their successes. I also point to the future and the 2019 Open golf tournament, which is coming to Royal Portrush. That is more delivery for our tourist industry. Again, my congratulations to the Executive. No one can say that the Executive are not successful in supporting our sporting events. The result is employment and economic development, the cornerstones of future development.

With a more peaceful Northern Ireland, the potential for developing the tourist sector is immense and, as stated previously, much has already been achieved. I want to see all sectors developed because this is one of the cornerstones of Northern Ireland's economic development. In every constituency, there are sporting events and activity-based tourism: climbing the Mourne, surfing on our coasts, caving in Fermanagh, sea and river fishing or boating on our lakes, waterways and coasts. We have a huge sports activity tourist product to sell to the world. This is a base for our tourism economic growth.

I am confident that, with this Executive and Minister at the helm, Northern Ireland can be assured of the commitment to developing our tourism sector in all aspects and to utilising our sporting and activity-based tourism to the utmost. I support the motion and ask the House to follow suit.

Mr Aiken: I support the motion and the amendment and add our support to Tourism Northern Ireland and to other bodies as we seek to grow Northern Ireland as one of the key niche sporting and cultural tourism destinations in the world.

Whether it is large, medium or small sporting events or cultural events, helping to promote those events or benefiting from the wider positive image these activities sell of Northern Ireland plc as a great place to visit, to invest and to live in, our brand is something that we must build up, cherish and guard from being undermined by other competitors, either here on this island or further afield. We have much to be proud of: our strong sporting links to golfing, motorcycling, cycling, equestrianism, rugby, football, GAA, sailing, swimming, athletics and hockey. It would be remiss of me not to mention the great Mossley, Parkgate and Randalstown hockey teams of my constituency of South Antrim. Then there is the sporting prowess exemplified by our international sports stars, Olympians and Paralympians. This does not just imply the promotion and support of sports in schools and our communities but having the facilities for our sports, whether through our planners ensuring that globally significant road races such as the Ulster Grand Prix are

not penalised by unwelcome graveyard developments or having suitable venues to attract major sporting events.

In mentioning the Ulster Grand Prix and as a proud Ballyclarian, I would also like to put on record again my delight in Jonathan Rea's being crowned World Superbike champion. I too would be delighted if the Assembly formally recognised his fantastic success.

We also have to ensure that our cultural landscape is supportive and attracts major visitor numbers. I particularly note events such as the Belfast Tattoo, Ulster-Scots events in Glenarm, arts festivals, literary events and the great work that has gone on in Londonderry, as well as the new visitor centre celebrating Seamus Heaney in Bellaghy. We need to effectively promote all our sports and cultural events and tourism, so let us make sure that we appropriately invest in the promotion of brand Northern Ireland. It is noteworthy that the Irish tourism authorities spend many multiples of Tourism Northern Ireland's budget; indeed, the budget for the Wild Atlantic Way alone is much more than what we do to promote Northern Ireland tourism. If Northern Ireland tourism is —

Mr McMullan: I thank the Member for giving way. The Member made a good point when he mentioned the Wild Atlantic Way. I ask the Minister to look at that. We need to bring it up here. The Atlantic does not stop at the border; the Wild Atlantic Way should not stop at the border either.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Aiken: Thank you very much indeed. As we all know, the Atlantic stretches all the way to Ballycastle and Torr Head. That is what we should be doing; we should promote the extension of the Wild Atlantic Way along that way.

We should commend Tourism Northern Ireland's desire to increase the market to £1 billion per annum. If we are to do that and support that growing investment, we need to help Tourism Northern Ireland. As part of the strategy, we need to resource it adequately.

4.15 pm

Mr Maskey: Like my colleagues, I support the motion. As I understand it, the Member who spoke previously said that the Ulster Unionist Party will also support the motion, albeit along with the amendment. I am not sure whether that means that, if the amendment falls, the party will support the motion. I hope that it will. As my colleagues, particularly Conor Murphy, have already said, in our support for the motion, we will not support the amendment, because it appears to us to be part of the now standard trend from the SDLP to be, in a way, mean-spirited, not wanting to recognise that the Executive have done anything right or of substance. Even though that party had Ministers in office in the previous mandates and was quite prepared to share in, and rightly so, some of the very good work that was done, it would never take responsibility for some of the work that was not done. Nevertheless, I recognise that Justin McNulty in his remarks did acknowledge that the Executive did do some good work. To that extent, I am quite pleased to hear that, because, ultimately, whatever way the amendment is voted on, I do not think that any of us can really find any substantive fault with the motion.

I look forward to hearing from the Minister, because, as Conor Murphy said already, we expect to hear that we will have substantial and substantive support for the tourism industry, not least the sporting tourism sector, in any upcoming tourism strategy and, in fact, right through to the heart of the economic strategy eventually. All Members have testified in the House this afternoon that it is a very important sector for a variety of reasons. It certainly helps the local economy. There is no question or doubt about that. It brings more people here and increases the spend locally in the broader community, including the hospitality sector.

Mrs Long: I thank the Member for giving way. He mentions the hospitality sector. One of the big issues around hospitality is the review of licensing laws, which, at the moment, the Committee and the Minister are looking at. Will he agree with me that a more radical approach to that particular issue would be very helpful in supporting the economy and economic growth?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute. Tá nóiméad breise ag an Chomhalta.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Member for that intervention. There is no doubt of that. In the previous mandate, I was very clearly on record as saying that we need an overhaul of licensing legislation. I look forward to that happening in the time ahead. There is no doubt that it will also be of benefit if it is improved in the right and appropriate manner.

As I said, the community here is accruing very important economic benefits through sporting tourism events. Beyond that, they continue to increase the involvement of people here in sports. Although the motion refers to the Executive achieving good things in the past, all those other organisations, be they tourism bodies or sporting bodies, not to mention all the participants, activists, sportsmen and sportswomen, have inspired many of us here and people around the world. The continuing success of the sports tourism industry and sector will add to the number of people who are involved in sport. That has an overall benefit to society here, because sport increases people's participation, addresses social exclusion and is far better for people's health, well-being and all the rest. It is a no-brainer, really: if we can, we should increase support for the sector.

One of the things that has come through in the debate is that, although everybody acknowledges all the very many major sporting events, and rightly so — we are very thankful for them and for the prowess of our sportspeople and all those who support them, such as their coaches, trainers and families — all Members have testified to the fact that there are many much smaller sporting events that really go unsung. I will mention just one. On Friday past, I had the benefit of meeting those involved. It is a small event that involves two amateur boxing clubs: St Paul's in west Belfast and Scorpion in Ballymoney. The two clubs have come together and developed a partnership with Detroit. They hope to bring over a party from Detroit that will include Thomas Hearn, a very famous world champion of our generation.

There is no doubt that the relatively small party that they will bring over here will increase the tourism spend not only in Belfast. A very good programme of events has already been arranged around that one small programme. It is only one. There was a previous similar initiative called Beltway,

which married people from Washington and, mainly but not exclusively, Belfast — originally, it was an Ardoyne club.

These smaller sporting events are very important not only for the local economy but for the well-being of people here because more and more people are becoming involved in sport. Of course, when people come here to take part in those sporting events, they avail themselves of other parts of our tourism industry. That is all the better for everybody concerned.

I commend the Executive for all the work that has been done over the last number of years. I particularly commend all the people who have been involved in the sporting achievements, the tourism and other sporting bodies —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Maskey: — that have helped. I look forward to hearing from the Minister about other substantive support that will be given to these events in the future.

Mr Frew: I support the motion. I acknowledge the work that has been done to date. I invite Mr Chambers to visit North Antrim, where he can attend Ballymoney town hall and learn all about the history of road racing in Northern Ireland. On his way home, he could call into the Ballymena Showgrounds, where he will see our hall of fame, which has represented in it Willie John McBride, Eamonn Loughran, Michael O'Neill, Maevie and Sean Kyle and Nigel Worthington. There are a lot of museums that acknowledge and support the work of all sports in all guises and through all individuals. I disagree with him: if we focus on a museum, we could lose sight of the future potential. We need funding and support to make sure that we assist the athletes of the future rather than spending money on a museum that shows us what happened in the past.

I acknowledge the work of the organisers of the North West 200, which is very close to my constituency; it benefits greatly from that event. What a massive event it is, and it is free. Where else would you get that in the world? The Milk Cup — the Super Cup as it is called now — does tremendous work with young people from around the world. We also have our golfers. Look at what has been achieved at the very highest levels by Rory McIlroy, Graeme McDowell, Darren Clarke and, of course, Michael Hoey, who, I think, is now a six-time winner on the European Tour.

Michael Hoey has done a lot of work with Galgorm Castle Golf Club. He is an ambassador for the Northern Ireland Open, which is Northern Ireland's annual professional golf tournament. Whilst it is good that Northern Ireland can attract the Irish Open and, of course, the Open in 2019, we should look at the potential of the Northern Ireland Open. At the minute, it is a Challenge Tour tournament, which is the second division in European golf terms. It has been going only since 2013, when it had over 22,000 spectators. In 2014, it had 34,000 spectators. In 2015 and 2016, it had 39,000 spectators, and the grand total for 2016 was 39,721 spectators. It was won by Ryan Fox from New Zealand. That is the potential that the Northern Ireland Open has. It broke the Challenge Tour attendance records in the last two years. That tells me that the Northern Ireland Open has outgrown that division of European golf. To go up higher, you are talking about the same professional tour as the Irish Open, the Scottish Open, the French Open, the Spanish Open and all the rest. How good would it

be if Northern Ireland were to get a slot in that diary? It would be at the very peak of European golf. We can do it. I pay tribute to the owner of Galgorm Castle, Christopher Brooke, on the work that he has done on that ground and the investment that he has made. I also pay tribute to his managing director, Gary Henry, who is also the main organiser of the Northern Ireland Open. These people can put Northern Ireland on the map.

We can compete right up there with the Irish Open. It is good to have the Irish Open in Portrush, at the Royal County Down in Newcastle and, now, in Portstewart. We can do this every year; we can have a tournament of that calibre every year through the Northern Ireland Open. Why should we not strive to get there and to have this as an annual event? We have the infrastructure around Ballymena, and we have the golf course. I know that the Minister has played it; I have seen him in action.

Mr Lyons: Was he any good?

Mr Frew: Well, I think he should get a tour invitation. You never know. I will take half of his prize money. This is a tremendous opportunity for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Open.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his comments to a close.

Mr Frew: I hope the Minister will look at that and see how we can grow the Northern Ireland Open.

Mr Hamilton (The Minister for the Economy): I was a little thrown there by Mr Frew's final comments. It would be a very kind invitation to join the tour. He was offering his services as an agent or something —

Mr Frew: A caddy.

Mr Hamilton: A caddy, perhaps — looking to take half of my winnings. Half of zero, of course, is still zero.

I thank all of the Members who have contributed to the debate and particularly thank Mr Storey, Mr Buchanan, Mr Dunne and Mr Lyons for tabling the motion. At times during the debate, as debates of this nature can tend to do, it sounded a bit like a Tourism NI brochure for each constituency in Northern Ireland. Well done to the Members who availed themselves of the opportunity to promote the attractions of their area.

The motion states that Northern Ireland has been very successful in bidding for and hosting a range of high-profile sporting events in the last few years, and that is undoubtedly the case. I do not think that anybody denied that in their contribution. From the Titanic centenary in 2012, when the world spotlight shone on Belfast for all of the right reasons, to the hosting of events such as the MTV European Music Awards, the Irish Open in Portrush and a range of other high-profile 2012 celebrations, major public events have become extremely important to the Northern Ireland tourism industry, to the further promotion of the tourism product and to the wider economy.

The follow-up from that tipping point, as it were, in 2012 has been extremely good. Londonderry's year as the first ever UK City of Culture in 2013 was a resounding success. We then had a series of further major events, such as the World Police and Fire Games, the Giro d'Italia Big Start and the 2015 Tall Ships Festival. Aside from their individual and economic successes, collectively, all of those events have not just served to greatly improve Northern Ireland's

profile as a place where major events can take place but have increased the likelihood and potential for Northern Ireland to host bigger events — sporting and otherwise — in the future. I am delighted, for instance, that World Rugby has chosen to award the hosting rights for the Women's Rugby World Cup 2017 to the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU). This prestigious tournament will be held in Belfast and Dublin in August next year, and Northern Ireland will undoubtedly benefit from the global coverage that goes with such an important event. The Northern Ireland Executive are also very supportive of the bid to host the Rugby World Cup in 2023. I am delighted that Ireland is through to the second phase of the bid process. I know that a lot of work will go into this next phase to secure a winning bid. Northern Ireland will also host the 2017 UEFA European Women's Under-19 Championship. Securing that football tournament is particularly exciting, considering the recent success of our men's senior team, who did so well in the summer's European Championship in France.

The Gran Fondo of the Giro d'Italia will return next year as part of the successful legacy event. Some Members talked about the legacy of big events that we attract in Northern Ireland. In 2015-16, the event attracted 3,066 participants, 21% of whom were from outside Northern Ireland. The 2016-17 event attracted 4,399 participants, 14% of whom came from outside the Province. The impact of events of this type is instant, with riders, their friends and families filling up hotels, enjoying our local food and drink and attractions, experiencing our unique cycling trails, increasing international visitors and generating revenue for local businesses.

Mrs Long: I thank the Minister for giving way. He makes a compelling case in the assessment he does of the economic out-turn of the issues that are supported by the Executive. However, sporting events take place day and daily. There are, for example, 10 world champions in kick-boxing in my constituency. They bring people from Japan, the US and across Europe here, and they have a multiplicity of championships there. That is not work supported by the Executive.

Does the Minister do any assessment of its value to the economy, as well as to participation in sport?

4.30 pm

Mr Hamilton: It is a topic that was mentioned by many Members in their contributions about celebrating — I am sure that the Member agrees — the large events, both home-grown and international, that we have established or attracted over the years. There is an importance for local events, and I have heard it loud and clear. There is a range of events at local level that have been supported; not always through the Executive, admittedly, but mostly through local government. That is the principal way in which it should be done to reflect the needs of the local community.

Mrs Long: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hamilton: Hold on a second. I know that the Member likes to talk, but just let me finish my point.

Mrs Long: International events, Minister.

Mr Hamilton: Look, if the Member has any particular cases that she wants to raise with me, I am very happy to look at them —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask that all Members make their comments through the Chair.

Mr Hamilton: — to assess their impact on any particular events that the Member raises. I know that the councils that principally fund those events at a very local level will do their impact assessments on what the impact has been on the local economy so that they can justify the expenditure that they have made on them.

Whether it is very localised events, events that attract people from elsewhere in the British Isles or, indeed, from further afield, it is vital that we focus at an Executive level on the bigger events and that there are smaller events at a local level that allow people to participate. They can be inspired perhaps by the bigger events, but they can certainly be encouraged to participate at a local level in local events.

I am happy to give way to the Member if she has another point to make.

Mrs Long: Thank you. The point that I am making to the Minister is not that these are local events, but that they are international events; they are world championships. They are not supported by any government funding, but they take place in Northern Ireland on a regular basis. They are not just local events.

Mr Hamilton: The Member will appreciate that, as successful as we have been over the last number of years in attracting some major sporting events — some of which I have mentioned already; some of which I am sure I will mention throughout the remainder of my contribution — we do so on the basis of what will bring in a return for the wider economy and improve our tourism product. That is not to say that other events held at a local level, which are international in nature, are seen in any way as inferior. The Member will appreciate that there is a limited budget to support events available to me and my Department through its agencies, so we cannot support every event. To do so would dilute the pot and give far less of a return on our investment than supporting the bigger events that I have already mentioned.

I am also delighted that the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open will return to Northern Ireland next July with Portstewart Golf Club being the host venue. Tourism NI and my Department are working with partners in the European Tour, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Tourism Ireland and the wider tourism industry to deliver another great Irish Open, the third to be held in Northern Ireland in the last five years. The Irish Open has, of course, been one of the key factors in attracting the Open Championship to Royal Portrush, and next year's Irish Open will provide the perfect stepping stone to the excitement and drama of the biggest tournament in world golf, which will take place here in 2019. The Open's return to Northern Ireland is a hugely significant step forward. Securing this tournament has been a key part of Tourism NI's events strategy, and, unquestionably, it will further consolidate Northern Ireland's reputation as the home of outstanding events and boost efforts to grow domestic and overnight visitor numbers and spend.

The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews retains global research company Repucom to conduct an annual branded content analysis of the Open Championship. It estimates that the combined tourism promotion and economic development will be up to £70 million, with

200,000 spectators expected at Royal Portrush over the competition days.

The hosting of major golf events, including our own — as mentioned by Mr Frew — Northern Ireland Open, as with all major sporting events that we manage to attract, continues to play a key role in realising our ambitious plans to grow tourism here to a £1 billion industry by 2020. Whether it is world-class home-grown motor sports events like the North West 200, the Circuit of Ireland and the Ulster Grand Prix, or major one-off internationals, they all have the capacity to showcase our people and places on a global stage.

Events drive visitor numbers, generate increased spend and provide platforms for the visitor to interact with the local culture, local people and explore our scenic landscapes and cities. In activity tourism, and I have to say that, when I am on holiday, I am anything other than —

Mr Attwood: I thank the Minister for giving way and note what the leader of the Alliance Party has said. The British Open is going to be the game changer of all game changers for tourism and sports tourism in Northern Ireland. Given that we are within touching distance of 2019 for marketing and promotion, will you have a bespoke budget line for the British Open 2019 to deal with infrastructure, marketing, promotion, training, skills and anything else that will make that event as big as possible given its scale? Is there going to be a bespoke strategy, bespoke money, bespoke efforts and bespoke ambitions because that is the measure of whether you are putting meat on the bones of a tourism strategy?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his contribution and it is not unexpected around golfing. The Member is a far better golfer than I am and he is a great supporter of golf, particularly when the Irish Open first came to Royal Portrush and the regeneration of that area. My ministerial colleague Paul Givan is actively working on that front to ensure that the benefits of the Open are felt.

The Member is right, this is at an entirely different level. Members will want to promote events in their particular areas, but this is a truly international global event the like of which we have not seen in Northern Ireland, perhaps ever. Even when it was hosted here in the 1950s, it was nowhere near the level it is now. The Member is absolutely right; we need to capitalise on this, and I am adamant that we will not miss this opportunity. Yes, the intention is that the Open will come back on a regular basis, but we will not miss this opportunity in 2019 to make sure there are other benefits such as regeneration, improving skills and infrastructure in the surrounding area and across Northern Ireland.

The motion also mentions activity tourism, and this is one of the key themes for unlocking the potential of Northern Ireland as a tourist destination. The beauty and variety of our ever-changing landscape, and the compact distances that we have, make Northern Ireland a wonderful place to undertake all types of outdoor activity. Activity tourism is estimated to be worth about £100 million to the Northern Ireland economy annually and is well placed to grow further due to the diversity of activities available. Activity tourism marketing is delivered through a service level agreement with Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland, which is responsible for industry engagement and the development of activity-specific websites. The activity tourism sector here is young and vibrant, representing a

confident Northern Ireland and, in that context, Tourism NI's activity product priorities are focused on five areas: adventure, walking, mountain biking, cycling and canoeing.

Many Members talked about local events, particularly in their areas and constituencies. In 2014, Tourism NI introduced a three-year letter of offer fund for international events and administration of the national fund as a sponsorship scheme. However, that events programme is the subject of a review being conducted by my Department, which is likely to take a number of months to conclude. In the interim, Tourism NI has put in place a one-year programme to support events whilst the review and strategy are completed.

A new tourism strategy for Northern Ireland to 2025 is being developed by my Department, and part of that new tourism events strategy will emerge to support the delivery of the overarching tourism strategy targets. There is a new appreciation of the potential for tourism to contribute to the growth of the Northern Ireland economy and to deliver jobs and investment. We have worked very hard in Northern Ireland to improve visitor perception and to build on our reputation as the home of great events. We must continue this hard work with a focus on further improving our reputation internationally and our attractiveness as a destination. When we play host, we all join in and go the extra mile.

Our new tourism strategy will have a global focus that will set Northern Ireland as an internationally competitive and inspiring destination. The new tourism strategy will have the sole aim of transforming Northern Ireland into the world-class tourism destination that we know that it can be, and we are pursuing that aim on strong foundations. The annual tourism statistics show that, in 2015, we had 4.5 million overnight trips, with an associated expenditure of £764 million; a 3% increase. We had 2.3 million external visitors, which is the highest number on record and a 6% year-on-year increase.

Hotel room occupancy was 67%, which was up 2%. Northern Ireland also welcomed nearly 70 cruise ships with 123,000 passengers. More recently, NISRA occupancy statistics for January to September this year reveal record room occupancy levels over the summer, with August hotel occupancy reaching 88%, the highest on record for any month. Factors that may bode well over the rest of the year include recent favourable currency movements. That will potentially be supported by improvements in air connectivity over the winter, with 10 new routes from Spain, Poland, Germany, Italy and Brussels.

World-renowned events such as those that we have been speaking of today will continue to play a vital role in attracting external visitors, helping to enhance our international reputation as a destination of choice and providing world-class experiences for all. Northern Ireland has already had significant success in bidding for and hosting a range of major global events.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Minister bring his comments to a close?

Mr Hamilton: We are in a strong position to continue the success and to attract sporting events and tourists who wish to engage in a range of outdoor activities.

Ms S Bradley: I welcome the opportunity to make the winding-up speech on the amendment. I start with comments made by my party colleague Justin McNulty, who

rightly referred to events such as the Irish Open and could barely contain himself, being the sporting man that he is, when he referred to the bid for the Rugby World Cup and something about a haka on the Mall in Armagh. Reference was also made — rightly so — to embracing the GAA. The scale of support across the world for the GAA is largely unmeasured, but the Executive must embrace it, considering the fact that we are the homeland of Gaelic games. Justin McNulty also rightly raised the point that there is one-event thinking going on at the moment — successfully at times, when events are captured and brought here — but we must extend beyond that way of thinking.

Alan Chambers expressed his concern that the Minister's party had once again tabled a motion for debate that really calls for nothing more than what we should already consider to be agreed. He also made calls for a sporting museum, which, he thinks, would be a precious addition to any strategy.

Stephen Farry rightly highlighted what we will discuss further: the self-congratulatory tone of the motion. He went on to mention and discuss all-island connectivity, the methods of getting repeat visits, customer care and, rightly, the training that would be required to make a visitor's experience one that they would wish to return to and share again.

We then had a contribution from Steve Aiken, who referred to the Wild Atlantic Way, which we look at with envy, and there are lessons to be learned there. He acknowledged the good work of many organisations and individuals who have contributed to the sector and the success of sporting tourism to date.

What we must ask ourselves is this: why would tourists come here? What events would attract them? How do they get here? There is the uncomfortable truth of the United Airlines story, which should not be repeated in the House. There are also issues with the Enterprise service, which is barely functioning right now. Some tourists might even like to approach my constituency of South Down via a bridge at Narrow Water. The infrastructure and the means of getting here should be there.

How do they get here? Where do they stay? I am very conscious that hotel plans are sitting with the Planning Service and not getting through the system. There must be out-of-silo thinking and a joined-up approach to where people will stay and what their experience will be. What activities and pursuits will they engage in while they are here? At the same time, we are talking about the possible threat of closure of outdoor education centres. Opportunities do not exist in other constituencies to partake in sports that people would not otherwise have an opportunity to engage in. What opinion will those tourists leave with when they have had the Northern Ireland hospitality experience? Again, that goes back to Stephen Farry's comments about training and being not just open for business but successfully open for good business and giving our tourists an experience to remember.

Mr Maskey: I thank the Member for giving way. While she is lamenting the fact that, for example, the Narrow Water bridge has not yet been developed, does she not accept that many of her party colleagues supported all those parties in the last Southern mandate that withdrew the money the Irish Government had committed to the project?

4.45 pm

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Ms S Bradley: No, I do not accept that; in fact, if I remember correctly, it was your party colleague who was in office when the money was not brought forward for the bridge.

Speaking directly to the amendment, Conor Murphy on behalf of Sinn Féin gave first light about why his party did not believe it could support the amendment. He said that he believes that the SDLP, at any cost, will come in here and take merit from the Executive. I assure you that that is not the case. If the Member does not want to listen to me, he could take time to read the amendment. He will see that it goes further than the motion. It adds a sense of urgency and asks the Executive to address the need for:

“capital, resource, marketing, skills and training”.

If the Member is serious in saying his party does not accept those as additional factors to be considered in the amendment, I find that quite disingenuous. In fact, I would go further. When I listened to the debate — this will perhaps be the routine — I felt that, regardless of what amendment is tabled, parties will simply look through it to find a get-out. I do not see the get-out here, and Sinn Féin should really reflect before it decides how it will vote on this. While it is comfortable going for the softer language, I ask this: is there a fear of accountability? Rather than vote for the promotion and encouragement of economic growth, why not call for real and substantial growth? I put it to the House that, increasingly —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring her remarks to a close?

Ms S Bradley: I will. Increasingly, I suspect this Executive will become known as the Executive who like to share the blame but never the credit.

Mr Lyons: I am pleased to be able to make the winding-up speech on the debate. I thank Members for their contributions.

There is a reason why we brought the motion before the House. It is the same as the other motions we have brought as members of the Economy Committee on the economic strategy, exports, SMEs and now on activity- and sports-based tourism. That is because we want to set out our stall and show the priorities we have and what we would like to see in the various strategies that the Minister will bring forward.

I know this is hard for some members of the Opposition to take in, but the Executive have had some success on those issues. I know you would prefer it if we did not, but we are going to talk about the successes we have had. I know you are trying to get a narrative together that everything is bad and terrible and that we are awful people. We have had successes, and I am afraid you will have to listen to some of them.

Mr Durkan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lyons: If the Member has something useful to say, I will give way.

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for giving way. Will he say whether all those successes have taken place in the past five months?

Mr Lyons: No, they happened before that as well. We have certainly had successes, and I am sure that, by the end of this Assembly term, we will have had even more that we will be able to speak about. We want to talk about the successes. We will continue to have them, and we hope that, through the new tourism strategy, we will be able to address some of the issues.

We have had successes in tourism. You have only to look at some of the figures. We have the highest number of external visitors, hotel occupancy is up and we have the highest number of overnight stays. We have also made huge progress in developing our tourism potential and product here in Northern Ireland. In just the last number of years, we have seen the opening of Titanic Belfast and the visitors centre at the Giant's Causeway, and next year will see the opening, for good, of the Gobbins path in East Antrim. In the meantime, do not worry: if you want to visit East Antrim, there are many other attractions you can see. We look forward to that happening as soon as possible.

It is also right that we look at areas in which we can see room for improvement. One of the reasons why we brought the motion to the House was that a significant portion of our tourist offering is in larger sports events or activity-based tourism.

What we are saying to the Minister today is, when that tourism strategy is being put together, let us not forget about that and about how important they can be. That is the basis of our motion today.

I will address briefly some of the criticisms that have been made of the motion. This was not meant to be a motion that would divide the House or cause any problems in the House. We think that it is fairly straightforward and simple and something that everyone can buy into. That was the way in which the motion was drafted, but we have complaints that it does not include all the sporting organisations that have been involved in the success. Absolutely, we need to acknowledge the work of sporting and other organisations that has led to the success, but, as an Assembly, we are here to call on the Executive to do things and take action. That is why we are pointing out some of the steps that could be taken.

To move on to what other Members have said, briefly, first of all I thank Gordon Dunne for opening the debate and highlighting the importance of activity and sports events for our tourism sector, and all the benefits that can come from that. He only mentioned North Down twice, which, I suppose, is some kind of record for him, but no doubt he will continue to mention it in the future. Of course he had to mention motor sport as well, and the opportunities that can come from that.

Justin McNulty is no longer here, but he mentioned the reason for the amendment, and I have to say that I think it was just for no other reason than to have a pop at the Executive. I do not see any real reason for putting that amendment in. It took him almost six minutes, but he was able to mention Brexit and talk about the uncertainty that that is causing for the tourism sector. I do not know what figures he has been looking at because, regardless of your view on Brexit, surely people can see the benefits that are coming from the changes that have occurred in the pound and how beneficial that has been.

Conor Murphy mentioned some constituency issues and mentioned the keen cyclist who was in front of him, which,

as Carál Ní Chuilín has pointed out, was not her. Maybe Sammy Douglas can encourage her to take that up, but he was absolutely right in what he said: any tourism strategy must be well done, not half-baked, and timely, and we look forward to the publication of that.

Alan Chambers talked about the sports museum that he wants to see. He did not give away where he wanted that to be — probably in North Down. If he wants it in North Down, he will have the support of Gordon Dunne, so he has two votes in favour of that already. It is a shame that he did not give way, because I would have liked to have heard a little bit of the debate between him and Paul Frew on that.

Stephen Farry mentioned the importance of not just having high-profile events. That is not what the motion is calling for. We want to see those high-profile, major international events and not just one-offs. In its entirety, it is about activity-based sports events and the tourism that comes from that.

Mrs Palmer: Thank you very much for giving way. There has been a lot of talk in this debate around massive sporting events. Do you agree with me that more needs to be given to the Women's Rugby World Cup next year and the European Women's Under-19 Football Championships next year? Women are certainly at —

Mr Lyons: The point first of all is that both are being supported and are getting funding. That is exactly the point of the motion: it is about making sure that we are getting the support for these. So I challenge Stephen Farry on that. Stephen Farry was also very interesting because he complained about how the motion was all about self-congratulations. The Alliance Members would know all about self-congratulations; they do it often enough themselves. Maybe I will take a lecture from him on that, but, as I said, we are not going to shy away from our accomplishments as much as he would prefer it if we did.

Tom Buchanan rightly talked about the pride that we should have in our sporting heroes in Northern Ireland, and other Members mentioned that during the debate. It is important that we do that, because that has been the catalyst for so much of the success that we have had. He also made a very important point about ensuring that we have the infrastructure necessary in Northern Ireland. He also floated a novel idea of a marathon through west Tyrone and Fermanagh and south Tyrone. Maybe he can continue to be a cheerleader for that.

I mentioned already that Carál Ní Chuilín made very clear that she is not the cyclist whom Conor Murphy was referring to, but she did mention the role of local government. It is important that we ensure that all levels of government are involved where possible. George Robinson extolled the virtues of his constituency and the fantastic tourist product that we have on the north coast. I also welcome the fact that he elaborated somewhat on the activity-based aspect. It is not just about the big international sporting events but about the other things that we have here on the activity side of things, which we should be proud of and where there is room for growth and investment.

Steve Aiken mentioned Jonathan Rea, whom, I am sure, the whole House will want to congratulate. He went off topic slightly, not that that has stopped him in the past, and talked about the cultural, literary and Ulster-Scots side of things. That is not what the motion is addressing, but it is absolutely right to mention it, because we have a product

there that is worth selling, and we want to make sure that that is realised.

Alex Maskey nailed it when he referred to the SDLP reasons for putting forward the amendment. He also made a very important point on the importance of health and well-being for our people. Paul Frew highlighted our sporting heroes, in particular those from north Antrim. He told us something of his golf knowledge and perhaps some of his ambitions for the future.

Finally, I thank the Minister for his comments. It is good to hear that the tourism strategy is being developed and will include the issues that we have been discussing. He mentioned the activity-based side of tourism, which maybe we could have mentioned a little bit more during the debate. The targets that he set out are all very welcome.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can the Member bring his comments to a close?

Mr Lyons: I thank the Members who took part in the debate. We have put forward our position, and I ask Members to support it. I commend the motion to the House.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I have to say that I am very disappointed that tennis did not get mentioned in the entire debate. That will happen in the next one.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 38; Noes 56.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Durkan, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Hanna, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCrossan, Mr McGlone, Mr McGrath, Mr McKee, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Mullan, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McNulty and Mr Mullan.

NOES

Mr Anderson, Ms Archibald, Mr Bell, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Ms Dillon, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Ms Gildernew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Mr McElduff, Mr McGuigan, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr Maskey, Mr Middleton, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Murphy, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Stalford, Ms Sugden, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr Robinson.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly welcomes the success that the Executive have had in attracting major sporting events in recent years and attracting visitors engaged in sports tourism; notes the high-value economic benefit that can arise from events-based and activity-based sports tourism; and calls on the Minister for the Economy, through his Department, agencies and the new tourism strategy, to promote and encourage growth in this sector.

Adjourned at 5.14 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 15 November 2016

The Assembly met at 10.30 am (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Private Members' Business

Middletown Centre for Autism

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Mr McElduff: I beg to move

That this Assembly is deeply concerned by the failure to provide residential assessments and therapies at the Middletown Centre for Autism; believes that this represents a setback for autism services across the island of Ireland; and calls on the Minister of Education to work with his Executive colleagues and the Minister for Education and Skills to evaluate the development of the Middletown Centre for Autism, to renew their commitment to the original priorities of the Middletown Centre for Autism and ensure that all services are fully funded.

The first thing I want to do in the context of the motion is commend the Minister for his visit to the Middletown Centre for Autism in early August. It was not long after he was appointed Minister and was an early initiative on his part. It is all downhill from here. *[Laughter.]* I am only joking. I genuinely want to commend the Minister for visiting the Middletown centre of excellence for autism.

The Middletown centre, most Members will know, is a joint initiative by the Department of Education and the Department of Education and Skills, the two Departments for education on this island. It was opened in March 2007 and is funded by the two Departments on a 50:50 basis. Its key objective is to deliver educational services for children with some of the most complex forms of autism. The centre provides support for those who have been referred by the Education Authority or by the Department in the Twenty-six Counties — I will say that, if nobody else says it.

I also want to point out that the Middletown centre provides an extensive programme of training and research for parents and professionals. I am very mindful of the stress and pressure that parents feel. Parents of children with autism are very often under immense stress and need a lot of support and respite.

I want to touch briefly on the prevalence of autism in our society. It is generally known that the levels of autism in schoolchildren have more than doubled in the last seven years — I think that the correct figure might be 4,000 children with autism in the North alone — and those

children have special educational needs. That obviously presents a very challenging scenario for educationalists, parents and Departments. I will go back to very start and remind Members that autism is a developmental disability that influences a person's ability to communicate and relate to other people as well as affecting how they make sense of the world. Of course, it is a spectrum. Some children and young people will lead quite independent lives, and others will need a lot of support throughout their lives.

Before I return specifically to the Middletown centre, I want to say that, under the Autism Act 2011, the Department of Health leads on the development, implementation, monitoring and reporting of a cross-departmental autism strategy and publishes figures that are extracted from school census data collected by the Department of Education. During the debate, I invite the Minister to respond to questions from the National Autistic Society (NAS) and Autism NI via their jointly published report, 'Broken Promises', which reflects on the effectiveness of the Act. Indeed, I tabled a question in June inviting the Minister to detail his Department's response to the 'Broken Promises' report, and the Minister could, in his response, perhaps provide some elaboration on, for example, whether there are plans in the Department of Education for specific autism training for teachers, staff, classroom assistants, other education professionals and youth workers. That is the type of recommendation that is included in the 'Broken Promises' report that was initiated by NAS and Autism NI.

The Middletown centre has passed all its tests with flying colours. Joint inspection reports always refer to the exceptional standard of courses and support services that are delivered in the centre, in a child's home and in school settings. The Middletown centre is a very important facility. The Minister has previously pointed out that the focus now appears to be on the delivery of outreach services and that, as the centre has evolved, that is where the focus now appears to lie, but the motion questions that and the residential aspect of the centre, which seems to have been abandoned. Indeed, the Minister acknowledged in previous ministerial statements that residential services would be of value to children and young people in Middletown. The media have reported widely on the abandonment of the residential services aspect of the Middletown centre, and I am trying to get to the bottom of that in the motion.

My colleagues, including Jennifer McCann and Catherine Seeley, and I are trying to get to the bottom of the original concept that residential services would be delivered at Middletown and of the idea that there would be a change, an evolution or a development, and we want to know why

there has been a shift in that thinking. I asked a question in the Assembly after the North/South Ministerial Council statement on 3 October regarding the abandonment of residential services. I go back to the point that the original concept of the Middletown centre was that it would provide individual residential support and that pupils between the ages of 11 and 19 would receive appropriate educational interventions for finite time periods, with anticipated educational benefits. That is our concern, and it is reflected strongly in the wording of the motion. However, in the same breath, I want to acknowledge that I detect from the Minister and his Department a commitment to Middletown and to working with the Department of Education and Skills into the future. I wish the Minister and his Department well in that.

Mr Speaker: I call Lord Morrow.

Lord Morrow: Thank you, Mr Speaker, but I did not realise that I was down to speak on this, but, having been called on, I will take the opportunity to say something. I was going to make an intervention when Mr McElduff was speaking, but I thought better of it. Now that you have called me, I have the opportunity to put the question to the Minister directly.

The Middletown centre is delivering and, according to all the reports, meeting expectations. However, when the centre was first mooted, it was asked — the question remains for the Minister, although he has inherited the issues and will, I suspect, have to give a lot of careful thought to them — whether Middletown was the best place for this type of provision. There are those who told me, quite vociferously, that it was not the proper place and that the facility should have been more central and accessible to the population, rather than on the edge of the border. We accept that it was the former, former Minister of Education, Caitríona Ruane — notorious for making some crazy decisions — who made the decision to put it where it was. We queried it at the time, so we are not coming in late and saying, as an afterthought, that a different location would have been better. However —

Ms Seeley: I thank the Member for giving way; I appreciate that. Does the Member agree that, given that this is an area of cross-border cooperation, it makes sense that the centre is located close to the border?

Lord Morrow: Not really.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute

Lord Morrow: Thank you. The fact that it was on the border was the problem for some of us. We believe that the provision is basically for the people of Northern Ireland. I understand that there are those from the other side of the border who use it, but that raises another question: who is financing it? If it is as you say, is it financed both by the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland? No doubt the Minister will deal with that, and the Member, when she gets up to speak, will deal with it also. Having said that, the provision is essential and important, and it seems to me, from the reports I have heard, that it is fit for purpose and delivering. That is the issue we need to dwell on today.

I listened to Mr McElduff. He was not hypercritical of the Minister; as a matter of fact, he started off very well, but then he warned him that it was all downhill from then on. It was not too bad: the hill did not seem to be that steep. The Sinn Féin motion, although it might seem to start off with criticism of the Minister, veers away from that. Mr McElduff

has gone some distance today to curb that criticism, and it has not been too sharp. We as a party will not vote against the motion —

Mr Weir (The Minister of Education): Not vote for the motion.

Lord Morrow: Yes, I thought I said that. We will not be voting for the motion because we believe that too many things have been left out of it and it does attack the Minister to some degree, although he is well used to that and it would be like water off a duck's back.

That would not annoy him — not the bit that annoys us. We believe that the motion misses the mark. I will stop there, Mr Speaker.

10.45 am

Mrs Overend: I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate as the Ulster Unionist Party's education spokesperson. Fundamentally, at the heart of the motion, we find a very important issue being brought to the House, and that is to ensure that the healthcare, social and educational needs of young people with autism and their families in Northern Ireland are met. With that in mind, we commend the motion.

This is an issue that, in fact, since 2011, the Executive have had a statutory duty to tackle under the Autism Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 via the auspices of the autism strategy, yet, in June 2016, we found ourselves reading the report, which the proposer mentioned, from the National Autistic Society and Autism NI, indicating that, despite all the promises and hype, services are getting worse rather than better. How can it be, five years after the implementation of the Autism Act, that services for those with the condition are actually getting worse, promises are unfulfilled, duties are unmet and young people have been failed? I fear that that is a phrase that we will repeat all too often in the coming years. Indeed, it is not for lack of information that these failures are occurring. In fact, research and studies such as those that go on in Middletown have fed into what is a rich body of knowledge around many of the issues that affect those with the condition.

One of the major areas of concern amongst families of children with autism is that diagnosis is not early enough to make the most of support and advice. A growing body of evidence shows that early intervention can improve social and communication skills in children with autism spectrum disorders. At the beginning of 2016, it was reported that, in the Belfast Trust area, where autism is most prevalent, children are waiting up to 20 months to receive a diagnosis. That equates roughly to just under two full school years. I, personally, find this absolutely unacceptable, especially considering that it is recommended that a child should wait no more than 13 weeks for diagnosis. Indeed, in the Northern Trust, by August 2016, 58% of children on the waiting list had been waiting for 13 weeks or longer. This was even after the Minister of Health had announced a £2 million investment in autism, which had been available to trusts since 1 April 2016. Whatever the Executive are doing, it is simply not working.

The impact is then felt on the children themselves and their families. Without a statement of diagnosis, children cannot receive the care packages or specialist education

that they need. Much of the problem relates to the fact that future estimates of need are turning out to be completely inaccurate. I understand that the rates of children being diagnosed have quadrupled since 2002. It is therefore very unfortunate that many of the services that are provided by centres such as Middletown are accessed much later than is necessary for maximum impact on young people and the quality of their lives.

By all accounts, the Middletown Centre for Autism provides an excellent service and plays a vital role in meeting the needs of children with autism in Northern Ireland. It has outstanding inspection reports. Its research is considered world class. After speaking to many parents, teachers and school principals who have accessed its training, I know that it makes an invaluable difference to the lives of those who have the privilege of availing themselves of the service. One parent recently told me that, once you have understanding and awareness, you eliminate the stigma that is associated with autism. That is something that we need to remember now and in the future. In all walks of life and all Departments, we need to eliminate the stigma that is associated with autism and increase awareness and understanding.

It is unfortunate that the funding model for the Middletown centre is dependent on a different country, which is at the mercy of its own electorate, financial pressures and so on. Unfortunately, that is why we are in the position that we are in at the moment. The Middletown Centre for Autism is funded on a 50:50 basis, as we all know, between the Department of Education here and the Department of Education and Skills in the Republic of Ireland. Indeed, in 2009, the then Department of Education and Science in the Republic said that it could not fund the expansion of Middletown because of financial pressures. Despite the then Minister of Education's protestations, the expansion plans for a residential service never came to fruition.

Therefore, although we support the motion in principle, the Minister will have to secure agreement —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude her remarks.

Mrs Overend: Perhaps —

Mr Weir: Will the Member give way?

Mrs Overend: Yes.

Mr Weir: This will get her an extra minute. The Member indicated, particularly from parental feedback, the invaluable service that Middletown provides. It is a model largely of outreach and direct engagement with parents. In the light of that, will she indicate why she is commending a motion — I appreciate the general remarks made about autism — that would shift Middletown away from being an outreach model towards being a residential model? That would take the centre in the wrong direction for dealing with autism.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Minister for the extra minute and for the opportunity to give my reasons. Outreach is worth so much to people across Northern Ireland, but it has been said to me that it would be useful if teenagers were to have the opportunity to stay over for an assessment. You are assessing children during school days, but they sometimes need to be assessed in the evening time. It has been said to me that that might be useful as well.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr McNulty: I thank the signatories to the motion for bringing the issue of the Middletown Centre for Autism to the House today.

The Middletown Centre for Autism is a shining light for cross-border cooperation. It is one of the success stories of joined-up government on the island, and it should be a lesson —

Mr Speaker: For the sake of Hansard, will you pull your mic up? Thank you.

Mr Weir: We are in danger of hearing you. *[Laughter.]*

Mr McNulty: Ha ha. *[Laughter.]* It should be a lesson to all involved in politics on this island that, when we set our political differences aside, we really can make a difference to the lives of the most vulnerable children in our society. The Middletown Centre for Autism was established in 2007 in response to the joint task force established in 2001 by the Department of Education here and the now Department of Education and Skills in Dublin. It has been, and continues to be, an outstanding success. During 2012, and again earlier this year, a joint North/South independent and rigorous inspection found the quality of work and services on offer at Middletown to be outstanding.

I welcome today's debate, but I am a little perplexed by the motion. Although the vision in 2000-01 up to 2007 was for a centre with residential placement at Middletown for five weeks, five days a week, offering intensive learning and support, thinking has moved on. Researchers, academics and professional experts the world over since then have cautioned against such a short intervention. In fact, they now recommend a whole-life support approach, one that embraces the needs of children at home, in their school and in their community. Instead of working with one child for a short period, they recommend working with the family and the whole school, including teachers, staff and dinner ladies.

The Middletown Centre for Autism is at the heart of my constituency. I know it well, and I know how it works. I visited it just last week. The motion contradicts what all the experts are saying works and what should happen. The original vision for Middletown included a residential element, but research, time and professional opinion have moved on. All the expert advice and thinking points to the current model adopted by the centre as being the one that works best. I want to see the model and, indeed, Middletown grow and expand.

In 2009, when the global economy went into free fall, the Irish Government and the Executive paused the then planned capital expansion for the residential proposals. The centre and its sponsoring Departments engaged experts to review the systems, proposals and programmes. What came out of that review has been an outstanding success.

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for giving way. I apologise for any facetious remarks that I made earlier, seeing as he now seems to be agreeing with me.

Does he agree that one of the advantages of the different model that has been put in place, the one that has been borne out in time, is that, because the workers deal with children in their own school, there has also been a positive spin-off for the schools? Schools that may not have a particular experience of autism beyond the family of the autistic pupil involved have gained a much greater

understanding of autism, and that has prepared them a lot better for having any other children who are somewhere on the autistic spectrum. The current system therefore has an unforeseen benefit.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McNulty: The evidence shows that it has to work for the support network or it will not work for the child.

In 2009, when the global economy went into free fall, the Irish Government and the Executive paused the planned capital expansion for the residential proposals. The centre and its sponsoring Departments engaged with experts to review their systems, proposals and programmes, and what came out of the review has been an outstanding success, as I have already said. The centre developed a model that was more person-centred, benefiting from the multiplier effect of being more focused in the school and in the home, and in 2012 there was a vision for a phased expansion plan for the centre. The Education Ministers at the time, John O'Dowd MLA and Ruairi Quinn TD, gave the green light to an expansion of the services delivered by the centre with a focus on ensuring a sustainable future.

The original vision proposed a five-week intensive residential programme, whereas now a 52-week programme supporting our young people from the age of three to 19 is on offer. The key element of the current approach is to mainstream the support to coordinate a wrap-around service where our young people are getting support in their homes, schools and in their community. It is a transdisciplinary service, including speech, behavioural and educational support. The approach adopted recognises that the support has to work for the group; otherwise, it will not work for the child.

The current model is working above and beyond what was originally envisaged. The recent inspection report said that it offers highly individualised transdisciplinary support for autism to children and young people. It points to evidence that the work being done is impacting significantly on the educational and life experience of referred pupils, their teachers and parents. The original vision was to support 140 cases per year and yet, since 2007, the centre has trained and supported 19,395 parents and 37,172 education and health professional across the island. That is an outstanding achievement.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr McNulty: If any criticism can be made of Middletown, it is maybe that it does not tell its story well enough.

Mr Lunn: I am always glad to discuss Middletown in the House, even on the back of a poorly worded motion, such as this one. I will put Lord Morrow out of his misery straight away: funding for Middletown is 50:50 between the two Governments. On that basis, if you wanted to put it somewhere central it would probably be further south than it is now because it covers the whole of the Republic, as well as us, so Middletown is, I think, a very good location.

We have various problems with the motion. In fact, the only bit that we approve of is the last few words:

“ensure that all services are fully funded.”

If Middletown was funded more adequately, we would get a return on it that would be equal to any funding that we provide because it does such terrific work, as others have said.

There is a disparity between what the motion calls for and what would be best for the continuing development of Middletown. Others have referred to the residential aspect. The original idea of Middletown, from memory, was that it would offer five-week residential courses for about 140 or 150 children per annum. That had drawbacks because of the disturbance involved with the children, for a start, and the fact that five weeks is not really long enough. The model that it has developed allows them to, in our case, look after up to 64 children, and it does that through schools, homes and the community in a mainstream way. The treatment and assessment that it provides can last up to a year. So, it is either a year for 64 children or five weeks for 150; the experts in this field are in no doubt which is the better option.

The motion calls for another evaluation. The last evaluation report was in September, just passed, and it was outstanding. The one in 2012 said the same thing — outstanding. These people really deliver value for money, and the training that they provide for teachers and parents across the island, and the effect that they have on the children they are allowed to concentrate on, is recognised widely. This is a really good scheme and a really good centre. Frankly, they do not want residential down there; it would divert them from what they think is the best option for them.

11.00 am

In terms of ensuring that they are fully funded, their budget was set at £2.174 million in 2012 and that has not been revised. I suppose you could give thanks that it has not been cut again. It is a piffling amount given what they do and the expertise that is required and which they provide. It should have been reviewed at least in line with inflation over those years. The only thing that they did get was £90,000 in one of the recent monitoring rounds to, frankly, avert a crisis in wages, which was what was happening.

I have no doubt that, if the House does nothing else today but ask the Minister to ensure that the service is fully funded, that would be a step forward. Fully funded means more than the £2.174 million per year that was set almost five years ago, Minister, but that is a matter for you.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he agree with me that it is astonishing that no record is kept by the Department of Education as to which teachers are trained, and how many? Maybe the Minister could look at that too so that we can identify any gaps across Northern Ireland.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Lunn: I thank Mrs Overend. I was not aware that there is no record kept, in fact I am a bit surprised by that. Surely a record must be kept in the schools in question, mostly special schools? I have spoken to the people at Harberton School in my area and they think that this service is invaluable. The way in which it is being delivered now is not really open to question.

The motion kind of gives us a bit of a problem. We decided yesterday that we would probably support it, but the more I look at it, the more I wonder what it is that we are supporting. I cannot help thinking that it is an education motion and that, perhaps, Sinn Féin might wish that it had done its homework, because the way it is worded does not add up.

Mr Agnew: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lunn: Yes, certainly.

Mr Agnew: Does the Member agree that it is not about whether we support Middletown, which is a fantastic facility, but it is the proposal to go back to residential provision that is the issue?

Mr Lunn: I am sure that I made the point about the notion that you would go back to the original priorities. The original priorities are to give children who are on the spectrum the very best treatment, assessment and therapy that we can provide. I will wait to hear if anybody can suggest a better way than what Middletown is doing at the moment, except that if you give them 50% more money, Minister, they will do 50% better and probably look after 50% more teachers, children and parents. You probably get the drift of what I think about the motion by now. *[Laughter.]* I will reserve judgement. Possibly, it will not get pushed to a vote; that would probably be the best thing.

Mr Logan: I want to contribute to the debate in a positive manner just as some other Members have, and I agree with most of what Mr Lunn said. The motion is quite negatively framed, but I want to contribute in a positive manner. I praise Middletown on the work that it does which is very valuable to the children — some of whom have very complex forms of autism — and their parents.

I am confident that the Department of Education and the Minister are clearly committed to meeting the needs of children and young people with autism. This manifests itself through a range of different methods, including mainstream provision, learning support centres attached to mainstream schools, and the special schools provision. The Department of Education also provides funding to the Middletown Centre for Autism and has established it and enabled it to expand its programme of direct support and intervention to children with complex autism, who are referred by the Education Authority, and provide professional and parental training and research services. Minister Weir visited the school in August this year, just three months into his appointment, to look around the centre and assure management and staff of his support.

I said earlier that I agree with Mr Lunn's comments. I am disappointed at the tone of the motion. It uses language such as, "deeply concerned", "failure" and "setback for autism services" and this is simply not accurate. It calls for residential assessments and, like others, I agree that this is not necessarily the best option. The research shows that children are best placed at home with their parents or carers, who have benefited from the centre's training.

It talks about a renewed commitment to the centre's original priorities, which are as follows:

"The Middletown Centre for Autism aims to support the promotion of excellence in the development and coordination of education services to children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders."

That support does not always need to come from residential services. As I said, I believe that that is best placed with parents and carers. After the launch of the Northern Ireland Executive's autism strategy and action plan, the Middletown Centre for Autism, in conjunction with the Education Authority, is delivering training programmes for teachers, education professionals, youth workers and

parents, helping to provide effective support for children with autism. Formal arrangements are also in place for collaborative working between the Department of Health and the Department of Education.

The Middletown Centre for Autism is, right now, a fantastic resource and facility for young people. The centre provides an extensive training programme for parents, schools and a range of professionals, offering opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and safe practices for education provision for children and young people with autism. The centre's data shows that, up to April 2016, almost 15,000 parents and 17,000 professionals in the Republic of Ireland and 4,500 parents and almost 20,000 professionals in Northern Ireland attended the centre's training events, which are held in venues across both countries. The latest inspection report, which was referred to, could not be more full of praise for the leadership in the school. Equipping people to deal with autism is a vital and necessary part of allowing individuals with ASD and their carers to get the most out of life. That is what the Middletown Centre for Autism seeks to do.

I am disappointed that the motion is framed negatively. As Lord Morrow rightly said, we will be voting it down today.

Ms J McCann: I thank my colleague Barry McElduff for proposing the motion. We are trying to add to what is happening at Middletown. We are not saying that its direction is wrong or anything else but are just trying to add the residential part of it.

The passing of the Autism Act 2011 was the result of a long campaign. Like me, many other Members were here at the time when individuals, parents and organisations representing people with autism fought long and hard in that campaign to get the Act passed. The Act was followed by the launch of an autism strategy and action plan. For children and adults who have autism or for parents whose children are autistic, it pointed the way towards the provision of improved support and services. Unfortunately, that was not the experience of many of those people.

Someone already mentioned some of the issues in 'Broken Promises', in which Autism NI and the National Autistic Society called for action now to ensure that that better quality of life for autistic people and their families is now delivered. There are a lot of people — I meet them day and daily in my constituency — who still feel that those services and access to them are not properly resourced in the way that they should be. That is particularly true of waiting times for children's assessments. I raised that issue at the Education Committee last week when the Department was in. There are still areas where people are waiting for up to 20 months for a child's assessment. That child cannot receive help in school until the assessment is carried out, which has a major impact on that child's ability to learn and future attainment levels. We really need to look at some of those issues as well.

Statistics show that some children can wait that length of time. Many families find it extremely difficult to cope with the practical and emotional problems that caring for someone with autism brings, and they often feel isolated and overwhelmed. There is a real need for those support services and adequate provision that can be easily accessed in order to help them.

I work with a number of people in my constituency in the Butterfly support group, which is a group of parents of

children with autism who came together to support and encourage each other. There are a lot of self-help groups out there that exist on donations and very small amounts of funding. They do activities with children and other parents. We need to look again at helping those groups and resourcing them better.

The Middletown centre, as has already been said, provides intensive assessment and learning support for children and young people with complex autism who experience difficulties in their educational setting. It also provides training to education professionals and parents of children who have autism, alongside different areas of research and information. People have already mentioned that it is an all-island facility that is jointly funded by the Executive and the Government in the South. The recent evaluation report said that the quality of leadership and management at the centre was outstanding, and that the services provided by the centre had a significant impact on the education and experiences not just of the pupils but of staff and parents.

There is no doubt, and I do not think that anybody is saying that it is not providing an excellent service. The reality is that outreach provision is a much-needed service. Like many here, I can remember people, at the time when this idea was being developed, wanting the services to be kept in local communities and schools that were handy for parents. There was also a small group of people who needed that residential facility — perhaps those who had more complex needs. What we are trying to do is to build and support that.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude her remarks.

Ms J McCann: I hope that people see that that is the way the motion is meant to be. It is about the added value of Middletown, and is certainly not a criticism of what is happening there at the moment.

Mrs Cameron: I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate. I was a member of the all-party group on autism during the last Assembly term, and now have the privilege of being the chair of the group. During the last number of years, I have gained an insight into how autism affects people and their families, the impact that it has and how overwhelming it can be for individuals and their loved ones. Although we have a broad understanding, the full impact of living with autism can only truly be felt by those who are directly living with the condition.

By definition, each case is completely individual, and no matter what strategy is arrived at, there will be no one-size-fits-all solution to this. In dealing with autism, it is vital that the individual is at the centre of the approach, and people with autism must receive the highest-quality education services, tailored to their individual needs, in order to achieve the best possible outcome. In doing so we will ensure that we are equipping those people with the appropriate life skills that are required to realise their educational achievements, access employment and, of course, fulfil their individual potential.

Northern Ireland has the highest incidence of autism diagnosis in the United Kingdom at 2.3%. The UK average is 1%. With more than double the national average, we in Northern Ireland should be approaching autism in a strategic and long-term manner to future-proof our services and ensure that those already in the system have access to the best possible ways to suitably manage their needs.

The Middletown Centre for Autism was established in 2007, when increasing numbers of children were being educated outside of Northern Ireland due to the severity of their ASD-associated behavioural issues. Since then, around 30 new pupils each year have availed themselves of the centre's excellent facilities and services. With two joint inspection reports noting the exceptional services delivered and the positive outcomes for its users, in school and at home, the work of the centre and its management must be congratulated.

The original model for the centre was intended to be a residential scheme. Over the years, this has developed into being more outreach in nature. My issue with the motion is the focus on the residential element of the centre. As I mentioned at the outset, autism is entirely individual and each case is very different. That said, one of the defining characteristics is the need for routine and the dislike of change. I am concerned that any enforced change of routine may actually be detrimental to the development and progress of people with autism and may, in fact, set back any progress.

I am further concerned that there may be an element of institutionalism with the residential treatment for autism, and I feel that this is not an approach that is necessarily appropriate. My view is that, through engaging with people in their own educational environment and supporting their families and teaching staff, we may be able to achieve better outcomes.

I am conscious that there is a lack of evidence to support the need for, or the implied success of, any proposed residential facility. I am aware that the Minister visited the centre during the summer, and the view among the professionals, parents and children using the facility was that outreach was the preferred option. The reality is that those are the voices that we need to listen to.

11.15 am

In closing, there is no doubt that we can do better in looking at the provision for autism. Whilst the Middletown model is working well and is achieving results, it is not providing what it was originally designed to do. I therefore believe that the current provision could be reviewed in order to ensure the best possible outcomes for service users. It must be recognised that we must attain good value for money whilst achieving that. We have significant educational, clinical and academic resources to draw on in reviewing the service, not to mention a vast number of voluntary and charity partners, such as Autism NI and the National Autistic Society. The key to reviewing this type of service is listening to those who are benefiting from it and using their experience to shape the future of autism services for Northern Ireland and through joint working with the Republic of Ireland.

The all-party group wishes the Minister of Education every success in his cross-border working with the Minister for Education and Skills in the Republic of Ireland. I look forward to seeing the results for the benefit of not only those dealing with autism today but for any future services. Whilst I and my party will not be supporting the motion today, I welcome the recent meetings that the Education Minister, in particular, and, indeed, the Health Minister, the First Minister and the deputy First Minister have had with —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mrs Cameron: — Autism NI and members of the APG.

Mrs Barton: Meeting the needs of young people with autism and their families is clearly something that we should all support. In the 14 years since the project at Middletown was announced, and in the five years since the implementation of the Autism Act, the prevalence of autism diagnosis in Northern Ireland has greatly increased but, unfortunately, the percentage of children helped by specialist assessment has declined dramatically.

It is concerning that, in the Programme for Government consultation paper, there appears to be only minimal provision made for special needs. Autism is not mentioned once in the entire draft Programme for Government, and special needs is mentioned only three times in the 200-page document and is never actually referred to in the list of actions. On page 45, it states:

“outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs also require additional focus if those outcomes are also to improve.”

Yet, this is not referenced again under the title, “What will we do?”. While the Executive state the obvious problem, I hope that they have the skills and the inclination to take action.

Recently, we debated the partnerships between schools and allied professionals in the health and social care sector. That is also crucial when considering the centre for autism. It must provide a linked-up, integrated service, as addressing health and social care needs equips all children to make the most of educational opportunities.

Many years ago, it was suggested that health visitors be equipped to identify autistic tendencies as early as the two-year assessment as that could enable support to be tailored for children at a very early age. Like most diagnoses, early diagnosis is advantageous in creating positive outcomes. My colleague Sandra Overend already covered the issues that young people with autism face during diagnosis, including increased waiting times as a result of the failure to properly plan for the number of children diagnosed.

Equally stressful, however, can be the other end of the education system where young adults with autism must make the transition to life as a school leaver. Learning does not stop for young people at 19. In a report by the Committee for Employment and Learning, published in 2016, areas of concern documented included a real lack of suitable provision for individuals during the transition stage and the fact that there are problems in the process that hamper a smooth transition, such as the lack of information. One idea that was considered was extending the statement of educational need to the age of 25. However, the report quite rightly stated that the same problem would present at 25. A substantive, tailored approach to special educational needs education must therefore be developed for the whole life of people with autism.

It is important to ensure that the Middletown Centre for Autism has its capacity expanded. That will require serious investment and expansion. Although we support the motion, we must not assume that that is the only way in which to provide autism services. We must continue to work with children, parents, teachers and other bodies to ensure that services for those with autism and related conditions continue to improve. Together with the

Middletown centre, that will have significant benefits for those with the condition and for society as a whole.

Ms Lockhart: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the matter. Autism, ADHD and Asperger's syndrome are all conditions that we hear about so often. I have sat with mums, dads and carers and have had them literally cry and long for some help and assistance for their children and other young people who present with those needs. The message is very clear: each child is different and each child presents with different needs when diagnosed with autism.

I commend the Minister on his visit to the centre in Middletown to see the facilities there at first hand. It is my intention to visit the centre in the not-too-distant future. Following his visit, I note that the Minister made a very clear statement in which he said that it is clear what a positive impact the services provided by the centre are having on pupils, parents and teachers. Those are the three key stakeholders in the whole debate.

Additional needs facilities and education provision are key focus areas for me in my term in the Assembly. During my time as a councillor, I was lobbied by many families, who contacted me to raise concerns about statementing and diagnosis. In the main, though, they contacted me about early intervention and ensuring that their child gets the best possible intervention at the earliest possible age.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Member for giving way. I know that she is a member of the all-party group on autism as well. Does she agree with me that the Assembly, on a cross-departmental basis, needs to look at 'Broken Promises', the report published by the two main autism charities? Does she also agree that more needs to be done on a cross-departmental basis to ensure the implementation of the Autism Act?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Ms Lockhart: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Absolutely, and I commend the Member for her role on the all-party group. The title of 'Broken Promises' says it all, and I was very encouraged by the Minister recently meeting the group to ensure its implementation. The Education Committee is a great arena in which to raise those issues, and you are 100% right about the need to ensure a working together by the Department of Health, the Department of Education, the Department for the Economy and the Department of Justice to help these children and young people realise their full potential.

The motion is too specific and does not address the areas of priority need. Residential has its place, but I do not believe that, on balance, it is a methodology that professionals necessarily believe is best placed to address need. A study has shown that autism affected 2.3% of the school population in 2015-16, which is a rise of 1.1% on the 2009-2010 figures. I suggest that that is down to a better understanding of the symptoms and awareness of the illness. However, that increase obviously means a need for increased provision and finance to deal with it. It is very clear that there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Previously, additional needs children were potentially labelled as disruptive or, in some instances, slow learners and were often left to their own devices. I am really encouraged by the fact that the Middletown centre is training and really homing in on these young people to try to help them realise their full potential.

I am very encouraged by the training programme that they have in place. I note with admiration the two joint inspection reports that state very clearly that Middletown centre delivers services to an exceptional standard, and that has affected the lives of children in school and at home. My only hesitation is that, as the numbers presenting with the condition increase, it is vital that we resource it in that way. I am not going to rehearse it, but I do not believe that residential is the way to deal with these young people. To take them out of their own surroundings is somewhat wrong, and I do not think that they would be able to cope with it.

It is vital that we listen to parents and ensure that they have feed-in, and I believe that Middletown is doing that in an exceptional way. The real issue with additional needs is not the educational evaluation of the children but the medical assessment times, which are causing unnecessary delays to treatment. I believe that this, alongside some of the Education Authority's processes for dealing with additional needs, is not best placed. I know that the Minister has committed to looking at those processes and ensuring that they are addressed.

The centre provides wide-ranging training programmes for parents and schools. It has also done significant research on sensory processing and has provided advice and guidance and online resources. I support a review of the current operation and educational offering on an ongoing basis. We can never be complacent or sit back in the belief that we have cracked this. This is a fluid, ever-changing process —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude her remarks.

Ms Lockhart: — and I know that the Minister will continue to work to this end.

Mr Durkan: First, I offer apologies from Colin McGrath, our education spokesperson, as he cannot be here for today's debate, and double apologies from him that I have to speak instead of him. While not overly familiar with the situation or, indeed, the history of Middletown — I would like to learn more and would like to see what is happening there — I am all too familiar, as, I am sure, are most of us in the Chamber, with the many challenges facing those with autism and their families every day.

Mrs Overend elaborated most on those challenges and the huge frustrations and difficulties that they cause. Children have to wait a completely unacceptable time for diagnosis, and, sadly, that seems to set the trend for what they can expect from services and statutory service providers for the rest of their lives — not a lot.

It seems to me that the Middletown motion just about typifies service delivery, or lack of it, for people with autism. We have a great vision and the promise of better things to come. I think of the Autism Act, but, ultimately, it does not materialise. Reading into it more and listening to today's debate, it is hard to understand the wisdom or rationale of the motion, given that it seems to fly in the face of what the experts tell us about residential provision. If anything, rather than assist people with autism, the motion almost misleads and manipulates them. I echo Mr Lunn's sentiments that we want to see the centre, and, indeed, all autism services, fully and adequately funded.

It is clear from reading the information pack that what the centre does, it does very well, outstandingly well, in fact,

according to an inspection this year. Transdisciplinary support has expanded due to additional staffing, and staff working with pupils, schools and parents have developed their extensive and holistic special skills and are highly valued. That leads to improved outcomes for the pupils at home and at school. Facilities have improved, and investment has been made to upgrade the ICT infrastructure.

With regard to today's debate, though, I am slightly concerned at the tone used by Lord Morrow in relation to North/South cross-border projects. We need to see more North/South collaboration across a wide range of issues. Nowhere is this collaboration more essential than in the area of health, where enhanced relationships between jurisdictions on this island will not just save a lot of money but will save a lot of lives. I would be a bit more concerned about his remarks if they were not at odds with the actions of some of his party colleagues when they were Health Ministers in the not-too-distant past.

11.30 am

We will not be supporting the motion, but we do support those people working in the centre and elsewhere to meet the needs of people and their families who are living with autism. We need to work for them and with them to ensure more funding and better services for autism. While we will be voting with the Minister on this occasion, he cannot ignore that much of what his Department does in relation to autism is not up to scratch.

Ms Armstrong: I declare an interest because I live with autism. Before I came to speak today, I went back to the people who I have been working with for the past year to ask them about their opinion on this. In February this year, my predecessor, Kieran McCarthy, submitted my petition that was signed by over 8,500 people calling for better autism support and services from Health and Education. Health, as we know, said at that stage that there would be an extra £2 million a year and that there would be further recruitment of staff to bring down waiting times. That is happening, and we are very grateful for that. We know that the Education Minister went out to see Middletown. Thank you very much for that. With regard to schools, the report card reads, "Could do better". I say that because we are still waiting to see the support and help for students when they get their diagnosis from Health and go back into the education system.

When I spoke to parents who confirmed that they had access to Middletown services, they could not be more glowing in their praise of Middletown. They were very clear that the help that they received as parents, that their children received and that teachers received in their training was fantastic and second to none. That has been borne out by the many reports that have been provided to us in relation to the motion. Some parents did say to me, "What is Middletown? What is this?". They were not aware of it. Indeed, there were some teachers who did not know the referral process. When I say that I mark the report card as "Could do better", that is what I mean. There are many people whose children end up having a diagnosis and then wait an extraordinary amount of time for support systems to be put in place in schools.

That is why I support the Middletown approach for the whole-school ASD-competent environment. Middletown can go into schools. It can develop the full school

system to ensure that, as others have said, the school environment is more appropriate for children with ASD. We have teachers trained, the parents are given support and the children themselves are given support. The whole school network, whether that is classroom assistants, caretakers or cleaners, is involved in it. This is a more sustainable approach to helping children with ASD in Northern Ireland than residential care. However, I do say that each child is an individual, and, in some cases, residential care is important. For some girls in particular who are not diagnosed until much later, perhaps residential care may suit them. It is not for everyone, and it is not the full solution, but, if we do away with residential services completely, what will we do for those young people who require it? I am bit more cautious than others because I live with autism and I understand, in the family environment, exactly the difficulties that can happen.

I also believe that Middletown should be fully funded to support everybody who is involved in the educational environment. I say that because of my experience. In September, for instance, in my constituency, the Education Authority's transport department had to do a very quick change in transport provision on day one because a taxi firm pulled out. It happened to be that the school and the pupils who were affected by that change were children with autism from Killard special needs school. That change was handled very quickly. There was transport in place so that the children got home, but the change caused such a detrimental effect to the children that one child could not go back to school for a week and the others had meltdowns when they went home. I think that Middletown should be invested in to provide training, not just for teachers and the school estate, but for the Education Authority and for departmental officials because an understanding wholly and completely of the effects that change can have on children with autism would be very welcome by parents so that people could understand exactly the impact that it can have.

My colleague mentioned teacher-training records. I have written to the Minister, and, in the responses that have come back, he has confirmed that the Education Authority or schools will hold training records. On behalf of parents, I ask this: can we please have something better? Can we have a more structured approach to make sure that teachers are afforded the time and the ability to go to appropriate training, perhaps provided by Middletown? Can the Minister look at the cross-departmental autism strategy? The strategy has been extended to 2017, so now is the time to start thinking about the next time. Middletown should absolutely be funded to its full ability, but Middletown, Autism NI, the National Autistic Society, parents and young people themselves should all be talked to about the development of the next cross-departmental autism strategy —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude her remarks.

Ms Armstrong: — to see how we can improve services and make sure that funding is fully available.

Mr Speaker: Before I call Mr Steven Agnew, I have to inform the Member that he has only three minutes.

Mr Agnew: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Many issues affect families who have experience of autism: the time it takes to get a diagnosis; support after diagnosis; support in schools; support at home; and wider public awareness.

In all my time of working on issues relating to autism and other special educational needs, the issue that the motion seeks to address has not come up. I have not heard anything in today's debate that compels me to believe that this is the pressing issue in autism services.

As many others highlighted — I will not go into too much detail because it has been said — the Middletown centre does excellent work. What I have not heard is evidence that it somehow needs to go back to an original purpose. I am not entirely sure why it has evolved in the way that it has; maybe the Minister will talk to that. It seems to me to be in line with current thinking across a range of health issues, which is that we do more outreach, more work in communities and go out to families rather than take this residential approach, although I am minded of Kellie Armstrong's comments, which seem to give some credit to that approach. However, at a time when, across our health estate, we are looking to move more towards community-based services, this seems to move in the opposite direction. In the absence of evidence that that is what is required, I cannot support the thrust of the motion. As I say, there are so many areas where we need to put increased investment into autism services, including putting more resources into Middletown. However, I cannot support the thrust and direction of the motion. I look forward to hearing from the Minister about how he intends not only to support the Middletown centre further but to improve autism services more generally.

Mr Speaker: I call the Minister of Education, Mr Peter Weir, to respond to the debate. The Minister has up to 15 minutes.

Mr Weir: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am getting indications that I do not have to take the full 15 minutes, but we shall see how it goes.

I thank all the Members who took part in the debate, which was very constructive. I even find myself in the rare situation of agreeing with Steven Agnew, which does not happen all that often. I welcome the opportunity to discuss the work at Middletown. While I disagree with the motion and will, therefore, vote against it if it is moved, I appreciate that the motivation behind it is very genuine and sincere in trying to focus on the particular way forward for Middletown.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the debate on a motion dealing very directly and specifically with the Middletown centre quite often diverged into wider issues around autism; that is quite understandable. I will deal with a couple of the points. Both the visit to Middletown and the recent meeting with representatives of the all-party group on autism and Autism NI have been mentioned. The proposer also mentioned 'Broken Promises'. As a Department, we are trying to deliver on those, particularly through teacher training, which was mentioned and is one of the key aspects of Middletown.

There has been a great deal of criticism, particularly of the diagnostic side of things. Delivery for probably the majority of 'Broken Promises' lies with the Department of Health, which leads on autism, but I am very encouraged by the level of engagement across the Executive with Autism NI and the National Autistic Society NI. It has not been just me. I know that the Health Minister, the First Minister and the deputy First Minister have recently met representatives of those organisations. There is a determination to try to

resolve the issues. As we move through the mandate, we will be contributing to the ongoing autism strategy, the lead for which again lies with another Department.

One of the things that has united the House in its approach is the fairly consistent welcoming of the good work and progress that is being made by the Middletown Centre for Autism, and by my Department and the Department of Education and Skills in the Republic of Ireland, as they work together to promote excellence in the development and delivery of education services for children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders. The increased number of pupils, parents and professionals who have benefited from the centre's services is evidence of the fact that the centre has become an important part of the specialist second-tier services available to support children in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Indeed, the success of that is borne out by the various inspection reports.

The motion goes very much to the heart of the delivery of the model that will be provided. The centre's current service model has three elements to it. First, it has an intensive one-to-one multidisciplinary assessment and support outreach service for pupils with the most complex autism needs. Secondly, it has a training and advisory service that provides training to education professionals and parents. Mention has been made of the Education Authority records. We will be pressing it on better ways in which those training records can be provided. Thirdly, it has a research and information service that requires the most up-to-date information, techniques and best practice to be used. To date, the centre has provided training to over 62,000 parents and education professionals in the Republic and Northern Ireland. If there is a case for some officials having a wider scope, I am sure that that can be looked at.

May I correct one thing that the proposer said? I have not been able to find any record of where I said that I believe that residential is a better way forward or, indeed, that it should be part of the way forward. What has been acknowledged, I think, by the centre is that residential would be of some value to a small number of children, but it has also said that the current outreach intervention work is having a much more immediate and prolonged impact, not only on children and young people with autism who are referred but on their families, on school staff and on pupils.

I was going to deal with the point that was raised by the SDLP, but its members seem to have left the Chamber. I will maybe come back to that. I am grateful to see that Mark has returned. Mr Durkan asked why there was the shift. There were two reasons for it. The less beneficial one was the fact that the level of finance that was proposed, particularly from the Republic of Ireland, decreased. It was not able to be provided. That meant a certain rejigging of the model. However, the virtuous element of that is that the rejigging followed best practice and has turned out to be the better route.

Since October 2010, the centre has provided assessment and support to children through its outreach service. The wider impact means that other children with autism, not just those who are referred, receive support, either as part of the referred child's class or via teacher training. To date, it is estimated that that has impacted on around 3,000 children and young people.

As Members will be aware, two joint inspections have taken place, in April 2012 and April 2016. The idea of review may therefore be a little premature at this stage. Both inspections evaluated the provision of services as outstanding. The most recent inspection highlighted the fact that the services impacted significantly on the education and life experiences of referred pupils, their teachers and their parents. Key strengths highlighted in the evaluation relate to the multidisciplinary nature of the outreach service and the extent and duration of the centre's involvement in pupils' home and school simultaneously. The quality of leadership and management was also described as being outstanding.

11.45 am

It is unfortunate that the proposers of the motion appear to have missed those positive reports and focused instead on the lack of residential assessment, perceiving that to be a setback to autism services. I do not believe that that is the case. We are all aware of the background; I have dealt with it. The outreach service is fundamentally the same assessment and support service for children with autism as was originally intended. It provides the assessment, therapies and education plan to meet the individual needs of the child. However, significantly, it is delivered in the child's home and school setting for up to three school terms, instead of residentially at the Middletown centre. In fact, the service is having a wide-ranging positive impact not just on the referred pupils but on teachers, parents, siblings and other members of the family and, indeed, other children with autism who attend that child's school. It is difficult to see that outstanding provision as a setback for autism, considering that those wider-reaching impacts would never have been achieved if we had simply gone down the residential route.

At a recent visit to the centre in August, I spoke to the parents of a child who had been referred to Middletown. They explained that they were initially very apprehensive about the offer of support from Middletown, as they thought that their child would have to attend the centre on a residential basis. They did not feel that it would be in the best interests of the child to attend on that basis, as it would take the child away from family and family surroundings. However, they told me that the intensive outreach intervention programme that was provided in their home and in their child's school made all the difference to their lives. They described it as "life-changing", and they were very emotional in their praise of Middletown staff. A number of other parents took a similar position.

The centre's staff has advised me that, while a residential facility might assist a small number of children, the centre's current approach has a much more prolonged impact, as the outreach model allows all those young people to be a part of the young person's life. Therefore, it has a much greater impact.

Looking back at the original rationale for Middletown, it was based on the need to:

"address the increasing prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorders; recognise good practice and support; and complement current services."

The result was the joint government approach and policy decision to establish Middletown Centre for Autism to provide a specialist second-level autism support service. I

think that the centre is delivering on the original concept and is having a wider-reaching and more positive impact with the outreach learning, support and assessment service.

I also highlight that the centre has been developing its services by assisting whole schools to develop their capacity to support pupils with autism, working in the referred schools to bring about a culture change and increasing the school's confidence and capacity to respond to the needs of learners with autism. One intervention creates positive ripples on the pond. Investment in online training is also ongoing to provide easier access to those who are unable to attend events, such as the refreshers and updates for those who have already received training.

Much has been made of the financial situation, and I appreciate that, as an Executive, we need to see what more we can do on autism. Take Mr Lunn's point — he suddenly pays attention at this point. He spoke of what we could do if, for example, there was a 50% increase in funding. However, if we were to move to an additional residential model and do it properly, we would have to treble the budget. At the moment, if someone gave me 50% more money for Middletown, I would look to expand the outreach services, because that is the greatest need.

Mrs Armstrong said that there were still parents who were unaware of Middletown, and we must reach out to those people. I appreciate that you can always do certain things that are to the benefit of very small groups of children, but, to reach the maximum number of children, any additional resources should mostly be directed to outreach because that is the best bit. That is why I oppose the motion. I oppose it not simply because of that conviction but from discussions with the staff and the board when I was in Middletown. At that point, we were waiting for the appointments from the Republic of Ireland; we had made the Northern Ireland appointments. However, from speaking to the person who was, I think, about to be the chair of the board and to parents, children and Autism NI during my recent visit, I see that there is a clear direction of travel that says the route to go is outreach and increased levels of outreach rather than residential. That is the danger with that.

As we move forward, it is important to ensure that the services delivered reflect best practice. That is why the centre continues to use the latest research, including the findings from its intensive intervention service, to support future training. The new board of directors will consider the future direction of services as part of the centre's business planning process. If the new directors decide on a different emphasis, I will take their professional judgement and move in that direction, but, as things stand, the focus has got to be on outreach. If there is significant change, that is likely to have a price tag attached, and we have to ensure that we get the best delivery for that.

I am happy to work, as and when required, with Executive colleagues, the centre, its board of directors and the Department of Education and Skills on the services provided by the centre. All of us have a role in enhancing educational achievement and providing the best pathways, particularly for those with special educational needs such as autism. Importantly for Middletown, we need to continue to focus on developing effective child-centred services based on best practice, so I reject the analysis that the failure to provide residential provision at Middletown

represents a setback for autism services: it does not. That flies in the face of the independent inspection reports and the views expressed to me by all stakeholders. I do not see it as being a setback, and I believe that the best way forward is to continue on the route we have been on. That is why, with all sincerity, I have to oppose the motion and ask whether, in light of what has been said, the supporters of the motion want to carry on with it or whether the fact that we have had the debate has, at least, been able to unearth a degree of light.

Mr Speaker: I call Ms Jennifer McCann — sorry, Ms Catherine Seeley to wind up the debate on the motion, and the Member has up to 10 minutes.

Ms Seeley: I thank all Members who contributed to the debate. It was a positive debate. I thank the Minister for being here. I want to say from the outset that the motion was not intended to attack or critique the work of the Minister; it was really just to call for reassurances that he is committed to supporting children with autism, the families of children with autism and the teachers of children with autism despite the recent decision around residential provision at the Middletown Centre for Autism, which, as my party colleague Barry McElduff rightly said, has been abandoned. I think that the Minister, in his contributions, has given those assurances, and I welcome that. I want to echo the praise for the centre that my party colleague Jennifer mentioned.

In response to a question for written answer, the Minister gave assurances that assessments and therapies, although not being carried out on-site at the Middletown Centre for Autism, were being delivered in the child's home, school or community. I have spoken with staff at the centre, and they are content with that. However, what has caused concern is the suggestion that that decision signified a lesser commitment to services for children with autism and, indeed, their families.

In a response to a question for written answer from Mr McNulty and Mr Durkan's party leader, the centre advised that a residential facility would be of value to a small number of children. That is what we are calling for. I welcome the comments from Kellie Armstrong. I thank her for sharing her personal experience of autism, which contributed well to the debate.

The Middletown Centre for Autism supports the promotion of excellence in the development and coordination of education services to young people with ASD. It is an area of cross-border cooperation, hence it is located near the border, which Lord Morrow, my colleague on the Education Committee, queried. It is not simply used by residents in the South; it is equally funded by them.

Between 2002 and 2012, the Executive contributed approximately £6 million to developing the centre, which was a much needed resource at the time. In addition to assessments and therapies, the centre aims to upskill teachers at a time when autism training is not mandatory, which is something that, I hope, the Minister will reconsider during his term. Whilst the residential aspect has not been realised, it is important to note that this is not a case of either/or; we need both levels of provision to work hand in hand. I also accept Mrs Barton's comments that this is not the only way that we need to address autism and agree with her comments on autism services for older people and those who are outside the education setting.

A transdisciplinary team currently works with identified children to understand their needs in their school and home settings. That provides training and techniques for teachers, parents and siblings as well as awareness and understanding for the children's peers. That has to be welcomed, and we do not deny that at all. That said, the extent of the outreach is limited by resource and is not consistent across the North. For that reason, I ask the Minister to commit to extending the work of the transdisciplinary teams as well. Mrs Overend detailed the number of children awaiting a diagnosis, which could be addressed by expanding and further resourcing the team and, indeed, the centre.

I have spoken to staff in the centre, who believe that there is a need to expand in order to provide services to the increasing number of children with ASD. At the beginning of this week, they expressed directly to me a desire to have some level of residential provision to offer respite to parents and carers, particularly the parents and carers of multiple children with learning and/or physical disabilities. Whilst Mr McNulty is right in his commentary on the success of the current outworkings, with a renewed commitment and additional resource, children could benefit further, as Mr Lunn said. Therefore, I call on the Minister — I know that he recently visited the centre, for which the staff were very grateful — to re-engage meaningfully with centre staff and centre users to gain a fuller understanding of the need, with a view to ensuring that all children are supported to reach their full potential, irrespective of their disability.

I welcome the tone of the debate around the Chamber. It is not our intention to divide. We wanted to have a fruitful debate on autism services, and I think that we have had that. We wanted to raise awareness and seek reassurances from the Minister that he is committed —

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for giving way and for her comments. When I was at Middletown, I had the opportunity to speak to the incoming chair of the group. At that stage, there had been a delay. Some of the appointments to the board come from my Department, and some come from the Department in the Republic of Ireland. At that stage, we had made the appointments and the Republic had not. Subsequent to that visit, Minister Bruton from the Republic's Government made those appointments. That means that we now have a full board. I will be happy to have ongoing engagement — that is probably the best route — with the board as we move ahead, because it is obviously in the best position to make a judgement on that. I am happy to give that assurance.

Ms Seeley: I thank the Minister: indeed, he has given multiple assurances this morning that have to be welcomed. When I spoke to the centre, I found that that is exactly what they want. They want to re-engage the Minister and the Department with a view to ensuring that there is a small level of residential provision and that access to respite is available. In my conversation with staff, they really focused on the need to extend and expand their services so that they work with more teachers, carers and parents of children with autism. We welcome the tone of the debate on all sides of the House this morning and the commitment and reassurances from the Minister. We now feel much more positive that the Minister will extend, expand and resource services

for those children, the families of those children and the teachers of children with autism.

Mr McElduff: Will the Member give way?

Ms Seeley: I will give way.

Mr McElduff: This is just to serve notice that our party is of a mind to withdraw the motion, if the facility is open to us, given that there has been a very full debate on the value of the Middletown centre and a recognition that the Minister and the Department are moving in the right direction. Of course, we reserve the right to hold our position regarding the value of a residential facility as well.

12.00 noon

Ms Seeley: I thank the Member for giving way. I urge — *[Laughter.]* I thank the Member for his contribution. Apologies: it was me speaking.

We do not want to divide on the issue. That would not send out a positive message to the centre or to teachers, parents and carers of children with autism. I hope that we can move forward on the issue, with consensus right across the House.

Mr Speaker: The Member has sought leave to withdraw the motion in the Order Paper standing in the names of Mr Barry McElduff, Ms Catherine Seeley and Ms Jennifer McCann. If there are no objections, the motion will be withdrawn.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr Speaker: I ask Members to take their ease.

(Madam Principal Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

Nurture Provision

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. Two amendments have been selected and are published on the Marshallled List, so 15 minutes have been added to the total time. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes in which to wind. The proposer of each amendment will have 10 minutes in which to propose and five minutes in which to wind. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes. Before we begin, the House should note that the amendments are mutually exclusive. If amendment No 1 is made, the Question will not be put on amendment No 2.

Lord Morrow: I beg to move

That this Assembly welcomes the report by the Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation at Queen's University Belfast, entitled 'The Impact and Cost Effectiveness of Nurture Groups in Primary Schools in Northern Ireland'; welcomes the commitment of the Minister of Education to continuing to fund the 32 nurture units across Northern Ireland; and calls on the Minister of Education to examine potential options to mainstream nurture provision within the current education budget.

This Assembly is supposed to be based on the core principle of inclusion. It should reach out to the citizens of Northern Ireland, particularly those who are marginalised for a variety of reasons, including social, emotional, financial and educational issues. We have to use our energy, efforts and resources to ensure that all are included in the rich and varied fabric of our society. We have to remove any barriers to learning that may exist in our schools to ensure that all children are valued equally and given the opportunity to achieve their potential and contribute to our community.

I commend the staff of Queen's University for producing such an excellent report on the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of nurture group provision in Northern Ireland. It would be difficult not to recommend funding for the implementation of nurture groups when one reads the report in detail and takes account of the views of those involved in the study. The challenge surely is that we have to search for funding from a variety of sources to provide the necessary funds to implement the nurture provision.

In addition to reading the report, I took account of the views of teachers and others involved in providing and managing a nurture room in a school. Short-term expenditure of approximately £50,000 per school — for a teacher, classroom assistant and resources, that is — at an early stage to maximise on early intervention will yield dividends later while the child is at school and, in some cases, post-education at 16 years of age. The cost-effective figures are included in the report and merit careful consideration and study. Long-term savings on a child with a conduct disorder can range from £12,000 to £150,000 later in life. A stitch in time not only saves public funds but gives a child and family hope for the future. I feel that the real test of any provision is, of course, the

views of those who are tasked with using it, those who implement it and those who benefit from it.

The following is a brief summary of comments from teachers involved in a nurture room:

"Our entire school has benefited greatly from the nurture room — we can see improved attendance and confidence amongst the children;

Children who return from the nurture room to their class full time are more settled to learn and can cope better with class work;

There are better relationships between the nurture children and their peers;

Children in the nurture room have more time to work their emotions in a small group and work at their own pace, and are then equipped to use these strategies when they return to class;

As a school, there has been a significant strengthening of relationships between staff and parents, especially those parents who might have initially been reluctant to approach staff;

The nurture approach has been fully embraced by the entire school community — children are accepted at their level of understanding and development;

Staff take a flexible approach to dealing with behaviour — they look at the needs of the child rather than react;

The school works to build up the confidence of parents, encourage them and reassure them that they are doing all they can;

The nurture room itself is accessible to all children and can be used for children who are having trouble settling in the mornings or who just need a quiet space for a time;

Older children would benefit from the nurture room and should be included;

The nurture room intervention also has reduced the amount of referrals made to the behavioural team;

The nurture room's small group settings also help staff to more closely identify the children's needs; emotional, educational and social."

Those are quotations from some principals and schools that we have taken into consideration. I think that everyone will agree that they are all exceptionally positive and send out a good message. Those who work at the coalface, as the saying is, see the direct benefits and how it benefits the school, the child and, indeed, the parents. Consider the impact and benefits that a nurture room could have on children with emotional and social problems who may be disruptive and upsetting for the entire class, with the additional work and stress placed on teachers and the worry and anxiety of parents at the prospect of their child being suspended from school.

I commend the report to the Assembly and recommend that funds be found from a variety of sources to mainstream nurture provision in schools. The benefits are clearly outlined in the report. It is essential that we, the

Members of the Assembly, do all that we can to include all the children who may be marginalised. The report should be commended; it should be read by all Members of the Assembly. I believe that they will come to the same conclusion as those of us who tabled the motion: it is work well done, and it augurs well for directing, assisting and helping with nurture provision in schools in the future.

Mr Agnew: I beg to move amendment No 1:

Leave out all after the second "Northern Ireland;" and insert

"recognises the role effective early years interventions can play in reducing the need for nurture units; and calls on the Minister of Education to examine potential options to develop universal early years education provision."

I am fully supportive of the motion; my amendment seeks to complement it rather than in any way detract from its intention. Just yesterday, DUP councillor Peter Martin, a North Down colleague of mine, spoke in the 'News Letter' about the importance of early years. He highlighted the benefits that something as simple as reading to a two-year-old child can have if done on a regular basis. I hope that we can agree on the steps that need to be taken, even if there is slightly different wording across the motion and the two amendments.

The intent of my amendment is to say that, before we expand the ground floor, we have to get the foundations right. The Queen's University report is clear: nurture units work. They are effective and are an important part of the work that we do with children. However, the reality is that we have limited resources. We know that investment in early years will, on the one hand, enhance the work of nurture units but may also, if done effectively, reduce the need for them. For me, it is more about where we start. I think that we can potentially agree on where we finish. It is more about starting earlier and making that earlier intervention.

As my colleague Clare Bailey put it when we were discussing the motion, we should get children ready for school before they start school rather than, as we sometimes do, trying to help them to catch up when they start school behind their peers. We should, as much as possible, ensure that no child starts school before they are ready. Whilst it is another debate for another day, flexible school starting age could contribute to the issues that we are trying to address today.

As well as the Queen's University report on the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of nurture units, we have ample evidence of the benefits of early years provision. Professor Heckman highlighted the pure economics of early years intervention: £1 spent in early years can save up to £9 in later interventions. I come back to the point that I made earlier: investment in early years has the potential to reduce the need for nurture provision, although it will not negate it entirely.

Dr Suzanne Zeedyk has highlighted in her research the importance of the brain development of a child in those early years, particularly from nought to three. Her work shows the harm done by not intervening in those early years. The disadvantage that can be caused through a lack of proper stimulation, love and care in early years can be very difficult to reverse later. Again, it is a question of

getting it right at the early stages rather than trying to undo any harm that has already taken place.

It is unclear from the motion — I look forward to hearing from others — what we mean by "mainstreaming". Do we mean nurture units in every school? Are we talking about a universal service in that regard? If I make that assumption —

Mr Weir (The Minister of Education): Will the Member give way?

Mr Agnew: Certainly.

Mr Weir: I think that we all want to see an expansion. I appreciate that there may be a bit of difference in terms of the wording of amendments etc.

Nurture units are funded under a particular programme that is time-limited and separate from the main education budget. When we talk about "mainstreaming", we mean taking that into the main education budget and having something permanent.

12.15 pm

Mr Agnew: I appreciate the Minister's intervention, which is constructive and certainly helps me in my thinking. It is about getting the right services in the right places. The security that mainstreaming would give to nurture units is welcome.

With regard to the evidence, Professor Heckman and Suzanne Zeedyk have both spoken at Stormont, and a number of Members attended. I note that Simon Hamilton, through Assembly questions, raised the importance of early investment with the former Education Minister. When Roy Beggs was chair of the all-party group on children and young people, he was a great champion of early years investment.

We often put a lot of focus on our schools, which are a vital part of a child's life and, to a large extent, help to shape their future development. Sometimes, however, we put too much emphasis on what schools can do. They are somehow required to do everything, and we almost forget about the child outside the school. Early years is not just about supporting educational development but about supporting the child in the context of the family and the family in the context of the community.

Ms Lockhart: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he agree that children often find themselves in nurture units because the family unit has broken down in some way or they are not getting adequate provision outside the school setting and that, to all intents and purposes, the school setting is one of the better places to give security to those children?

Mr Agnew: I thank the Member and partially agree that that is often where the problems arise. It emphasises my point about needing to work with families and communities. If we work with a child in school, we put the onus on that child to go back to potentially difficult family circumstances, almost to hold their hand. In supporting the family, we support the child, which is why my amendment specifically asks for universal early years services. The evidence is that we try to target families in particular need, which can add stigma and a reluctance to engage. If we have universal services, families can opt out rather than having to opt in. The evidence across Scandinavia is that universal service means that children do not fall through the gaps to the same extent, and Scotland is adopting that model. As I said, families who do not need the support can

opt out rather than always trying to get families who need the support to opt in.

This is, of course, an issue for Health and Education, and the Minister is well aware of his duty to work with other Ministers. We are discussing education today, but I ask the Minister to remember that, whilst his title is Minister of Education, he is, effectively, the Minister for children with responsibility for the childcare strategy. It is about looking at children not just in our school systems but in our community and throughout their early years before they even have contact with the formal education system.

I welcome the debate and the focus that it brings to tackling educational underachievement. I hope that we can agree not only on the end point but on some of the starting points that we need. I will say it again: if we invest in the family, we invest in the child, and we need to look at the child as part of a family unit.

Mr McGrath: I beg to move amendment No 2:

Leave out all after the second "Northern Ireland;" and insert

"and, as recommended in the report by Queen's University, calls on the Minister of Education to ensure that a sustainable funding model is put in place for the longer-term viability of nurture group provision, to plan the further expansion of nurture provision in each primary school sector targeted in the areas of greatest need, to develop appropriate training for staff and to conduct research into models for the delivery of nurture provision."

I hope that we receive cross-party support for our amendment. I will speak to our amendment in a moment, but, first, I want to say that I am glad that we are getting the opportunity to discuss the motion. It is primarily based on the Queen's University report on nurture group provision, which, I have to say, makes for very positive reading. I welcome the fact that we are today taking the opportunity in the Chamber to discuss an issue not only that we all support but that research has proven is working for our children.

The report highlights the positive impact that nurture provision has had on our children:

"They represent a short-term and focused intervention to address barriers to learning arising from unmet attachment needs."

I welcome the fact that we have this option for children who have difficulties coping in mainstream classes. Although there are only 32 nurture groups in schools across Northern Ireland, there is no denying their success. They are a prime example of how early intervention works and how outcomes for our children are improved. The study found that nurture groups led to significant improvements in social, emotional and behavioural outcomes among children who previously had difficulty learning in a mainstream class.

I welcome the comments that the Minister has made previously on nurture groups:

"One of the clear indications is that intervention has been of tremendous value to children, particularly to some vulnerable children and those who need that degree of help." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 118, p76, col 2].

The Minister is right on the money there, but it should also be highlighted that the value of nurture provision goes further, as the report tells us:

"Nurture support is not limited to the nurture group, as all schools will embed the nurturing principles and practice at a whole school level, providing appropriate support for all pupils attending the school."

There are repercussions from having those units in schools, and they spread around the whole school environment, providing a cascading effect of the benefit.

I also welcome the findings in the report that state that nurture groups are cost-effective, costing around £70,000 per school, and have the potential to result in significant savings further down the education system. Let us not ignore the correlation between underachievement and other elements of society further down the line. A small investment at school age could provide a greater saving to society many years later.

Our amendment has two strands. The first part comes directly from recommendation 10 in the Queen's University report:

"The importance of providing a consistent funding framework to ensure that schools are able to develop Nurture Group provision and plan effectively."

The motion mentions the need:

"to examine potential options to mainstream nurture provision within the current education budget."

We believe that the funding model for nurture units should be sustainable to ensure their long-term viability. We have seen the benefits that nurture units have given to us, but they currently cover only 32 schools. We want to see it widened, and the only way in which we feel that that can be done is to ensure that a sustainable funding model is put in place.

The second part of our amendment calls on the Minister to:

"plan the further expansion of nurture provision in each primary school sector".

We have seen and heard examples of funding not being given to certain sectors. For example, when he was Minister, Mr O'Dowd announced funding for a pilot for nurture units for schools in the Irish-medium sector, and Minister Weir then said that, owing to funding pressures, he could not provide funding for that pilot. The Queen's report recommends:

"Until further research is available on the effectiveness of different models of delivery, it would be wise for the Department of Education to continue to target the provision of Nurture Groups in schools in the most deprived areas".

That should be done regardless of the sector that it is in. I speak —

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for giving way. I put it on record that there were indications given at that stage that there was additional funding provided by the Department of Finance. Those schools are funded as part of that, so it crosses the various sectors.

Mr McGrath: I thank the Minister for his intervention. What we are talking about here is the planned intervention across all sectors. When it becomes reactionary because of budgetary pressures, we must not rob money from particular sectors but keep it right across.

I wholeheartedly agree with the recommendation from Queen's that research should be undertaken to ensure that there are models for the delivery of nurture provision, but until that is done we believe that it should be targeted at the areas of greatest need. If we do not give our children the best start in life, we do them an enormous disservice. What is great about the motion is that it extends to children who need help the most the opportunity to avail themselves of services that will aid their education. The Assembly should be about delivering for children in Northern Ireland and giving them a better start in life. I commend our amendment, the other amendment, and the motion so that our children can be given a start in this process.

Ms J McCann: I welcome the opportunity to take part in this important debate. It is the second education debate today, and it is very good to see, given the contributions so far, that the motions seem to be almost knitting together. We support the motion, and we have no difficulty with either amendment.

Nurture units are of great benefit to young children when they are going through a difficult period, for whatever reason, in their young lives and need a wee bit of extra help and support. I remember my first visit 10 years ago to a nurture unit in my constituency. The setting surprised me because it was very similar to a home environment. The children at that unit received one-to-one help from teachers, classroom assistants and other staff. For me, it was clear that they were not just getting help in going back to the classroom but were also being helped to go back to the family home, which was very important. A lot of parents said very positive things about it. At that time, not too many schools had nurture units. I am glad to see that, through the Delivering Social Change signature projects and other sources of funding, there are now 32 units throughout the North. I hope that, as the motion says, that provision can be mainstreamed in future.

Everybody has to commend the great work that the staff and teachers do with the young children in the units. Talking to teachers and staff, I know that our children often have to face really big challenges in their lives that no child should have to face. Those challenges can have an impact on their emotional well-being and can affect their personal development and, of course, their education. That is what these nurture units are intended to do: give children a bit of support and help to go back to the classroom.

The time taken by teachers and staff to help a vulnerable child through a difficult period with one-to-one support not only helps the child but can also be beneficial for parents and the whole family setting. I have spoken to people whose young children have attended a nurture unit after losing a mother or a father in tragic circumstances and they have told me that the whole family unit has been helped. Maybe they have had brothers or sisters at the same school, and the unit has been beneficial for those children to sit in that home environment to try to come to terms with the great sense of loss that they have had and then go back to the family home to help the remaining parent. While we might view it here mainly in an

educational capacity, there is a wider benefit when those children go back into the family home.

Early intervention programmes, such as the services provided by nurture units, are known to work and all the evidence points to them working. Other Members mentioned the evaluation carried out by Queen's University that provided clear evidence of their benefits. It also highlights the difference between children who have received support compared with those who have not because the support was not available in their school. The report goes on to say that nurture groups were very cost-effective; we know that and we have all seen it. We have taken part in debates, but we have seen with our own eyes that early intervention programmes save Departments money in the longer term. When you invest early, particularly in young children and in supporting families, you will see long-term benefits over the years in education, health, social and family issues.

12.30 pm

Over the years, we have had many debates in the Chamber in which it was very clear that intervening early in a child's life, when a vulnerability or difficulty is identified, can have a long-term impact on their lifetime opportunities. Nurture groups provide a short-term and focused intervention for children experiencing difficulties in the class for a number of reasons. They also provide that link, as I said, between home life and school which helps children settle into class again.

Children, particularly those from deprived communities or from a family with social and emotional difficulties or, indeed, financial difficulties —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring her remarks to a close?

Ms J McCann: — are the ones who will benefit quite a lot from these nurture provisions. I support the motion.

Mrs Overend: I thank the proposers of the motion for bringing it to the Floor of the House. As Ulster Unionist education spokesperson, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate.

Nurture units have become a widespread feature of education provision across the UK, with an estimated 1,500 currently in operation. This is a targeted programme, as Members have already said, aimed at pupils who, for a variety of reasons, have difficulties in mainstream classes, fail to engage in the learning process and may otherwise be at risk of underachievement.

Early intervention is always the most valuable and as nurture units usually target pupils in Key Stage 1 they have an impact at an early stage of a child's development. They take pupils out of their mainstream class setting, usually for between two and four terms, and then return them to their mainstream class on a full-time basis.

The primary aim of nurture groups in Northern Ireland has been to improve the social, emotional and behavioural skills of children from deprived areas who are exhibiting significant difficulties. The evaluation by Queen's University Belfast found that nurture group provision was highly successful in meeting this aim. It is always great to hear that investment in our children is actually having an impact, and that it is not something to be taken lightly.

As with all things, there is, of course, a price tag for nurture groups and, under the current framework, that sits at around £70,000 per school involved. However, the cost-effectiveness of the nurture provision programmes is well documented in the report, and shows the real value that can be placed on early intervention, not just in monetary terms but in the life of the child and their progression through primary education into post-primary schools and beyond. Teachers saw improvements in punctuality, increased attendance and significant reductions in social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Children felt more involved in their classes and were beginning to find school more enjoyable.

While nurture groups are widespread in the UK, they are still in their infancy and there are still aspects of the scheme that could be improved. For example, some evidence showed that greater progress was being made by those who were not eligible for free school meals than by those who were. It would be interesting to understand why that was the case. The original criterion for the allocation of signature project funding targeted schools with an above-average proportion of pupils who were eligible for free school meals. It would be a concern if those children were less likely to receive the benefits of the project. Perhaps adaptations can be made to ensure maximum effect in the future, and I urge the Education Minister to consider further research in that area.

A new nurture room is being officially opened this Friday in Castledawson Primary School, which is in my constituency of Mid Ulster. It received no additional funding from the Department of Education, but the principal and board of governors there obviously felt the need to invest in teacher training for such a part-time provision at their school. It is available to children on Mondays and Fridays and its aim is to support the social, emotional and behavioural aspect of children in need from P3 to P5. They can aim the provision to where it is most needed and for as long as necessary. This flexibility works for Castledawson Primary School, and it is receiving very positive feedback.

There were limits to the research carried out by Queen's University Belfast, and it recommended further research involving a proper randomised control trial design and further research with a larger sample size into the effects of the different models of provision.

The evaluation report from the Education and Training Inspectorate, published in February this year, also had additional recommendations for improvement, many of which could be explored.

For those reasons, we will support the SDLP amendment, as I do not believe that nurture groups as currently delivered could be described as a finished product, although I do not want to use a consumerism term. I believe, therefore, that the SDLP amendment provides a better way forward and can allow for mainstreaming once a clearer way forward has been established. I highly commend the amendment tabled by Steven Agnew MLA, and I thank him for it. However, I urge him to bring forward the amendment as a motion in its own right, and we could maybe support it at that stage.

In my opinion, the mainstreaming of nurture units and examining the potential of universal early years education provision are not mutually exclusive; indeed, a combination

of both would provide a comprehensive support system to children across the UK. For now, I feel that —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring her remarks to a close?

Mrs Overend: I will, indeed.

I feel that sticking to the issue of nurture units would be wiser. Therefore, we will vote against amendment No 1.

Mr Lyttle: On behalf of the Alliance Party, I welcome the opportunity to speak in support of nurture units. The short-term, focused intervention for children with particular social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in small groups of six to 10 children, usually from years 1 to 3, led by a teacher and classroom assistant across around 32 schools in Northern Ireland is having a positive impact on pupils, staff and parents and, of course, across the wider school community.

The Queen's University evaluation report has identified a 57% reduction in the number of children exhibiting behavioural challenges when placed in a nurture unit compared with the normal school setting. Pupils are feeling more confident in school and are reporting as enjoying school much more as a result of the nurture units. Also, in cases of children with special educational needs, one in five participating in a nurture unit showed particular improvement.

The Queen's report has found that nurture units are not only beneficial for children but cost-effective. It has found that it will cost at least twice as much to provide a pupil with behavioural difficulties with just one of the many additional resources available between years 3 to 12 as it would to address those needs through early intervention nurture unit provision in years 1 to 3. The costs for the family and educational and social services are significant, and they can be mitigated by that intervention.

There are, however, some issues raised by the Queen's evaluation report that, I believe, are a good reason to support the call for further research into the area. Whilst children participating in nurture units reported increased confidence in school and reduced behavioural challenges, the findings were not the same for an immediate improvement in numeracy and literacy skills. The Queen's report suggests, however, that it should be possible, with further research, to identify improvements in academic attainment in the medium to long term for pupils who have benefited from nurture units and achieved greater confidence and enjoyment in school. I, therefore, support the call for further research into the sustained impact on attendance and academic attainment as well as addressing behavioural challenges.

The report also recommends that nurture unit provision be targeted in the most deprived areas, and that appears to be a main thrust of the SDLP amendment. However, the ETI evaluation on nurture units takes a different view, calling for the roll-out of nurture units beyond areas of social and economic disadvantage and noting that nurturing needs are increasingly evident in all schools. I think that there is merit in the wider SDLP amendment, so we will not vote against it today. However, the Alliance Party believes that, in the context of scarce resource, nurture unit provision should be a targeted intervention for the pupil and child most in need of nurture support.

We also believe that nurture units must be part of a wider model of early intervention. The Green Party amendment

rightly identifies the need for that approach; indeed, research clearly suggests that, as early as the age of two, there can be as much as a six-month gap in language-processing skills between children from advantaged backgrounds and those from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The ETI chief inspector's report published in 2014 identified the importance of investment in early years health, childcare and education in supporting school readiness and achievement among our children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

I am content to support the motion. I have no difficulty with either amendment. There is merit in all the content that has been put forward and, indeed, the contributions. I suggest, however, that it would be good to hear —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Lyttle: — from the Minister about from where in the education budget the resources will be taken to make the further investments.

Mr Logan: It is a privilege for me to highlight my support for nurture units. As has been said, they provide a short-term, focused intervention for children with particular social, emotional and behavioural difficulties that create barriers to learning in mainstream classes. It is a targeted programme aimed at pupils who fail to engage in the learning process and may otherwise be at risk of underachievement, leading to SEN support or the need for education outside of the school setting.

Analysis of the data gathered on the 529 children who had previously attended nurture groups showed that, on average, they had made consistently large improvements in social, emotional and behavioural development. Just a few weeks ago, I asked the Minister in an Assembly question to give me his assessment of the Queen's University nurture unit evaluation report, and I was delighted to hear that one of the clear indicators is that intervention has been of tremendous value to children, particularly to some children who are vulnerable and those who need that help.

Another thing that came across clearly from the report was that, even though only a limited number of children are directly involved in a unit, intervention through nurture units in schools creates a whole-school improvement, and children across the board get that. That is why, ideally, we should look at expanding the nurture group provision. Again, I was delighted to hear the Minister's insight that there is a strong desire to see an expansion if possible. Of course, he has urged caution, as we know that there are budgetary pressures from all angles. However, despite the initial budgetary strain that they will exert, as has been said, nurture units have proven to be cost-effective. The estimated cost per year of reducing one child who is defined as having behavioural difficulties to within the normal range is just less than £13,000. The cost of a pupil with behavioural difficulties being provided with just one of the many additional resources during the school term between year 3 and year 12 will be at least twice as much to the education system as it would be by addressing those difficulties through effective nurture group provision before the start of year 3. It is considerably higher again if the child has to avail himself or herself of alternative full-time education provision and/or attend a special school. Existing evidence suggests that investment in nurture

group provision is likely to pay for itself after just two years. It is therefore cost-effective and represents a significant economic return to society, along with the benefits that it brings to the child and their family.

The schools that were most effective at nurturing had a clearly defined, positive but firm approach to the way in which they spoke to pupils. They gave them clear boundaries, praised them for their efforts and achievements, ensured that they made academic progress and worked with their parents, who are, of course, children's first educators. They saw pupils as individuals and dealt with them as such — each individual is different in their circumstances and difficulties. Nurture groups gave parents practical support — that is very important — including strategies that they could use at home with their children. Parents felt more confident about being able to help their children and valued the nurture groups more highly.

As Chris Lyttle pointed out, there are some concerns that literacy and numeracy targets were not achieved in certain nurture groups. That is something that I hope will be addressed as they continue to develop. Let us be clear: children who are more well-rounded emotionally, behaviourally and socially will be more willing to dedicate themselves to learning in school.

Mr McElduff: From a party political perspective, Sinn Féin's position is that it will support the motion and the SDLP amendment.

12.45 pm

In my capacity as Cathaoirleach — Chair — of the Education Committee, I want to make a few remarks about our interest as a Statutory Committee in this matter to date. Nurture is a focused, school-based intervention, usually in primary schools, designed to address barriers to learning arising from unmet attachment needs. Nurture units provide a carefully planned safe environment in which to build an attachment relationship with a consistent and reliable adult. A small group of selected children spend the majority of the school week in the nurture unit receiving highly structured and supported learning experiences.

Our Committee saw evidence of something similar to this in action on a visit to a special school recently, where normal social interactions, eating breakfast, for example, are structured and used to support learning and engagement to positive effect. Anecdotal feedback and the Queen's University report suggest that the nurture approach has a very positive behavioural benefit on children, and nurture would, therefore, appear to sit well with other early intervention measures.

The Queen's University study seems to show that about one fifth of participating pupils moved down the SEN register, ie their special educational needs seemed to improve as a consequence of nurture. Nurture is also cost-effective: the cost per child appears to be around £13,000 per annum, contrasted with average costs of provision of support under a SEN statement of £10,000 per annum in primary and £7,000 per annum in post-primary. That might suggest that a more elaborate study needs to be carried out to establish whether schools with nurture units have fewer SEN statements.

Our Committee would also like to put on record support for the mainstreaming of nurture, but we may also want to see

what impact it has on the overall level of SEN statementing in schools.

Mrs Barton: I do not think that anyone in the House will disagree that our children should be given the best start in life. Indeed, the findings of the Queen's University report clearly support the value of nurture groups as an effective intervention strategy, but the most important part of the motion is the final clause. It is imperative that ways to utilise the best practice of nurture groups be identified and put into action in schools throughout Northern Ireland.

All counties have areas that could benefit from nurture groups. The principles that underpin all this work should include equal opportunity for all schools and that schools can adapt to the needs of all our children, be they suffering from a difficult home life, have special educational needs, or are gifted children who need stretching.

A nurture group typically caters for very young schoolchildren who have social, behavioural or emotional needs greater than the norm. Without specialist care, they can have a negative school experience and, indeed, make school life more difficult for their peers and teachers. Effective nurture systems can ease the child into mainstream schooling, equip them for school life and allow them to play a full role in their school.

As with so many of the issues that we discuss, identifying and addressing them as early as possible is the key to achieving optimal outcomes for the children, their parents and society as a whole.

While nurture groups here are traditionally attached to primary schools, in other parts of the UK more and more post-primary schools are setting up nurture groups, as pupils are increasingly presenting to these schools at an emotionally and socially different developmental stage.

Recent research shows that, after the formative years, the other major time restriction on the brain is the teenage years. Many principals today recognise the importance of how emotional well-being underpins learning and has a significant impact not only on attendance and behaviour but on academic achievement. Research also indicates that these nurture groups can have a whole-school effect, where not only children in the nurture group improve but so do other children with similar issues throughout the school.

It is clear, then, that nurture groups can make a substantial difference to the lives of the children who have the opportunity to be part of one. They improve behaviour, improve performance and improve outcomes for the children, but there are only 32 nurture groups in Northern Ireland and approximately 800 primary schools. Resources are not infinite, but the lessons of the nurture groups can be learned by all who are interested in the education of our children. The findings about the benefits of these small-group situations for children supports how working in smaller groups can be so beneficial, and it has been proven that behaviour associated with engagement with the curriculum improves, the children settle quicker to work in the classroom and they gain ability to work collaboratively with other pupils. In supporting the motion, I urge that consideration be given to the scheme being extended to post-primary schools and that mainstream nurture provision be provided across the Province.

Ms Seeley: I thank the DUP for bringing the motion to the House; it is a motion that we are happy to support. A

recent report in 'The Irish News' detailed the 529 children who are making consistently large improvements in social, emotional and behavioural development thanks to their inclusion in nurture provision. That alone is testament to the importance of continuing investment in nurture groups. The Queen's University of Belfast report on the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of nurture group provision in the North accredits nurture groups with developing emotional literacy and resilience. It details how nurture groups are designed to enhance children's opportunities so that they can interact in a more positive way and have increased self-awareness, and it also enables the classroom assistant and the teacher to devise activities suited to the needs of individual children. There is no doubt that this results in the development of positive relationships, something that some of our children may not experience on the home front. Additionally, as the report notes, nurture groups are an effective form of early intervention through which teachers and classroom assistants can identify children who would benefit from an enriched learning experience.

Through involvement in these groups, teachers have the opportunity to develop children as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. I therefore welcome the Minister's commitment to fulfilling and, indeed, advancing the sterling work of his predecessor, my party colleague John O'Dowd MLA, who part-funded their expansion and targeted extra Department of Education resources to nurture groups.

As has been noted, nurture provision develops the language and communication skills of our children at early stages of their life, laying the building blocks for social interaction. These are life skills that they can avail themselves of for conflict resolution, anger management and when discussing and dealing with emotions, as well as when identifying a range of positive relationships. The advantages of more fully developing the language and communication skills of children when they are in their early years cannot and should not be underestimated. Interventions such as this can determine the future of a child and their outcomes.

At a time of increased class sizes, sadly, some children risk slipping through the net. Full-to-the-brim classrooms do not create learning environments conducive for all. That is why it is important, moving forward, that area plans recognise this and do not target small schools but instead respond to need to secure investment into intervention mechanisms such as this.

Finally, the Queen's University of Belfast report not only recognises the need for evidence-based policymaking but identifies areas for improvement with regard to nurture provision. I hope that any future investment from the Minister will be geared towards that. I commend the motion, as amended by the SDLP, to the House.

Mr Durkan: I am happy to contribute to this important debate on an important issue. It is good to hear the support around the Chamber for nurture education. It is hard to imagine that anyone, anywhere would have any problems with it.

Nurture education developed in London in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a response to identified need. The provision offers a short-term focused intervention strategy that addresses barriers to learning arising from social,

emotional or behavioural difficulties in an inclusive and supportive manner. As an early intervention strategy, the core focus group for nurture provision is pupils in the early stages of primary education, from primary 1 to primary 3. The core purposes of nurture education are to provide a flexible and preventative resource that is responsive to the particular needs of the children attending that nurture unit; to provide ongoing assessment and support for early years children showing signs of emotional stress and behavioural difficulties, with the aim of enabling the child to access the curriculum and return to full-time participation in their mainstream class; to help the children to learn to behave appropriately, which is something that some Members in here might be able to benefit from; to improve children's self-esteem and develop their confidence through forming close and trusting relationships with adults; and to work in partnership with teachers, parents, schools, staff and outside agencies to enable consistency of approach both at home and at school.

The motion refers to the Queen's report. Indeed, numerous studies and research projects have consistently highlighted the effectiveness of nurture education as an early intervention strategy. The success of nurture provision is evidenced clearly by the fact that there has been such a significant growth in it over the past number of years. In Glasgow, for example, there are a minimum of 68 nurture units, while we now have 32 in the North. In the Northern Ireland context, two evaluations of nurture provision have been conducted in the past year, and both have been highly positive in their conclusions. The ETI report, to which Mr Lyttle referred, reported the effectiveness of the provision and saw a need for even greater roll-out. The evaluation of the pilot nurture project in Northern Ireland conducted by Queen's was also highly positive about the benefits of nurture education and its cost-effectiveness.

It is clear that the evidence highlights the social, emotional, behavioural and educational benefits of nurture education as well as the economic benefits of this type of provision. While these reports have identified and highlighted the benefits of nurture education, I have also seen at first hand the benefits of nurture education to children and families. I pay tribute to a constituent of mine Garry Matthewson, who has been a great champion of and for nurture education not just in my constituency but right across the North and has worked closely with previous Ministers on the issue. I suppose that I also have to commend the work of previous Ministers. I have no doubt that the current Minister will work with Ministers across the Executive to progress this, because it is bigger than an education issue. It is clear to me that, as the outcomes of nurture education are a benefit to many Departments in our local Assembly and, indeed, society as a whole, it is only just that funding for nurture provision is either a shared fund from the various Departments that benefit, including Education, Communities, Health and Justice, or maybe more simply an Executive funding stream. Indeed, through Mr Agnew's Children's Services Co-operation Act, there is the scope and, actually, a duty for that to be done.

In our fragmented education system, it is important that all sectors have access to nurture provision so that no child or family —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his comments to a close?

Mr Durkan: — is required to leave that sector to access provision. My colleague referred to the Irish-medium sector, but it is my understanding that there is no nurture provision in the integrated sector. Maybe the Minister will address that.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up. The Business Committee has arranged to meet at 1.00 pm. Beidh an Coiste Gnó ag a haon a chlog. I propose, therefore, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm. Beidh Tráth na gCeist againn ansin. The first item of business when we return will be Question Time.

The debate stood suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 12.59 pm.

2.00 pm

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

Oral Answers to Questions

Education

Area Planning: Fermanagh and South Tyrone

1. **Mr McPhillips** asked the Minister of Education to outline how the Education Authority's 'Providing Pathways Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020' will affect schools in Fermanagh and South Tyrone. (AQO 656/16-21)

Mr Weir (The Minister of Education): I thank the Member for clarifying question 1. The draft strategic area plan for Northern Ireland, 'Providing Pathways', focuses on the education interests of children and young people. It aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs, delivered by schools that are educationally and financially viable. In the development of the draft strategic area plan for 2017-2020, the Education Authority (EA), working with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and the other sectoral support bodies, has analysed the current position and identified key strategic themes and issues that are impacting on the education system.

It is important to note that the draft strategic area plan is out to consultation at present, so we are not at the final stage. It does not identify individual schools, but will act as a catalyst for discussion at a regional and local level. The school planning and managing authorities will engage at a local level to determine the most appropriate area solutions to ensure that children and young people have access to high-quality education, regardless of where they live. The aim at this stage is to look at a Northern Ireland-wide basis, though there is direct reference to the 11 council areas. Schools will be involved in the process at a formative stage and will have the opportunity to inform the development of the area solutions.

Mr McPhillips: I thank the Minister for his answer. He will be aware that his statement on the Education Authority's plan has caused great concern for rural schools, which traditionally have lower pupil numbers. What assurances can the Minister give that rural proofing legislation will be properly considered so that no rural pupil loses out, and there will be no redundancies for teachers or other staff in the rural schools?

Mr Weir: Let me just tackle a couple of those points. We always have to focus on the schools, and we must ensure that there is proper provision of education for the children. An issue has been highlighted already where there are composite classes. Where, in particular, more than two years are involved, there is the danger that that does not provide the best possible education. On the basis of that, it is my intention to ensure that a strategic look is taken at schools to ensure that we do not have isolated communities and that there is some level of provision within that.

In the second or third part of the Member's supplementary question, there was mention of teacher redundancies. What has happened in the past and will continue to happen is that transferred redundancies will be looked at as the way of doing that, were a particular school to close or amalgamate. Within the system, there is enough provision for that to be taken care of. It is something that, in the past, EA or CCMS, as the managing authorities, have been able to do. Other teachers will be looking to retire, and transferred redundancies are the route to avoiding any form of compulsory redundancy, which no one wants.

Mrs Barton: Given that the financial context of savings is a major section of the draft area plan consultation document, can the Minister give details as to how much money will be saved by the implementation of the draft area plan? Where is that money committed to being spent?

Mr Weir: With respect, let me say a couple of things. I do not accept that savings are a major issue in the draft area plan. The key focus of the plan is on ensuring that there is good provision of education. We all have to recognise that there is a degree of financial constraint. If there are changes made to the schools estate, and if they reduce pressures on issues around the small-schools factor, which is part of that, that money will recirculate within the aggregated schools budget. It is not a question of money being taken away from schools. Ultimately, there will be a set amount available to schools, and the distribution of it will depend on the number and location of schools. At the moment, because the schools estate is not fit for purpose, a lot of schools are not getting the level of spending and support that they should. I appreciate that Members from all parties in all locations will fight for their own area, but we also have to look at this in a mature and strategic way, which asks, "What is the best possible delivery of our education? How do we cope with an educational estate that is not fit for purpose and not meeting the demands of maintenance or educational need?". We need to have that level of mature discussion. It is not a question of money being taken out of education. It is a question of this: if the pressures are in different spheres, the money will be re-circulated within the schools budget.

Mr Lyttle: How will the Education Minister's failure to support the 1% pay increase for teachers in 2015-16 affect area planning for schools?

Mr Weir: That is a good attempt to shoehorn that in. I do not think it has any particular impact on area planning. We need to be responsible in the language we use. As for the money that was not there in 2015-16 to provide that 1%, let us remember that the overall wage bill for schools over the last two years will have gone up by 2.61% as a result of the pay settlements. The position for 2015-16 and 2016-17 is that all teachers below the top level will receive automatic increments. That is not the case in England, Scotland and Wales.

In area planning, the need is to focus on the best delivery of the schools estate. What individual teachers will get paid is not particularly relevant to area planning, and we should not be trying to conjoin the issues, even in a desperate attempt for a headline.

Lord Morrow: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. Could he tell the House what will happen to the area plan at the end of the consultation period?

Mr Weir: The consultation period, as you know, has been launched. It is due to complete on 12 December. It is an Education Authority consultation, and the Education Authority will have responsibility for analysing the responses and presenting a report on the issues raised. That will inform its final strategic plan, which will be for consideration in the new year.

The key objective in the area plan has identified the main issue to be addressed, which is a network of educational and financially viable schools. Once we get to that stage, an annual area plan will supplement the strategic area plan, so there will be one for 2017-18, another one for 2018-19 and one for 2019-20. It will contain details of the work programme of the planning and management authorities to address specific issues at local level. Area planning is a continuum, and that will be reflected in the annual area plan. That will, in turn, I suppose, lead to individual development proposals for schools, which will then have to go through a proper legal process. That is where the direct impact will be. A number of significant issues will be addressed. It is not possible to tackle everything at once. Therefore, the aim of the three-year plan is to identify priorities over a three-year period, and then drill down into those into annual plans.

Mr Lynch: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he accept there is no educational evidence or research to back up assertions on whether composite classes or single-year groups produce poorer educational outcomes?

Mr Weir: On the contrary, there is some evidence in relation to this, particularly with the differences. There is a limited amount of difference where you have children taught in a two-year composite class, although there is a level of additional differentiation there, which does make it difficult for the teacher.

If you speak to the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), it will say that it sees a considerable difference where you move beyond a simple two-year composite class and into settings where there are three years or more within a single class. A teacher is therefore trying to provide such a level of differentiation that it does have an impact. That is something that the ETI has raised.

Given the number of composite classes, some will continue. There are some very good teachers. The issue is that, once you get that differentiation in composite classes, it does make it more difficult for a teacher, and it is not the ideal situation.

Forge Integrated Primary School

2. **Ms Bradshaw** asked the Minister of Education to outline the timescales to approve development proposals to relocate Forge Integrated Primary School. (AQO 657/16-21)

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for her question. The Education Authority (EA) published three development proposals for Forge Integrated Primary School on 20 October 2016. I am sure that the Member is aware of that, but, for the benefit of the House, the three proposals are to relocate the school to the former Knockbreda High School site; to establish a 52-place part-time nursery unit; and to establish an autistic spectrum disorder centre at Key Stage 1 and a general learning support centre at

Key Stage 2. The publication on 20 October triggered a two-month objection consultation period, during which my Department will take receipt of any issues that have been raised, including objections and expressions of support for each application. The objection period, or the development proposal period, will end on 20 December, and my officials will then compile and assess all pertinent information before making a recommendation to me. I will consider all the information and advice before taking a decision in the context of my Department's statutory duties, stated priorities and policies.

As the Member will appreciate, as the final decision maker, I will legally have to give a decision on that, so I cannot discuss the details of the individual development proposals today. I can assure you, however, that I will endeavour to complete the process that I have outlined to you as quickly as possible, but the time taken can vary, depending on the individual circumstances and complexity of each proposal. As with all development proposals, my decision will conclude the process. The issues around the implementation, if implementation is required, of my decision are then a matter for the Education Authority, as Forge is a controlled integrated school.

Ms Bradshaw: Thank you, Minister. I ask what is almost a hypothetical question. Do you believe that the capital funding for this proposal could fit within the shared education campuses programme, and, if not, from where do you imagine funding will come?

Mr Weir: I am tempted to say that I have enough difficulty with real questions without hypothetical ones being added to the mix.

As part of Fresh Start, there are tranches of available funding. Forge Integrated has been selected to receive a new school build under the Fresh Start funding announcement that was made in March 2016. That new-build project is being led by the Education Authority. Such projects undergo a standard set of actions, and I suppose that the advantage is that the more the Department and the Education Authority are directly involved in new school builds, the more familiar they will get with the processes. The project for the new build for Forge Integrated is in the early stages, and the Department continues to work with the EA as required. On 27 April this year, an engagement event was held with all the schools — I think that there are 15 in total — for which funding under Fresh Start was announced on 23 March. The next step is site searches being commissioned, and that is the case with any new capital build. Members occasionally raise with me the point that there is a very obvious place for a particular school to go, but site searches are always commissioned with any new capital build, and work is under way to develop procurement documentation to engage integrated design teams. As with any proposal, barring any change that I have no control over, once a school has been announced for a new build, it will happen. It is not a question of there being any doubt about the capital build. Legally, the development proposals will have to be considered separately.

Ms Bailey: Given the consistent high demand and, in some cases, oversubscription, does the Minister feel that there is adequate provision of integrated education places in south Belfast?

Mr Weir: I am aware of the broader issues. It would be difficult to deal with the issues of the precise level

of availability in south Belfast without touching on the development proposals. In dealing with development proposals, I cannot do anything that can be either taken as being in favour of or against a particular development proposal. There is a limited amount of detail that I can get into. There has been some work, which was commissioned by the previous Minister, on a strategic review of integrated education, and I look forward to looking into the detail of that when I am able to deal with it.

2.15 pm

Ms Lockhart: I thank the Minister for his answers. He has already touched on this, but will he outline how the Department of Education will ensure that Fresh Start Agreement funding is fully maximised?

Mr Weir: I want to make sure that it is fully maximised. When it was secured by the Executive, it came both with opportunities and constraints. It is probably fair to say that there was not great enthusiasm in the Treasury for signing up to everything in Fresh Start. The funding is for integrated and shared education, and there will be some funding for shared housing. I want to make sure that the maximum amount is used. We continue to engage with the Northern Ireland Office and are working to identify future projects. From that point of view, the initial call resulted in 15. Further calls have since gone out; indeed, I initiated a new call for shared education campuses just a few weeks ago.

There are ways of widening how things are done. At the moment, the focus of Fresh Start is on pure new capital funding, but we could, for example, ensure that there was a role for Fresh Start in the integrated sector by widening out the pool for the school enhancement programme. There is also the issue of end-year flexibility, which is directly outside my control; we want to raise that with the Northern Ireland Office. The provision in Fresh Start is £50 million for each of 10 years; if it is not spent in a particular year, the money effectively goes unspent. A new capital build, in particular, is not something that you can start on one day and have the money spent within a year; it takes time. So the more flexibility we can get from the Northern Ireland Office and the Treasury, the more we can maximise the amount going into school build via the Fresh Start Agreement.

Capital Spend: East Antrim

3. **Mr Lyons** asked the Minister of Education to outline his Department's capital spend in East Antrim since 2011. (AQO 658/16-21)

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for his question. The Department of Education's total capital spend in East Antrim for the five full financial years since 2011-12 is £18.5 million. I do not have figures for the spend in the current year. Major capital programmes for St Killian's College, Islandmagee Primary School, Corran Integrated Primary School, Abbey Community College, Ulidia Integrated College and Woodburn Primary School have all been announced and are advanced in planning. Work to deliver those projects is being advanced jointly by the Department and the Education Authority. I will quiz Members on the names of all those schools later.

Mr Lyons: I thank the Minister for his answer. I impress on him the need for capital expenditure in East Antrim, on minor works in particular. A lot of schools have come

to me with a lot of need. Can he update the House on the new build for Islandmagee Primary School, which is much anticipated by local people?

Mr Weir: The new-build primary school for the Islandmagee area was originally included in the January 2013 capital announcement, although it was subsequently withdrawn due to a change in the basis on which the project had been included. On 24 September 2014, the former Education Minister made a decision that the development proposal agreed in 2004 to amalgamate Kilcoan and Mullaghdubh primary schools — I bow to local knowledge on pronunciation — to create the new Islandmagee Primary School remained extant. The decision allowed the project to be included in the March 2016 capital investment announcement. As a result, a project board with specific responsibility for the new build for Islandmagee Primary School was established on 27 June 2016, with representation from the school, the Education Authority and the Department of Education to ensure effective governance structures for the delivery of the project. Once there has been an announcement on the capital build, the processes will move ahead.

Mr Beggs: The development of Islandmagee Primary School has been rather torturous, in that it began in the early 2000s and has taken more than a decade.

Can the Minister assure us that the split site on which the school is now operating will increase the priority with which funding will actually be allocated and that there will be no further delays? Given that planning permission has now been delivered for Woodburn Primary School, when will both schools actually be built?

Mr Weir: Right: I will pick from the range of questions. I appreciate the strong involvement that the Member has had with this. The speed will be up to the project board but there will not be any unnecessary delays.

I appreciate the point made that there was a previous commitment over a decade ago. Indeed, in a situation where I think that there was anticipation then of ever-increasing capital amounts, a lot of projects were given the green light and then the plug was pulled on them. The Department has learned from that position. Only those projects that are gateway checked and are therefore in a position to move ahead will get the green light.

I cannot give specific dates for when it will move ahead to completion but, as I said, the project board which brings it forward, irons out all the details and makes the arrangements, has been established and, therefore, this is something that will happen. There will not be any undue delay in that.

Mr Dickson: I appreciate that this question relates to a constituency-specific subject. With regard to the minor works programme, what action does the Minister propose to take about the totally inadequate outdoor boys and girls' toilets at Greenisland Primary School — his predecessor having visited the school — which were put up in the 1930s and, to this day, are totally and wholly inadequate for children in the modern age?

Mr Weir: Direct prioritisation of minor works is ultimately for the Education Authority. However, although it has been widely accepted that we are in a very tight resource regime, it is hoped that we will see and know a little bit better, roughly speaking, in a week's time, that things

should improve on the capital side. I suppose, as with all minor works, it is a question of prioritisation. I appreciate, from what you have indicated, that this is something that — to slightly misquote a popular party tune — it is old but it is not beautiful in that location. As such, action will obviously need to be taken to rectify that, but there are a lot of calls on minor works.

School Programmes: East Antrim

4. **Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Education to outline any programmes in schools in East Antrim designed to deter children from illegal activity and paramilitary involvement. (AQO 659/16-21)

Mr Weir: There was just a bit of natural flow in that regard.

The statutory curriculum that is taught in all schools includes citizenship education which enables young people to participate positively and effectively in society, play their part in democratic processes and make informed and responsible decisions as citizens throughout their lives.

At primary level, it is part of the personal development and mutual understanding area of learning. Pupils look at diversity, cultural heritage, promoting inclusion, human rights, causes of and responses to conflict, and playing an active and meaningful part in the community, all of which contribute to turning children away from involvement in illegal and paramilitary organisations.

Specifically, at post-primary level, local and global citizenship is part of the learning for life and work area. Pupils explore issues such as diversity, prejudice and racism, promoting inclusion and reconciliation, mutual respect, equality and human rights, social justice and exclusion, democracy, and participation through local and global examples.

In addition to this, because, as I may have mentioned earlier, we sometimes focus purely on what is happening in the classroom, my Department also provides funding directly to the Education Authority (EA) under the youth intervention programme. This is to support young people in times of community tension and unrest. Last year, the fund was a little bit over £800,000. This targeted programme enabled the creation of, if you like, diversionary activity for individuals who were often at risk of involvement in paramilitary activity. That is an important part of this as well.

I am not aware of specific programmes in schools in East Antrim per se but I hope that the aspects in the curriculum, as I have outlined them, will deter children from involvement in illegal and paramilitary activities. Nobody wants children to go down the wrong route in life. Whether it is paramilitary activity or other criminal activity, we all have to play our part in ensuring that we divert people from that.

Mr Dickson: I thank the Minister for his answer. Minister, you will appreciate that, given the imminent and real danger to young people in East Antrim, particularly in Carrickfergus and Larne, intervention is vital for how we support our young people in those communities. In respect of dealing with paramilitaries, the Executive agreed an action plan, including an early intervention transformation programme. Have you met that board? What action will you take with the early intervention transformation programme board to deal with the matter?

Mr Weir: As yet, I have not had a direct meeting with the board, but I am happy to work alongside it. If we need to do things in a multi-agency or multi-departmental way, I am keen to embrace that. If young people go down that pathway, they are potentially creating a risk to society in terms of deaths, injuries and damage to property. That is bad enough, but added to that is the danger of a young person being left scarred for life by a criminal record. We should take any steps that we can to divert people from that. I am happy to meet anybody in that regard. I will try to get the Member details of any activities that the EA has planned in East Antrim and send them to him.

Mr McMullan: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. Can you, Minister, give me your Department's assessment of the harm that the culture of paramilitary activity and domination in parts of Carrick and Larne is having on the educational attainment of young people and children? In the absence of such an assessment, will your Department consider carrying one out?

Mr Weir: I am not sure whether there is much point in doing something so specifically location-oriented. Unfortunately, there are still parts of Northern Ireland in which there is paramilitary activity and paramilitary organisations in both sections of the community. As I indicated, there is clear damage to the lives of young people who get involved, and they should be discouraged from any such activity. There is risk to their future long-term prospects in terms of criminal records and their life, let alone the damage that they do to others. As you indicated, it is also about the impact that that will have on their educational opportunities and the damage that is done. From that point of view, we need to look at how we can do that throughout Northern Ireland. If there are specific interventions that can happen in a constituency, I am happy for the EA to do those; it will perhaps know what needs to be done directly on the ground. If there is any form of audit, it needs to be taken forward on a much wider basis to ensure that all areas where there are problems are properly dealt with.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): I call Phillip Logan for a brief question and a brief answer.

Mr Logan: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. What progress has the Minister made on implementing the plans in the Fresh Start Agreement for tackling paramilitary activity?

Mr Weir: To add to what has been said, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has provided outline costs for the development of curriculum materials to address the issues of paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime. Those materials will support the delivery of citizenship education in the curriculum. It is designed to raise awareness and develop understanding of active citizenship and lawfulness.

We have to be mindful of the fact that most of us are of a generation who know about what happened throughout the Troubles. We knew about the damage that was done to society as a whole. A lot of people are growing up for whom it is simply a historical event. We have to make sure that young people do not repeat the mistakes of previous generations, so the damage that can be caused to young people and society has to be brought home to them.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): That ends the period for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions.

Teachers' Pay: Union Discussions

T1. **Mr Mullan** asked the Minister of Education for an update on any discussions that he has had with the teachers' unions about pay concerns, especially with the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), which plans to hold a one-day strike next month. (AQT 476/16-21)

2.30 pm

Mr Weir: I appeal to people to show restraint and to not be involved directly in a strike. We are in a position, as indicated, and discussions have been ongoing for the last year or two. Do not forget that we are talking about an issue with the 2015-16 pay settlement in particular, which was never sorted out during 2015-16. There were various offers made, I understand, from management side to the unions, which were not accepted at various stages, and those negotiations broke down.

I think there is a willingness to have discussion on it, but the reality is that there is not any more money. We are in a situation where, as I said, over 2015-16 and 2016-17 teachers received an increase in the pay bill of 2.61%. We have to take increments into account. That means that, for 2015-16, every teacher in Northern Ireland who had a salary below £37,500 saw a pay increase last year. So, we have to deal with this through some objective facts. There is a tough financial regime out there for schools. While I am sure there is a strong desire to see additional pay, the reality is that the more we push up pay, the more current circumstances in the schools' budget will lead to further redundancies. I think there also has to be a balance struck between greater levels of pay and teachers losing their job. That will also have to be borne in mind. I do not have any additional money to throw at this issue.

Mr Mullan: Minister, thank you for your answers so far. I understand what you are trying to strive at. Do you agree that our teachers are as hard-working, dedicated and committed as any teacher within GB and are and should be entitled to the same levels of pay and should not be lagging two years behind?

Mr Weir: With respect, they are not lagging two years behind; that is an inaccuracy. It is also the case that every teacher below the top level received an increment for 2015-16 and will receive an increment and pay increase for 2016-17. In England, automatic pay increments were abolished a number of years ago, so, in that sense, it is not like for like. If people want to have like for like, there will be consequences of that as well. I think we have to get to the facts of the situation rather than always looking to see where there is parity when it suits and ignoring other occasions when it does not suit.

Transfer Test Guidance: Update

T2. **Mr McQuillan** asked the Minister of Education for an update on his recently announced transfer test guidance. (AQT 477/16-21)

Mr Weir: There are a couple of aspects to that. Obviously, an announcement was made on guidance to primary schools for preparation. That gave primary schools a permissive environment in which to prepare children for issues with practice tests, a level of coaching for tests, a familiarisation with the facilities and, if there is agreement,

to have the tests hosted in primary schools. I accept that, realistically, there will not be agreement on selection between the two Government parties, indeed there is a fairly great chasm within the Chamber on the issue. I am realistic enough to know that there is not going to be agreement, and I am not going to look for some sort of short-term fix for it for the next couple of years. As such, there will be efforts to see what can be done to make life easier for the children going through transfer. One aspect of that is to try to see whether we can reach an agreement on whether the two sets of tests that are there at present — the PPTC and AQE — can be a single agreed set of tests. To that extent, I have appointed an independent expert from outside Northern Ireland, who, therefore, maybe does not have the same connections with Northern Ireland, to see whether he can facilitate discussions, but those are at a very early stage.

Mr McQuillan: I thank the Minister for his answer so far. Minister, I have had very positive feedback on the announcements. Do you think these changes will encourage more parents to enter their kids for the exams?

Mr Weir: A considerable number of pupils are entering for the transfer test. I think people can debate the merits of that, but it is very much a fact of life. It is also a fact of life that, clearly, given the level of demand, the transfer tests are here to stay. From that point of view, I think there will always be an individual choice for individual parents about the action they take in connection with that. Therefore, I suppose my role is to try to make the pathway as easy as possible and to not throw artificial barriers, to an extent, in their way or in the way of the schools and to try to make sure that provision, if you like, is given in what is always going to be a difficult issue — that of transfer — but is done in a way that does not add stress to the situation.

Educational Psychologists

T3. **Mr McCartney** asked the Minister of Education whether he is content or satisfied with the number of educational psychologists that are available to carry out assessments on young children and young adults. (AQT 478/16-21)

Mr Weir: With regard to educational psychologists, there is an issue which is a joint working between the Departments of Education and Health. There are gaps in that, and we are hoping to close those in terms of numbers. I am happy to work with my colleague in Health at the Executive to ensure that we get timely interventions. It was mentioned earlier today when we were debating autism, for example, that one of the problems was early diagnosis, which principally lies with Health, but there is a joint responsibility. The sooner we can get to a diagnosis and, indeed, action to rectify some problems, the more advantageous to everybody.

Mr McCartney: Mo bhúochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. While he waits to have that discussion with the Minister of Health, are there any actions that he could take to help reduce the waiting times, even in the short term?

Mr Weir: Strategically, we need to look at what actions can be taken to ensure that there is a smoother process, full stop. Whatever the direct contact between me and Michelle O'Neill in relation to this, there is ongoing work with the two Departments at official level. Particularly with

regard to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 that went through last year, part of that was to have a much greater sense of joined-up working, so there is liaison between officials. We need to ensure that, while there is good work going on at a departmental level, that permeates into the groundwork and we get that delivery for young children.

Outdoor Residential Activity Centres

T4. **Mr Aiken** asked the Minister of Education to outline the reasons for the proposed closure of half of our eight outdoor residential activity centres, particularly because many studies have shown that building relationships, building leadership skills and giving our children a much-valued sense of the outdoors are key to development. (AQT 479/16-21)

Mr Weir: There are 12 outdoor centres; they are being reduced from 12 to eight. The Member seems to have missed out on four of them. The position is that it is a proposal by the Education Authority. There was an assessment in 2015 of the needs with regard to outdoor activity that concluded that we needed about eight instead of 12, so this follows through from that. There is no doubt that that is also a product of the pressures that are there financially. The Education Authority this year has had its budget reduced by about £20 million, and there is £20 million of pressures. That is the situation with the overall budget. To be fair to the previous Minister, something I have tried to do as well is, as much as possible, protect the front-line schools budget. That means that — probably disproportionately, to be fair — the Education Authority has had to bear that weight of responsibility.

Everyone is aware of the good work being done in outdoor education centres. There will still be availability of that through any new scheme, but it will be the situation that, if the Education Authority has to make a level of cuts, it is also incumbent on people. There are certain things that can happen in voluntary redundancy and that type of thing, but that will not close the entire gap. If, for example, as a result of this exercise, there is a determination that these are not the right cuts, there will also be an onus on people to say, in a responsible fashion, where the other cuts should come from. We are at the consultation process, and those are the arguments that should be made. Another issue that people will have to consider is whether, if there is a reduction in outdoor centres, these are the right ones to remove. That has also got to be borne in mind in any discussion.

Mr Aiken: I apologise to the Minister; I meant eight large outdoor activity centres rather than the overall number.

With regard to your answer, one of the questions that we have to ask on the identified savings of £1.5 million is whether there are specific areas that you are looking to use those savings from. Like some of the other activities that we are doing, are you looking to use those for things like adventurous training, leadership and teamwork and how can we do that?

Mr Weir: It is not a question of that money being hypothecated. First of all, I will indicate that the issue is that the Education Authority has a budget. The decision on the outdoor centres is a decision, ultimately, for them. The issue is that they have to live within their budget. To be fair, there would not be the same compelling financial case for change if it was simply a question of £1.5 million

or whatever amount of saving simply being redirected into another activity. The argument would then be that what is there is not broke so it does not need fixing. The issue is that there are pressures for a range of activities, such as the increasing costs of special needs education, which are going up year-on-year. As for the overall budget share, the Department's budget was reduced in 2016-17, and the Education Authority, to be fair to it, bore a disproportionate amount of that cut. They have to make ends meet, so it is not a question of recycling the money; it is about trying to ensure that they remain within budget. It is a requirement that they have, and it is one that I have with my budget, too.

Early Years Provision: South Belfast

T5. **Mr Stalford** asked the Minister of Education to outline what provision is planned for early years in the South Belfast constituency over the next five years. (AQT 480/16-21)

Mr Weir: The aim is to make sure that a preschool place is available for every child in the immediate preschool year. It is also an aim of the draft Programme for Government and one that I plan to continue. The preschool education advisory group in the EA has direct responsibility for ensuring there is adequate preschool provision in local areas and to allocate funded places on the basis of local need. For 2016-17, every child whose parents stayed to the end with the admissions process in the South Belfast constituency received the offer of a preschool place. I want to ensure that that continues, so that we have that level of adequate provision throughout Northern Ireland, not simply in South Belfast.

Mr Stalford: The Minister will know that, as well as preschool places, Sure Start plays a valuable and important role, particularly in helping people from deprived communities get back into work. What provision and support is there for Sure Start in South Belfast?

Mr Weir: The current investment across Northern Ireland as a whole is about £25 million per year, which is administered by the Health and Social Care Board under a service-level agreement with the Department of Education. There are 39 Sure Start projects across Northern Ireland. The core budget for Sure Start in South Belfast in 2016-17 is £920,000. The Sure Start project involves services to legacy wards. Prior to the rejigging of the boundaries in Belfast, these included Ballynafeigh, Shaftesbury, Botanic, Blackstaff, Upper Malone, which despite its name includes Taughmonagh and Benmore, and, through the expansion of services, Minnowburn, as part of the Beechill ward, which falls within the Belvoir estate. In addition to the ongoing resource costs, the Department has made a capital investment totalling £359,000 in 2015-16 for the purchase and refurbishment of the former Belvoir Clinic premises to enable the expansion of South Belfast Sure Start.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): I call Paul Frew for a brief question.

Schools: Maintenance Budget/Budget Powers

T6. **Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Education to shed some light on the circumstances that have led to him being contacted by many school principals from North Antrim about the Education Authority's maintenance department, which is telling them that there has been no budget for maintenance work since the start of the financial year; and,

in anticipating that he will not get to ask a supplementary question, for an update on the Minister's plan to give more powers to principals over their school budgets. (AQT 481/16-21)

Mr Weir: In shopping terms, I think that is what is called a two-for-one offer.

It is not true that there has not been any money. The level of the maintenance budget from the Department, through the EA, has been about £14 million this year. That is probably less than what is needed, and that means that things have had to be prioritised on the basis of health and safety.

I wrote to principals and schools in the last week or so to get an indication of their views on greater autonomy. If there is a good argument that there are parts of the budget that could be better utilised by schools themselves in a sensible fashion, I am very open to it.

That correspondence is fairly open-ended for suggestions. It does not concentrate on particular aspects, such as maintenance or procurement, but those can easily be brought back to me in a response from schools.

2.45 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Time is up. We must move on to questions to the Minister for Communities.

Communities

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Question 1 has been withdrawn.

Social Security Offices/Jobcentres

2. **Mr McKee** asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the review of social security offices and jobcentres in Cookstown, Ballynahinch and Newcastle. (AQO 672/16-21)

Mr Givan (The Minister for Communities): A public consultation on the proposed closure of the social security offices and jobcentres in Cookstown, Ballynahinch and Newcastle was launched on 20 September and will complete on 15 November. The consultation is an opportunity for claimants, staff, public representatives and other stakeholders to comment on and raise concerns regarding the proposed closures of the offices. Decisions will not be made until I have had an opportunity to consider fully all responses to the consultation.

Mr McKee: Given all the changes to social security that are being brought in at the moment and the extra resources that have been put into advice services, does the Minister recognise that closing jobs and benefits offices in major towns across the country makes no sense?

Mr Givan: What makes sense is my Department reviewing the services that it provides in the light of the changes that are coming about through the introduction of universal credit. Welfare is changing, and the services that my Department provides need to recognise that environment and deliver services efficiently in a space where the budgets that my Department has to deal with are constrained. We are looking at the responses, and I will consider them in due course.

Mr McGrath: Why did the Minister not have 60 seconds to 90 seconds to meet the staff in the Great Hall today to receive their petition, which, at the very least, would have been a nice gesture?

Mr Givan: Today I was opening a new facility for young people who come out of care in my constituency whom Fold and MACS NI have been dealing with. It will help people who have been homeless. I then went to meet people from the faith community at a conference at the Ramada Hotel and arrived in Parliament Buildings five minutes ago to deal with Question Time. If the individuals are still in the Great Hall when the debate commences, I will be more than happy to meet them.

Mr K Buchanan: Will the Minister confirm that all claimants will have access to the same level of customer service that they currently have?

Mr Givan: There should not be any negative customer service impacts on claimants. Claimants affected by any proposed closures will continue to be able to access face-to-face services from alternative offices within a reasonable travelling distance. There will be a greater choice of access channels for customers, with discretionary support offering a telephony delivery model and universal credit offering an online model.

Ms Dillon: Will the Minister provide an overview of the discussions that he had with the unions and staff representatives prior to the consultation?

Mr Givan: The consultation process is being carried out by the Department. I approved its commencement. Obviously, there will have been engagement between my departmental officials and those on the trade union side, but this is a consultation process, and no decisions have been taken. The consultation process closes today, and we will have an Adjournment debate later this afternoon that the Member herself has brought to the House. I will be able to elaborate on the process that is being followed and what the next steps may be.

Ms Armstrong: What rural-proofing criteria will the Minister use when making the decision to close — if he is going to close — any of the social security offices, given the fact that, if the Ballynahinch office in my constituency closes, face-to-face meetings in other areas will not be possible, because transport is so limited?

Mr Givan: There was rural proofing through engagement with the Department of Agriculture. That document was published on 4 November. Those are issues that need to be taken into account whenever we are dealing with this.

The service is changing, and the need for people to come in and sign on is changing. I am concerned with delivering a service that best meets the needs of the individuals who have to use it but also one that my Department is responsible for within the budgetary constraints that exist.

Sexual Orientation

3. **Mrs Long** asked the Minister for Communities to outline the action his Department is taking to improve good relations with regard to sexual orientation. (AQO 673/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Member will be aware that section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a statutory duty on

all public authorities to promote equality of opportunity between a wide range of groups such as:

persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation

between men and women generally;

between persons with a disability and persons without;

and between persons with dependants and persons without.

Furthermore, section 75(2) states:

a public authority in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland shall have regard to ... promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

My Department has published an interim equality scheme that sets out how, as a Department, we propose to fulfil our section 75 statutory duties. In addition, my Department is required to provide an annual progress report to the Equality Commission setting out how we have delivered against those statutory duties. The first Department for Communities section 75 annual progress report will be completed for 2016-17 and will be made available following submission to the Equality Commission in August 2017. I will be happy to have a copy, when it is published, sent to the Member if that would be useful.

Mrs Long: I thank the Minister for his answer with respect to setting out what section 75 is meant to achieve. However, I will take the opportunity to remind the Minister of the question: what action does he intend to take to improve good relations with respect to those of different sexual orientations, and can he address that specific issue in his answer?

Mr Givan: Section 75 is applicable right across the areas that I have highlighted in Departments and their duties to deal with all the issues raised in section 75. That is the statutory instrument that Departments have to abide by, and I will certainly do that.

Ms Hanna: I ask the Minister what action he is taking to meet and engage with the LGBT community as he develops his departmental strategy.

Mr Givan: Obviously, my door is open to people who want to engage with me. This is an area that I have touched upon in the House before. When dealing with section 75, and the different groups that exist, we must acknowledge that people have different characteristics that they identify by. It is important that we, as a society, respect all those different characteristics and that we find a space in our society where people can accommodate differences so that, where differences exist, they can be expressed in a way that is respectful.

It is important that, in promoting one's identity, we do not denigrate another's identity. That is how our society would be best placed to evolve when it comes to dealing respectfully with individuals, irrespective of their background.

Mr Middleton: Can the Minister outline his approach to dealing with the needs of people right across the section 75 groups?

Mr Givan: This is a very important issue to us. Obviously, the case that was heard in the Court of Appeal raised the issue of the conflict that, at times, can exist. As a society, we need to find ways of navigating those differences, but it is beyond the issues that seem to dominate the debate on section 75 — sexual orientation and religious belief. When we look at all the groups in section 75, we see that it is about helping people who have disabilities and the broad spectrum that it covers. It is important that we look at those issues in their totality and find a way of addressing all the issues raised by how people identify and that we do so by trying to find a respectful dialogue while acknowledging that differences exist, and where you can make reasonable accommodation for that, it should be carried forward.

Mr F McCann: I thank the Minister for his answer so far. The Minister has partially answered my question. How can he ensure that equality protections will be adhered to for the LGBT community in his Department, including arm's-length bodies?

Mr Givan: Section 75 is applicable to arm's-length bodies as well. Obviously, all arm's-length bodies should be complying with the law. I expect that, whether it is my Department or the arm's-length bodies, when dealing with these issues, you find a way to comply with the law, and that everybody can be treated equally in the services that have to be delivered by the state.

I make the comment again that there will be occasions when the different characteristics identified in section 75 will be in conflict. It is in that space that we need to find a way in which our society can manage that. Again, I do not believe that the promotion of one's identity should be carried forward in a way that denigrates another individual's identity. It is in that space that, I think, the challenge to the Assembly is this: what type of society do we want to have? Is it one that respects that difference? Is it one that can reasonably accommodate those differences? Is it one where a particular section 75 group will want to enforce its will upon another section 75 group? That is not equality, and I believe that there is a better way to do things than what has happened heretofore.

Mr Agnew: Can the Minister confirm that LGBT representative groups have sought to engage constructively with him and his Department? Will he give a commitment that he will not let the minority who may troll on the Internet affect the work that he does with that community?

Mr Givan: The Member makes a valid point. I think that there will be individuals on the extremes who identify with whatever characteristic I have referred to so far. That should not put people off being able to have dialogue on these issues. I give an assurance that I recognise that social media can be a very powerful and useful tool, but it does attract individuals who will, at times, misrepresent the broader interests of the characteristic that is identified. Again, my door is open. I am happy to have a conversation about these issues; I think that is important. It is also important that that conversation is carried out in a respectful manner, recognising that people will come to the table with different views on how we navigate around these issues. If the starting place in all this is treating each other with respect then, potentially, there is a way in which we can find an accommodation.

Fresh Start Panel Report

4. **Dr Farry** asked the Minister for Communities to outline the action his Department has taken to date to implement the recommendations of the Fresh Start panel report on the 'Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland'. (AQO 674/16-21)

Mr Givan: Following publication of the panel's report on 7 June, the Executive launched their action plan for tackling paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime on 19 July. Implementation of the plan is being taken forward by a cross-departmental programme board, led by the Department of Justice. I am fully committed to delivering on my Department's responsibilities in the action plan, which include: to work with local voluntary and community organisations to promote a culture of lawfulness; to take forward a programme to increase the influence of women in community development; to establish a fund to support ambitious initiatives aimed at building capacity in communities in transition; and to consider how funding can be made available, within existing accountability guidelines for managing public money, to support such activities.

The work forms an integral part of the new Programme for Government. We have made significant progress to date in consulting with key stakeholders across all sectors and will continue to report progress through the programme board.

Dr Farry: I am concerned that the Minister has omitted to refer to recommendation D2 of the panel's report, which refers to the need to tackle segregation in housing and "set ambitious targets and milestones" in that regard. I remind him that the Fresh Start Agreement itself links the issue of tackling division to being central to eradicating paramilitary activity. Therefore, I ask the Minister to confirm whether, in his view and that of his Department, there is a very firm link between the promotion of mixed, shared and integrated housing and the eradication, finally, of paramilitary activity from our society?

Mr Givan: That issue has been touched on before in the Assembly in respect of shared housing. I believe that when you create the environment in which people can have confidence, you will naturally develop shared housing. There are specific requirements that my Department will, of course, meet when it comes to developing shared housing areas.

In the broader sense, whether it is social housing or private housing, it is about building confidence in our communities so that people feel at ease with one another, and that will then develop into mixed housing areas. What I do not believe in is somehow socially engineering outcomes. People should be given houses on the basis of need; it should not be on the basis of one's religion.

I recognise that that is a strange concept for the Alliance Party. It supported the discrimination of Protestants when it came to Police Service recruitment and is now putting forward the case that people should be denied a house on the basis of their religion. I will not support that.

3.00 pm

Dr Farry: Recommendation D2 in the report has been abandoned.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): I remind Members that there should be no comments from a seated position, please.

Ms Mallon: Does the Minister agree that the decision that has been taken by the British Government not to release £5 million in funding because of a lack of detail in the Executive's plan to address paramilitarism is deeply embarrassing for the Executive?

Mr Givan: I met the Secretary of State recently, and we discussed how we will tackle paramilitary activity and the responsibilities that my Department will have in that area. I am confident that the money that is being made available to the Northern Ireland Executive will be released by the Treasury in due course.

Mr Logan: Will the Minister outline what progress he has made in promoting a culture of lawfulness in Northern Ireland?

Mr Givan: That is, of course, very important. The Department has been working on a scoping exercise with the Strategic Investment Board that will make recommendations on how we can work together with our arm's-length bodies and voluntary and community sector organisations to promote and develop a culture of lawfulness in our society. The Department intends to run a series of pilot programmes in early 2017 to test collaborative interventions that specifically promote lawfulness. We are also working through the joint government/voluntary and community sector forum to consider how that work can be factored into the existing partnership agreement between government and the sector.

Ms Archibald: Will the Minister give an update on any discussions that his Department is engaged in with the community and voluntary sector on how it can support the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Fresh Start panel report?

Mr Givan: I touched on that engagement in answer to the previous question from my colleague Mr Logan. The Department is engaging with the voluntary and community sector, and work is ongoing, for example, with those who represent the Women's Support Network and so on to look at enhancing the role of women in communities. It is vital that it is delivered at a community level. Government from on high telling communities how they need to develop can, I believe, work only when the community is working with you. The voluntary and community sector plays an important role in that and will have an important role in taking forward the recommendations.

Mr Allister: The panel report states:

"It is important that those who do business with Government ... should be consistent positive examples to their communities. We recommend that the Executive ... should review their protocols for engaging with representatives of paramilitary groups."

Why, on the very morning after another BBC 'Spotlight' exposure of paramilitary links to an office on the Shankill Road, did the Minister think it appropriate to visit that office and be photographed with at least one paramilitary figure?

Mr Givan: I will go to constituencies and meet organisations. When I met that organisation, a conversation took place about supporting the PSNI and

upholding the rule of law, and those who responded were categorical in saying that it is for the PSNI to deal effectively with issues of law and order.

The recommendations in the report state that we need to support communities that are moving into a transitional process. I can speak only about those in my constituency, but there are those who have pasts and prison records, and I recognise the work that they have been doing to move the community forward. I am prepared to work with those individuals on the basis that they support only the PSNI. That is certainly the case with the individuals whom I have been working with and will continue to work with. It is, of course, important that organisations are always looked at in terms of those protocols.

When it comes to being the judge on all those things, given the Member's legal expertise, he will know that, if individuals are breaking the law, it is for the PSNI to arrest and charge them.

What I have heard from a number of Members is that they have been acting as judge and jury over a number of these individuals as opposed to allowing the forces of law and order to deal effectively with them. It is for them to make those judgements and to prosecute people where they break the law.

Casement Park

5. **Mr Sheehan** asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment of the Ulster GAA's new plans for Casement Park. (AQO 675/16-21)

Mr Givan: I recently met the GAA, which presented the emerging design for the redevelopment of Casement Park prior to the launch of its phase 2 community consultation. The design proposals presented by the GAA demonstrated how issues raised in the 2014 judicial review and through the phase 1 community consultation have been incorporated into the designs.

My Department remains fully committed to the redevelopment of Casement Park and will continue to work with all parties to ensure the successful delivery of a new, safe stadium at the Casement Park site. It is anticipated that a new planning application will be submitted in the third quarter of the 2016-17 financial year.

Mr Sheehan: Mo bhuíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he give a reassurance that the social clauses for the redevelopment of Casement Park will be an integral part of the redevelopment of a new stadium?

Mr Givan: I am happy to give that assurance. In a lot of these contracts, the Executive are very much of the view that the social clauses are very important and can help people to get the skills they need to get future employment. They give people an opportunity. So, as this is developed, they are something I will want to see included. They will have a positive impact on those who will benefit from it, and the community will obviously get a benefit from that.

Mr Stalford: I am sure the Minister will agree with me that the rights of residents who live in the vicinity of large stadiums should be respected. In that regard, will the Minister outline what actions his Department is taking to address the concerns of residents who live in the vicinity of Windsor Park?

Mr Givan: I thank the Member for his question. It is an issue he has raised with me on a number of occasions. These stadiums are, obviously, in residential areas. Casement will be in a heavily populated residential area, as are Ravenhill, or Kingspan, and the national stadium at Windsor Park. Therefore, it is important that there is constructive engagement with the local community.

Where the national stadium is concerned, there is a community stadium board. That was a requirement from the Department in the money that was allocated to the IFA. That board meets on numerous occasions. It has representatives and key stakeholders, including the council, the Police Service and local residents, and it provides a forum for ongoing local engagement and discussion. I know there will be further work with the Department and officials who are working with Mr Stalford to determine the nature and extent of the issues being faced by residents. It is in everybody's interests that these issues are effectively managed, and residents are supportive of the work that is taking place at the national stadium at Windsor Park.

Mrs Palmer: Does the Minister agree that safety is a paramount consideration and planning decisions must be made on material planning grounds? Will he encourage his colleague the Minister for Infrastructure to take his decision on Casement on a completely non-political basis?

Mr Givan: The Member invites me to get involved in something that is not my responsibility. It will be for the GAA to submit the planning application. I have made it clear from my point of view and that of the Department that there is an Executive commitment to develop the three stadia. This is the last one that needs to be delivered on, but it is for the GAA to develop that planning application. It has gone through that process. It is moving into the next phase, and it is for the GAA to navigate through the processes. I do not know whether it is a matter for the Department for Infrastructure or whether it will be Belfast City Council, but that will be something I am sure the Department will deal with and deal with according to due process.

Mr McCrossan: Does the Minister recognise the invaluable contribution that the GAA has played in communities such as mine? What is the Minister doing to promote and support the enhancement of the sport going forward?

Mr Givan: I certainly do. I met Danny Murphy recently, and we had a broad conversation around how the GAA plays an important role in the community. It was a frank conversation. I very much value the work that the GAA does from a sporting perspective, and I acknowledged that. We also had a discussion around the Irish language and the more cultural dimension of the GAA, and that was a conversation that was honest. It was one where the GAA was very clear on its view that this is fundamental to the organisation. I indicated to it that, when I meet the Irish Football Association and when I meet Ulster Rugby, neither of those organisations lobbies me around cultural issues. That makes the GAA unique, and I believe that that presents challenges. From a sporting perspective, I am very supportive of it.

Mr Lyttle: Does the Minister support the Executive-agreed subregional football stadia funding programme commitment to redevelop the Oval, in partnership with Glentoran Football Club, on a budget of £10 million? Why

has he refused to meet Naomi Long and me on this matter, despite meeting numerous DUP MLAs on the issue?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): While that is not relevant to the question, it is, of course, up to the Minister's discretion to determine the answer.

Ulster Fleadh 2016

6. **Mr McAleer** asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment of the 2016 Ulster Fleadh in Bangor organised by Comhaltas Uládh. (AQO 676/16-21)

Mr Givan: I believe that the 2016 Ulster Fleadh, which was held in Bangor for the first time and which ran over a period of nine days in July, was successful. Thousands of people attended and participated in the festival, and the 25 events and sessions that took place were well supported. The "Bagoa" — I may have pronounced that incorrectly, but I understand that it translates as "lively", so I do have some knowledge — concert had approximately 500 in attendance, and the Sands Family concert was also a major triumph, with over 350 attending the event. Overall, the Fleadh incorporated a wide variety of events that took place across different venues in the Ards and North Down borough. The report from local businesses was that it was beneficial to the local economy through the bed-nights that it created. The Fleadh was also recently awarded the best tourist event or activity in the North Down Business Awards 2016. Of course, the Ulster Fleadh is to return to Bangor in July next year.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Before I call the Member for a supplementary, I advise Members to tone down the background noise a bit in order that the questions and, indeed, the responses can be heard. Thank you for that.

Mr McAleer: I thank the Minister for his answer. I think that the group that the Minister is referring to is Beoga. Can the Minister give his assurance that his Department and its ALBs will give the work of the Comhaltas the same value as the other federations that are involved with music and bands?

Mr Givan: Unfortunately, my Irish is not quite as good as Her Majesty the Queen's, so apologies for that. I recognise the cultural value that Comhaltas provides. I expect it, and any organisation in the arts, to be treated fairly when it comes to the different funding streams that are available through the Arts Council and when applications are put forward. Where they meet the requirements in the criteria, they will be successful. I have said before in the House that I recognise the cultural diversity that exists in Northern Ireland, and I believe that it enriches our heritage and should be supported.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Very briefly, Joanne Bunting.

Ms Bunting: Still on a musical theme, given the successful reintroduction of the musical instruments for bands programme, does the Minister have plans to review this programme overall?

Mr Givan: This has been a hugely successful scheme that I reintroduced; it did previously exist. However, the fact has been highlighted in the process that the criteria should be looked at, and therefore I will establish a steering group that will conduct a review of the musical instruments for bands policy.

Again, that fund is available to all who are eligible, whatever section of the community they are from.

3.15 pm

Mr Chambers: Minister, I can confirm that this was an event enjoyed by visitors and locals alike. We look forward to its return. Will the Minister take this opportunity to acknowledge and compliment the work of volunteers and venue owners who make events like this happen?

Mr Givan: These events are successful. This generated over 800 bed-nights in north Down. Thousands of people attended, and therefore there is a benefit to the local community. The volunteers who support events like this and events that take place right across the Province in a whole range of areas, whether cultural or sporting, generate a positive impact for the local business community. The businesses that embrace these activities will see financial benefit, so it should be a win-win.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Time is up. We now move to topical questions.

Urban Regeneration and Community Development Powers

T1. **Mr Smith** asked the Minister for Communities, given that, when Jo-Anne Dobson asked him in June about his plans for the devolution of urban regeneration and community development powers to the 11 new councils, he said that a decision would have to be made sooner rather than later, to state how that decision is coming along. (AQT 486/16-21)

Mr Givan: The decision on that issue will be taken soon. The Member will not have long to wait for the outcome. Obviously, the rationale for the decision that will be taken will be explained at that time. It is an area that I have been considering in the light of my Department's responsibilities, and an announcement will be made to the House in due course.

Mr Smith: I thank the Minister for his update. Will he, with his responsibilities for local government, support and champion the devolution of powers to local councils from all Stormont Departments? Will he ensure that, if and when these powers are devolved, an adequate budget goes with them?

Mr Givan: It is vital that the resource follows whatever powers are transferred to local government. At the partnership panel that I am responsible for chairing, I had a discussion with representatives from local government about the powers that they have, and there is a conversation to be had about what future powers they may wish to have. However, I am very clear that wherever the service is being delivered, whether it is at Stormont or through local government or arm's-length bodies, there is a need to make sure that the relationship is one that works effectively. The taxpayer or ratepayer often does not differentiate between local government and central government. Ultimately, what they are interested in is having the service delivered. I am interested in ensuring that we deliver the service and do so effectively and efficiently.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Question 2 has been withdrawn.

Community Halls Pilot Scheme

T3. **Mr T Buchanan** asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the community halls scheme. (AQT 488/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department launched the community halls pilot scheme on 19 October. The concept of the programme was to invest in community halls to improve the fabric of these valuable community assets. The scheme is open to all community organisations that own or hold a lease to operate a community hall. The maximum award available to a community hall is £25,000. I can inform the House that, so far, the programme has generated a huge appetite. The delivery team has fielded numerous queries and attended a number of information sessions that were organised by various community groups throughout Northern Ireland, such as County Armagh Community Development. The programme closes for applications at noon on 23 November. Late applications will not be accepted. To date, the Department has received 34 applications with a cumulative valuation of £644,000.

Mr T Buchanan: I thank the Minister for his response. In the light of the huge interest in this scheme — no doubt more applications will come in — will the Minister give some consideration to allocating more money to it in-year and in the years that lie ahead?

Mr Givan: Applications are still open, and I encourage people to continue to apply. There was £0.5 million identified within the Department this year. We are oversubscribed already, but I encourage groups to continue to make applications. I will look at the resources available in the Department. Where we can find additional moneys, those will be found, because the value of this scheme is widely recognised right across the community.

Therefore, applications should continue to come in. Given the success of the scheme and the interest that it has already generated, it is something that we will need to look at in future years for the capital programme.

Housing Associations: Reclassification

T4. **Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the proposed derogation of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) decision to reclassify the housing associations, including any discussions that he has had with the Minister of Finance. (AQT 489/16-21)

Mr Givan: Responsibility for seeking that derogation from the Treasury now rests with the Minister of Finance. Work is ongoing, but the Minister of Finance has the responsibility for taking the discussions forward. As the Member knows, when it comes to relations with the Treasury, it is always the Minister of Finance who leads on behalf of whatever Department is impacted on, which in this case is my Department.

Mr Agnew: I thank the Minister for his response. As he said, the impact of this will very much be on his Department. Is he reassured that we are going to get a successful outcome, given the potential impact that the derogation will have on our ability to provide social housing? Is he confident that we will be able to do the work required?

Mr Givan: The Executive recognised that the direction of travel was going to take us to this place, albeit we had to wait until the ONS took its decision. We had to know the

detail of the decision and how it would have an impact in order to know how to respond. The Executive agreed that we will seek the derogation, and we have already, at that high level, agreed the strategic approach to it. It is now about seeking the derogation and then implementing the changes that will be required as a result of the ONS announcement. The swift action taken by the Executive means that I am confident that we will be able to deal with the issue effectively.

Small Grants Programme: Update

T5. **Mr McAleer** asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the small grants capital pilot programme. (AQT 490/16-21)

Mr Givan: If there is a specific area of the small grants capital programme that the Member wants to raise with me, I will be happy to look at it. In the general sense, I need a little more detail, unless the Member is lining me up for the sucker punch in his supplementary question.

Mr McAleer: No, Minister, I am not lining you up for a sucker punch, I assure you. I was just looking for an update on the level of interest and the number of applications, for example. My supplementary question is specifically on the issue of partnerships. One focus of the grant programme is partnership, and I am curious to know how that will be assessed. For example, should joint applications be made? By what means will that partnership be assessed? Will groups need to collaborate to apply?

Mr Givan: I have had a bit more time now to collect my thoughts. The question relates to the £300,000 that is currently open for applications. That recognises the important work that a lot of our community-based organisations carry out. Applications can be made for sums of between £1,500 and £5,000. Obviously, the criteria include partnership. Those applications are open, and I say to groups that are interested that there is a dedicated resource that will be able to advise them on how to apply and on the criteria that they need to meet to receive that funding.

I engaged with a lot of our community-based organisations, and they highlighted the need for small capital equipment, whether it be sports equipment or even a lawnmower to cut grass at the facility used. Groups often find it very difficult to raise that type of money for such capital equipment. Therefore, we developed a scheme that, I believe, will be successful. If the Member knows of any groups that are interested in the scheme, support is available to guide people through the application process. I am confident that the scheme will again be one that is oversubscribed.

Londonderry Bands Forum: Marching Bands Report

T6. **Mr Middleton** asked the Minister for Communities to outline his view on the recent publication of a report by the Londonderry Bands Forum in relation to marching bands. (AQT 491/16-21)

Mr Givan: I have been in Londonderry, and my colleague has invited me on numerous occasions. There is one thing about the folk from the north-west: they are always keen to get you up there, and when they get you, it is very difficult to get away. I have met a number of groups.

The Londonderry Bands Forum is one that I have met on numerous occasions, and it has demonstrated the positive impact that it has had in that community. It has taken bold steps and has broken down perceptions and barriers that might have existed between communities. It is an organisation that is doing excellent work, and the report demonstrated that.

I will be keen to take forward the work on this in recognising that via the Arts Council, which provides support to the Londonderry Bands Forum on a range of activities. Where the Member can keep making the case, I am keen to support that organisation in its work.

Mr Middleton: The Minister outlined a review into marching bands' funding. Will the Minister consider, as part of that review, the need for bands to have resource as well as capital funding made available?

Mr Givan: That is an issue that I know is being raised, not least by the Member. I have asked my officials to engage with the forum, along with a range of stakeholders who have an interest in that area. This is something that will be given consideration in the discussions.

Social Housing: Adapted New Builds

T7. **Mr Milne** asked the Minister for Communities how he plans to meet the needs of those people who require specially adapted new builds in the Mid Ulster area. (AQT 492/16-21)

Mr Givan: We have been looking at special adaptations in homes across the Province, not in just Mid Ulster. The Housing Executive is looking at how we address those needs and at the criteria for new builds to make sure that there is scope for having buildings with the required special adaptations.

Mr Milne: I thank the Minister for his response. I asked the question in the knowledge of the dire need in the Mid Ulster area among some families for such new builds. There is a long waiting list. Housing associations do not have plans to bring that about in the short term. My supplementary question is to ask you to treat this as a matter of urgency.

Mr Givan: I reassure the Member that this is an area that I have been engaging on with the Housing Executive. Indeed, I am due to have one of the annual reviews that take place with the Housing Executive. Let me assure the Member that I will put on the agenda for that formal meeting how the Housing Executive will address the issue that the Member has raised.

Social Housing: Fermanagh and South Tyrone

T8. **Mr McPhillips** asked the Minister for Communities whether his Department has plans to build any social housing in Fermanagh and South Tyrone, given that he will be aware that the social housing waiting list in that constituency is continuing to grow, with demand greatly outweighing supply. (AQT 493/16-21)

Mr Givan: This is an issue that all Members raise when it comes to the need for social housing. His own party had a debate on the issue, and I put on record our desire to deliver the numbers of social homes over the period of this Assembly. That is a challenging and ambitious target that we are setting ourselves. Of course, Fermanagh and

South Tyrone will be an area where we will want to deliver new homes.

The Executive are clear that we want to deliver new social homes. We want to improve people's housing environment, and there is a dedication on our side to do that.

Mr McPhillips: Irvinestown in particular is suffering from a lack of social housing provision. Can the Minister outline any plans that he has for the Irvinestown area and give assurances that he will instruct the Housing Executive to urgently undertake a review of the area?

Mr Givan: I will be happy to take that issue up on the Member's behalf in respect of Irvinestown.

It is the Housing Executive that ultimately needs to look at these areas and work with housing associations to deliver social housing. I am happy to raise the Member's specific point with the Housing Executive on his behalf, and I will correspond with the Member.

3.30 pm

Urban Regeneration

T9. **Ms Ní Chuilín** asked the Minister for Communities to review recent correspondence that he sent in relation to an urban regeneration scheme, given that his colleagues in the Housing Executive are perhaps giving local residents a different impression of the status of that scheme and his clarification would be helpful. (AQT 494/16-21)

Mr Givan: I will be happy to follow up with the Member on the specifics of the urban regeneration scheme. I am keen that we support communities, particularly when it comes to the Department's urban regeneration responsibilities, because I recognise their value to a community and believe that the Executive can do more on that. I hope to touch on the issue in the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Time is up for topical questions.

Assembly Business

Mrs Long: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. In the course of Question Time, the Minister, I think, inadvertently misled the Chamber with respect to our position on 50:50 recruitment for policing. It is not the case that Alliance supported 50:50 recruitment at any time for policing, and, indeed, it was our Minister who withdrew that provision. I would like you, Mr Deputy Speaker, to review Hansard and perhaps give the Minister the opportunity to set the record straight.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): While it is not a point of order, it is a point of information. Should the Minister wish to adversely challenge that or otherwise, that is up to him.

Mr Givan (The Minister for Communities): I understand that the Alliance Party can be very precious about the finer details at times, but my understanding is that the Alliance Party supported the Patten report.

Mrs Long: Further to that point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Is this a point of order?

Mrs Long: Further to that point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, there is a serious issue here with respect to the fact that these are not matters of political opinion but matters of fact. The party did not support 50:50 recruitment. For the Minister to continue to insist that that is the case is now a deliberate attempt to mislead people in the Chamber.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): While it is not a point of order, it is a point of accuracy, and you have now twice had the opportunity to put your point of accuracy clearly on the record.

Dr Farry: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. This is a different point of order about Standing Order 20(8). While, obviously, respecting the option for the Speaker to act with his discretion in such matters, could I seek clarity for the House on the relevance of supplementary questions? Question 5 to the Minister for Communities referred specifically to Ulster GAA and Casement Park. A supplementary question about Windsor Park was permitted from Mr Stalford but one was not permitted from my colleague Mr Lyttle about The Oval. Furthermore, question 6 was specifically about the Ulster Fleadh —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Could the Member get to his point?

Dr Farry: — in Bangor, and a supplementary was taken on marching bands. Could I ask the Deputy Speaker to reflect on the consistency of the approach that was adopted today and maybe come back to the House to provide further guidance to all Members so that we can better frame our questions in light of the guidance from the Chair?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Those matters will be reflected on as to their relevance as points of order, and the Member will receive a response from the Speaker.

Lord Morrow: Further to that point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, is it in order for a Member to rise on a point of information?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): For clarification, it was not on a point of information. It was described as a "point of order", and I have to listen to it to determine

if, in fact, it is a point of order. That is how the Member described it.

On that point, we have no further issues, so can Members please take their ease while the Chair changes?

(*Mr Speaker in the Chair*)

Questions for Urgent Oral Answer

Mr Speaker: Members, I want to return to a point made by Ms Armstrong and Mr Dickson yesterday in relation to the written statement made by the Minister for Infrastructure on the York Street interchange project. I believe the situation yesterday was unusual, in that a written statement had been provided to Members for a sitting day and that its embargo overlapped with questions to the Minister. It would seem to me that this is not the scenario that our rulings on written statements envisaged and that the intention was never to impede discussion by Members on the Floor. There are times when I may accept a question for urgent oral answer as an appropriate way to address a situation where Ministers have not brought issues to the House. However, there are also occasions when I will not accept a question for urgent oral answer because it would be reasonable for me to expect Members to raise the issue when the Minister is in the House for questions. In this case, the embargo yesterday may have disadvantaged Members from using the opportunity of Question Time to raise an issue that they had expressed an interest in. I am, therefore, using my discretion to accept the question for urgent oral answer and give that chance today.

Finally, as it is relevant to these circumstances, Members may be interested to know that I have already asked officials to work on new rulings for my consideration on Matters of the Day and questions for urgent oral answer. It is my intention to issue those rulings for our return in the new year in order to give Members greater awareness of the issues that I intend to take account of in the context of this mandate. I have to warn that this does not mean that Members will not be disappointed sometimes as the rulings will still have to be within the scope of current Standing Orders. However, that raises the point again that there are longer-term issues for the whole House in improving our parliamentary culture.

I want to proceed with the two questions for urgent oral answer, so I do not intend to take any points of order on the issue now. Let us move on.

Infrastructure

York Street Interchange Project

Mr Speaker: Ms Kellie Armstrong has given notice of a question for urgent oral answer to the Minister for Infrastructure. I remind Members that, if they wish to speak or to ask a supplementary question, they should rise continually in their place. The Member who tabled the question will be called automatically to ask a supplementary question.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister for Infrastructure, following his acceptance of the public inquiry and decision to progress, for an update on the York Street interchange project.

Mr Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure): I have just announced the publication of the public inquiry inspector's

report, departmental statement and notice to proceed. That allows officials to begin consultation with key stakeholders, including the local community, in line with the recommendations in the inspector's report.

The scheme will address a major bottleneck in the strategic road network, replacing the existing signalised junction at York Street with direct links between the Westlink, the M2 and the M3, three of our busiest roads in the North. It will also separate strategic traffic from local traffic movements.

The inspector appointed to chair the inquiry to examine the case for and against the scheme concluded that the case to replace the existing York Street junction had been demonstrated. The procurement process for the scheme is well advanced and was progressed in parallel with the statutory processes. The appointment of a contractor would aid discussions with the local communities on the impacts of the construction process. However, I will need to consider the funding for the project, together with other priorities, as part of my budget 2017-2021 considerations before deciding whether to award the York Street interchange contract. The scheme remains a priority for me, and I am committed to do all that I can to deliver it in the current financial context, working with the Finance Minister and other Executive colleagues.

Ms Armstrong: Thank you very much for your clarity. It is good to see the Minister here and to hear his update. What criteria will be used to prioritise other road-building schemes over the York Street interchange? Can you clarify just where it is in the priorities? You said in your statement that York Street was a priority but there is no money for it, and others are proceeding.

Mr Hazzard: On a point of clarity, I do not think that anywhere in my statement I said that there was no money for York Street; I said that, going forward, it has to fit within a programme of works and we need to do more to ensure not just that we have the funding to start a project but have funding in place to the end.

As regards the criteria for road schemes, I have four infrastructure flagship projects that are agreed by the Executive: the A5, the A6, the Belfast transport hub and Belfast rapid transit (BRT). Those are the four infrastructure priorities for the Executive, but that is not to take away from the fact that there are other large-scale projects, such as the York Street interchange, the Newry southern relief road, the Ballynahinch bypass, the Cookstown bypass, the Enniskillen bypass, the Narrow Water bridge, investment in public transport and billions of pounds of investment in our water infrastructure. There are huge demands on the infrastructure budget, and they are all competing. It is my job and that of my Department to put our priorities in place so that we can deliver as much as we can with the finances that are available to us and can do that strategically in the years ahead.

Mrs Palmer: I welcome the Minister's statement. What a difference a month makes in policy and direction. Can he give assurances that, when he meets the Chancellor on Brexit implications, the York Street interchange will be at the top of his priorities?

Mr Hazzard: As I just outlined to the previous Member, I have a number of competing priorities with the four Executive flagship projects. Last week, we saw the launch of the consultation on the Belfast transport hub. I will go

to mid-Ulster tomorrow, where top of the agenda will, no doubt, be the Cookstown bypass and progression of the A5 and the A6. Everybody inside the Chamber will have different priorities. I have no doubt the Member would love to raise the possibility of a Sprucefield bypass with the Chancellor if she had the opportunity. We all have competing priorities. Certainly, as a Department, we now have to put in place a programme of works that meets the needs of the economy but does so in a regionally balanced way so that, whenever I say that I will address the infrastructure deficit, particularly in the west, I mean what I say. Projects such as the A5 and A6 maintain priority with me, as does the Belfast hub and BRT, but that is not to suggest that we will not have any money at all for other projects. Of course, I want to be in a position to deliver the likes of the York Street interchange.

I know that other Members have suggested — you are hinting at and alluding to this — that Belfast is somehow being neglected all of a sudden and that this priority in the west is taking over, which, again, is not true. I will spend more money in Belfast than in any other town, city or village in the years ahead. Belfast sits primed to receive money for BRT, the Belfast hub, investment in water infrastructure — whatever it may be. Let Members be assured that we will not forget Belfast in the years ahead.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for his statement to the House. I welcome his acceptance of the public inquiry's findings. The York Street interchange is absolutely vital in connecting Northern Ireland, the port of Belfast, the M2 and M3 with west Ulster and our airports. It is hugely important for business, particularly the haulage industry and tourism. Now that the case has been demonstrated, procurement is well advanced, negotiations with the EU are ongoing and assurances have been given by the Treasury in London, when will the Minister be in a position to come to the House and tell us that work will start on the York Street interchange?

Mr Hazzard: Like many in the House, I hope I will be in a position to do that in the coming weeks and months. The Member made reference, obviously, to assurances that the British Treasury believes it has made on a number of projects. I am yet to be convinced, having met the British Secretary of State and others. One assurance, however, from the British Treasury that I am very aware of is the wave of austerity that is coming our direction for the next five years or longer. That will put huge strain on my Department as well as others. We have seen the effects of austerity to this point. There is nothing to suggest it will not be the same, if not worse, in the years ahead.

Those are the sorts of considerations that I have to take into account when I am putting together my programme of works for the years ahead.

3.45 pm

Mr Kelly: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for his answers so far. I welcome the decision that has been made to make progress on this very important project. Bearing in mind what he said about funding, I hope that the Minister will agree that there is an opportunity to consult further with the residents in the area, who are most affected by the project. They have some concerns about the plans that they have seen. I do not think that it would be a big effort to

make the adjustments necessary so that the project goes ahead with less impact on the local residents.

Mr Hazzard: Absolutely. Aside from banking the progress to date, the written ministerial statement enables my Department to move ahead and engage with the local community, as set out by one of the recommendations in the report, and also to examine ways to increase the amount of cycling provision that any new infrastructure at the junction has. Engaging with the community is very important. We now have the potential to realign the road away from Little Georges Street and look at antisocial behaviour at the steps on North Queen Street. There is also a need for sympathetic treatment of the McGurk's bar memorial, together with architectural landscaping enhancements to local structures and the rear of properties at Little Georges Street. All of that work is vital. Making the statement today allows my Department to re-engage with the community and take that forward in the months ahead.

Ms Mallon: Why did the Minister cite Brexit as the reason initially for putting the project on hold, given the commitment from the UK Treasury to fund any structural projects awarded EU funding beyond the point of any Brexit?

Mr Hazzard: I never once announced that the project was on hold. What I said was that the procurement process for the project had been lengthened, which allowed me to take stock of the financial and geopolitical situation that we now face. The Member will no doubt admit that we are in very uncertain political and financial times.

The Member also flagged up assurances. The first available opportunity for me to apply for European funding for the project is at some point in 2018. We are not yet sure of when that will be in 2018, but we can be sure of one thing: article 50 will be triggered long before 2018. It will probably be triggered at least a year before I can even apply for any European funds whatsoever. The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) fund is highly competitive — member states have to fight and compete with one another to win the funds. There is nothing to suggest that we will be successful. The likelihood of the EU funding a project in a region that is in the mouth of leaving the EU through Brexit is highly unlikely. As I said, that is only 40%. I do not think that the assurances that we have received from the British Treasury stand up to that. There is also 60% that has to be found.

Mr Dickson: Thank you, Minister, for coming to the House today. How can you justify your failure to prioritise the busiest road junction in Northern Ireland? For most people in the House, it is, on any scale or standard, the single most important infrastructure project that you should have on your desk.

Mr Hazzard: The Member might have missed the news: today I announced that that infrastructure project will proceed. If that is not giving priority, I do not know what is.

It is clear that the Alliance Party does not have any political reps outside of Belfast. When I go around the North and speak to people in Derry, Enniskillen, Strabane, Omagh and different places, they tell me that they want other areas and projects to be prioritised. They have waited for decades for roads like the A5 and the A6. Motorways stop in places like Craigavon and Randalstown for no particular reason. The allusion that the Member makes is entirely false.

Mr E McCann: Can the Minister confirm that the construction of the York Street scheme, whenever it begins, will not be delayed by being divided into three phases, like, for example, the A6 motorway or the railway from Coleraine to Derry?

Mr Hazzard: There is no doubt that it is one of the busiest junctions that we have here in the North. Any construction process will have to be done in tandem with the huge amount of vehicles going through the junction. It will have to be managed very carefully.

I have no doubt that the issues that the Member raised will be part of the discussion with officials and engineers as we decide the best way forward with the construction works.

Mr Allister: I trust that this statement means that the Minister has got over his hissy fit of scaremongering about this project. The Chancellor has been very clear. He said that he will promise to underwrite EU funding for all projects signed off before Brexit. He could not do anything more, and yet the Minister said in his statement:

"I believe this does not go far enough."

What does he want?

Mr Hazzard: I said that there are two parts to this. The first part that we certainly want is an end to the austerity that has been crippling departmental budgets for many years — *[Interruption.]* The Members might tut, but they know full well what austerity is doing to communities, not just here but throughout Britain.

The second point is, and I have touched on this with Members previously, that the assurances talk about projects that are signed off before Brexit. We do not know — we just saw today in the news that the British Cabinet do not even know what is happening — but, in all likelihood, Brexit is going to be at some stage in early 2019. The earliest that I can even apply for any European funding is some point in 2018. It may take a year or it may take months before that is signed off. The uncertainty around this is not imaginary or part of a hissy fit. As I said, I want to progress with this project, but I am not going to put funds into a project that I do not have enough money to complete.

Mr Robison: I thank the Minister for his statement. Will he, as much as possible, ensure that local contractors will be employed to build this very important roads project that will also benefit the local construction industry?

Mr Hazzard: Absolutely. Obviously, we will go through a tendering process, and the procurement processes are advancing well, as I have outlined. There is no doubt that, when we invest such a serious amount of money into construction works, it has a very good knock-on effect. Every £1 that is invested in construction projects creates a £4 knock-on effect for the local economy. There is no doubt that this project, like many others, will have a knock-on effect, and we will be investing hundreds of millions of pounds in the years ahead on these projects. This will have a great effect on the local economy and our local construction industry.

Mr Aiken: I thank the Minister for his comments so far. Thank you very much indeed for the U-turn; it is excellent. One of the issues that I would like to raise and ask a question on is that, obviously, the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce, the CBI and virtually every business organisation in Northern Ireland see this

as a vital piece of infrastructure. This is not a question of infrastructure for Belfast, it is for all of Northern Ireland and, indeed, all of Ireland north of Drogheda. Will the Minister, when he is putting together his priorities, ensure that the York Street interchange is up there with the A6, the A5 and the other priorities?

Mr Hazzard: As the Member has just outlined, we have the A5, the A6 and the other priorities; the list is endless. I engage regularly with the CBI and others and, alongside talking about projects such as the York Street interchange, they talk about the southern relief. More often than not, when it comes to the roads, they talk about the massive investment that is needed in water and waste water infrastructure and energy security, and, obviously, the Minister for the Economy will be dealing with a number of issues there.

There are a huge amount of priorities. There are more priorities than we have money for. That is why, when I make reference to the need for the British Treasury to end the wave of austerity that is crippling our budgets, again, this is not scaremongering politics or hissy fits; this is a reality. Our budgets are under serious pressure. They have been for a long number of years, and they look set to be under more pressure in the years ahead. I say to the Member — I know he has colleagues at Westminster now — that we should use our collective power as elected representatives to send the united message that we need to protect our budgets and we need to see stimulus. It is not enough that we see a capital stimulus; we cannot see the constant attack on our resource budgets, and they must let us get on with building regional growth for all our people.

As I said, I engage regularly with the CBI and the business community. The message is very clear: as well as projects such as the A5 and the A6, we need serious investment in our water infrastructure and other projects. I only wish that I had all the money to deliver all these projects.

Health

Mental Health Waiting Times

Mr Speaker: Mr Mark Durkan has given notice of a question for urgent oral answer to the Minister of Health. I remind Members that, if they wish to ask a supplementary question, they should rise continually in their place. The Member who tabled the question will be called automatically to ask a supplementary question.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health what action she will take to address the unfolding crisis in mental health waiting times in every health and social care trust across Northern Ireland.

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Health): I am grateful for the opportunity to address this important issue today. Compared with other regions, we have a higher than average prevalence of mental health issues, and it is that, together with an increased awareness of psychological therapies and a legacy of unmet need, that has contributed to increased waiting times. Since I was appointed, I have consistently said that mental health is one of my key priorities. I have been working hard to identify the needs and the gaps in services to be addressed and to formulate a plan for action.

The draft delivery plan for the Programme for Government improving mental health indicator is out to consultation until next month, and it recognises that psychological therapies is an area that needs further investment, together with a wide range of specialist services, such as perinatal mental health. It currently envisages that it will take five years at the very least for us to start to see an appreciable movement in mental health on a population level. A 10-year programme is probably more realistic.

I have adopted six principles to improve mental health, with a first step of committing to a move towards parity of esteem to ensure that mental health receives the time, effort and resources required to meet local needs. Of the £10 million that is invested in psychological therapies, around £2 million is invested in the development of primary-care talking therapy hubs. I acknowledge that a further £3 million is needed to complete the programme. At the moment, nine hubs are operational across the region, providing treatment and care at a community level to over 7,000 people. A further five hubs are in development. Recovery colleges have also been established in each trust area. I also allocated a further £180,000 to continue the development of a comprehensive mental trauma service, which is based on the psychological therapies stepped care mode. When fully established, it will employ over 40 specialist staff.

Clearly, we face a challenging budgetary situation. Although I am actively making the case for more money for mental health, it is incumbent on us all to get the best value for the money that we already spend, and that is why the board is working up proposals for a managed care network to better utilise existing expertise across trusts and to promote uniformity and better continuity of care. That also demonstrates why fundamental reshaping of the health and social care service is so vital. It will enable money to be released across the system so that it can be targeted at those areas that need it most.

I am fully aware of the significant mental health challenges that face us. I am committed to improving services. It will be a long-term effort and, given the current budgetary position, there will be a need to prioritise. It is also important to note that, even if all the money required right across mental health services was immediately available, there would be a delay in utilising it fully, given the need to recruit highly skilled staff.

Mr Durkan: I thank the Minister for her answer. We have heard much from the Minister about how she will prioritise mental health, but, given the health service authorities are saying that they now need about 160 additional staff to deal with mental health pressures, what action has she taken to recruit staff in that area? What action has she taken to support external organisations, many of them unfunded, that provide services and support to people in their darkest hours?

Mrs O'Neill: I will pick up on your point about external organisations first. I presume, for example, that you are referring to the community and voluntary sector. Earlier today, I had a meeting with the Niamh Louise Foundation, which I am sure the Member is aware of. It provides excellent services in the community, and its staff will quite often describe themselves as being first-aiders when dealing with mental health issues and people who feel suicidal. We have to continue and enhance the role that we have across government, and also with the community

and voluntary sector, in order to tackle successfully mental health issues in our society.

There are a number of issues that I need to tackle, and a number of factors point to the current state of play, particularly the fact that we have a legacy of underinvestment in our mental health services, which is something that we need to address over time. Doing that will be particularly challenging, given the budgetary issues that we have to deal with.

There is an increasing demand for services and a recognition that psychological therapies are an excellent way of supporting people. That means that more people are aware of psychological therapies and that more people are requesting them and being referred for them. That is a good thing.

4.00 pm

The board has set out its stall in relation to the challenges that we have in recruiting staff. That is not just symptomatic of issues in mental health but right across health and social care. All those factors have led to a situation where we have a long way to go to improve mental health services. I said that it is a priority for me and that it is an issue that I want to champion and run with.

Just last week, I received the evaluation of the Bamford review, which looks back over the last 10 years at how the Executive and all Departments have worked to improve services for people with mental health problems. It has pointed to a number of gaps in services and where we need to do better. I will use that work, and when we put that together with the recent work commissioned by the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Lord Crisp's review, we have a real body of evidence that points to what we need to do differently.

As I said, I intend to set out, in line with the Programme for Government indicator, how we transform mental health services in the years ahead. We will have to do it incrementally, and I think that we can do that. I always say that a lot of good things are happening in the health service, but we have a long way to go in terms of challenging where we need to do things better. We have the information and the evidence that allows us to support a case to transform mental health services in future.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for her answers thus far and Mr Durkan for tabling the urgent oral question. I want to follow up on his question about the community and voluntary sector. I attended the greater Shankill suicide and self-harm reference group meeting in the Hammer community centre in the greater Shankill area. The people there talked about their local community response plan, which works very well when someone presents at an emergency department (ED) who has attempted suicide. The response plan goes in, looks after the community and the family concerned, and builds up a rapport. However, they suggested that maybe our EDs need to look at this slightly differently, given the fact that today's report states that nearly 16,500 people presented at EDs, some of whom had been admitted more than once. Maybe we need to look at our EDs as well to see whether referrals can be made to local community response teams, which are doing invaluable work in their communities. They are not there just to pick up the pieces after a suicide; they are there to assist in stopping people committing suicide.

Mrs O'Neill: That is exactly the approach that we need to adopt. Often, a lot of people will not even present to an ED but will go to people they know in the local community group that is involved in supporting people with mental health problems. I had a very similar experience in relation to understanding the work that they do. There is certainly a role for the community and voluntary sector.

In terms of shaping our services, we have just finished the consultation on the Protect Life strategy — the suicide strategy. One of the things that is very strong in that is the need to work with the community and voluntary sector. I am very open to strengthening how things happen and how the statutory agencies interact with the community and voluntary sector, because they have a role to play. I always say now that no one has the option of working in silos; we all have to work together. If we are all serious about delivering better outcomes for people with mental health problems, I know that the community and voluntary sector is up for that.

In relation to EDs, we should always keep that under review. A number of years ago, after a campaign by families that had been bereaved, the “card before you leave” system was brought into play. There are simple things that can make a real difference, and it was a lifeline for some families. We need to do more such things, but the only way to learn about them is by talking to service users — the people with lived experience who have needed the support of the health service. We have a lot of lessons to learn, but the evaluation of the Bamford review points to all the gaps that are there, and I want to work with the Health Committee and all Members to put plans in place to improve things across the piece. Clearly, whilst the Programme for Government indicator talks about a five-year plan, the feedback that I am getting from health professionals and others who work in the field is that we need to chart a way forward — similar to Delivering Together — for the next 10 years so that we can start to improve things.

Mr Butler: I thank the Minister for attending today. The largest share in breaches of psychological therapy services over recent months was recorded in my own trust, the South Eastern Trust. In August, for instance, the South Eastern Trust accounted for 773 of the 1,798 patients forced to wait longer than 13 weeks. Will she detail specifically what steps she is taking to close the widening gap of unmet need and funding for psychological therapies in my constituency?

Mrs O'Neill: No, I will not get into specifics in relation to the South Eastern Trust in this debate but I am very happy for the trust to pick that up directly with the Member in relation to what it is doing operationally.

The same things that I have just said actually stand for every trust. We have to get to the point where you get the same access to services no matter where you live in the North. It is unfortunate that at this moment in time, depending on where you live, you may have better access to psychological therapies, and that is what we are talking about today. That is not acceptable to me. We need to have a regional standard. We need to make sure that you have full access no matter where you live.

We have a psychological strategy in place. Clearly, there is a recognition that psychological therapies work. They actually take pressure off the acute end of mental health

services. They are giving people first-aid. They are talking to people from very early on, and maybe preventing them from having to move through further areas of the health service.

I recognise that we need to do more of this, and I am actively engaged in conversations with the Finance Minister on how we can fund psychological therapies in the future. I believe in them. I believe they are the right thing to do. I believe they work and in terms of doing more — we have to do more — we have a certain level of investment, which has been very positive, but we certainly have a long way to go to improve the picture for absolutely everybody who may need psychological therapies.

Ms Seeley: I thank the Minister for being here to discuss this important issue. What consideration has she given to the principles that will inform her plans for tackling mental ill health?

Mrs O'Neill: As I said, we are at an opportune time as we have the Bamford evaluation but, first and foremost, the commitment has to be about moving towards parity of esteem. I have said that I am firmly committed to moving towards parity of esteem.

Secondly, it is really important that we develop and sustain a recovery culture. Whenever I talked, in the last number of weeks, about how we are going to transform health and social care, one of the things I talked about was co-designing services and planning services along with patients, carers and families. This is an area where mental health is already ahead of the field. Recovery colleges have been established and they are really practical examples of how people with lived experience — those who have had mental health problems — have actually helped to design and improve services and work with others who find themselves in the same scenario. They have then been employed by trusts to provide those services. I want to do a lot more of that in pursuing and enhancing the recovery culture which we have.

Thirdly, involvement by people, as I said, with lived experience is key.

The fourth principle is around service development where our resources allow us to do so. We are going to have to prioritise. We do not have an unlimited pot of money. We are going to have to prioritise services and what we take forward. So, let us make sure that every service that we invest in is about delivering better health outcomes and making a meaningful difference. Over the time ahead, we are going to have decisions to make to plug the gaps between needs and service provision, but the Bamford review is really key in pointing out some of the areas where we need to do more.

I am particularly interested in making sure we do more to support young people, particularly those with a dual diagnosis. I want to do more to establish a regional perinatal service for people with mental illness. I want to do more around eating disorder services, psychological therapies, mental trauma and personality disorders. There are so many things that are key and really important which we need to do, but we need to come at it from a planned system change point of view and that is going to take a bit of time to do. What is most important is that we work collectively — community and voluntary sector and government — to make sure that we provide first-class services for those people when they need them.

I said that waiting lists are always unacceptable. The length of time that some people are waiting for services across health and social care is totally unacceptable to me. That continues to be the case, and when I publish the plan for how I am going to bring elective care under control, in January, I will look forward to discussing with Members of the House how we can improve that picture.

Ms S Bradley: While the question today rightly looks at the out-and-out failure to meet the 13-week target, I express to the Minister my shock at finding out that anybody living with a mental health issue would have to wait 13 weeks, let alone that the target has not been met. Is the Minister satisfied that this is an acceptable target?

Mrs O'Neill: I was not shocked, and I do not think that the Member should be shocked. We all know that there is a legacy of underinvestment in mental health services. I do not know how aware you are of mental health services and how they are delivered but, certainly, it is no shock to me that there is a waiting list. It is no shock to me that we need to invest more in mental health services. It is no shock to me that we need to invest in all those areas which I have just highlighted, areas where we need to do more.

We have a very challenging situation and, as I said in the first answer I gave, there is a legacy of underinvestment and increased demand for services. Psychological therapies are working, so people want them, and rightly so. We have a big demand on our service and we need to deliver for the people who need our service.

Do not be shocked, but be assured that I am doing everything I can to make sure that we change the services that we provide. I am doing everything I can, along with Executive colleagues and the Finance Minister, to make sure that we deliver the funding that we need to invest in psychological therapies.

Ms Bradshaw: Thank you, Minister, for your answers so far. I welcome your praise for the community and voluntary sector in dealing with the issue and your commitment to review mental health psychological and therapeutic support services. As part of that review, you will find that there is no counselling or support for people under 16 who are the victims of sexual crime. If you could look at that in your review, I would really welcome it.

The organisations that plug the gaps where there is no provision are very reliant on core revenue funding from your Department. As you know, they have a year-on-year increase, so I ask you to look at bringing forward the innovation fund as quickly as possible so that we do not lose the community and voluntary sector services that are so vital to addressing the mental health issue.

Mrs O'Neill: I thank the Member for her question. I do not have a full understanding of the services for victims of sexual crime, but I will certainly look into it and make sure that that is included in taking things forward.

You are absolutely right about core funding: the community and voluntary sector does excellent work. The health service has given some core funding for that in the past, but it is probably nowhere near what it takes for them to run the services. If the health service tried to do that itself, it would find itself stretched to the limit. We have to recognise the excellent work that is out there in the community and voluntary sector. The previous Minister obviously decided to end core funding and develop an

innovation scheme. I am still looking at that because I wanted to take a fresh look at the organisations that we fund, some of which may disappear. I am fearful, particularly in relation to advocacy, about how those groups will be supported in the future, and I am considering that. I want to get the innovation fund out the door because I know that people are very anxious, given the decrease in their funding over the last number of weeks. I intend at least to initiate the applications for the innovation fund before the end of the financial year to allow people to bid in. Alongside that, I am looking at whether there is any potential or scope to support the community and voluntary sector and the particular groups that we need, because we know the value that they bring to all the people who use their services.

Mr Carroll: Given that, according to the Health and Social Care Board, an additional £17 million will be needed to keep up with the demand in mental health services, will the Minister give a guarantee that the money will be found and, if so, say from where?

Mrs O'Neill: I think that I have answered that. I am doing absolutely everything I can to work with the Finance Minister and Executive colleagues to make sure that we have proper funding for our mental health services. It is not without its challenges. There is Tory austerity; I could list all the issues that we have to deal with. We do not have an unlimited pot of funding, but we have a commitment to parity of esteem. We have a legacy of underfunding in mental health; I want to change that picture and am committed to doing that. I will work with Executive colleagues throughout the Budget process and will not be found wanting when it comes to shouting and fighting hard to make sure that we have an adequate budget for health and social care in general and, in particular, as in this case today, to address the issues that we have with psychological therapy itself.

Mr Middleton: I thank the Minister for her answers so far. She will be aware that there has been an increase in the number of children and young people presenting with mental health issues; it is as many as one in nine. Will she look at what specialist services — she touched on eating disorders and addressing that issue — are being provided to help to address that worrying trend?

Mrs O'Neill: Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) are delivered under a stepped care model. The board leads on a reform process under the auspices of the stepped care model implementation review. A lot of progress has been made, but you are right: more young people have been referred to our services. We always have to adapt to the needs of society. If more younger people are coming in, we need more emphasis on CAMHS. I am committed to making sure that we do that. We invest over £20 million annually in CAMHS. That shows that there is a recognition that we need to put the funding there to support those young people. I am also considering reforming investment options across a range of other services, including CAMHS. As I said, it is important that we look at children and young people with a dual diagnosis, for example. We do not have a service to support those families, and perhaps we need to look at that. If we cannot do it here, let us look at it on an all-island basis. Is it something we can provide on the island? It is so important that young people know there are services to

support them so that they do not feel they have nowhere to go. I am keen to make sure we do that.

4.15 pm

The regional acute inpatient services at Beechcroft are frequently under pressure, and I think Members are aware of that. An independent review in 2014 concluded that the current 33-bed model was appropriate but that, crucially, it was dependent on the further strengthening of the crisis resolution and home treatment services. What else can we put into the community that stops people having to go into acute inpatient settings? That is an area we need to focus on.

I should also say that a managed care network for acute child and adolescent mental health services is being established as we speak. That will bring acute services into one managed system and, again, will ensure greater consistency across the region and streamline access to Beechcroft.

It is an area we have to do an awful lot more in, but the Bamford evaluation points to those issues, the service gaps we have and where we need to do a lot more. This is certainly one of those key areas.

Mr Milne: Will the Minister give an update on the suicide prevention strategy?

Mrs O'Neill: The consultation has closed; however, I have said that I want to go out and engage personally. I have met a number of organisations and individuals about the strategy. I intend to go out next week, and I am doing consultation events in Belfast and the Dungannon area. It is important that I listen to the people who have been bereaved by suicide and make sure that I develop a strategy that very much has their views, ideas and initiatives embedded when going forward. We will work on that over the next number of months and collate the responses we have received. As I said, it is really important that we listen to those with lived experience.

Mr Ford: As I remember questioning the Minister's predecessor Bairbre de Brún on funding for mental health services about 14 or 15 years ago, it is rather sad that Mr Durkan had to ask a question today to illustrate the problem. Given that the Minister has referred a few times to the Bamford review, can she give us any information on the commencement of the Mental Capacity Act?

Mrs O'Neill: Surely the Member is not blaming Bairbre de Brún for all the issues we have in mental health in our society. We are a society coming out of conflict, which is an issue in itself, but we obviously have a prevalence issue that continues to rise with young people and mental health issues and more people being referred to the service. We have a societal problem. I do not think we can pinpoint it on one area; we have a societal problem that we need to address. We need to address it across every Department, council or community and voluntary sector organisation that wants to get involved. Do people have access to a job? Do they have a home? All those things contribute to people's mental well-being. We have a collective responsibility as an Executive and a society to help people who find themselves with mental health issues.

The Member will be very aware that the Act is a very complex piece of legislation. We are working our way through all the issues as we speak. Officials in my Department and in DOJ are working through all the

initiatives, because, when we commence the Act, we need to make sure we can deliver on it. From his previous role as a Minister, the Member will be very aware of the challenges we have with the Mental Capacity Act. It was significant legislation, so it is important that we have everything lined up and can deliver everything when we commence the legislation.

Mr Speaker: That concludes this item of business. I ask Members to take their ease while we change the top Table.

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

Private Members' Business

Nurture Provision

Debate resumed on amendments to motion:

That this Assembly welcomes the report by the Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation at Queen's University Belfast, entitled 'The Impact and Cost Effectiveness of Nurture Groups in Primary Schools in Northern Ireland'; welcomes the commitment of the Minister of Education to continuing to fund the 32 nurture units across Northern Ireland; and calls on the Minister of Education to examine potential options to mainstream nurture provision within the current education budget. — [Lord Morrow.]

Which amendments were:

No 1: Leave out all after the second "Northern Ireland;" and insert

"recognises the role effective early years interventions can play in reducing the need for nurture units; and calls on the Minister of Education to examine potential options to develop universal early years education provision." — [Mr Agnew.]

No 2: Leave out all after the second "Northern Ireland;" and insert

"and, as recommended in the report by Queen's University, calls on the Minister of Education to ensure that a sustainable funding model is put in place for the longer-term viability of nurture group provision, to plan the further expansion of nurture provision in each primary school sector targeted in the areas of greatest need, to develop appropriate training for staff and to conduct research into models for the delivery of nurture provision." — [Mr McGrath.]

Mr Allister: Unaccustomed as I am to commending government projects, I have to say that my experience of the nurture project is very positive.

I think that it has been most successful, where it has been allowed to operate, in reaching out to those in greatest need.

In my constituency, we sadly only have one nurture project, at Harryville Primary School. We have some adjacent ones. There is a very successful one at Ballycraig Primary School, and there is quite a good one at Harpur's Hill in Coleraine. It seems that these projects have been successful in inducing in the kids better behaviour, more interest in school — some may be coming from a background where that is not overly encouraged — and, indeed, interest in the joys of education through improving their reading capacity and all those things. So the pilot schemes that have taken place, from what I hear of them, appear to have been quite good. I am relying almost more on the anecdotal evidence that I hear from my constituents than on the very positive report from Queen's University.

One of the criticisms — it is not to do with the delivery of the project and those who deliver it — is to do with the drip feed nature of the funding. It was delivered under Delivering Social Change. The Department of Education was just the conduit for passing on the money, meaning it

had to wait for the release of the money from OFMDFM, as it then was, and then it passed it on. That drip feed is the core problem with going forward with the project and putting it on a stable footing. We are not talking about a lot of money. When you think that the commitment to each nurture unit was of the order of £70,000, and that multiples of that are often spent with little apparent effect, it seems to be giving a good return for the spend. It is not that hard to establish it. It obviously needs a room kitted out, a teacher and probably a classroom assistant but, after that, its demands are relatively modest. Therefore, I would be very supportive of the idea of expanding that provision within the mainstream. That can only be positive.

One of the most distressing and saddening things for anyone who has any relationship with education is to see kids pass through the system, knowing that they are not taking the best out of it, maybe not being encouraged from home and elsewhere to take the best out of it, and not achieving their full potential — in fact, becoming alienated from the education system, whereas education should be the door to the world for all of us. It is by going through that door and experiencing it that we move on to greater things and make a really worthwhile contribution to society. Trying to capture a sector of our kids who are lagging behind can only be a good thing. Therefore, I encourage the Minister to be bold in advancing the scheme and mainstreaming the funding so that it has certainty and can progress to attain the ends in even greater form to what it has already attained.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): Minister, you have 15 minutes.

Mr Weir (The Minister of Education): I thank Members for their contributions today. It has been a very productive debate. We have found ourselves largely in vigorous agreement. Indeed, when even Mr Allister commends the Government, we should ring the date on the calendar. I thank him for his words as well. I have taken a keen interest in nurture since my days on the Education Committee. It has always been an issue that Members have recognised as an effective means of supporting our most vulnerable children. Indeed, just before I came to office, I visited a primary school in Slate Street in west Belfast and Rathcoole Primary, and, last week, I had the opportunity to go to Harryville Primary. I think Northern Ireland has a total of seven Boxall awards, which is more or less the national award for nurture, and Harryville received it last week. I think that, as Mr Allister said, the impact, not just on the children themselves but on the whole school, is demonstrably beneficial.

In case there was any indication or any belief that there is any level of criticism of other schools, I will say that, in general, I think that our schools offer themselves as very caring and supportive places. I commend them for the good work that they do. Irrespective of whether they are directly involved in a nurture project, schools do a great deal to nurture children. However, it is clear that some children need extra help, and that is where nurture groups come in.

Several Members outlined what nurture groups are and the basis on which they operate, so I will not delay proceedings by reiterating that. I will simply note that the groups work with children from years 1 to 3 who are suffering with attainment difficulties by building their trust and self-confidence and, ultimately, equipping them with skills and

strategies that, effectively, can put them back in mainstream classes. The reasons why children need nurture are varied and are often unaddressed but, in every case, these can lead to barriers to learning and long-term achievement. Preventing that waste of opportunity is what nurture is for. As a number of Members have mentioned, it is a financial investment, because there is a certain level of investing to save, and a particular investment in human capital.

On the progress of this scheme, initially, 20 nurture groups were set up under the Executive's Delivering Social Change programme. This was jointly delivered by Education and DSD, and it was then extended to establish another 10 and then another two nurture groups. When Delivering Social Change funding ended in 2015, DFP provided support through its change fund, and the Department of Finance has recently provided additional resources to the two Irish-medium schools. I put on record my thanks for all of the support for this. While these efforts precede the Children's Services Co-operation Act, I think that they exemplify its intent that Departments should work together to deliver for children. As a result of these collective efforts, over 700 children have attended a nurture group, with 800 additional children receiving short-term support during crisis situations.

We have heard a great deal about the recent Queen's University evaluation. That was a very robust study that showed that the groups were successful in supporting children who were previously struggling to cope in school. It highlighted particular benefits for looked-after children and children involved with social services, two highly vulnerable groups. It found that nurture groups were cost-effective and had a real potential to reduce the need for long-term educational, health, social services and justice interventions.

As well as referencing the Queen's University evaluation, Members referenced the ETI evaluation. Again, that showed a significant positive impact on children's social, emotional and behavioural development, building resilience and helping them to learn more effectively. ETI found that the new groups quickly became highly effective, and this gives me real confidence that the model can be equally effective in many other schools.

Today's motion asks that I commit my Department to building upon this success. I am happy to give that commitment. Coming to one of the points that Mr Allister made, I have already committed the Department to developing a new nurture programme, and, until that new nurture programme is put in place and we reach a point where that can be properly mainstreamed, funding will be sustained to the existing 32 groups. It is worth reflecting that Departments have already invested £8 million in nurture. Several Members have already noted the benefits of nurture beyond education and that that contributes to several aspects of the new Programme for Government. I fully recognise this, and I have asked my officials to explore how a new programme can continue to build on this existing collaboration. Those conversations have already commenced.

The costs of nurture are not insignificant. Sustaining the 32 groups will cost the Department around £2.3 million. There will be challenges to the budget, but I will stand over my commitment to those 32 groups. The new PFG asks Departments to focus their efforts on outcomes rather than expenditure, targeting expenditure on those areas where they can deliver the greatest impact. In considering the Queen's University report, I could not ignore the fact that

nurture has demonstrated that it is a proven, outcome-driven intervention that transforms children's lives.

For that reason, I can assure Members that I will be ambitious in planning for a new programme and vocal in fighting for the resources to deliver it.

4.30 pm

The shape of a new nurture programme is still to be determined, but I can confirm that the current nurture group model will sit at its heart. Where a nurture group is viable and sustainable, that model of delivery provides the best possible outcomes. I do not think that anyone can pretend that we can fund every school wishing to have a nurture group. I appreciate that Mrs Barton raised the issue of post-primary. If we were to mainstream it in all 1,000 schools, that would probably cost an extra £70 million. Evaluation has recommended that we should continue to target provision at schools with the greatest need. While no future selection criteria have been agreed, I want to make sure that they are based on comprehensive, objective and up-to-date data. Naturally, I will have regard to all the Department's statutory duties.

Several Members commented on the need to extend the reach of nurture provision as broadly as possible. One of the things that struck me very much when visiting schools was that the nurture unit is not just for the children who are directly involved; it creates a whole-school model. That will also be part of any future programme.

Mr Storey: I thank the Minister for giving way. I welcome the fact that he visited Harryville in my constituency with us last week. I was proud to be the person who opened the Harryville nurture unit a number of years ago. I pay tribute to his officials, one of whom, who is in the House today, has worked extremely hard on the issue. Will the Minister make sure that nurture becomes mainstream in the school and is not something that is looked on as an isolated class in an isolated classroom?

Mr Weir: To be fair, the schools that have embraced nurture have very much taken that mainstreaming attitude. There is an issue about mainstreaming in the budget; there is also an issue about mainstreaming in the schools. I was reflecting the fact that there is a commonality of approach. For instance, schools have a sort of quiet room, which might not be a bad idea for us to adopt at Stormont.

Mr Storey: One or two might be in it.

Mr Weir: Yes. I will not ask whether the Member is intending to do that.

The projects receive specialist support. In future, that resource will be extended to any school that wants to consider a whole-school nurturing approach. It is also not simply about the schools that we provide the direct support and funding to but about ensuring that the experience is rolled out. Whatever the constraints, that will enable the benefits of nurture to be felt much more widely. There is still significant work to be undertaken, but I intend to bring forward plans for a new nurture programme next year and to have additional nurture groups operational by 2018-19.

I turn now to the two amendments. Amendment No 1 talks about the need to recognise the role of early years interventions in reducing the need for nurture units. I agree with a lot of what Mr Agnew said. That is the second time today, so I am a little worried. Whether that should worry

him more than me, I do not know. I have some concerns, however, about the wording of his amendment. I cannot remember who made the point that a separate motion dealing with early years intervention might be a better way of dealing with it directly. I very much recognise the importance of early intervention. However, to tie that in directly with some belief that it will lead to a reduction in the need for nurture units is probably the wrong approach. There is not quite the same level of nexus.

There is universal provision in the preschool admissions process, where we have about 99.8%, but I appreciate the point that we need to ensure that provision is there for the families that could most benefit from it. While wider nurture provision can only be helpful in adding to the mix of services, nurture groups are an important intervention in their own right. On that basis, it may not be ideal to tie the two together.

Both amendments have worthy intentions, but they are mutually exclusive, so the House can adopt only one or the other. From that point of view, amendment No 2, which stands in the names of members of the SDLP, is very much in the spirit of the original motion. It follows the direction of travel that I want to go in, so I am happy to support it.

I welcome this debate and all the positive contributions that we have heard. I will reflect on Members' comments as I develop my plans. Given the amount of agreement around the Chamber, I suspect that this issue may not lead the news tonight or feature on tomorrow morning's radio programmes. Maybe society is a bit the worse for that. However, I welcome what has been said. I have visited a number of nurture units, and I will do that on a continual basis. The only word that properly describes the difference that nurture makes to children's lives is "transforming." I believe that nurture classes have much more to offer our education system.

I am happy to endorse the motion and amendment No 2. I commend them to the House.

Mr Attwood: It is often the case that the simplest stories convey the most graphic truths. Some years ago, I went to see staff in a school in west Belfast. I went into a nurture class, and the school principal told me that the child to whom I was talking came to school not knowing how to handle a pen or pencil. Earlier in the debate, a Member gave the example of a child in a nurture class having to learn how to eat breakfast. Those stories are multiple, and all Members could tell them. They capture the essence of the challenge on the one hand and the value of nurture classes on the other. That is not least in the context of what was said to me by the principal of a school on the lower Falls, who told me a short time ago that the number of children at preschool and primary 1 who presented with challenges and multiple issues was greater than at any time in her working life. Therefore, the requirements of nurture and the care requirements of our young people from birth to six years, in particular, are more critical and acute than they have ever been.

In the spirit of the debate, the SDLP will support the Green amendment, if it is pressed, because we think that there is a need for a comprehensive approach. If that amendment is defeated, we call on all Members and parties to support the SDLP's amendment. That is the tone and tenor of the debate.

I take the point raised by Mr Lyttle that the requirements for nurture are not exclusive to areas of disadvantage. It is more concentrated in such areas for reasons that are captured in many reports, but it is not exclusive to them because there will be children in less disadvantaged areas who will have the struggles and the challenges of those in disadvantaged areas. In that spirit, I will explain the SDLP amendment. The reason why we proposed the amendment is that we should borrow from the Queen's University review of nurture and take forward explicitly its key recommendations: sustainable funding; expansion in each primary-school sector; developing appropriate training for staff; and conducting research into models of delivery. We think that that is a comprehensive approach. That is why we welcome the Minister's comments and those of other parties that they will endorse it.

My view — I have said this before, I think — is that the SDLP's first motion of this mandate was on childcare. The reason why the SDLP tabled that motion is that the paradigm shift of this mandate — we had that conversation with the Minister just last week — has to be to recognise that, for all the multiple interventions in the lives of children and in areas of need, it is the concentration of intervention from birth to age six that is the most critical, acute challenge that, in my view, faces the Assembly.

I am saying that in the context of the challenges of organised crime, paramilitarism and the health service. Of all the issues that touch on the lives of our people and the life of the Assembly, the most important challenge is a paradigm shift that sees the directing of resources and strategy into the lives of children from the moment of birth — indeed, from before being born — to the age of six. The Programme for Government, and government itself, should be measured against that standard.

The reason why this debate has been different in tone and character from others that we have had over the last number of months is the nature of the issue and the consensus of response in the Assembly. It is also because this Minister has taken the opportunity to recognise that those who speak from Opposition Benches do not speak simply to oppose but to propose and create. That is the measure of this Minister, and I want to acknowledge that.

Mr Agnew: In front of us we have three complementary proposals. That has been reflected in the debate, which has been largely a discussion on how we maximise benefits for children. We have a consensus that we want to support children to achieve their potential; we have a consensus that nurture units work in that regard; and we have a consensus that there should be secure funding for existing nurture provision.

I put it to the Minister that whatever final wording is agreed today, and we sometimes take that as the be-all and end-all — what is cast in stone — he and his Department should take into account the whole debate rather than the final wording. I see that he is nodding his head. If we agree any more, our constituents are going to be very confused.

I think this shows that we are taking an evidence-based report from Queen's University, and the evidence on early years, as I mentioned, from Professor Heckman, Dr Suzanne Zeedyk and others.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Agnew: Absolutely.

Mr Storey: Will the Member accept that we had the evidence for a long time, when nurture was working successfully in places such as Ballysally Primary School, Coleraine, and Holy Family Primary and Nursery School, Londonderry? It took the Department a long time to recognise its value. Now, we have this report and a Minister who is being proactive on the issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): The Member has an additional minute.

Mr Agnew: I thank the Member for his intervention. I take his point that evidence does not lead to quick change. That is the point I would make about early years and why, at every opportunity, I keep making the point and the argument, as Mr Attwood just did, that this is the single most important intervention that we can make.

Whilst we have that evidence and whilst the Minister has, seemingly, agreed to take into account the wider aspects of this debate, we have not seen that paradigm shift towards early years funding. I appreciate that you cannot simply say that, overnight, you are going to stop funding these services for children and young people in later life because the evidence is that the benefit is earlier. It has to be a managed transition. However, every time we call for additional funding or receive additional funding — recently, £18 million was proposed for PE to tackle obesity — we have to take those opportunities to invest in nought to six, follow the evidence and make those impacts.

So, in the spirit of the debate, I will not push my amendment to a Division. I appreciate the SDLP magnanimously proposing to support it but we have not had a divisive debate and we should not have a divisive outcome. I am happy, as was suggested, to bring forward a motion specifically on early years. I ask simply that I be empowered by the Business Committee to do so or that another party brings it forward in conjunction with the Green Party. We should take consensus when we have it and build on it. Even Mr Allister my honourable colleague gave credit to the Government. When we reach that level of consensus, we should bank it.

4.45 pm

Ms Lockhart: I thank the Members who participated in the debate. It has been a momentous occasion for the House in the level of agreement. I want to start by commending the Minister for all his work on and commitment to nurture units and for the commitment that he gave throughout his speech on their sustainability and on looking at new ways of doing this. I trust that, when I ask him for one in Upper Bann, he will be so obliging.

It has been a good debate. We have been very clearly educated about nurture units. I have only entered the Assembly and taken up my role on the Education Committee, and I have not had the privilege of visiting a nurture unit; I will make a point of doing that. There is no question that nurture units help to develop children and young people who avail themselves of them. Quite often, these young people, as we heard, are some of the most vulnerable in society —

Mr Humphrey: I thank my colleague from Upper Bann for giving way. The Member is quite right. I represent North Belfast, and Edenbrooke Primary School in the greater Shankill is one of the schools that is fortunate enough to have a nurture unit. As a governor there, I have seen the

difference that that has made to the young people. I have heard from the teachers, the parents and, in particular, the principal about the immense effect that has had on those young people. It also ripples out into the classroom and the community.

Ms Lockhart: I thank the Member for his contribution; maybe that is the one that I will visit, if you are willing to be accommodating.

From my perspective, it is important that these children and young people experience this in a safe environment, and I believe that there is probably nowhere safer than a school setting. Whilst things may be falling apart around them in their life, as children and as individuals, it is important that there is some structure in the school setting.

There has been reference to the Queen's University report, and I will quote the director of the centre for evidence and innovation, Paul Connolly:

“research provides clear evidence of the benefits of nurture groups for children who face challenges in their early years in education. We found that nurture groups led to significant improvements in social, emotional and behavioral outcomes”.

There was mention of the Marjorie Boxall award for nurture provision, and Rathcoole was, I think, the latest unit to receive that award. *[Interruption.]* Apologies — it was Harryville; we commend them.

I will move to Members' contributions. Lord Morrow led on this and very eloquently outlined the DUP's position. He has always championed the need to ensure that children who are on the margins of society have adequate provision. He said that a stitch in time saves public funds and gives hope for families, and I think that the message that has been woven throughout today's debate is that early intervention and the money spent on nurture units will have a positive effect in the future. He noted that there was funding from a variety of sources and that there is no doubt that the Minister is committed to trying to mainstream that and to move it forward from within the education budget so that each nurture unit has some security in its long-term provision.

Steven Agnew moved amendment No 1 and commended Peter Martin, one of my colleagues, who has done a lot of work on this.

You quite rightly said it was important to get the foundations right. You noted the reality that there are limited resources. We acknowledge that. I think it has to be said that there is not a bottomless pit of money, but, again, there has been a commitment. I also note that you quoted the £1/£9 scenario, and, again, that demonstrates that, if we invest early, it will have a positive impact.

I note that Colin McGrath, moving the second amendment, said that he welcomed the Queen's University report. I know that, with his background, he is very interested in the long-term impact of nurture units on youth provision. He said he wants to see them widened, as well as a sustainable funding model, which was the train of thought of most people throughout the House.

In her comments, Jennifer McCann talked about the units having a very similar environment to the home. Again, there was widespread support for the fact that these children are getting very basic skills. Fortunately, quite a few of us in the House probably never experienced that

situation because we were brought up in a relatively stable environment. I think that was well noted. She also noted the need to make sure that places are provided to families who have got caught in the trap of deprivation. That point has been well made.

Sandra Overend noted that, throughout the UK, there are quite a number of nurture units and said that there was maybe something we could learn from them and share. You also noted — through the Chair — that early intervention is important and that social, emotional and behavioural skills are developed in nurture units. You noted that it cost £70,000 per school and were keen to see some further research. You said you would support amendment No 2 and vote against amendment No 1.

Chris Dickson said there was a 57% reduction in behavioural problems as a result of nurture units. He said that — Chris Lyttle: apologies. This is my first time giving a winding-up speech in a debate, so please bear with me. One in five showed improvements having been in a nurture unit, which, I think, is a good statistic to quote. The costs for families and social services etc can be addressed and mitigated by nurture units and can actually be reduced. You also noted the academic achievements and said that further research is needed into those. The Minister broadly agreed that he would look at that situation.

My colleague Phillip Logan said there are clear indicators within the report that intervention works and that there is a wider school impact. When schools as a whole benefit from these nurture groups, they say it has a ripple effect — like a stone in a pond — on other classes. He commended the Minister for his commitment to further investment. He said it was likely to pay for itself in two years, which, again, demonstrates its viability and sustainability.

Barry McElduff spoke as Chair of the Education Committee. He said that nurture sits well with other early interventions. I think that is very true; I do not think nurture is a silver bullet to deal with all the problems that can occur in a young person's life, but I believe it has its place and is very cost-effective.

Rosemary Barton outlined how she wants to see the best start in life for children. She wants nurture groups to be rolled out in all areas throughout the country, in all schools, and to look towards post-primary. I certainly take Mrs Barton's comments on board, but we have to look at the sustainability and viability of it. I think that the Minister made the point with regard to the amount of funding that it would take to have it in every school.

Catherine Seeley, in her contribution to the debate, said that it did help in the development of positive relationships.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I ask the Member to draw her remarks to a close.

Ms Lockhart: Yes. Obviously, Sinn Féin agreed to it. I think that it would be remiss of me not to mention that our colleague Jim Allister agreed with the Government. We certainly welcome that. It is a historic move.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): Order. The Member's time is up.

Ms Lockhart: Thank you very much.

Mr Allister: Do not get carried away.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I feel the hand of history. *[Laughter.]* Before I put the Question on amendment No 1, I remind Members that if it is made, I will not put the Question on amendment No 2.

Mr Agnew: I seek to withdraw amendment No 1.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): The Member has sought leave to withdraw the amendment standing in his name. If there are no objections, the amendment will be withdrawn.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question, That amendment No 2 be made, put and agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly welcomes the report by the Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation at Queen's University Belfast, entitled 'The Impact and Cost Effectiveness of Nurture Groups in Primary Schools in Northern Ireland'; welcomes the commitment of the Minister of Education to continuing to fund the 32 nurture units across Northern Ireland; and, as recommended in the report by Queen's University, calls on the Minister of Education to ensure that a sustainable funding model is put in place for the longer-term viability of nurture group provision, to plan the further expansion of nurture provision in each primary school sector targeted in the areas of greatest need, to develop appropriate training for staff and to conduct research into models for the delivery of nurture provision.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I ask the House to take its ease while we make changes.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

Motion made:

That the Assembly do now adjourn. — [Mr Speaker.]

Adjournment

Cookstown Social Security Office: Proposed Closure

Mr Speaker: In conjunction with the Business Committee, I have given leave to Ms Linda Dillon to raise the matter of the proposed closure of Cookstown social security office. The proposer of the topic will have 15 minutes.

Ms Dillon: I appreciate the opportunity to bring this Adjournment debate forward on what is an extremely important issue for my constituents and me. It first came to my attention when some of the staff who work in the offices were notified by a leaked document that there was a proposed closure of these offices. We then received emails from the Department.

Even the way in which it initially came out was totally wrong for the staff and everybody involved. I welcome some of those people; they are in the Gallery today. There are representatives of the staff here. I thank those who came up here today to outline the issues. They were out at the front of Parliament Buildings earlier; I think that they met quite a few MLAs to highlight the issues. The fact that they made the effort to come up here and took the time out of work to do that shows their concern.

5.00 pm

There are a number of issues that I will address with regard to the proposed closures. I am glad to see that the Minister is here to listen to us. I know that he has met Mid Ulster District Council and a number of MLAs already on the issue. The first concerns the failures in the consultation document. It fails to recognise the working poor and the low-wage employment common across the area. There is a wild underestimation of journey times and costs, which have a serious negative impact on claimants. The premises analysis uses wholly unrealistic estimated capital costs and, therefore, is not reflective of cost-effectiveness. The cost-effectiveness measures use only jobseekers' allowance (JSA) claimants; they ignore the much greater number of other clients, who would better reflect the office usage. Equality screening was totally inadequate; it failed to note the differential impacts on women, older people, carers, people with disabilities and migrant communities. The rural proofing was completed only on 4 November, which was eight weeks into the consultation. I do not know how the Minister thought that that would instil any confidence in the largely rural constituency of Mid Ulster.

Due to the nature of the constituency, access is hindered by poor public transport. Almost 16% of households have no access to personal transport. Let us face it: the reality is that they are most likely to be the people who need access to social security offices. I would be interested to know whether any future-proofing has been done on the proposed closures, given that the regional development strategy 2035 defines Cookstown as a main hub with a growing population and a higher proportion of nought-to-15-year-olds than the rest of the North.

The Minister talks about the use of telephony and broadband. As a representative of the area, I assure you that the biggest issue that I am challenged about — it is raised with me regularly — is poor broadband and mobile phone infrastructure in the constituency. Whilst I will continue to lobby to have those issues addressed, I do not believe that, in the current circumstances and where we are likely to sit over the next number of years, that is a valid proposal.

I am aware that the unions have raised consistently with the Minister their concerns around the lack of engagement with them in relation to the proposed closures in advance of any proposals. Sinn Féin opposes strongly the Tory cuts and welfare reform. Unfortunately, we are dealing with a Tory Government who, quite frankly, are not concerned about their own constituents, never mind the people over here. We have seen the result of how they have decided to implement welfare reform. Minister, you have an opportunity to do things differently and ensure that our most vulnerable citizens, particularly those with mental ill health and disabilities, have access to front-line services. I assure you that many people will not be able to access the service if the office in Cookstown is closed. People with mental health problems often have difficulty asking for help. What will we do when those people start falling through the cracks? Are they just going to be collateral damage?

My background is in working in the Sinn Féin advice centre in Coalisland and dealing with welfare and all those issues with very vulnerable people in our society. They are the people who do not ask for help and do not know where to go for help. I would be very concerned for those people in a situation where there is no front-line service. They will fall through the cracks. It is already happening. I have met Citizens Advice on numerous occasions about the difficulties that it was having with people. There have been occasions when staff have had to go out to people's homes — I have been in this situation — and deal with people at the very brink, who will possibly go that step further and take their own life. We know that some people across the water have already taken their own life. I am quite sure that it has happened and will continue to happen here. We need to protect those people. Cost-effectiveness has to be looked at in the round. What cost are we prepared to pay? Will that cost be to our health service? This is one Executive, and we need to look after every part of it. That is something that needs to be taken into consideration.

I am also concerned about what will happen if people are unable to attend appointments through no fault of their own but because of the poor transport infrastructure and have sanctions placed on them as a result that could mean families being left without money for food or household necessities. I know that all of that needs to be addressed and is not necessarily your responsibility, but the fact is that it is what it is, and we have to live in the circumstances that we live in. You might say that there are appeals processes and measures to negate, but we have seen with previous measures that have been taken that that does not always work. People will, as I have already said, fall through the cracks, and I have dealt with numerous such cases. Most often, it tends to be those with mental ill health or people with mild to medium learning difficulties who fall into that situation.

The Minister may talk about the ring-fenced money for advice services. However, that money is for the entire

North, not just for Cookstown or even Mid Ulster. Let us face it: by the time it goes around, there will not be much left to negate any impact of office closures in Cookstown, Ballynahinch or Newcastle. The reality is that, with the changes to welfare, there will be a greater need than ever to protect our vulnerable constituents. The first step is to retain our front-line services across the North. I am not asking to protect just those three offices: we need all the offices that we have across the North.

Ms S Bradley: Will the Member give way?

Ms Dillon: Yes.

Ms S Bradley: Vulnerable service users will be affected, but does the Member agree that rural dwellers will be among the most vulnerable, as they will have difficulty accessing services, should the offices be closed?

Ms Dillon: Absolutely, and I will address that. You are 100% right. I raised that as the Chair of the AERA Committee. I asked for the Minister to be written to and, in turn, for her to have a conversation with her Executive and party colleague, because I felt that that was something that had been absolutely ignored. For that reason, I was extremely concerned.

The staff in the offices are predominantly at a lower grade, female and with caring responsibilities. As such, they will be severely negatively impacted on by any closure, resulting in them having to travel further to work and at a greater cost. Again, I do not see any evidence that the Department has given this any great degree of consideration.

There has been much work carried out, as I have already outlined, by Mid Ulster District Council to try to work with the Department to find solutions to ensure that the service can be retained in Cookstown. This is a very positive move: local government is wanting to work with central government to deliver for communities. That is community planning in practice, but it will work only if the Minister approaches it with an open mind and sees the need to protect these front-line services and, as has just been outlined, our rural dwellers. One of the main concerns raised by the council and by numerous people in public meetings was the fact that Mid Ulster is a largely rural constituency yet the figures that were used were those within a mile of Cookstown town centre. Ardboe, Moortown, Killen, Aughamullan and all these other places are nowhere near Cookstown centre.

I ask the Minister to rural-proof any planned closures honestly and genuinely. When you look at it, you will see that they cannot be rural-proofed. If you close the offices, people in my constituency will not be able to access the service. Unless you have other proposals that we have not yet seen, there is nothing that will address that. I am seriously concerned about the impact that this will have. As I have already outlined, we are not just talking about people on jobseeker's allowance. Those are the figures that were used in the consultation for how many people use the service. We are talking about people on tax credits. We are moving to universal credit, and apparently that is the reason that we are looking at changing these services. Universal credit will mean that more people will need to visit the office, not fewer. That is why we need to retain an office in Cookstown and not just in Cookstown — Ballynahinch and Newcastle fall into the same category.

They have all the same challenges, in that they are rural areas and have vulnerable constituents.

I ask the Minister to listen to what is being said. I know that you have already met numerous MLAs, that you met the council, and that a lot of these issues have already been outlined. You have met NIPSA and have heard their arguments, and their arguments are well thought through; they have all the statistics to show the negative impact that this has already had across the water. I do not want to see our people suffering the same fate. It was said outside the Building today that it will be a sad indictment on us as a government if we have a food bank in a town and no social security office.

Mr Speaker: Members, there is a very full speaking list. Therefore, I propose that constituency Members will each have up to four minutes to speak and all other Members who wish to speak will have three minutes.

Mr K Buchanan: I thank the Member for bringing the debate to the House. Following representation by staff and constituents in August about the possible closure of Cookstown and Magherafelt social security offices and jobcentres, I met the Minister for Communities on 6 September to discuss the long-term future of services being provided across Mid Ulster. At that meeting, the Minister reassured me that the long-term future of Magherafelt jobs and benefits office would be secure and that it would have an important role in the new universal credit service. While I welcomed this news, I was very mindful of the role of Cookstown social security office and jobcentre. The Minister assured me that a review, which closes today, would be carried out by his Department and that no member of staff would be made redundant and that those staff who would have to move would be offered suitable posts in other parts of the Department. Since that meeting, I have visited the Cookstown offices and met and listened again to the concerns of staff regarding possible closure.

Cookstown, as we all know, and as the last Member said, serves a large rural area. People will be forced to travel to Dungannon and Magherafelt with their concerns about their benefits. There will be no facility for face-to-face interviews for vulnerable groups in this area; there will be no one to help with form-filling advice and answers to queries, especially with ongoing changes from welfare reform. Many clients or customers from Cookstown and the surrounding area do not have access to the Internet or, indeed, good Internet coverage. Cookstown social security office may be only 11 miles from Cookstown and 10 from Magherafelt, but recent census figures show that just over 15% of households in Cookstown have no transport. That means that many of those accessing the services of this office — indeed, need them — will need to depend on public transport. Unfortunately, being a rural constituency, public transport can be sparse and result in two or three bus journeys either way.

Centralising services will dramatically reduce the number of staff working locally, who, in future, will only be capable of providing advice to claimants on a limited number of payments. There has been widespread concern about the Social Security Agency proposals to move staff out of local offices. It is important that local offices are retained to protect jobs, meet the needs of customers and ensure that the economy does not suffer another blow as a result of public-sector jobs being transferred out of the town. We are living in tough times when local businesses are

struggling for custom, and the proposal to move staff from local offices will, without a doubt, have a major negative impact on local trade.

While I recognise the need to ensure an effective, responsive and resilient customer service to meet the needs of claimants following the introduction of universal credit, I ask the Minister to consider that the current social security office provides a vital service for around 38,000 people in the whole Cookstown catchment area. It is not just jobseeker's allowance claimants who use the office in Cookstown; many access the service seeking advice and support on pension credit and employment support.

Although it is proposed that some services will be available digitally, as we have previously discussed, unfortunately, the broadband network in Mid Ulster is somewhat weak. There is a fear that people will receive higher sanctions on their benefits due to the difficulties that they will face trying to participate in face-to-face meetings with advisers. Staff are concerned that there may be an increased workload with the introduction of universal credit and that a reduction in local services will have a negative effect on the whole community of Cookstown. There is increasing concern that, if they have to move to alternative offices, they will incur additional travel and childminding costs, meaning that their work-life balance will be greatly affected and may result in them having no option but to seek alternative employment.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

5.15 pm

Mr K Buchanan: I welcome the fact that the Minister is in the Chamber today and place on record that he had an open-door policy to meet public representatives, including MLAs and Mid Ulster councillors, to listen to the concerns of the staff. It would be a great comfort to local people if the Minister would look at innovative ways to maintain local access in the Cookstown area to the services provided.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Member for bringing this important Adjournment debate forward. I welcome the opportunity to participate and I am pleased that the Minister is present to respond to the debate. I am also grateful to him for meeting me a few weeks ago on the matter and I look forward to further engagement.

I am sure that, by now, the Minister appreciates the strength of feeling about these proposals in Cookstown and the surrounding areas. He can rest assured that we will continue to lobby him on this particular issue. The proposed closure of the social security office and the jobcentre in Cookstown has raised many concerns for claimants and employees. At the outset, it is clear that the implementation of the proposals will have a detrimental effect on service users and staff. It will mean that constituents will have to travel much further on a regular basis to access social security services.

When I asked the Minister, in a recent Question Time, to assure me that claimants from Cookstown and the surrounding rural area will not be out of pocket by travelling to Magherafelt or somewhere else to sign on, he was, unfortunately, unable to give me a satisfactory answer. Indeed, he admitted that changes such as those proposed here can create turbulence and cause a lot of discomfort for some individuals who have to go through them, and that must give great cause for concern.

I and other Members were contacted by a number of members of staff from the offices in Cookstown, as well as trade union representatives, expressing legitimate concerns about the potential reduction in services resulting from the closure of these offices and the subsequent redundancies or redeployment of staff away from their local area. It is crucial that the difficulties and stress that the closures will cause are not brushed under the carpet and that the voices of employees and service users are listened to and fully considered throughout the consultation process.

We all know that the roll-out of welfare reform, which as Members will remember was rushed through by the DUP and Sinn Féin without the chance for proper scrutiny, will bring significant change in how benefits are delivered. A part of that process is a move towards claimants using telephony and digital services. However, many service users, such as the elderly, the disabled, those without transport to Magherafelt or Dungannon and those not able to access the Internet, will continue to require face-to-face services and will appreciate being able to discuss their needs in person or with an adviser.

In that regard, and notwithstanding reduced budgets, I urge the Minister to consider proposals for the continuation of face-to-face advice for claimants in Cookstown. Proposals have been put forward to allow this, and I acknowledge and commend the work of Mid Ulster District Council to that end. Suggestions have been made for the social security office and the jobcentre to merge in one building or for a skeleton service to be run from the council offices. These scaled-down options would make financial savings on the one hand while meeting the needs of the most vulnerable service users on the other, and they should be given careful and serious consideration.

I was very disappointed to learn that these proposals had not been rural proofed before they were brought forward and that a report was belatedly commissioned to be conducted by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. The impact on rural areas in Mid Ulster from these closures should have been assessed long before the proposal was even brought forward.

If the Minister decides to push ahead with closing the facilities, it is imperative that he considers accommodating adjustments such as the proposals for a scaled-down service in the town, IT training for service users and for employees to be relocated to the nearest social security offices.

I am also concerned about the way in which the plans were communicated to staff. As the proposer mentioned, MLAs were informed that the information was leaked through —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude her remarks.

Mrs Overend: I also raise the Minister's announcement in mid-September of 280 public-sector jobs to help deal with credit and child maintenance payments in GB. I hope he can explain how that announcement could be made at that time, yet he is looking at how to take jobs away from Cookstown.

Mr McGlone: I thank the Member for bringing the Adjournment debate today. While I do not particularly welcome the occasion of it being before us, inevitably it is here — the proposal that we have to close the social security office and the jobs and benefits office.

I have represented the area since 1993 as a councillor and, latterly, as an MLA in the last number of years. I have had dealings with staff in the local offices and know that local accessibility has proven itself and meant a lot to so many people who find themselves in really difficult circumstances. Two cases come to mind. The first is when a family would have been made homeless but for an officer's intervention and diligence, dedication to the task and commitment to serving the community. In another case, a young single parent would have had no money to heat her house in the middle of a harsh winter. I remember vividly the two members of staff who dealt with those cases and went beyond the call of duty in their dedication. Access to that service was crucial and pivotal in helping those people in their difficult circumstances.

Cookstown social security office, as was mentioned, covers an area with a population of 38,000, including a large migrant community. At the time of the 2011 census, 3.4% of the population did not have English as their first language. Public transport provision is poor, and around 16% of households do not have access to personal transport, despite the largely rural location. There are pockets of significant deprivation, with 27% of the population considered to be income-deprived, while over 3,000 are rated as employment-deprived. Additionally, 21% of people have had long-term health problems or disability. That gives Members some idea of the background to the issue and why the proposed closure of Cookstown social security office and jobs and benefits office and the removal of those services from a local office is a matter of concern to me and others.

I move on to rural proofing, which was mentioned. No rural proofing was done on this. Five phone calls were made, and that qualifies as rural proofing in a big, scattered area that is densely populated, with the associated plethora of problems among the population. As for the relevance by way of nods to the Rural Needs Act — I really do not know. Apparently, the rural-proofing document, such as it is, has been kept under review during the consultation period. I really think that that needs to be looked at.

We have talked about people who are vulnerable and people who have difficulties, disabilities etc. I have looked at the equality impact screening, and it is based on this: "No figures or evidence are available to indicate this, so it must not exist". There is no evidence because the Department does not have any evidence. I have put down Assembly questions about that on issues such as gender, disability and nationality, given the migrant population that I referred to, but it does not have any stats on the usage of those offices so it cannot come to a conclusion about whether an equality impact assessment is viable or not. It does not have the evidence, so the screening is immaterial. This will cause hardship for many unemployed and low-waged residents.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr McGlone: As we face into universal credit and given the difficulties with it in GB, I call on the Minister to reverse any proposed decision to close the offices.

Mr Milne: I thank my colleague Linda Dillon for securing the Adjournment debate. It affords us the opportunity to speak about the proposal that is out to consultation, which includes the closure of Cookstown social security office and jobcentre. As many of the issues have been

discussed, I will be brief here tonight. I thank and welcome the staff, the unions and the representatives of Mid Ulster District Council who are present in the Public Gallery for the debate and those who were part of the delegation that we met earlier. I commend them for their commitment and efforts to retain this valuable front-line service.

Sinn Féin, as you heard, has conducted a number of meetings with the Minister for Communities, NIPSA and staff members about the issue, given the impact not only on Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon but right across the North. We are all aware that we are entering a period of significant change in the welfare system, and the reorganisation that runs alongside that has created a lot of uncertainty and concern for all social security staff. It is most keenly felt in areas facing potential closure. We are also familiar with the response coming from the Department regarding efficiencies and the building restrictions associated with Cookstown. While we acknowledge those points, they need to be balanced with the negative impact such a move would have for staff and claimants. In particular, the Minister needs to take account of the rural nature of the constituency.

The closure of the local offices will not only remove an essential service from the town but will reduce the already limited number of public-sector jobs in the mid-Ulster area. For many years, people from Mid Ulster have had to travel considerable distances to take up posts in the public sector and absorb the associated travel costs and impact on family life. Transfers have been long-awaited and hard-fought for, so it is disappointing to see that rural areas are to be at the forefront of the Minister's proposals. Despite the Department's indications that the proposals would have no differential impact on any section 75 categories, it is a fact that just over 88% of the staff who will be affected are women.

The closure will also create challenges for claimants. People already suffering financially will be forced to travel further to seek welfare advice, and those without personal transport will struggle to adhere to appointment times. I have no doubt that the move towards a telephone and digital service will not be without its problems, particularly given the limited access to broadband and the patchy mobile signal that is experienced in many areas of Mid Ulster. I suggest that the requirement for face-to-face contact is set to increase rather than decrease as the changes come into effect. I call on the Minister to ensure that that need is met.

I conclude by urging the Minister to listen to the concerns raised about the proposal and seek an alternative solution that would see the retention of the jobs and benefits service. I would also say to the Minister that this is not just a lobby from individuals; it is coming from Mid Ulster District Council, which I imagine is one of the biggest types of lobbyist the Minister will ever face.

Mr Speaker: Before I call Mr Harold McKee, I advise you that, as you are an MLA from outside the Mid Ulster constituency, you have been allocated three minutes.

Mr McKee: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I concur with the frustration of all those who use the Cookstown social security office and the staff who will most likely have to travel to other offices to seek work. We have a similar issue in Newcastle and Ballynahinch, where there is a recommendation to close the social security offices and jobs and benefits offices.

This is much bigger than a cost-cutting exercise; it will have a knock-on effect on the economies of Cookstown, Ballynahinch and Newcastle. Most importantly, the process of encouraging claimants to go online will give no reason for older or younger people to leave their home. That can often lead to those who look forward to a reason to go into their town or village to have a face-to-face conversation, shop or socialise becoming less able, housebound or even depressed. With many of our rural areas having residents unable to receive broadband, those people must make their way to a social security office and will have no other means to do that but by hiring a taxi to go a greater distance. That will, in turn, take a fair chunk out of their payments.

It is disappointing that, at the end of the consultation period, the Minister has said, even today, that he is minded to close the three offices. I urge him to give this essential service, which is dear to many, a fair hearing and to listen to the concerns.

Ms Ruane: Gabhaim buíochas le Linda Dillon. I thank Linda Dillon for bringing the matter to the Assembly. It is good to see colleagues from Mid Ulster and South Down here doing a joint lobby to fight for essential services. It is also good to see representatives from every party, and I hope the Minister notes there is cross-party support, including his party. I have no doubt that Jim Wells would be here, only for his personal circumstances, to defend Newcastle and Ballynahinch.

I join the representatives who have spoken about the difficulties that closures will create for people in rural areas, the adverse impact they will have on women and the fact that the bus and transport system is not the best.

It could end up costing a week's worth of fuel if claimants have to pay for travel out of their own pockets. The cost of public transport from one town to another will eat up a significant amount of a person's benefit. Access to crisis loans will be even harder for those in need, due to the distance and cost involved. People will have to travel to Killeel or Downpatrick to address any concerns that they have about any of their benefits.

5.30 pm

The other factor that needs to be taken into account — I am lobbied about it all the time — is the poor broadband coverage and speed in South Down. This also comes into play. Online solutions will not work for many people. Indeed, I put two questions for written answer to the Minister — AQW 6294/16-21 and AQW 6293/16-21 — and I have to say that I was very disappointed with the incomplete response. Some questions that I asked were not even responded to; they were glossed over. I ask the Minister to have another look at the questions and ask his officials to give a more complete response on this occasion.

The staff in the offices earmarked for closure are also very concerned, and I note that they have joined us at Stormont today. They will also be forced to travel further distances. We had assurances that none of these offices were going to be closed, and now we are a wet week into the new mandate, and we have leaked memos about potential closures. I know —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude her remarks.

Ms Ruane: — that all my colleagues in South Down will support our colleagues in Cookstown, and we will fight this together.

Mr McGrath: I wholeheartedly support the calls today to stop any potential closure of jobs and benefits offices across the North from going ahead. Given that many hundreds of people will still be required to present themselves to an office, I am deeply concerned that moving the services from the Cookstown office will have an unfair impact on those who live in rural areas, similar to the impact of closures in Ballynahinch, which is near to my constituency, and Newcastle, which is in my constituency.

Many people who live in places such as Lissan, Ardboe and Kildress and other rural areas will now face lengthy journeys, often involving multiple changes, to get to their new offices, and will spend considerable time travelling there and back — time that they could spend applying for jobs. It astounds me that moving to an IT-based system can be suggested as a positive solution to proposed closures when an equality impact assessment is yet to be carried out. It is clear that proper thought has not gone into this so-called solution. Of course, we have to consider the massive cost of the service, which will be passed on to the claimant. It assumes that the benefit recipients can afford to buy computers and pay for broadband. Can the Minister confirm that the cost of broadband and purchasing computers will be reflected in an increase to the amount of money that benefit recipients will get?

Rural disparity is surfacing again, with broadband provision in rural areas being significantly weaker than in cities. I question whether we have evidence to prove that weaker broadband will be able to facilitate a new IT-based system. The use of IT systems in an independent manner assumes that everyone has capable literacy standards. As this is not the case, those who are unable to use services will have to travel to centres to get assistance. I believe that this is an outright act of discrimination against those who have lower literacy capacity.

It is unquestionable that the proposed closure of the Cookstown jobcentre and social security office will have a disproportionate impact on women. Some 88.5% of staff in the Cookstown offices are women. It is clear that consideration is not being given to the locality of workplace for existing staff and the fact that many have chosen to work in their local jobs and benefits office as it is conveniently located to ensure that they can remain as carers for elderly family members or for children.

Mr Speaker, you will notice that I have a lot of concerns about the proposed changes and that the word that keeps cropping up is "equality". I am deeply concerned that a full and robust equality impact assessment has not been undertaken and urge that it be completed. If we do not assess, we are left to guess, and that is not the basis for any decisions. I call on the Minister and the Executive to reverse the decision.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr McGrath: There is more than one party in the Executive, and there is more than one party that can help to make the decision appropriate.

Mr McElduff: Maybe on one discordant note, it is a pity that the previous Member's party did not take its place in the Executive and accept responsibility.

I will now move to a more unanimous and harmonious mode. I commend Linda Dillon for proposing this debate. Living in mid-Tyrone, as I do, I am very familiar with the Cookstown situation and with the rural communities that Linda outlined and which are severely disadvantaged by having poor broadband access. I also commend the MP for Mid Ulster, Francie Molloy, for his proactive role in this campaign and for being in attendance this evening. I ask that the Minister makes this decision his own because, when I met the Minister some months ago in relation to issues relevant to this matter pertaining to the Omagh area, I got the impression that he, being new in office, may not have had time to make this his own decision. It was a developing and evolving situation that he may have inherited, and I would like the Minister to put his own stamp on the decision.

The reasons of rurality, rural proofing and broadband have been outlined. I want to put on record that there is a proposal to relocate a number of Social Security Agency posts away from Omagh, and this is wholly unnecessary because, in the Omagh office, there has been significant investment in telephony systems, and it has a very valuable workforce. I understand that the Minister is going to meet Fermanagh and Omagh District Council in early December to discuss this. There is no proposal to close the Omagh Social Security Office but there is one to relocate a number of posts, and I am saying about it and the Cookstown office that we should be moving in the direction of decentralisation, not centralisation. That should be a key feature of our Programme for Government when it is concluded.

In solidarity with the people in the Cookstown district and in Newcastle and elsewhere, I just wanted to make my position known and to call for the retention of a number of posts in Omagh. The current plan is that they shall be relocated. When you meet those staff, you see that they are not at an age when travelling to their work will come easy to them. I ask for a little bit of compassion and for the Minister to make this his own decision —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr McElduff: — not just something that has been passed to him by senior civil servants.

Mr Smith: I thank Linda Dillon for bringing this important issue to the House. I might be an interloper from Strangford, given that this is an issue affecting Cookstown, but, as the proposer said in her opening comments, whilst this is focused on Cookstown, there are two other offices involved: Ballynahinch, in my constituency, and Newcastle. The three of them have been grouped together and looked at as a package. Similar issues have been consulted on, and they face the same problems.

Members have talked about the two major issues, the primary one being the impact on claimants. Travel time is the key issue for people in rural areas. Members talked travelling the 10 or 11 miles from Cookstown to Magherafelt or Dungannon, and, in my constituency, with the example of Ballynahinch, we are talking about people travelling to Newtownbreda or Lisburn. By the time that people, first, incur the costs of getting there and, secondly, travel to and fro, with a public transport timetable that does not facilitate transport particularly well, the reality is that people who are going to claim JSA are probably technically not available for work that day because of

the time and effort that they have of getting to and from the place of signing on. I think that the Minister should take that on board. That is before you consider the more vulnerable, such as those who have young children, those who are disabled and service users who are older. Those people will find this a much more difficult proposition.

The other impact, of course, is on the towns themselves. The consultation certainly focuses on that, but it talks about the lack of footfall if staff go.

In Ballynahinch, for example, there are 13 or 14 staff but 13,000 or 14,000 service users. I appreciate that that may be only a secondary issue from the Minister's perspective, but, if you take the offices out of these towns, it will have a massive impact on trading conditions. That needs to be taken on board.

The key issues in the consultation were value for money and the need for investment. From a value-for-money perspective, the focus in Ballynahinch in my constituency was on running costs for staff, when, in reality, they should look at the running costs for the service users, which is a much better comparison. On the issue of investment, the comparison in the consultation for Ballynahinch was for a £2.2 million new build, when, in reality, a £700,000 refurbishment of the existing building would have sufficed. There was more —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Smith: — to look at in the consultation. I agree with my colleague Sandra Overend and urge the Minister to be creative in order to maintain face-to-face services in the towns affected.

Mr Carroll: I thank the Member for bringing the topic to the House today. We are talking, of course, about the closure of the Cookstown centre, but we cannot forget Ballynahinch and Newcastle, which, as has been mentioned, will be affected by the proposals.

People have a right to access these centres for advice and support; indeed, one of the roles of the Department for Communities is to get people back to work. I ask how that can be done when people are having their local jobcentre closed in their face. That is not to mention the effect that the closures will have on staff.

People whom I talk to are being told that the centres are not fit for purpose, but we know the story all too well here. Centres and facilities are run down and starved of investment, and then we are told that they cannot operate, are not fit for purpose and have to close. We have seen it before, and no doubt we will see it again. It is also worth saying that this is a Department that is wasting £25 million paying private companies to implement a Steps 2 Success programme that is not very successful and is absolutely failing to find people permanent jobs. That is public money thrown down the drain. I pay tribute to NIPSA and everyone else involved in the campaign to save the centres. During the consultation period, there were public meetings in local areas. There were thousands of objection letters and thousands of petitions. If the consultation is to mean anything, those concerns have to be listened to. I hope that the Minister hears those voices today. He really, really should.

The closures present particular problems for people, including, as has been mentioned, those in rural areas. We live in an era in which most things are put online, but not everyone has access to the Internet or the skills to

get online, along with the difficulties with broadband in rural areas that have been mentioned. If the centres are closed, people will be told to go online. What advice will the Minister give those people? Where will he tell them to go? In reality, closing the centres will send people to other towns to go to other jobcentres and social security centres. That is based on the assumption that people have access to a car or are able to drive. That is not always the case, especially for people who are unemployed and in receipt of benefits. Some people will not have access to a car or be able to afford £6 or £7 out of their £70 a week to pay for buses. The closures will further cut access for people living in rural areas, especially vulnerable people, and deny them information about the benefits that they are entitled to.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Carroll: Welfare reform has been mentioned. It is already coming in, with 21,000 sanctions already this year. I do not say it lightly, but the reality with welfare reform is that we will see cases like that of Daniel Blake across the region unless people get organised and fight back against it.

Mr Givan (The Minister for Communities): I thank Ms Dillon for tabling the Adjournment topic and for allowing Members an opportunity to speak on something that I know they feel passionately about. That has been reflected in the way in which they have wanted to engage with me on the issue. Hopefully they have found me willing to engage with them on it. Throughout the consultation process, the requests have been coming in. From around the Chamber, I have met Mr Buchanan, Mrs Overend, Colin McGrath, Michelle O'Neill and Chris Hazzard. I have also met Jim Shannon and Councillor Billy Walker. I have met the delegation from Mid Ulster District Council, and I am meeting Francie Molloy next week.

5.45 pm

I do not think that I have failed to meet any elected representative who has asked for a meeting with me to put the case. I have met Barry McElduff and Tom Buchanan when it was the only issue raised. Hopefully, that reassures Mr McElduff. I appreciate that he thinks that I am a new Minister. Let me assure the House that I will take the decision. This is not something where officials came to me and I signed a blank cheque to start a consultation process. People who know me know that I take decisions. There will be times when that is in agreement with how my civil servants advise me and others when it is contrary to their advice. However, I expect them at all times to give me impartial professional advice. They do that and will continue to do so. However, the decision on the consultation process that we are now going through will be mine. Consultation on the four offices closes today. The analysis will now take place, and, ultimately, I will take the decision and will have to stand over it.

Ms S Bradley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Givan: Yes, I am happy to do so.

Ms S Bradley: I welcome that you embrace taking the decision and that you take ownership of it. Will you confirm, for clarity, whether your decision has to be presented to the Executive for completion?

Mr Givan: No, it clearly falls entirely within my responsibility; it is for my Department to take the decision. I will have to do that. Mr McKee and Mr McGrath spoke: one

indicated that I had already given a view that I wanted this to happen, and Mr McGrath called for the decision to be reversed. Let me be very clear: there has been no decision. There has been a consultation process on proposals, but no decision has been taken on it. It will be for me to decide, once the analysis has been carried out and it comes to me to deal with. Then I will take the decision.

Let me go through in a little more detail the issues that we are looking at. I assure Members that I will consider all the responses received and that we will publish the results of the consultation process. That process has given staff, public representatives and other stakeholders the opportunity to comment on and raise concerns regarding the closure of the offices. Just before I came in to the debate, I was advised that, so far, we are just shy of 400 responses to the consultation proposals. Mr Carroll of People Before Profit talked about thousands of representations; maybe they are coming or due to arrive, and quite a number came in today. At present, however, we sit just shy of 400 responses, although that figure may change. I have responded to a significant number of Assembly questions on the topic, and, as I outlined, I have met a number of MLAs and elected representatives. Apart from meeting them myself, senior officials in the Department directly met councillors and council officials.

In making the proposals, I recognise the importance of local access to services, and, therefore, the proposed closures are premised on the basis that there is a strong network of jobs and benefits offices that will continue to deliver front-line services. In recent years, the Department has made significant investment in modernising and improving access to our services through the jobs and benefits network and through the use of the telephony service. Indeed, 70% of social security benefit services are provided via telephone, and many will move online. I know that access to broadband is an issue that we have touched on, and Members have raised it both in meetings with me and in the debate. I recognise that it is an issue, and my Department is working with officials in the Department of Finance and in the Department for the Economy to deliver proposals to increase the coverage of the broadband network and to put in place local support to help the most vulnerable.

Further investment will be made in jobs and benefits offices to ensure that they are fit for purpose for the changes required for the introduction of universal credit and that they will support the use of digital service in the offices. Some Members have pointed to or certainly implied a view that rural areas are being disadvantaged in respect of how the services will be delivered. Welfare is changing, and therefore how we deliver services has to keep pace with that change so that we can deliver them to the people who require them. The three universal credit centres, for example, will be in Newry, Foyle and Belfast. This is not a Belfast-centric model that I want to develop; I am keen that it is pushed across the Province because it is a service that is required to be delivered across the Province. In respect of discretionary support, the two centres that we will use for that are in Antrim and Dungannon. Those will be two major facilities, so this is not Belfast-centric.

I do not represent Belfast. As Minister, I am responsible for it, of course, but I am keen to make sure that services are delivered across the Province, and we are always looking at how we deliver on that. When you look at your jobs and benefits offices, you see that, as unemployment figures

fluctuate, caseloads change in those offices and there is ongoing assessment of staffing requirements in those offices and changes take place as a result. That was the context of what I said to Sandra Overend. There is always change around how services are delivered, and that can create challenges and difficulties for those it impacts on. I recognise that, but we have to deliver the service as well as we can and as efficiently as we can, recognising that, in circumstances where people are vulnerable, we need to put measures in place to support them. I am committed to doing that.

I have asked my officials to look at other measures by which the most vulnerable claimants in isolated rural areas can be accommodated, for example by changing signing times, reviewing the need for postal signing or using the appointment-based service in alternative offices. In my meetings with MLAs and MPs, all argued that they wanted the offices to stay open, including mine. Mr Shannon told me, "I am mounting the barricades against you, Paul", and Keith Buchanan has made it clear he is opposed to what I am doing. I accept that elected representatives will voice the views of those they represent; I would not expect them to do anything less.

Members have also challenged me, including the representation from Mid Ulster District Council, that there needs to be a range of options looked at. Without prejudice to my decisions around this, it is important that we look at a range of options for what could be delivered. That will need to be explored.

Members have raised a range of issues. In respect of section 75 obligations, the Department is cognisant of its equality of opportunity responsibilities and ensures that all new or revised policies are scrutinised in accordance with the responsibilities detailed in the Department's equality scheme. The Department's initial assessment of the proposed office closures is that they do not directly discriminate against any of the section 75 groups and that appropriate measures can be put in place to mitigate any impacts, for example changes to signing times and the use of online or telephony channels. I know Members have raised a number of —

Ms Dillon: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Givan: I will, briefly, because I am finishing.

Ms Dillon: Does the Minister agree that continuous engagement with NIPSA and the other unions would be useful in any process like this?

Mr Givan: With five seconds to go —

Mr Speaker: I will allow the Member to answer the question.

Mr Givan: Let me assure Members: all the issues will be taken very seriously, and I am committed to taking my own view on all this on the basis of information that will be provided to me.

Mr Speaker: The Minister's time is up.

Adjourned at 5.54 pm.

Written Ministerial Statement

The content of this written ministerial statement is as received at the time from the Minister. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.

Written Ministerial Statement

The content of this ministerial statement is as received at the time from the Minister. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.

Department for Infrastructure

York Street Interchange Project — Publication of Notice of Intention to Proceed and Making of the Designation Order

Published at 12.00 noon on Tuesday 15 November 2016.

Mr Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure): I wish to inform Members of my decision to accept the outcomes of the Public Inquiry for the £130million York Street Interchange Scheme and to proceed to progress the scheme in readiness of funding becoming available.

The scheme will address a major bottleneck on the strategic road network, replacing the existing signalised junction at York Street with direct links between Westlink, M2 and M3, the three busiest roads in the north. It will also separate strategic traffic from local traffic movements via underpasses below the existing road and rail bridges and underneath a new bridge at York Street.

The Inspector, appointed to chair the inquiry to examine the case for and against the scheme, concluded that the case to replace the existing York Street Junction Gyrotory System has been demonstrated.

The Inspector therefore recommended that the Environmental Statement, prepared by the Department containing proposals for provision of a grade separated junction at York Street to provide direct links between the Westlink and the M2 and M3, should be used as a basis for taking the scheme forward through both the detailed design and eventual construction stages.

They also recommended that the associated Designation Order and Vesting Order should be implemented.

In considering the Inspector's Report, the Department carried out a thorough examination of the Inspector's comments and recommendations. It concluded the scheme should proceed subject to recommendations relating to mitigation measures adjacent to residential areas, increased local community liaison and consideration of further provisions for cyclists.

Part V of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 sets out the statutory requirements for the assessment of environmental impacts of road schemes. With regard to Habitats Assessment, having caused an Appropriate Assessment to be carried out and having considered the Environmental Statement and the consultation responses to it, I am satisfied the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed scheme have been properly

assessed and have been sufficient to inform judgements on the scheme. Accordingly, in light of the Appropriate Assessment process undertaken and the information presented within the Statement to Inform the Appropriate Assessment and the Environmental Statement, I accept the Department's conclusion (as the Competent Authority) that the construction and operation of the York Street Interchange Scheme would not, by itself or in combination with other known plans or projects, adversely affect the integrity of the Belfast Lough Special Protection Area and the Belfast Lough Open Water Special Protection Area, or their ability to meet their conservation objectives.

I have carefully considered the Department's Statement on the Public Inquiry and agree with its conclusions. I have therefore decided to proceed with the scheme subject to the availability of future funding. In doing so, I commit my Department to carrying out the necessary actions to facilitate the Inspector's recommendations and the mitigation measures described in the Department's Statement and the Environmental Statement.

The procurement process for the scheme is well advanced and this was progressed in parallel with the overarching statutory process. Simultaneously, my Department has worked closely with the European Commission over a period of time to build the case for this project to be recognised as a priority for EU co-financing. In the event of the project being approved, this co-financing could have provided up to 40% of the project's costs subject to meeting a number of conditions with regard to project timing and duration. The outcome of the referendum vote and the projected timescales for withdrawal does, therefore, have significant negative implications for delivery of this project. Without substantive guarantees of replacement funding from the Treasury, this would add to the pressure on the Executive's capital budget.

While I welcome the Chancellor's most recent announcement, about guaranteeing EU funding for those projects signed off by the Commission while we remain in the EU but continue after we have left, I believe this does not go far enough. I will continue to press the Government and the Treasury to secure the best outcomes and support for the North.

The York Street Interchange project, however, remains a priority for me as it would deliver significant social and economic benefits, both in terms of alleviating traffic congestion and also in terms of improving access to key port and gateways.

For this reason I am committed to do all that I can to deliver the scheme within the current financial context,

working with the Finance Minister and other Executive colleagues.

The release of the Inspector's report and making of the necessary statutory orders will permit the scheme to be progressed in readiness for funding.

Consequently, I have asked my Department to publish the formal Notice of its Intention to Proceed and to make the Designation Order for the scheme. The associated Vesting Order will remain in Draft until finance becomes available to build the road.

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 4 November 2016

Written Answers to Questions

The Executive Office

Mr Hussey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many organisations and arm's-length bodies in their departmental remit offer recruitment agencies the opportunity to become the preferred providers of staff; and how an established recruitment agency is considered for inclusion on this list.

(AQW 3005/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): All of the organisations and arm's length bodies within our remit that are included in the List of Participating Bodies for Central Procurement Directorate Collaborative Frameworks have access to the current NICS Temporary Worker contract to source their Temporary/Agency worker requirements.

Mr Smith asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the total remuneration package, including any taxable benefits in kind and pension benefits, for the Executive Press Secretary.

(AQW 4129/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The Executive Press Secretary has been appointed to a salary of £75,419. He has normal Civil Service pension terms. There are no taxable benefits in kind.

Mr E McCann asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions they have had with the Strategic Investment Board regarding the proposed transfer of ownership of Northern Ireland Housing Executive buildings.

(AQW 4375/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Discussions with the Strategic Investment Board have been in relation to the totality of the Asset Management Strategy (AMS); this included a discussion in respect of the AMS Implementation Plan in December 2013.

Mr E McCann asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline who the Strategic Investment Board represent in discussions with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) regarding the proposed transfer of ownership of NIHE buildings.

(AQW 4403/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The Strategic Investment Board is supporting the Department of Finance with the delivery of the Reform of Property Management Programme. This Programme was established to improve the management and reduce the cost of the Central Government office estate through exiting private sector leases, developing more efficient office accommodation and transferring the offices into the control of the Department of Finance. The Strategic Investment Board staff involved in the Programme engage with all organisations within Central Government, including NIHE, to establish requirements and discuss the process by which the Programme will be delivered.

Mr McPhillips asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail who commissioned the report Preliminary Analysis on the impact of a UK referendum on its membership with the European Union.

(AQW 4687/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The Preliminary Analysis report was commissioned by the Head of the Civil Service.

Mr Smith asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) to detail the number of departmental and arm's-length body staff that exited under the Voluntary Exit Scheme, broken down by grade; (ii) how many of these posts were then suppressed; and (iii) (a) what proportion; and (b) how many posts were later (1) advertised; and (2) filled by internal promotion.

(AQW 5046/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The number of departmental and arm's-length body staff that exited under the Voluntary Exit Scheme, broken down by grade, is as follows:

Nine departmental staff exited under the Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES). The grade breakdown was: 4 Administrative Officers, 2 Personal Secretaries, 1 Staff Officer, 1 Principal Officer and 1 Assistant Secretary.

Eight ALB staff exited from the Equality Commission under the VES. The grade breakdown was: 3 Administrative Officers; 1 Executive Officer 1; and 4 Staff Officers.

All of the Departmental posts were suppressed. None of the Equality Commission posts have been formally suppressed.

None of the Departmental or ALB posts were later advertised and/or filled by internal promotion.

Mr Dickson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 2029/16-21, whether teams at senior levels of the Northern Ireland Civil Service had been established to consider potential implications for each Department.

(AQW 5189/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The governance structures outlined in AQW 2120/16-21 are now in place. They include an Inter-departmental Coordination Group (ICG) comprised of senior civil servants and chaired jointly by the Permanent Secretaries of the Departments of Finance and Economy. The ICG is supported by teams in each department.

Mr McPhillips asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much (a) victim and survivor funding; and (b) other funding has been given to ex-prisoner groups since 2011.

(AQW 5212/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: No victim and survivor funding has been provided to ex-prisoner groups. Funding provided to specific groups since 2011 is contained in the table below.

Period of Award	Programme	Name of Organisation	Amount Awarded
2015/16	Central Good Relations Programme	Lisburn PSP	£74,831.00
		Teach na Failte	£40,000.00
		Coiste na nlarchimi	£46,252.14
2016/17	Central Good Relations Programme	Lisburn PSP	£83,000.00
		Tar Abhaile	£50,561.00
		Tar Isteach	£49,491.00
		Teach Na Failte	£30,000.00

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the arrangements their Department has made to promote co-operation as required by Section 2(2) of the Children's Services Co-operation Act.

(AQW 5221/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: We refer the member to the answer given to AQW 2477/16-21.

The Executive Office will cooperate fully in respect of its relevant responsibilities by the process described in the answer.

Mr Dickson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 2029/16-21, to whom the established departmental civil service teams considering potential implications to Northern Ireland's interests are reporting.

(AQW 5322/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The teams referred to in AQW 2120/16-21 are reporting through their Departmental Ministers to the First and deputy First Ministers.

Mr Kearney asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on their engagement with the business community to attract inward investment.

(AQO 472/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: We regularly meet with the local business community across a range of engagements. We continue to underline the support that the Executive provides to the business community.

We are committed to growing the local economy.

One of the strategic outcomes in the new Programme for Government is to create a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest. This includes the role of the Executive to encourage business investment both indigenously and in terms of foreign direct investment.

We are fully supportive of the work that Invest NI carries out to help new and existing businesses to compete internationally and attract new inward investment to the local economy.

Mr Attwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the total number of staff involved with the Social Investment Fund; (ii) the total cost of salaries per annum; and (iii) the pay scales of staff, broken down in each year since its establishment.

(AQW 5557/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The information requested is outlined in the table below.

Social Investment Fund – staff numbers and salary costs

Financial year	Total number of Social Investment Fund staff	Total salary costs	Relevant pay scales
2012/13	4	£104k	Executive Officer 1: £25,439 – £26,638 Staff Officer: £27,835 – £30,825 Deputy Principal: £34,847 - £39,282 Grade 7: £45,694 - £51,304
2013/14	10	£456k	Executive Officer 1: £25,871 – £27,271 Staff Officer: £28,500 – £31,135 Deputy Principal: £35,190 - £39,675 Grade 7: £46,141 - £51,816
2014/15	11	£305k	Executive Officer 1: £25,871 - £27,271 Staff Officer: £28,500 - £31,135 Deputy Principal: £35,190 - £39,675 Grade 7: £46,141 - £51,816
2015/16	8.92*	£378k	Executive Officer 1: £25,871 - £27,271 Staff Officer: £28,500 - £31,135 Deputy Principal: £35,190 - £39,675 Grade 7: £46,141 - £51,816
2016/17**	10.72*	£259k**	The 2016/17 pay award, which will settle the salary scales, has still to be agreed.

* full-time equivalent staff

** costs up to September 2016.

Mr Attwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the amount spent in supporting projects under Social Investment Fund; and (ii) the location of each project, broken down for each of the last five years.

(AQW 5559/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The information requested has been placed in the Assembly Library.

Mr Dickson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 3990/16-21, to outline the action (i) taken; and (ii) to be taken by their Department to ensure the retention of the Human Rights Act.

(AQW 5637/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: As outlined in the response to AQW 3990/16-21, we are aware that the UK Government proposes to replace the Human Rights Act with a British Bill of Rights. We are currently waiting on details on the proposal and will then wish to discuss it with the Westminster Government.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 586/16-21, to address the question asked.

(AQW 5697/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: We refer the member to the response to AQW 586/16-21.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 4663/16-21, to answer the question asked.

(AQW 5698/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: As referred to in AQW 4663/16-21, all lead partner organisations have the appropriate structures and processes in place to manage public money effectively and efficiently.

Mrs Overend asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the status of the Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation report.

(AQW 5747/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The project entitled 'Understanding differential educational achievement within and between areas of multiple deprivation in NI – a case study approach' is being carried out by Professor Ruth Leitch, Professor Joanne Hughes, supported by Dr Ian Shuttleworth and Dr Michael levers from the Queen's University, Belfast. The research forms part of a programme of independent research commissioned by OFMDFM through an open call in 2011 to inform the policy development process. As such, the views expressed are those of the authors and not OFMDFM/the Executive Office.

Professor Ruth Leitch and her team are currently finalising the report for publication. Details of the publication will be provided on the Executive Office website when they are available.

Mrs Overend asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an outline of the recommendations of the Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation report.

(AQW 5748/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The project entitled 'Understanding differential educational achievement within and between areas of multiple deprivation in NI – a case study approach' is currently being finalised for publication. The research forms part of a programme of independent research commissioned by OFMDFM through an open call in 2011 to inform the policy development process. As such, the views expressed are those of the authors and not OFMDFM/the Executive Office.

Details of the publication will be provided on the Executive Office website when finalised and findings from the research will be available upon publication of the report.

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Mr Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for (i) a start date for construction on her Department's new headquarters at Ballykelly; and (ii) a timeline for completion of the project.

(AQW 4575/16-21)

Miss McIlveen (The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs): All planning approvals are now in place and we expect building work to begin in November 2016. Officials are finalising the staff transition arrangements so that the building can be occupied in January 2018.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether (i) she has any plans to address the ongoing failures of the water quality at Ballyholme bathing beach; (ii) any pollution prosecution proceedings been instigated in the last five years in relation to this location; and to outline the outcome of any such proceedings.

(AQW 4679/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: It is disappointing to see that in 2016 Ballyholme bathing water failed to meet the minimum requirement of the EU Bathing Directive. The water catchment surrounding Ballyholme bathing water is complex, comprising pressures from tourism, industry and significant urbanisation and agricultural practices. It should be noted however that 17 out of the 20 scheduled bathing water samples tested over the 2016 season at Ballyholme beach returned results that met excellent water quality standard. Only 3 failed to meet the required standard, and these were all following heavy rainfall events.

DAERA works closely with the Department for Infrastructure and Northern Ireland Water to set standards which ensure that our bathing waters are protected. I understand that NIW is spending £11.6 million to improve the wastewater treatment infrastructure around Ballyholme, and a number of phases are already completed. We also work closely with the agriculture sector to protect water quality.

Ballyholme was prioritised for specific catchment investigations in both 2011 and again in 2016. These proactive investigations carry out tailored inspections of all possible pollution sources within the catchment and rectify problems when found. In 2016 Ballyholme was also prioritised by DAERA officials to have additional weighting applied to farms within the catchment under the cross compliance inspection regime. It is also an area that has been put forward as an area that would benefit from the Environmental Farming (Group) Scheme.

In answer to the second question, there have been eight significant water pollution incidents in the catchment of Ballyholme bathing water in the last five years which were categorised by NIEA as having either a high or medium severity environmental impact. A successful prosecution was taken against NIW for the high severity incident, and a £2000 fine was issued. A second prosecution against a farm business has been referred to the Public Prosecution Service. The outcome is not yet known.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether an equality impact assessment was carried out before the renaming of Banríon Uladh.

(AQW 5318/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: For the administration of its functions the principal language of my Department is English. The name of the Department's Fishery Protection Vessel is displayed accordingly. An equality impact assessment was not carried out.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs , pursuant to AQW 4700/16-21, to outline when she will make a decision on each of the options.

(AQW 5334/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: As I advised in my response to your previous question, I have decided not to reduce the basic payment scheme to fund an Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) Scheme under Pillar I of the CAP. I have also decided that I will not introduce a Pillar I to Pillar II transfer to fund ANC under the Rural Development Programme. These decisions rule out Options 2a, 2b, 3 and 4 from the Consultation on Options for future support to ANC. Other options are under consideration but any decision will have to take account of all the relevant issues, including value for money and budget availability.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs , pursuant to AQW 4202/16-21, to outline when she will provide an answer.

(AQW 5371/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: AQW 4202 was answered on 18 October 2016.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to list (i) the types of imported meat that is accepted; (ii) it's country of origin; (iii) all imported meat by weight; (iv) the names of importing destinations; and (v) how often imported meat is accepted.

(AQW 5372/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Chapter 2 of annex 1 to Commission Decision 2007/275 EC (as amended) lists the types of meat which are appropriate to be checked under the veterinary checks regime for consignments of live animals and products of animal origin from third countries. A copy is detailed below:

- (i) Chapter 2 of annex 1 to Commission Decision 2007/275 EC concerning lists of animals and products to be subject to controls at border inspection posts under Council Directives 91/496/EEC and 97/78/EC

Chapter 2: Meat and edible meat offal

	This chapter does not cover	
	(a) Products of a kind described in headings 0201 to 0208 or 0210 unfit or unsuitable for human consumption;	
	(b) guts bladders or stomachs of animals (heading 0504) or animal blood (heading 0511 or 3002);	
	(c) animal fat other than the products of heading 0209 (Chapter 15).	
0201	Meat of bovine animals, fresh or chilled	All
0202	Meat of bovine animals, frozen	All
0203	Meat of swine, fresh, chilled or frozen	All
0204	Meat of sheep or goats, fresh, chilled or frozen	All
0205 00	Meat of horses, asses, mules or hinnies, fresh, chilled or frozen.	All
0206	Edible offal of bovine animals, swine, sheep, goats, horses, asses, mules or hinnies, fresh, chilled or frozen.	All
0207	Meat and edible offal, of the poultry of heading 0105, fresh, chilled or frozen.	All
0208	Other meat and edible meat offal, fresh, chilled or frozen.	Excludes: raw material not intended for human consumption. This includes bones and other material for the production of gelatine or collagen for human consumption.
0208 10	Of Rabbits or hares	All
0208 20 (00)	Frog's legs	All
0208 30	Of Primates	All

0208 40	Of whales dolphins and porpoises (mammals of the order Cetacea); of manatees and dugongs (mammals of the order Sirenia).	All
0208 50 (00)	Of Reptiles (including snakes and turtles).	All
0208 90	Other: of domestic pigeons, of game other than of rabbits or hares.	Includes meat of quails, seal meat, reindeer or any other mammal species.
0209 00	Pig fat, free of lean meat, and poultry fat, not rendered or otherwise extracted, fresh, chilled, frozen, salted, in brine, dried or smoked.	Includes both fat and processed fat.
0210	Meat and edible meat offal, salted, in brine, dried or smoked; edible flours and meals of meat or meat offal.	All: Includes meat, meat products and bones for human consumption and other products of animal origin. Processed animal protein including greaves for human consumption is covered by this chapter. Includes dried pigs ears for human consumption. Sausages are included under heading 1601.

(ii) Meat has been directly imported into Northern Ireland during 2016 from the following countries:

- Botswana
- South Africa
- New Zealand
- China
- Brazil

(iii) The weight of meat directly imported over the same period is as follows:

Country	Type of meat	Weight (tonnes)
Botswana	Beef	304
South Africa	Beef	21
New Zealand	Beef	254
	Lamb	1208
	Venison	138
China	Duck	6
Brazil	Poultry	2055

(iv) Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, section 43, information is exempt if its disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice the interests of any person. I am unable, therefore to release the identity of the importers without their express permission to do so.

(v) During 2016, a total of 219 consignments have been directly imported, equating to 5 consignments each working week.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on each new export market the Department is exploring.
(AQW 5373/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My officials continue to work closely with members of the Agri-Food industry and Government Departments in order to support trade and explore new markets.

DAERA supports the United Kingdom (UK) delegation at EU Third Country Trade Negotiations Groups to reflect the unique interests of the Northern Ireland (NI) industry in the market access process. Recent negotiations of particular interest to the NI industry are summarised below:

The Chinese Certification and Accreditation Administration (CNCA) recently announced its intention to provisionally approve plants in Northern Ireland for the export of pork to China and we hope the final approval will be granted soon. The approval to export represents a very tangible outcome in our long-term engagement strategy with China in line with the Northern Ireland Executive's Agri-Food Strategy and the Economic Strategy for NI. Local industry recently indicated that this new trade could generate as much as £10 million in revenue per year for our pork sector and we are keen to secure this lucrative market for the NI pig industry. Building relationships and trust is key to doing business in China. Government to Government cooperation

is vital to enable progress to be made at official and commercial levels and I am pleased to have the opportunity to visit China next month to help promote and generate interest in NI as a trading partner.

DAERA veterinary officials hosted an inspection by the Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) in April 2016 aimed at securing approval to export pork. My officials held follow-up teleconferences in August and October which resulted in DAWR officials agreeing to progress the process with a view to producing a draft report by the end of 2016.

The Philippines are considering our application to export red meat and poultry meat and a team of Inspectors will be carrying out an inspection/systems audit of our meat inspection and animal health programmes in November of this year.

Currently NI exports pork to the US but not beef or lamb. Plans are underway to host an inspection from the US on beef and lamb in the near future with the objective of opening markets through agreed veterinary health certificates.

The process of renegotiating the conditions to export pork to Korea is ongoing. DAERA is closely monitoring the situation to ensure the specific interests of the NI pork industry are at the forefront of the negotiations, particularly as the Koreans sought to introduce a clause to limit exports of meat from only those animals born and reared in NI. This would be a significant barrier to trade given around 45% of the pigs slaughtered in NI are sourced from farmers in the ROI.

Negotiations are currently underway to agree certification to export pork to Mexico on an EU wide basis. DAERA is participating in the negotiations providing technical veterinary support to represent the NI agri-food industry via the UK Export Certification Partnership (UKECP).

I know that our Industry greatly value the support we have given them and this will continue as we work together to build further opportunities.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs how an economically viable model for sustainable production, delivering on improved on-farm profitability from more efficient use of resources as recommended in the Going for Growth Strategy, has been developed by her (i) Department; (ii) the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute; and (iii) the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

(AQW 5374/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Your question relates to Recommendation 18 made by the Agri-Food Strategy Board in their strategic action plan Going for Growth. The Executive published its response to Going for Growth in October 2014 including agreed actions to be taken forward by government departments and agencies. An update on Executive-led actions outlined in the response is available on the DAERA website at:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/Going%20for%20Growth%20Progress%20Update%20-%20period%20ending%2030%20June%202016.pdf>.

This update was also shared with the Assembly's Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee on 22 September 2016.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs with reference to AQW 2460/16-21, why this assessment did not assess the risk of (i) coastal erosion (ii) sediment transportation (iii) nor provided any mitigating measures.

(AQW 5386/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: A full Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed Greencastle to Greenore ferry and infrastructure was conducted by the developer. The Environmental Statement assessed coastal erosion within Chapter 9, 'Coastal Processes'. That chapter also deals with sediment transportation issues and, in addition, these are mentioned in Chapter 7 on 'Marine Ecology', 7.3.4.2. Mitigating measures have been included on these issues within the marine licence i.e. the structure of the pier is open pile to ensure the pier is not a barrier to natural sediment movement, and turbidity monitoring has been included to ensure that suspended solids are kept under control both during construction and operation.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline what Departmental assistance she can provide to egg producers to adapt to the decision of UK supermarkets to phase out the sale of non free range eggs.

(AQW 5404/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The announcement by several supermarkets that they intend to stop sourcing eggs from caged hens follows a commercial decision resulting from an online petition. I understand the supermarkets have indicated that, by 2025, they wish to source their eggs from suppliers who use eggs from cage free methods of production. My Department had no role in the supermarkets' decision.

Farmers will need time to adjust and my Department recognises that the supermarkets have provided the egg producers with a timeframe to adhere to these new sourcing requirements. Egg packers will be advising their farmers of the new market requirements and what this will require in due course and I would encourage farmers to work closely with their customers on this.

The financial and market challenges facing agricultural producers reinforce my determination to make the best use of the Rural Development Programme and the 'Going for Growth' initiatives. The capital element of DAERA's Farm Business Improvement Scheme, which will open shortly, will allow farmers to seek financial support for investment in modern, fit for purpose and future-proofed infrastructure and equipment. It is important we use the opportunity that these mechanisms could

offer to build a resilient industry that can face the challenges ahead, while taking advantage of the opportunities that will come from developing new markets.

I have asked my officials to monitor developments on this subject carefully.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail (i) the number of fatal accidents that have occurred on farms, including slurry-related incidents, since 2011; and (ii) the key elements of her Department's strategy for improving safety on farms.

(AQW 5471/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: There have been a total of 47 work related deaths on farms since 1 January 2011 and up to 13 October 2016. Of which, 7 were slurry-related incidents.

Health and Safety is the remit of the Health and Safety Executive NI, however, I continue to show my commitment to the safety of our farmers, families and employees through significant input to the work, in association with our partners, on the Farm Safety Partnership (FSP).

My Department continues to provide funding for the ongoing, 'Stop and Think SAFE' campaign. This high profile and often hard hitting campaign was developed by the FSP to help tackle the high rates of serious accidents and deaths on Northern Ireland's farms. It raises the issues of the four main causes of fatalities on our farms - Slurry, Animals, Falls (from height) and Equipment.

There are a number of online farm safety tools that I strongly recommend all farmers, farm family members and farm workers access. There must be willingness from everyone who lives and works on our farms to think about their safety and the safety of others.

As part of the Rural Development Programme, the Farm Business Improvement Scheme (FBIS) - Business Development Groups (BDG) and Farm Family Key Skills (FFKS) has been launched and groups have now been formed. The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise has responsibility for the development and delivery of this knowledge transfer element of the FBIS. Farm Safety is a mandatory element of the discussion programme and also a key area of training as part of FFKS.

I launched the Preparation Stage for the capital element of the FBIS last month and am delighted to see that there has already been interest in the tools that have been made available. In particular a large number of farmers have already completed the on-line 'Making it Safer' Farm Safe risk assessment tool. I would encourage all farmers to complete this assessment on-line, not just those who will need it for an application to the FBIS - Capital Scheme. It is also encouraging that farmers are completing the Farm Safe Awareness module; although not required for the Scheme, it is an important tool in improving awareness of key risks on the farm.

My Department will continue to work collaboratively with its partners on the FSP to help drive home the importance of farm safety and develop a safety-first culture on our local farms. It is however, the farmers and those living and working on our farms that must put into practice those actions that are required to minimise or eliminate the risks of serious injury or death on our farms.

Ms Archibald asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, given the recent announcement by the Treasury on future European funding, to outline how she plans to ensure the Environmental Farming Scheme is funded to its full potential of £100m.

(AQW 5474/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The recent announcement from Treasury on future European funding is very positive news for the Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS). It guarantees funding for projects signed up until the point at which the UK departs the EU.

Subject to the necessary financial approvals, EFS is planned to open for applications in February 2017. Scheme agreements for the first tranche of successful applicants to the EFS Wider level will commence in July 2017. The first Higher level agreements will commence in January 2018.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment of the compliance with the European Laying Hens Directive.

(AQW 5501/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Council Directive 1999/74/EC was adopted in 1999 and lays down minimum welfare standards for the protection of laying hens. The Directive banned the keeping of hens in conventional or 'battery cages' from 1 January 2012.

All egg producers in Northern Ireland have been fully compliant with the Directive since 2013.

The European Commission confirmed in 2014 that it no longer had pending complaint cases based on non-compliance with Directive 1999/74/EC.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, pursuant to AQW 4564/16-21, whether she plans to implement a register allowing the owners of registered breeding establishments to register the numbers and breeds of each litter born in their establishment.

(AQW 5508/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (NI) 2013 require commercial dog breeding establishments to be licensed by their local Council. The licence must specify the number of breeding bitches to be kept in each establishment, and a record of this is held by the Council. Under the licence conditions each licensed breeder must maintain a record for inspection by the Council of each breeding bitch and each puppy born on the establishment.

Therefore, I do not plan to establish a register of numbers and breeds of each litter born in a breeding establishment.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to list the number of pups born and microchipped broken down by licensed breeding establishment in each council area.

(AQW 5510/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: As I advised in my reply to AQW 4564/16-21, my Department does not hold statistical information on the number of pups born in licensed breeding establishments.

Councils maintain a record of licensed breeding establishments, which includes the number of bitches on the premises, and have the powers to inspect the licence holder's mandatory records relating to pups.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the departmental support provided to research centres to develop the capability to (i) translate genetic improvements in ruminant livestock to the Grass Based System; (ii) assist industry in translating the research for monogastric improvements into practical and deliverable outcomes; (iii) support development of healthy eating alternatives to processed food ingredients; and (iv) support the research and development necessary to deliver improved human health through developments in animal nutrition.

(AQW 5511/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My Department continues to support the development of a broad range of research capabilities through its funding to the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), including genetic improvements in ruminant livestock. In 2011 DAERA funded the initial development of a DNA data base for the AFBI Hillsborough herd, one of the highest genetic merit dairy herds within the UK. Blood samples were obtained from over 600 animals over a three year period and analysed for DNA. When sufficiently populated, this database will allow progress to be made in identifying dairy cows particularly suited to grazing systems.

The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) continues to assist industry in translating the research into practical and deliverable outcomes. Business Development Groups have been established across dairy, beef, sheep, arable, poultry, pigs and the commercial horticulture sectors and the outcomes of the DAERA commissioned research are being delivered via these groups.

CAFRE is a member of the Healthy Project Team which is working to identify strategic areas for further research and development, via the Agri-Food Quest Competence Centre, to contribute to improved human health through developments in animal nutrition.

My Department continues to invest in new research and development to underpin sustainable farming systems. For example, as part of its Evidence and Innovation Strategy, my Department has recently commissioned 26 new research projects at AFBI. Details of all projects commissioned since 2011 are available on the DAERA website. (link below).

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/daera-directed-afbi-research-projects-2011-2016>

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on the development of a strategic regional land management policy; and how areas best suited for specific agricultural use whilst maintaining and enhancing environmental sustainability are identified.

(AQW 5514/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Your question relates to a recommendation made by the Agri-Food Strategy Board in their strategic action plan Going for Growth. The Executive published its response to Going for Growth in October 2014 including agreed actions to be taken forward by government departments and agencies. An update on Executive-led actions outlined in the response is available on the DAERA website at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/Going%20for%20Growth%20Progress%20Update%20-%20period%20ending%2030%20June%202016.pdf>.

This update has also been shared with the Assembly's Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee on 22 September 2016.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the financial grants awarded from the plastic bag levy, broken down over the last three years.

(AQW 5545/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The table below shows the financial grants awarded during the last three years (2013-14 to 2015-16) from the income received from the carrier bag levy.

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Total
Natural Heritage Fund	585,927	1,252,392	-	1,838,319
Natural Environment Fund	-	-	1,799,139	1,799,139
Challenge Fund	2,309,712	1,235,618	403,210	3,948,540
Sustainability Innovation Fund	198,471	369,037	62,090	629,598
Listed Building Grant Scheme	-	412,083	460,720	872,803
Community Waste Fund	-	225,540	231,282	456,822
Keep NI Beautiful	-	368,600	250,000	618,600
Exploris seal sanctuary	-	-	43,230	43,230
Local Air Quality grant programme	-	-	38,858	38,858
Total	3,094,110	3,863,270	3,288,529	10,245,909

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (i) how many agency staff have been engaged in her Department via the Civil Service during and since the Voluntary Exit Scheme; (ii) at what cost; and (iii) how many of those staff exited under the scheme then returned as agency staff.

(AQW 5562/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The number of Agency Workers engaged by my Department, from the announcement of the Voluntary Exit Scheme in March 2015 until September 2016, was 137 at a cost of £1,271,578. None of the Agency workers engaged by my Department exited under the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme.

Agency workers are engaged to meet urgent short-term business priorities. During this period only 2 DAERA posts vacated as a result of the Voluntary Exit Scheme have been filled on a temporary basis through agency provision.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail the driving qualifications required for ministerial drivers when employed by (i) her Department; and (ii) herself or her party.

(AQW 5570/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: In line with current NICS guidance for the management of NICS employees assigned as Ministerial drivers, all drivers must possess a current driving licence entitling them to drive a Group A vehicle under the Road Traffic Act (NI). In addition to this requirement existing Ministerial drivers are members of the Institute of Advanced Motorists.

Neither myself, nor my party, employs a driver to allow me to carry out my official duties as Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline (i) any plans to develop guidance for departmental officials in relation to the steps needed to consider rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and designing and delivering public services; and (ii) plans to measure and evaluate outcomes.

(AQW 5616/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016, which will come into operation first for Northern Ireland departments and district councils in June 2017, provides a statutory basis for an existing Executive commitment to undertake rural proofing of all new and revised policies and strategies across government.

The existing guidance on rural proofing "Thinking Rural": The Essential Guide to Rural Proofing", which can be accessed at the link below, will be reviewed and updated to take account of the new statutory requirements.

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dard/guide-to-rural-proofing.pdf>

This will be carried out by the Rural Development Council under its contract to provide support services to the Rural Network for the 2014-20 Rural Development Programme. They will also develop monitoring arrangements for rural proofing and a framework for measuring its impact on rural communities which can be used by public authorities to measure the outcome of their policies and strategies.

These supporting arrangements will be in place before the Act comes into operation on 1 June 2017.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline (i) her plans to progress the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016; and (ii) the training provided for her departmental officials and officials in other Departments.

(AQW 5617/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 was passed by the NI Assembly on 8 March and received Royal Assent on 9 May 2016 and I have decided on a phased approach to commencement. It is proposed that the Act will come into operation for Northern Ireland departments and district councils on 1 June 2017 and for the remaining public authorities listed in the schedule to the Act on 1 June 2018.

The Act provides a statutory basis for an existing commitment made by the Northern Ireland Executive in 2002, and reaffirmed in 2009, to undertake rural proofing of all new and revised policies and strategies across government. The existing training course for NICS Departmental policy makers, "Think Rural", will be updated to reflect the requirements of the Act.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the steps she is taking to ensure that the needs of rural citizens are considered in the action plans for the Programme for Government.

(AQW 5618/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 will come into effect for Northern Ireland departments on 1 June 2017. It provides a statutory basis for an existing Executive commitment to undertake rural proofing of all new and revised policies and strategies across government.

Responsibility for carrying out rural proofing of the Programme for Government action plans lies with individual Departments. My officials are available to provide information and guidance on the rural proofing process to those involved.

On 10 October 2016, I wrote to Executive colleagues reminding them of their responsibilities under the Executive commitment and referred them to the current guidance on rural proofing. Departments, therefore, are aware of the need to consider any potential impact on rural citizens of policies, strategies, plans or services undertaken in support of the Programme for Government Framework's implementation.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail the projected cost of the Northern Ireland Food Animal Information System.

(AQW 5631/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Following a competitive procurement process, the Northern Ireland Food Animal Information System (NIFAIS) contract was awarded to AMT-Sybex Limited on 21 April 2016. NIFAIS was procured to replace the existing Animal and Public Health Information System (APHIS), which has been in existence since 1998. APHIS is becoming technologically outdated and its contract cannot be extended further. The NIFAIS contract covers an initial period of nine years, extendable by agreement to twelve or fifteen years.

The projected Supplier costs for the NIFAIS system and associated implementation and operational services for the contract period of fifteen years is £10.67 million. The value to the contractor for the initial nine years is £8.7 million.

The Net Present Costs of the NIFAIS contract projected in the Full Business Case is £44.2 million. These costs include an allowance for optimism bias, IT Assist hosting costs, internal project costs from July 2011 and provision for maintenance and any essential enhancements needed to the system throughout its anticipated life. They also include the costs of preparing APHIS for the transition and maintaining it during the procurement and the period of parallel running and migration prior to final switch over.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the actions her Department has taken alongside the agri-food industry to develop an agreed regulatory environment.

(AQW 5632/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Your question relates to Recommendation 38 made by the Agri-Food Strategy Board in their strategic action plan Going for Growth. The Executive published its response to Going for Growth in October 2014 including agreed actions to be taken forward by government departments and agencies. An update on Executive-led actions outlined in the response is available on the DAERA website at:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/Going%20for%20Growth%20Progress%20Update%20-%20period%20ending%2030%20June%202016.pdf>.

This update was also shared with the Assembly's Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee on 22 September 2016.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline how her Department has increased the number of training places for agri-food.

(AQW 5633/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Over the past three years my Department has increased the number of full-time and part-time agri-food training places at the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) by 8.5%.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether all agri-food skills and entrepreneurship development is now the responsibility of a single dedicated group that matches provision to requirements.

(AQW 5634/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Your question relates to Recommendation 31 made by the Agri-Food Strategy Board in their strategic action plan Going for Growth. The Executive published its response to Going for Growth in October 2014 including agreed actions to be taken forward by government departments and agencies. An update on Executive-led actions outlined in the response is available on the DAERA website at:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/Going%20for%20Growth%20Progress%20Update%20-%20period%20ending%2030%20June%202016.pdf>.

This update was also shared with the Assembly's Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee on 22 September 2016.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline any discussions she has had with authorities in the Republic of Ireland regarding the illegal cross-border trade in pups.

(AQW 5667/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My officials regularly share and discuss mutually relevant information on the issue of the puppy trade with their counterparts in the Department of Agriculture Food and Marine in Dublin. This includes formal discussion at the animal health Working Groups set up under the auspices of the NSMC, the progress at which is noted as part of the NSMC Ministerial Agriculture meetings.

The issue of the puppy trade is on the agenda for the next Animal Welfare and Transport Working Group scheduled to take place later this month.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether she plans to release funds to help Rural Support continue their mentoring programme for business planning and finance for farmers and their families.

(AQW 5844/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I value the service provided by Rural Support to our farmers, their families and those living in rural communities.

My Department, through the Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme provides Rural Support with annual funding of £91,500 towards their work. This funding underpins Rural Support's work across a number of themes, including their Helpline and Volunteer service, outreach to rural communities and guidance for social farmers. It also complements Rural Support's on-farm business support service. Discussions involving my officials, Rural Support and a number of their funding partners are ongoing to consider how best to continue this good work into the future.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether she has, or will carry out a risk assessment of the Food and Drink Industry in the event of a restriction or abolition of free movement for EU citizens; and is there a risk of food and drink businesses relocating to the Republic of Ireland if a restriction on EU citizen movement is implemented.

(AQW 5845/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: It is too early in the process to make a definitive assessment on this as it will depend on the nature of the new arrangements which will emerge. However, I am alert to the issue and will continue to closely monitor developments.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether she would provide support to food processors facing a manpower shortage to their businesses as a result of a restriction or abolition of the free movement for EU citizens.

(AQW 5846/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: It is too early in the process to be able to make a definitive assessment on the implications of the UK decision to leave the EU on available manpower as this will be dependent on the nature of the new arrangements.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to list (i) sub-sectors of the agri-food industry that are reliant on migrant labour; and (ii) the number of migrant workers employed in the food and drink sector.

(AQW 5847/16-21)

Miss McIlveen:

- (i) Whilst the Northern Ireland food and drinks sector does employ migrant labour, information is not collected at the sub-sector level and it is therefore not possible to list those which may or may not employ migrant labour.
- (ii) According to the 2011 Population Census there were 3,999 migrant workers employed in the Northern Ireland food and drinks sector.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the reliance on migrant labour in the food and drink sector.

(AQW 5848/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: According to the 2011 Population Census there were 3,999 migrant workers employed in the Northern Ireland food and drinks sector which equated to 26% (rounded) of the workforce in this sector at that time.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline what percentage of the quota in British waters is owned by UK based fishermen.

(AQW 5849/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Fish stocks are assessed on the basis of sea areas that have been defined by ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea). This grid is based on lines of latitude and longitude rather than the boundaries that define a Country's territorial seas or Exclusive Economic Zone. Most fish stocks are shared between Member States and in principle those quotas can be taken anywhere within the ICES area of assessment. Each Member State retains exclusive access to its territorial waters within 12 nautical miles unless there is a pre-existing access arrangement for vessels from other countries. There is no statistical analysis by government currently available which attributes the amount of fish quotas to British waters.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the monetary value of the catch caught by Great Britain based fishermen in British waters.

(AQW 5850/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: There is no statistical analysis by government currently available which attributes the amount of, or value of fish caught by fleets in British waters. The total value of fish caught by Great Britain based fishermen (those fishing vessels licensed and administered by England, Scotland or Wales) across all sea areas was £729.3m in 2015.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the monetary value of the catch caught by Northern Ireland based fishermen in British waters.

(AQW 5851/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: There is no statistical analysis by government currently available which attributes the amount of, or value of fish caught by fleets in British waters. The total value of fish caught by Northern Ireland fishing vessels licensed and administered by my Department across all sea areas was £45.8m in 2015.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail her Department's funding allocation for the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation funded Assisted Rural Travel Scheme.

(AQW 5979/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (ARTS) has been funded through my Department's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme on an ongoing basis since December 2009 with over 1.2 million passenger trips delivered and supported in that time. Through ARTS, rural dwellers, across Northern Ireland, who are members of their local Rural Community Transport Partnership (RCTP) and who hold a valid SmartPass can travel free or half fare on the Dial-a-Lift services provided by the RCTPs.

Funding for ARTS, delivered in conjunction with the Department for Infrastructure, is in place until March 2017. My Department's financial allocation for ARTS in 2016/17 is £300,000.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, pursuant to AQW 4563/16-21, to outline the strong link formed with her counterpart in the Department for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

(AQW 6047/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I have met with Michael Creed, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in the Republic of Ireland on a number of occasions, most recently at the NSMC Agriculture Sectoral meeting on 26 October 2016, where we discussed cross border issues.

My officials are in regular contact with colleagues in DAFM on issues of mutual importance such as animal health, welfare, trade and agri-crime. There are also a number of formal working groups established under the auspices of the NSMC.

These interactions will continue and I will seek to engage on additional matters arising from the UK's exit from the EU as appropriate.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the support available for farmers wishing to diversify their farm.

(AQW 6211/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: There is no specific scheme for farm diversification, however farmers wishing to diversify into a non farming activity may do so under the Rural Business Investment Scheme. This is delivered through the LEADER component of the Rural Development Programme by Local Action Groups (LAG). The action group covering your area is the Mid and East Antrim LAG.

Department of Education

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education to outline why the Education Authority has changed the policy on referring three-year-old children for places at special needs schools, even when the school in question has available capacity.

(AQW 3447/16-21)

Mr Weir (The Minister of Education): The Education Authority (EA) will allocate places in pre-school provision in special schools based on complexity of need, and the statutory special educational needs framework for assessment will apply.

The EA's priority in September 2016 was to place children in early years' special school classes for whom this was deemed to be appropriate. In addition, the Authority is aware that there are pre-school children who are not yet in their penultimate school year who are also requesting a nursery place.

These younger children have historically been placed after children in their penultimate school year have been placed, and this continues to be the case. However, given the significance of placing children in a special school, the EA is requesting that these younger children are placed after their statutory assessment has been completed. This means that the children will be placed, in many cases, during the 2016/17 year. Previously, some children had been accessing early years' placements in special schools even though a statutory assessment had not commenced.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education (i) to detail the number of children homeschooled in each of the last five years; and (ii) for his assessment of any increase.

(AQW 4223/16-21)

Mr Weir: The number of children registered with the Education Authority (EA) as being home educated in each of the last 5 years is as follows:

2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
197	213	249	268	343

The actual number of children home educated in each year may be higher as parents are only required to notify the EA if their child has previously attended school or has a statement of special educational needs.

Parents may choose what they consider to be the most appropriate educational setting for their child and that can include being home schooled; however, the number of children being educated at home has remained relatively low over the last five years.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) how many hours are allocated for the assessment of special needs in each of the five Education Authority areas; and (ii) whether there has been any changes to this allocated time over the last five years.

(AQW 5012/16-21)

Mr Weir: Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice Stage 4:

The Education Authority (EA) has statutory duties in relation to the conduct of Stage 4 assessments. This includes a requirement that the Educational Psychology Service provide Psychological Advice within 6 weeks of it being requested by EA. There is therefore no system of allocation of hours for the assessment of special needs at Stage 4 of the SEN Code.

SEN Code of Practice Stage 3:

The Educational Psychology Service also provides advice for non-statutory assessments at stage 3 of the Code of Practice

During the current academic year 2016/17 the EA is continuing to progress to a single Educational Psychology Service. A great deal of work has progressed to date and indeed continues to progress, in order to enable a smooth transition from the five local psychology services into one.

As part of this transformation, from September 2016 the EA is delivering a common regional model for the allocation of educational psychology services to all primary and post-primary schools.

In the interests of equitable access to the Educational Psychology Service, EA allocates Stage 3 service time to all schools through the application of a common formula that takes account of a) school enrolment, b) social deprivation and c) educational achievement. As the legacy Boards had already been implementing a time allocation model of service delivery in primary schools since 2011, for many schools this will entail only minor adjustments to the current arrangements: the majority should note little change to their time allocation.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education to outline what support mechanisms and formal guidance is in place for teachers that have pupils with a statement of special educational needs.

(AQW 5370/16-21)

Mr Weir: Schools have the following support mechanisms:

1 Education Authority's Children and Young People's Services Teams

These teams provide advice and guidance, on request, from any teacher together with individual advice and guidance for specific pupils through certain referral routes. They also provide training on how to support pupils with Statements of special educational needs (SEN) on request from schools.

2 Educational Psychology

Schools also have a named educational psychologist who facilitates a support mechanism for them to access regarding children with Statements of SEN.

3 The School SEN Co-ordinator

All schools have a SEN Co-ordinator (SENCo) whose responsibility is to ensure that they co-ordinate the day to day operation of the SEN Policy in school and to provide advice and support to all staff in school. Through the SEN Policy, the procedures for supporting children at all stages of the SEN Code of Practice (CoP) are outlined and SENCos ensure that all teachers are familiar with the SEN Policy. The Education Authority (EA) has issued guidance for schools on writing a SEN Policy.

The Department of Education funded Leadership and Management training for SENCos in 2013-15 and all EA SENCos were offered training which was to support them in their role in school. The training specifically covered the SEN Policy and training on how teachers support pupils at all stages of the CoP, including children with a statement of SEN, in school. The training was designed and delivered by a range of SEN Services, including the Educational Psychology Service.

4 Formal guidance for schools and teachers

There are published documents for schools to support teachers with pupils with SEN, such as: The SEN Code of Practice (1998) and Supplement (2005); The Good Practice Guidelines 2009 (EA); and the SEN Resource File (Department of Education) 2011. These documents provide guidance for teachers in supporting pupils with a range of difficulties at all stages of the CoP, including children with statements of SEN.

Within SENCo training, the SENCos are made aware of all of the above documents and how they can use them to guide teachers in supporting children with statements of SEN.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Education to detail how many primary schools have submitted budgets to the Education Authority showing a deficit in (i) 2016-17; (ii) 2017-18; and (iii) 2018-19, broken down by sector.

(AQW 5432/16-21)

Mr Weir: The table below provides details of the number of Primary schools forecasting a deficit at 31 March 2017, 31 March 2018 and 31 March 2019. This information is based on the school plans which were submitted to the Education Authority at the start of the financial year.

Category of Primary School	No. of Schools forecasting Deficits @ 31 March 2017	No. of Schools forecasting Deficits @ 31 March 2018	No. of Schools forecasting Deficits @ 31 March 2019
Controlled Primary	105	146	198
Controlled Integrated Primary	5	7	12
Other Maintained Primary	13	15	13
Roman Catholic Maintained Primary	120	158	216

Schools' financial plans are reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout the period and are therefore subject to change.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Education to detail how many post-primary schools have submitted budgets to the Education Authority showing a deficit in (i) 2016-17; (ii) 2017-18; and (iii) 2018-19, broken down by sector.

(AQW 5433/16-21)

Mr Weir: The table below provides details of the number of post-primary schools forecasting a deficit at 31 March 2017, 31 March 2018 and 31 March 2019. This information is based on the school plans which were submitted to the Education Authority at the start of the financial year.

Category of Post-Primary School	No. of Schools forecasting Deficits @ 31 March 2017	No. of Schools forecasting Deficits @ 31 March 2018	No. of Schools forecasting Deficits @ 31 March 2019
Controlled Grammar	10	14	15

Category of Post-Primary School	No. of Schools forecasting Deficits @ 31 March 2017	No. of Schools forecasting Deficits @ 31 March 2018	No. of Schools forecasting Deficits @ 31 March 2019
Controlled Integrated Secondary	3	3	3
Controlled Secondary	23	33	40
Other Maintained Secondary	1	1	1
Roman Catholic Maintained Secondary	39	45	45

Schools' financial plans are reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout the period and are therefore subject to change.

Mr Logan asked the Minister of Education to detail how many children are waiting to see educational psychologists, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 5438/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has confirmed it is not possible to break this information down by constituency; therefore it has been broken down by Education Authority Office. The numbers relate to children in all age-groups, including pre-school, referred to the Educational Psychology Service for the first time at Stage 3 of the SEN Code of Practice. Some may have already been seen recently but remain listed until the response to the referral has been completed.

EA OFFICE	
Belfast	68
North Eastern (Ballymena)	225
South Eastern (Dundonald)	86
Southern (Armagh)	414
Western (Omagh)	111

Mr McGuigan asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the (i) Dual Agency Behavioural Support Service (DABSS) collaboration with the Department of Health; (ii) difficulties that exist in classrooms within the previous North Eastern Education and Library Board area are as a result of shortages in Education Authority-funded behavioural associate posts within (DABSS); and whether he will work as a matter of urgency to fill these positions.

(AQW 5477/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has advised that it is working in partnership with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust in relation to the Dual Agency Behavioural Support Service which is currently delivered in 6 special schools. It must be noted that this is not a core service and is delivered in addition to the agreed teaching and non-teaching staff in each school.

The EA has continued to fund administrative and accommodation costs for the service and is currently identifying behavioural assistants from within the EA's existing behaviour support service that will be able to provide support in the forthcoming weeks. This should strengthen the links between interventions in schools and at home for young people with challenging behavioural and learning difficulties.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Education to detail the most recent inspection results for all schools in Upper Bann.

(AQW 5486/16-21)

Mr Weir: The requested data are shown in the table below:

DE Ref No	Name of School	Phase	Inspection Grade (Overall Effectiveness Conclusion)
5110021	Edenderry Nursery, Portadown	Nursery	Outstanding
5116189	Millington Nursery School	Nursery	Outstanding
5116190	Harrison Nursery School	Nursery	Outstanding
5116238	Banbridge Nursery School	Nursery	Outstanding
5116256	Downshire Nursery School	Nursery	Outstanding
5136217	St John The Baptist Nursery	Nursery	Outstanding
5136631	Drumnamoe Nursery School	Nursery	Outstanding

DE Ref No	Name of School	Phase	Inspection Grade (Overall Effectiveness Conclusion)
5010992	Lurgan Model Primary School	Primary	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
5011124	King's Park Primary School	Primary	Very Good
5011127	Carrick Primary School	Primary	Good
5011129	Hart Memorial Primary School	Primary	Good
5011165	Rich Mount Primary School	Primary	Good
5011174	Birches Primary School	Primary	Very Good
5011189	Edenderry Primary School	Primary	Very Good
5011190	Tullygally Primary School	Primary	Good
5011594	Abercorn Primary School	Primary	Outstanding
5011596	Gilford Primary School	Primary	Good
5011598	Waringstown Primary School	Primary	Outstanding
5011602	Bleary Primary School	Primary	Good
5011651	Milltown Primary School	Primary	Very Good
5011664	Scarva Primary School	Primary	Good
5011687	Maralin Village Primary School	Primary	Very Good
5013019	Edenderry Primary School	Primary	Very Good
5016007	Millington Primary School	Primary	Good
5016065	Dickson Primary School	Primary	Good
5016080	Drumgor Primary School	Primary	Good
5016117	Ballyoran Primary School	Primary	Good
5016138	Bocombra Primary School	Primary	High level of capacity
5016178	Donacloney Primary School	Primary	Good
5016543	Moyallon Primary School	Primary	Very Good
5031103	Tannaghmore Primary School	Primary	Good
5031160	St Teresa's Primary School	Primary	Very Good
5031164	St Mary's Primary School	Primary	Very Good
5031168	St Patrick's Primary School	Primary	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
5031184	St Anthony's Primary School	Primary	Very Good
5031667	St Patrick's Primary School	Primary	Very Good
5031669	St John's Primary School	Primary	Very Good
5033324	St Patrick's Primary School	Primary	Good
5036006	St Mary's Primary School	Primary	Good
5036009	St Mary's Primary School	Primary	Good
5036043	St Mary's Primary School, Banbridge	Primary	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
5036101	St Brendan's Primary School	Primary	Good
5036173	St John the Baptist Primary School	Primary	Good
5036400	St Colman's (Bann) Primary School	Primary	High level of capacity
5036457	St Francis' Primary School, Aghaderg	Primary	High level of capacity

DE Ref No	Name of School	Phase	Inspection Grade (Overall Effectiveness Conclusion)
5036586	Presentation Primary School	Primary	High level of capacity
5036633	St Francis Primary School	Primary	High level of capacity
5046137	Seagoe Primary School	Primary	Very Good
5066540	Bridge Integrated Primary School	Primary	Good
5066553	Portadown Integrated Primary School	Primary	Very Good
5210043	Clounagh Junior High School	Post-Primary	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
5210047	Banbridge High School	Post-Primary	Good
5210054	Killicomaine Junior High School	Post-Primary	Good
5210271	Lurgan Junior High	Post-Primary	Important area(s) for improvement
5210282	Craigavon Senior High School	Post-Primary	Good
5230076	St Patrick's College	Post-Primary	Good
5230213	Lismore Comprehensive School	Post-Primary	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
5230256	Drumcree College	Post-Primary	Satisfactory
5250216	Brownlow Integrated College	Post-Primary	Good
5260285	New-Bridge Integrated College	Post-Primary	Very Good
5410013	Banbridge Academy	Post-Primary	Very Good
5410057	Lurgan College	Post-Primary	Very Good
5410067	Portadown College	Post-Primary	Very Good
5420314	St Ronan's College	Post-Primary	*
5316520	Donard Special School	Special	Outstanding
5316521	Ceara Special School	Special	Outstanding

Notes:

New overall effectiveness conclusions were introduced in September 2015

- The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.
- The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.
- The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners.
- The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interests of all the learners.

* Recently amalgamated school to receive a baseline inspection.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education to outline the circumstances that led the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust to remove occupational therapy staff and provision from Oakwood Special School.

(AQW 5490/16-21)

Mr Weir: Prime responsibility for the provision of therapeutic services for a child with a statement of special educational needs rests with Health and Social Care Trusts, as the employers of therapists. As such, the provision of occupational therapy at Oakwood Special School would be a matter for the Department of Health in the first instance.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education whether (i) he would consider the establishment of the Daily Mile; and (ii) facilitate its promotion in all schools.

(AQW 5494/16-21)

Mr Weir: Greater flexibility and less prescription are key features of our curriculum which recognises the importance of allowing teachers to plan their teaching to meet the needs of their pupils. My Department delegates as much funding and decision-making as possible to schools, who are best placed to determine which resources or programmes they wish to use to support their delivery of the curriculum.

My Department does not endorse or recommend any particular resource or programme for use by schools.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 4433/16-21, to detail any discussions he has had with the Education Authority regarding the ongoing issue of repair work at Killyleagh Integrated Primary School.
(AQW 5497/16-21)

Mr Weir: As previously advised Killyleagh Integrated Primary School is a controlled school, and as such the Education Authority is responsible for minor works and maintenance at the school. Since the response issued to AQW 4433/16-21 on 7 October, which confirmed the position regarding the ceiling repair and pipe work replacement I have not had any further discussions with Education Authority officials regarding the ongoing issue of repair work at the school.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education, given its one of his Department's arm's-length bodies, to outline the oversight mechanisms used for the Education Authority .
(AQW 5498/16-21)

Mr Weir: A governance and accountability framework is in place between my Department and the Education Authority (EA) to ensure that the responsibilities placed on the Department under Managing Public Money NI are adhered to.

The EA's operating framework which covers the conditions under which public funds are paid and how the EA is to be held to account for its performance, is set out in the EA's Management Statement and Financial Memorandum which was drawn up by DE in consultation with the EA and approved by the Department of Finance. Within that framework a number of measures and controls are in place to provide the Department with assurances in relation to accountability and performance management, arrangements for strategic and business planning, budget allocations and financial monitoring, governance and accountability reviews, risk management and audit and risk assurance.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Education to outline how he will address the condition of the Lurgan campus of Craigavon Senior High School.
(AQW 5500/16-21)

Mr Weir: As Craigavon Senior High School is a controlled school, the Education Authority (EA) is responsible for addressing accommodation problems at the school. The EA have commissioned a review of the current Craigavon Senior High School accommodation. This consists of 3 elements:

- An immediate review of site security, health and safety, with particular reference to staff and pupil wellbeing. This will be carried out by EA appointed Health & Safety/Safeguarding experts.
- A review of the impact that the site and condition of the buildings is having on their staff and pupils. This will be carried out by officers experienced in school improvement matters.
- An examination of the impact that the operation of the Lurgan site is having on the budget of the school. Once again this will be carried out by a highly experienced EA officer who will liaise with relevant local LMS officers as necessary.

The review will be overseen by a senior officer of the EA and it will set out a number of options, with costings, for the EA to address.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail what driving qualifications are required for ministerial drivers when employed by (i) his Department; and (ii) him or his party.
(AQW 5529/16-21)

Mr Weir: Ministerial Drivers are required to possess a full current driving licence entitling them to drive a Group B vehicle. Driving licences are inspected annually to ensure compliance with Insurance requirements. Membership of the Institute of Advanced Motorists Membership is also required to provide an independent assurance of professional driving competence.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education (i) how many agency staff have been engaged in his Department via the Civil Service during and since the Voluntary Exit Scheme; (ii) at what cost; and (iii) how many of those staff exited under the scheme then returned as agency staff.
(AQW 5560/16-21)

Mr Weir:

- (i) On 1 April 2015, 14 agency workers were engaged in the Department of Education, and on 1 June 2016, the figure was 18 agency workers.
- (ii) The cost to the Department of Education of engaging agency workers:
 - for the 14 month period from 1 April 2015 until 31 May 2016 was £385,566.01; and
 - for the 4 month period from 1 June 2016 until 30 September 2016 was £126,844.74.
- (iii) The information requested about the number of civil servants who exited under the scheme and then returned as agency workers, is not held, as it is permissible under the rules of the NICS Compensation Scheme, for a beneficiary of the Voluntary Exit Scheme, to take up employment subsequently as an agency worker.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education to outline the (i) road danger circumstances; or (ii) health conditions that might allow his Department or the Education Authority to apply discretion or flexibility in respect of a pupil's eligibility for home to school transport provision.

(AQW 5569/16-21)

Mr Weir: Should a pupil be ineligible for school transport assistance under normal policy arrangements, the Education Authority (EA) reserves the right to provide assistance in cases falling outside those arrangements and which it considers exceptional in nature.

By their very nature it is not possible to outline all the circumstances or conditions which the EA considers exceptional as each case is considered on its individual merits; however, the EA does provide four examples which may be successful, namely:

- Travel to or from school which has either resulted in the child suffering significant harm or is likely to result in the child suffering significant harm and where alternative safe means of transport are not reasonably available to the child;
- Enforced relocation;
- Serious Mental Health concerns for the child; and
- Extreme and persistent bullying.

Additional guidance on the process to apply under exceptional circumstances may be found on the EA website.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 526/16-21, to detail all payments made to the Northern Ireland Catholic Commission for Education since 2010

(AQW 5622/16-21)

Mr Weir: As previously advised, my Department does not provide funding as a matter of course to the Northern Ireland Commission for Catholic Education (NICCE). However, since 2010 payments totalling £43,000 have been made to the organisation for services rendered. These services related to the Commission's role in establishing a Catholic schools' sectoral support body.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education to outline why is he funding the Catholic Schools Trustee Service to provide professional support and advice to the trustees in respect of area planning for the whole catholic school sector when the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools already provide this service.

(AQW 5623/16-21)

Mr Weir: My predecessor agreed that modest funding should be made available for a Catholic Schools' Trustee Service (CSTS), in recognition of the scale and scope of educational and administrative responsibilities that attach to the Catholic Trustees as owners of the largest school sector. The purpose of the funding is to help professionalise the contribution of the Catholic Trustees to area-based planning on behalf of the whole Catholic-managed sector, including Catholic grammar schools.

The provision of professional support will allow the Catholic Trustees to meet the demands made of them, over and above those for which support is currently available through the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS). CCMS provides advice and guidance to Trustees on the effective provision and development of school buildings in the Catholic maintained sector only.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education whether he is aware of any schools taking action on the recommendation from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child that children should be able to decide on their own not to attend religious worship in schools.

(AQW 5624/16-21)

Mr Weir: My department does not monitor collective worship in schools. It is for Boards of Governors, in consultation with the school trustees and the principal, to decide the arrangements for collective worship, having regard to the ethos of the school and its registered pupils. The legislation is clear that parental consent is required for children to withdraw from collective worship.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education whether his Department has investigated or will investigate best practice and legislation in other jurisdictions with a view towards issuing guidance to schools or introducing legislation restricting the allowable weight of a pupil's school bag.

(AQW 5677/16-21)

Mr Weir: There is no consistent scientific evidence for restricting the allowable weight of a pupil's school bag and in most countries school bag weights are not regulated. As there is insufficient evidence for recommending a clear limit to the weight of school bags, I have no plans to issue guidance to schools or to introduce legislation in relation to this matter.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 3491/16-21, whether there are intentions to close informally the nursery at Fleming Fulton.

(AQW 5678/16-21)

Mr Weir: The provision of nursery education at Fleming Fulton is a matter for the Education Authority (EA) in the first instance.

The EA has advised that, whilst there is no nursery provision operating out of the school in the 2016/17 academic year, the nursery is not closed.

The EA is currently reviewing nursery provision in all special schools. Any future proposals relating to Fleming Fulton School will be a matter for the EA, in its role as planning authority, to consider in the context of area planning of the special school sector.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education to outline why the Education Authority does not provide transport from schools to learning disability respite care facilities.

(AQW 5682/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority (EA) has advised that its statutory responsibility is to provide transport assistance from the permanent home address to the school attended.

Where pupils are placed in respite care facilities, transport assistance will normally be provided by the EA if it can be facilitated within existing resources and where no additional cost is incurred. Where transport to such facilities would result in additional cost, responsibility lies outside of the Education Authority's remit.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Education whether he would consider extending the education programme that was developed by West Belfast Partnership Board in Upper Bann, and in particular to schools in the Craigavon area.

(AQW 5683/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Department has allocated funding to the West Belfast Partnership Board (WBPB) to deliver the Sharing the Learning Programme.

The main objective of the Sharing the Learning Programme is the wider dissemination of the school/community structure that the WBPB has developed with the schools in the area. The aim is for them to assist other Partnership Boards in Belfast initially and then, in the longer term, regionally to develop school/community education structures and programmes.

I would encourage all schools to work collaboratively with each other and with their local community to ensure our children and young people are supported to achieve their full potential.

Mr Logan asked the Minister of Education how much his Department spent in translating all documentation into Irish between May 2011 and March 2016.

(AQW 5686/16-21)

Mr Weir: The table below details how much the Department spent on translating documentation into Irish between May 2011 and March 2016:

	May 2011 – March 12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Spend English to Irish Translation	£34,757	£36,207	£31,414	£27,925	£19,446

In addition to the expenditure outlined in the table, the Department employed an Irish Language Officer(s). As the translation of documents forms an integral part of a range of duties carried out by the Irish Language Officer(s) it is not possible to provide a cost for this work.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education to detail how many new buses have been ordered by the Education Authority since it was established.

(AQW 5696/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has purchased a total of 41 new buses since its establishment.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the opportunity for the Controlled Schools Support Council to contribute effectively to the draft Area Plan 2017-20, given that the CSSC only came into existence on 1 September 2016.

(AQW 5699/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC) had an opportunity to contribute to the development of the draft Area Plan 2017-2020 during the period leading up to appointment of its first Chief Executive on 1 September 2016 and subsequently since his appointment.

CSSC formally engaged with the area planning process and development of a new Area Plan in June 2015. Its representatives attended six meetings of the Area Planning Steering Group (APSG) which oversees the process and allows the Minister and senior DE officials to engage with the statutory planning authorities and sectoral planning partners.

CSSC also engaged with the Area Planning Working Group (APWG) which includes sectoral bodies involved in operational aspects of area planning. Twelve meetings have taken place between September 2015 and October 2016 and CSSC has attended five of these meetings, including the attendance of the CSSC Chief Executive at two of three meetings held since his appointment in September 2016. APWG meetings will continue to be held, normally on a monthly basis.

Area Planning Local Groups (APLGs) bring together all local stakeholders including planning authorities, sectoral bodies and further education representation. CSSC is also represented at a local level on at least two of five Area Planning Local Groups. Full representation on all five groups has yet to be achieved due to the early stage of development of the organisation but it is expected that as it develops it will be fully represented on each APLG. All APLG members have been invited to attend joint planning day workshops arranged by the EA and a further event has been arranged for November 2016. Given the joint meetings CSSC is fully aware of the development of the strategic issues in relation to the Area Plan.

During the eight week public consultation on the draft Area Plan which concludes on 12 December 2016 CSSC will have further opportunity to influence its content, including opportunity to participate in public consultation events scheduled for November.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Education whether he will increase Special Education Needs provision in primary schools. (AQW 5702/16-21)

Mr Weir: The 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 in all school settings, including primary schools.

It is therefore a matter for schools and the EA to determine the appropriate level of provision required for children with SEN to help them achieve their full potential. Support for children with SEN is based on the individual needs of the child.

I recognise that the EA's arrangements for special educational provision and the delivery of resources, support services, capacity building and training are all key to improving the provision for children with SEN, including those in primary schools.

I am aware of the increasing demand for SEN support and the costs associated with this. A significant amount of the EA's budget is being spent on special education services such as special schools, specialist pupil support services, SEN classroom assistants and transport costs. Special education funding has been prioritised, as far as possible, as part of the budget setting process over the last number of years, and additional funding for SEN has been secured from the Executive as part of in-year monitoring rounds

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Education to detail the (i) total number; and (ii) proportion of: (a) Assembly Written Questions; (b) Assembly Priority Written Questions; and (c) Freedom of Information requests directed at his Department that have been answered within the maximum permitted timescales since May 2016.

(AQW 5746/16-21)

Mr Weir: The information is outlined in the below table:

	Total Number May 2016 – 20 October 2016	Answered within Timescales
(a) Assembly Written Questions	526	496
(b) Priority Written Questions	29	21
(c) Freedom of Information Requests	76	57

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to outline what effort he has made to gain access to the Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation report.

(AQW 5750/16-21)

Mr Weir: I await the final version of the report which I understand is currently being finalised by the researchers.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education (i) whether there was consideration of an integrated sixth form at the new Strule Campus, Omagh; and (ii) if so, whether that is being pursued; and (iii) if it is not being pursued, the reasons why.

(AQW 5752/16-21)

Mr Weir: Consideration of a common sixth form centre was discussed during initial consultation with the schools in 2010/2011. Most of the schools involved favoured the provision of shared facilities at post-16, rather than a common sixth form building. Following consultations with relevant School Authorities, the provision of a standalone Sixth Form College was not considered as part of the Outline Business Case (OBC2, 2013) for the project and that will remain the case. It is the intention that the Strule schools will retain their own sixth forms.

As you are aware, I am resolutely supportive of academic selection. Many parents make a choice that they wish their child to attend a selective grammar school and this extends to the young person's education post-16.

The Strule Campus structure will allow schools to preserve their individual identity and ethos whilst also facilitating and encouraging collaboration and sharing in the context of a post-primary curriculum, that provides a wide range of pathways to meet the interests and needs of all pupils.

Area Learning Communities exist across Northern Ireland to enable post-primary schools in a local area, both individually and collectively, to determine their priorities for the delivery of the Entitlement Framework. This framework sets out the minimum number and range of courses that a school should offer at Key Stage 4 and post-16. The Campus will enhance the opportunities for sharing within the Learning Community in Omagh as it is being designed to include six core schools alongside purpose built shared education and shared sports facilities which will encourage cohesion, collaboration and partnership.

The Shared Education Centre will enable a more flexible cross curricular and cross school approach to learning, with enhanced curriculum choices across the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) area of the curriculum, particularly at post-16 stage. Shared sports facilities will be available to all pupils on the campus. The close proximity of the schools on the campus will also facilitate further opportunities for sharing within core school buildings.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education to detail how many schools have taken part in Shared Education Initiatives in each year over the last five years.
(AQW 5753/16-21)

Mr Weir: Over 500 schools engaged in a form of Shared Education over the past five years. However, in the absence of a common definition of Shared Education the nature and type of sharing has varied.

The Shared Education Act (NI) 2016 established a legislative definition of what constitutes Shared Education. There are currently three Shared Education initiatives which satisfy the legislative definition:

- the Delivering Social Change Shared Education Signature Project launched in December 2014, of which 314 schools, in 134 partnerships are actively engaged; A further call for applications announced in September 2016 is in progress;
- the Shared Education Campus Programme, of which to date ten schools, in five applicant projects have been given approval to progress to a planning stage; and
- the Strule Shared Education Campus Programme, which involves six schools.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education to outline why his proposals for a Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision, published on 17 October 2016, were based on the Sustainable Schools Policy, published in 2009.
(AQW 5754/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Department sets the policy and strategic context for the planning of education provision in Northern Ireland on an area basis. The key policy driving this process is the Sustainable Schools Policy (SSP) which is central in delivering my Department's vision to provide every child and young person with high quality education that meet their needs and enables them to achieve their full potential. Its aim is the development of a network of sustainable schools that are educationally and financially viable ensuring access to the curriculum for all pupils.

Area Planning is the process developed to deliver the SSP and the draft Strategic Area Plan for 2017 - 2020 is a product of the process of Area Planning. It is therefore entirely appropriate that the draft Strategic Area Plan is based on my Department's policy.

It should be noted that the proposals in the draft Strategic Area Plan are not my proposals but those developed by the Education Authority working in conjunction with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the sectoral support bodies.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education whether extra funding for capital development will be included as part of the final proposals on the Strategic Area Plan for School Provision.
(AQW 5755/16-21)

Mr Weir: There will be capital available to support area planning; however as the capital budget for 2017 – 2021 is not yet known I cannot quantify the proportion of the overall budget which will be allocated to implement the outworkings of area planning.

The Department of Education's strategy for future capital investment will remain focused on supporting the "Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools" and the Education Authority's Strategic Area Plan for School Provision, as well as on schools where investment is required to ensure that facilities are fit for purpose.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education what was the nature of the collaboration between the Education Authority and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools in preparation of the Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision.
(AQW 5756/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority, as statutory planning authority, has overall operational responsibility for planning of education provision and liaises with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (also having a statutory planning role) and representatives of other school sectors to ensure a unified cross-sectoral approach to Area Planning.

Formal collaboration is facilitated through the following Area Planning structures. The Area Planning Steering Group (APSG) oversees the process and allows the Minister and senior DE officials to engage with the statutory planning authorities and sectoral planning partners. The Area Planning Working Group (APWG) deals with operational planning issues and facilitates consistency of approach across all partner bodies and all areas. Area Planning Local Groups (APLGs) facilitate discussion

of local planning issues and identification of planning priorities, drawing upon a broad range of evidence, informed by stakeholder opinion.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister of Education to outline (i) how he intends to measure progress in improving the quality of provision as a stated strategic aim of the Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision; and (ii) what are the current measures of quality that can be used as a baseline.

(AQW 5757/16-21)

Mr Weir: The implementation of my Department's "Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools" (SSP) through the Education Authority's draft Area Plan is an iterative process. The aim is to develop a strong network of educationally and financially viable schools in which pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum with clear progression pathways so that they can reach their potential; where there is high quality pastoral care and an extensive range of extracurricular activities; that have the confidence of parents and the community they serve and are well led.

Following consultation, the final Area Plan and supporting Annual Action Plan will be developed for my approval. The Annual Action Plan will contain actions which clearly support the Area Plan aims. Progress in implementing the Annual Action Plan will be undertaken through the Area Planning governance structures including the Area Planning Steering Group.

- (ii) At the system level, my Department publishes a range of indicators related to the quality of educational provision. These encompass indicators related to the wellbeing of children and young people, educational outcomes, access and equity, the education workforce and the learning environment. Details of these are published in the Department's Business Plan 2016/17. The measures used as a baseline for a specific strategy are determined by the particular focus of the policy or programme. The SSP six sustainability criteria and supporting indicators provide a framework for schools to monitor and self review and to consider along with their managing authority, how to strengthen and improve in the best interests of the pupils. The "Quality Educational Experience" criterion indicators include attainment levels, composite classes, access to the Entitlement Framework and information from Education and Training Inspectorate school inspection reports.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister of Education to outline his plans for the Small Schools' Support Factor.

(AQW 5758/16-21)

Mr Weir: Within the Common Funding Scheme, small schools support funding seeks to reflect the needs of smaller schools in delivering the curriculum. I plan to examine the Common Funding Scheme to ensure that it is fit for purpose, that the best possible support is given to all schools and that the maximum advantage is being derived from the monies allocated.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister of Education to detail how much each (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school received through the Small Schools' Support Factor in each of the last five years.

(AQW 5759/16-21)

Mr Weir: Details of (i) primary schools, and (ii) post-primary schools, receiving an element of the Small Schools' Support factor as part of their delegated budgets in the last five years are shown on the tables below.

(i) Primary Small Schools Support Factor (SSSF) Funding

DE Ref	School / Financial Year	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £
301-0862	Abbots Cross PS	3,531	5,201	1,680	1,890	
306-6568	Acorn Integrated PS	20,564	19,970	19,954	20,374	21,692
201-1873	Aghadrumsee PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-1034	Aghavilly PS	41,544				
401-3046	Alexander Dickson PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
405-6541	All Children's Integrated PS	17,656	16,642	18,063	15,333	16,872
203-6557	All Saints PS, Tattysallagh	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,384
303-2011	Altayeskey PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2722	Altishane PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-2234	Ampertaine PS	37,597	36,404	38,017	38,227	38,125
401-1608	Anahilt PS	36,766	37,237	36,337	35,496	38,783
303-2257	Anahorish PS	27,419	26,003	25,835	27,305	25,855
503-1146	Anamar PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822

DE Ref	School / Financial Year	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £
501-1684	Annalong PS	34,273	33,076	34,446	35,706	36,591
405-3009	Annsborough Integrated PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-6376	Ardstraw PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-1110	Armagh Christian Brothers'	15,787	14,770	13,232	6,721	3,506
301-6040	Armoy PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-6068	Artigarvan PS	39,882	40,773	39,907	39,487	40,097
201-6124	Ashlea PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-2714	Aughamullan PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-2635	Augher Central PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-2621	Aughnacloy Regional PS	38,636	37,653	36,547	35,916	35,715
101-0269	Avoniel PS	31,365	29,332	31,086	31,926	
201-1893	Ballinamallard PS	32,196	30,996	30,876	33,186	34,181
401-6202	Ballinderry PS, Lisburn	25,757	26,211	23,524	21,424	21,035
201-2095	Ballougrty PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-0720	Ballycarrickmaddy PS	31,365	32,452	34,236	28,145	26,731
301-0809	Ballycarry PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
305-3333	Ballycastle Integrated PS	34,481	31,204	29,825	29,405	26,951
301-3331	Ballycraigy PS	37,597	33,700	33,816	31,926	34,400
101-0296	Ballygolan PS	41,544	41,605			
303-2104	Ballyhackett PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-6170	Ballyhenry PS	33,027	33,492	34,866	32,346	31,333
503-1558	Ballyholland PS	16,825	14,146	15,963	15,543	15,557
401-1647	Ballykeigle PS	41,544				
201-2298	Ballykelly PS	12,255	11,649	10,292	7,141	6,135
503-2208	Ballylifford PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-0823	Ballymacrickett PS	3,116				
403-0573	Ballymacward PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-0875	Ballymena PS		4,161	3,361	2,730	219
305-0866	Ballymoney Model Cont. Integ.	7,062	3,536	2,520		
401-1567	Ballynahinch PS	14,540	13,314	15,123	20,584	22,349
301-0802	Ballynure PS	38,636	38,069	36,967	37,597	36,591
501-6117	Ballyoran PS	27,834	28,916	28,355	22,474	23,664
301-6252	Ballysally PS	29,288	27,251	20,794	19,323	15,776
101-6076	Ballysillan PS	41,544	41,605	41,167	36,337	34,181
301-0892	Ballytober PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-2615	Ballytrea PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-1265	Ballyvester PS	41,544	41,605	40,117	39,277	40,316
401-1566	Ballywalter PS	27,419	29,540	28,145	27,305	28,703
301-6447	Balnamore PS	40,713	39,525	41,588	41,377	43,165
303-0800	Barnish PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822

DE Ref	School / Financial Year	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £
203-2510	Barrack Street Boys' PS, St'ban	37,597	36,404	28,985		
301-2290	Bellaghy PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-2087	Bellarena PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-1860	Belleek No 2 PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
101-0012	Belmont PS	11,009	8,529	9,032	9,032	10,079
401-3013	Belvoir Park PS	26,796	24,547	23,734	19,323	19,063
501-1179	Bessbrook PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-1174	Birches PS	37,389	34,324	31,926	31,086	29,142
101-6059	Black Mountain PS	41,128	38,693	36,337	33,396	34,400
501-1602	Bleary PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	40,974
503-2463	Blessed Patrick O'Loughran Pr	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
101-6207	Blythefield PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-6138	Bocombra PS	1,039	208			
101-6499	Botanic PS	25,757	25,795	23,524	22,054	23,664
501-6098	Brackenagh West PS	29,496	27,251	27,515	26,255	26,731
306-6551	Braidside Integrated PS					1,972
401-1683	Braniel PS	8,724	6,241	2,520	210	39,002
201-6645	Bready Jubilee PS	39,882	37,653	39,067	37,807	
201-2674	Bridgehill PS	41,544	41,605			
501-6612	Bronte PS	26,380	28,916	27,725	28,145	28,484
201-1894	Brookeborough PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-0762	Brownlee PS	27,419	26,211	26,675	22,684	21,911
504-6597	Bunscoil an luir	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
104-6593	Bunscoil an Tsleibhe Dhuibh	31,158	32,036	30,876	30,035	30,895
104-6596	Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain	38,636	40,773	40,327	38,647	38,344
404-6648	Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-6574	Bunscoil Cholmcille PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
101-6647	Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
104-6501	Bunscoil Phobal Feirste	14,956	13,522	12,182	9,452	8,107
501-6391	Bush PS	24,511	25,587	23,944	22,474	24,321
301-0873	Bushmills PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-6594	Bushvalley PS	32,612	32,244	33,396	34,656	36,591
301-6269	Cairncastle PS	34,897	36,404	36,757	36,547	38,344
305-2071	Carhill Integrated PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
303-0713	Carlane PS	41,544				
301-0825	Carnaghts PS	41,128	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,384
301-0470	Carnalbanagh PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-2049	Carnalridge PS	24,095	20,595	20,584	23,104	23,664
301-6129	Carniny PS	5,401	3,744	3,361	1,890	1,972
305-0519	Carnlough Integrated PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822

DE Ref	School / Financial Year	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £
501-2696	Carntall PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-1584	Carr PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-1127	Carrick PS, Lurgan	12,463	7,281	420		
301-0841	Carrickfergus Central Primay	39,882	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-1310	Carrickmannon PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,603
401-6020	Carrowdore PS	34,273	33,700	31,506	31,296	31,114
301-0572	Carrowreagh PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
101-0282	Carr's Glen PS	1,869				
401-3044	Carryduff PS	26,796	26,835	25,625	25,835	25,855
401-1462	Castle Gardens PS	7,686	3,744	8,612	11,762	14,242
301-3704	Castledawson PS	40,297	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-2288	Castleroe PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,384
401-1599	Castlewellan PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
406-6588	Cedar Integrated PS	23,888	24,755	22,054	22,054	23,883
203-6465	Chapel Road PS	19,941	21,011	21,844	20,374	21,911
403-1328	Christ The King PS, B'nahinch	41,544	41,605	41,588	40,537	43,165
203-6449	Christ The King PS, Omagh	33,027	33,700	29,195	26,255	26,512
501-2538	Churchill PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-6141	Churchtown PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-1670	Clandeboye PS	31,365	24,755	18,693	10,502	3,944
501-1142	Clare PS	34,273	33,700	32,346	34,026	33,305
503-1108	Clea PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
105-6483	Cliftonville Integrated PS	27,626	21,011	16,173	4,201	2,848
503-1080	Clintyclay PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-1086	Clonalig PS	31,781	30,372	28,565	25,835	25,855
503-1301	Clontifleece PS	41,544	41,605	42,008		
301-0834	Clough PS	28,042	27,875	28,565	29,405	33,743
301-6260	Cloughmills PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-2649	Coagh PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-1588	Comber PS	2,700				
201-6663	Cooley PS	36,974	37,653	37,177	38,227	39,002
203-1892	Cornagague PS	41,544				
306-6561	Corran Integrated PS	23,680	25,379	27,725	27,725	35,058
203-1886	Corranny PS	41,544				
501-1175	Cortamlet PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-1596	Craigavon PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2277	Craigbrack PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	
106-6580	Cranmore Integrated PS	23,888	23,299	21,214	19,323	20,377
401-1645	Crawfordsburn PS	14,125	18,306	17,643	16,803	19,939
301-0741	Creavery PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822

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401-1632	Cregagh PS	31,365	30,996	32,346	32,136	31,114
303-0434	Creggan PS	37,805	38,277	38,017	38,227	40,097
503-2693	Crievagh PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	
303-2218	Crossroads PS	38,428	38,277	37,597	39,067	41,193
305-0859	Crumlin Integrated PS	28,457	29,956	30,245	31,926	34,181
301-2065	Culcrow PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-2224	Cullycapple PS	41,544	41,605			
201-2052	Culmore PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-2282	Culnady PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-6372	Cumber Claudy PS	35,727	33,908	36,547	33,816	35,277
401-6650	Cumran PS	23,680	23,091	20,374	32,136	32,209
101-0063	Currie PS	34,689	33,284	32,346	29,825	30,018
301-2225	Damhead PS	25,549	23,091	20,794	21,634	22,787
501-1119	Darkley PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-2660	Denamona PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-1578	Derryboy PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-2713	Derrychrin PS	41,544	41,189	39,487	37,387	34,619
201-1899	Derrygonnelly PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-1157	Derryhale PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-2387	Derrylatinee PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
304-2162	Desertmartin PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-6065	Dickson PS	31,158	30,580	28,145	24,154	25,198
301-0754	Doagh PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-6178	Donacloney PS	16,825	15,810	15,753	15,543	16,433
501-6224	Donaghey PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-2632	Donaghmore PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
101-6060	Donegall Road PS	29,704	26,003	21,214	18,273	16,433
201-2711	Donemana PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-6235	Downpatrick PS	24,303	25,795	24,784	25,415	26,074
401-1619	Dromara PS	23,888	23,299	25,205	23,524	26,293
503-1088	Dromintee PS	27,626	27,043	25,625	24,784	26,074
201-2707	Dromore PS, Omagh	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-1520	Dromore Road PS, W'point	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-6029	Drumachose PS	14,333	14,770	12,182	8,612	1,534
501-6616	Drumadonnell PS	20,356	19,970	16,383	15,753	16,652
201-2227	Drumahoe PS	11,424	13,106	11,342	8,612	1,972
301-2255	Drumard PS	41,544	41,605			
203-2639	Drumduff PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-6080	Drumgor PS	25,549	24,755	22,474	18,273	14,023
501-6027	Drumhillery PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822

DE Ref	School / Financial Year	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £
201-2392	Drumlegagh PS	41,544				
406-6668	Drumlins Integrated PS	34,273	30,788	29,405	27,095	27,827
203-2677	Drumlish PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-6656	Drumrane PS	40,713	40,357	38,857	36,547	37,687
501-1117	Drumsallen PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-6063	Dunclug PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
101-6242	Dundela Infants' PS	15,787	12,274	10,922	11,342	11,832
301-0558	Duneane PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-2720	Dungannon PS	22,226	17,682	15,333	15,123	15,995
201-2378	Dunmullan PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-0788	Dunmurry PS	34,066	31,412	30,666	27,095	27,389
301-0726	Dunseverick PS	36,766	38,069	38,227	38,647	40,535
301-6249	Earlview PS	36,351	33,284	28,775	28,775	23,664
301-0796	Eden PS Ballymoney	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-0785	Eden PS Carrickfergus	18,487	18,514	18,903	18,903	19,939
101-0323	Edenbrooke PS	20,564	17,890	16,173	10,502	8,545
503-2585	Edendork PS	5,401	5,617	4,411		
103-0329	Edmund Rice PS	6,024	7,073			
201-2638	Edwards PS	31,158	29,540	24,154	23,944	22,787
201-2245	Eglinton PS	23,057	22,675	22,264	23,524	23,883
206-6549	Enniskillen Integrated PS	17,033	13,938	11,552	5,671	1,972
203-2631	Envagh PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	
201-2617	Erganagh PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
101-0146	Euston Street PS	17,033	15,602	13,652	10,502	4,820
203-2702	Evisch PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-6599	Fair Hill PS	7,686	4,161	1,890	840	
101-6205	Fane Street PS	27,626	23,507	21,634	20,374	21,911
203-3706	Faughanvale PS	28,457	28,291	24,574	20,794	22,130
501-6088	Fivemiletown PS	26,380	22,675	23,104	21,424	24,759
201-1881	Florencecourt PS	40,505	41,189	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-0909	Foley PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
105-6535	Forge Integrated PS	7,270	5,617	1,890		
405-3308	Fort Hill Integrated PS	18,071	18,930	18,903	18,063	20,158
101-0205	Forth River PS	20,564	19,138	19,113	18,693	20,158
201-6564	Fountain PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-0891	Fourtowns PS	14,333	10,401	4,411	3,571	1,753
304-6653	Gaelscoil an Chastil	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
104-6672	Gaelscoil an Lonnain	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
204-6669	Gaelscoil an Traonaigh	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
304-6691	Gaelscoil an tSeanchai	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822

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504-6695	Gaelscoil Aodha Rua	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
204-6646	Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir	37,389	38,901	39,277	39,907	41,193
304-6685	Gaelscoil Éanna	41,544	40,773	34,446	31,086	31,114
504-6699	Gaelscoil Eoghain		41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
304-6684	Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
204-6689	Gaelscoil Léim an Mhadaidh	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
104-6571	Gaelscoil na Bhfal	29,704	28,708	29,615	29,825	30,237
204-6687	Gaelscoil na Daróige	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
204-6677	Gaelscoil na gCrann	41,544	41,605	42,008	40,957	39,440
504-6692	Gaelscoil na mBeann		41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
104-6671	Gaelscoil na Mona	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,384
304-6678	Gaelscoil na Speirini	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-6700	Gaelscoil Neachtain		41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
204-6638	Gaelscoil Uí Dhochartaigh	35,727	35,572	34,236	34,866	36,591
504-6637	Gaelscoil Ui Neill	31,989	30,788	28,355	28,775	30,456
301-0594	Garryduff PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-6119	Garvagh PS	36,974	37,861	40,117	42,008	43,822
201-6089	Gibson PS	6,024	6,241	4,201	1,680	876
201-2648	Gillygooley PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-6681	Glasswater PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
303-6292	Glen PS	27,003	27,251	26,045	25,205	25,636
303-0708	Glenann PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
405-3020	Glenraig Integrated PS	16,825	16,434	16,593	18,693	19,063
203-2212	Glendermott PS	36,766	37,445	37,387	39,907	40,755
305-0791	Glengormley Integrated PS	17,241	10,609	1,470		
303-3311	Glenravel PS	28,457	28,708	28,145	29,405	29,580
301-0808	Glynn PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-6055	Gorran PS	40,713	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-6395	Gortin PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2712	Gortnagarn PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-1589	Grange PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	42,727
201-6071	Greenhaw PS	15,371	12,274	11,972	11,762	10,956
101-0304	Greenwood Infants' PS	8,516	8,529	8,612	7,981	8,545
401-1300	Greyabbey PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-6037	Greystone PS	25,342	24,755	24,154	24,364	25,198
205-2035	Groarty Integrated PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-0822	Groggan PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	40,537	40,535
501-6179	Hamiltonsbawn PS	38,220	38,693	41,167	42,008	43,822
101-0232	Harding Memorial PS	23,888	21,843	22,054	21,424	20,377
101-6604	Harmony PS	27,419	27,875	26,885	22,684	26,074

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301-6052	Harpur's Hill PS	26,796	26,835	25,625	25,625	25,636
301-0781	Harryville PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-1129	Hart Memorial PS	8,101	4,577			
301-6444	Hazelbank PS	38,843	39,733	41,167	39,697	41,850
301-2229	Hezlett PS	15,994	15,602	16,173	14,493	12,489
301-6038	Hollybank PS	29,704	29,540	32,976	32,976	36,153
203-0381	Holy Child PS, Londonderry	19,110	21,635	19,744	23,104	21,254
103-0331	Holy Cross Girls' PS, Belfast	27,003	27,459	28,985	27,725	28,703
503-1694	Holy Cross PS, Kilkeel	36,351	35,364	36,757	38,437	40,097
403-3012	Holy Family PS, Downpatrick	22,849	22,467	21,214	21,844	23,445
103-0327	Holy Rosary PS	9,347				
501-2646	Howard PS	13,294	12,065	5,671	2,310	
201-6151	Irvinestown PS	33,858	29,956	30,876	28,775	31,114
501-1611	Iveagh PS	14,956	13,938	14,913	12,602	11,394
103-6697	John Paul II PS			8,612	7,981	5,916
201-6003	Jones Memorial PS	23,264	24,547	25,415	23,734	26,951
503-6122	Jonesborough PS	39,674	40,565	41,167	42,008	41,850
501-6028	Keady PS	41,544				
301-0835	Kells & Connor PS	25,757	25,587	25,835	27,725	27,389
201-1787	Kesh PS	26,172	21,843	22,054	21,004	21,035
301-0828	Kilbride Central PS	36,143	36,196	36,757	34,236	34,181
505-6013	Kilbroney Integrated PS	41,544	41,605	39,697	36,757	37,468
304-0451	Kilcoan PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-6002	Kilcooley PS	37,597	33,492	33,816	32,556	32,209
503-1154	Killean PS	35,104	36,821	36,757	36,337	38,783
201-2641	Killen PS	41,544	41,605	40,747	41,377	41,850
301-2237	Killowen PS, Coleraine	24,511	22,259	22,054	22,474	21,911
503-1318	Killowen PS, Rostrevor	39,466	40,357	41,167	42,008	43,822
203-1897	Killyhommon PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-1132	Killylea PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-1634	Killyleagh PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-6680	Killyman PS	32,819	31,204	29,615	27,725	28,046
301-0878	Kilmoyle PS	39,674	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-2269	Kilrea PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-3703	Kilross PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2473	Kilskeery No 1 PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-1152	Kingsmills PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
405-1569	Kircubbin Integrated PS	36,766	30,996	25,415	21,214	21,254
301-0780	Kirkinriola PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-1373	Kirkistown PS	34,481	37,029	36,967	40,957	43,822

DE Ref	School / Financial Year	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £
301-0893	Knockahollet PS	41,544	41,605	41,167	42,008	43,822
401-1674	Knockbreda PS	34,273	33,076	28,145	25,835	27,170
301-6283	Knockloughrim PS	41,544	41,397	40,537	40,327	40,974
401-3334	Knockmore PS	41,544	41,605	40,747	40,117	41,850
303-2197	Knocknagin PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
101-3018	Knocknagoney PS	41,544	34,740	32,346	22,054	13,804
203-2628	Knocknagor PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-6184	Lack PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-2558	Laghey PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-0795	Landhead PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-2671	Langfield PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-0743	Largymore PS	40,713	38,901	36,127	31,506	28,923
301-0486	Larne & Inver PS	27,834	25,379	25,205	27,515	25,636
401-3043	Leadhill PS	39,051	41,605	42,008	40,327	37,906
301-3325	Leaney PS				210	2,848
101-0325	Ligoniel PS	33,650	29,956	29,405	27,725	25,198
201-6218	Lisbellaw PS	24,095	22,259	23,524	23,734	22,787
401-0807	Lisburn Central PS	27,419	30,372	31,086	27,725	24,759
501-2611	Lisferty PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-0787	Lislagan PS	41,544	40,149	39,067	39,487	40,316
501-1153	Lisnadill PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-1657	Lisnasharragh PS	18,902	12,690	9,662	5,671	
503-2262	Lissan PS	40,713	39,733	40,747	40,327	38,563
203-2300	Listress PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-0745	Loanends PS	21,603	23,715	24,364	22,054	22,787
201-0380	Londonderry Model PS		2,080		7,141	6,354
301-0466	Longstone PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-6475	Longtower PS	14,956	17,266	17,433	16,803	13,585
203-2537	Loreto Convent PS	18,071				
203-2724	Loughash PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-1267	Loughries PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
101-6537	Lowwood PS	24,511	23,923	23,734	24,364	25,417
501-0992	Lurgan Model PS	29,288	27,043	27,305	24,784	25,636
301-3700	Macosquin PS	22,226	21,635	21,844	21,424	21,911
401-6417	Maghaberry PS	22,018	21,427	21,634	21,424	18,844
301-2291	Maghera PS	41,544	41,605	41,167	42,008	43,384
301-2267	Magherafelt PS	9,970	11,857	11,972	9,662	10,517
201-6127	Maguiresbridge PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	41,167	42,288
306-6652	Maine Integrated PS	39,674	38,901	38,857	37,597	41,412
301-0812	Mallusk PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822

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101-6498	Malvern PS	38,012	37,861	39,487	42,008	43,822
501-1687	Maralin Village PS	10,801	9,361	5,461	4,411	5,697
501-6436	Markethill PS	1,039				
201-2344	McClintock PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-0512	McKinney PS	39,259	37,237	35,496	35,706	37,249
401-6636	Meadow Bridge PS	9,347	8,529	7,771	1,890	1,753
103-6041	Mercy PS	19,941	18,306	18,483	20,584	19,501
306-6544	Mill Strand Integrated PS	28,457	24,963	25,415	24,364	24,759
406-6644	Millennium Integrated PS	20,564	18,098	15,333	10,712	5,259
401-1681	Millisle PS	31,989	28,291	26,255	23,524	22,130
303-0438	Millquarter PS	33,650	34,324	34,026	34,026	36,153
501-1651	Milltown PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-1789	Moat PS	40,505	38,901	39,277	38,227	38,344
503-1516	Moneydarragh PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-2280	Moneymore PS	28,042	26,211	23,944	23,944	23,445
303-0815	Moneynick PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-1699	Moneyrea PS	25,757	23,091	20,584	21,424	19,720
301-0818	Moorfields PS	19,733	19,346	21,214	22,474	22,130
301-3323	Mossgrove PS	24,303	23,507	20,794	17,013	14,680
503-1126	Mount St Catherine's PS	21,395	17,266	17,223	14,283	17,748
501-1161	Mountnorris PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-2636	Moy Regional PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-6543	Moyallon PS	23,057	22,259	19,744	19,954	21,035
301-0870	Moyle PS	7,478	4,369			
203-3707	Mullabuoy PS	41,544	41,397	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-0760	Mullaghdubh PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-1019	Mullaglass PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-1095	Mullavilly PS	40,505	40,565	36,967	35,076	37,249
203-0373	Nazareth House PS	14,956	13,938	15,123	15,543	15,776
101-0267	Nettlefield PS	10,801	6,657	8,191	3,991	
303-2109	New Row PS	25,549	24,755	25,415	27,095	29,361
201-2261	Newbuildings PS	30,119	29,956	30,035	29,825	28,484
401-1698	Newcastle PS	38,012	38,485	33,816	35,286	36,811
501-2719	Newmills PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-1879	Newtownbutler No 2 PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-1137	Newtownhamilton PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-6262	Newtownstewart Model PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-6257	Oakfield PS			1,890	1,260	2,410
406-6611	Oakwood Integrated PS	19,941	19,970	20,164	20,584	22,130
401-6144	Old Warren PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	40,535

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301-0646	Olderfleet PS	26,796	25,795	25,835	23,104	25,855
201-2691	Omagh County PS	7,270	4,785	8,402	3,571	5,697
501-6658	Orchard County PS	34,689	33,492	32,556	32,346	32,428
501-6221	Orritor PS	26,172	25,795	26,465	26,465	29,361
203-6415	Our Lady of Lourdes, Omagh	39,259	40,357	39,697	39,067	39,002
503-6639	Our Lady's & St Mochua's D'n	22,641	22,675	23,314	23,734	24,759
503-6598	Our Lady's PS, Tullysaran	33,650	33,076	33,396	31,296	30,456
301-0642	Parkgate PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-6058	Parkhall PS	19,110	18,098	16,173	17,433	20,596
506-6657	Phoenix Integrated PS	28,873	27,667	27,515	26,255	24,102
506-6553	Portadown Integrated PS	19,941	19,138	17,433	13,652	5,040
405-1601	Portaferry Integrated PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-1507	Portavogie PS	25,549	22,675	24,154	21,004	21,692
301-6440	Portglenone PS	41,336	41,397	40,537	41,588	42,288
301-0847	Portrush PS	22,641	23,299	23,314	22,684	22,349
301-2250	Portstewart PS	16,825	14,978	12,602	12,392	11,175
501-6078	Poyntzpass PS	39,674	39,733	39,067	38,857	41,631
503-6586	Presentation PS	17,656	15,810	10,712	9,032	7,231
201-2669	Queen Elizabeth II Omagh	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-6200	Queen Elizabeth II Pomeroy	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-0816	Randalstown Central PS	20,149	20,178	19,954	19,744	21,911
301-6125	Rasharkin PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-0895	Rathcoole PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
305-6231	Rathenraw Integrated PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	
203-2704	Recarson PS	38,843	37,445	38,437	38,437	42,946
401-1688	Redburn PS	41,544				
501-6643	Richmond PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	41,850
501-1165	Richmount PS	41,544	39,941	40,537	37,807	39,440
401-6615	Riverdale PS	21,603	21,427	21,214	19,323	20,158
503-2591	Roan St Patrick's PS	40,505	37,653	38,647	38,017	37,906
206-6665	Roe Valley Integrated PS	30,535	25,795	27,725	28,985	28,484
203-2723	Roscavey PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-0364	Rosemount PS	13,709	10,609	8,191	5,251	2,629
101-0157	Rosetta PS	25,134	22,883	17,223	17,433	16,872
305-6248	Round Tower Integrated PS	5,816	4,161	6,721	4,621	5,478
406-6682	Rowandale Integrated PS	34,689	30,372	24,995	21,634	18,405
103-6471	Sacred Heart PS, Belfast	28,873	32,036	31,716	31,926	36,591
403-6133	Sacred Heart PS, Dundrum	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-6136	Sacred Heart PS, Rock	38,220	37,653	40,327	39,697	42,946
203-2721	Sacred Heart PS, Tattyreagh	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822

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506-6578	Saints & Scholars Integrated	22,018	24,131	22,684	23,104	20,158
501-1664	Scarva PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
104-6641	Scoil an Droichid	37,805	37,445	35,496	36,757	37,687
404-6600	Scoil na Fuisseoige	40,090	38,901	38,857	36,757	37,906
504-6137	Seagoe PS	6,232	4,161	1,890	1,260	1,315
303-0899	Seaview PS, Glenarm	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-0882	Seymour Hill PS	23,264	24,963	27,515	23,734	19,501
301-6005	Silverstream PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	41,798	40,535
201-6442	Sion Mills PS	15,787	17,474	17,223	19,954	18,405
305-6231	Six Mile Integrated PS					43,822
401-6123	Spa PS	31,989	29,956	27,725	25,625	26,293
306-6613	Spires Integrated PS	21,395	20,178	20,374	21,634	24,540
101-0221	Springfield PS	40,297	35,988	33,186	29,825	27,608
101-0307	Springhill PS	19,318	25,171	26,465	30,666	33,524
103-0316	St Aidan's PS, Belfast	30,742	34,740			
203-3708	St Aidan's PS, Magilligan	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
303-0898	St Anne's PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-6389	St Anne's PS Strabane	15,579	16,226	13,863		
403-3008	St Anne's PS, Donaghadee	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
303-0900	St Anthony's PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2265	St Anthony's PS (Roe)	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	
103-0317	St Bernadette's PS	34,689	35,572			
303-3326	St Brigid's PS Ballymoney	25,757	25,795	23,524	25,835	23,883
303-0890	St Brigid's PS Cloughmills	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
303-6103	St Brigid's PS Knockloughrim	18,487	17,266	13,442	11,342	9,641
303-2018	St Brigid's PS Tirkane	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2573	St Brigid's PS, Altamuskin	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-2727	St Brigid's PS, Augher	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-6142	St Brigid's PS, Carnhill	7,893	7,281	6,301	4,411	1,315
203-2685	St Brigid's PS, Cranagh	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-3040	St Brigid's PS, Downpatrick	16,617	12,690	9,452	6,721	6,135
503-1169	St Brigid's PS, Drumilly	41,544	41,605	41,798	42,008	42,069
503-1163	St Brigid's PS, G'drummond	26,796	27,043	26,045	24,574	26,074
203-2662	St Brigid's PS, Mountfield	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-2698	St Brigid's PS, Mountjoy	37,182	38,485	39,067	36,547	35,496
503-6673	St Bronagh's PS, Rostrevor	27,419	29,748	26,885	26,675	26,512
203-2694	St Caireall's PS, Castlederg	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-6045	St Canice's PS, Dungiven	8,309	4,785	3,361	3,571	2,629
203-2263	St Canice's PS, Feeny	40,713	39,941	41,377	39,067	40,316
403-1485	St Caolan's PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822

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303-6268	St Ciaran's PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-1213	St Clare's Convent, Newry	24,926	25,171	20,374		
503-1576	St Colman's Abbey, Newry	19,941	17,682	16,593		
503-6061	St Colman's PS, Annaclone	35,312	34,532	32,136	28,145	26,951
503-6400	St Colman's PS, Bann	41,544	40,565	41,167	39,697	39,878
503-6000	St Colman's PS, Dromore	41,544	41,605	41,798	42,008	43,165
503-6545	St Colmans' PS, Kilkeel	24,718	24,547	22,474	20,164	19,939
503-6572	St Colman's PS, Saval	27,834	25,587	25,205	24,364	22,568
203-6082	St Colmcilles PS, Claudy	11,632	11,649	13,652	14,493	14,900
403-6182	St Colmcille's, Downpatrick	32,612	31,620	30,035	26,465	24,540
203-6053	St Colmcille's PS, Omagh	28,250				
203-6213	St Columban's PS, Belcoo	40,090	40,981	40,747	41,798	43,384
303-2202	St Columba's PS Garvagh	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
303-6147	St Columba's PS Kilrea	29,496	27,459	24,995	19,744	17,529
303-2268	St Columba's PS Straw	33,235	31,828	30,035	29,195	30,018
203-6247	St Columba's, Newbuildings	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2730	St Columba's PS, Clady	39,466	38,693	36,757	34,866	34,400
203-2737	St Columbkille's Carrickmore	16,202	16,642	16,383	14,703	14,242
303-2205	St Columb's PS Magherafelt	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
303-2231	St Colum's PS Portstewart	23,057	22,883	27,515	26,675	29,142
403-6146	St Comgall's PS, Bangor	2,700		420	630	219
203-6258	St Davog's PS, Belleek	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2664	St Davog's PS, Castlederg	41,544				
203-6186	St Dymrna's PS, Dromore,	29,496	26,211	26,465	23,524	21,035
303-2271	St Eoghan's PS	39,674	36,612	38,227	38,437	39,002
203-6555	St Eugene's PS Londonderry	30,950	30,996	34,236	33,816	36,153
203-1888	St Eugene's PS, Lisnaskea	41,544	41,605			
203-2688	St Eugene's PS, Tyrcur	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2682	St Eugene's, Victoria Bridge	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-3017	St Finian's PS	28,457	27,043	30,245	30,035	33,743
203-6149	St Finlough's PS, Sistrakeel	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-6610	St Francis' of Assisi PS	26,588	27,251	28,985	30,035	32,209
203-2600	St Francis of Assisi, Drumn'y	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	
403-1531	St Francis' PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-6457	St Francis' PS, Aghaderg	30,535	30,580	30,876	28,355	28,265
503-1167	St James' PS, Drumatee	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
303-6100	St James' PS, N'abbey	15,163	15,394	13,442	12,602	12,708
503-6121	St Jarlath's PS	29,081	28,083	27,725	28,565	29,361
303-2246	St John Bosco, Ballynease	40,920	39,525	38,857	38,857	40,316
203-1887	St John the Baptist, E'killen	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822

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303-3317	St John's PS Carnlough	31,989	30,788	31,296	32,556	34,181
303-3709	St John's PS Coleraine	27,834	27,459	26,885	28,355	31,333
303-2274	St John's PS Swatragh	24,511	22,051	21,634	20,374	19,063
203-6187	St John's PS, Dernaflaw	35,520	34,116	34,656	35,706	35,715
503-0958	St John's PS, Eglish	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-1669	St John's PS, Gilford	36,143	35,364	38,017	37,597	38,125
503-2729	St John's PS, Kingisland	41,544	41,605	42,008	40,327	41,412
503-6622	St John's PS, Middletown	35,727	33,700	30,035	28,565	29,361
503-2715	St John's PS, Moy	24,926	25,587	24,574	23,734	25,855
503-6675	St Joseph's & St James' PS	38,636	39,109	37,177	36,337	36,811
303-6050	St Joseph's PS Antrim	22,434	19,762	13,863	10,712	3,944
303-6243	St Joseph's PS Dunloy	6,647	7,697	7,771	5,041	5,697
103-6246	St Joseph's PS (Holland Dr)	5,816				
103-6621	St Joseph's PS (Slate Street)	24,718	22,467	21,004	18,063	18,186
403-1231	St Joseph's PS Ballycruttle	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-1663	St Joseph's PS Carnacaville	30,327	28,291	26,675	24,784	25,198
403-1550	St Joseph's PS Crossgar	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-6016	St Joseph's PS Killough	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-3005	St Joseph's PS Strangford	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-3037	St Joseph's PS Tyrella	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-1325	St Joseph's PS, Ballymartin	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-6110	St Joseph's PS, Bessbrook	15,579	13,730	9,872	8,612	6,573
503-6463	St Joseph's PS, Caledon	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2700	St Joseph's PS, Drumquin	41,544	41,605	38,857	37,597	36,811
203-6070	St Joseph's PS, Ederney	37,389	38,277	36,547	35,916	37,687
503-6033	St Joseph's PS, Galbally	24,718	26,211	22,684	19,113	19,063
203-2683	St Joseph's PS, Glenmornan	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-6108	St Joseph's PS, Killeenan	38,636	36,196	35,076	37,177	41,412
203-6107	St Joseph's PS, Lisnaskea	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-1138	St Joseph's PS, Madden	36,351	35,988	35,706	36,337	36,591
503-1188	St Joseph's PS, Meigh	24,926	24,131	24,784	22,264	21,692
503-6130	St Laurence's PS, Beleeks	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2684	St Lawrence's PS, Fintona	20,356	17,266	14,073	11,552	14,461
403-6081	St Luke's PS	26,588	23,923	19,323	14,493	
503-2624	St Mac Carten's Convent PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-3007	St Macartan's, Downpatrick	25,965	23,923	23,734	23,944	23,445
203-2687	St Macartan's PS, Dromore	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	
203-6659	St Macartan's PS, Roslea		34,740	35,076	37,177	39,221
303-6575	St Macnissi's PS, Larne	17,864	18,514	19,744	19,323	18,186
303-6139	St Macnissi's PS N'Abbey	25,549	25,587	24,364	22,474	22,130

DE Ref	School / Financial Year	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £
303-0848	St Macnissius' PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-6148	St Malachy's PS Bangor	1,246				
403-6454	St Malachy's PS Castlewellan	4,985	3,536	1,260		
403-1350	St Malachy's PS Kilclief	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-6036	St Malachy's PS Kilcoo	35,312	34,740	35,076	35,076	36,591
503-1133	St Malachy's PS, Armagh	20,980	21,219	19,744	19,744	19,720
503-0975	St Malachy's PS, Ballymoyer	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
103-6466	St Malachy's PS, Belfast	10,801	7,697	1,050		
503-6433	St Malachy's PS, Carnagat	9,970	5,825	6,721	5,671	4,820
503-6064	St Malachy's PS, C'croppan	11,424	11,233	11,762	9,032	8,984
303-2297	St Malachy's PS, Coleraine	15,787	13,522	13,652	13,442	15,338
503-6057	St Malachy's PS, Drumullan	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-2306	St Malachy's PS, Glencull	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-6105	St Martin's PS, Garrison	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-6458	St Mary's PS, Gortnaghey	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-6096	St Mary's Girls' PS, Strabane	10,594				
303-2281	St Mary's PS Bellaghy	25,342	25,171	24,784	24,364	24,979
303-0625	St Mary's PS Cargan	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
303-0894	St Mary's PS Cushendall	33,235	33,700	32,766	33,606	36,811
303-2273	St Mary's PS Draperstown	19,525	16,850	17,223	19,113	16,652
303-6039	St Mary's PS Glenview	17,241	17,682	16,803	15,543	16,433
303-2275	St Mary's PS Greenlough	29,911	28,708	27,935	26,675	27,170
303-0588	St Mary's PS Rathlin	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
103-6388	St Mary's (St Pauls Cavan.)	41,544	33,700	34,236	35,286	36,372
403-1673	St Mary's PS Ardglass	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-1662	St Mary's PS Comber	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-3036	St Mary's PS Killyleagh	36,558	36,821	38,227	42,008	43,822
403-6428	St Mary's PS Kircubbin	34,897	34,532	33,816	29,615	32,428
403-6635	St Mary's PS Newcastle	4,570	2,704			
403-6530	St Mary's PS Portaferry	20,772	21,427	24,364	24,784	27,827
303-0621	St Mary's PS Portglenone	23,264	20,387	19,323	20,794	21,692
403-1672	St Mary's PS Saintfield	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2294	St Mary's PS, Altinure	22,849	24,963	26,675	27,095	29,580
403-3002	St Mary's PS, Aghlisnafin	29,911	29,124	28,145	27,725	31,114
503-6363	St Mary's PS, Aghnacloy	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-2735	St Mary's PS, Ballygawley	38,220	38,693	40,537	41,167	42,727
503-1695	St Mary's PS, Barr	37,805	34,116	33,606	33,186	35,715
203-1876	St Mary's PS, Brookeborough	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-2734	St Mary's PS, Cabra	20,356	20,803	19,323	21,844	21,911
203-6095	St Mary's PS, Cloughcor	21,187	23,299	23,314	21,214	24,540

DE Ref	School / Financial Year	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £
503-3011	St Mary's PS, Dechomet	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-6006	St Mary's PS, Derrymore	31,989	31,828	32,136	31,926	29,580
503-6009	St Mary's PS, Derrytrasna	41,544	41,189	40,117	40,327	43,165
503-2699	St Mary's PS, Dunamore	26,796	24,963	23,734	23,314	23,883
503-2736	St Mary's PS, Fivemiletown	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-6001	St Mary's PS, Glassdrumman	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-1172	St Mary's PS, Granemore	29,496	27,251	27,515	26,675	26,731
203-1884	St Mary's PS, Killesher	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-2592	St Mary's PS, Lisbuoy	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-1164	St Mary's PS, Maghery	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-1895	St Mary's PS, Maguiresbridge	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-6087	St Mary's PS, Mullaghbawn	3,947	1,040	2,520	2,941	2,410
203-1890	St Mary's PS, Mullymesker	37,182	34,532	33,606	34,656	37,687
203-1869	St Mary's PS, Newtownbutler	30,535	30,580	27,725	26,255	25,636
503-6118	St Mary's PS, Pomeroy	30,119	30,164	28,145	28,355	28,484
503-3004	St Mary's PS, Rathfriland	41,128	40,981	42,008	40,117	42,069
503-2692	St Mary's PS, Stewartstown	36,766	37,861	39,697	40,537	43,822
203-6181	St Mary's PS, Teemore	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
103-6048	St Mary's Star of the Sea PS	38,843	38,277	36,967	34,026	38,125
203-6356	St Mary's, Tempo No 2 PS	39,674	40,357	40,327	39,277	40,097
103-6505	St Matthew's PS, Belfast	20,980	17,890	17,223	15,753	14,900
203-2612	St Matthew's PS, Garvaghey	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2286	St Matthew's PS, Limavady	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-1653	St Matthew's, Magheramayo	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-1166	St Michael's PS, Clady	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-3006	St Michael's PS, Finnis	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-1070	St Michael's PS, N'hamilton	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-6090	St Naile's PS, Kinawley	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,603
403-6113	St Nicholas' PS, Ardglass	39,882	41,397	42,008	42,008	40,316
303-6563	St Nicholas', Carrickfergus	32,612	31,828	27,725	27,095	26,951
203-1880	St Ninnidh's PS, Derrylin	35,520	37,237	34,236	35,706	36,372
303-0719	St Olcan's PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-6143	St Oliver Plunkett Strathfoyle	28,042	26,627	20,584	21,004	20,377
303-3303	St Oliver Plunkett PS, Antrim	32,612	28,500	27,305	23,104	25,417
203-6291	St Oliver Plunkett PS, Beragh	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-6180	St Oliver Plunkett's, B'hegan	41,544	41,605	42,008	41,377	41,193
503-0972	St Oliver Plunkett's, Forkhill	39,051	35,988	35,076	33,396	34,619
503-1135	St Olivers' Carrickravaddy	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
303-6559	St Patrick's & St Brigid's PS			1,680		
303-2285	St Pat's & St Joseph's Fed.	26,588	24,131	23,734	24,784	25,417

DE Ref	School / Financial Year	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £
303-6131	St Patrick's PS Glenariffe	39,882	40,565	39,277	39,067	41,412
303-6154	St Patrick's PS Loughgiel	29,081	28,708	30,035	30,666	29,142
303-3320	St Patrick's PS Rasharkin	25,134	21,427	22,894	24,995	23,226
403-1665	St Patrick's PS Ballynahinch	19,318	19,346	18,273	17,643	16,872
403-1671	St Patrick's PS Castlewellan	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-1628	St Patrick's PS Holywood	15,371	10,609	8,612	5,881	1,972
403-3028	St Patrick's PS Portaferry	35,935	35,364	34,236	35,496	39,221
303-0547	St Patrick's PS Portrush	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-1526	St Patrick's PS Saul	25,757	24,131	23,734	23,944	24,102
503-1168	St Patrick's PS, Aghacommon	18,902	17,682	18,063	18,273	18,186
503-6047	St Patrick's PS, Annaghmore	16,410	14,562	14,283	13,863	12,270
503-2697	St Patrick's, Aughadarragh	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-3025	St Patrick's PS, Ballymaghery	3,947	2,496	420		
203-6094	St Patrick's PS, Castledearg	20,356	16,226	15,753	11,132	8,107
503-1148	St Patrick's PS, Crossmaglen	26,172	21,843	19,954	18,273	15,776
503-6099	St Patrick's PS, Cullyhanna	24,926	22,883	25,415	23,944	24,102
203-1874	St Patrick's PS, Derrygonnelly	36,974	34,948	35,496	37,177	38,125
503-3324	St Patrick's PS, Derrynaseer	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-2678	St Patrick's PS, Donaghmore	19,941	19,138	19,744	21,424	20,377
203-6387	St Patrick's PS, Donemana	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
503-6605	St Patrick's, Drumgreenagh	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2705	St Patrick's PS, Eskra	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-2676	St Patrick's PS, Gortin	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
403-6455	St Patrick's PS, Legamaddy	28,042	27,875	29,195	28,985	31,990
503-6031	St Patrick's PS, Loup	31,573	29,540	30,035	28,775	27,389
503-1667	St Patrick's PS, Maralin	35,104	32,244	33,396	33,186	35,715
503-1697	St Patrick's PS, Mayobridge	1,039				
503-6120	St Patrick's PS, Moneymore	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-1828	St Patrick's PS, Mullanaskea	20,356	21,011	20,584	19,534	20,596
503-2717	St Patrick's PS, Mullinahoe	26,796	22,883	20,794	16,173	13,366
203-6008	St Patrick's, Newtownstewart	36,766	38,901	39,067	39,487	39,659
303-6683	St Paul's PS, Ahoghill	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
103-6624	St Paul's PS, Belfast	13,086	12,690	11,132	9,662	7,888
503-3003	St Paul's PS, Cabra	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-1898	St Paul's PS, Irvinestown	14,748	14,978	16,593	18,273	21,473
203-6227	St Paul's PS, Slievemore	35,520	37,653	36,337	34,866	36,153
203-6085	St Peter's & St Paul's PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
103-6620	St Peter's PS, Belfast	4,985	5,201	5,251	2,100	
503-6595	St Peter's PS, Collegelands	37,597	37,237	36,127	32,346	33,962
503-2703	St Peters' PS, Moortown	26,380	29,332	28,985	27,515	28,703

DE Ref	School / Financial Year	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £
203-6097	St Peter's PS, Plumbridge	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-1901	St Ronan's PS, Lisnaskea	10,178	9,153	5,881	5,671	1,534
203-6153	St Scire's PS, Trillick	40,090	39,733	40,327	40,747	42,288
203-2731	St Teresa' Loughmacrory	32,612	33,076	33,186	33,606	33,524
503-1160	St Teresa's PS, Lurgan	27,419	26,419	28,775	26,885	24,321
503-1107	St Teresa's PS, Tullyherron	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
203-6459	St Theresa's PS, Glebe	37,389	38,069	37,597	42,008	43,822
203-1868	St Tierney's PS, Roslea	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	42,069
303-2185	St Trea's PS	39,259	37,653	36,547	38,017	39,659
103-6042	St Vincent De Paul PS	25,757	23,507	21,424	17,853	14,023
103-6464	Star of The Sea PS	3,116	3,952			
501-2643	Stewartstown PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
201-2708	Strabane PS	13,709	12,898	13,022	11,972	11,832
301-0570	Straid PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-0804	Straidbilly PS	41,544	41,397	39,487	38,227	40,974
301-0879	Straidhavern PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-0860	Sunnylands PS	38,220	38,485	37,597	34,446	30,237
203-1863	Tattygar PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
101-0301	Taughmonagh PS	35,312	33,700	34,236	33,186	34,400
201-6102	Tempo No 1 PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-6079	The Cope PS	38,843	38,693	38,437	38,437	41,412
301-0826	The Diamond PS	34,689	35,156	34,446	34,656	35,277
504-6241	The Dreincourt PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-6264	The Irish Society's PS			2,730	7,771	7,450
301-0779	The Thompson PS	30,327	27,667	27,725	25,835	26,731
301-0404	Tildarg PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
303-3304	Tir-na-nog PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-2233	Tobermore PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-0885	Tonagh PS	21,603	20,803	17,643	16,383	15,557
301-3332	Toreagh PS	41,544	40,565	42,008	41,377	42,507
401-3038	Tullycarnet PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
501-1190	Tullygally PS	41,544	41,605	41,167	38,647	37,249
203-2603	Tummery PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
301-0850	Upper Ballyboley PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-1488	Victoria PS (Ballyhalbert)	31,781	32,868	35,706	34,656	33,962
501-2657	Walker Memorial PS	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
401-6083	Westwinds PS	34,273	31,620	34,446	32,136	33,086
101-6532	Wheatfield PS	31,781	30,788	32,136	33,606	37,030
301-0842	William Pinkerton Memorial	41,544	41,605	42,008	42,008	43,822
506-6554	Windmill Integrated PS	19,733	17,682	19,744	15,963	17,529

DE Ref	School / Financial Year	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £
501-6451	Windsor Hill PS	32,404	30,580	25,415	18,903	17,748
301-0696	Woodburn PS	22,226	23,091	21,844	23,104	24,321
301-6225	Woodlawn PS	8,932	2,912	1,890	2,520	9,422
501-3702	Woods PS	33,235	29,540	30,456	30,245	28,484
	Primary SSSF Totals	22,379,115	21,737,632	21,262,980	20,794,595	21,030,227

(ii) Post-Primary Small Schools Support Factor (SSSF) Funding

DE Ref	School / Financial Year	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £
521-0153	Aughnacloy College	141,248	141,457	142,826	142,826	148,995
321-0233	Ballee Community High School	112,999	130,545	142,826	54,274	59,172
321-0124	Ballycastle High School	77,081	70,729	66,108	16,323	36,185
426-0309	Blackwater Integrated College	107,349	123,270	130,992	142,826	148,995
525-0216	Brownlow Integrated College	66,992	82,854	89,368	97,530	119,196
221-0065	Castledearg High School	31,075	31,929	46,112	37,135	55,341
123-0146	Christian Bro's Secondary, Bf'ast	10,493	9,700	25,301	26,525	22,562
521-0121	City of Armagh High	131,159	130,141	136,705	133,032	131,116
521-0043	Clounagh Junior High		404			
124-0291	Colaiste Feirste		3,637			
321-0300	Coleraine College	131,966	134,182	142,826	142,826	148,995
123-0262	Corpus Christi College	30,267	44,862	55,906	84,063	101,742
325-0149	Crumlin Integrated College	129,545	141,457	142,826	142,826	148,995
423-0224	De La Salle Secondary School	80,310	82,854	77,942	80,799	80,883
223-0138	Dean Brian Maguirc College	34,707	24,250	24,892	25,301	17,454
221-0305	Devenish College	4,843	26,271	4,897	12,650	29,373
342-0068	Dominican College, Portstewart	20,178	18,996	15,507	19,588	29,373
321-0232	Downshire School					3,406
523-0256	Drumcree College	141,248	141,457	142,826	142,826	148,995
521-0231	Drumglass High	71,835	86,895	90,592	102,018	111,108
421-0262	Dundonald High School	121,473	124,078	136,705	135,072	129,413
526-0286	Dungannon Integrated College	23,407	10,912	4,489	2,857	5,108
321-0222	Dunluce School	20,582	33,141	57,130	66,516	83,863
421-0194	Dunmurry High School	141,248				
241-0040	Enniskillen Collegiate	22,600	24,250	18,771	18,363	20,008
226-0280	Erne Integrated College	50,849	48,904	52,642	56,722	57,895
521-0097	Fivemiletown High	44,796	48,096	43,664	56,314	65,558
224-0319	Gaelcholáiste Dhoire					148,995
321-0013	Garvagh High School	141,248	141,457			
223-0254	Immaculate Conception College	140,441	141,457	142,826	142,826	
521-0054	Killicomaine Junior High	36,321	40,821	44,072	41,624	31,928
421-0086	Knockbreda High School	35,514	63,050	97,122	115,893	

DE Ref	School / Financial Year	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £
321-0038	Larne High School	25,425	25,866	39,175	33,870	28,096
421-0051	Lisnagarvey High School	42,778	28,696	17,139	16,731	21,711
221-0080	Lisnaskea High School	141,248	141,457			
541-0057	Lurgan College	38,339	37,587	40,399	39,583	40,442
321-0035	Magherafelt High School			5,713		10,643
521-0083	Markethill High	24,214	23,846	25,709	22,036	23,414
123-0104	Mercy College		73,962	51,825	47,745	44,273
421-0012	Movilla High School	39,953	60,220	6,121	35,094	
421-0045	Nendrum College	56,499	52,541	80,391	107,731	140,907
526-0285	New-Bridge Integrated College	5,650	3,233	54,682	55,906	57,895
521-0186	Newry High	29,460	40,416	45,296	53,050	59,598
321-0279	Newtownabbey Community High	129,141	132,162	140,377	142,826	
521-0025	Newtownhamilton High	141,248	141,457	142,826	142,826	148,995
326-0290	North Coast Integrated College	39,549	36,375	33,870	42,440	52,361
221-0125	Omagh High School	48,428	59,412	59,987	62,843	65,558
121-0266	Orangefield High School	117,438	122,866	142,826		
323-0075	Our Lady of Lourdes High School	141,248	141,457	142,826	142,826	148,995
123-0104	Our Lady of Mercy Girls' School	66,992				
242-0042	Portora Royal School, Enniskillen	25,425	24,250	22,036	22,444	22,136
425-0024	Priory Integrated College	16,546	23,442	20,404	408	
521-0127	Rathfriland High	102,506	96,595	102,835	99,570	99,614
421-0063	Saintfield High School	73,045	71,133	74,677	74,677	76,626
426-0281	Shimna Integrated College	7,264	1,617	1,632		
326-0303	Sperrin Integrated College	22,196	23,442	20,812	19,996	24,691
223-0166	St Aidan's High School	141,248	141,457	142,826	142,826	148,995
323-0308	St Benedict's College	39,549	55,775	64,884	66,516	76,626
523-0160	St Brigid's Boys' High	136,809	141,457	142,826	142,826	
223-0225	St Brigid's College, Carnhill			13,875	20,404	4,257
423-0161	St Colman's High School	66,992	43,650	54,682	58,355	51,510
423-0102	St Colmcille's High Crossgar	62,553	71,941	82,023	97,530	112,811
423-0223	St Colm's High School, Belfast				29,381	44,273
323-0132	St Colm's High, Magherafelt	47,217	43,650	44,480	42,440	50,658
523-0059	St Columban's College	135,195	141,457	142,826	142,826	148,995
423-0067	St Columba's High School	134,388	139,437	142,826	142,826	148,995
223-0190	St Comhghall's College	72,238	51,329	50,193	32,646	26,819
223-0180	St Eugene's College, Roslea	141,248	141,457	142,826	142,826	148,995
223-0111	St Eugene's High Castlederg	141,248	141,457			
223-0099	St Fanchea's College	91,610	93,362	89,776	90,592	91,100
123-0173	St Gemma's High School	141,248	141,457			
223-0148	St John's College	141,248	141,457	142,826	142,826	148,995

DE Ref	School / Financial Year	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £
523-0056	St Joseph's Boys' High, Newry	61,746	73,558	80,391	80,799	96,634
523-0192	St Joseph's College, Coalisland	85,556	89,724	104,467	111,812	118,770
123-0275	St Joseph's College, Belfast	9,686	13,742			
323-0110	St Joseph's College, Coleraine	80,713	80,429	93,449	104,875	114,939
223-0100	St Joseph's College, Enniskillen	128,738	128,524	122,830	115,893	122,602
542-0073	St Joseph's Conv. Gram. D'more	2,018	808			
323-0142	St Mary's College, Ballymena	89,188	84,470	93,449	95,897	102,594
523-0070	St Mary's Girls' High, Lurgan	11,300	19,400	24,076	37,951	
223-0085	St Mary's High School, Brollagh	141,248	141,457	142,826	142,826	148,995
423-0023	St Mary's High School, D'patrick	54,078	48,500	42,440	47,337	62,152
223-0109	St Mary's Secondary, Irvinestown	141,248	141,457	142,826	142,826	148,995
223-0122	St Patricks & St Brigids High Coll.	15,336	14,550	11,018	10,610	14,048
423-0165	St Patrick's Academy, Lisburn	43,989	32,737	31,422	33,054	48,530
323-0084	St Patrick's College Ballymena	14,125	14,954	13,875	9,386	13,622
523-0076	St Patrick's College, Banbridge	76,678	90,129	117,525	116,709	121,750
223-0144	St Patrick's College, Dungiven	91,610	106,295	110,180	117,525	124,305
323-0151	St Paul's College	94,031	94,170	99,978	105,283	110,682
523-0088	St Paul's Junior High, Lurgan	37,128	62,645	69,373	93,857	
223-0181	St Peter's High School	141,248	141,457			
123-0130	St Rose's High School	58,517	65,879	81,615	95,897	118,770
426-0295	Strangford Integrated College	4,843	8,487	8,161		
521-0143	Tandragee Junior High	109,770	113,974	115,077	117,117	127,284
421-0029	The High School Ballynahinch	89,995	100,233	120,382	142,010	148,995
	Post-primary SSSF Totals	6,511,945	6,621,014	6,229,653	6,218,635	6,097,307

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister of Education to detail what percentage of the Aggregated Schools' Budget did the allocation to primary and post-primary schools under the Small Schools' Support Factor represent, in each of the last five years. (AQW 5760/16-21)

Mr Weir: Total funding distributed to primary and post-primary schools under the Small Schools' Support Factor (SSSF) in each of the last five years, as a proportion of the overall Aggregated Schools Budget (ASB), was:

Financial year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
SSSF proportion of ASB	2.6%	2.5%	2.4%	2.3%	2.3%

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education to outline his Department's target for growth in the integrated sector in 2016-17. (AQW 5772/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Department does not set targets for the growth of any school sector, nor does it promote any sector.

As part of its statutory duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education, my Department funds the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) specifically to promote integrated education. Funding of £623,000 is being provided to NICIE in the 2016/17 financial year.

I will also give careful consideration to the recommendations of the Independent Review of Integrated Education, which I expect to receive shortly.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education to outline (i) the ethos of a controlled school; and (ii) the difference between Controlled Irish Medium, Controlled Integrated and Controlled Primary schools.

(AQW 5773/16-21)

Mr Weir: In September 2014 the Executive agreed that one of the functions of the Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC), established on 1st September 2016, should be to work with schools within the sector to develop and maintain its collective ethos. It will be a matter for the CSSC to develop and agree an ethos that relates to all schools within the controlled sector, including Controlled Integrated and Controlled Irish Medium schools.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education how he is promoting integrated education, as set out in the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child report.

(AQW 5774/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Department does not set targets for the growth of any school sector, nor does it promote any sector.

As part of its statutory duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education, my Department funds the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) specifically to promote integrated education. Funding of £623,000 is being provided to NICIE in the 2016/17 financial year.

I will also give careful consideration to the recommendations of the Independent Review of Integrated Education, which I expect to receive shortly.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Education what consideration his Department has given to mandated autism training for teachers.

(AQW 5791/16-21)

Mr Weir: I would refer the member to AQW 1600/16-21 tabled by Barry McElduff MLA and published in Hansard on 1 July 2016.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education to detail how much of the £50m capital investment from A Fresh Start funding for Integrated and Shared Education will be spent before 31 March 2017.

(AQW 5792/16-21)

Mr Weir: Projected spend to 31 March 2017 is circa £3 million. It should be noted however that a significant portion of this is for land purchase which is assumed to be complete by 31 March 17.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education whether he can carry forward any unspent balance from the £50m capital investment from A Fresh Start funding for integrated and Shared Education into the next financial year.

(AQW 5793/16-21)

Mr Weir: It is not normally possible to carry over unspent capital funding into the next financial year. However, in the case of the Fresh Start funding, I have already raised this issue with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Education how many school children have received counselling for bullying, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 5796/16-21)

Mr Weir: In 2013/14 a total of 27,890 counselling sessions were delivered in post-primary schools. Bullying was not recorded in the top 10 issues raised. In Special Schools, a total of 4861 sessions were delivered to post-primary age pupils with 3% recorded as bullying.

2014/15 a total of 28,474 counselling sessions were delivered in post-primary schools. Bullying was not recorded in the top 10 issues raised, with 0.5% recorded as bullying. In Special Schools, a total of 5837 sessions were delivered to post-primary age pupils. There were no recorded cases of bullying.

2015/16 a total of 33,330 counselling sessions were delivered in post-primary schools. Bullying was not recorded in the overall top 10 issues raised, with 1.2% recorded as bullying. In Special Schools, a total of 5163 sessions were delivered to post-primary age pupils with no recorded cases of bullying.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Education (i) whether a record is kept of instances of bullying in schools; and (ii) to detail the number of instances in each of the last five years, broken down by primary and post-primary schools.

(AQW 5820/16-21)

Mr Weir: Schools are not currently required to record bullying incidences in school and the only figures available to the Department are for cases where bullying has been cited as the reason for a pupil being suspended or expelled. These figures are published annually by the Department and can be accessed via the following web-page:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/pupil-suspensions-and-expulsions>

The 'Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016' was granted Royal Assent on 12 May 2016. One of the specific issues this legislation is intended to address is to introduce a requirement for all schools to centrally record incidents of bullying, their motivation and their outcome. This will allow us, going forward, to quantify the true scale of the problem and any emerging trends which may require further specific interventions.

While the provisions of this Act are not yet in force, I intend that they will be in place for the start of 2017-18 school year.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 4274/16-21, to outline the scope of the review.
(AQW 5821/16-21)

Mr Weir: The EA has clarified that work is in progress to create interim management arrangements for a single Early Years' Special Educational Needs Service, to include pre-school home teaching. The Authority anticipates that a regional manager will be appointed, at which stage any formal review of the service will be considered.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 4274/16-21, to detail the (i) stakeholders; and (ii) consultees for the review.
(AQW 5822/16-21)

Mr Weir: The EA has clarified that work is in progress to create interim management arrangements for a single Early Years' Special Educational Needs Service, to include pre-school home teaching. The Authority anticipates that a regional manager will be appointed, at which stage any formal review of the service will be considered.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 4274/16-21, when he expects to receive the review's findings or recommendations.
(AQW 5823/16-21)

Mr Weir: The EA has clarified that work is in progress to create interim management arrangements for a single Early Years' Special Educational Needs Service, to include pre-school home teaching. The Authority anticipates that a regional manager will be appointed, at which stage any formal review of the service will be considered.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 4274/16-21, to detail (i) the names; and (ii) grades of the individuals conducting the review.
(AQW 5824/16-21)

Mr Weir: The EA has clarified that work is in progress to create interim management arrangements for a single Early Years' Special Educational Needs Service, to include pre-school home teaching. The Authority anticipates that a regional manager will be appointed, at which stage any formal review of the service will be considered.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 4274/16-21, to detail the timeline for the review.
(AQW 5825/16-21)

Mr Weir: The EA has clarified that work is in progress to create interim management arrangements for a single Early Years' Special Educational Needs Service, to include pre-school home teaching. The Authority anticipates that a regional manager will be appointed, at which stage any formal review of the service will be considered.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of classroom assistant vacancies in each of the last five years.
(AQW 5863/16-21)

Mr Weir: The number of classroom assistant vacancies in each of the last five years is set out in the table below:

Financial Year	Total Number of Vacancies
2011/12	391
2012/13	584
2013/14	597
2014/15	459
2015/16	504

This includes all temporary and permanent posts.

Mrs Overend 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 5864/16-21)

Mr Weir: The numbers of teachers who have taken early retirement and then subsequently taken up temporary teaching positions in each of the last three financial years are set out in the table below:-

Financial Year	Number of teachers
2013-14	52
2014-15	51
2015-16	32

These figures do not include Voluntary Grammar Schools

Mrs Overend 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 5865/16-21)

Mr Weir: I refer the Member to my answer to AQW 3360/16-21 tabled by Chris Lyttle and published in the Official Report on 7 October.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education how his Department monitors Religious Education in maintained schools.

(AQW 5866/16-21)

Mr Weir: Religious Education is monitored through inspection by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), as part of the general inspection of a school, where ETI has been invited to do so by the relevant Board of Governors/Management Committee.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 55546/11-16, whether it is necessary to revise the current policy on home to school transport.

(AQW 5867/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Independent Review of Home to School was published in December 2014 and the policy recommendations contained therein are under consideration.

Any decision to amend the current policy would be subject to full public consultation. Following this I will decide if, and to what extent, the current policy needs revised.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education to outline what funding is currently allocated to provide services for children and young people in voluntary sector youth centres.

(AQW 5868/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority (EA) has advised that £5,503,929 has been allocated by the EA in the 2016-17 financial year to provide services for children and young people in voluntary sector youth centres.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education to outline his plans to review the Entitlement Framework.

(AQW 5869/16-21)

Mr Weir: I am currently considering whether any changes to the Entitlement Framework policy, including the relevant statutory requirements, are required.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education to outline his plans to review the school curriculum.

(AQW 5870/16-21)

Mr Weir: I refer the member to my answer to AQW 4066/16-21 tabled by Sandra Overend MLA and published in the official report on 14 October 2016.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the capability of small schools to comply with the requirements of the Entitlement Framework.

(AQW 5871/16-21)

Mr Weir: Larger schools by virtue of having more pupils are better resourced than smaller schools and are, therefore, better able to provide for a fuller educational experience for their learners. However, Entitlement Framework (EF) policy encourages schools to offer courses in collaboration with partner schools and all post-primary schools participate in Area Learning Communities to facilitate this collaboration.

However, there is evidence that schools falling below the Sustainable Schools Policy (SSP) enrolment thresholds can struggle to meet the EF requirements, even when working in collaboration with other schools. Analysis of EF compliance rates in

2015/16 shows a correlation between schools with enrolments below the SSP thresholds and schools failing to meet the minimum requirements of the EF.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education to detail how much (i) his Department; and (ii) each of its arm's-length bodies has spent on consultants since May 2011.

(AQW 5872/16-21)

Mr Weir: In accordance with guidelines set out by the Department of Finance (DoF), 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 May 2011, namely 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16. At this stage, figures for 2016-17 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 DoF 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 2016:-

	2011-12 £'s	2012-13 £'s	2013-14 £'s	2014-15 £'s	2015-16 £'s
Department of Education	60,075	152,415	168,923	167,132	107,423
Education Authority*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Belfast Education & Library Board*	0	0	0	0	n/a
North Eastern Education & Library Board*	0	0	0	0	n/a
South Eastern Education & Library Board*	9,000	0	0	0	n/a
Southern Education & Library Board*	0	0	0	0	n/a
Western Education & Library Board*	450,000	6,927	61,630	0	n/a
Staff Commission for Education & Library Boards*	0	0	0	0	n/a
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	0	0	0	0	0
Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment	6,476	0	0	0	0
Council for Integrated Education	0	47,222	0	0	0
Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta	0	0	0	0	0
General Teaching Council	0	4,750	2,855	0	0
Middletown Centre for Autism	0	0	0	0	0
Youth Council	0	0	0	0	0

* The Education Authority became operational on 1 April 2015 and subsumed all of the Education and Library Boards and the Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Education to detail any projects that have been undertaken by his Department to improve mental health among school pupils.

(AQW 5873/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Department works in partnership with other Departments and agencies, including the Department of Health, in order to provide an appropriate response to identified need on a cohesive, co-ordinated basis.

To this end, the 'iMatter' Programme (see below) and specific developments within the programme are part of the Department's contribution to a number of cross-departmental strategies and action plans, including:

- (Draft) Protect Life 2 – A Strategy for Suicide Prevention in the North of Ireland
- Making Life Better 2013-2023: Strategic Framework for Public Health;
- Bamford Report (Mental Health Review) 2012-15 – currently under Evaluation by contributing Departments; and the
- Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2013-2020.

In relation to specific actions taken by my Department, under the I-Matter programme, new guidance 'Protecting Life in Schools – Helping Protect Against Suicide' issued to schools in March 2016 followed by supporting materials in September 2016. This guidance is allied to the 'Protect Life' strategy and follows the issue of 'A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools', which issued to school in February 2014.

I-Matter

As I explained in my last answer to your question about mental health in schools, 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. The Programme aims to support a school in integrating its individual policies and support systems in a consistent and coherent way.

Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS)

You may be aware also of the ICSS. This service is currently available in the post-primary sector and post-primary cohort in the special school sector and provides over 39,000 counselling sessions annually.

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. Where staff can recognise and respond appropriately to their needs the educational outcome is maximised. An independent counselling service can be such a response to addressing pupil needs.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Education to detail any collaboration between his Department and the Department of Health aimed at improving mental health among secondary school pupils.

(AQW 5874/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Department works in partnership with other Departments and agencies, including the Department of Health, in order to provide an appropriate response to identified need on a cohesive, co-ordinated basis.

To this end, the 'iMatter' Programme (see below) and specific developments within the programme are part of the Department's contribution to a number of cross-departmental strategies and action plans, including:

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Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail how many children have been enrolled in (i) nursery provision provided by primary schools; (ii) voluntary pre-school centres; and (iii) private pre-school centres in each year since 2008.

(AQW 5886/16-21)

Mr Weir: Pre-school enrolments are as follows:

	(i) Nursery classes in primary schools	(ii) Voluntary pre-school centres	(iii) Private pre-school centres
2008/09	8202	6110	519
2009/10	8233	6215	529
2010/11	8435	6929	670
2011/12	8608	7323	826
2012/13	8703	7453	957
2013/14	8952	7319	1041

	(i) Nursery classes in primary schools	(ii) Voluntary pre-school centres	(iii) Private pre-school centres
2014/15	9165	7516	1105
2015/16	9312	7492	1224

Source: NI school census

Notes:

- 1 Enrolments in voluntary and private pre-schools refer to funded pupils only
- 2 Pupils enrolled in nursery schools and in reception classes have been excluded from this table. Therefore, adding the figures does not represent the full extent of funded pre-school provision.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 4979/16-21, to detail all schools in East and North Antrim that have applied for and/or received (i) training; (ii) advice; and (iii) support from the Autism Advisory Service.

(AQW 5917/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has provided the table below which details (i) training, (ii) advice and (iii) direct individual support provided by the Autism Advisory Service to mainstream nursery, primary and post primary schools in North, North/Central and East and East/Central Antrim. The information relates to the past three-year period only.

Nursery School	Training (1), Advice (2), Individual Support (3)
Acorn Integrated Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Ashgrove Nursery School	1 2 3
Ballycastle Intergrated Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Ballyclare Nursery School	1 2 3
Ballyhenry Nursery School	1 3
Ballykeel Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Ballymena Nursery School	1 3
Ballymoney Nursery School	1
Ballysally Nursery School	1
Braidside Integrated Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Broughshane Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Bushmills Nursery School (Unit)	1 2
Carnlough Community Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Clough Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Corran Integrated Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Cuilrath Corner Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Dunclug Nursery School	1 2 3
Earlview Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Gracehill Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Harryville Nursery School (Unit)	1 2
Kilmoyle Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Kylemore Nursery School	1 2 3
Linn Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Mill Strand Integrated Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Monkstown Nursery School	1 2 3
Mossgrove Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Mossley Nursery School	1 2 3

Nursery School	Training (1), Advice (2), Individual Support (3)
Moyle Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Oakfield Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Portstewart Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Rathcoole Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Silverstream Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
St Anthony's Nursery School	1
St Bernard's Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
St James' Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
St Joseph's Nursery School (Unit) Crumlin	1 2 3
St Joseph's Nursery School (Unit) Dunloy B'Mena	1 2 3
St Joseph's Nursery School Antrim	1
St Mary's Nursery School (Unit) Cushendall	1 2 3
St Patrick's & St Brigid's Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
St Patrick's Nursery School (Unit) Loughgiel B'mena	1
Steeple Nursery School	1 3
Sunnylands Nursery School	1
Templepatrick Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
The Irish Society's Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Victoria Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Whitehead Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3
Whitehouse Nursery School (Unit)	1 2 3

Primary School	Training (1) Advice (2) Individual Support (3)
Abbots Cross Primary School	1 2 3
Acorn Integrated Primary School	1 2 3
Antrim Primary School	1 2 3
Armoy Primary School	
Ashgrove Primary School	1 2 3
Ballycarry Primary School	1 2 3
Ballycastle Integrated Primary School	1 2 3
Ballyclare Primary School	1 2 3
Ballycraigy Primary School	1 2 3
Ballyhackett Primary School	1 2 3
Ballyhenry Primary School	1 2 3
Ballykeel Primary School	1 2 3
Ballymena Primary School	1 2 3
Ballymoney Model Integrated Primary School	1 2 3
Ballynure Primary School	1 2 3
Ballysally Primary School	1 2 3
Ballytober Primary School	1 2 3
Balnamore Primary School	1 2 3

Primary School	Training (1) Advice (2) Individual Support (3)
Barnish Primary School	1 2
Braidside Integrated Primary School	1 2 3
Broughshane Primary School	1 2 3
Bushmills Primary School	1 2
Bushvalley Primary School	1 2 3
Cairncastle Primary School	1 2 3
Camphill Primary School	1 2 3
Carhill Integrated Primary School	1 2 3
Carnaghts Primary School	1 2 3
Carnalbanagh Primary School	1 2 3
Carnalridge Primary School	1 2 3
Carniny Primary School	1 2 3
Carnlough Integrated Primary School	1 2 3
Carnmoney Primary School	1 2 3
Carrickfergus Central Primary School	1 2 3
Carrickfergus Model Primary School	1 2 3
Carrowreagh Primary School	1
Castleroe Primary School	1 2 3
Clough Primary School	1 3
Cloughmills Primary School	1
Corran Integrated Primary School	1 2 3
Creavery Primary School	1 2 3
Crumlin Integrated Primary School	1 2 3
Culcrow Primary School	1 2
D H Christie Memorial Primary School	1 2 3
Damhead Primary School	1 2 3
Doagh Primary School	1 2 3
Dunclug Primary School	1 2 3
Dunseverick Primary School	1 2 3
Earlview Primary School	1 2 3
Eden Primary School Ballymoney	1 2 3
Eden Primary School Carrickfergus	1 2 3
Fairview Primary School	1 2 3
Gaelscoil An Chaistil	1 2 3
Gaelscoil Eanna	1 2 3
Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach	1
Garryduff Primary School	1 2 3
Garvagh Primary School	1 2 3
Glenann Primary School	1 2
Glengormley Integrated Primary School	1 2 3
Glenravel Primary School	1 2 3

Primary School	Training (1) Advice (2) Individual Support (3)
Glynn Primary School	1
Gorran Primary School	1
Gracehill Primary School	1 2 3
Greenisland Primary School	1 2 3
Greystone Primary School	1 2 3
Harpur's Hill Primary School	1 2 3
Harryville Primary School	1 2
Hazelbank Primary School	1 2 3
Hezlett Primary School	1 2 3
Hollybank Primary School	1 2 3
Kells & Connor Primary School	1 2
Kilbride Central Primary School	1 2 3
Killowen Primary School	1 2 3
Kilmoyle Primary School	1 2 3
King's Park Primary School	1 2 3
Kirkinriola Primary School	1 2 3
Knockahollet Primary School	1 2
Landhead Primary School	1 2
Larne and Inver Primary School	1
Leaney Primary School	1 2 3
Linn Primary School	1 2 3
Lislagan Primary School	1 2 3
Loanends Primary School	1 2 3
Macosquin Primary School	1 2 3
Mallusk Integrated Primary School	1
Mill Strand Integrated Primary School	1 2 3
Millburn Primary School	1 2 3
Moorfields Primary School	1 2 3
Mossgrove Primary School	1 2 3
Mossley Primary School	1 2 3
Moyle Primary School	1 2 3
Mullaghdubh Primary School	1 2 3
Oakfield Primary School	1 2 3
Olderfleet Primary School	1 2 3
Parkgate Primary School	1 2 3
Parkhall Primary School	1 2 3
Portrush Primary School	1 2 3
Portstewart Primary School	1 2 3
Rathcoole Primary School	1 2 3
Round Tower Integrated Primary School	1 2 3
Seaview Primary School	1 3

Primary School	Training (1) Advice (2) Individual Support (3)
Silverstream Primary School	1 2 3
Six Mile Integrated Primary School	1 2 3
St Anne's Primary School	1
St Anthony's Primary School	1 2 3
St Bernard's Primary School	1 2 3
St Brigid's Primary School Ballymena	1 2 3
St Brigid's Primary School Ballymoney	1 2 3
St Brigid's Primary School Cloughmills	1 2 3
St Ciaran's Primary School	1 2 3
St Colmcille's Primary School	1 2 3
St Columba's Primary School Garvagh	1 2 3
St Colum's Primary School	1 2 3
St Comgall's Primary School	1 2 3
St James' Primary School	1 2 3
St John's Primary School Carnlough	1 2 3
St John's Primary School Coleraine	1 2 3
St Joseph's Primary School Crumlin	1 2 3
St Joseph's Primary School Dunloy	1 2 3
St Joseph's Primary School Stiles Antrim	1 2 3
St MacNissi's Primary School Larne	1 3
St MacNissi's Primary School Newtownabbey	1 2 3
St MacNissius' Primary School	1
St Malachy's Primary School	
St Mary's on-the-Hill Primary School	1 2 3
St Mary's Primary School Cargan	1
St Mary's Primary School Gortaclea Cushendall	1 2 3
St Mary's Primary School Rathlin Island B'castle	
St Nicholas' Primary School	1 2 3
St Olcan's Primary School	
St Patrick's & St Brigid's Primary School	1 2 3
St Patrick's & St Joseph's Federated Primary School	1 3
St Patrick's Primary School Glenariff B'mena	1
St Patrick's Primary School Loughgiel B'mena	1
St Patrick's Primary School Portrush	2 3
Straid Primary School	1
Straidbilly Primary School	
Straidhavern Primary School	1 2 3
Sunnylands Primary School	1 2 3
Templepatrick Primary School	2 3
The Irish Society's Primary School	1 2 3
The Thompson Primary School	1 2 3

Primary School	Training (1) Advice (2) Individual Support (3)
Tildarg Primary School	1 2
Tir-na-Nog Primary School	1 2 3
Toreagh Primary School	1
Upper Ballyboley Primary School	1 2 3
Victoria Primary School	1 2 3
Whiteabbey Primary School	1 2 3
Whitehead Primary School	1 2 3
Whitehouse Primary School	1 2 3
William Pinkerton Memorial Primary School	1 2 3
Woodburn Primary School	1 2 3
Woodlawn Primary School	1 2 3

Post Primary School	Training (1) Advice (2) Individual Support (3)
Abbey Community College	1 2 3
Antrim Grammar School	1 2 3
Ballycastle High School	1 2
Ballyclare High School	1 2
Ballyclare Secondary School	1 2 3
Ballymena Academy	1 2 3
Ballymoney High School	1 2 3
Belfast High School	1 2 3
Cambridge House Grammar School	2
Carrickfergus College	1 2 3
Carrickfergus Grammar School	1 2
Coleraine College	1 2 3
Coleraine Grammar School	1 2 3
Cross and Passion College	1 2
Crumlin Integrated College	1 2 3
Dalriada School	1 2
Dominican College	2
Downshire School	1 2 3
Dunclug College	1 2 3
Dunluce School	1 2
Edmund Rice College	1 2 3
Glengormley High School	1 2 3
Larne Grammar School	1 2 3
Larne High School	2 3
Loreto College	1 2 3
North Coast Integrated College	1 2 3
Our Lady of Lourdes High School	1 2 3
Parkhall Int College	1 2 3

Post Primary School	Training (1) Advice (2) Individual Support (3)
Slemish College	1 2 3
St Joseph's College	1
St Killian's College	1 2 3
St Louis' Grammar School	1 2
St Patrick's College Ballymena	1 2 3
Ulidia Integrated College	1 2 3

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education whether he plans to continue to support the provision of music lessons in primary and post-primary schools.

(AQW 5918/16-21)

Mr Weir: Music is a statutory part of the curriculum from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 3 and pupils may also choose to study it as an exam choice at Key Stage 4. All schools are therefore required by law to make provision for teaching music.

In addition, the Education Authority's (EA) Music Service aims to provide all children and young people with the opportunity to avail of a musical education of the highest quality. This service is a non-statutory one and will be required to consider how it might reach challenging savings targets. It is the responsibility of the EA to prioritise its resources accordingly and schools also have an important role to play in ensuring that our young people access music education.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister of Education, in light of the decision to put the York Street Interchange project on hold, whether any EU funded projects in his Department are at risk following the decision to Brexit.

(AQW 5935/16-21)

Mr Weir: €35.3m is being made available for Shared Education through the PEACE IV Programme covering Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland. This comprises €30m through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) plus €5.3m government matched funding.

HM Treasury has confirmed that it will provide a guarantee for all structural and investment fund projects signed before the UK leaves the EU. Applications from delivery bodies are currently being processed and no changes to the Programme are envisaged.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister of Education for his assessment on whether inspections carried out in Irish medium schools by inspectors with little or no Irish language skills is an appropriate method of assessing these schools.

(AQW 5989/16-21)

Mr Weir: All members of the inspection team for IME primary schools are fluent in Irish and have experience evaluating Irish immersion education.

There are two stand alone IME post-primary schools with 605 and 48 pupils respectively (and 3 IME units). To inspect the larger IME post-primary school ETI worked in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Inspectorate in the Republic of Ireland to increase the number of fluent Irish speaking inspectors on the team. The ETI has a long standing and productive working relationship with DES and has training and quality assurance measures in place.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Education when the Education Authority will publish the Finalised Outturn Statements for the Southern Region for 2015-16.

(AQW 5993/16-21)

Mr Weir: Since 1 April 2015 the Education Authority (EA) has operated as a single organisation. As a single organisation the EA intends to publish one outturn statement in relation to 2015-16 which will include all schools for which the EA is the funding authority. The EA has advised me that this information will be published in the New Year.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Education for an update on plans to give teachers a 1per cent wage increase.

(AQW 6222/16-21)

Mr Weir: Management Side of the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) has recommended a 1% cost of living increase for teachers for 2016, in addition to incremental progression already paid for 2015 and 2016. Department of Finance approval, in line with NI Executive Pay Policy guidance has been received.

Teachers' Terms and Conditions, including pay, are negotiated through the forum of the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC), at which I am represented. It would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education (i) to outline the reason for the decision not to offer teachers a pay rise for 2015-16 and a 1 per cent cost of living uplift in 2016-17; and (ii) for an update on the negotiations on these matters.

(AQW 6315/16-21)

Mr Weir: Management Side of the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) has recommended a 1% cost of living increase for teachers for 2016, in addition to incremental progression already paid for 2015 and 2016. Department of Finance approval, in line with NI Executive Pay Policy guidance, has been received.

Teachers' Terms and Conditions, including pay, are negotiated through the forum of the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC), at which I am represented. It would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

Department for the Economy

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for the Economy what impact the vote to leave the European Union will have on local universities.

(AQW 2467/16-21)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister for the Economy): The impact on local universities of the vote to leave the European Union will depend upon the outcome of negotiations in the period of up to two years after Article 50 is triggered.

Along with the Executive Office, I am engaging with HMG to ensure Northern Ireland's voice is heard and needs are addressed.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister for the Economy to list the courses, subjects and levels available at the Newcastle campus of the South East Regional College in (i) 2014-15; (ii) 2015-16; and (iii) 2016-17.

(AQW 2727/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department does not hold lists of courses, subjects and levels specifically available at the Downpatrick or Newcastle campuses of the South East Regional College that you have requested.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for the Economy to indicate to ongoing budgetary consequences of the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme.

(AQW 2999/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The estimated impact in terms of cost to the Northern Ireland block over the next 5 years is likely to be in the order of £140 million if no action is taken. However, I have instructed officials to look at options for cost controls going forward and I hope to go out to consultation on this later in the year.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for the Economy to publish, or place in the Assembly Library, a full list of the beneficiaries from the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme.

(AQW 3000/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I have no plans to publish, or place in the Assembly Library, a full list of beneficiaries from the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for the Economy what training his staff receive in completing answers to Assembly Questions in line with departmental guidance.

(AQW 3240/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Centre for Applied Learning in the Department of Finance is responsible for the delivery of generic training and development services to the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for the Economy whether there are there any conditions attached to the £9m subsidy to United Airlines that will impose restraint on fare increases.

(AQW 3251/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Detail of the agreement with United Airlines is commercially sensitive information.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for the Economy what efforts are being made to attract an air service to Canada.

(AQW 3373/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Re-establishing a direct air service between Northern Ireland and Canada is a priority for my Department. There are long established and highly valued family, cultural and business links which exist between Canada and Northern Ireland and which make direct air access on this corridor highly desirable to Northern Ireland's growth aspirations.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for the Economy, in light of the comments by the deputy First Minister during Question Time on 19 September 2016, when he will present the (i) June monitoring round; and (ii) forthcoming October monitoring to the departmental committee.

(AQW 3649/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The June Monitoring outcome was agreed following a series of discussions between departmental Ministers. This reflected a change of approach due to the new dynamic in the Executive with the presence of an official opposition.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on the provision of superfast broadband on Main Street, Lisnaskea.

(AQW 3687/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The contract for delivery of the Superfast Roll-out Programme was awarded to BT on 27 February 2015. The project is expected to provide access to superfast broadband, with speeds of at least 24 Megabits per second, to a further 39,000 premises by 31 December 2017.

While improvements are scheduled to take place in Main Street, Lisnaskea by June 2017, it is too early to indicate precise locations that will benefit. Details of the current roll-out plans at 5 digit postcode level can be found at <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/superfast-rollout-programme-phase-2>.

The intervention areas for my Department's projects are identified through complex engineering models prepared by BT under their contracts with DfE. The aim is always to ensure value for money while maximising the number of premises that benefit from the funding available. It is not possible to prioritise specific geographical areas or individual premises without impacting on the operational delivery of the projects.

It is important to recognise that there are other alternative technologies that can be used to deliver broadband services. For those premises that continue to have access to services of less than 2Mbps, the Department is currently administering a support scheme which offers assistance with the cost of installing a basic broadband service (using satellite or wireless technology), from a list of registered suppliers. It ensures that no household or business- which meets the eligibility criteria, need pay more than £400, to access a basic broadband scheme over a 12 month period. Details of the scheme can be found on DfE's website at www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-better-broadband-scheme.

Mr McGuigan asked the Minister for the Economy to outline his Department's strategy to extend superfast broadband services further into rural areas following the BT phase 2 superfast rollout programme.

(AQW 3858/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Under my Department's Superfast Roll-out Programme, it is expected that access to superfast broadband, with speeds of at least 24 Megabits per second (Mbps), will be provided to a further 39,000 premises by December 2017.

It is important to recognise that as well as fibre based services there are alternative technologies that can be used to deliver broadband services. The Department provides support under the Better Broadband Scheme, with the cost of installing a basic broadband service (using satellite or wireless technology), from a list of registered suppliers. Aimed at premises that cannot access services greater than 2Mbps, this scheme ensures that no eligible household or business need pay more than £400 to access a basic broadband scheme, over a 12 month period. Further details can be found on DfE's website at:

<http://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-better-broadband-scheme>

In recognising the importance of access to faster broadband, the Executive's draft Programme for Government (PfG) includes an Indicator to improve internet connectivity. My department is keen to put in place infrastructure that will improve and extend broadband services, particularly in rural areas. The outcome of the PfG discussions and related budget will determine the nature and scale of my Department's future telecommunications interventions.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for the Economy how many students from Queen's University, Belfast have been expelled for taking part in anti-social behaviour in the Holyland district.

(AQW 3910/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: While my Department provides funding and sets the strategic direction for the Higher Education sector, the Universities are autonomous institutions and are responsible for their own policies and procedures including those concerning the discipline of students. As such, my Department does not hold this information.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for the Economy to outline his plans to ban zero hours contracts.

(AQO 316/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The issue of zero hours contracts was consulted upon in 2014, and the Employment Act (NI) 2016 contains a regulation-making power to address issues connected to their use. The focus of this provision is on tackling abuses in these types of contracts.

Officials have commenced informal discussions with stakeholders to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the types of situations and sectors where zero hours contracts are used effectively and those in which there would appear to be abuses.

Rather than introducing a ban on zero hours contracts, my intention is to address abuses where they exist whilst enabling businesses and workers to make use of zero hours contracts in those situations where they work for both parties.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for the Economy how many staff are employed in his Department's Information Service; and what is the annual cost of this service.

(AQW 4324/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Department for Economy has seven Press Officers.

The Department for the Economy came into existence on 9 May 2016 and therefore we can only provide costs of the service from that date. The total salary cost for these Press Officers from May 2016 to Sep 2016 is £124,631.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for the Economy to detail the range of courses that are delivered by Strabane Training Services; and for his assessment as to how Strabane Training Services assist and empower young people towards employability in an area.

(AQW 4328/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Strabane Training Services is contracted to deliver my department's ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success programmes.

ApprenticeshipsNI training is provided in the following occupational areas; Business Administration, Construction, Hairdressing, Child Care Learning and Development, Information Technology, Retail, Transport and Storage and Warehousing.

Training for Success training is provided in following occupational areas; Administration, Construction, Hairdressing, Health and Social Care, Information Technology, Retail, and Transport.

The most recently published Education and Training Inspectorate report for Strabane Training Services was published on 2 May 2013. The report indicates that the quality of training provided by Strabane Training Services was assessed as "very good". The report also highlighted "very good" provision of employability skills training and "good" provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance.

The Education and Training Inspectorate has carried out a further inspection of Strabane Training Services and it is anticipated that this report will be published by the start of December this year.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on the status of the EnergyWise programme, including its (i) aims; (ii) objectives; and (iii) future plans.

(AQW 4377/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I am currently considering future energy efficiency policy. No decision has therefore been made with regards to the aims, objectives and future plans of the proposed EnergyWise Scheme.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister for the Economy to detail (i) the number of cases heard by the Labour Relations Agency in the last five years; and (ii) the number of case determinations in favour of the (a) employer; and (b) employee, broken down by categories of case type.

(AQW 4580/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Labour Relations Agency hears only a small number of disputes which necessarily result in a final determination, through independent arbitration. Most disputes dealt with by the Agency are subject to a different process, namely conciliation, where the Agency's duty is to assist the parties to reach a settlement. Such a settlement is binding if concluded, but is not a determination in the sense of having been decided by an external adjudicator.

There have been no arbitrations arising out of collective agreements during the last five years. Statistics on individual arbitrations provided through the Agency's statutory arbitration scheme are set out in the table below.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total received	1	7	8	4	1
Agreement rejected		1			
Withdrawn prior to hearing					1
Settled prior to hearing			1		
On hold				1	
Total heard	1	6	7	3	
Outcome for employer	1	3	4	3	
Outcome for employee		2	1		

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Split decision			2		
Settled by agreement		1			

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister for the Economy to publish the terms of reference of the current BT contract to provide fibre optic broadband provision.

(AQW 4586/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The BT contract was awarded via a nationally negotiated framework agreement by the UK Government through the Department of Culture Media and Sport. Details of the terms of reference and template contract document can be found at <http://data.gov.uk/data/contracts-finder-archive/contract/1062212/>.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for the Economy how many males were involved in childcare apprenticeships in (i) 2013-14; (ii) 2014-15; and (iii) 2015-16.

(AQW 4646/16-21)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) There were 8 males at April 2014.
- (ii) There were 2 males at April 2015.
- (iii) There were 4 males at April 2016.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for the Economy how many females were involved in apprenticeships in engineering in (i) 2013-14; (ii) 2014-15; and (iii) 2015-16.

(AQW 4649/16-21)

Mr Hamilton:

- (iv) There were 35 females at April 2014.
- (v) There were 56 females at April 2015.
- (vi) There were 34 females at April 2016.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for the Economy how many females were involved in apprenticeships in Information Technology in (i) 2013-14; (ii) 2014-15; and (iii) 2015-16.

(AQW 4650/16-21)

Mr Hamilton:

- (vii) There were 26 females at April 2014.
- (viii) There were 26 females at April 2015.
- (ix) There were 55 females at April 2016.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for the Economy to list the companies in West Tyrone that have benefitted from the innovation technology transfer programme FUSION in the last five years.

(AQW 4729/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Companies based in the West Tyrone electoral area that have undertaken Fusion since 2011 are:

- McColgan's Quality Foods, Strabane
- Waste Systems, Omagh
- Telestack, Omagh (current participants)

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for the Economy whether he has plans for new builds for the Regional College in West Tyrone.

(AQW 4844/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Two Further Education colleges, South West College and North West Regional College have campuses in the West Tyrone constituency, based in Omagh and Strabane respectively. Individual colleges are responsible for planning and managing their own estates and for bringing forward business cases for any major capital build proposals for my approval.

South West College's Omagh campus was constructed in 2005 under a 30 year Private Finance Initiative contract and there are no plans for any further major capital investment at this stage.

North West Regional College is currently reviewing a number of development options in relation to its Strabane campus. However a business case has not yet been finalised. Any proposals received will be fully considered by my Department and any decision to proceed with investment at the campus will be subject to the availability of capital funding.

Ms Archibald asked the Minister for the Economy how many people have (i) participated in the Erasmus programme until 2014; and (ii) participated to date in the Erasmus Plus programme.
(AQW 5357/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Table 1 below provides details of the number of students and staff from Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions who undertook Erasmus and Erasmus+ placements since 2007.

Table 1

Year	Students	Staff
2007-2008	291	28
2008-2009	355	29
2009-2010	336	26
2010-2011	361	39
2011-2012	433	36
2012-2013	462	34
2013-2014	493	40
2014-2015*	485	38
2015-2016*	611	36

* Erasmus+ commenced 2014

Table 2 below provides details of the number of students and staff from Northern Ireland Further Education Institutions who undertook Erasmus and Erasmus+ placements since 2007.

It should be noted that North West Regional College was the only FE College to participate on the Erasmus programme (which applied to Higher Education mobility only), between 2007 and 2013.

Table 2

Year	Student	Staff
2007-2008	0	0
2008-2009	0	3
2009-2010	0	0
2010-2011	0	2
2011-2012	0	3
2012-2013	0	5
2013-2014	3	6
2014-2015*	145	95
2015-2016*	130	161
2016 – 2017*	430	214

* Erasmus+ commenced 2014

Mr Aiken asked the Minister for the Economy when the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment received the Ministerial Energy and Manufacturing Advisory Group Report.
(AQW 5606/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department received the Energy and Manufacturing Advisory Group report on 5 April 2016.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on the future application of the European Social Fund.
(AQO 566/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: On 12 August 2016, the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer provided a guarantee that all EU structural and investment fund projects signed before the Autumn Statement would be fully funded, even when the projects continue beyond the UK departure from the EU. In a further statement on 3rd October, the Chancellor extended the guarantee for projects signed, in the normal course of business, up until the actual date of departure.

The original plan was for projects to be in place to run from April 2018 until March 2022 and it would be our intention to proceed on this basis.

Preparatory work for the second call for projects will commence during 2017 with a view to having projects approved for April 2018 in line with previous communications.

My Department has placed an update in relation to European Social Funding on the Department for the Economy website.

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/2014-2020-ni-esf-programme-funding-next-steps>

Department of Finance

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance (i) how many agency staff have been engaged in the Civil Service during and since the Voluntary Exit Scheme; (ii) at what cost; and (iii) how many of those staff exited under the scheme then returned as agency staff.

(AQW 5462/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir (The Minister of Finance): The NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme was launched on 2 March 2015 and the final tranche exited at 31 May 2016. The number of agency workers engaged in the Civil Service at 1 April 2015 was 372 and at 1 June 2016 was 497. By way of some comparison, headcount in the Civil Service reduced by 3,327 in the period 1 April 2015 to 1 July 2016, which in itself will generate an annual pay bill saving of approximately £100 million.

The cost of agency workers engaged in the Civil Service during and since the Voluntary Exit Scheme is £10,634,853.80. This represents the total expenditure on agency staff during the period 1 April 2015 – 1 June 2016.

The NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme was open only to permanent NICS employees. Agency staff are not NICS employees and so were not eligible to apply and therefore none of those left under the Scheme then returned as agency staff. In relation to the number of civil servants who exited under the Scheme who then returned as agency staff, this information is not held by my Department, as it is permissible under the rules of the NICS Compensation Scheme for staff who leave via the Voluntary Exit Scheme to take up employment subsequently as an agency worker.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Finance for an update on his Department's plans to reduce or eliminate rates on community-rooted amateur sports clubs.

(AQW 5468/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: As you will now be aware, the Assembly passed the necessary legislation for these changes on 25 October 2016.

There will no back-dated claims for the relief and it will apply only from 26 October onwards. LPS have already adjusted systems to enable receipt of applications for the enhancement.

The change will enhance relief from 80% to 100% for Community Amateur Sports Clubs without a bar. Those clubs will have to apply for the enhanced relief.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Finance for an update on the Civil Service Equal Pay Settlement.

(AQW 5729/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I have understood this question to relate to the PSNI/NIO "Equal Pay" issue.

As Minister Sammy Wilson said in 2013 "The arguments put forward by those lobbying on this issue do not change the fact that the position in terms of eligibility has been clear from the outset of the equal pay settlement and this has now been upheld in the County Court, which found that the settlement applied only to periods of service in the 11 NICS departments and did not apply to bodies such as the NIO and PANI/PSNI, who had lawfully received delegation for pay matters, which was still in effect during the relevant time period. No legal liability has been established upon which to base any rationale to approve payment of the settlement to PSNI staff."

That said I have sympathy for those affected. At the time of the NICS equal pay settlement, and during the reckonable period on which the settlement was based, the British Government, through the NIO pay group, were responsible for the pay negotiations for many of those affected. I have therefore written to the British Secretary of State, urging him to take responsibility for this issue and to come forward with a resolution.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Finance to detail the amount of money held in the Renewable Heat Incentive contingency fund; and its budgetary source.

(AQW 5734/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: As part of my October Monitoring statement I confirmed that the Executive has set aside £20 million Resource DEL centrally to meet pressures anticipated in relation to the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Finance to detail the number of cases where boundary lines have been changed on first registration in Belfast when the Compulsory Registration of Title (No. 2) Order Northern Ireland was introduced in 2002.
(AQW 5762/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Land Registry is not aware of any unauthorised changes to property boundary lines since the introduction of the Compulsory Registration of Title (No 2) Order Northern Ireland 2002. Under Section 69 of the Land Registration Act (Northern Ireland 1970) the Registrar of Titles has limited powers to amend boundaries and may only do so with the consent of all interested parties or where notice has been served on those interested parties of an intention to rectify boundaries and no objection has been received.

The Registrar of Titles can provide further guidance on this issue and she can be contacted at Land & Property Services, Lanyon Place, 7 Lanyon Plaza, Belfast BT1 3LP or telephone 9033 6314.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance, pursuant to AQW 4604/16-21, when a formal request for derogation will be submitted.
(AQW 5942/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The formal request seeking derogation was issued to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 19 October 2016.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance, pursuant to AQW 4986/16-21, until which date will funding be guaranteed for structural and investment fund projects signed after the Autumn Statement and prior to the UK leaving the EU.
(AQW 5943/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I expect the guarantee to cover funds committed, in accordance with David Gauke the Chief Secretary's letter, for the duration of the projects approved.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance, pursuant to AQW 4604/16-21, (i) whether he has spoken to his counterparts in Scotland, England and Wales on the issue of housing association reclassification; and whether he has considered a joint application for derogation along with the other devolved administrations.
(AQW 5944/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I have discussed the issue with my counterparts and my officials continue to work closely with their opposite numbers in relation to the reclassification.

I wrote to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 19 October to formally request that the implementation of the budgetary changes, arising as a result of the housing association reclassification, be delayed to allow the necessary legislative and regulatory changes to be progressed.

While I continue to work with my counterparts a joint letter would not have been appropriate due to differences in terms of both the reasons for the classification decision and the legislative processes.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Finance whether paragraph 18 of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Code of Ethics applies to complaints about the behaviour of non-NICS staff of non-departmental public bodies, where such complaints are referred to the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland under paragraph 17 of that Code.
(AQW 5968/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The NICS Code of Ethics policy applies to the behaviour and conduct of NICS staff only, and does not apply to non-NICS staff of non-departmental public bodies.

In accordance with paragraph 18 of the policy if a member of NICS staff decides to raise a concern and considers that he/she did not receive a reasonable response from his/her department or agency, the matter can be reported to the Civil Service Commissioners.

The content of paragraph 17 of the policy makes reference to staff (NICS) observing the behaviour of his/her NI Civil Service colleagues, and to signpost staff who decide to report issues of concern.

Ms Bailey asked the Minister of Finance when he will answer AQW 5551/16-21.
(AQW 6342/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: AQW 5551/16-21 was answered on 27 October 2016.

Department of Health

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health whether there has been investment in capital works on the helipad at Royal Victoria Hospital for the air ambulance service.

(AQW 2804/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Health): NIAS is currently in the process of developing a business case for the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service. Once this has been approved, it is estimated that design and construction of the helipad will take 6 – 9 months at a capital cost of approximately £750k - £800k.

To date there has been no investment in capital works on the helipad and capital funding will not be released until the business case has been approved.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister of Health for an update on the implementation of the nine key recommendations of the Review of GP-Led Primary Care Services in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 2864/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I fully appreciate the challenges facing GP-led services and I am committed to developing a plan that will ensure their long-term sustainability. I am currently considering the findings and recommendations of the GP-led care working group's report within the context of the development of my vision for the future of health and social care and future funding priorities for my Department.

A number of investments have already been made in recent years in the areas identified by the working group's report. The number of GP training places has been increased from 65 per year to 85, the biggest increase in more than ten years, and a new scheme has been put in place to retain GPs in general practice.

In addition my Department is investing up to £14m by 2020/21 to put almost 300 pharmacists into practices to see patients, improve care and ease the workload on GPs. I also recently announced an additional £900k to support the work of GP Federations. GP Federations will help practices work together to increase their resilience and meet rising demand.

There have also been significant developments in information technology aimed at reducing GPs' administrative workload, freeing up GP time for those patients who most need to see them, and making it easier for patients to access their GP practice.

I am determined to build on these investments to ensure everyone here continues to have access to sustainable, high quality GP services.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the Mental Health Rights Campaign statement on the percentage of the health budget allocated to mental health services.

(AQW 3186/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: On the basis of the commissioning plan allocation to mental health services, the figure allocated to the mental health programme in 2015/16 was approximately £255m, which represented just over 5.5% of the Departmental Expenditure Limit of £4.7bn. This £255m does not include capital depreciation or interest costs, mental health patients treated on general acute wards, dementia patients (who are treated in the elderly programme of care), spend within primary care such as GPs and Pharmacy and in particular the community drugs budget of which the mental health element forms a substantial part.

I have recently written to the Participation and Practice of Rights (PPR) Mental Health Rights Campaign to reiterate that mental health is one of my key priorities as Health Minister, and that I am committed to improving mental health in the North of Ireland.

I am looking forward to tackling issues in relation to funding of mental health, development of new services, improved delivery of those services, and ensuring that there is genuine and meaningful involvement of service users at every stage. Moving towards parity of esteem – making progress to the point where mental health gets its fair share of time, effort, attention and resources – is a concept I am committed to.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, pursuant to AQW 43502/11-15 and AQW 2863/16-21, why the business case has not been progressed.

(AQW 3294/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The business case has not been progressed due to the lack of available capital funding. Progression and approval of the business cases is subject to the outcome of the Executive's Budget and DoH's Capital Priorities review for 2017-21.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health when she expects a completed report from the Western Health and Social Care Trust on the underspend for Adults with Learning Disabilities; and whether the report will be released to the Assembly.

(AQW 3467/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Western Health and Social Care Trust have been instructed to provide regular reports to my Department so that progress can continue to be closely monitored. The first update report was received on 2nd September 2016. Further reports will be provided on a quarterly basis. The publication of these reports is ultimately a matter for the Western Trust.

I have also continued to engage directly with families and carers with whom I met again recently. In light of that meeting, I have asked for an independent person to be appointed to address the breakdown in confidence in the Trust and, crucially, to facilitate the establishment of true partnership working going forward. I have also appointed a senior official in the Department to oversee this process and to act as a contact point in the Department for the families who, understandably, want their views and concerns to be listened to and addressed. This has motivated my actions since the issue first came to my attention. This will continue to be the case going forward.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health for an update on the Task and Finish Group established to reform the Individual Funding Requests process.
(AQW 3526/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Following public consultation on the findings of an evaluation into the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process, a clinically led Task and Finish Group was established to take forward work to revise the IFR process under formal project management structures and arrangements.

The Task and Finish Group Project Board met for the first time at 3pm on 23 March 2016 and further meetings have been held on 27 April (3pm), 18 May (3pm), 24 June (10am) and 7 October 2016 (3.30pm).

The Project Board tasked a sub-group to develop new policy, including governance and procedures. Given the nature of the task and the clinical commitments of the members, much of the work is carried out virtually. However, the sub-group has physically met on three occasions with a number of internal meetings having also taken place. The work is well advanced, which the sub-group reported to the Project Board at the last meeting.

I expect my officials to report to me in the autumn and I will publish the new IFR policy as soon as possible after this.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health to list the dates and times the Task and Finish Group, established to reform the Individual Funding Requests process, has met since she came to office.
(AQW 3527/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Following public consultation on the findings of an evaluation into the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process, a clinically led Task and Finish Group was established to take forward work to revise the IFR process under formal project management structures and arrangements.

The Task and Finish Group Project Board met for the first time at 3pm on 23 March 2016 and further meetings have been held on 27 April (3pm), 18 May (3pm), 24 June (10am) and 7 October 2016 (3.30pm).

The Project Board tasked a sub-group to develop new policy, including governance and procedures. Given the nature of the task and the clinical commitments of the members, much of the work is carried out virtually. However, the sub-group has physically met on three occasions with a number of internal meetings having also taken place. The work is well advanced, which the sub-group reported to the Project Board at the last meeting.

I expect my officials to report to me in the autumn and I will publish the new IFR policy as soon as possible after this.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health on which date the Task and Finish Group, established to reform the Individual Funding Requests process, will present its report; and when it will be made public.
(AQW 3528/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Following public consultation on the findings of an evaluation into the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process, a clinically led Task and Finish Group was established to take forward work to revise the IFR process under formal project management structures and arrangements.

The Task and Finish Group Project Board met for the first time at 3pm on 23 March 2016 and further meetings have been held on 27 April (3pm), 18 May (3pm), 24 June (10am) and 7 October 2016 (3.30pm).

The Project Board tasked a sub-group to develop new policy, including governance and procedures. Given the nature of the task and the clinical commitments of the members, much of the work is carried out virtually. However, the sub-group has physically met on three occasions with a number of internal meetings having also taken place. The work is well advanced, which the sub-group reported to the Project Board at the last meeting.

I expect my officials to report to me in the autumn and I will publish the new IFR policy as soon as possible after this.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health to outline the consultation arrangements for the report of Task and Finish Group, established to reform the Individual Funding Requests process, and on which date consultation is due to commence.
(AQW 3529/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Following public consultation on the findings of an evaluation into the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process, a clinically led Task and Finish Group was established to take forward work to revise the IFR process under formal project management structures and arrangements.

The Task and Finish Group Project Board met for the first time at 3pm on 23 March 2016 and further meetings have been held on 27 April (3pm), 18 May (3pm), 24 June (10am) and 7 October 2016 (3.30pm).

The Project Board tasked a sub-group to develop new policy, including governance and procedures. Given the nature of the task and the clinical commitments of the members, much of the work is carried out virtually. However, the sub-group has physically met on three occasions with a number of internal meetings having also taken place. The work is well advanced, which the sub-group reported to the Project Board at the last meeting.

I expect my officials to report to me in the autumn and I will publish the new IFR policy as soon as possible after this.

Mr Middleton asked the Minister of Health why the hearing loss pilot scheme to address the backlog of waiting lists has been put on hold.

(AQW 3867/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: In their initial preparation for a market sounding exercise, the HSCB engaged with HSC Trust Service Managers on their audiology service requirements and workforce plans to address the current backlog and future targets. This included, for example, that no patient over 55 years old is waiting longer than 9 weeks for assessment and 13 weeks to have a hearing aid fitted, once diagnosed, by 31 March 2017.

These plans were developed further at a HSC Trust workforce strategy and planning workshop in September 2016. As an outcome, priority has been given in the short term to the development of plans to reduce waiting times by March 2017.

The HSCB has advised that it has reprioritised the resources for the hearing loss pilot to fund delivery of the HSC Trusts' waiting list backlog plans. It is now working with the Trusts, my Department and the British Academy of Audiology to review the current workforce and produce a workforce plan to ensure the future sustainability of HSC services. In consequence, the pilot is now on hold.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health what impact the shortage of Health Visitors in the Western Health and Social Care Trust is having on patient care.

(AQW 4091/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: A prolonged period of significant staff shortages within Health Visiting in the Western Health and Social Care Trust (WH SCT), has resulted in the Trust not having the capacity to deliver the full universal 'Healthy Child, Healthy Future' programme to all preschool children. Priority is, therefore, given to contacts in the first year of life, vulnerable families, child protection families and immunisations.

Universal families and those requiring core interventions are receiving a step down service based on assessed need.

In order to address this, the Public Health Agency has worked with the Health and Social Care Board to increase the capacity in the 5 Health and Social Care Trusts. This has resulted in an additional 3.4 WTE Band 6 Health Visitors and 2.8 Band 7 Health Visitor Supervisors for WH SCT. The WH SCT has commissioned 8 student Health Visitors for this year and the benefits will be realised in 2017.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health when the Bengoa Report will be published.

(AQW 4291/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The report was published on 25th October 2016.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health when the Bengoa report will be published.

(AQW 4334/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The report was published on 25th October 2016.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health what proposals she has to introduce an Adoption Support Fund to help families with adopted children with therapeutic needs.

(AQW 4447/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: HSC Trust Therapeutic Teams for Looked After and Adopted Children provide support to young people and their families who require specific therapeutic and support as part of an adoptive family. Through in-year funding, I was able to make a further investment in these services, particularly for those young people who have suffered from, or been exposed to, trauma. Further work on the nature and quantum of support required to meet need will be undertaken in the context of new adoption legislation which I plan to consult on as soon as possible.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health for an update on local junior doctors' contracts.

(AQW 4533/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I believe that working towards a negotiated agreement is preferable to any imposed implementation of new terms and conditions of service for junior doctors. I am aware of the position taken in Scotland and Wales and likewise I have no intention of imposing a contract in the north of Ireland.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health to outline the reasons for the delay in staff receiving the 2016-17 award, as per the pay review body recommendations.
(AQW 4745/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Final approval by the Department of Finance of the Agenda for Change and Salaried Doctors' and Dentists' 2016/17 Pay remits was received on 7th October 2016.

The payroll team in the Business Services Organisation has provided assurances that the vast majority of staff will receive their uplift and arrears in November.

I understand that only those staff groups whose allowances need to be manually updated on the payroll system might experience a delay, but they should get their uplifts and arrears in December or January at the very latest.

Mr Lyons asked the Minister of Health to outline the estimated cost of making Sorafenib available to people diagnosed with cancer.
(AQW 5460/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Due to the complexity and range of clinical indications to which sorafenib might be appropriate, it is not possible to estimate a generic cost for sorafenib treatment.

The HSC is guided by (NICE) when considering the many new drugs and treatments introduced each year. Sorafenib has not yet been fully assessed by NICE however it is expected that guidance will be issued in February 2017. When the final guidance is issued, my Department will consider it under the usual process for NICE technology appraisals.

Mr Lyons asked the Minister of Health whether her Department has any plans to make Sorafenib available to people diagnosed with cancer.
(AQW 5461/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Due to the complexity and range of clinical indications to which sorafenib might be appropriate, it is not possible to estimate a generic cost for sorafenib treatment.

The HSC is guided by (NICE) when considering the many new drugs and treatments introduced each year. Sorafenib has not yet been fully assessed by NICE however it is expected that guidance will be issued in February 2017. When the final guidance is issued, my Department will consider it under the usual process for NICE technology appraisals.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Health whether she has plans to extend the option of hypnobirthing across Health and Social Care Trusts.
(AQW 5466/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: It is a matter for each trust to evaluate and make the necessary plans to extend the use of complementary therapies, including hypnobirthing.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health what steps her Department is taking to reduce the waiting list for patients seeking a first consultant-led ophthalmology appointment.
(AQW 5478/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Health and Social Care Board is working with primary and secondary care on 'Developing Eyecare Partnerships', a five year plan to improve the commissioning and delivery of eyecare services in the North. The twelve objectives of the plan encompass all elements of service reform including promotion of eye health, legislative requirements, workforce development and the development of integrated care pathways supported by IT developments and professional skill mix. Developing Eyecare Partnerships aims to ensure that service planning and reconfiguration will deliver safe and effective care equitably for all patients both in the primary and secondary care setting.

Work is under way on demand management initiatives in primary care which will help to reduce demand for secondary care through the development of a primary care-based service for acute non-sight threatening eye conditions and the four major ophthalmic disease entities; glaucoma, cataract, macular and diabetic retinopathy.

The Board is also delivering improvements in the primary/secondary care interface through the introduction of electronic referrals within primary care optometry, and the launch of two optometry/ophthalmology Project ECHO Knowledge Networks which enable primary care optometrists and secondary care ophthalmologists to share learning.

Within secondary care, the Board has invested in recruitment of community optometrists with a special interest in the secondary care setting and co-location of diagnostics and treatment within the service; and is exploring alternative ways of delivering ophthalmology services, with the aim of creating more capacity.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health to detail the capital projects under consideration by her Department and each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 5484/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: A large number of capital investment projects have been proposed by the Health and Social Care Board, Public Health Authority, Health and Social Care Trusts, and the Fire and Rescue Service. These include ICT investments, Research and Development investments, large redevelopment investments in Hospitals to increase ward and theatre capacity, large investments to replace mental health inpatient facilities, day centre investments, Primary and Community Care Centre investments, Ambulance Station and service investments, Fire Station and service investments, car parking investments, and investments in equipment, fleet and estate maintenance. These proposed projects range in size from a few thousand pounds to several hundred million pounds and far exceed to total capital budget currently available to me.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail each time each hospital has settled a legal case in each of the last five years, including a summary of the case and how much was awarded or levied in each incident.

(AQW 5523/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Table 1 summarises the number of legal cases settled and the total amount of awards in each of the last five years. Tables 2-6 analyse these figures by hospital. A more comprehensive summary by case can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Table 1

	2011/12 £m	2012/13 £m	2013/14 £m	2014/15 £m	2015/16 £m
Total Award Amounts	18.0	20.6	38.5	28.0	15.1
Total number of cases settled	311	373	377	380	386

Table 2

2011/12	Award Amount £m	No of Cases settled
Altnagelvin Hospital	2.15	29
Antrim Area Hospital	0.72	22
Belfast City Hospital	1.75	28
Braid Valley Hospital	0.01	2
Causeway	1.12	8
Craigavon Area Hospital	2.36	28
Daisy Hill Hospital	2.31	11
Downe Hospital	0.03	5
Downpatrick Maternity Hospital	0.01	1
Erne Hospital	0.34	10
Gransha Hospital	0.03	2
Holywell Hospital	0.06	9
Lagan Valley Hospital	0.14	7
Mater Hospital	0.30	14
Mid-Ulster Hospital	0.20	1
Muckamore Abbey Hospital	0.07	3
Musgrave Park Hospital	0.29	11
Purdysburn Hospital	0.00	1
Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children	0.17	7
Royal Maternity Hospital	0.09	6
Royal Victoria Hospital	1.85	64
St Luke's Hospital	0.03	4

2011/12	Award Amount £m	No of Cases settled
Tyrone County Hospital	0.07	4
Ulster Hospital	3.96	34
Total	18.04	311

Table 3

2012/13	Award Amount £m	No of Cases settled
Altnagelvin Hospital	1.2	39
Antrim Area Hospital	0.7	25
Ards Hospital	0.0	2
Bangor Hospital	0.0	2
Belfast City Hospital	2.2	35
Braid Valley Hospital	0.0	2
Causeway	0.6	9
Coleraine Hospital	0.0	4
Craigavon Area Hospital	0.5	28
Daisy Hill Hospital	0.2	7
Downe Hospital	0.0	4
Downshire Hospital	0.0	4
Erne Hospital	0.1	5
Gransha Hospital	0.0	1
Holywell Hospital	0.1	6
Lagan Valley Hospital	1.0	13
Lurgan Hospital	0.0	1
Mater Hospital	4.4	24
Mid-Ulster Hospital	0.4	5
Muckamore Abbey Hospital	0.1	8
Musgrave Park Hospital	0.2	13
Purdysburn Hospital	0.0	2
Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children	0.1	4
Royal Maternity Hospital	0.1	4
Royal Victoria Hospital	6.0	82
South Tyrone Hospital	0.0	2
St Luke's Hospital	0.0	2
Tyrone County Hospital	0.1	5
Ulster Hospital	2.4	35
Total	20.6	373

Table 4

2013/14	Award Amount £m	No of Cases settled
Altnagelvin Hospital	7.7	44

2013/14	Award Amount £m	No of Cases settled
Antrim Area Hospital	0.3	19
Ards Hospital	0.0	3
Armagh Community Hospital	0.0	1
Belfast City Hospital	0.6	29
Braid Valley Hospital	0.0	2
Causeway	0.4	11
Coleraine Hospital	0.0	3
Craigavon Area Hospital	1.8	37
Daisy Hill Hospital	0.3	8
Downe Hospital	0.1	4
Erne Hospital	2.4	8
Gransha Hospital	0.0	4
Holywell Hospital	0.1	3
Lagan Valley Hospital	0.5	10
Lurgan Hospital	0.0	1
Mater Hospital	1.9	18
Mid-Ulster Hospital	0.6	5
Muckamore Abbey Hospital	0.0	6
Musgrave Park Hospital	0.3	8
Purdysburn Hospital	0.1	4
Royal Belfast Hospital (for Sick Children)	0.1	6
Royal Maternity Hospital	1.9	8
Royal Victoria Hospital	10.5	81
South Tyrone Hospital	1.5	1
South West Acute Enniskillen Hospital	0.0	1
Tyrone County Hospital	0.1	3
Ulster Hospital	6.7	48
Waveney Hospital	0.6	1
Total	38.5	377

Table 5

2014/15	Award Amount £m	No of Cases settled
Altnagelvin Hospital	1.1	37
Antrim Area Hospital	3.6	26
Ards Hospital	0.0	3
Bangor Hospital	0.0	1
Belfast City Hospital	2.5	41
Causeway	0.4	11
Coleraine Hospital	0.4	5
Craigavon Area Hospital	1.4	29

2014/15	Award Amount £m	No of Cases settled
Daisy Hill Hospital	2.7	13
Downe Hospital	0.1	5
Erne Hospital	0.3	6
Holywell Hospital	0.1	8
Lagan Valley Hospital	0.4	13
Lurgan Hospital	0.0	1
Mater Hospital	2.4	15
Mid-Ulster Hospital	0.2	4
Muckamore Abbey Hospital	0.0	1
Musgrave Park Hospital	0.2	13
Purdysburn Hospital	0.0	4
Robinson Memorial Hospital	3.3	1
Route Hospital	0.0	2
Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children	0.0	2
Royal Maternity Hospital	0.2	7
Royal Victoria Hospital	3.5	70
South Tyrone Hospital	0.4	3
South West Acute Enniskillen Hospital	0.0	4
St Luke's Hospital	0.0	1
Tyrone County Hospital	0.2	2
Ulster Hospital	4.5	52
Total	28.0	380

Table 6

2015/16	Award Amount £m	No of Cases settled
Altnagelvin Hospital	0.6	23
Antrim Area Hospital	0.4	34
Ards Hospital	0.0	1
Belfast City Hospital	0.9	29
Braid Valley Hospital	0.0	1
Causeway	0.1	7
Coleraine Hospital	0.0	2
Craigavon Area Hospital	0.5	23
Daisy Hill Hospital	0.6	13
Dalriada Hospital	0.1	1
Downe Hospital	0.1	8
Downshire Hospital	0.0	1
Erne Hospital	1.2	13
Holywell Hospital	0.0	7
Lagan Valley Hospital	0.2	18

2015/16	Award Amount £m	No of Cases settled
Mater Hospital	1.2	27
Mid-Ulster Hospital	0.1	3
Muckamore Abbey Hospital	0.1	7
Musgrave Park Hospital	0.3	33
Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children	0.6	6
Royal Maternity Hospital	1.8	10
Royal Victoria Hospital	3.3	70
South Tyrone Hospital	0.0	1
South West Acute Enniskillen Hospital	0.0	1
Tyrone County Hospital	0.3	4
Ulster Hospital	2.6	41
Waterside Hospital	0.0	2
Total	15.1	386

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the total number of (i) Serious Adverse Incidents; and (ii) Never Events in each hospital, broken down by programme of care, over each of the last five years.

(AQW 5524/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Serious Adverse Incidents (SAIs) data is not recorded on a hospital basis. The number of SAIs by calendar year for each Trust, broken down by Programme of Care, is outlined in the table below.

A Never Events list is in the process of being adopted here. As a consequence, no data on these events are available. However, work is underway to make modifications to the SAI process to include notification of Never Events which will enable all Never Events to be recorded.

SAIs reported to HSCB by POC and Org / Year	BHSCT	NHSCT	NIAS	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT	Total
2011	79	49	1	37	48	28	242
Acute Services	31	7	1	0	8	2	49
Maternity and Child Health	1	1	0	1	3	1	7
Family and Childcare (inc CAMHS)	8	6	0	2	9	0	25
Elderly	1	5	0	2	3	2	13
Mental Health	30	27	0	29	21	18	125
Learning Disability	1	1	0	3	4	2	11
Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Health Promotion and Disease Prevention	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Primary Health and Adult Community (includes GP's)	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
POC - Corporate Business / Other	5	2	0	0	0	2	9
2012	77	63	4	47	41	36	268
Acute Services	31	14	3	5	6	2	61
Maternity and Child Health	3	1	1	1	3	5	14
Family and Childcare (inc CAMHS)	4	16	0	2	4	1	27
Elderly	2	5	0	3	3	5	18

SAIs reported to HSCB by POC and Org / Year	BHSCT	NHSCT	NIAS	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT	Total
Mental Health	29	20	0	34	22	21	126
Learning Disability	1	1	0	1	1	1	5
Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Health Promotion and Disease Prevention	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
POC - Corporate Business / Other	6	6	0	1	1	1	15
2013	84	129	3	57	57	53	383
Acute Services	29	40	3	14	7	9	102
Maternity and Child Health	20	9	0	5	7	6	47
Family and Childcare (inc CAMHS)	2	9	0	5	2	2	20
Elderly	1	20	0	6	9	3	39
Mental Health	26	40	0	24	28	26	144
Learning Disability	3	5	0	1	1	1	11
Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment	0	1	0	2	0	0	3
Primary Health and Adult Community (includes GP's)	1	1	0	0	3	0	5
POC - Corporate Business / Other	2	4	0	0	0	6	12
2014	181	188	3	112	144	102	730
Acute Services	47	50	1	24	30	38	190
Maternity and Child Health	101	19	2	14	23	24	183
Family and Childcare (inc CAMHS)	3	7	0	7	6	4	27
Elderly	1	56	0	3	49	10	119
Mental Health	18	36	0	59	33	22	168
Learning Disability	8	6	0	2	0	1	17
Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment	0	2	0	0	1	0	3
Primary Health and Adult Community (includes GP's)	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
POC - Corporate Business / Other	3	10	0	3	2	3	21
2015	162	102	1	111	145	83	604
Acute Services	36	20	1	18	47	36	158
Maternity and Child Health	81	17	0	21	30	29	178
Family and Childcare (inc CAMHS)	8	18	0	4	3	0	33
Elderly	2	8	0	11	46	4	71
Mental Health	28	30	0	54	18	11	141
Learning Disability	4	5	0	0	0	1	10
POC - Corporate Business / Other	3	4	0	3	1	2	13
Totals:	583	531	12	364	435	302	2227

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the conversion rate from (i) urgent; and (ii) routine referrals for cancer.
(AQW 5526/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The conversion rate for suspect cancer referrals in 2014/15 is shown in the table below.

Tumour Site	Referral Type	
	Total Red Flags	Other Referrals
Urology	15%	34%
Upper Gastrointestinal	4%	17%
Lower Gastrointestinal	4%	27%
Lung	22%	40%
Breast	6%	22%
Skin	8%	39%
Head/Neck	3%	14%
Haematological	30%	35%
Gynaecological	4%	21%

Source: CaPPS

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health how many people have been referred for each suspected cancer by GPs in each of the last five years; and what proportion in each year were designated (i) red flag; (ii) urgent; and (iii) routine cancer referrals. (AQW 5527/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: It is assumed that the question refers to the number of GP red flag referrals for suspect cancer that (i) remained red flag; and (ii)/(iii) those that were subsequently downgraded to either urgent or routine, however it is not possible to differentiate between the two types.

This information is provided in the following table for the period 2013/14 to 2015/16.

Tumour site	GP Red flag referrals ¹			GP Red flag referrals subsequently Downgraded ²		
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Breast	4,875	5,406	8,466	23	27	142
Childrens	43	18	115	1	2	41
Lung	1,328	1,545	1,731	132	169	230
Haematological	209	284	397	27	30	75
Leukaemia	1	1	0	1	0	0
Upper GI	4,468	5,898	6,422	75	106	163
Lower GI	6,743	8,119	9,889	205	215	298
Skin	5,409	6,508	8,065	107	95	171
Gynae	3,627	4,540	5,530	169	261	419
Brain	250	375	490	108	116	100
Urological	3,257	4,284	5,024	187	179	239
Testicular	237	283	292	25	23	11
Head & Neck	3,199	3,878	5,157	256	299	315
Sarcomas	68	127	102	4	9	6
Dental	29	21	50	7	1	1
Other	347	312	479	43	49	64
No Tumour Site	2,500	2,848	2,998	0	0	0

Source: Business Objects Outpatients Universe

¹ Includes the number of patients referred by their GP or dentist for suspect cancer referrals.

- 2 Includes the number of patients referred by their GP or dentist who are suspect cancer referrals and following triage have been downgraded by the Consultant.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health whether her Departments has plans to acquire the resource to allow the Health Service to provide 3 cycles of IVF, as recommended in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines. (AQW 5534/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am mindful of the distress caused by fertility problems. However, implementation of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Clinical Guideline on Fertility (CG156) would have significant cost implications for HSCB which have to be carefully considered within the context of ongoing budget pressures and other competing HSC services requiring new investment in the years ahead.

I have asked my officials to provide me with a detailed briefing on the current situation, to which I will give full consideration. I can advise you that I intend to work towards delivering the optimum number of cycles as identified.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Health for a breakdown of successful claims for clinical negligence in each hospital in each of the last three years; and how many claims are still being processed.

(AQW 5541/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) Information on the number of successful claims for clinical negligence in each hospital is not available. However, information on the number of clinical / social care negligence cases that were closed with damages paid is detailed in the following table by Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust / Legacy Health and Social Services (HSS) Board.

HSC Trust / Legacy HSS Board	No. of Cases Closed With Damages Paid		
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Belfast	24	110	75
Northern	30	29	22
South Eastern	51	51	40
Southern	11	33	24
Western	18	29	24
Legacy HSS Boards	24	*	6
NIAS/NIBTS	0	*	0
North of Ireland	158	265	191

Source: Departmental CN1 Information Return

* In order to avoid personal disclosure an * represents a cell count less than 4. In addition, where the anonymised figure can be deduced from the total, the next smallest figure has also been anonymised.

- (ii) At 31st March 2016, the latest information available, 2,768 clinical/social care negligence cases remained open in the north of Ireland.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health what consideration her Department has given to moving ambulance workers up their pay scale.

(AQW 5607/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: It is anticipated that all Agenda for Change staff (including Ambulance workers) will receive the 1 per cent uplift effective from 1 April 2016 in their November 2016 salary.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health to detail the additional financial allocation given to the Western Health and Social Care Trust for Adult Learning Disability Services.

(AQW 5609/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Western Trust has accepted the need to increase its investment for Adult Learning Disability Services and has recently confirmed that it is planning to increase its resourcing in this area by £8m. Plans totalling an investment of £3m have already been detailed by the Trust and plans for the remaining £5m will be developed with families and carers in the area. This investment will be delivered through resource transfers within the Trust's overall allocation.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the £33 million underspend on adult learning disability services in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 5610/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Based on financial data provided by the Health and Social Care Board, the average variance between the expected capitation investment in community learning disability and the actual spend in the Western Trust area for learning disability over the past six years was around £7m per annum. In assessing any recurrent over/under funding position it would not be appropriate to add together year on year indicative values.

While such variances do not necessarily indicate an under or over spend, in this case the Western Trust has accepted the need to increase investment. The Trust has recently confirmed that it is planning to increase its resourcing in this area by £8m. Plans totalling an investment of £3m have already been provided by the Trust and plans for the remaining £5m will be developed with families and carers in the area.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the £11 million underspend on physical and sensory disability services in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 5612/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware of the capitation variance in physical and sensory disability services in the Western Health and Social Care Trust. However, it is important to note that such variances do not necessarily indicate that a programme of care is receiving too much or too little investment.

Analysis by reference to projected capitation levels as compared to actual spend is used to support Trusts in considering the overall complexion of their funding allocations and to determine whether any rebalancing is necessary. In addition, in assessing any recurrent over or under funding position in the Western Trust's physical and sensory disability programme of care it would not be appropriate to add together year on year indicative capitation values.

The Health and Social Care Board has been working closely with the Western Health and Social Care Trust to consider whether there is any scope for the realignment of investment between programmes of care.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health what her Department is doing to make general practice more attractive to females.

(AQW 5784/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The GP workforce has changed significantly over the last decade. In 1985, women made up just 19% of the GP workforce. Latest figures show that in the 2015/16 year, 56% of GPs on the Performers List here were female and, since 2011, the majority of people starting GP specialty training have been women.

That more women are entering the GP workforce is a positive and welcome development. I am committed to ensuring that general practice is an attractive career choice for young doctors, both female and male. This will mean exploring options to provide more opportunities for flexible and part-time working in general practice, and support for doctors to balance work with other responsibilities.

Schemes are already in place to support GPs to return to practice after a period away or to support GPs to remain in practice who may otherwise consider leaving. While these schemes are open to both male and female GPs who meet the eligibility criteria, it is recognised that they can be particularly attractive to female GPs.

The report of the GP-led care working group acknowledged the need for general practice to adapt to the changing GP workforce profile, and was clear that attracting younger doctors would require action to address the challenges facing the service. In outlining my vision for the future of health and social care, I have committed to providing more exposure to general practice through the undergraduate medical curriculum; increasing the number of GP training places available here each year to 111—up from 85 currently; expanding the general practice team; and investing in technology. I have been clear that primary care is the a vital part of our health and social care system, and I will provide a full response to the other recommendations of the GP-led care working group before the end of this year.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health what plans her Department has to extend the Ask My GP service.

(AQW 5785/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: AskMyGP, a telephone and web-based patient triage system, is currently being piloted in four GP practices in the North.

You will be aware that on 25 October 2016, I published 'Health and Wellbeing 2016: Delivering Together' setting out the approach and actions I will take to lead the transformation of health and social care services in the North.

One action, aimed at supporting the improvement of access and resilience, and to support the development of new models of care, is the further rollout of the AskMyGP system.

Following a call for expressions of interest, work has now commenced to extend the pilot to a further thirty GP practices.

It is expected, that the pilot will have begun in all of the thirty additional practices by mid December. Each pilot will run for a period of twelve weeks.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health how many school children have been referred for mental health assessment in each of the last three years.

(AQW 5797/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: It is assumed that school children are those aged 4-16 years old. Figures in Table 1 detail the number of referrals of children aged from 4 years and up to 16 years who were referred to Regional Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in each of the last three years.

Table 1

Year	No. of referrals
2013/14	5,767
2014/15	6,001
2015/16	6,604

Source: Health and Social Care Board – Monthly Trust CAMHS Returns

Please note that year reported is 1 August to 31 July, age band included is from 4th birthday to 16th birthday

Mrs Long asked the Minister of Health how long it took the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to draft and launch the Sexual Health Promotion Strategy during the 2011-2016 Assembly mandate.

(AQW 5800/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The five year Sexual Health Promotion Strategy and Action Plan was published in December 2008. In June 2013, the then Minister for Health agreed to extend the life of the Strategy and Action Plan for a further two years. This work commenced in the summer of 2013. The updated Action Plan was published in March 2014 and ran to the end of December 2015.

The Public Health Agency facilitated a major sexual health workshop on 25 October with stakeholders to consider key issues and potential actions for improving sexual health services and approaches to sexual health promotion. I will consider the report on the outcome and proposals from this workshop before making any decision on the way forward.

Mrs Long asked the Minister of Health whether her Department has plans to renew the Sexual Health Promotion Strategy.

(AQW 5801/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The five year Sexual Health Promotion Strategy and Action Plan was published in December 2008. In June 2013, the then Minister for Health agreed to extend the life of the Strategy and Action Plan for a further two years. This work commenced in the summer of 2013. The updated Action Plan was published in March 2014 and ran to the end of December 2015.

The Public Health Agency facilitated a major sexual health workshop on 25 October with stakeholders to consider key issues and potential actions for improving sexual health services and approaches to sexual health promotion. I will consider the report on the outcome and proposals from this workshop before making any decision on the way forward.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health when the internet safety strategy for children will be launched.

(AQW 5803/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Work is ongoing to develop an e-Safety Strategy and Action Plan in recognition of growing concerns about the safety of children and young people when using the internet and electronic technology (e-Safety). The draft strategy will be presented to Executive Ministers for approval when complete and, subject to approval, it is proposed to launch the strategy in early 2017.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health to outline the departmental funding for the Patient and Client Council in each of the last two financial years.

(AQW 5827/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The total departmental funding allocated to the Patient and Client Council in 2014/15 and 2015/16 was £1.8m and £1.6m, respectively. This includes both Capital and Resource funding.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, other than her Department, to outline the alternative streams of funding for the Patient and Client Council.

(AQW 5828/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Patient and Client Council do not receive any alternative streams of funding. They have only one stream of funding which is from my Department.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health to outline her Department's relationship with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

(AQW 5829/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The NI Social Care Council is one of the Arms length Bodies of the Department of Health.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health to outline the departmental funding for the Northern Ireland Social Care Council in each of the last two financial years.

(AQW 5830/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The NI Social Care Council received Departmental funding as follows:-

Year 2014/15

- Grant in Aid and Disbursements - £3,033,654
- Capital £125,876

Year 2015/16

- Grant in Aid and Disbursements - £3,043,269
- Capital - £81,398

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health , other than her Department, to outline the alternative streams of funding for the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

(AQW 5831/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Social Care Council have access to funding from registration fee income generated from Registrants who are made up of the social work and social care workforces in the north of Ireland.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health whether she would consider the establishment of an Autism Strategy Forum, similar to the Together: Building a United Community Strategy Forum or NEETs Strategy Forum to enhance Non-Governmental Organisations involvement in the implementation and monitoring of the Autism Strategy.

(AQW 5835/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The current cross-departmental Autism Action Plan was extended to 2017 to allow it to be reviewed in partnership with all stakeholders. It is intended that this review will produce an agreed set of effective interventions to plug the gaps, informed by the views of people with autism. It is anticipated that this work will be progressed in conjunction with other Executive Departments later this year.

I will consider your suggestion as part of this Review.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to detail the waiting times for prostate cancer surgery and the treatment pathway provided to local patients once diagnosed.

(AQW 5836/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Statistics and guidance on cancer waiting times are available at the following link on the Department's website:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/cancer-waiting-times>

Diagnostic and treatment services for prostate across the North are commissioned with reference to best available evidence, including NICE guidance on prostate cancer, issued 2014 (CG 175). The treatment options for patients in the North include surgery, radiotherapy and systemic anticancer therapies (SACT).

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health , pursuant to AQW 4279/16-21, whether sedation could be reconsidered for use in extreme cases and in such an event the person could automatically be moved for specific medical care in the facility or immediately transferred to a civilian hospital.

(AQW 5837/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The use of sedation generally is based on individual clinical need and the requirement is for it to be administered in an appropriate clinical setting. The prison environment is not considered to be an appropriate setting for sedation. The support for vulnerable prisoners in prisons will continue to include processes to move prisoners to other health facilities necessitates a legal process which is initiated by the appropriate clinician.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health to detail (i) the cost of Family Support Hubs; and (ii) the number of people that have benefitted over the last three years of the programme.

(AQW 5857/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: At October 2016, there are 29 Family Support Hubs operational in the north of Ireland at a cost of £25,000 each; from 2013/2014 to 2015/2016 a total of 9,213 families have been referred to Family Support Hubs.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health whether there has been an evaluation of Family Nurse Partnerships; and to outline the recommendations from any such evaluation.

(AQW 5858/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: An evaluation of Family Nurse Partnerships in the Western HSCT has been completed.

Ten recommendations were made by the researchers in the report, which are as follows:

- 1 Review inclusion criteria;
- 2 Expand provision of FNP;
- 3 Balance caseloads in relation to complexity;
- 4 Tailor provision to meet the specific needs of clients;
- 5 Clarify alignment with other services;
- 6 Raise awareness and share the content of the programme;
- 7 Improve mechanism for communication on transition to universal service following programme;
- 8 Streamline paper work and documentation ;
- 9 Provide statistical information; and
10. Evidence outcomes.

Local Implementation Teams and other stakeholders are working to make progress against these ten recommendations.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health to detail (i) the cost of Family Nurse Partnerships; and (ii) the number of people that have benefitted over the last three years of the programme.

(AQW 5859/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) The total cost for the five Family Nurse Partnership sites during the three year period from 2013–2016 equals £3,693,502. This includes set up costs and training and supervision of Family Nurses by the English National Unit. Costs per client will reduce as the number of clients increases and expertise develops, allowing core programme training to be provided in the north of Ireland.
- (ii) 485 people have benefitted from the Family Nurse Practitioner Programme from 2013 to present.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the research by the NSPCC on Exploring the learning and improvement processes of Local Safeguarding Children Boards, in relation to changes to the Safeguarding Board arrangements following the Jay Review.

(AQW 5876/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Firstly, I welcome the work undertaken by the NSPCC as part of its contribution to the work of the Safeguarding Board for NI (SBNI), as a member of the Board. As referenced in the report, I agree that the SBNI should position itself as a 'learning board' and that it should play a pivotal role in multi-agency learning, training and driving improvement to ensure that children and young people in the north are effectively protected from harm. The challenge for the SBNI is to undertake a programme of reform, assisted by my Department as appropriate, in line with the findings of the Jay Review. I consider that the NSPCC research will assist with the process of reform, by, for example, drawing on the many good practice examples and initiatives identified within the report and the key learning points highlighted.

Mrs Long asked the Minister of Health how many people are on the surgical waiting list for endometriosis; and how long a patient waits on average for surgical intervention.

(AQW 6467/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The number of patients currently waiting for surgery with an operation description which includes the treatment/potential treatment of endometriosis has been provided in the table below.

HSC Trust	Number Waiting
South Eastern	36
Western	71

Source: HSC Trusts

Belfast, Northern and Southern Health and Social Care Trusts were unable to provide this information within the specified time frame.

Health and Social Care Trusts were unable to provide an average waiting time for surgical intervention within the specified time frame.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the average daily cost of a patient stay in Muckamore Abbey Hospital.

(AQW 6489/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The average cost per patient for adults in Muckamore Abbey Hospital is:

- Adults Long Stay: £900 per day
- Adults Short Stay: £400 per day

NB: The above figures have been taken from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Financial Returns for 2014/15, which is the most recent year for these returns.

Department for Infrastructure

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether his Department has a strategy to address the cost difference between crossing the Irish Sea and the English Channel.

(AQW 3067/16-21)

Mr Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure): While shipping is a reserved matter under the Department for Transport in London, I recognise that sea and air links with Britain are essential for business, tourism and the growth of the local economy.

With respect to pricing, ferry companies operating Irish Sea services are private commercial entities and as such, the setting of fares is a commercial matter for these companies.

In 2011, the Competition Commission investigated competition on a number of Irish Sea routes and ruled in favour of an acquisition, based on the fact that the operator would continue to face a direct competitor in each of the corridors in which it operates following the acquisition.

To help ensure that passengers are able to avail of the best deals in terms of pricing, the Department for the Economy, through Tourism Ireland, works closely with all the major ferry operators to highlight value fares, inclusive packages and ease of access to the north of Ireland.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Infrastructure what major projects scheduled to be completed by May 2021 are reliant on European Union funding.

(AQW 4106/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As previously advised in AQW 2591/16-21 delivery of projects is not ordinarily dependent on EU funding.

My Department has currently two ongoing railway projects that have secured EU co-financing through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). These are track rehabilitation works between Knockmore and Lurgan, due to complete in December 2018, and track upgrading works between Derry and Coleraine, due to complete in December 2016.

I am currently awaiting the outcome of the assessment of my Department's Stage 2 Application for EU co-financing from the INTERREG Va programme for the development of a multimodal transport hub in Derry and this project is forecast to complete in 2020.

Waterways Ireland, one of this Department's arms length bodies, has also made an application for funding from the INTERREG Va programme for the Ulster Canal Greenway project which is due to complete in December 2020.

My Department has a number of major projects, including York Street Interchange, The Belfast Hub and Newry Southern Relief Road, which have been included within the European Commission Work Plans. Whilst there is no guarantee of funding, by virtue of their inclusion within the work plans, these would have been strong candidate projects to secure funding through the CEF in future funding calls.

In order to benefit from the chancellors recent announcements relating to EU funding these projects would have to have a signed off agreement from the commission prior to Britain and the north of Ireland leaving the European Union. With the next CEF funding call for major projects expected sometime in 2018 it is unlikely these projects will be able to benefit from this commitment as the funding stream for these projects will extend beyond the chancellors timeframe.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) the cost to his Department since May 2016 to answer Assembly Written Questions from Members; and (ii) how many questions have been answered since May 2016 to date.

(AQW 4678/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: While answering Assembly Questions is a core part of accountability in the democratic process, there is a significant overall cost involved in answering questions.

The cost of preparing answers to Assembly Questions varies considerably according to the complexity of each question, therefore it is very difficult to provide an exact figure as to the total cost to the Department for the period in question. My officials have however estimated the cost to my Department of answering written Assembly questions since May 2016 to be in the region of £100,000.

I can inform the member that, as at 27 October 2016, I have answered approximately 1000 written Assembly Questions received since May 2016.

Mr Smith asked the Minister for Infrastructure (i) to detail the number of departmental and arm's-length body staff that exited under the Voluntary Exit Scheme, broken down by grade; (ii) how many of these posts were then suppressed; and (iii) (a) what proportion; and (b) how many posts were later (1) advertised; and (2) filled by internal promotion.

(AQW 5244/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The total number of staff who left under Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) is set out in Tables 1, 2 and 3. Table 1 relates to all Department for Infrastructure functions but refers back to their position prior to restructuring in May 2016 ie the Department for Regional Development, some aspects of the Department of Environment (DVA, Planning & Road Safety) and the Rivers Agency.

The Department's Arms Length Bodies – Translink and Northern Ireland Water (NIW) ran their own schemes in line with the NICS scheme. Tables 2 and 3 provide their information.

While the suppressed posts cannot be directly linked to the posts vacated under VES, I can confirm that the Departmental paybill has been reduced by the total paid to those leaving under VES. In some cases, business critical posts held by individuals who left under VES were filled and other posts across the Department were suppressed or amalgamated.

Table 1: Department for Infrastructure

Grade	(i) Total number of staff (Headcount) exited under VES	(iv) Total number of posts advertised as a result of VES exits	(v) Total number of posts filled by internal promotion as a result of VES exits
Principal	8	0	0
Deputy Principal	31	0	0
Staff Officer / ICT5	19	0	0
Executive Officer I / ICT4 / Senior Traffic Examiner	32	0	0
Executive Officer II / Personal Secretary	27	0	0
Administration Officer / SGBI	85	0	0
Administration Assistant / SGBII / Typist	32	0	0
Sub-total	234	0	0
PPTO	6	0	0
SPTO	8	0	0
HPTO	29	0	0
PTO	63	0	0
Senior Scientific Officer	1	0	0
Superintendent Civil Eng	1	0	0
Inspector Group 4	3	0	0
TG1	52	0	0
Industrial	94	0	0
Sub-total	257	0	0
Total	491	0	0

Table 2: Translink

Grade	(i) Total number of staff (Headcount) exited under VES	(iv) Total number of posts advertised as a result of VES exits	(v) Total number of posts filled by internal promotion as a result of VES exits
Manager/ Professional	17	1	0
Clerical	23	0	1
Supervisors	25	0	0

Grade	(i) Total number of staff (Headcount) exited under VES	(iv) Total number of posts advertised as a result of VES exits	(v) Total number of posts filled by internal promotion as a result of VES exits
Permanent Way	9	0	0
Bus Drivers	37	0	0
Engineering	6	0	0
Total	117	1	1

There were 2 positions which were not suppressed, however these roles were backfilled at a lower grade and pay level.

Table 3: Northern Ireland Water

Grade	(i) Total number of staff (Headcount) exited under VES	(iv) Total number of posts advertised as a result of VES exits	(v) Total number of posts filled by internal promotion as a result of VES exits
Level 4	3	0	0
Level 6	1	0	0
Level 7	1	0	0
Higher Class Officer	2	0	0
Total	7	0	0

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Infrastructure (i) how many candidates were considered for the post of Ministerial Special Adviser; (ii) what account was taken of any potential imbalance in religious background or gender in the pool from which he selected his Special Adviser; (iii) how wide was the trawl for candidates; (iv) how did he ensure that it was broadly based as required by the Code of Practice on the Appointment of Special Advisers; and (v) to publish the job description and person specification drawn up before the Special Adviser was appointed.

(AQW 5476/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I can confirm that my Special Adviser was appointed in accordance with the 'Code Governing the Appointment of Special Advisers'.

Conor Heaney was appointed in the Department for Infrastructure on 6 June 2016. Prior to this he was a Special Adviser in the Executive Office.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail when he will answer (i) AQW 4205/16-21; and (ii) AQW 4206/16-21.
(AQW 5493/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I answered both AQW 4205/16-21 and AQW 4206/16-21 on 18 October 2016.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for Infrastructure for his assessment of the condition of the water and sewerage infrastructure (i) across Northern Ireland; and (ii) in Belfast.

(AQW 5499/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: NI Water maintains water and wastewater facilities containing 1556 water assets and 3161 wastewater assets across the North. The condition of all facilities and assets naturally vary and NI Water has a series of programmes to maintain or replace assets to ensure overall service is maintained.

NI Water inherited an aged asset base and £1.8 billion has already been invested in its infrastructure since the company's formation in 2007. This investment has led to record high compliance levels for water and wastewater services. However, it also means that NI Water has a growing asset base which has to be maintained. Based on the figures for 2015/16 the Company spends around £85 million a year on maintaining the current assets. Around a further £70 million a year is spent to deliver quality enhancements, improve service and accommodate growth.

Following approval from the NI Executive in July 2014, the cross-departmental 'Living With Water Programme' was established to develop a Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Plan for Belfast. This programme has already identified the Private Drainage Infrastructure, which I have instructed to be surveyed to determine what sections should be adopted and brought up to standard.

In East Belfast it has also helped to secure the site for the replacement Sydenham Wastewater Pumping Station, which when replaced will be one of the largest such facilities in the North.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Infrastructure (i) to detail how many 20 mph zones are in place; and (ii) whether he has any plans to bring forward legislation to introduce 20 mph zones in housing estates, schools and children's play areas.
(AQW 5554/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) has a statutory duty to promote road safety and, within the context of the Road Safety Strategy, does this through a wide range of rolling road safety educational activities, including road safety public information campaigns and education programmes; and engineering initiatives.

My Department continues to take a range of actions to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads and focuses on key causes of road casualties, and on groups which are over-represented in the casualty figures. Children and young people are amongst the most vulnerable groups using our roads and as such must be taught how to use our roads safely, both in the school vicinity and the wider community.

As over 95% of road traffic collisions where someone is killed or seriously injured are due to human error, there are a number of types of risks to children's safety around housing estates, at schools and near play areas arising from road traffic and driver behaviour. Therefore, in addition to my Department's portfolio of educational activities, we also help improve safety by encouraging drivers to reduce speed and reminding them of children in the area through engineering initiatives.

A total of 713 streets have enforceable 20 mph speed limits in place. These are part of almost 500 traffic calmed areas that include measures aimed at reducing speeds to 20mph the majority of which do not have posted reduced speed limits. These have been engineered to maximise road safety benefits, and implemented in areas where there was a history of collisions or where there are high levels of vulnerable road users.

All speed limits, other than those on Restricted Roads, are made by order under Article 38 of the Road Traffic Regulation (NI) Order 1997. Additional legislative powers are not considered necessary to introduce 20 mph speed limits.

My Department will introduce 20 mph limits and zones in situations where there is a particular risk to vulnerable road users especially in residential areas. Successful 20 mph zones employ 'self enforcing' engineering measures such as road humps, central islands and other traffic calming measures to reduce traffic speeds resulting in substantial reductions in the number and severity of injury collisions. I am particularly keen to see more part-time 20mph speed limits outside schools, especially where the school is on a road where the national speed limit applies. I have asked my officials to consider further refinements to the policy for this measure that would facilitate an increased provision, subject to available funding.

When designating any speed limit for a road, including those under 30 mph, my Department's traffic engineers comply with the policy guidelines set out in RSPPG E051 Setting Local Speed Limits in Northern Ireland. This document is available to download from the internet at www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/setting-local-speed-limits-northern-ireland-rsppg-e051

I am committed to continuing to work towards reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads. I recognise the continuing challenges of preventing road deaths and serious injuries and as such my Department will continue to address the issues through various educational and engineering activities.

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Infrastructure what steps his Department is taking to prohibit bullbars on non-agricultural vehicles.
(AQW 5555/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: 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. These safety standards are a matter for the Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA), under designation by the Department for Transport. VCA has responsibility for ensuring that type approval adheres to all automotive European Community Directives and Regulations.

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Infrastructure how many road users have been killed or injured as a result of a collision with a vehicle with bullbars, in each of the last five years.
(AQW 5556/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The PSNI have no record of bull bars being cited as a feature in any fatal or serious injury collisions during this period.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Infrastructure, pursuant to AQW 1473/16-21 and following a further road traffic accident on Scarva Road in Banbridge on 17 October 2016, whether he will reconsider the introduction of measures to improve safety for school pupils.
(AQW 5585/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: All collisions on our roads are indeed regrettable but those involving young school children are especially traumatic for their families and all involved.

I previously advised of the existing engineering measures that this area benefits from to aid safety and I can also advise that a review of the location was carried out over the summer and additional SCHOOL KEEP CLEAR yellow zig-zag markings have been provided on the Scarva Road at St Patrick's College entrance.

You will also be aware of the many measures my Department has taken to educate road users with the intention of reducing collisions and injuries on our roads, most recently through the 'road to zero' campaign.

I was very sorry to hear of the injuries sustained by the two young girls and I wish them a speedy return to full health and I can assure you that my officials will review the information with the PSNI when the accident investigation is complete to identify if there are any further measures which can be considered for the Scarva Road.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the car share facilities or incentives available for Belfast bound commuters using the M1 that start work between 09:00 and 09:30.

(AQW 5587/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department has provided a number of Park & Share/Park & Ride sites along the M1 corridor to enable car sharing motorists to meet and to share onward journeys to Belfast or elsewhere. The sites are also served by Translink services to facilitate motorists who wish to complete their journeys by public transport.

The sites adjacent to the M1 motorway include the facilities at Tamnamore (317 spaces), Sprucefield (352 spaces) and Blacks Road (247 spaces). The corridor is also served by the Park & Share/Park & Ride facility at Ballygawley (184 spaces).

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the public transport options available for Belfast bound commuters using the M1 that start work between 09:00 and 09:30.

(AQW 5588/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: It is recognised that the M1 corridor is a congested part of the road network, particularly during school terms. I believe that Public Transport must be effective in providing an alternative to driving.

Translink currently offer a comprehensive range of daily rail and bus transport services into Belfast. Those commuters travelling along the M1 that start work between 9:00 and 9:30 could avail of the following services:

Bus Service	Route
209	Cookstown – Belfast
238	Newry - Belfast
250 & 251	Armagh - Belfast
261	Enniskillen/Dungannon - Belfast
273	Strabane/Omagh - Belfast
650	Blacks Road Park and Ride – Belfast
651	Sprucefield Park and Ride - Belfast

Commuters can avail of the rail services parallel to the M1 corridor. There are frequent rail services from Portadown, Lurgan, Moira and Lisburn rail.

The Sprucefield Park & Ride currently caters for 345 cars and has a dedicated express bus service during the peak periods, which makes use of the Hard Shoulder Busway, to bypass traffic, for its journey into the Europa Bus Station. My Department is currently in the process of trying to increase the size of this Park & Ride facility.

My Department also has a proposal to extend the existing busway that runs on the M1 hard shoulder. The existing busway, between Ballyskeagh over-bridge (near the service station under construction) and Black's Road (Junction 3), will be extended back to Junction 8, where Sprucefield Park & Ride is located. This will provide an additional 3.5km of busway and operate during the same hours as the existing busway, from 07:30am to 9:30am. It will provide improved journey times and journey time reliability to Belfast bound commuters travelling on buses. The scheme is currently being prepared for tender and it is anticipated that works will begin on the ground next year.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) what work has been carried out; and (ii) any planned future works to alleviate flooding at Ballymongan Road, Castlederg.

(AQW 5643/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: It is believed that this query relates to flooding at or adjacent to House No. 41 Ballymongan Road, Castlederg.

Recent flooding at this location was caused by a blockage in a piped drain on farm land on the opposite side of the road to this property. During heavy rainfall, the inlet to the drain became blocked and the water flowed out onto the public road. This

blockage has since been cleared by the landowner and I am advised that the drainage system is now flowing freely. The landowner has also agreed to expose the inlet to another pipe within his property and this, as well as recent works on the Pullytean Road, will also help drainage in the area.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether the embargo in relation to street lighting is still in existence.
(AQW 5649/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department continues to assess all requests for additional street lighting in line with established policy and procedures. However, in view of continuing resource pressures, only those schemes which are essential for collision remedial works or other priority schemes will be installed at this time.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline what steps are taken to alter the sequencing of traffic lights at appropriate junctions in order to manage the impact from road closures for maintenance on arterial routes.
(AQW 5672/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Roadworks on main arterial routes will generally result in some congestion due to a reduction in the available lanes for vehicle traffic. However, my Department undertakes a number of steps to minimise any disruption.

For example, during the recent roadworks on the M3 Lagan Bridge, the steps taken included:

- The provision of electronic signs up to seven days in advance of the works to inform the public of the works.
- The Traffic Control Centre is generally operational Monday to Saturday but during these works the hours of operation were increased to include Saturday evening and Sunday. Staff at the Control Centre monitor 156 CCTV cameras across the city and use this information to continuously update traffic signal timings at over 200 traffic light junctions, based on actual traffic flows. This “live, up to the minute” programming of signal timings ensures the road network operates at its maximum efficiency during the roadworks.
- Live traffic information was updated on the Trafficwatchni website, on social media platforms, and frequent updates were broadcast on local radio stations.
This ensured the public were kept fully informed about the impacts of the works and allowed them to plan their journeys more effectively.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline what systems are in place to prevent traffic lights changing on side roads leading to major arterial routes, when there are no cars waiting to exit, with knock-on delays for traffic flow on the main road.
(AQW 5673/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Traffic signal installations include for vehicle detectors on both the main road and side roads at all junctions. The signals are generally configured to ensure that the green light for the side road only “appears” when these detectors have been activated.

Traffic signals are monitored remotely by an automated computer system which reports any faults at the traffic signals or the detectors. However, if there is a specific location that you would wish to have TransportNI carry out additional checks, please forward details to the local Divisional office.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether his Department has considered determining one organisation to have responsibility for the scheduling of all bus services.
(AQW 5674/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Translink currently has primary responsibility for the scheduling of most public bus services here. Following the commencement of the Transport Act 2011, which confirms the legal status of Translink, the then Department for Regional Development agreed a five-year Service Agreement with Translink in October 2015. This Agreement places key performance obligations on Translink, and sets out protocols for agreeing temporary and permanent changes to the defined bus network.

My Department is currently coordinating an Integrated Passenger Transport Project involving Translink, the Department of Health, the Health and Social Care Board and Trusts, the Department of Education and the Education Authority. The aim of this project is to consider how all publicly funded passenger transport resources could be used to better meet the travel needs of users.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister for Infrastructure (i) for an update on Moss Road car park, Millisle; (ii) whether a health and safety assessment has been completed; (iii) to detail when Transport NI will repair the wall; (iv) what process Transport NI followed to ensure the cost is reclaimed from the person who caused the damage; and (v) whether the delay is due to that ongoing process.
(AQW 5679/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I can advise the Member as follows in response to the various points she has raised.

- (i) I assume the member is referring to the perimeter wall between the footway on Moss Road and the car park which was damaged earlier this year as a result of a road traffic accident. The Member will be aware that the car park itself is no longer under the control of my Department’s TransportNI but is the responsibility of Ards & North Down Borough Council.

- (ii) A health and safety assessment was carried out which determined the need to provide a barrier system to keep pedestrians away from the rear of the footway given the difference in level to the car park. The barrier was then erected by TransportNI.
- (iii) TransportNI is actively involved in discussions with the insurers of the vehicle responsible for causing the damage and will arrange for the wall to be repaired when details have been finalised.
- (iv) TransportNI sought and received information from the PSNI who had attended the scene of the incident on the day it occurred, with a view to recovering the cost incurred for repairing the wall from the insurers of the vehicle.
- (v) The delay in having the wall repaired has been due to the process outlined above as information provided along the way has been partially inaccurate.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Infrastructure for his assessment of the trial of 20 mph zones at schools.
(AQW 5680/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department has a statutory duty to promote road safety, and within the context of the Road Safety Strategy, does this through a range of rolling road safety educational activities and engineering initiatives.

My Department continues to take a range of actions to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads and focuses on the key causes of road casualties, and on groups which are over-represented in the casualty figures. Children and young people are amongst the most vulnerable groups using our roads and as such must be taught how to use our roads safely, both in the school vicinity and in the wider community.

As over 95% of road traffic collisions where someone is killed or seriously injured are due to human error, there are a number of types of risks to children's safety at schools arising from road traffic and driver behaviour. Therefore, in addition to my Department's portfolio of educational activities, we also help improve safety by encouraging drivers to reduce speed and reminding them of school children in the area through engineering initiatives.

You refer to one such initiative. Part-time 20mph speed limits using electronic Variable Message Signs (VMS) were trialed at two rural and one urban primary school to investigate their effectiveness as speed reducing measures at schools. The trials were subject of pilot studies which concluded that the introduction of part-time 20mph speed limits are effective at reducing vehicle speeds at schools.

The pilot studies recorded average vehicle speeds, throughout the day and for both directions of travel, before and after the implementation of each pilot. Marked reductions in traffic speed were noted at all 3 schools during the operation of the enforceable 20mph speed limit. The report on the pilot studies is available at www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/drd/20mph-part-time-speed-limits-report-on-pilot-projects.pdf

The success of all three trials can be attributed to:

- The reduced speed limits only being operational when there is activity around the schools at starting and finishing times, and when the potential hazards ahead are evident to drivers; and,
- The speed limits are enforceable and PSNI officers have had a visible presence.

Part-time 20mph speed limits are now included in TransportNI's road safety at schools policy as one of a range of engineering measures that can be used to help increase driver awareness and achieve reductions in vehicle speeds outside and in the vicinity of schools.

This document can be accessed at www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/road-safety-schools-rsppg-e070.

I am committed to continuing to work towards reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads. I recognise the continuing challenges of preventing road deaths and serious injuries and as such my Department will continue to address the issues through various educational and engineering activities.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline his plans to implement temporary 20 mph zones at schools during peak travel times in the morning and afternoon.
(AQW 5681/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Following the successful piloting of part-time limits at three primary schools, further schemes have been installed, or are in the process of installation, at four more schools.

My Department has a statutory duty to promote road safety and, within the context of the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy, does this through a range of rolling road safety educational activities, engineering and other initiatives. Children and young people are amongst the most vulnerable groups using our roads and I am committed to ensuring that they use our roads safely, both in the school vicinity and the wider community.

I am therefore keen to roll out this important safety measure to other schools, especially those located on roads where the national speed limit applies. However, with installation costs currently in the region of £50,000 per school, these systems are expensive to provide and maintain. My officials are currently investigating an alternative and more cost effective method to provide part time enforceable 20mph speed limits at schools which would have the potential to allow more schools to be treated, subject to available funding in the current challenging financial position.

Given that over 95% of road traffic collisions where someone is killed or seriously injured are due to human error, there are a number of types of risks to children's safety at schools arising from road traffic and driver behaviour. Therefore, in addition to making proven engineering interventions, my Department also challenges driver behaviour and through the road safety campaigns, reminds motorists of their responsibility to themselves and other road users. In recent weeks, a series of road safety messages have been delivered through social media, radio, television and outdoor advertising, addressing a range of road safety behaviours on the journey to and from school to enhance child passenger and child pedestrian safety. My Department's current anti speeding campaign, aimed at drivers, reinforces the message that 'you can never control the consequences if you speed', with the reminder that the equivalent of a classroom of our children have been killed due to speeding since 2000.

My Department also provides and delivers a range of road safety resources and initiatives to schools here to teach children how to be safe as they use the road, as pedestrians, as passengers and as cyclists. These initiatives include the Road Safety Calendar Teaching Aid, Practical Child Pedestrian Safety Training and Cycling Proficiency training.

I remain committed to continuing to work towards reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads. I recognise the continuing challenges of preventing road deaths and serious injuries and as such my Department will continue to address the issues using all practicable methods.

Mr Logan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the number of potholes that have been reported in North Antrim area in each of the last five years.

(AQW 5685/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department holds the information requested on a Council by Council basis and not by MLA Constituency. Therefore the figures provided below cover defects within Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. It should also be noted that the figures provided contain a range of road defects which includes potholes and that these statistics have been reported via a number of sources: email, on-line reporting facility, telephone and by TransportNI road inspectors.

Year	Total
15/16	11181
14/15	7040
13/14	8615
12/13	8790
11/12	11688

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the number of passengers that used the 109a bus to Lisburn, broken down by each stop from the Belfast International Airport, daily over the last six months.

(AQW 5687/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Due to the large volume of information required to respond to this Assembly Question I have arranged for the information to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the number of passengers who used the 109a bus to Belfast International Airport, broken down by each stop from Lisburn, daily over the last six months.

(AQW 5688/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Due to the large volume of information required to respond to this Assembly Question I have arranged for the information to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the number of passengers who used the Airport Express 300 bus to Belfast, broken down by each stop from the Belfast International Airport, daily over the last six months.

(AQW 5689/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Due to the large volume of information required to respond to this Assembly Question I have arranged for the information to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the number of passengers who used the Airport Express 300 bus to Belfast International Airport, broken down by each stop from Belfast, daily over the last six months.

(AQW 5690/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Due to the large volume of information required to respond to this Assembly Question I have arranged for the information to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Mr Stalford asked the Minister for Infrastructure what is the target time for statutory consultees to respond to planning consultations.

(AQW 5692/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Statutory consultees were placed under a “duty to respond” by the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (GDPO). This requires that those consultees specified as statutory by the GDPO must give a substantive response to a request from a planning authority (a council or as the case may be the Department) to provide the necessary specialist knowledge needed to inform the determination of a planning application. The required substantive response (as defined in the legislation) must be supplied within 21 calendar days or any longer time as agreed in writing between the planning authority and the consultee.

The duty to respond also requires the statutory consultees to provide annual performance reports outlining their success in meeting the above statutory timeframes. The reports are therefore couched in terms of the number of statutory requests responded to within the required timeframes (“on time” responses) and those returned outside the timeframe (“late” responses). Consultees are not required to report on average response times. It is not possible to estimate the average time that statutory consultation accounts for within the overall processing time of planning applications. As the consultation process is carried out in parallel with other work in processing planning applications the length of time it takes does not necessarily add to the overall application processing time.

The Department has received the performance reports for the last financial year (the first year in which the new duty has operated) and these are currently being analysed.

The analysis of these reports will inform ongoing direct work with councils and consultees to improve the consultation process and therefore performance of the whole planning system. A key feature of the performance reports is a requirement for statutory consultees to provide explanations for their late responses which the Department believes will identify areas for future attention. The first year of the new duty has also encouraged a culture of continuous improvement amongst statutory consultees with greater engagement between consultees and council planning staff and also a sharing of examples of good practice. Many consultees have refined their systems to provide, for example, much more on-line advice and guidance so that planning staff have a better appreciation of when and why to consult. Experience has also highlighted the importance of providing all the vital information required to determine a planning application at the outset so that consultees can provide an informed opinion at the earliest possible point in the process.

While councils have three statutory performance indicators covering the average processing times for major and local applications, and enforcement, the Department is currently working with councils regarding the establishment of a planning performance management framework which will look at measures beyond the statutory indicators in order to drive continuous improvement across the planning system.

I believe that the work to date will provide a useful baseline against which we can look at future performance improvements in our new two-tier planning system.

Mr Stalford asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the average length of time taken for statutory consultees to respond to planning consultations, broken down by (i) agency; and (ii) area.

(AQW 5693/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Statutory consultees were placed under a “duty to respond” by the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (GDPO). This requires that those consultees specified as statutory by the GDPO must give a substantive response to a request from a planning authority (a council or as the case may be the Department) to provide the necessary specialist knowledge needed to inform the determination of a planning application. The required substantive response (as defined in the legislation) must be supplied within 21 calendar days or any longer time as agreed in writing between the planning authority and the consultee.

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I believe that the work to date will provide a useful baseline against which we can look at future performance improvements in our new two-tier planning system.

Mr Stalford asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline his plans to decrease the average time it takes statutory consultees to respond to planning applications.

(AQW 5694/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Statutory consultees were placed under a "duty to respond" by the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (GDPO). This requires that those consultees specified as statutory by the GDPO must give a substantive response to a request from a planning authority (a council or as the case may be the Department) to provide the necessary specialist knowledge needed to inform the determination of a planning application. The required substantive response (as defined in the legislation) must be supplied within 21 calendar days or any longer time as agreed in writing between the planning authority and the consultee.

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I believe that the work to date will provide a useful baseline against which we can look at future performance improvements in our new two-tier planning system.

Mr Stalford asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the average time that statutory consultees add to the average processing time taken to process planning applications.

(AQW 5695/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Statutory consultees were placed under a "duty to respond" by the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (GDPO). This requires that those consultees specified as statutory by the GDPO must give a substantive response to a request from a planning authority (a council or as the case may be the Department) to provide the necessary specialist knowledge needed to inform the determination of a planning application. The required substantive response (as defined in the legislation) must be supplied within 21 calendar days or any longer time as agreed in writing between the planning authority and the consultee.

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I believe that the work to date will provide a useful baseline against which we can look at future performance improvements in our new two-tier planning system.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Infrastructure for an update on the backlog of the processing of Blue Badge applications. (AQW 5704/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The normal timeframe for the turnaround of a Blue Badge application is between four and eight weeks. This timeframe allows the Department to issue requests for evidence, etc, as part of the legislative process.

At any given time there are up to 8000 applications being processed within the normal timeframe.

At present there are 2795 applications which form the backlog and fall outside the normal eight week period.

Mr McKee asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the (i) total number; and (ii) proportion of (a) Assembly Written Questions; (b) Assembly Priority Written Questions; and (c) Freedom of Information requests directed at his Department that have been answered within the maximum permitted timescales since May 2016.

(AQW 5744/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As at 27 October 2016 the information requested is set out in the table below:

	Total number answered since May 2016	Proportion answered within the maximum permitted timescales
Assembly Written Questions	955	79.8%
Assembly Priority Written Questions	52	89.1%
Freedom of Information Requests	172	88.4%

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the information his Department has received from the European Union regarding future funding for (i) ongoing Transport NI projects; and (ii) future Transport NI projects.

(AQW 5765/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department has, for a prolonged period, worked closely with the Commission and its Agencies to both promote potential projects and ensure that our particular issues and circumstances are acknowledged and accounted for. This has resulted in our projects featuring prominently in Commission Regulations and workplans.

The latest call for applications for funding through the Connecting Europe Facility – which is a highly competitive programme – opened on the 13 October 2016 with the deadline for the submission of proposals being the 7th February 2017.

This is a particularly prescriptive call with the majority of funding being targeted at Cohesion countries. Taking the call criteria into account, it is clear that in this case, smaller scale projects will be most likely to attract funding. I have asked my officials to examine the suitability of a range of potential candidate projects with the intention of submitting applications where it is appropriate to do so.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Infrastructure for his assessment of allowing powered wheelchair users to use cycle paths. (AQW 5778/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Cycle Routes Order (Northern Ireland) 2008 provides only for cycles on cycle lanes.

I am not considering the inclusion of any other vehicles in cycle lanes at this time. However I have asked my officials to give the matter some consideration.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he would consider increasing the permitted maximum engine output for electrically assisted pedal cycles to be higher than 250W for larger cycles, such as tandems, family bikes, cargo bikes and freight cycles.

(AQW 5779/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The maximum engine output for electrically assisted pedal cycles is aligned with European rules on vehicle type approval which has determined a current motor output limit for these vehicles of 250W.

Vehicle Type Approval is the confirmation that production samples of a design will meet specified performance standards. Type approval is a matter for the Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA), under designation by the Department for Transport. VCA has responsibility for ensuring that type approval adheres to all automotive European Community Directives and Regulations.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline how the extra £350m promised in the A Fresh Start agreement for his Department is being spent.

(AQW 5789/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Executive's Budget 2016-17 document explained that the additional borrowing facility provided under the Stormont House Agreement, together with other borrowing and the conventional capital provided by the 2015 Spending review has been allocated to a range of infrastructure projects across a number of departments.

The capital infrastructure projects being undertaken by my Department include: the Belfast Rapid Transit project; the dualling of the A6 road; the refurbishment of the Derry – Coleraine railway line; the new Strangford and Rathlin Island ferries; the A31 Magherfelt Bypass; the A26 Glarryford roads; and development work on the Belfast Transport Hub.

Other infrastructure projects are being taken forward by other departments and those Ministers would be best placed to provide details of these projects.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for Infrastructure when he or his Special Adviser must give clearance before a Freedom of Information response can be issued.

(AQW 5883/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Neither I nor my Special Adviser 'clear' Freedom of Information (FOI) responses. Responses are issued directly by business areas in my Department. On occasions I will be given sight of responses prior to issue for information only. The only circumstance when I will be involved in the process of responding to a Freedom of Information request is when an exemption under section 36 in the FOI Act is being applied. In this case I am required as the 'Qualified Person' under the legislation to satisfy myself that the public interest is best served by withholding the information requested under that exemption.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the shortfall in the budget for the York Street Interchange.

(AQW 5884/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Budget for 2017-18 to 2021-22 has not been agreed by the Executive, therefore there are no current allocations in advance of this year for projects other than those flagships projects identified by the Executive as part of the 2016-17 Budget process.

York Street Interchange remains a priority for me and I will be considering funding for this project together with other priorities as part of my Budget 2017-18 to 2021-22 considerations.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) how many bus stops are between Crookedstone Road and Belfast City and; (ii) how many passengers have got on at each stop daily over the last six months.

(AQW 5885/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Translink do not run any route that uses the Crookedstone Road when travelling to Belfast.

The boarding and alighting stage of Crookedstone Road is passed by the following bus services:

- Antrim to Lisburn via Belfast International Airport
- Crumlin to Antrim Hospital

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether his Department will be vesting land for the A5 that was already vested for the previous A5 scheme.

(AQW 5894/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: To ask the Minister for Infrastructure whether his Department will be vesting land for the A5 that was already vested for the previous A5 scheme.

In September 2012 the Vesting Order for the A5WTC project became operative for the sections from Newbuildings to north of Strabane and Ballygawley to south of Omagh. However following a legal challenge, a court ruling in April 2013 effectively quashed the Orders including the Vesting Order resulting in land transferring back to the original owners.

In February 2016 TransportNI published updated documents for the A5 Western Transport Corridor which included the Notice of Intention to Make a Vesting Order for the following phases:

- a) Phase 1a - from Newbuildings to north of Strabane;
- b) Phase 1b - from south of Omagh to Ballygawley; and
- c) Phase 2 - from north of Strabane to south of Omagh.

The majority of the land included in these draft Vesting Orders was included in the previous draft Vesting Order which, as outlined above, was not previously concluded and therefore land was not vested at that time.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail all current and future departmental projects that are reliant on European Union funding.

(AQW 5896/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Delivery of projects is not ordinarily dependent upon EU funding; securing this can, however, contribute to the acceleration and expansion of my wider infrastructure programme and help support the progression of projects.

My Department has currently two ongoing railway projects that have secured EU Co-financing through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). These are track rehabilitation works between Knockmore and Lurgan, due to complete in 2018, and track upgrading works between Derry and Coleraine, due to complete in December 2016.

The Chancellor's recent announcement that he would honour in full ERDF funded projects in receipt of grant offers prior to Britain and the north of Ireland exiting Europe means there are a number of projects that are likely to benefit from EU co-financing which I am hopeful will receive positive decisions shortly.

My officials are progressing a Stage 2 application for €20m of EU Co-financing from the INTERREG VA Territorial Co-operation Programme toward the development of the North West Multimodal Transport Hub in Derry, and this is currently under assessment.

One of my Department's Arms Length Bodies, NI Water, has been involved in the development of two joint project applications under INTERREG VA seeking €36m of EU Co-financing; The Sustainable Catchment Area Management Plan project and the Shared Waters Enhancement and Loughs Legacy Project.

Waterways Ireland, a North South Implementation Body, has in partnership with Monaghan County Council; Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; and East Border Region Ltd. submitted an INTERREG VA application for €4.2m of EU co-financing to develop a greenway along the route of the Ulster Canal from Smithborough, Co. Monaghan to Middletown co. Armagh.

There is currently a CEF call open for applications for co-financing, which closes on the 7 February, and specifically targets small scale projects. I have recently instructed my officials to prepare a number of project applications within the competitively funded TEN-T programme with the intention of presenting these to the European Commission for independent evaluation.

Looking further to the future I understand there may be a substantial CEF call in 2018 which may be suitable for a number of our major projects, including York Street Interchange, the Belfast Hub and the Newry Southern Relief Road that have been included within the European Commission Work Plans. This does not guarantee funding; however, by virtue of their inclusion within the work plans, they would ordinarily be seen as strong candidate to secure funding through the CEF.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the total amount of European Union funding needed to complete all planned infrastructure projects.

(AQW 5897/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Delivery of projects is not ordinarily dependent upon EU funding; securing this can, however, contribute to the acceleration and expansion of my wider infrastructure programme and help support the progression of projects.

My Department has currently two ongoing railway projects that have secured EU Co-financing through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). These are track rehabilitation works between Knockmore and Lurgan, due to complete in 2018, and track upgrading works between Derry and Coleraine, due to complete in December 2016.

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Mr O'Dowd asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the roads in Upper bann included in the rural roads resurfacing programme.

(AQW 5919/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department's TransportNI does not hold the requested information on a constituency basis, but rather by local Council area. However, I can advise of the on-going programmes of work, developed by TransportNI engineers, to carry out small scale resurfacing schemes on selected lengths of the following roads in the Banbridge and Craigavon council area

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| ■ U1168 off Derryanvill Road | ■ B0002 Derrymacash Road |
| ■ U1081 Carrick Road | ■ C160 Bannfoot Road |
| ■ U1350 Island Road | ■ C310 Diamond Road |
| ■ U1098 Derrycush Road | ■ C310 Diamond Road |
| ■ U1089 off Derryvinney Road | ■ U4113 Kilmacrew Road |
| ■ U1063 Wood Road | ■ U4047 Scolban Road |
| ■ U1166 off Corbracky Road | ■ U4226 Aghaderg Road |
| ■ U4095 Lenaderg Road | ■ U4367 Dicksons Hill Road |
| ■ U4288 Cavehill Lane | ■ U4258 Lairds Road |
| ■ U4103 Knocknagore Road | ■ U4057 Skeagh Road |
| ■ U4135 Tullylish Road | ■ U4084 Stramore Road |
| ■ U4350 Lisnacroppin Road | ■ U4102 Parkstown Lane |
| ■ C153 Castor Bay Road (3no stretches) | ■ C0352 Ballylough Road |
| ■ U1069 Church Road (East) | ■ U4094 Ballykelly Road |
| ■ U1069 Church Road (West) | ■ U4462 Kiln Lane |
| ■ U1106 Derrycrow Road | ■ U4069 Skeltons Cut |
| ■ U1017 Annaghdroghal Lane | ■ U4073 Tullyhenan Road |
| ■ U1129 Turmoyra Lane | ■ U4308 Bog Road |
| ■ U1107 off Ballynerry North Road | ■ U4309 Annaghbane Road |
| ■ C160 Ardmore Road | ■ U4297 Rock Meeting Road |
| ■ B0002 Derrytrasna Road | ■ U4072 Ballymoney Road |

Mr McAleer asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he will ensure that all sectors within the transport industry are reflected in the Integrated Transport Strategy.

(AQW 5921/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As part of the arrangements for developing proposals for the integration of passenger transport services all existing operators including the Health and Social Care Trusts, the Education Authority, Translink, the Rural Community Transport Partnerships, Disability Action and the Federation of Passenger Transport are involved in a Stakeholder Forum. The Forum provides input to the plans and proposals for design of the new integrated arrangements. There will also be a need for ongoing engagement with existing operators to obtain details of user needs, the numbers and types of users and their current travel patterns.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he would, through the North/South Ministerial Council, consider introducing navigation fees on the Shannon-Erne waterway.

(AQW 5922/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: There are no plans to introduce navigation fees on the Shannon-Erne waterway at present. Waterways Ireland has responsibility for this navigation. The remit of Waterways Ireland is to manage, maintain, develop and promote the navigations for which it is responsible. In addition, the introduction of navigation could prove counterproductive to the efforts made by Waterways Ireland to attract tourists.

Waterways Ireland charges fees to users of the navigation for access to facilities such as service areas and lock gates, through a smart card system. The introduction of navigation fees would generate administration costs to Waterways Ireland that, at this time, could negate the benefits of introducing such fees.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he will ensure that the volunteering ethos among community transport drivers is maintained within the Integrated Transport Project.
(AQW 5923/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I acknowledge the important role that volunteer drivers within the Community Transport sector currently play in the delivery of demand-responsive transport services for elderly and disabled passengers. I wish to ensure that volunteers continue to be included in the future arrangements for the provision of services through the Integrated Passenger Transport Project. As part of these new arrangements, each driver will need to hold an appropriate licence for the vehicle and the purpose for which they are using it.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for Infrastructure, in relation to the review of Winter Services Procedures, to detail (i) the cost of consultant fees to carry out the route optimisation exercise for the last two years; (ii) the staff costs to implement the new proposals; and (iii) the expected savings following review.
(AQW 5940/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department commits significant resources to its winter service programme and it is therefore essential that we continue to ensure that we are providing this service as efficiently as possible.

Working with our partners the Met Office, the Department has reviewed its salting routes and carried out an Operational and Climatological optimisation. The cost of this Route Optimisation Project was approximately £116,000.

While departmental staff input was essential, the costs were neutral as the vast majority of the time spent on the project was absorbed within normal duties.

Based on an average winter it is anticipated that the annual saving will be around £110,000 per season. This is based on a requirement for fewer salting vehicles, fewer drivers and fewer miles being driven (fuel/wear and tear) to carry out winter service for the same length of salted network as that of previous seasons.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for Infrastructure, in relation to the the review of Winter Service Procedures, to detail the expected efficiencies to be achieved in (i) the number of existing drivers and number proposed; (ii) the average route treatment time at present and proposed; and (iii) the proposed new response times for all sections on the A4 Ballygawley to Enniskillen route.
(AQW 5941/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Working with our partners the Met Office, the Department has reviewed its salting routes and carried out an Operational and Climatological Optimisation.

The route optimisation project resulted in the overall number of routes being reduced from 111 to 107.

The overall numbers of Drivers varies from year to year dependant on availability of both Internal and External resource. The annual numbers required depends not only on the number of routes but also the frequency of being on duty. In relation to expected efficiencies, savings were projected based on two drivers per route, therefore it is anticipated that eight fewer drivers are required to facilitate the winter service programme this season.

Last season, the average route treatment time was 2 hours 39 minutes compared to a revised average route design time of 2 hrs 49 minutes. Although the average time has increased slightly, the revised routes mean that we are still able to salt the same length of network with four fewer routes and the total length of time required to complete all routes has been reduced from just over 4 hours to approximately 3 hours 30 minutes.

Based on the design time, all sections on the A4 Ballygawley to Enniskillen route should be completed under normal circumstances in approximately 2 hours from the scheduled treatment start time.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the protocols and procedures in place in his Department to inform MLAs of their constituency visits and of visits by VIPs and Royalty.
(AQW 5947/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: When the Department for Infrastructure was established on 9 May 2016, no formal procedures or protocols were put in place in to alert local MLAs of ministerial visits or engagements undertaken in their constituency.

However, I have now asked my Private Office to ensure that in future, as a professional courtesy, to notify local MLAs of visits or engagements undertaken in their constituency.

VIP and Royal visits are arranged and co-ordinated by the NIO and I understand that specific protocols exist to inform the constituency MPs and other interested parties of visits by VIPs and Royalty.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Infrastructure what form of response and feedback is provided to members of the public who report a defective street lamp or pothole via the NIDirect website.

(AQW 5952/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: When a member of the public submits a report of a defective street light or pothole on-line via the NI Direct website, they are provided with an acknowledgement pop-up message and unique enquiry reference number. In the case of a street lighting fault an acknowledgement email is issued.

Active enquiries are displayed on a map to confirm that a fault has been reported and will allow other members of the public to add their details to an existing enquiry if required.

The web site indicates how to find out the progress/status of an enquiry on-line by inputting the reference number into the 'Track a Fault' feature, see relevant web page link for your convenience: <http://reportfaultproblem.nidirect.gov.uk/track.html>

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) on how many occasions his Department has given consent for companies to dig up roads or footpaths (ii) how many follow up inspections were carried out; and (iii) on how many occasions has an inspection deemed the road or footpath to have been left in an unsatisfactory condition, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 5995/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Utility companies with statutory authority under their operating licences do not require consent from my Department to dig up roads or footpaths for purposes of installation or repair of their apparatus. However, they are required to provide notification of their intention to carry out works, and to provide further notifications of completed reinstatements.

Details of the number of openings in each of the last five years is set out in the table below, along with the number of inspections of reinstated openings, and the number of occasions on which the reinstatement failed to meet the specified standards.

	Number of openings	Number of inspections	Failed reinstatements
2011/12	50,655	10,332	1,021
2012/13	44,192	10,069	759
2013/14	50,216	10,393	704
2014/15	45,017	10,230	634
2015/16	46,175	9,825	684

TransportNI follows up each failed reinstatement to ensure the utility company responsible carries out the necessary repairs.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Infrastructure how many claims for compensation have been received by his Department as a result of roads or footpaths being in disrepair in each of the last five years.

(AQW 5996/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The information cannot be provided in format requested. However, statistical data which is relevant to your request has been provided below.

Table (i) below details the number of personal injury and vehicle damage claims received as a result of alleged incidents on public roads and footpaths in each of the last five financial years. The figures include claims where the alleged cause of the incidents were defects on public roads and footpaths.

Table (i)

Financial Year	No. of Claims
2011/2012	2741
2012/2013	2402
2013/2014	2341
2014/2015	1849
2015/2016	2838

Mr McAleer asked the Minister for Infrastructure, given that over 50 per cent of community transport trips are health related, whether he will request a contribution towards community transport from the Department of Health.

(AQW 5998/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As a result of the changing travel needs of users, including those on Day Opportunities placements, my Department is taking forward an Integrated Passenger Transport Project in conjunction with the Department of Health and

the Department of Education. Its aim is to develop proposals for a more integrated approach to the use of all publicly funded passenger transport services.

As it will take some time for the new integrated arrangements to come to fruition, I wrote to the Health Minister, Michelle O'Neill MLA, on 5 September 2016 to suggest a meeting to discuss the potential for her Department and the Trusts to consider helping to part grant fund the Rural Community Transport Partnerships. This request was based on the increasing demand on Rural Transport Providers to help with the emerging transport requirements in respect of Day Opportunities.

I expect to take this forward in the near future.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Infrastructure, in light of the decision to put the York Street Interchange project on hold, whether any EU funded projects in his Department are at risk following the decision to Brexit.

(AQW 6005/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department is taking forward a number of projects that are either currently benefiting from, or imminently expect to benefit from, EU co-financing. These are track rehabilitation works between Knockmore and Lurgan; track upgrading works between Derry and Coleraine; the development of a multimodal transport hub for the North West located in Derry; the Ulster Canal Greenway being taken forward by Waterways Ireland; and the Sustainable Catchment Area Management Plan and Shared Waters Enhancement and Loughs Legacy Project both of which are being taken forward by NI Water.

On the basis that these projects fall into one of two categories i.e. they will complete prior to Britain and the north of Ireland exiting the EU or they will coincide with the timings outlined within the Chancellor's guarantee of protected funding, I do not consider these projects to be at risk.

I remain committed to pursuing all avenues of EU funding that have the potential to provide an additional stream of project finance and I have tasked my officials with identifying opportunities to bid for these funds.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether any domestic waste water or street rainwater is piped directly into the Cottown River.

(AQW 6025/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: NI Water has one asset along the Cottown River, Cottown Wastewater Pumping Station, and it has an emergency overflow that is piped directly into the river.

Storm water from the local road drainage systems drains into the river in question by means of natural field drainage systems.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Infrastructure for an update on the John Lewis planning process at Sprucefield.

(AQW 6037/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: There are currently no major planning applications at the Sprucefield site. It is likely that any future applications, including those involving major retail proposals, would be submitted to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council in the first instance.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Infrastructure for an update on any major planning permission processes at the Sprucefield site.

(AQW 6038/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: There are currently no major planning applications at the Sprucefield site. It is likely that any future applications, including those involving major retail proposals, would be submitted to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council in the first instance.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Infrastructure how his Department ensures the 30 mph speed limit in Sion Mills village is monitored and adhered to.

(AQW 6063/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department has a statutory duty to promote road safety and, within the context of the Road Safety Strategy, does this through a range of rolling road safety educational activities, engineering and other initiatives.

If inappropriate speed has been identified as an issue in any geographic area, it is the responsibility of the PSNI to enforce the 30mph speed limit.

Research shows that over 95% of road traffic collisions where someone is killed or seriously injured are due to human error. Therefore, in addition to making proven engineering interventions, my Department also challenges driver behaviour and through the road safety campaigns, reminds motorists of their responsibility to themselves and other road users. My Department's current anti speeding campaign, aimed at drivers, reinforces the message that 'You can never control the consequences if you speed', with the reminder that the equivalent of a classroom of our children have been killed due to speeding since 2000.

I remain committed to continuing to work towards reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads. I recognise the continuing challenges of preventing road deaths and serious injuries and as such my Department will continue to address the issues using all practicable methods.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he will amend section 3, part 2a of the General Development Procedure Order 2015 to make it mandatory for both domestic and commercial developers to include all dimensions in any written planning application.

(AQW 6068/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 requires that any planning application submitted to a council or the Department must, among other material, contain: a written description of the development to which it relates; a plan that is sufficient to identify the land to which it relates showing the situation of the land in relation to the locality, particularly in relation to neighbouring land; and such other plans and drawings as are necessary to describe the development to which it relates.

Should a council or the Department consider that further information is necessary it may direct the applicant to provide any specified information to enable it to determine the application.

The current provisions are suitably comprehensive to ensure that all necessary information is submitted or can be requested by the relevant planning authority to inform the determination of any application submitted.

Additionally, the current planning application form requires the applicant to give full and accurate details of the development proposal. For example, for full applications, details of the number of houses/apartments, the floorspace uses, the area of the development, including the floorspace for production, sales, offices, storage and other ancillary uses, and also including the area of the site in hectares. Any accompanying detailed drawings such as elevation plans will also show the exterior appearance and dimensions of the proposed development.

I consider that an amendment to the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 is not required.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Infrastructure what plans Transport NI has to reduce the speed limit outside schools to 20 mph.
(AQW 6069/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Following the successful piloting of part-time 20 mph speed limits at three primary schools, further schemes have been installed, or are in the process of installation, at four more schools.

My Department has a statutory duty to promote road safety and, within the context of the Road Safety Strategy, does this through a range of rolling road safety educational activities, engineering and other initiatives. Children and young people are amongst the most vulnerable groups using our roads and I am committed to ensuring that they use our roads safely, both in the school vicinity and the wider community.

I am therefore keen to roll out this important safety measure to other schools, especially those located on roads where the national speed limit applies. However, with installation costs currently in the region of £50,000 per school, these systems are expensive to provide and maintain. My officials are currently investigating an alternative and more cost effective method to provide part time enforceable 20mph speed limits at schools which would have the potential to allow more schools to be treated, subject to available funding in the current challenging financial position.

Given that over 95% of road traffic collisions where someone is killed or seriously injured are due to human error, there are a number of types of risks to children's safety at schools arising from road traffic and driver behaviour. Therefore, in addition to making proven engineering interventions, my Department also challenges driver behaviour and through the road safety campaigns, reminds motorists of their responsibility to themselves and other road users. In recent weeks, a series of road safety messages have been delivered through social media, radio, television and outdoor advertising, addressing a range of road safety behaviours on the journey to and from school to enhance child passenger and child pedestrian safety. My Department's current anti speeding campaign, aimed at drivers, reinforces the message that 'you can never control the consequences if you speed', with the reminder that the equivalent of a classroom of our children have been killed due to speeding since 2000.

My Department also provides and delivers a range of road safety resources and initiatives to schools here to teach children how to be safe as they use the road, as pedestrians, as passengers and as cyclists. These initiatives include the Road Safety Calendar Teaching Aid, Practical Child Pedestrian Safety Training and Cycling Proficiency training.

I remain committed to continuing to work towards reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads. I recognise the continuing challenges of preventing road deaths and serious injuries and as such my Department will continue to address the issues using all practicable methods.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the savings expected to be made as a result of the implementation of the LED street lighting pilot projects in (i) Craigavon; and (ii) Banbridge.

(AQW 6092/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As a result of the implementation of the LED street lighting pilot projects in the Craigavon and Banbridge areas, my Department expects to make savings of approximately £360k per annum (at 2015/16 prices). These savings are made up of £210k per annum in electricity and carbon reduction commitment charges, and £150k per annum of maintenance savings due to the anticipated long life and reliability of the new LED fittings.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide the savings separately for (i) Craigavon; and (ii) Banbridge.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure (i) to detail what discussions have taken place with the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council with a view to addressing coastal erosion along the causeway coast; and (ii) whether he will make a statement.

(AQW 6158/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As previously advised my Department currently has responsibility for protecting the roads and railway networks and certain sea defences which only accounts for some 20% of our coastline.

Whilst there have been no direct discussions with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, please be assured my Department has acted in a very responsible manner, accepted its responsibilities and led the way by investing considerable sums to strengthen and protect this coastline where it borders and provides support to the adopted road network. There are many recent examples of TransportNI sea defence works along the A2 Coast Road and I can advise that further works by TransportNI are nearing completion north of Larne.

In relation to making a statement on this issue I have been meeting with the DAERA Minister with regards to the overall approach to coastal management issues, and we hope to be in a position to advise the Assembly on the outcome of our deliberations in the near future.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) the number of motorists that have had their licences suspended for motoring offences relating to driving under the influence of drink/drugs and; (ii) the number of motor cyclists suspended for the same reasons, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6160/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Driver & Vehicle Agency's (DVA) un-validated management information, which is set out below, shows the number of drivers, including motor cyclists, who have been disqualified from driving for offences relating to driving under the influence of drink/drugs in each of the last five years.

The statistics also provide information on the total number of drivers who were disqualified from driving for alcohol or drug-related offences and, separately the number of drivers who, at the time of conviction, held full entitlement to drive motorcycles. The DVA does not hold information on the category of vehicle being driven at the point of detection.

Total Drivers Disqualified from Driving by Year

Period	Number Disqualified
1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011	2307
1 January 2012 to 31 December 2012	2133
1 January 2013 to 31 December 2013	1578
1 January 2014 to 31 December 2014	1771
1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015	2187

Motorcycle Licence Holders Disqualified from Driving by Year

Period	Number Disqualified
1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011	65
1 January 2012 to 31 December 2012	60
1 January 2013 to 31 December 2013	48
1 January 2014 to 31 December 2014	57
1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015	68

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) the number of motorists in West Tyrone that have had their licences suspended for motoring offences relating to driving under the influence of drink/drugs and; (ii) the number of motor cyclists suspended for the same reasons, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6161/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Driver & Vehicle Agency's (DVA) un-validated management information, which is set out below, shows the number of drivers, including motor cyclists, from the West Tyrone area who have been disqualified from driving for offences relating to driving under the influence of drink/drugs in each of the last five years.

The statistics also provide information on the total number of drivers who were disqualified from driving for alcohol or drug-related offences and, separately, the number of drivers who, at the time of conviction, held full entitlement to drive motorcycles. The DVA does not hold information on the category of vehicle being driven at the point of detection.

The Driver Licensing database does not hold records by Parliamentary Constituency area, therefore the following postcodes were used to identify drivers within the West Tyrone constituency – BT47, BT70, BT76, BT78, BT79, BT81, BT82 and BT93. The postcodes used may overlap with those included in counts for other constituencies.

Total Drivers Disqualified from Driving by Year

Period	Number Disqualified
1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011	266
1 January 2012 to 31 December 2012	223
1 January 2013 to 31 December 2013	212
1 January 2014 to 31 December 2014	208
1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015	269

Motorcycle Licence Holders Disqualified from Driving by Year:

Period	Number Disqualified
1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011	7
1 January 2012 to 31 December 2012	*
1 January 2013 to 31 December 2013	*
1 January 2014 to 31 December 2014	7
1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015	9

* where results return a figure of less than five, figures are suppressed to protect the identity of individuals.

Department of Justice

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 4417/16-21, whether (i) the five press officers are the entirety of her Department's information service; (ii) there are additional staff; and, if so, (a) how many; and (b) at what cost. (AQW 5454/16-21)

Ms Sugden (The Minister of Justice):

- (i) There are currently six Press Officers in my Department. Since my answer to AQW/4417/16-21 an agency worker joined my Press Office on 17 October 2016 for a 6 month period.
- (ii) The cost of the agency worker to date is £1,368.90.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the recouping of unpaid fines in the Fermanagh and Tyrone Court Division, broken down by courthouse and by (a) magistrates; and (b) crown court. (AQW 5520/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The plans for the new Fine Collection and Enforcement Service are in an advanced stage and as such existing management information reports are being upgraded. Therefore it is not currently possible to provide all of the information sought.

The total value of fines and other monetary penalties imposed by the court in the Division of Fermanagh and Tyrone and which remain outstanding at 30 September 2016 are set out in the table below. This includes sums which have not yet reached the payment due date.

It is anticipated that the new Service will be operational by early 2017 however it may be possible to produce more detailed data in advance of that pending the conclusion of the upgrade exercise.

Table 1 Total value of outstanding fines and monetary penalties imposed in the Division of Fermanagh and Tyrone

Court Office	Total
Dungannon Court Office	621,055.96
Enniskillen Court Office	406,628.62
Omagh Court Office	740,642.64
Strabane Court Office	406,374.30
Grand Total	2,174,701.52

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Justice to detail what driving qualifications are required for ministerial drivers when employed by (i) her Department; and (ii) herself.

(AQW 5532/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Neither my department nor myself employ Ministerial drivers. As Justice Minister my drivers are provided by the PSNI.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether persons that fail to pay fines and then jailed by committal warrant are subject to an offender levy.

(AQW 5594/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The offender levy applies to court imposed fines under the terms of the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. Provision has also been included to allow the levy to be collected and enforced in the same way as a court imposed fine. This means that any warrant raised in relation to non-payment of the fine, to which the levy applies, will include the levy, where this has not been paid. The default term served by the offender in custody for non-payment would expunge the levy, as it does with the court fine.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the totals of unpaid fines per court division.

(AQW 5596/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The plans for the new Fine Collection and Enforcement Service are in an advanced stage and as such existing management information reports are being upgraded. Therefore it is not currently possible to provide all of the information sought.

The total value of fines and other monetary penalties imposed by the court, broken down by Court Division and which remain outstanding at 30 September 2016 are set out in the table below. This includes sums which have not yet reached the payment due date.

It is anticipated that the new Service will be operational by early 2017 however it may be possible to produce more detailed data in advance of that pending the conclusion of the upgrade exercise.

Total value of outstanding fines and monetary penalties imposed, broken down by Court Division

Court Divisions	Total
Antrim	2,472,628.17
Ards	2,063,730.87
Armagh And South Down	2,766,233.47
Belfast	6,378,302.05
Craigavon	1,723,996.18
Fermanagh And Tyrone	2,174,701.52
Londonderry	2,264,295.87
Grand Total	19,843,888.13

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of people that have been prosecuted for attacking Gaelic Athletic Association club premises or facilities since 2011.

(AQW 5651/16-21)

Ms Sugden: There is no offence specific to an attack on Gaelic Athletic Association club premises and offences relating to these attacks are recorded under generic offence descriptions, such as criminal damage or arson, of which there are a large number each year. For example, in 2015, there were 1,908 convictions where at least one offence was that of criminal damage.

Information on convictions datasets is sourced from Integrated Courts Operating System (ICOS), the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service information management system and, within this system, information on the type of building which may have been attacked is only held in the detail of charges for which an individual is prosecuted at court. Therefore, it would only be possible to identify convictions resulting from an attack on Gaelic Athletic Association club premises through a manual trawl of court records, which, given the numbers of cases involved, a subset of which are quoted in the example, would incur a disproportionate cost.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of sex workers that have exited the sex industry since the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 came into effect.

(AQW 5652/16-21)

Ms Sugden: No information is available on the number of sex workers who have exited prostitution since the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 came into effect.

Section 19 of the Act required the then Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to prepare and publish a strategy to ensure that a Programme of assistance and support is made available to those who wish to leave prostitution. The strategy was published in December 2015 and the programme was published in May 2016. The programme will be subject to ongoing review by the Department of Health to ensure that appropriate advice and information is made available.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Justice to provide an overview of psychiatric mental health provision within Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre, including number of staff involved in delivering that provision.

(AQW 5656/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust provides a dedicated in-reach Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to young people resident in Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre in line with similar CAMHS services delivered within the community.

This dedicated in-reach service, which is part-funded by the Youth Justice Agency, is based in Woodlands and has been operational since November 2015. It provides a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and age-appropriate mental health assessment and treatment service comprising the following specialisms:

- Locum Consultant Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist
- Mental Health Clinical Nurse Specialist
- Forensic/Clinical Psychologists

The Team is available during office hours but does not have an emergency/on-call service provision as part of its remit. Out-of-hours emergencies are managed via the local on-call GP service, local Accident and Emergency Departments and local community CAMHS Crisis Assessment and Intervention Team (CAIT) services.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many people are classed as homeless when (i) entering; and (ii) leaving prison.

(AQW 5664/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The information requested is shown in the table below. These figures cover the period from 30 September 2015 to 01 October 2016.

Establishment	Homeless on committal	Homeless on discharge
Maghaberry	318	164
Magilligan	50	73
Hydebank Wood College	36	7

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many offences were carried out against homeless people in the last year, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 5665/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The recording of offences committed is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

The PSNI have advised me that they would not be able to identify whether or not the victim of a crime was homeless and therefore it has not been possible to provide the information requested.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many attempted suicides were recorded amongst prisoners, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 5666/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Information available does not differentiate between the act of self-harm and an attempt, or act of suicide.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline how many committal warrants have been issued for unpaid fines in the Fermanagh and Tyrone Court Division, per court house and shown as (i) magistrates; and (ii) crown courts; and of these how many resulted in (i) a prison term; or (ii) full payment on service of the committal warrant.

(AQW 5670/16-21)

Ms Sugden: As the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service is currently upgrading management information systems in preparation for the establishment of the new Fine Collection and Enforcement Service, it is not possible to provide the information requested at this time. The information will be provided as soon as it is possible to do so.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 4280/16-21, whether she plans to bring forward legislation to amend the criteria or create a separate scheme focusing on reoffending and recidivism as opposed to the singular new offence(s), with a view to prevention on a wider scale, by identifying issues in a continuous basis.

(AQW 5671/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Public Protection Arrangements (PPANI) facilitates the common assessment and management of the risks posed by the most serious sexual and violent offenders in Northern Ireland. A serious case review is considered in circumstances where an individual, whose risk of causing serious harm is currently being managed on a multi-agency basis through these arrangements, is either charged with a further serious sexual offence or serious violent offence, or where a significant failure occurs in their risk management.

The criteria for a Serious Case Review is established administratively in Departmental Guidance to Agencies, not in statute, and thresholds have been established to ensure that its use is proportionate and focuses on reviewing significant incidents in relation to the risk management of offenders who pose the greatest risk of causing serious harm to the public.

Agencies who act as designated risk managers for individual offenders do already regularly monitor compliance with risk management plans and there is an existing forum for continuous assessment and adjustment of risk management plans to address any emerging issues of concern, which is the multi-Agency Local Area Public Protection Panel (LAPPP). PPANI Agencies can also undertake internal reviews of risk management in individual cases to inform future organisational practice which can be discussed in LAPPP meetings and, where appropriate, disseminated more widely through changes to the PPANI Manual of Practice.

I have no plans to make changes to the current arrangements.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether she plans to obtain a report from the Departmental Solicitor's Office to ascertain if there is liability for agencies, under her departmental remit, that are alerted to instances of reoffending, even with warnings of public safety, that resulted in (i) inadequate monitoring; and (ii) no monitoring; and to provide or place copy of this in the Assembly Library.

(AQW 5733/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I have no plans to commission a report from the Departmental Solicitor's Office and, in any case, advice from that Office to my Department is provided under legal professional privilege and would not therefore be published.

Effective risk management of offenders is founded on a risk assessment process which is dynamic and in which the changing features of an offender's circumstances, and new or updated information, are appraised to evaluate whether they indicate that the offender is, as a consequence, more or less likely to re-offend and appropriate adjustments made to their Risk Management Plan.

The strategies used within the Risk Management Plans of individual offenders combine both external strategies, such as curfews, restrictions and prohibitions and internal control factors targeting motivation, attitudes, and promoting pro-social contacts and activities. While PBNi interventions have been demonstrated to be effective in the prevention of further offending, it is not possible to predict or eliminate the risk of re-offending completely. It is widely recognised that with the most robust monitoring, offenders can still choose to make poor decisions and engage in opportunistic risk-taking behaviour which may in some circumstances result in them re-offending.

Equally, it is recognised that the public expect offenders, subject to statutory orders and licence conditions in the community, to be monitored to agreed professional standards.

Probation Officers operate within a Code of Conduct and framework of professional standards and failure to observe those standards, or any allegations of misconduct, would be dealt with under the Probation Board's disciplinary policy and procedures. Where any matter calls into question a Probation Officer's Social Work registration this is required to be reported to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

Police Officers with responsibility for monitoring statutory requirements imposed on offenders are similarly bound by a Code of Ethics. This sets the professional standards expected of officers and failure to observe them, or allegations of misconduct, are dealt with through the PSNI's disciplinary policy and procedures.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Justice to detail the (i) total number; and (ii) proportion of (a) Assembly Written Questions; (b) Assembly Priority Written Questions; and (c) Freedom of Information requests directed at her Department that have been answered within the maximum permitted timescales since May 2016.

(AQW 5780/16-21)

Ms Sugden: As at 1 November, my Department has been asked a total of 531 Assembly Questions (503 Assembly Written Questions and 28 Assembly Priority Written Questions) since May 2016. All 531 Assembly Questions have been answered within the permitted timescales.

Since 1 May 2016, my Department has received 117 Freedom of Information requests. Of these, 104 were answered within statutory deadlines, 12 are new requests which are still being processed, and one issued two days late.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of convictions made relating to cyber bullying in each of the last 3 years.

(AQW 5808/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The previous Executive agreed to the commissioning of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) to develop an E-Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to enable the safe use of digital and internet technology by children and

young people. My Department is represented on the Project Board which is developing the draft Strategy in advance of public consultation.

Offences relating to cyber-bullying and other cyber-crimes are generally prosecuted under more generic offence descriptions, and datasets held by my Department currently do not contain information on the detail or circumstance of such offences; therefore, it would only be possible to identify convictions resulting from cyber-bullying through a manual trawl of court records, which would incur a disproportionate cost.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Justice (i) for her assessment of the prevalence of counterfeit currency; and (ii) what training measures are being adopted to assist retail and hospitality staff to identify and respond to counterfeit currency at point of sale.

(AQW 5810/16-21)

Ms Sugden:

(i) In 2013 (the most recent published figures), the number of counterfeit Northern Irish banknotes represented only 0.018% of the number of genuine banknotes in circulation.

All counterfeit currency notified to the Police Service of Northern Ireland is submitted to the United Kingdom National Central Office (UKNCO) for the Suppression of Counterfeit Currency and Protected Coins.

(ii) The Northern Irish & Scottish issuing banks have comprehensive information for the public about the design & security features of their banknotes on the website of the Association of Commercial Banknote Issuers (ACBI):-
http://www.acbi.org.uk/current_banknotes.php

A 'Know Your Northern Ireland Banknotes' leaflet has been issued to retailers across Northern Ireland. The banks also conduct visits to retailers by request.

The Bank of England has conducted education visits to Northern Ireland in relation to their recently issued polymer £5 note. Comprehensive information for the public about the design & security features of their banknotes & coins can be found on the websites:-

- <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/banknotes/Pages/default.aspx>
- <http://www.royalmint.com/discover/uk-coins/coin-design-and-specifications>

Retailers Against Crime [RAC] provide training for members on how to detect counterfeit currency and counterfeit bankcards. Members are circulated with information on offenders suspected of using counterfeit currency and this information is shared with PSNI. RAC has worked closely with Ulster Bank in providing training to RAC members.

Local banks have also held fraud prevention sessions for customers.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether (i) persons charged with a domestic abuse-related offence that self-represent in court contests or trials, are not permitted to cross-examine their victim(s); and (ii) this covers all aspects of domestic abuse, including physical, emotional and sexual.

(AQW 5815/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Detail on the rules governing the cross-examination of witnesses by an accused in person in criminal proceedings are set out under Part III of the Criminal Evidence (NI) Order 1999 - SI No.2789 (N.I.8).

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether she will discuss with key stakeholders the option of the Chief Constable both reinstating the original domestic violence protocol before services were centralised to link with Health and Social Care Trusts, and reverting to specialist domestic violence officers available for victims from the commencement to completion of court processes.

(AQW 5816/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The establishment, on 1 April 2015, of a Public Protection Branch within PSNI, linked to the five Health and Social Care Trusts, arose from an operational decision taken by the Chief Constable. While the PSNI falls under the remit of the Department of Justice, it has complete operational autonomy and therefore I cannot involve myself in operational decisions.

However as Minister of Justice I have identified Domestic Violence and Abuse as a key priority for my tenure. In addressing this priority and as Co-Chair of the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse, I will be liaising with key stakeholders regarding progress on the delivery of priorities set out in the "Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse" Strategy in order to ensure Government's commitment to tackling this abuse is focused and effective.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 4420/16-21, whether a recommendation is required by the Prisoner Ombudsman for the implementation or can she, her Departmental officials, and/or NIPS management authorise the implementation in the interests of safety and duty of care.

(AQW 5817/16-21)

Ms Sugden: A recommendation is not required from the Prison Ombudsman for the Northern Ireland Prison Service to amend the Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Policy.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service approach is to ensure that the support available is focussed upon individual risks and needs.

To apply a universal approach would potentially divert attention and resources away from individuals who require support to those who do not.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline (i) the rationale for the terminology for Supporting Prisoner at Risk, with the main characteristic being support, when there is no mandatory mental health referral and/or assessment; and (ii) what support is regarded and delivered in the current model in absence of said referral or assessment.

(AQW 5818/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Mental health assessments and referrals are a matter for the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust under the SPAR multi-disciplinary approach.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service approach is to ensure that the support available is focussed upon the individual's identified risks and needs.

Dr Farry asked the Minister of Justice to outline the circumstances when she or her Special Adviser must give clearance before a Freedom of Information response can be issued.

(AQW 5838/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The only instance where I, as Minister must clear a response to a Freedom of Information Request, is where the release of all or part of the requested information would be likely to "cause prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs". This situation is defined in s36 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) where a public authority must have a "Qualified Person" provide their opinion that the release of the requested information would actually cause the prejudice described, and therefore that s36 of the FOIA is engaged. As per s36(5)(b), the qualified person for the Department is myself as Justice Minister, and it is my decision whether s36 is engaged.

Further information regarding the application of s36 can be found at the link below. The points I have covered can be found on page 4, points 7-9 (Identifying the qualified person) and page 6, points 15 -17 (Qualified person's opinion needed to engage s36 exemption).

https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1175/section_36_prejudice_to_effective_conduct_of_public_affairs.pdf

There are no circumstances where my Special Adviser is required to give clearance.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Justice for (i) an update on the Safe Shop Scheme; and (ii) initiatives to combat retail crime.

(AQW 5841/16-21)

Ms Sugden: My Department's Community Safety Strategy focuses on reducing crime which is likely to impact on a range of areas including the retail sector.

More specifically through a partnership approach, on 21 June my Department along with the Northern Ireland Policing Board, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the business community launched a Business Crime Action Plan which focuses on three core themes at a strategic level - Prevention and Protection, Information and Reassurance, and Enforcement. Its key objectives are to improve levels of protection and reduce the impact of crime, improve the sharing of intelligence to help disrupt and deter criminal activity, and improve confidence in the wider criminal justice system.

PSNI's Shopsafe scheme, which is now in its second year of delivery throughout Northern Ireland, provides bespoke face to face information sessions and resource packs for retailers to help prevent, detect and deter retail crime and personal safety of staff. Since its launch, PSNI figures show a downward trend in shoplifting crime in Belfast and Londonderry city areas, as well as other areas utilising this scheme.

At a local level, Policing and Community Safety Partnerships work with local councils and businesses to identify and resolve local priorities. Examples include the promotion and support of the Shopsafe scheme, a national Retailers Against Crime scheme, retail crime audits and pop up crime prevention surgeries.

The PSNI are also putting in place a pilot scheme involving 'Facewatch', which is an online reporting platform to improve identification rates of persons involved in crime, including retail crime, by utilising key industry partners, text alerts and a Notepad scheme as a staff aide memoire initiative covering powers and procedures.

Further PSNI initiatives include improving the identification of offenders which is being advanced by utilising key industry partners in a bid to identify offenders of retail theft, and forecourt crime by dedicating resources to deal with these incidents.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Justice to outline the prison officer staff cover, for front line duties, at weekends that is (i) required; and (ii) currently received, broken down by prison.

(AQW 5889/16-21)

Ms Sugden: It would not be appropriate to discuss the staffing levels in prisons, particularly for a high security prison.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Justice to outline how many front line staff are night shifts short of the full staffing quota, broken down by prison.

(AQW 5890/16-21)

Ms Sugden: It would not be appropriate to discuss the staffing levels in prisons, particularly for a high security prison.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Justice for her assessment of the impact on staff and prisoners as a result of shortages of front line staff at nights and weekends.

(AQW 5891/16-21)

Ms Sugden: It would not be appropriate to discuss the staffing levels in prisons, particularly for a high security prison.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Justice whether she has considered bringing the risk allowance for prison officer staff in line with that of the PSNI.

(AQW 5892/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Supplementary Risk Allowance was introduced in January 2014 on the recommendation of the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB). In their report issued in December 2013 the PSPRB set out their analysis and recommendations. The Body considered the level of the allowance and recommended that Northern Ireland Prison Service staff should not receive the same allowance as staff of the Police Service of Northern Ireland. I accept the analysis of the PSPRB in this regard.

The PSPRB noted the need to review the allowance every 2 years or when there was a significant change to the threat level.

I am actively considering the allowance in the context of the ongoing pay negotiations and recent security related events.

A full copy of the December 2013 PSPRB report can viewed using the link below:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/266299/NI_Allowance_report_website_publication.pdf

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Justice to outline why prison officers are not entitled to overtime pay for additional hours worked to relieve staff shortages.

(AQW 5893/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Prison officers are paid overtime for additional hours worked in accordance with their terms and conditions of employment.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister of Justice to outline the measures her Department is taking specifically to reduce rural crime in Newry and Armagh.

(AQW 5900/16-21)

Ms Sugden: My Department's Community Safety Strategy 2012-2017 contains a commitment to making rural communities safer by reducing opportunities to commit crime. It also highlights my Department's commitment to supporting the outcomes of the Executive's Rural White Paper and Action Plan, led by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), to support and sustain rural communities and to deliver initiatives in rural areas across Northern Ireland that will contribute to safer rural communities.

The Rural Crime Partnership, which consists of representatives from my Department, the PSNI, NFU Mutual, the Ulster Farmers' Union and DAERA, also delivers actions taken forward at a strategic level to support safer rural communities.

While I welcome the overall downward trend in agricultural and rural crime across Northern Ireland, I am also aware that the PSNI's quarterly update to 30 September shows that the policing districts which cover your constituency area have experienced a slight increase over the past twelve months.

I understand that the PSNI are committed to a range of initiatives to specifically target rural crime in the districts that cover your constituency. Examples include specific days dedicated to target rural crime, using animal DNA to recover stock, and running operations with key partners to combat agri-theft and detect illegal activity such as fuel laundering and illegal dumping.

At a local level, Policing and Community Safety Partnerships continue to deliver a wide range of initiatives, such as farm and neighbourhood watch schemes, crime prevention messages on dedicated farmers market screens, property marketing and registration schemes, crime prevention workshops and a number of seasonal crime prevention campaigns.

My Department will continue to work with key partners in addressing rural crime.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice to outline the meetings or discussions she or departmental officials have had on the closure of the Bangor PSNI custody suite.

(AQW 5981/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Management of the police estate and service provision are operational matters for the Chief Constable, but he and I have regular stocktake meetings and, in view of concerns expressed to me, I will raise this matter with him when next we meet.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many cases of fraud by abuse of position are currently in the court system, broken down by (i) court division; (ii) Magistrates' Courts: and (iii) Crown Courts.
(AQW 5987/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The number of cases of fraud by abuse of position currently in the court system, broken down by (i) court division; (ii) Magistrates' Courts: and (iii) Crown Courts are presented in the table below.

Table 1 - Active Cases with at least one 'Fraud by Abuse of Position' charge

		Magistrates	Crown
Court Division	Belfast	2	1
	Londonderry	1	1
	Antrim	1	2
	Fermanagh & Tyrone	1	1
	Armagh & S Down	3	0
	Ards	2	2
	Craigavon	1	3
	Total	11	10

Active cases as of 21st October 2016 including at least one charge with code 44.05.229 - 'Fraud by abuse of position'

Source: Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS)

Ms Mallon asked the Minister of Justice, in light of the decision to put the York Street Interchange project on hold, whether any EU funded projects in her Department are at risk following the decision to Brexit.
(AQW 6008/16-21)

Ms Sugden: In light of recent statements from Treasury providing guarantees for EU funding, we do not anticipate any risk to current projects involving justice organisations.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister of Justice to outline the protocols and procedures in place in her Department to inform MLAs of their constituency visits and of visits by VIPs and Royalty.
(AQW 6166/16-21)

Ms Sugden: In 2008 the Executive agreed a protocol for notifying MLAs of Ministerial visits to their constituencies. My Department adheres to this protocol and does so taking account of the underlying need to protect the safety and security of Ministers and officials. Where appropriate MLAs will routinely be informed of Ministerial visits to their constituency in advance of the visit.

There are no separate protocols in place in my Department relating to VIP visits to constituencies, the arrangements for which are made on a case by case basis.

Certain VIP and Royal visits are arranged and co-ordinated by the Northern Ireland Office and I understand that specific protocols exist to inform the constituency MP and other interested parties of visits by VIPs and Royalty.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline who will be in charge of NIPS as of 30 October 2016.
(AQW 6208/16-21)

Ms Sugden: As of 30 October 2016 Phil Wragg will be Acting Director General.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister of Justice (i) to outline the rationale behind her decision on the closure of courts; and (ii) why she advised the Assembly at Question Time on 24 October that it would be inappropriate to comment on court closures until a judicial review was concluded, given that the Assembly Business Office was then advised within 90 minutes of Question Time of an intention to make an oral statement on court closures under urgent procedure.
(AQW 6231/16-21)

Ms Sugden: As explained within my statement to the Assembly on 25 October 2016, a range of factors informed my decision on the closure of courts including; the views of Assembly members and local communities affected by closures; the priorities

within the draft Programme for Government such as the innovative Pathfinder pilot on Problem Solving Justice; and the recently published preliminary report from Lord Justice Gillen's Review of Civil and Family Justice.

In the context of a changing justice landscape, I have concluded that it is appropriate to retain maximum flexibility within the court estate until these innovative reforms can be properly considered and established.

Having reached a final decision on this matter, it was entirely appropriate to make my announcement promptly to the Assembly.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 11 November 2016

Written Answers to Questions

The Executive Office

Dr Farry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister by which code of conduct is the new Executive press secretary bound.
(AQW 3390/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): The code of conduct in relation to the Executive Press Secretary is contained within the terms and conditions of the appointment.

Mr Kennedy asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any engagement they have had with Her Majesty's Government regarding the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union.
(AQO 240/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: We met with Prime Minister Teresa May in July to discuss the outcome of the referendum and welcomed her commitment that we will be fully involved and represented in the negotiations process.

An extraordinary summit of the British Irish Council was also convened in July at which all member administrations discussed the implications of the outcome of the Referendum on membership of the European Union which had taken place on 23 June.

An initial assessment of the issues arising from the European Union referendum result informed our August letter to the Prime Minister in which we identified the border, economic competitiveness and access to labour, energy, EU funding and the agri-food sector as priority areas for the Executive. A copy of the Prime Minister's response has been placed in the Assembly Library.

In September Ministers met David Davis the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union.

We attended a plenary meeting of the Joint Ministerial Council on Monday 24 October in 10 Downing Street. The meeting was chaired by the Prime Minister and a substantial part of the agenda was devoted to a discussion about the EU negotiations and the establishment of a Joint Ministerial Council sub-committee dedicated to preparations for and oversight of the EU negotiations.

The first meeting of this Committee will take place in early November.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to what Code of Conduct will the new Executive press secretary be subject.
(AQW 3475/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The Executive press secretary's code of conduct is code of conduct is contained within the terms and conditions of appointment.

Mr Ford asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any proposed actions to increase shared space in rural areas.
(AQW 4074/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The Executive is committed to the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Key Priority of our Shared Community, with the aim to create a community where division does not restrict the life opportunities of individuals and where all areas are open and accessible to everyone.

T:BUC recognises that issues relating to contested spaces can be particularly complex within a rural setting. To this end, the Executive Office is engaging with rural organisations with a view to developing an approach that will tackle the barriers that prevent sharing in a rural context.

Increasing shared space in rural areas can take place in many settings and so requires a multi faceted approach. As a result of T:BUC, the creation of Shared Education Campuses, such as the shared STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) and sixth form facilities for St Mary's High School, Limavady and Limavady High School, and Shared Neighbourhoods such as Manse Court in Saintfield have been completed, providing 12 new family homes in a rural setting.

Letters of Offer were accepted by 103 groups for the 2016/17 Summer Camps Programme and approximately 4,000 young people participated in programmes this year. Fifty two groups were from outside the Belfast constituency.

Mr McElduff asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline what help they will provide to ageing Mother and Baby Home survivors; including mothers that were under the age of eighteen at the time, as well as their now adult children. (AQW 4996/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: In establishing the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse, the well being, both emotionally and physically, of victims and survivors was at the heart of all decision-making.

The definition of an institution for the purposes of the Inquiry is defined in its Terms of Reference: "any body, society or organisation with responsibility for the care, health or welfare of children in Northern Ireland, other than a school (but including a training school or borstal) which, during the relevant period, provided residential accommodation and took decisions about and made provision for the day to day care of children." Residents of Mother and Baby Homes who were under the age of eighteen fall within this definition.

Support Services

Since January 2012, Lifeline has provided ongoing face-to-face and telephone crisis counselling to victims and survivors by arrangement, facilitating clients with face-to-face counselling that could be arranged in the Lifeline premises in Belfast or Derry/Londonderry, or in another convenient location.

Since October 2012, the Department has funded the WAVE Trauma Centre to provide a drop in and counselling facility for victims and survivors in Derry/Londonderry. A qualified Trauma counsellor provided by WAVE Trauma Centre is on hand to support victims and survivors.

Since 1 August 2013, Contact NI, providers of the Lifeline Service, has been contracted to provide a bespoke support service for HIA victims and survivors, including: non crisis counselling; caseworker support to assist individuals with benefits entitlement, housing, debt, tracing personal records, education matters; and additional bridging counselling for any victims and survivors waiting for referral appointments with a specialist service. A co-ordinator oversees the provision of a seamless service.

Small Grant Scheme

On 14 November 2014 the Department launched a small grant scheme for low level social support aimed at assisting those groups who exclusively support HIA victims and survivors.

The scheme had approval to operate for a period of 2½ years up to 31 March 2017, with a total budget of £75,000. Groups were limited to a maximum of £10,000 per annum to ensure that no one group would be able to bid and receive all of the funding available.

On 3 August 2016 we approved a one year extension to the scheme, with an additional budget of £40,000, in order to provide funding up to 31 March 2018.

Four victims and survivors groups applied for and are in receipt of funding for 2016/17. They are: SAVIA, Survivors North West, Rosetta Trust, and Birth Mothers and their Children for Justice NI. As part of the governance oversight and engagement arrangements in place, bi-monthly meetings are held between officials and the groups over and above the informal contact on related matters.

We continue to listen to and to meet with victims groups and to do all we can to ensure victims and survivors are supported throughout the Inquiry process.

Mr Dickson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail plans to ensure full and proper engagement before United Nations Treaty monitoring bodies in all future scenarios. (AQW 5188/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: As detailed in the response to AQW 3841/16-21, we are committed to engaging actively with the reporting process, to promote the many positive actions here and ensure the good work being taken forward to protect human rights is reported back to the United Nations.

Mr Dickson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 2029/16-21, what level of contact, and with what grade level, will these Civil Service teams have with Whitehall, Irish and EU counterparts. (AQW 5320/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: NICS officials are engaging with Whitehall, Irish and EU counterparts regularly at all levels (up to and including the Head of the Civil Service) to ensure that issues of particular significance for us are fed into considerations relating to the EU referendum result.

Mr Dickson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 2029/16-21, how civil service teams considering potential implications to Northern Ireland's interests will report their findings and observations; and when they will publish their progress. (AQW 5323/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The information will be used to inform our input to the negotiations. It would not be appropriate to publish it at this time.

Ms J McCann asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for a constituency breakdown of the numbers of young people engaging in the Together: Building a United Community Summer Camps in 2016.

(AQO 468/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: One hundred and three summer camps have been delivered by groups across all 18 constituencies. Over 4000 young people have participated in the camps this year. A detailed breakdown of the numbers of young people by constituency will not become available until the end of the programme in March 2017 when the independent evaluation of the programme for 2016/17 is completed.

Mr Girvan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how departmental investment and initiatives are assisting South Antrim.

(AQO 469/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The Executive Office's Summer Camp Programme 2016/17 has been operating from June 2016. This Programme, which represents an investment of £1.2 million per year is about building positive relations among young people across all parts of our community. One hundred and three Camps are being delivered this year on both a local and regional level and in all 18 Assembly constituencies including five delivered by groups based in South Antrim.

The Central Good Relations Fund was established to support productive, time bound projects which contribute to the promotion of good relations. Applicants must demonstrate how their project delivers against one or more of the T:BUC key priorities and associated outcomes. The Fund is open to properly constituted community groups and voluntary organisations. In 2016/17 £65,000 has been allocated from the fund to two projects based in the South Antrim area.

The District Council Good Relations Programme is a strategic good relations programme funded in partnership with local Councils. It aims to improve relations within Council areas and provide local solutions to local good relations issues. Over the last two years, £280,000 has been allocated to Antrim and Newtownabbey Council through the Programme to fund good relations work in areas including South Antrim.

The Social Investment Fund is investing £9 million in projects in its Northern Zone which includes the South Antrim constituency. Four of these projects, worth £6.9 million, are Zone-wide and therefore will potentially impact on the South Antrim constituency. These projects include £3.3 million in the Building Education through Employment project, which currently has over a thousand participants; £0.8 million in the Access to Employment project which enhances the Dial-a-Lift service; £1 million in the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing project, and £1.8 million which has been allocated for a project to tackle Fuel Poverty.

Mr Attwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the total cost of administering the Social Investment Fund, broken down for each year since its establishment.

(AQW 5558/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The information requested is included in the table below.

Social Investment Fund – cost of administration

Financial year	Total
2012/13	£123k
2013/14	£468k
2014/15	£650k
2015/16	£2.209m
2016/17*	£1.338m

* costs up to 30 September 2016

Dr Farry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the timetable for the formulation of the new Programme for Government, including the period for public consultation.

(AQW 5573/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The Executive agreed the draft Programme for Government at its meeting on 27 October 2016, and a public consultation on the draft Programme was launched the following day. The consultation will run until 23 December 2016, and our aim is to secure Assembly agreement soon after to a final document. This will be informed by the findings from engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and, of course, by feedback from the Assembly's own scrutiny processes.

Mr Dickson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 3841/16-21, to outline (i) who was responsible for the decision to not attend; (ii) why that decision was not given in a timely manner; and (iii) whether they were aware that non-attendance would mean non-compliance from the United Kingdom.

(AQW 5638/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Attendance by a representative of the Executive at the dialogue with the UN in Geneva on 15-16 June 2016 was not, in itself, an international obligation under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. As such, non-attendance by a representative of the Executive does not mean non-compliance from the United Kingdom.

As outlined in the response to AQW 3841/16-21, no decision was taken concerning attendance. However, we are committed to actively engaging in the future to enable the many positive actions here to be reported back to the United Nations.

Mr Swann asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 2341/16-21, to detail the membership of each Executive Sub-Group and Sub-Committee during the 2011-16 mandate.

(AQW 5648/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The membership of each Executive Sub-Group and Sub-committee established during the 2011-16 mandate is provided in the following table.

Ministerial Groups to March 2016

Department	Name of Sub Group/ Sub Committee	Membership
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	Executive Sub-Committee on the Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minister of Finance and Personnel ■ Minister for Regional Development ■ Minister for Education ■ Minister for Employment and Learning. ■ Junior Ministers OFMDFM
Department of the Environment	Ministerial Road Safety Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minister of the Environment ■ Minister for Regional Development ■ Minister of Justice ■ Assistant Deputy Chief Constable ■ Assistant Chief Fire Officer ■ Media and Communications Manager, NIAS
Department of the Environment	Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) - Executive Sub-Group Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minister of the Environment ■ Minister for Employment and Learning ■ Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety ■ Minister for Regional Development ■ Minister for Social Development ■ Junior Ministers OFMDFM
Department of Finance and Personnel	Executive Sub-Committee for Improving Public Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minister of Finance and Personnel. ■ Minister of Education ■ Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety ■ Minister of Justice ■ Minister of the Environment ■ Junior Ministers OFMDFM
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety ■ Minister of Justice ■ Minister of Finance and Personnel ■ Minister of Education ■ Minister for Social Development ■ Minister for Employment and Learning ■ Junior Ministers OFMDFM

Department	Name of Sub Group/ Sub Committee	Membership
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Ministerial Group on Mental Health and Learning Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety ■ Minister of Justice ■ Minister of Finance and Personnel ■ Minister of Education ■ Minister for Employment and Learning ■ Minister for Social Development ■ Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure ■ Minister for Regional Development ■ Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment ■ Junior Ministers OFMDFM
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Ministerial Co-ordination Group on Suicide Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety ■ Minister of Education ■ Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure ■ Minister for Regional Development ■ Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment ■ Minister for Social Development ■ Minister for Employment and Learning ■ Minister of Justice ■ Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development ■ Minister of the Environment ■ Junior Ministers OFMDFM ■ Chief Medical Officer ■ Lead Departmental Official, DHSSPS ■ Chair of Suicide Strategy Implementation Body ■ Chief Executive of the Public Health Agency.
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Ministerial Committee for Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ministers of all Departments ■ Junior Ministers OFMDFM.
Department for Social Development	Executive Sub-Group on Welfare Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minister for Social Development ■ Minister of Finance and Personnel ■ Minister for Employment and Learning ■ Minister of the Environment ■ Minister of Education ■ Minister of Justice ■ Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development ■ Junior Ministers OFMDFM.
Department for Social Development	Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minister for Social Development ■ Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety ■ Minister of Justice
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	Budget Review Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ First Minister and deputy First Minister ■ Minister of Finance and Personnel ■ Minister for Regional Development ■ Minister of the Environment ■ Minister for Employment and Learning ■ Head of the Civil Service
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	Delivering Social Change Ministerial Sub- Committee on Poverty and Social inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ministers of all Departments.

Department	Name of Sub Group/ Sub Committee	Membership
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	PfG Executive Programme Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ First Minister and deputy First Minister ■ Minister of Finance and Personnel ■ Other departmental Ministers as required
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	Children and Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ministers of all Departments.
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	Ministerial Sub-Group on Regional Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ First Minister and deputy First Minister ■ Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment ■ Minister for Employment and Learning ■ Minister of the Environment;
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	European Task Force Steering Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All Ministers with significant European priorities and any Minister who wished to attend in respect of particular agenda items

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the tender process for awarding Social Investment Fund projects.

(AQW 5927/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Delivery agents or contractors for Social Investment Fund projects are procured following a competitive procurement in line with Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy. The tendering process is overseen or managed by the Central Procurement Directorate.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail where (i) open competition; or (ii) tender processes were operated in relation to an award of Social Investment Funding.

(AQW 5928/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Lead partner organisations procure delivery agents or contractors following a competitive procurement in line with Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy. The tendering process is overseen or managed by the Central Procurement Directorate.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the (i) procurement; and (ii) selection process whereby lead partners were appointed in respect of Social Investment Fund projects.

(AQW 5929/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Lead partners were selected by local Steering Groups to oversee delivery of projects prioritised in the relevant zone. The lead partners do not deliver the projects. These are delivered by agents or contractors procured following a competitive procurement in line with Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy. The tendering process is overseen or managed by the Central Procurement Directorate.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any outcomes from the Joint Ministerial Committee meeting held in London on 24 October 2016.

(AQW 6067/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: A copy of the communique can be accessed via the following link; <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/publications/joint-ministerial-committee-communique-24-october-2016>

Dr Farry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of recent media reports, to outline what steps they are taking to review public funding Charter NI.

(AQW 6170/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: We refer the member to the answer given to AQW 4663/16-21.

In addition, monitoring is ongoing for the duration of any funding award which includes monthly vouching and verification of all spend, monthly monitoring of the project delivery and budgets through formal project boards and on site governance and financial checks on funded organisations.

These processes ensure funding is appropriately managed and allocated to deliver the objectives of the project.

Ms Bradshaw asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of recent media reports, to outline what steps they are taking to review their previous conclusions around governance assurances regarding Charter NI.

(AQW 6176/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: We refer the member to the answer given to AQW 6170/16-21.

Ms Mallon asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, following the public comments of the Chief Executive Officer, whether they plan to review the funding of Charter NI.
(AQW 6198/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: We refer the member to the answer given to AQW 6170/16-21.

Mr Dickson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when will their Department's website be updated to reflect the progress of Social Investment Fund projects.
(AQW 6273/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Now that the full £80 million has been committed to Social Investment Fund projects prioritised by local Steering Groups, we are in the process of finalising full details for inclusion on the Executive Office website. We expect final updates to be made over the next few weeks.

Department for Communities

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Communities (i) how many Freedom of Information requests he has received since coming to office; (ii) how many of these have been answered; (iii) how many of these were read by his Special Adviser; and (iv) how many were altered or amended either by, or at the request of, his Special Adviser.
(AQW 2420/16-21)

Mr Givan (The Minister for Communities): Since I came to office, the Department has received 84 Freedom of Information requests. 58 have been answered with 26 still being processed by the Department. Draft replies to FOI requests may be considered by a number of staff in the department before a response is issued. No separate records are maintained identifying which individuals may have seen or amended draft responses before they are finalised.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Communities to detail the departmental (i) facilities; and (ii) staff based in North Antrim as of 1 September 2016.
(AQW 2814/16-21)

Mr Givan: The departmental facilities and staff based in North Antrim are detailed below:

Building Location	Facility	Number of Staff
Ballymoney Jobs and Benefit Office 37 – 45 John Street, Ballymoney	Employment and Benefit services	56
Ballymena Jobs and Benefit Office 2 Parkway, Ballymena	Employment and Benefit services	109
County Hall Ballymena 182 Galgorm Road, Ballymena	Regional Development	17
Total Staff		182

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Communities for an update on how his Department is supporting the establishment of the Gaeltacht Quarter in West Belfast, as well as a rural Gaeltacht at Carn Togher.
(AQW 2930/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Gaeltacht Quarter Action Plan (GQAP) sets out twelve key projects and programmes aimed at assisting the economic and social development of West Belfast including for example cultural tourism. The Plan is based on joint departmental working and also includes actions for other departments. The approach to delivering the Plan is embedded in community development and regeneration and is being taken forward through a Gaeltacht Quarter Programme Joint Secretariat. Work is also progressing on the development of a Business Case for an Irish Language Academy.

Foras na Gaeilge, as the statutory body with responsibility for promoting the language has also provided funding to groups within the Gaeltacht area, and to Carn Togher, for activities including Scéim Pobal Gaeilge (Irish Language Community Officers scheme); After School and Summer camps.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to detail the cost of investigations relating to Sport NI's suspended Chief Executive in each of the last three years.
(AQW 3891/16-21)

Mr Givan: Costs associated with investigations relating to the suspended Chief Executive cannot be provided as Sport NI does not retain costs relating to any individual investigation cases.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to detail the amount spent by Sport NI on legal advice/services, broken down by (a) external legal advice/services by provider; (b) internal Departmental and Sports NI legal advice/services in each of the last three years.

(AQW 3893/16-21)

Mr Givan:

(a) Sport NI has utilised a number of external legal advisers/services in each of the last three years including:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| ■ Erdis Limited | ■ Arthur Cox Solicitors |
| ■ Liberty HR | ■ Rosemary Connolly Solicitors |
| ■ Meadow Consultancy Services Ltd | ■ W Curragh (Consultant) |
| ■ Charis Consultancy Services | ■ People Management Solutions |
| ■ People Management Solutions (NI) Ltd | ■ McCaul HR Business Support |
| ■ Dr Carol Ackah | ■ NILGOSC and others. |
| ■ McCaul HR Business Support | |

Total costs are as follows:-

- 13/14 - £73,990.35
- 14/15 - £102,856.97
- 15/16 - £117,754.89

(b) There has been no cost incurred on internal Departmental and Sports NI legal advice/services in each of the last three years.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to detail Sport NI's legal and staff grievance investigation costs in each of the last three years .

(AQW 3894/16-21)

Mr Givan: Sport NI's legal and staff grievance investigation costs in each of the last three years is as follows:-

- 13/14 - £3,762
- 14/15 - £68,106
- 15/16 - £97,798

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for Communities whether the projects in the Enabling Success strategy are progressing in line with the timescales in the strategy.

(AQW 4594/16-21)

Mr Givan: Enabling Success was the last Executive's strategy for addressing Northern Ireland's high economic inactivity rate.

The Executive remains committed to tackling economic inactivity, and to this end has included a specific indicator (Indicator 17: Reduce Economic Inactivity) in the draft Programme for Government. My department has developed a Programme for Government Delivery Plan which sets out how we propose to address this indicator and reduce economic inactivity during the term of this Executive.

Building on Enabling Success, the commitments made are action oriented and focused on delivering a step change in our approach to supporting people with health conditions and disabilities, and those with family and caring responsibilities who want to work.

Through the actions proposed we will ensure that work pays, that people have the skills they need to access and progress in work, that they have access to health related support they may need to stay in work and that they can afford the childcare they may need.

The proposals in the delivery plan will be the subject of a full public consultation as part of the next stage of the Programme for Government process over the coming weeks.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities for (i) an expenditure breakdown on the Affordable Warmth Scheme to date across each council area; and (ii) his assessment on expenditure for each area, including administration.

(AQW 5057/16-21)

Mr Givan:

(i) The Housing Executive has provided details below of Affordable Warmth expenditure in respect of the Affordable Warmth Scheme at Housing Executive Grant Office level (see Appendix A).

These figures have been taken from the Housing Executive finance system. The Housing Executive records costs at Grant Office level and not at local council level.

- (ii) Initial funding to local councils included necessary start up costs to reflect the introduction of a new and significant initiative. As the Affordable Warmth Scheme has embedded, my staff have closely monitored administrative costs.

Local councils are funded quarterly and in 2015/16 each local council received £153,000 to administer the Affordable Warmth Scheme. However in 2016/17 my Department revised these costs downward by some 30% and each council will receive funding amounting to £107,250.

Affordable Warmth Scheme**Appendix A**

Measures	*2014/15 (£k)	2015/16 (£k)	2016/17 to Period 6	Total (£k)	Council
NIHE Grants Office					
Belfast Grants		1,267	1,135	2,402	Belfast City Council (including overflow cases from the Ards & North Down Borough Council)
South East Grants		1,512	1,592	3,104	Lisburn City and Castlereagh District Council and Ards & North Down Borough Council (some cases overflowed to Belfast Grants Office)
South Grants	7	2,977	1,923	4,907	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
North East Grants		1,178	1,261	2,439	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Derry Grants		1,984	2,450	4,434	Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and Derry City & Strabane District Council
WEST GRANTS		2,638	2,134	4,772	Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Mid-Ulster District Council
Total	7	11,556	10,495	22,058	
Staffing and Administration Costs					
Payments to Councils for referrals	1,334	1,683	674	3,691	
NIHE Administration costs	387	3,999	1,672	6,058	
	1,721	5,682	2,346	9,749	
Total Affordable Warmth Expenditure	1,728	17,238	12,841	31,807	

* Please note that these figures exclude the costs for the Pilot Scheme that ran between 2012/13 and 2014/15 totalling £1,403k

Mrs Long asked the Minister for Communities to outline the progress made on the review of entertainment licensing, conducted as part of the red tape review of the hospitality industry.

(AQW 5394/16-21)

Mr Givan: In 2014 an Entertainment Licensing Review Group was tasked with reviewing the legislation, associated model terms and conditions and the structure and level of fees for entertainment licences, and making recommendations on any changes needed. It reported its findings to the then Minister of the Environment in February 2015 and made 36 recommendations for a future licensing regime.

A consultation on the Review Group's Report and recommendations was conducted from 1 May 2015 to 26 June 2015. An analysis of the responses showed that respondents welcomed the proposed changes and agreed with the majority of the recommendations.

The Departmental Response to the public consultation issued on 10 March 2016 and indicated that more detailed proposals for a future entertainment licensing regime would be developed and that further liaison was needed with other Departments on certain issues.

I am currently considering the Departmental Response to the public consultation together with the Review Group's report, to decide what further work may be needed on updating the entertainment licensing regime.

I would refer the Member to the Executive's document, Better Regulation: An Action Plan for Reform, published in March 2016, which sets out an integrated approach to regulatory reform. This recognises the value of sector or theme based specific reviews and the opportunity they provide for more detailed and in-depth engagement with key stakeholders.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities, pursuant to AQW 42365/11-15 and as part of their annual audit into the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI) whether (i) the Northern Ireland Audit Office reported or found any conflict of interest in the appointment and lack of procurement of an interim manager to Disabled Police Officers Association of Northern Ireland in this case; and (ii) they brought this to the attention of CCNI.

(AQW 5495/16-21)

Mr Givan: The NIAO did not find or report on any conflict of interest in the appointment or lack of procurement of an interim manager to the Disabled Police Officers Association of Northern Ireland.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities when the review of the Charity Commission will be published.

(AQW 5506/16-21)

Mr Givan: I commissioned a Strategic Review of the Charity Commission to provide assurance and advice on any changes which could improve charity regulation and support in Northern Ireland. My officials are finalising their Report and I will consider the options presented in it before deciding on the most appropriate next steps.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities, pursuant to AQW 42365/11-15, to outline (i) what procurement process was followed by the Charity Commission NI in appointing an interim manager for the Disabled Police Officers' Association in October 2014; (ii) whether employing the same firm as the interim manager's to carry out a forensic audit of DPOANI was a conflict of interest, as is suggested in the guidance produced by the Charity Commission of England and Wales; and (iii) why tendering was not considered appropriate.

(AQW 5507/16-21)

Mr Givan: As this matter is a subject of an ongoing litigation by the Charity Commission for NI it would be inappropriate to make any comment at this time.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Communities (i) how many agency staff have been engaged in his Department via the Civil Service during and since the Voluntary Exit Scheme; (ii) at what cost; and (iii) how many of those staff exited under the scheme then returned as agency staff.

(AQW 5561/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) Since the establishment of the Department for Communities on 9th May 2016, my Department has engaged 340 Agency staff.
- (ii) The cost to my Department is £151,936.10. This figure excludes costs of Agency staff who are engaged to work in business areas where funding is provided from the Department of Works and Pensions.
- (iii) Information is not held regarding civil servants who exited under the Northern Ireland Civil Service Voluntary Exit Scheme and may have returned as Agency staff.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline the medical assessment used when applying for Personal Independence Payment for people with mental health issues.

(AQW 5591/16-21)

Mr Givan: Entitlement to Personal Independence Payment is based on the effects of disability on a person's life and not on any specific disability or illness. The Personal Independence Payment assessment was designed so that it treats people as individuals, considering the impact of their impairment or health condition on their everyday life. The assessment is designed to treat all health conditions and impairments fairly including those with mental health issues.

The assessment considers the claimant's individual circumstances and the impact of their health condition or impairment on their ability to carry out a range of key everyday activities. A key consideration is not just whether the claimant can complete the activities but that they can do so safely, to an acceptable standard, repeatedly and in a reasonable time period.

There are ten daily living activities and two mobility activities and underpinning each activity are a number of descriptors, each describing a varying level of ability to carry out the activity. When assessing an individual, the descriptor most appropriate to the individual within each activity will be chosen. Each descriptor in the assessment criteria has a numeric point score attached to it, reflecting both the level of ability it represents and the overall importance of the activity.

All assessments are carried out by registered health professionals who have specialist training in assessing the impact of disability and health conditions on an individual's functional ability.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities whether Personal Independence Payment applicants that receive their forms late can apply for a two week extension.
(AQW 5592/16-21)

Mr Givan: Claimants have a month to return the Personal Independence Payment application form - 'How your disability affects you' from the date the Department issues the form. A two week extension to that date can be granted if the claimant contacts the Department to request it.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister for Communities to outline the (i) total number of staff engaged in Neighbourhood Renewal; (ii) total cost of salaries; and (ii) pay scales of staff both per annum and since it was established.
(AQW 5598/16-21)

Mr Givan: As Departmental salary costs are not recorded at a programme level, my Department is unable to provide this level of information in relation to Neighbourhood Renewal. However a detailed special exercise was carried out and we are able to provide the direct salary costs for Neighbourhood Renewal for 2015/16 financial year.

- (i) The total number of staff engaged in Neighbourhood Renewal in 2015/16 was 104; which equates to a Whole Time Equivalent of 78.
- (ii) Salary cost of those engaged in Neighbourhood Renewal for 2015/16: £3.2 million.
- (iii) Staff from Grade 5 to Administrative Assistant work on Neighbourhood Renewal. NICS pay scales are available at www.finance-ni.gov.uk/topics/working-northern-ireland-civil-service/civil-service-pay

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities to detail the proportion of Employment and Support Allowance claimants that were turned down on mandatory reconsideration and appealed the decision in 2015.
(AQW 5599/16-21)

Mr Givan: The information is not available in the format requested as Mandatory Reconsiderations were only introduced on 23 May 2016.

In 2015, 79% of enhanced reconsiderations completed on all types of Employment and Support Allowance decisions did not change the original decision.

There is no separate breakdown by reconsiderations against a decision to turn down Employment and Support Allowance.

In 2015, 72% of appeals heard were upheld in the Department's favour.

This figure reflects the total number of appeals heard for all types of Employment and Support Allowance decisions. It is not possible to determine how many claimants appealed the reconsideration decision. Appeals received and heard during 2015 include those made against original decisions and reconsiderations.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities to detail of the proportion of appeals by claimants turned down for Employment and Support Allowance that were successful in 2015.
(AQW 5600/16-21)

Mr Givan: The table below details the number of Employment & Support Allowance appeals received with a final determination of allowed or disallowed during the 2015/16 financial year period.

Appeals determined	Number Allowed	Number Disallowed
6,069	1,700	4,369

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Communities to outline any meetings or engagements he has undertaken with the Gaelic Athletic Association, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and Conradh na Gaeilge since assuming Office.

(AQW 5601/16-21)

Mr Givan: Since assuming office I have met on two occasions with members of the Ulster Council GAA. I have not received any requests for meetings from either Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann or Conradh na Gaeilge.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities following research on the financial impact of cancer, whether he intends to address recommendations made by CLIC Sargent that (i) immediate financial support be made available for parents and young people from diagnosis; and (ii) the government should improve support for young cancer patients and their parents when applying for Personal Independence Payment and Disability Living Allowance, and provide training for relevant departmental staff.

(AQW 5602/16-21)

Mr Givan: CLIC Sargent has supplied a copy of its "Cancer Costs" report to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in Great Britain. Officials in my Department will work with DWP in considering CLIC Sargent's findings and recommendations.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities to detail how many staff are employed by the Charity Commission NI (i) permanently; (ii) on a temporary/agency basis; (iii) permanently and left in the past three years; (iv) on a temporary/agency basis and left prior to the end of their contract in the past three years; (v) were seconded by the NI Civil Service since 2013; and (vi) were reemployed by the Charity Commission NI from the NI Civil Service since 2013.

(AQW 5603/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- i The Commission employs twenty-six permanent staff, of which one is on fixed term contract to cover maternity leave.
- ii. There are four staff employed on a temporary / agency basis.
- iii. Two permanent staff left in year 2013/14, three in year 2014/15 and none in year 2015/16.
- iv. There was no staff employed on a temporary/agency basis that left prior to the end of their contract in the past three years.
- v Four NICS staff have been seconded to the Charity Commission since 2013.
- vi. There was no NICS staff re-employed by the Charity Commission since 2013.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) how many solicitors/legal advisors are permanently employed by the Charity Commission NI; (ii) occasions Senior Counsel were employed; (iii) occasions Junior Counsel were employed; and (iv) the steps taken when using Senior and Junior Counsel litigants in person to ensure it is proportionate and good value for the public purse.

(AQW 5604/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) Three solicitors/legal advisors are permanently employed with one post currently being covered by a fixed term maternity cover.
- (ii) Since 2010 Senior Counsel have been instructed to represent the Commission at Tribunal/court on two occasions and have been employed to provide opinion to the Commission on two occasions regarding the interpretation of charity legislation.
- (iii) From 2010 to date junior counsel have been instructed to represent the Commission at Tribunal/court on four occasions. Junior Counsel have been instructed to provide opinion to the Commission on 37 occasions regarding the interpretation of charity legislation.
- (iv) Each case is considered on its own merits and the requirement of Counsel depends on a number of factors including the complexities of the case, whether a precedent is being established and the availability of CCNI's own resource. Value for Money is considered on application of all Commission expenditure.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Communities for an update on replacing shop fronts in Strabane.

(AQW 5608/16-21)

Mr Givan: In 2015, my Department provided funding of £392,174 to deliver a Revitalisation scheme in Main Street, Castle Place and Bridge Street in Strabane.

My Department recently received a further application from Derry City and Strabane District Council for a new phase of the Revitalisation scheme in Strabane Town Centre. Subject to a satisfactory appraisal process, the project will involve the funding of an Architect and associated costs, to design and cost a new scheme.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities to confirm the date, and by what means he first announced publically his plan to deliver 9,600 new social homes and 3,750 new affordable homes between 2016-2021, as outlined in the DUP amendment to the Housing motion, debated on Tuesday 18 October.

(AQW 5619/16-21)

Mr Givan: As I advised during the debate, I have been working with my officials on proposals for the draft Programme for Government delivery plans since the summer.

The debate on the housing motion on 18 October, was the first opportunity I had to indicate to members my proposals to increase housing supply during the current mandate should funding be available.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities to outline the consideration he is giving to the vesting of land and use of compulsory purchase orders to address land availability when building new social and affordable homes.

(AQW 5620/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive, through its new Delivery Strategy for Social and Affordable Housing, is focused on improving the supply of land to support new social and affordable housing. While the use of vesting orders is not discounted where absolutely necessary, it is usually quicker and less resource intensive to purchase land by agreement.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities (i) for an update on his derogation negotiations with the UK Treasury in response to the reclassification of the 22 local Housing Associations by the Office for National Statistics; (ii) to detail the contingency plans in place if legislation is not brought forward within the derogation timeframe if granted; and (iii) for his assessment on the impact of this process on his departmental target to build new social and affordable homes.

(AQW 5621/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department of Finance (DoF) continues to lead on the negotiations with HM Treasury, and my department continues to work closely with DoF on this matter to ensure the impact of the reclassification is minimised.

It is imperative that the enactment of the legislation and the retest by ONS take place during the period of the derogation. Should this not happen then HM Treasury budgeting rules would mean that borrowing by housing associations would count against the Executive's Capital budgets.

Provided the process to amend the legislation happens within the derogation period to be agreed with HM Treasury there should be no impact on the Departmental target to build new social and affordable homes.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Communities whether (i) Brexit will have any impact on the £280m in long term, low interest loans announced in June by the European Investment Bank (EIB) to Apex and Choice Housing Associations to enable the construction of 4,700 new social homes over the next five years; and (ii) if the funding is not unduly affected by Brexit, to detail when the investment Programme by Apex and Choice will commence.

(AQW 5635/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- i) The vote to leave the EU will have no impact on the funding contract agreed by the two housing associations with the European Investment Bank.
- ii) When this investment will be used is a decision for the two housing associations. The housing associations, with support from my Department and the Housing Executive, continue to be committed to begin construction on 4,700 new social homes over the next five years and retro-fitting of some existing units.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Communities to detail how he will ensure the new build social housing investment plans by Apex and Choice Housing Associations, in conjunction with his Department, are formulated and targeted to addressing housing need on an equitable basis throughout the 11 district council areas.

(AQW 5636/16-21)

Mr Givan: New social housing in Northern Ireland is delivered through the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP). The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is responsible for the delivery and day to day management of the SHDP, which is based on a three year rolling programme of planned social housing schemes.

The formulation of the SHDP is shaped by the Housing Executive's 'Strategic Guidelines'. These guidelines, which are reviewed annually, target new social housing development at those areas of greatest social housing need. They take into account waiting list statistics – in particular levels of housing stress, including homelessness – and aim to ensure that new social housing is distributed equitably across a range of programme policy areas.

The Housing Executive will continue to direct the relevant housing associations to identify and bring forward development opportunities in those areas of greatest unmet social housing need.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities to outline the checks and balances in place to ensure that Housing Association Grant Funding is spent in the most socially beneficial manner.

(AQW 5644/16-21)

Mr Givan: Social housing in Northern Ireland is delivered through the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP). The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is responsible for the delivery and day to day management of the SHDP which is a three year rolling programme of planned social housing schemes.

Housing associations are invited to identify and bring forward development opportunities in those areas of greatest unmet social housing need as set out in the Housing Executive's annual Unmet Housing Need Prospectus.

These proposals are then used to formulate the SHDP through the Housing Executive's Strategic Guidelines which take into account waiting list statistics, in particular levels of housing stress, including homelessness, to ensure that the programme and resources are equitably distributed amongst the various competing needs, and targets those areas of greatest social housing need.

The housing association sector is also committed to providing additional social benefit. It does this through its engagement with local communities and in its use of procurement activity to support training and employment. Housing Associations' commitment to using social clauses in large contracts has generated 20 fulltime employment opportunities and over 300 training placements for previously unemployed people. Housing Associations have also committed to adopting the Executive's new 'Buy Social' Approach.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Communities to outline his plans to support people with a disability that are not awarded a Personal Independence Payment after the one year's mitigation payment has ended.

(AQW 5653/16-21)

Mr Givan: At present my Department's focus is on implementation of the mitigation schemes to ensure people receive the financial support they need. As part of the Fresh Start Agreement, the Executive set aside £94m up to March 2020 to support existing Disability Living Allowance claimants who were adversely impacted by the introduction of Personal Independence Payment and committed to review the arrangements for mitigation in 2018-19.

To inform that review, officials have developed an evaluation strategy aimed at evaluating the various components of the welfare reform programme including the mitigation measures. The evaluation strategy will assist the Executive in carrying out its review.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Communities to outline the steps his Department is taking to support families with more than two children that, as a result of the benefit cap, will see their benefits reduced when the mitigation fund is exhausted in 2020.

(AQW 5654/16-21)

Mr Givan: At present my Department's focus is on implementation of the mitigation schemes to ensure people receive the financial support they need. As part of the Fresh Start Agreement, the Executive committed to review the arrangements for mitigation in 2018-19.

To inform that review, officials have developed an evaluation strategy aimed at evaluating the various components of the welfare reform programme including the mitigation measures. The evaluation strategy will assist the Executive in carrying out its review, including whether it wishes to provide financial support for families with two children once the mitigation fund comes to an end in 2020.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Communities to outline the steps his Department is taking to support people affected by the bedroom tax when the mitigation fund is exhausted in 2020.

(AQW 5655/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Northern Ireland Executive confirmed in, "A Fresh Start: the Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan" that the Social Sector Size Criteria would not apply in Northern Ireland. In accordance with recommendations from the Welfare Reform Mitigations Working Group the Executive agreed a four year fund to "top-up" UK welfare arrangements in Northern Ireland to March 2020.

The Department's priority has been implementation of the mitigation schemes to ensure people get the support they need. The Executive committed as part of the Fresh Start Agreement to a review of all the mitigation arrangements in 2018/19. This will provide the Executive with the opportunity to decide if it wishes to extend the mitigation scheme beyond the current planned end date of March 2020.

Department for Communities officials have developed a composite Welfare Reform evaluation strategy. This strategy has been designed to specifically evaluate each of the key reforms as well as the associated mitigations. It will be central in assessing and monitoring the impacts of Welfare Reform in Northern Ireland and will help to inform future decisions on Social Sector Size Criteria.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister for Communities to detail the cost of administering Neighbourhood Renewal (i) per annum; and (ii) since it was established.

(AQW 5658/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department's General Administration Costs are not broken down at a programme level; therefore we are unable to provide this level of information in relation to Neighbourhood Renewal. However a detailed special exercise was carried out and we are able to provide the direct salary costs for Neighbourhood Renewal for the 2015/16 financial year of £3.2 million.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister for Communities to detail (i) the amount spent in supporting projects under Neighbourhood Renewal; and (ii) the geographical spread of expenditure, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 5659/16-21)

Mr Givan: Table A details the amount spent in supporting projects under Neighbourhood Renewal at Neighbourhood Renewal Area level in each of the last five years from 2011/2012 to 2015/2016. Table B details the spend at Parliamentary Constituency level over the same period.

Table A

NRA	2011/2012 (£)	2012/2013 (£)	2013/2014 (£)	2014/2015 (£)	2015/2016 (£)
Andersonstown	256,042.37	398,751.00	464,225.00	502,482.00	237,913.96
Armagh	437,539.78	541,318.56	795,379.00	454,267.04	455,089.76
Ballyclare	43,223.56	29,551.00	125,897.00	116,992.40	29,817.65
Ballymena	149,776.91	693,149.09	343,666.00	358,508.85	320,929.39
Bangor	128,259.45	430,001.91	329,900.00	266,524.05	206,221.81
Brownlow	918,873.98	868,476.77	1,290,509.00	1,041,181.17	1,286,450.87
Cityside, Londonderry	1,557,000.00	1,140,000.00	1,753,333.00	2,362,827.00	1,382,650.00
Coalisland & Dungannon	212,191.78	487,692.09	967,240.00	685,645.49	768,974.88
Coleraine	321,192.26	481,624.06	1,283,992.00	1,048,438.20	748,087.66
Colin	709,396.06	1,031,809.00	1,100,585.00	929,930.00	734,296.80
Crumlin/Ardoyne	838,637.83	738,063.00	1,175,697.00	1,143,809.60	1,120,098.13
Downpatrick	268,638.76	690,804.00	453,206.00	342,597.89	435,226.87
Enniskillen	507,686.14	520,176.50	1,334,478.00	811,235.56	504,129.49
Greater Falls	1,304,588.80	1,808,529.00	867,402.00	902,733.00	1,400,800.45
Greater Shankill	1,087,433.41	1,988,828.00	2,227,192.00	1,854,827.59	1,611,192.03
Inner East Belfast	4,407,371.70	2,634,833.00	5,303,169.00	1,738,395.46	947,284.82
Inner North	867,111.16	565,225.00	1,212,761.00	1,036,907.89	994,672.97
Inner South Belfast	537,888.89	1,185,451.00	585,998.00	396,441.25	651,656.96
Lenadoon	435,532.63	570,829.00	557,947.63	649,675.80	325,509.23
Ligoniel	197,379.35	158,746.00	238,000.00	236,258.27	163,729.81
Limavady	419,000.00	197,000.00	430,975.00	599,463.00	236,055.00
Lurgan	849,977.72	990,301.70	1,506,281.00	1,015,756.89	305,023.97
Newry	765,459.20	1,211,204.00	1,271,913.00	546,579.87	731,409.36
NW Portadown	488,944.44	523,159.05	751,505.00	638,595.84	524,775.58
Omagh	1,047,353.59	932,994.61	539,141.00	358,494.73	265,093.26
Outer North, Londonderry	787,000.00	855,000.00	1,293,220.00	2,125,801.00	2,357,242.00
Outer West, Londonderry	596,000.00	631,000.00	776,390.00	1,564,742.00	750,781.00

NRA	2011/2012 (£)	2012/2013 (£)	2013/2014 (£)	2014/2015 (£)	2015/2016 (£)
Rathcoole	121,083.42	229,691.00	291,950.00	167,754.44	160,791.04
South West Belfast	669,048.00	622,349.00	490,726.00	652,580.45	495,185.95
Strabane	451,000.00	463,000.00	661,022.00	1,468,994.00	1,045,107.00
Tullycarnet	174,432.15	250,457.00	356,929.00	317,182.22	268,623.56
Upper Ardoyne/ Ballysillan	320,155.37	191,800.00	298,980.00	257,308.34	213,208.07
Upper Springfield / Whiterock	1,148,340.25	1,166,736.00	1,376,458.00	1,119,037.00	1,019,491.24
Waterside, Londonderry	925,000.00	685,000.00	1,253,833.00	1,386,979.00	1,952,837.00
Total	23,948,558.96	25,913,550.34	33,709,899.63	29,098,947.29	24,650,357.59

Table B

Parliamentary Constituency	2011/2012 (£)	2012/2013 (£)	2013/2014 (£)	2014/2015 (£)	2015/2016 (£)
Belfast East	4,581,803.85	2,885,290.00	5,660,098.00	2,055,577.68	£1,215,908.38
Belfast North	2,344,367.13	1,883,525.00	3,217,388.00	2,842,038.54	£2,652,500.03
Belfast South	1,206,936.89	1,807,800.00	1,076,724.00	1,049,021.70	£1,146,842.91
Belfast West	4,941,333.52	6,965,482.00	6,593,809.63	5,958,685.39	£5,329,203.72
East Londonderry	740,192.26	678,624.06	1,714,967.00	1,647,901.20	£984,142.66
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	507,686.14	520,176.50	1,334,478.00	811,235.56	£504,129.49
Foyle	3,865,000.00	3,311,000.00	5,076,776.00	7,440,349.00	£6,443,510.00
Mid Ulster	212,191.78	487,692.09	967,240.00	685,645.49	£768,974.88
Newry and Armagh	1,202,998.98	1,752,522.56	2,067,292.00	1,000,846.91	£1,186,499.12
North Antrim	149,776.91	693,149.09	343,666.00	358,508.85	£320,929.39
North Down	128,259.45	430,001.91	329,900.00	266,524.05	£206,221.81
South Antrim	43,223.56	29,551.00	125,897.00	116,992.40	£29,817.65
South Down	268,638.76	690,804.00	453,206.00	342,597.89	£435,226.87
Upper Bann	2,257,796.14	2,381,937.52	3,548,295.00	2,695,533.90	£2,116,250.42
West Tyrone	1,498,353.59	1,395,994.61	1,200,163.00	1,827,488.73	£1,310,200.26
	23,948,558.96	25,913,550.34	33,709,899.63	29,098,947.29	24,650,357.59

Mr Attwood asked the Minister for Communities to detail the cost of administering Building Successful Communities (i) per annum; and (ii) since it was established.

(AQW 5660/16-21)

Mr Givan: The cost of administering Building Successful Communities per annum is detailed below:

Year	£'000
2014-15	401
2015-16	399

The cost of administering Building Successful Communities since it was established is £799,695.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister for Communities to detail the (i) number of staff engaged in Building Successful Communities; (ii) cost of salaries per annum; and (iii) pay scales of staff, in each year since it was established.

(AQW 5661/16-21)

Mr Givan: The total number of staff engaged directly in Building Successful Communities in each year since it was established is as follows:

Year	Headcount	Whole Time Equivalent
31 March 2016	10	9.8
31 March 2015	10	9.8

The cost of salaries for those staff directly engaged in Building Successful Communities in each year since it was established is as follows is:

Year	£'000
2015-16	389
2014-15	390

Staff grades directly engaged in Building Successful Communities range from Administrative Officer to Deputy Principal. Northern Ireland Civil Service pay scales are available at the following link:

www.finance-ni.gov.uk/topics/working-northern-ireland-civil-service/civil-service-pay

Mr Attwood asked the Minister for Communities to detail the (i) amount spent supporting projects under Building Successful Communities in each of the last three years; and (ii) geographical spread of expenditure.

(AQW 5662/16-21)

Mr Givan: The amount spent supporting projects under Building Successful Communities broken down by year and geographical area of spend is as follows:

Pilot Area	Capital Spend (£'000)		
	2013/14*	2014/15*	2015/16
Lower Falls (Belfast)	-	-	263
Lower Shankill & Brown Square (Belfast)	-	-	281
Doury Road (Ballymena)	-	-	404
Lenadoon & Glencolin (Belfast)	-	-	399
Lower Oldpark & Hillview (Belfast)	-	-	354
Tigers Bay & Mountcollyer (Belfast)	-	-	259
Total	-	-	1,960

Ms Seeley asked the Minister for Communities, pursuant to AQW 3859/16-21, to outline how he plans to address the waiting list of 2075 for social housing in Upper Bann.

(AQW 5663/16-21)

Mr Givan: It is anticipated that the housing needs of applicants in the Upper Bann Parliamentary Constituency will be met through a combination of re-lets of existing social housing and new social housing delivered through the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP).

There were 482 allocations for the year ending June 2016 and 45 new social housing units are currently under construction in the Upper Bann Parliamentary Constituency. A further 112 social housing units are programmed to start on-site as part of the SHDP 2016/17 to 2018/19.

In addition the Housing Executive is establishing a new Housing Solutions and Support Approach which will offer more effective, relevant housing advice for its customers. By gathering information about their customers, and specific household needs they will be able to provide advice on a range of options that represent genuine potential housing solutions to meet their specific needs.

It is hoped that this new approach will provide improved housing outcomes for all customers and it is scheduled for introduction in the Upper Bann area next year.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Communities to outline the guidelines provided to contractors operating on behalf of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to clear debris from an illegal fire on NIHE owned land.

(AQW 5705/16-21)

Mr Givan: The guidelines for cleaning-up following bonfires are as follows:

- All broken glass, unburnt materials and associated debris shall be removed to an approved site within 4 days of the ignition of the bonfire(s).
- All bonfire debris, either hazardous or non-hazardous in nature shall be removed to an approved tip, in accordance with waste regulations, within 10 days of ignition.
- All damage to grass or hard surfaces made good within 21 days of ignition of the bonfire.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Communities to outline the support provided by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for tenants affected by the misuse of fireworks.

(AQW 5706/16-21)

Mr Givan: Whilst the responsibility for the purchase of licenses, possession and use of fireworks rests with the Department of Justice, the Housing Executive has an effective process in place to respond to any complaint of anti-social behaviour (including the misuse of fireworks) reported to our Local Offices. The process is outlined clearly in our Statement of Policy and Procedures on Anti-Social Behaviour which is available on the Housing Executive website.

Mr Aiken asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment of the impact on small businesses of the charges by local council on premises under the Licensing of Pavement Cafes Act 2014.

(AQW 5723/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Licensing of Pavement Cafés Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 introduced a statutory licensing scheme for the regulation of pavement cafés by district councils; this included provisions which enable the council to charge fees to offset the cost of administering the scheme.

It is a matter for each district council to decide whether it wishes to charge a fee and the impact on small businesses will depend on the fees set; at least one has decided to waive the application fee.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Communities to detail the number of times that (i) contractors; and (ii) staff operating on behalf of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive have been threatened in (a) Portadown; (b) Lurgan; and (c) Banbridge, in each of the last three years

(AQW 5741/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive can confirm that no threats to either contractors or staff have been reported within the last three years in Portadown, Lurgan and Banbridge.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities to outline the progress to date on each of the recommendations made by the Housing Supply Forum's report of January 2016.

(AQW 5770/16-21)

Mr Givan: My Department has, in conjunction with the Strategic Investment Board, recently commenced work on the Public Land for Housing Project to address the Forum's recommendation on the issue of land supply.

The Department is considering the other findings and recommendations presented in the final report from the independently chaired Housing Supply Forum.

As acknowledged in the report, there was not universal agreement on all that was discussed or proposed as potential solutions and recommendations. In many instances, the recommendations in the report do not represent positions presented by relevant Departments.

A key consideration for the response to the recommendations is the fact that the Housing Supply Forum used as part of its evidence base the Housing Growth Indicator (HGI) figure of 11,200 units per year taken from the 2009 Regional Development Strategy. In May 2016, the HGI figure was revised downwards to an estimated figure of between 5,500 and 7,200 units per year. This development significantly changes the landscape of housing supply as viewed by the Forum as current completion data confirms that between 5,500 and 6,500 units per year have been delivered over the past 5 years. Therefore, more research needs to be done to establish the true nature and extent of the housing supply problem in Northern Ireland.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the implementation of the recommendations by the Entertainment Licence Review Group.

(AQW 5777/16-21)

Mr Givan: In 2014 an Entertainment Licensing Review Group was tasked with reviewing the legislation, associated model terms and conditions and the structure and level of fees for entertainment licences, and making recommendations on any changes needed. It reported its findings to the then Minister of the Environment in February 2015 and made 36 recommendations for a future licensing regime.

A consultation on the Review Group's Report and recommendations was conducted from 1 May 2015 to 26 June 2015. An analysis of the responses showed that respondents welcomed the proposed changes and agreed with the majority of the recommendations.

The Departmental Response to the public consultation issued on 10 March 2016 and indicated that more detailed proposals for a future entertainment licensing regime would be developed and that further liaison was needed with other Departments on certain issues.

I am currently considering the Departmental Response to the public consultation together with the Review Group's report, to decide what further work may be needed on updating the entertainment licensing regime.

Since the Review Group reported I have introduced the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill in the Assembly. The Bill will address the existing difficulties which arise due to the differing requirements of the separate liquor licensing and entertainment licensing regimes.

Mr McKee asked the Minister for Communities to detail the (i) total number; and (ii) proportion of (a) Assembly Written Questions; (b) Assembly Priority Written Questions; and (c) Freedom of Information requests directed at his Department that have been answered within the maximum permitted timescales since May 2016.

(AQW 5781/16-21)

Mr Givan: The table attached outlines the number and proportion of Assembly Written Questions, Assembly Priority Written Questions and Freedom of Information requests that my Department has answered within the permitted timescales since May 2016.

	Total Answered	Answered Within Deadline	Proportion Answered Within Deadline
Assembly Written Questions	377	311	82.5%
Assembly Priority Written Questions	31	15	48%
Freedom of Information Requests	127	106	83.46%

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Communities when the figures in the his plans for 9600 new social homes and 3750 new affordable homes between 2016 and 2021 were first published.

(AQW 5811/16-21)

Mr Givan: As I advised during the debate, I have been working with my officials on proposals for the draft Programme for Government delivery plans since the summer.

The debate on the housing motion on 18 October, was the first opportunity I had to indicate to members my proposals to increase housing supply during the current mandate should funding be available.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Communities (i) how many candidates were considered for Ministerial Special Adviser; (ii) what account was taken of potential imbalance in religious background or gender in the pool from which he selected his Special Adviser; (iii) how wide was the trawl for candidates and how did he ensure that it was broadly based as required by the Code of Practice on the Appointment of Special Advisers; and (iv) to publish the job description and person specification drawn up before the Special Adviser was appointed.

(AQW 5812/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department for Communities Special Advisor was appointed in accordance with the Code Governing the Appointment of Special Advisors.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Communities, pursuant to AQW 3958/16-21 and in relation to the proposed closure of Social Security and Jobs and Benefits Offices, to detail (i) what assessments have been carried out in order to ascertain any potential impact on the workforces' health and safety due to the proposed changes, including new or different procedures, types of work equipment, premises and ways of working; (ii) whether there is a record of these assessments; (iii) when the assessments were carried out, and by who; and (iv) who was consulted during the assessments.

(AQW 5819/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department, as part of a comprehensive programme, carries out Health & Safety audits and specific risk assessments when deemed appropriate. The Social Security/Jobs & Benefits offices provide employment with inherently low risks to workers and it is not envisaged that these changes will adversely alter this position.

All Departmental premises are subject to quarterly health and safety risk assessments. Details of these are outlined in the table below.

Office	2016		2017	
	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 1	Quarter 2
Magherafelt	30/9/2016	31/12/2016	31/3/2017	30/6/2017
Dungannon	30/9/2016	31/12/2016	31/3/2017	30/6/2017

Office	2016		2017	
	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 1	Quarter 2
Downpatrick	30/9/2016	31/12/2016	31/3/2017	30/6/2017
Kilkeel	30/9/2016	31/12/2016	31/3/2017	30/6/2017
Lisburn	30/9/2016	31/12/2016	31/3/2017	30/6/2017
Knockbreda	30/9/2016	31/12/2016	31/3/2017	30/6/2017

All health and safety risk assessments are completed by trained risk assessors in consultation with Local Trade Union representatives.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities, pursuant to AQW 5013/16-21, to outline his commitment to benefits from the recently announced house building fund being allocated for social and affordable housing.

(AQW 5840/16-21)

Mr Givan: It is too early to say what benefits may flow to Northern Ireland from the announcement of plans to increase the supply of social and affordable homes in England. My Department will continue to liaise with colleagues in DoF and DCLG to establish a clearer picture of the potential implications for housing supply here.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Communities to outline how many Replacement Grants have been approved by the Housing Executive in the Londonderry, Omagh and Enniskillen Offices broken down by (i) office; (ii) year; and (iii) community background, since 2006.

(AQW 5852/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that the Replacement Grant has been approved as set out in the tables below. The Housing Executive does not require grant applicants to submit information on their community background in order to process a grant application.

Year	Londonderry Office	Fermanagh Office	Omagh Office
2006-7	24	40	21
2007-8	1	39	5
2008-9	9	39	25
2009-10	1	5	9
2010-11	14	48	9
2011-12	0	3	6
2012-13	0	5	2
2013-14	1	0	0
2014-15	0	1	0
2015-16	1	0	1
2016-17 (to Sept 2016)	1	0	0

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Communities to outline how many Renovation Grants have been approved by the Housing Executive in the Londonderry, Omagh and Enniskillen Offices broken down by (i) office; (ii) year; and (iii) community background, since 2006.

(AQW 5853/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that the Renovation Grant has been approved as set out in the tables below. The Housing Executive does not require grant applicants to submit information on their community background in order to process a grant application.

Year	Londonderry Office	Fermanagh Office	Omagh Office
2006-7	181	35	129
2007-8	109	57	31

Year	Londonderry Office	Fermanagh Office	Omagh Office
2008-9	222	51	126
2009-10	11	22	34
2010-11	110	53	83
2011-12	6	7	7
2012-13	2	1	1
2013-14	2	3	13
2014-15	5	20	28
2015-16	7	30	39
2016-17 (to Sept 2016)	8	16	37

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Communities to detail the Housing Executive expenditure on exceptional circumstances in the Londonderry, Omagh and Enniskillen Offices, broken down by office and year since 2006. (AQW 5855/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Renovation Grant, Home Repair Assistance Grant, HMO Grant and Replacement Grant are grants which the Housing Executive may award. Since 2009/10 these grants have been awarded only in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are deemed to exist where there is an imminent and significant risk to the occupier.

The Housing Executive has advised that the information is not readily available in the requested format. It is not possible to limit information to those cases awarded in exceptional circumstances because, for example, grant may have been approved prior to the introduction of the restriction, and paid following its introduction.

Information is held by the North West Grants Office in respect of the Londonderry office, and by the West Grants Office in relation to Omagh and Enniskillen. The Housing Executive has advised that the combined expenditure in these cases was as follows:

North West Grants Office

2009/10	£2,794,672
2010/11	£1,126,471
2011/12	£578,359
2012/13	£289,271
2013/14	£68,212
2014/15	£55,110
2015/16	£70,310
2016/17 (to September)	£61,553

West Grants Office

2009/10	£5,289,347
2010/11	£2,169,313
2011/12	£2,354,482
2012/13	£1,142,820
2013/14	£469,387
2014/15	£516,859
2015/16	£889,795
2016/17 (to September)	£672,236

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Communities to detail the Housing Executive expenditure on Disabled Facilities Grant assistance in the Londonderry, Omagh and Enniskillen Offices, broken down by office and year since 2006. (AQW 5856/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Disabled Facilities Grant is a demand-led grant delivered through the Housing Executive. The Housing Executive has advised that it does not hold the information in the requested format. Its West Grants office incorporates Fermanagh, Omagh, Cookstown and Dungannon. The North-West Grants Office covers the Londonderry, Limavady, Magherafelt and Strabane Areas.

The following has been expended on Disabled Facilities Grant across these two offices in each year since 2006:

	West Grants Office	North-West Grants Office
2006/07	£2,035,346.84	£1,844,307.72
2007/08	£1,998,249.32	£1,986,131.92
2008/09	£2,053,388.07	£2,498,375.95
2009/10	£3,186,473.63	£3,889,398.27
2010/11	£2,113,075.25	£2,319,670.69
2011/12	£2,178,110.62	£2,051,226.55
2012/13	£1,823,333.05	£2,597,464.81
2013/14	£1,498,925.86	£2,093,461.09
2014/15	£1,524,276.05	£2,109,436.08
2015/16	£1,522,012.72	£1,669,074.92
2016/17 (to Sept)	£591,399.28	£967,019.45

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Communities for an update on Herdman's Mill, Sion Mills.
(AQW 5887/16-21)

Mr Givan: Since I wrote to you on 27 August 2016, I have learned that the Sion Mills Building Preservation Trust has received a court order which enables them to take possession of the Work Units, Chimney and associated yard at Herdman's Mill.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Communities, pursuant to AQW 3837/16-21 and AQW 3311/16-21, for his assessment of his Department's statement that, in relation to in the Section 75 Equality Screening Form relating to the proposals to close the Cookstown Social Security Office and Job Centre, there will be no impact or minor impact on the various Section 75 groupings, when the answer to AQW 3837/16-21 states his Department does not routinely collect data for Section 75 groupings and therefore there is no information available with which to evaluate such impact.
(AQW 5888/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department for Communities does not routinely collect claimant data for all nine Section 75 groupings as it is not required for the processing and payment of benefits. Some information is recorded where necessary and this relates to age, gender and number of dependents. This position is currently under review.

The Department's initial assessment of the proposed office closures are that they are not directly discriminatory to any of the Section 75 groups and that appropriate measures can be put in place to mitigate any impacts, for example changes to signing times and the use of online or telephony channels.

These proposals are out for public consultation including any Section 75 impacts and my Department will use any evidence provided in the response to the consultation to inform a further screening of the policy to determine the need for an Equality Impact Assessment.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline how many Housing Executive properties have no or inadequate cavity wall insulation.
(AQW 5898/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive implemented a major programme to install cavity wall insulation from the mid to late 1980s. However, these schemes were carried out prior to the introduction of the Housing Executive's computerised recording of completed works and therefore detailed information on the incidence of cavity wall insulation in the stock is incomplete. The Housing Executive is therefore taking forward further surveying in order to establish the extent and quality of cavity wall insulation in its stock.

A substantial number of Housing Executive Houses (solid wall homes, many of non-traditional construction) have no wall insulation at all.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline the plans the Housing Executive has to address the lack of, or absence of cavity wall insulation in some Housing Executive homes.
(AQW 5899/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that the condition of the cavity wall insulation throughout its stock is being established through its External Cyclical Maintenance programme.

Representative samples of cavity inspections are being undertaken to determine if the cavity has been filled and, if it has been filled, what condition it is in.

Where specific problems are identified, these are being addressed on a case-by-case basis either through the Housing Executive's response maintenance service or planned schemes.

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Communities to detail any progress made on Recommendation 13 of the Inquiry into post Special Educational Need Provision in (i) education; and (ii) training for people with learning disabilities.
(AQW 5937/16-21)

Mr Givan: The previous Committee for Employment and Learning conducted a comprehensive inquiry into post Special Educational Need (SEN) provision in education, employment and training for people with learning disabilities throughout Northern Ireland.

A subsequent report was published, which included 44 Recommendations, covering a broad range of topics, to reflect the many challenges and issues that people with a learning disability and their families encounter, when they complete full-time education.

The Committee recognised the fact that this is a complex area of policy, involving an array of integrated service provision across a number of government departments. The Committee stressed the need for better co-ordination and collaboration with regard policy development, as well as service provision.

The Committee categorised the evidence into a number of distinct areas, with subsequent recommendations, and then allocated responsibility for each of the 44 recommendation to one or more of the then Executive departments, including Education, Health and Social Services and Public Safety, Regional Development, and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).

The majority of recommendations were allocated to DEL, due to the fact that the previous department had responsibility for a number of relevant areas, including careers advice, further education, training programmes, including specialist disability training projects, and employment services.

With the exception of the latter, all of these key services now reside with the new Department for Economy (DfE). Therefore, with regard to the specific question, on the issue of post SEN provision in (i) education and (ii) training, the Minister for Economy will be able to provide a more detailed response.

Officials from my department's Disability Employment Service continue to work with colleagues from DfE to ascertain the nature and extent of the opportunities and services that are available for people with learning disabilities, specifically to help them progress towards employment.

With regard to the wording of Recommendation 13, lead responsibility for the Ministerial Sub Group Action Plan, as well as the implementation of the Committee for Employment and Learning's Inquiry Report have yet to be agreed in this new mandate.

In the draft Programme for Government Framework, now out for public consultation, my department has accepted lead responsibility for a number of key Indicators, most notably Indicator 42, 'Improving the Quality of Life for People with Disabilities and their Families'.

In addition to the broader consultation process, we will consult specifically with the disability sector and people with disabilities on Indicator 42.

The Department will use co-design, co-implementation and co-delivery to take forward this key Indicator, and will work with other Departments to ensure a co-ordinated and integrated approach to address some of the emerging themes that are directly relevant to the Post SEN group, such as:

- Raising awareness and changing attitudes towards disability.
- Addressing the needs of children and young people including improving transition.
- Enhancing opportunities for employment and/or lifelong learning.
- Improving independent living and the provision of suitable homes.
- Improving participation in public and community life.
- Improving access to information and better data collection.

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Communities to outline the measures he will put in place to ensure data is captured for all nine Section 75 categories as part of the Equality Impact Assessment when evaluating the impact of Welfare Reform.
(AQW 5938/16-21)

Mr Givan: A composite evaluation strategy has been developed to assess the overall impact of Welfare Reform. This strategy has been designed to specifically evaluate each of the key reforms as well as the associated mitigations. It will be central in assessing and monitoring the impacts of Welfare Reform in Northern Ireland and will help to inform implementation and future strategy.

Each of the major Welfare Reforms and associated mitigations will be extensively evaluated and the findings will feed into the composite evaluation strategy. The evaluations will include the analysis of management information (M.I.) systems alongside a bespoke programme of research for each reform. All available section 75 information from the M.I. systems will be utilised as part of the evaluation process. Furthermore, information on all section 75 categories will be collected as a matter of course for any commissioned research.

The Department has also committed to collect section 75 data from those with eligibility for a Welfare Supplementary payment. This information will be collected on a voluntary basis and will be utilised in the evaluation of the mitigation schemes.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Communities to outline the facilities in place within Social Security for people that are eligible following the breakdown of their marriage but religious beliefs prevent them from (i) divorce; or (ii) separation.
(AQW 5939/16-21)

Mr Givan: Entitlement to social security benefits are determined on a claimant's individual circumstances and take account of characteristics such as age and marital status in determining if a person is eligible for a particular benefit and the rate at which it is paid. Entitlement will be calculated based on the information provided by a claimant in their application.

If a person is separated from their partner, it is up to them to declare this fact. The separation does not have to be a legal separation but does need to be reported to the Department to enable them to be paid as separate claimants.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Communities to detail the average cost of creating a job through Steps 2 Success.
(AQW 5977/16-21)

Mr Givan: Steps 2 Success is not a job creation programme. The programme is designed to improve the employability of participants and to assist them find and keep suitable employment.

It is not possible at this stage in the delivery of the Steps 2 Success programme to produce an accurate cost of placing a Steps 2 Success participant into work and sustaining that work. Most of the Steps 2 Success participants who have entered employment have not been in work long enough to have completed both 12 months in work and to have the output related funding for that period to have been paid. This means that the Department does not have the financial information required to make an accurate estimate of the cost of placing a Steps 2 Success participant into work and sustaining that work.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Communities to detail the (i) overall projected costs of the Steps 2 Success programme; and (ii) spending to date of each of the three private contractors leading the scheme.
(AQW 5978/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) Present financial forecasts estimate the overall projected costs of the Steps 2 Success programme for the full contract duration to be in the region of £50m. It should be noted that, as Steps 2 Success is a demand led programme, any change in the number of eligible participants entering the programme will have an impact on expenditure.
- (ii) The total amount spent on the S2S programme from its inception in October 2014 until the end of September 2016 is: £8.8m to Ingeus UK Ltd, £8.4m to PeoplePlusNI, and £8.4m to Reed in Partnership.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities for an update on discussions with Her Majesty's Treasury to obtain derogation for NI Housing Association following the Office for National Statistics reclassification.
(AQW 5980/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department of Finance (DoF) continues to lead on the negotiations with HM Treasury, and my department continues to work closely with DoF on this matter to ensure the impact of the reclassification is minimised.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the Social Strategy.
(AQW 5982/16-21)

Mr Givan: I plan to bring a draft Social Strategy to the Executive with the intention of having it issued for public consultation, subject to Executive approval.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the establishment of an advice network as recommended by the Welfare Reform Working Group.
(AQW 5983/16-21)

Mr Givan: As part of the Fresh Start Agreement, £8m funding was committed over four years to put additional independent advice services in place for Welfare Reform.

On the 27th of September I announced funding of £2.5 million for the Welfare Reform Advice Services Consortium (Citizens Advice, AdviceNI and the Law Centre NI). This money will fund a free phone helpline, resourced with 9 additional advisors and a further 35 advisers to provide face to face assistance. The advisers will be based across all 11 council areas in

Northern Ireland located in local Citizens Advice and Advice NI offices. The new additional advice services will also include the provision of specialist legal advice from the Law Centre and access to specialist services where required.

- The Independent Welfare Change Helpline (0808 802 0020) will go live from 1 November 2016 and provide a contact point for anyone needing help or advice relating to any of the welfare changes. The helpline is free from any device (mobile or landline) within the UK.
- The Advice Sector is currently recruiting the 35 additional advisers to deliver the face-to-face assistance, which will be in place across NI by mid November.

In September I also announced that my Department will be providing £800k of additional funding, inclusive of £600k through local councils to support and prepare existing frontline services in advance of the new services being put in place. This also included funding for a training assistance programme to meet the training and awareness needs of organisations which provide advice.

The Department is also working with the third sector to take forward the remaining recommendations contained within the report.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister for Communities whether Heritage Lottery Funding has been reclassified as state aid; and to outline (i) when the reclassification took place; (ii) on who's authority; and (iii) what discussions took place prior to the reclassification.

(AQW 5984/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department has not made any classification of Heritage Lottery Funds as state aid. The presence of funding from any source does not in itself constitute state aid.

The Department has clarified that Heritage Lottery Funding is a 'state controlled resource' and should be treated as such in our determinations.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister for Communities whether the Heritage Lottery Fund has commented on the decision that the funding it provides should be reclassified as state aid.

(AQW 5985/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department has not made any classification of Heritage Lottery Funds as state aid. The presence of funding from any source does not in itself constitute state aid. The Department has simply clarified that Heritage Lottery Funding is a 'state controlled resource'.

When the Department is assessing grant applications, where Heritage Lottery Funds are also present, this may have state aid and other implications, for example, determining public to private leverage.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland officials that can authorise the making of orders under Part 6 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008; (ii) what powers have been delegated to these officials; and (iii) when, and in which document, was this delegation actioned.

(AQW 5986/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) Any member of the Commission's Senior Management Team can authorise the making of Orders under Part 6 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.
- (ii) No powers have been delegated to these officials as the Commission acts as a body corporate, with staff authorised to discharge the Commission's functions on behalf of and in the name of the body.
- (iii) While no powers have been delegated to officials, for all orders issued, the Commission has put in place, since 2011, a number of specific operational procedures relating to the exercise of powers within the legislation, where the levels of authorised decision making are set out, as agreed by the Board of Commissioners. The exception is section 54 of the Act, which is dealt with on a case by case basis.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities, in light of the decision to put the York Street Interchange project on hold, whether any EU funded projects in his Department are at risk following the decision to Brexit.

(AQW 6006/16-21)

Mr Givan: Within the Department for Communities there are no EU funded projects at risk following the referendum vote to leave the European Union.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities to outline the criteria for applying for Discretionary Housing Payment.

(AQW 6012/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that the criteria for applying for Discretionary Housing Payments are as follows:-

- Applicants must be already in receipt of Housing Benefit to claim a Discretionary Housing Payment.

- In addition there must be a shortfall between the rent charged and the eligible rent used in the calculation of Housing Benefit (Local Housing Allowance) and/or from 5th September 2016 for new and existing tenants who are affected by the loss of Family Premium in the calculation of Housing Benefit.
- An applicant must show that they require further financial assistance.
- Applications for Discretionary Housing Payments must be made in writing or by using the application form.
- The budget for Discretionary Housing Payments is an annual cash limited budget provided by the Department for Communities (DfC), therefore Discretionary Housing Payments cannot be guaranteed.
- Each application will be considered on its own merits, there is no list of circumstances that will automatically qualify someone for a Discretionary Housing Payment.
- Discretionary Housing Payments cannot be greater than the shortfall between the rent charged and the eligible rent or the difference between the current Housing Benefit entitlement and entitlement if Family Premium had been awarded.
- Discretionary Housing Payments are paid for a set period which is usually up to the end of a financial year.
- Applicants can ask us to look at the decision again (within one month) if a Discretionary Housing Payment application is refused or reduced.
- As an award of discretionary housing payment is not an award of Housing Benefit, it cannot be appealed with The Appeals Service (TAS).

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Communities, in relation to the young people that have moved out of the NEET category within the last year, how many (i) have returned to Job Seekers Allowance; (ii) moved onto Steps 2 Success; or (iii) moved onto a zero hour contract.

(AQW 6015/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department does not hold any data on the number of young people that have moved out of the NEET category within the last year, how many (i) have returned to Job Seekers Allowance; (ii) moved onto Steps 2 Success; or (iii) moved onto a zero hour contract.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for Communities whether the Lower Shankill Community Association were granted resources from the good relations spending programmes; and to detail the amount and for what purposes it was granted.

(AQW 6020/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department for Communities is not responsible for administering Good Relations spending programmes. Responsibility for these programmes is held by the Executive Office.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Communities to outline any sanctions his Department plans to impose on Steps 2 Success private contractors that fall short of the performance standards expected in relation to getting people into, and staying in, a job.

(AQW 6039/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department has a robust contract and quality monitoring regime in place for the Steps 2 Success (S2S) programme which is managed by a Departmental Contract Management Team which has the key role of ensuring the programme is delivered to a standard which meet the terms and conditions of the S2S contract. The Department also has a Quality Performance Team which has responsibility for evaluating the quality of the programme. A key focus of each quality evaluation is on how well Lead Contractors and their supply chain partners are meeting the needs of individual participants throughout their journey from initial referral to the programme to sustained employment.

The S2S contract has a set of performance indicators, against which the performance of the programme is measured. The main measures of success focus on the percentage of participants moving into and sustaining employment.

Unsatisfactory Performance will not go unchallenged by the Department. Prompt and appropriate action, up to removal of contracts, will be taken in all cases where a Lead Contractor falls short of the required standard, in order to protect the Department's legal position, safeguard the use of public money and ensure that Steps 2 Success achieves its objectives, including the need to deliver value for money.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Communities to outline the departmental programmes providing outreach work with the farming community regarding debt advice.

(AQW 6048/16-21)

Mr Givan: My Department, in partnership with the eleven local councils, provides funding through the Community Support Programme for independent advice services, across Northern Ireland, including outreach advice services. This enables frontline advice organisations deliver a wide range of advice services including advice on money and debt.

The Department is also funding a freephone helpline and a face to face advice service in all council areas to provide additional advice services to assist people through the implementation of the ongoing changes to the welfare system.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities, following the announcement by the Work and Pensions Secretary that people deemed unfit for work and with conditions that will not improve will no longer face re-testing, what consideration has his Department given to applying this for local claimants.

(AQW 6053/16-21)

Mr Givan: Proposals recently announced by the Department for Work and Pensions remove the requirement to take part in reassessment for Employment and Support Allowance for people with the most severe health conditions or disabilities, whose condition is unlikely to improve. This change will affect claimants with severe, lifelong, often progressive and incurable conditions, with minimally fluctuating care needs, who are unlikely to ever be able to move closer to the labour market and into work.

My officials are considering the implications for Northern Ireland and are engaging with the Department for Work and Pensions with the aim to align the introduction of any changes with Great Britain.

I am aware that this announcement raises expectations and concerns for people in Northern Ireland who are in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance and will ensure my officials engage with stakeholders as developments on this issue progress.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to outline how his Department plans to deliver 9,600 new social homes and 3750 new affordable homes between 2016 and 2021.

(AQW 6054/16-21)

Mr Givan: As I advised during the debate on 18 October, I have been working with my officials on proposals for the draft Programme for Government delivery plans.

New social housing will be delivered through the Social Housing Development Programme. My Department has started to engage with the Housing Executive and housing associations to put in place a strategy to increase the delivery of new social homes to meet the target of 9,600 by 2021. The affordable housing target will be delivered through the Co-Ownership scheme, the Rent-to-Own scheme and the Affordable Homes Loan Fund, which are all delivered through housing associations.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) how many social homes have been demolished; (ii) areas where the vacant land has been re-used for new social housing; and (iii) areas where the vacant land was not re-used for social housing, in each of the last seven years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 6055/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) The Housing Executive's records indicate that 1,453 properties have been demolished in the last 7 financial years. This number includes properties demolished in urban regeneration areas and, therefore, includes previously privately-owned properties that were either vested or acquired by the NIHE and brought into its stock pending demolition.
- (ii) & (iii) The Housing Executive has provided the table below setting out the demolition sites, and whether they have been or will be re-used for new social housing.

Year	Constituency	Area	Dwellings	Re-used
2010/11	Belfast East	Ballybeen Square, Castlereagh	24	Yes
	Belfast North	Hogarth St, Belfast	5	No
		Skegoneill Avenue, Belfast	1	No
		Stanhope Drive, Belfast	9	Yes
	Belfast South	Village Urban Renewal Area, Belfast	1	Yes
	Belfast West	Hopewell Crescent, Belfast	4	No
	East Londonderry	Oakland Walk, Coleraine	1	No
		Gleanna Drive, Portrush	1	No
	Foyle	Brooke Manor, Magheramason	1	No
	North Antrim	Staffa Drive, Ballymena	6	No
		Regents Park, Ballymena	3	No
		Dunclug Gardens, Ballymena	2	No
	North Down	West Green, Holywood	35	Yes
	Strangford	Newtownards Road, Comber	1	Yes
West Tyrone	Lammy Crescent, Omagh	1	Yes	

Year	Constituency	Area	Dwellings	Re-used	
2011/12	Belfast North	Rathcoole Gardens, Newtownabbey	18	Yes	
	Belfast South	Village Urban Renewal Area, Belfast	163	Yes	
	Belfast West	Ross Street, Belfast	18	Yes	
	East Antrim	Gardenmore House, Larne	90	No	
	North Antrim	Regents Park, Ballymena	12	No	
	Upper Bann	Moyraverty Centre, Craigavon	12	No	
2012/13	Belfast North	Fortwilliam Parade, Belfast	12	Yes	
		Queen Victoria Gardens, Belfast	36	Yes	
		Parkend Street, Belfast	8	Yes	
		Clachattan Street, Belfast	5	Yes	
		Limestone Road, Belfast	3	Yes	
		Manor Street, Belfast	4	No	
		Alloa Street, Belfast	3	No	
	Belfast South	Village Urban Renewal Area, Belfast	256	Yes	
	Belfast West	Arundel Court/Walk & Excise Walk, Belfast	13	Yes	
	East Antrim	Cairngorm Drive, Larne	34	No	
		Shanlea Drive, Larne	16	No	
		Linn Road, Larne	8	No	
		Old Glenarm Road, Larne	2	No	
	North Antrim	Sandown Park, Ballymena	9	No	
		Wayside Green, Ballymena	4	No	
	Strangford	Lysander Park, Newtownards	24	Yes	
	Upper Bann	Aldervale, Craigavon	38	No	
	2013/14	Belfast North	Ballysillan Avenue, Belfast	7	Yes
		Belfast South	Village Urban Renewal Area, Belfast	110	Yes
Belfast West		Lawnbrook Urban Renewal Area, Belfast	30	Yes	
		Lenadoon Avenue, Belfast	11	Yes	
Fermanagh & South Tyrone		Drumbawn Close, Enniskillen	1	No	
North Down		West Green/West Link, Holywood	10	Yes	
Upper Bann		Aldervale, Lurgan	47	No	
		Legahory Court, Craigavon	1	No	
West Tyrone	Parkside Gardens, Sion Mills	1	No		
2014/15	Belfast West	Lawnbrook Urban Renewal Area, Belfast	143	Yes	
		Lenadoon Avenue, Belfast	22	Yes	
	North Down	Kilclief Gardens, Bangor	24	Yes	
	South Antrim	Firmount Drive, Antrim	1	No	
2015/16	Belfast North	Old Irish Highway, Newtownabbey	8	Yes	
		Fortwilliam Parade, Belfast	16	Yes	
		Hallidays Road, Belfast	10	Yes	
		Upper New Lodge Development Area	50	Yes	

Year	Constituency	Area	Dwellings	Re-used
	Belfast West	Hopewell Crescent, Belfast	19	Yes
		Glenveagh Drive, Belfast	11	Yes
2016/17	Belfast North	Upper New Lodge Development Area	43	Yes
	North Antrim	Camberwell Way, Ballymena	5	No

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to outline how (i) much was paid annually to councils to provide the Affordable Warmth Scheme since its inception and; (ii) the money was spent.

(AQW 6056/16-21)

Mr Givan: I have been advised by the NI Housing Executive that the following amounts have been paid annually to local councils to provide the Affordable Warmth Scheme since its inception:

2014/15	2015/16	2016 – 30/09/16	Total
£1.334m	£1.683m	£674,000	£3.691m

Local councils provide administrative support as one of our delivery partners within the Affordable Warmth Scheme, costs are agreed in advance between my Department and local councils. The amount is based on anticipated expenses that will be incurred each year.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Communities whether an estimated timetable is available for the scrapping of repeated assessments of benefits claimants with a long term condition that will not improve.

(AQW 6057/16-21)

Mr Givan: Proposals recently announced by the Department for Work and Pensions remove the requirement to take part in reassessment for Employment and Support Allowance for people with the most severe health conditions or disabilities, whose condition is unlikely to improve. This change will affect claimants with severe, lifelong, often progressive and incurable conditions, with minimally fluctuating care needs, who are unlikely to ever be able to move closer to the labour market and into work.

My officials are considering the implications for Northern Ireland and are engaging with the Department for Work and Pensions.

A timeline and approach to implementation has not yet been developed, however my Department aims to implement these changes in line with the Department for Work and Pensions' timeline.

I am aware that this announcement raises expectations and concerns for people in Northern Ireland who are in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance and will ensure my officials engage with stakeholders as developments on this issue progress.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) how many people have been sanctioned while on Steps 2 Success; (ii) the average sanction period; and (iii) the longest sanction period.

(AQW 6070/16-21)

Mr Givan: The information is not available in the format requested. As an individual may be sanctioned more than once, figures on the number of Jobseeker's Allowance claimants who have had a sanction imposed cannot be provided; data can however be provided on the total number of Jobseeker's Allowance sanctions imposed.

While it has not been possible to differentiate between sanctions applied to claimants who were on the previous employment programme, Steps to Work, and those who were participating in the Steps 2 Success programme, I can advise that 5,600 Jobseeker's Allowance claimants were sanctioned during the period 1 October 2014 to 30 September 2016 while participating on these programmes. The figure provided from 1 June 2015 is taken from a new recording system (Decision Making and Appeals Case Recorder).

I can confirm that the maximum period that a sanction can be imposed is 26 weeks; however system constraints mean that I am unable to provide information on the actual duration of any sanctions imposed.

Mr M Bradley asked the Minister for Communities whether there are further plans for new social housing developments in East Londonderry; and for a timeframe for the release of any planned developments.

(AQW 6071/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) is formulated on a three year basis, so information on new social housing schemes is only currently available for the three year period 2016/17-2018/19.

There are currently 120 social housing units under construction in the East Londonderry Parliamentary Constituency.

A further 216 social housing units are programmed to start on-site in the East Londonderry Parliamentary Constituency as part of the SHDP 2016/17 to 2018/19 (26 units in 2016/17, 167 units in 2017/18 and 23 units in 2018/19).

Please be advised that schemes can be lost or slip in future programme years for a variety of reasons e.g. relating to delay in acquiring site and/or failure to secure planning permission.

You may wish to note that the annual programme formulation process is currently underway for the new SHDP period 2017/18 to 2019/20, and further schemes may be added to the programme for the East Londonderry Parliamentary Constituency. Additional schemes can also be added to the SHDP in-year through the purchase of Existing Satisfactory/Off-the shelf properties.

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Communities to detail the number and location of new build social housing planned in North Antrim over the next five years.

(AQW 6072/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) is formulated on a three year basis, so information on new social housing schemes is only currently available for the three year period 2016/17-2018/19.

There are currently 232 social housing units under construction in North Antrim

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Location	Type	Need Group	Strategic Group	Units	Onsite Year	Completion Year
Ark	Templemoyle (Transfer)	Kells	New Build	General Needs	Rural	3	2015/16	2017/18
			New Build	Physical Disabilities	Rural	1	2015/16	2017/18
			New Build	Active Elderly	Rural	5	2015/16	2017/18
Choice	61 Market Road	Ballymena	New Build	General Needs	Urban	28	2015/16	2017/18
			New Build	Active Elderly	Urban	6	2015/16	2017/18
			New Build	Physical Disabilities	Urban	2	2015/16	2017/18
Choice	Carniny Court	Ballymena	Re-improvement	Vulnerable Women	Supported	20	2015/16	2017/18
			New Build	Vulnerable Women	Supported	3	2015/16	2017/18
Fold	19-21 Pottinger Street	Cullybackey	New Build	General Needs	Rural	15	2015/16	2017/18
			New Build	Active Elderly	Rural	6	2015/16	2017/18
			New Build	Physical Disabilities	Rural	3	2015/16	2017/18
Fold	Leyland Heights	Ballycastle	New Build	General Needs	Urban	28	2015/16	2017/18
			New Build	Physical Disabilities	Urban	2	2015/16	2017/18
Fold	18 Royal Court	Gracehill	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	Urban	1	2015/16	2016/17
Triangle	131 Tobar Park	Cullybackey	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	Rural	1	2015/16	2016/17
Triangle	9 Trinity Mews	Ahoghill	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	Rural	1	2015/16	2016/17

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Location	Type	Need Group	Strategic Group	Units	Onsite Year	Completion Year
Triangle	15 The Mews	Ballycastle	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	Urban	1	2015/16	2016/17
Triangle	46 Leyland Meadows	Ballycastle	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	Urban	1	2015/16	2016/17
Triangle	22 Gault Park	Ballymoney	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	Urban	1	2015/16	2016/17
Triangle	11 Edenmore Crescent	Bendooragh	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	Rural	1	2015/16	2016/17
Triangle	35 Edenmore Crescent	Bendooragh	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	Rural	1	2015/16	2016/17
Triangle	5 Millicent Avenue	Balnamore	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	Rural	1	2015/16	2016/17
Choice	St Mary's PS, Larne Road	Ballymena	New Build	General Needs	Urban	65	2016/17	2018/19
			New Build	Active Elderly	Urban	9	2016/17	2018/19
Fold	19-21 Royal Court	Gracehill	New Build	General Needs	Urban	20	2016/17	2017/18
Rural	11 Tobar Park	Cullybackey	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	Rural	1	2016/17	2016/17
Triangle	1-6 Rockfield Row, Glenravel Road	Cargan	Off-the-Shelf	General Needs	Rural	6	2016/17	2016/17
					Total:	232		

A further 332 social housing units programmed to start on-site in the North Antrim Parliamentary Constituency as part of the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) 2016/17 to 2018/19 (123 units in 2016/17, 140 units in 2017/18 and 69 units in 2018/19);

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Location	Type	Need Group	Strategic Group	Units	Onsite Year	Completion Year
Apex Housing	Frail Elderly, Rathmoyle	Ballycastle	New Build	Housing with Care	Supported	28	2016/17	2019/20
Clanmil	PSNI, Charlotte Street	Ballymoney	Rehab	Active Elderly	Urban	8	2016/17	2017/18
Clanmil	Station Road (Transfer)	Dunloy	New Build	General Needs	Rural	10	2016/17	2017/18
Fold	Ballymena Showgrounds Social Club	Ballymena	New Build	General Needs	Urban	18	2016/17	2018/19
Fold	Ballymena Showgrounds Social Club	Ballymena	New Build	Physical Disabilities	Urban	2	2016/17	2018/19
Helm Housing	Castle Street	Ballymena	New Build	General Needs	Urban	19	2016/17	2018/19

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Location	Type	Need Group	Strategic Group	Units	Onsite Year	Completion Year
Helm Housing	21 Charles Street	Ballymoney	New Build	General Needs	Urban	7	2016/17	2018/19
Triangle	Mill House Reprovision, Trostan Avenue	Ballymena	New Build	Single Homeless	Supported	21	2016/17	2018/19
Triangle	PSNI Site Broughshane	Broughshane	New Build	Active Elderly	Rural	10	2016/17	2017/18
Apex Housing	Garvaghy Avenue, Phase 2	Portglenone	New Build	General Needs	Rural	10	2017/18	2018/19
Choice	Ballymoney Road	Ballymena	New Build	Active Elderly	Urban	8	2017/18	2018/19
Choice	8-10 Main Street	Kells	New Build	General Needs	Rural	5	2017/18	2018/19
Choice	27 - 29 Church Street	Ahoghill	New Build	General Needs	Rural	13	2017/18	2018/19
Choice	Waveney Road	Ballymena	New Build	General Needs	Urban	14	2017/18	2018/19
Clanmil	125-127 Larne Road	Ballymena	New Build	General Needs	Urban	31	2017/18	2019/20
Habinteg	Straid Road	Ahoghill	New Build	Active Elderly	Rural	9	2017/18	2018/19
Rural	Cullybackey / Ahoghill	Cullybackey	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	Rural	5	2017/18	2018/19
Triangle	2A Garryduff Road	Ballymoney	Re-improvement	Active Elderly	Urban	10	2017/18	2018/19
Triangle	Main Street	Broughshane	New Build	Active Elderly	Rural	20	2017/18	2018/19
Triangle	New Street	Armoy	New Build	General Needs	Rural	6	2017/18	2018/19
Triangle	2A Garryduff Road	Ballymoney	Re-improvement	Learning Disabilities	Supported	9	2017/18	2018/19
Fold	Leyland Road Phase 2	Ballycastle	New Build	General Needs	Urban	20	2018/19	2019/20
Helm Housing	Parkview/ Jubilee Court	Ballymoney	New Build	General Needs	Urban	21	2018/19	2019/20
South Ulster	Ballymena ESPs	Ballymena	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	General Needs	Urban	10	2018/19	2019/20
South Ulster	Raceview Road	Cullybackey	New Build	General Needs	Rural	18	2018/19	2019/20
					Total:	332		

Please be advised that schemes can be lost or slip to future programme years for a variety of reasons e.g. relating to delays in acquiring sites and/or failure to secure planning permission. Please note that the annual programme formulation process is currently underway for the new SHDP period 2017/18 to 2019/20, and further schemes may be added to the programme for the North Antrim Parliamentary Constituency. Additional schemes can also be added to the SHDP in-year through the purchase of Existing Satisfactory / Off-the-shelf properties.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) why people on the Access to Work scheme have not been reimbursed for their cost of travel; (ii) any correspondence between his Department and those affected; and (i) when the backlog will be cleared.

(AQW 6080/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) There are currently over 700 disabled people receiving assistance through the Access to Work (NI) programme. My department's Disability Employment Service has responsibility for the management and delivery of this specialist employment programme, including the processing of all payments. There has been no policy change in relation to any aspect of the programme, and people on the Access to Work (NI) are still being reimbursed for the cost of their travel to and from their place of employment;
- (ii) Due to the fact that there has not been a change of policy, no official correspondence has been issued by my department to Access to Work (NI) customers. The Access to Work team respond to queries from participants, employers and other customers on a daily basis and will continue to do so;
- (iii) The Disability Employment Service strives to pay claims for reimbursement of costs to disabled customers as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, due to a number of unexpected staff absences recently, this caused a temporary delay in our normal payment process and timeline. To address this issue, the Disability Employment Service management put in place contingency arrangements and the Access to Work payment backlog has been cleared.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Communities (i) for an update on the process for the recruitment of the Chief Executive Officer for Foras na Gaeilge; and (ii) to outline the interim arrangements put in place to manage the business of the agency.

(AQW 6085/16-21)

Mr Givan: The recruitment process for the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) post is a matter for Foras na Gaeilge. The process is underway. Following completion of that process a CEO will be appointed, subject to the approval of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC).

At the NSMC Languages meeting held on 24th June 2016, Ministers approved interim arrangements for managing the business of the agency by extending the current CEO's contract by three months to 19 December 2016.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Communities to outline how many DLA renewals were turned down for child applicants, over the past two years.

(AQW 6093/16-21)

Mr Givan: The information requested is not available as the Department for Work and Pensions' IT system used by the Department to administer Disability Living Allowance (DLA) does not capture this specific level of detail.

The table below shows the total number of DLA renewal claims in the last two years which were disallowed

Year	DLA Renewal Disallowances
April 2014 to March 2015	1,904
April 2015 to March 2016	1,682
Total	3,586

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

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Communities to outline what support his Department can provide to businesses in the Strabane district to improve their shop fronts.

(AQW 6094/16-21)

Mr Givan: My Department can provide support for shop front improvements through the Revitalisation scheme. In 2015, my Department provided funding of £392,174 to deliver a Revitalisation scheme in Main Street, Castle Place and Bridge Street in Strabane.

My Department recently received a further application from Derry City and Strabane District Council for a new phase of the Revitalisation scheme in Strabane Town Centre. Subject to a satisfactory appraisal process, the project will involve the funding of an Architect and associated costs, to design and cost a new scheme.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister for Communities to outline the reasons why pension and benefits payments made into Post Office accounts will soon end and be directed towards banks, building societies or credit unions.

(AQW 6117/16-21)

Mr Givan: Post Office card accounts continue to be a method of payment for Department of Communities customers. The Department has a contract with Post Office Limited to provide card accounts until 30th November 2021, with an option to extend for a further 3 years.

The Department is committed to battling financial exclusion and helping more people to move towards, and benefit from mainstream banking. Post Office card account is not a transactional account and does not support our ambitions for the majority of working age benefit claimants. For this reason, the Department of Work and Pensions are currently writing to Post Office card account users on behalf of the Department for Communities in phases up to March 2018 about switching to a bank, building society or credit union account. We want our customers to have access to an account that prepares them for job readiness as well as other changes that Universal Credit will introduce, such as monthly payments, responsibility for payment of housing costs and managing a household budget.

Direct Payment into a bank, building society or credit union account is the most efficient, secure and reliable way of making payments and is the preferred way to make pension and benefit payments.

Those moving to another account can continue to access their money and other services at their local Post Office and importantly sub-postmasters will continue to receive revenue from those transactions while maintaining footfall.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for Communities to detail the funding to Lower Shankill Community Association; and from which programme this was awarded.

(AQW 6118/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- 1 The Department for Communities has awarded funding to Lower Shankill Community Association (LSCA) from December 2012 to March 2017 through the Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund. During this period £266,644.39 has been allocated and £204,288.02 has been provided to date. Funding is for salaries and overheads to enable provision of services including community relations, youth activities, community safety, community development and health awareness.
- 2 The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has also provided financial support for LSCA programmes from 2007. Funding has come from a variety of funding streams; totals are detailed below:

Community Development	£59,645
Good Relations	£14,050
Capacity Building	£9,634
Community Involvement	£8,584
Re-imaging Communities	£3,000
Race Relations	£1,740
Better Bonfires	£1,000
Total	£97,653

- 3 The Department is aware of this funding and there is no risk of duplication with Neighbourhood Renewal funding. Criteria for Discretionary Housing Payment

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities to outline the criteria for Discretionary Housing Payment.

(AQW 6164/16-21)

Mr Givan: I refer you to the response to AQW 6012/16-21, which I believe answers this question.

Mrs Long asked the Minister for Communities what processes are in place to ensure the speedy release of a Freedom of Information request in circumstances where the absence of clearance from either he or his Special Adviser has taken the request beyond the statutory deadline for response.

(AQW 6167/16-21)

Mr Givan: Draft replies to FOI requests may be considered by a number of staff in the department before a response is approved and issued. The Department seeks wherever possible to comply with deadlines for responses to requests.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Communities to outline whether his Department will have any involvement in the recently announced review of fixed-odds betting terminals being conducted by the UK Government.

(AQW 6209/16-21)

Mr Givan: Gambling in Northern Ireland is a devolved matter, regulated under the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (NI) Order 1985.

The current "Review of Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures" launched by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on 24 October 2016 relates only to gambling in Great Britain regulated by the Gambling Act 2005.

I look forward to reading the results of the review.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) this year's budget for the Affordable Warmth Scheme; and (ii) the future of the Scheme.

(AQW 6212/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department for Communities allocated an opening budget of £15.5million to the Affordable Warmth Scheme in 2016/17.

The future of the Affordable Warmth Scheme will be considered in the context of the Executive's Budget 2016 exercise and decisions announced at the appropriate time.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to outline how many cavity wall extractions have been carried out under the Affordable Warmth Scheme to date.

(AQW 6213/16-21)

Mr Givan: I have been advised by the NI Housing Executive, that they have issued schedules of work for 121 cases, for the removal and replacement of defective cavity wall insulation.

They have also advised that 85 of those cases have been completed to date.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) how much was paid to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to provide the Affordable Warmth Scheme; and (ii) how the money was spent, broken down per year, since inception.

(AQW 6214/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) My Department provides a general budget to the NI Housing Executive to fund its staffing and administration costs. The general staffing and administration budget is allocated to programmes by the NI Housing Executive.
- (ii) The NI Housing Executive have advised that their spend on staffing and administration costs directly related to the Affordable Warmth Scheme in each year since its inception is:

	2014/2015 (£k)	2015/2016 (£k)	Total (£k)
NI Housing Executive expenditure on Staffing & Administration costs for the Affordable Warmth Scheme	275	2,775	3,050

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to outline how many (i) technical inspections have been carried out by Northern Ireland Housing Executive under the Affordable Warmth Scheme; (ii) have included a detailed boroscope survey; and (iii) houses were solid wall, to date.

(AQW 6215/16-21)

Mr Givan: I have been advised by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that 10,379 technical inspections were carried out by them under the Affordable Warmth Scheme to date.

Housing Executive technical officers carry out borescope inspections in all cases, unless there is evidence that the cavity has already been filled or the householder does not want holes drilled in the walls.

There have been 321 properties identified as being of solid wall construction to date.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities to detail the total amount of unclaimed benefits over each of the last five years, broken down by benefit type.

(AQW 6217/16-21)

Mr Givan: Information detailing the total amount of unclaimed benefits over each of the last five years is not available.

However, I am committed to ensuring that those people who have rightful entitlement are receiving all the benefits and other supports and services that they are eligible for. Between 2013 and 2016, under its three year plan, "Maximising Incomes & Outcomes - a 3 Year Plan for Improving the Uptake of Benefits", my Department's Improving Benefit Uptake Team (IBU) generated over £48million for over 13,000 people. Around 75% of money generated was accounted for by claims related to older people.

Over the next 3 years we plan to target 100,000 people with the offer of a full benefit entitlement check and secure at least £40million in additional benefits.

Mr Kearney asked the Minister for Communities for (i) an update on the South Antrim Aluminium Bungalow Refurbishment Scheme; and (ii) a definitive date for this scheme to commence.

(AQW 6227/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) The South Antrim Aluminium Bungalows scheme is a comprehensive refurbishment scheme which will deliver substantial improvements to 54 properties in several different locations. The project is currently undergoing Economic Appraisal. Subject to approval the scheme will then be put out to tender to procure a contractor to deliver the works.
- (ii) The provisional start date, subject to all necessary approvals and tendering etc., is expected to be May 2017.

Mr Kearney asked the Minister for Communities to outline the reason for the delay in the commencement of the South Antrim Aluminium Bungalow Refurbishment Scheme.

(AQW 6228/16-21)

Mr Givan: Complex capital schemes such as this have long development, approval and procurement stages and it is important that NIHE takes the necessary time to prepare and deliver a comprehensive scheme that will fully address all of the issues in the properties.

The provisional start date, subject to all the necessary approvals and procurement, is expected to be May 2017.

Mr Kearney asked the Minister for Communities to detail the funding for Gaelic Athletic Association clubs for development and pitch construction.

(AQW 6234/16-21)

Mr Givan: Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, will open the third strand of its Lottery funded 'Everybody Active 2020' initiative later this month. This initiative is targeted at small scale capital projects that deliver new or enhanced sustainable facilities in the natural environment. In addition, Sport NI intends to reopen the Active Awards small grants programme in 2017, which will allow applicants to apply for grants to develop their sport. GAA clubs should register their interest with Sport NI directly.

Future funding may be available through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. Any funding club development and pitch construction would be dependent on the proposed project's linkages with the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and budget availability. Information relating to the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund is available on <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/urban-regeneration/neighbourhood-renewal>

Funding is currently available from my Department to provide assistance to voluntary and community organisations through a small grants pilot programme. This Programme is intended to enable such organisations to purchase items of equipment to sustain and enhance their activities and services to the community. Details on the programme, which closes on 11 November, can be found at <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/news/minister-announces-funding-community-equipment-scheme>

In the longer term, the Department is considering plans to develop Phase 2 of the Sub Regional Stadia Programme, which will include support for the development of GAA grounds.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Communities to outline the funding available to Libraries NI.

(AQW 6235/16-21)

Mr Givan: My Department has allocated indicative funding of £31.75 million to Libraries NI in 2016/17. This available funding consists of £27.98 million of resource, £2.09 million of capital and £1.68 million towards the Authority's Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES). It also includes an additional £225k which I made available in August 2016 to help Libraries NI maintain library opening hours at current levels in this financial year.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Communities whether his Department intends to repeal the provisions of the Unauthorised Encampments (Northern Ireland) Order 2005.

(AQW 6262/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Unauthorised Encampments (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (the Order) was introduced in response to concerns about environmental, public health and traffic problems, caused by widespread unauthorised camping in Northern Ireland.

The Minister has no plans to repeal the Order.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities to outline what discussions his Department has had with the Department of Finance since 29 September 2016 regarding a potential derogation from the Treasury with respect to the decision by the Office of National Statistics to reclassify housing associations as public bodies.

(AQW 6279/16-21)

Mr Givan: My Department since May 2016, has been working on this matter and continue to work closely with the Department of Finance (DoF) to ensure the impact of the reclassification is kept to a minimum. DoF continues to lead on the ongoing negotiations with HM Treasury to seek derogation.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities to outline the total amount of (i) brownfield land held by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; and (ii) this land that is polluted beyond the standards fit for development, broken down by Local Government district.

(AQW 6281/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive does not hold the information as requested.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities to detail how many children were declared homeless, by constituency, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 6284/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive maintains homelessness information on households, that is, individuals, families or any group of people that normally live together. The Housing Executive has advised that it does not maintain that information by constituency.

Information is available by Housing Executive Local Office and the numbers of households with one or more children accepted as homeless in each of the last three years are in the tables below. Young people aged 16/17 may seek homelessness assistance as individuals and those accepted as homeless in this category are reported separately.

Families with children accepted as FDA 2013/14 by NIHE local office

	2 Adults & 1 Child	2 Adults & 2 Children	2 Adults & 3 Children	2 Adults & 4 or more Children	3 or more Adults & 0-1 child	3 or more Adults & 2 Children	Single Parent & 1 Child	Single Parent & 2 Children	Single Parent & 3 Children	Single Parent & 4 or more Children	Grand Total
Antrim Housing	11	6	4	1	6	1	45	19	8	7	108
Armagh Housing	4	1		1	2	2	25	15	4	4	58
Ballycastle Housing	3	4	3		1	1	14	5	4	4	39
Ballymena DO Housing	12	9	7	8	10	2	42	24	7	6	127
Ballymoney Housing	2	1	2	2	3		16	10	2		38
Banbridge Housing	8	2	3	1	3		21	13	9		60
Bangor Housing	14	11	8	2	8	1	45	26	12	14	141
Carrickfergus Housing	3	4	2		4	1	34	14	6	1	69
Castlereagh Housing	8	8	3	1			35	20	9	2	86
Coleraine Housing	8	4	8		5	1	42	19	7	2	96
Collon Terrace Housing	9	9	5	4	4	3	82	41	21	8	186
Cookstown Housing	2	1	1			1	6	4	4		19
Craigavon Lurgan Housing	5	2	2		4	1	11	9	5	4	43
Craigavon Portadown Housing	7	5	1	1	2		19	2	6		43
Downpatrick Housing	7	7	2	2	3	1	45	11	12	9	99
Dungannon Housing	14	7	3	4	3	3	36	21	10	5	106

	2 Adults & 1 Child	2 Adults & 2 Children	2 Adults & 3 Children	2 Adults & 4 or more Children	3 or more Adults & 0-1 child	3 or more Adults & 2 Children	Single Parent & 1 Child	Single Parent & 2 Children	Single Parent & 3 Children	Single Parent & 4 or more Children	Grand Total
East Belfast Housing	14	14	5	4	10	1	76	47	13	8	192
Fermanagh Housing	2	4	4	3	1		14	12	2	6	48
Homelessness Services Unit (Belfast)	1	5		3	1	1	18	15	4	1	49
Larne Housing	4	3	1	1		1	16	8	4	1	39
Limavady Housing	3	4	1	2	1		11	4	2	1	29
Lisburn AS Housing	24	12	5	8	7	1	100	60	26	17	260
Lisburn Dairy Farm Housing	4	3	5	6	4	1	43	16	10	5	97
Magherafelt Housing	3	3	2	4	1	1	14	8	2		38
Newry Housing	11	8	6	6	4	1	88	31	13	15	183
Newtownabbey 1 Housing	6	3		1	3	1	28	19	8	3	72
Newtownabbey 2 Housing	9	8	7	4	4		47	26	15	5	125
Newtownards Housing	14	6	7	4	5	2	65	41	10	5	159
North Belfast Housing	14	11	4	9	11		121	74	29	12	285
Omagh District Housing	1	1	1	1	1		5	6	1	1	18
Shankill Housing	10	2	1		7		42	33	6	6	107
South Belfast Housing	7	6	2	2	5		29	21	9	3	84
Strabane Housing	4	3	1	2	1		15	6	8	4	44
Waterloo PI Housing	17	7	3	3	1		78	32	19	7	167
Waterside Housing	14	1	2	4	1		49	32	17	7	127
West Belfast Housing	13	12	5	3	6	3	91	50	14	7	204
Grand Total	292	197	116	97	132	31	1468	794	338	180	3645

Families with children accepted as FDA 14/15 by local NIHE office

	2 Adults & 1 Child	2 Adults & 2 Children	2 Adults & 3 Children	2 Adults & 4 or more Children	3 or more Adults & 0-1 child	3 or more Adults & 2 Children	Single Parent & 1 Child	Single Parent & 2 Children	Single Parent & 3 Children	Single Parent & 4 or more Children	Grand Total
Antrim Housing	11	1	5	7	6	1	45	27	7	9	119

	2 Adults & 1 Child	2 Adults & 2 Children	2 Adults & 3 Children	2 Adults & 4 or more Children	3 or more Adults & 0-1 child	3 or more Adults & 2 Children	Single Parent & 1 Child	Single Parent & 2 Children	Single Parent & 3 Children	Single Parent & 4 or more Children	Grand Total
Armagh Housing	6	1	1		1	3	22	13	3	1	51
Ballycastle Housing	4	1		1	1		18	6	3	3	37
Ballymena DO Housing	10	8	8	2	7	1	57	32	16	13	154
Ballymoney Housing	3	2	3	2			13	8	4		35
Banbridge Housing	3		2	2	2		15	12	8	3	47
Bangor Housing	10	19	4	2	12	4	71	51	17	3	193
Belfast Area CSU							2	2	1		5
Carrickfergus Housing	4	4		2	8	1	27	14	8	2	70
Castlereagh Housing	22	8	8	2	6		55	25	8	3	137
Coleraine Housing	7	3	3	2	4		53	22	9	4	107
Collon Terrace Housing	8	6	3	3	10	2	89	50	14	13	198
Cookstown Housing	3			1	1		9	7	2	2	25
Craigavon Lurgan Housing	5	8	2	3	5	3	12	8	5	3	54
Craigavon Portadown Housing	5	5		1	3	2	17	12	4	2	51
Downpatrick Housing	8	9	5	4	1		54	35	17	4	137
Dungannon Housing	31	12	3	6	5	3	57	20	15	4	156
East Belfast Housing	14	12	6	4	8	4	63	34	18	7	170
Fermanagh Housing	6	2	3	3		2	29	17	7	3	72
Homelessness Services Unit	9	7	7	4	3	1	32	22	10	8	103
Larne Housing	1	4	2	1	3		11	4	2	2	30
Limavady Housing	2	6		3	1		14	8	5	1	40
Lisburn AS Housing	22	20	10	2	9	1	98	45	17	10	234
Lisburn Dairy Farm Housing	6	4	4	1	1	1	56	35	21	9	138

	2 Adults & 1 Child	2 Adults & 2 Children	2 Adults & 3 Children	2 Adults & 4 or more Children	3 or more Adults & 0-1 child	3 or more Adults & 2 Children	Single Parent & 1 Child	Single Parent & 2 Children	Single Parent & 3 Children	Single Parent & 4 or more Children	Grand Total
Magherafelt Housing	6	6	1	3	3		13	8	2	1	43
Newry Housing	13	13	8	4	7	1	67	39	23	11	186
Newtownabbey 1 Housing	8	3	1	3	6	3	48	23	7	3	105
Newtownabbey 2 Housing	6	9	2	4	6		33	18	7	6	91
Newtownards Housing	16	15	8	8	7		87	41	18	11	211
North Belfast Housing	21	19	7	5	10	1	129	57	31	14	294
Omagh District Housing	4	2	1	3	1	1	14	7	3		36
Shankill Housing	10	2	2		1		54	16	9	6	100
South Belfast Housing	11	6	4	3	4	1	41	30	12	5	117
Strabane Housing	6	5	2	4	3		14	20	7	5	66
Waterloo PI Housing	7	2	2	3	2		62	33	11	6	128
Waterside Housing	12	10	6	4	2		66	36	11	7	154
West Belfast Housing	13	8	4	2	10	2	142	69	26	12	288
Grand Total	333	242	127	104	159	38	1689	906	388	196	4182

Families with children accepted as FDA 15/16 by local NIHE office

	2 Adults & 1 Child	2 Adults & 2 Children	2 Adults & 3 Children	2 Adults & 4 or more Children	3 or more Adults & 0-1 child	3 or more Adults & 2 Children	Single Parent & 1 Child	Single Parent & 2 Children	Single Parent & 3 Children	Single Parent & 4 or more Children	Grand Total
Antrim Housing	10	10	6	4	3	3	69	34	18	9	166
Armagh Housing	6	4	5	1	1	1	20	8	3	2	51
Ballycastle Housing	1		3				3	1	1		9
Ballymena DO Housing	13	7	6	7	12	2	43	27	15	7	139
Ballymoney Housing				1			3				4
Banbridge Housing	5	5	4		3		14	7	4		42
Bangor Housing	11	7	4	1	7	1	52	40	14	7	144
Belfast Area CSU							3				3

	2 Adults & 1 Child	2 Adults & 2 Children	2 Adults & 3 Children	2 Adults & 4 or more Children	3 or more Adults & 0-1 child	3 or more Adults & 2 Children	Single Parent & 1 Child	Single Parent & 2 Children	Single Parent & 3 Children	Single Parent & 4 or more Children	Grand Total
Belfast Housing Solutions	20	12	12	7	7	4	96	49	11	9	227
Carrickfergus Housing	5	6	4	2	7	1	23	11	8	3	70
Causeway HSST	15	12	11	7	8	6	83	43	15	11	211
Coleraine Housing	5	6	2	1	3	1	19	7	2	1	47
Collon Terrace Housing	14	9	5	5	6		79	41	12	8	179
Cookstown Housing	4	1	1		2		14	8	5	1	36
Craigavon Lurgan Housing	7	4	3	2	3	1	8	12	8	1	49
Craigavon Portadown Housing	3	5	2	2	3	4	9	7	5		40
Downpatrick Housing	17	12	8	4	6	1	43	27	15	7	140
Dungannon Housing	14	9	7	5	4	2	38	16	9	6	110
East Belfast Housing	9	8	2	3	4	2	62	38	10	5	143
Fermanagh Housing	4	2	5	1	4		24	18	10	6	74
Homelessness Services Unit	5	2		1	2		22	13	1	4	50
Larne Housing	5		1		2	1	10	10	5	1	35
Limavady Housing	3		1			1	8	2	1		16
Lisburn AS Housing	24	11	10	8	6	3	51	50	15	7	185
Lisburn Dairy Farm Housing	5	4	5	3	3		55	27	11	10	123
Magherafelt Housing	1	2	2	1	6	1	16	7	2	3	41
Newry Housing	11	16	11	12	9	2	62	33	14	15	185
Newtownabbey 1 Housing	5	8		1	8		45	33	14	4	118
Newtownabbey 2 Housing	5	7	5	4	7	1	43	33	10	5	120
Newtownards Housing	20	10	12	4	8	1	84	38	10	4	191
North Belfast Housing	23	14	10	6	8	4	95	67	31	20	278

	2 Adults & 1 Child	2 Adults & 2 Children	2 Adults & 3 Children	2 Adults & 4 or more Children	3 or more Adults & 0-1 child	3 or more Adults & 2 Children	Single Parent & 1 Child	Single Parent & 2 Children	Single Parent & 3 Children	Single Parent & 4 or more Children	Grand Total
Omagh District Housing	3	1		2	1		9	2	6	1	25
S & E Belfast Housing C'reagh	12	9	5	3	9	2	37	39	6		122
Shankill Housing	5	10	1	4	1		48	40	10	3	122
South Belfast Housing	4	1	3		1	1	19	8	6	3	46
Strabane Housing	3	2	3	3	3		19	8	5	5	51
Waterloo PI Housing	8	3	4	2			69	32	14	7	139
Waterside Housing	8	12	3	4			60	24	15	2	128
West Belfast Housing	14	9	7	3	11	1	110	55	24	7	241
Grand Total	327	240	173	114	168	47	1567	915	365	184	4100

16/17 year olds accepted as FDA by local NIHE Office

	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
Antrim Housing	5	6	9
Armagh Housing	2	0	1
Ballycastle Housing	3	0	0
Ballymena DO Housing	2	6	7
Ballymoney Housing	2	0	0
Banbridge Housing	1	1	1
Belfast Housing Solutions	0	0	10
Bangor Housing	3	14	4
Carrickfergus Housing	8	7	5
Causeway HSST	0	0	10
Castlereagh Housing	3	2	0
Coleraine Housing	5	14	1
Collon Terrace Housing	3	5	4
Cookstown Housing	1	2	0
Craigavon Lurgan Housing	0	5	3
Craigavon Portadown Housing	8	4	1
Downpatrick Housing	10	9	10
Dungannon Housing	2	1	4
East Belfast Housing	14	13	6
Fermanagh Housing	7	7	5
Homelessness Services Unit	0	1	4
Larne Housing	2	4	2

	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
Limavady Housing	7	4	1
Lisburn AS Housing	14	9	12
Lisburn Dairy Farm Housing	4	2	1
Magherafelt Housing	1	2	1
Newry Housing	3	14	10
Newtownabbey 1 Housing	3	1	5
Newtownabbey 2 Housing	5	6	3
Newtownards Housing	12	16	11
North Belfast Housing	7	10	5
Omagh District Housing	5	0	1
S & E Belfast C'reagh	0	0	2
Shankill Housing	4	3	6
South Belfast Housing	5	6	3
Strabane Housing	4	1	4
Waterloo PI Housing	4	5	4
Waterside Housing	6	3	5
West Belfast Housing	6	6	5
Grand Total	171	189	166

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities to outline what measures are in place to support and aid homeless people during the winter period.

(AQW 6285/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive spends £35.6m per year on a wide range of temporary accommodation and support services to homeless households. These include:

- 157 Voluntary Sector Hostels;
- 18 Housing Executive Hostels;
- Approximately 1,100 single let dwellings (which are private sector houses and flats acquired as necessary on a temporary basis);
- 70 units of Dispersed Intensively Managed Emergency (DIME) Accommodation ; and
- Drop-In Centres, Floating Support Services and Street Outreach Services.

There are a range of specialist services commissioned by the Housing Executive to work with the relatively low numbers at risk from rough sleeping in Belfast and Londonderry. These include the Welcome Organisation which is funded to deliver the drop-in, street outreach and floating support in Belfast. De Paul Ireland are funded to provide drop-in and floating support services in Londonderry and a Housing First service in both locations which works to provide permanent housing solutions with support for homeless people with complex needs.

In addition a series of actions arose from an Inter-Ministerial Action Plan to address homelessness and rough sleeping in Belfast which are further improving services in the city.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities to outline what measures are in place to assist homeless people with (i) an alcohol; or (ii) a drug addiction.

(AQW 6286/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 (as amended) places a statutory duty on the Housing Executive to provide interim and/or permanent accommodation for certain homeless households, dependent upon assessment of their circumstances.

The Housing Executive has advised that it currently funds £3.8 million annually for the delivery of services specifically for people with alcohol and drug related problems. This comprises 12 accommodation based services and four floating support services which currently have the capacity to provide housing support to approximately 400 individuals.

The Housing Executive also provides funding of £10.9 million to providers of some 46 accommodation and floating support schemes. These are for single homeless clients across Northern Ireland requiring varying levels of support. A number of these schemes also provide support to clients with complex drug or alcohol addiction issues.

Statutory responsibility for the treatment of people with drug and alcohol addictions rests with Health and Social Care.

Mr Smith asked the Minister for Communities to detail each budgetary pressure in his Department and its arm's-length bodies; and which of these pressures were raised with officials from the Department of Finance in advance of the October monitoring round.

(AQW 6291/16-21)

Mr Givan: In his statement to the Assembly on 25 October, the Minister of Finance drew attention to a new approach taken by the Executive in relation to the monitoring round process which is consistent with arrangements already in place in Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland.

My Department continues to manage its in-year financial position within the resources that have been allocated to us.

Ms Ruane asked the Minister for Communities to detail the cost to update the Social Security offices in Kilkeel, Downpatrick, Lisburn, Newtownbreda, Ballynahinch and Newcastle.

(AQW 6293/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Social Security offices in Kilkeel, Downpatrick, Lisburn, Newtownbreda, Ballynahinch and Newcastle all form part of the Government-owned or leased estate. The buildings are therefore held by the Department of Finance's Properties Division. Any expenditure on the buildings would have been a matter for that Department to maintain the condition and fabric of their assets. The Department of Finance recently carried out work at the Newcastle Social Security Office, a Government-owned building, to coincide with the release of rented property elsewhere in Newcastle.

The offices in Kilkeel, Lisburn and Newtownbreda (Knockbreda) buildings were converted from Social Security Offices to Jobs and Benefits Offices in 2002/3 thereby providing co-located jobs and benefits services as distinct from standalone Social Security and Job Centre functions.

More recently, in 2015, the former Department for Social Development invested c£130,000 at Knockbreda Jobs and Benefits to enhance the internal public office areas. A further c£25,000 was also spent in 2015 on the external perimeter areas and security features.

I have also announced capital expenditure of c£3.7m to refurbish the Government Offices at Rathkeltair House, Downpatrick. This significant investment, provided jointly by my Department and the Department of Finance, will provide modern facilities for both staff and customers and will open in April 2018.

Ms Ruane asked the Minister for Communities to outline the consideration that has been given to upgrading or accommodating alternative Social Security offices for Ballynahinch or Newcastle.

(AQW 6294/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department has considered the feasibility and cost of modernising the Ballynahinch and Newcastle offices including providing alternative accommodation locally from which to deliver services to claimants.

As part of the Jobs & Benefits project the former Department for Social Development took forward a procurement exercise to secure appropriate sites within the Ballynahinch and Newcastle areas. However, following evaluation of submissions it was concluded that the proposed development costs did not represent value for money.

The Universal Credit project in 2014 also considered the feasibility and cost of modernising both offices and the scope of the building to support the necessary IT infrastructure to deliver the new telephony and digital based services.

The outcome of this assessment confirmed that the Newcastle and Ballynahinch offices do not provide the necessary accommodation from which to deliver future services, requiring significant investment or alternative premises to enable the Department to provide the office environment required to deliver future services.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 2265/16-21, to outline (i) when will the report be completed; and (ii) can a copy of the report be provided to Assembly members.

(AQW 6300/16-21)

Mr Givan: Departmental statisticians are presently evaluating the raw data collected by the survey carried out over the summer. Due to the complexities of the analysis and the required comparison with the previous survey, it will now be early next year before the report is published. A copy of the report will be placed in the Assembly Library as soon as it is available.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities to outline the range of infrastructure improvements that can be applied for using the Community Regeneration Fund.

(AQW 6317/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Community Regeneration Fund is aimed at funding infrastructure projects to build upon the progress in recent years and stimulate economic activity. There will be engagement at Ministerial level over the coming weeks to identify suitable capital projects with allocations being agreed by the Executive as part of the January Monitoring round.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities to outline the criteria that will determine how the Community Regeneration Fund is allocated.

(AQW 6318/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Community Regeneration Fund is aimed at funding infrastructure projects to build upon the progress in recent years and stimulate economic activity. There will be engagement at Ministerial level over the coming weeks to identify suitable capital projects with allocations being agreed by the Executive as part of the January Monitoring round.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities to outline how applications are made for the newly announced Community Regeneration Fund.

(AQW 6319/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Community Regeneration Fund is aimed at funding infrastructure projects to build upon the progress in recent years and stimulate economic activity. There will be engagement at Ministerial level over the coming weeks to identify suitable capital projects and consider application process and criteria with allocations being agreed by the Executive as part of the January Monitoring round.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Communities to outline why his Department funded a public realm scheme in Magherafelt that involved the removal of the Union Flag flagpole from the town centre.

(AQW 6323/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Mid Ulster District council (and formerly the Magherafelt District Council) applied to my Department for funding to support a Public Realm scheme for the regeneration of Magherafelt town centre. My Department agreed to fund the scheme up to a maximum of 90%; however, the Mid Ulster District Council was responsible for the design, public and statutory consultations, seeking planning permission and the implementation of this scheme. This being the case, this Department had no role in the decision to remove the Union Flag. Throughout the process there was significant engagement with stakeholders and the public on the appraisal, planning design and programme delivery for the scheme.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 5378/16-21, to provide the (i) name; and (ii) location of each delisted building; and to detail the statutory test for special architectural or historic interest.

(AQW 6334/16-21)

Mr Givan: 117 buildings in total were delisted over the period in question. The name and location of each building is provided in the attached tables.

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires my Department to list buildings of 'special architectural or historic interest.' The criteria for listing (and de-listing) are contained within Annex C to Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6 Annex C) and can be accessed at http://www.planningni.gov.uk/de/index/policy/planning_statements_and_supplementary_planning_guidance/pps06.htm.

Buildings Delisted in 2013

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 2	Current Use
HB17/01/021 I	9 Ann Street, Gilford, Banbridge, BT63 6HX	Record only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/021 J	10 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/021 K	11 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/021 L	12 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/021 M	13 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/021 N	14 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/01/021 O	15 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/01/021 P	16 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/01/021 Q	17 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/01/021 R	18 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/01/021 S	19 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/021 T	20 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 2	Current Use
HB17/01/021 U	21 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/021 V	22 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/021 W	23 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/021 X	24 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/021 Y	25 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/021 Z	26 Ann Street, Gilford, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/027 A	1 Bannview Terrace, Gilford, CRAIGAVON, Co Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/027 C	2 Bannview Terrace, Gilford, CRAIGAVON, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/01/027 E	3 Bannview Terrace, Gilford, CRAIGAVON, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/027 G	4 Bannview Terrace, Gilford, CRAIGAVON, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB Ref No	Address	Survey 2	Current Use
HB17/01/027 H	5 Bannview Terrace, Gilford, CRAIGAVON, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/01/027 J	6 Bannview Terrace, Gilford, CRAIGAVON, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/01/027 L	7 Bannview Terrace, Gilford, CRAIGAVON, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/027 N	8 Bannview Terrace, Gilford, CRAIGAVON, County Down, BT63 6HX	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/01/041	Gilford Free, Presbyterian Church Presbyterian Church, 28 Dunbarton Street, Loughans,Gilford, Co Down, BT63 6HJ	Record Only	Church
HB17/02/003 F	1 Dandy Row, Lenaderg, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 4NP	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/02/003 G	2 Dandy Row, Lenaderg, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 4NP	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/02/003 H	3 Dandy Row, Lenaderg, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 4NP	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB Ref No	Address	Survey 2	Current Use
HB17/02/003 I	4 Dandy Row, Lenaderg, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 4NP	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/02/003 J	5 Dandy Row, Lenaderg, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 4NP	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/03/005	Loughbrickland, Reformed Presbyterian Church, Main Street, Loughbrickland, BANBRIDGE, Co Down, BT32 3YB	Record Only	Church
HB17/03/021	18 Main Street, Scarva, Craigavon, Co Down, BT63 6LS	Record Only	Shop - Terrace
HB17/03/025	26/28 Main St, Scarva, Craigavon, Co Down, BT63 6LS	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/03/026	30 Main St, Scarva, Craigavon, Co Down, BT63 6LS	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/03/029 A	34 Main St, Scarva, Craigavon, Co Down, BT63 6LS	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/03/030	38A & 38B Main St, Scarva, Craigavon, County Down, BT63 6LS	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/03/031	40 Main St, Scarva, Craigavon, Co Down, BT63 6LS	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/03/034	46 Main Street, Scarva, Co Down, BT63 6LT	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/03/035	48 Main Street, Scarva, Co Down, BT63 6LS	Record Only	Shop - Terrace
HB17/04/010 E	8 Church Street, Banbridge, Co. Down, BT32 4AA	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/04/010 F	9 Church Street, Banbridge, County Down, BT32 4AA	Record Only	Office -Terrace
HB17/04/017	Millmount, Lurgan Road, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 4LU	Record Only	Residential Home

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 2	Current Use
HB17/04/020 A	91 Lurgan Road, Seapatrick, Banbridge, Co. Down, BT32 4NE	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/04/020 B	93 Lurgan Road, Seapatrick, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 4NE	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB Ref No	Address	Survey 2	Current Use
HB17/04/020 C	95 Lurgan Road, Seapatrick, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 4NE	Record Only	House - Terrace
HB17/04/020 D	97 Lurgan Road, Seapatrick, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 4NE	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/04/020 E	Millcourt Antiques, 99 Lurgan Road, Seapatrick, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 4NE	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB17/05/001	Leaburn House, Dunbar Road, Drumnagally, Banbridge, County Down, BT32 3UR	Record Only	House
HB17/05/006	McClelland Fountain, Banbridge District Council, Civic Building, Downshire Road, Banbridge, County Down, BT32 3JY	Record Only	Memorial
HB17/06/012 B	Gates and Railings, Presbyterian Church, Scarva Street, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 3AD	Record Only	Gates/ Screens/ Lodges
HB17/06/014 A	89 Newry Street, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 3EF	Record Only	Shop - Terrace
HB Ref No	Address	Survey 2	Current Use
HB17/06/014 B	91 Newry Street, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 3EF	Record Only	Shop - Terrace
HB17/06/014 C	93 Newry Street, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 3EF	Record Only	Shop - Terrace
HB19/08/008	Union Locks, Blaris Road, Lisburn, Co Antrim	Record Only	Canal Structure

Buildings Delisted in 2014

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 2	Current Use
HB03/02/005	97 Main Street, Garvagh, Co. Londonderry, BT51 5AB	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB03/02/006	95 Main Street, Garvagh, Co. Londonderry, BT51 5AB	Record Only	Recreational Club
HB03/02/007	93 Main Street, Garvagh, Co. Londonderry, BT51 5AB	Record Only	House
HB03/02/011	Second Presbyterian Church, Main Street, Garvagh, Co Londonderry, BT51 5AD	Record Only	Church
HB14/07/021	180/182 Lurgan Road, Magheralin, Moira, Co Down, BT67 0QS	Record Only	Demolished
HB17/04/021	St Patricks Church, Lurgan Road, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 4LY	Record Only	Church
HB17/07/008	The Coach Inn, 15-19 Church Square, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 4AP	Record Only	Public House
HB17/07/015	1 Church Square, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 4AS	Record Only	Office
HB Ref No	Address	Survey 2	Current Use
HB17/07/018	51 Bridge Street, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 3JL	Record Only	Shop - Terrace
HB17/07/020	37-39 Bridge Street, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 3JL	Record Only	Shop - Terrace
HB17/15/048	Sundial, Skeagh House, 15 Banbridge Road, Dromore, County Down, BT25 1NB	Record Only	Sundial
HB19/06/004	Tower of the former, Annahilt Church of Ireland, Church of the Ascension, Church of Ireland, Glebe Road, Annahilt, Lisburn, Co. Down, BT26 6NE	Record Only	Church
HB26/30/076	Kinghan Presbyterian Church for the Deaf, 13 Botanic Avenue, Belfast, County Antrim, BT7 1JG	Record Only	Church

Buildings Delisted 2015

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 2	Current Use
HB01/04/005	94 Victoria Road, Rosnagalliagh, New Buildings, Londonderry, Co. Londonderry, BT47 2RN	Record Only	House
HB03/01/020	12 Hill Head Road, Kilrea, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT51 5XS	Record Only	House
HB03/02/028	Lisnascreeghog School, Lisnascreeghog Road, Garvagh, Co. Londonderry, BT51 5DL	Record Only	Demolished
HB03/04/001	Ringsend Presbyterian, Church, Aghadowey, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT51	Record Only	Church
HB03/07/013	Gatescreen, Little Agherton, 20 Agherton Road, Portstewart, Co. Londonderry, BT55 7PH	Record Only	Gates/ Screens
HB03/08/005	Rock Castle, Berne Road, Portstewart, Co. Londonderry, BT55 7PB	Record Only	Demolished
HB03/12/038	39 Ballywoolen Road, Castlerock, Coleraine, Co Londonderry, BT51 4XF	Record Only	House
HB03/13/006	69 Killeague Road, Macosquin, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT51 4UB	Record Only	Demolished
HB03/13/009	Second Dunboe, Presbyterian Church, 236 Windy Hill Road, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT51 4JN	Record Only	Church
HB03/14/002	Red House, Castleroe Road, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT51 5RL	Record Only	Demolished
HB03/14/004	Chapelfield House, 59 Laurel Hill Road, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT51 3AY	Record Only	Rectories/Manses
HB03/17/001 A	1 Kingsgate Street, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT52 1LB	Record Only	Shop - Terrace
HB03/17/001 B	3 Kingsgate Street, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT52 1LB	Record Only	Shop
HB03/17/001 C	5 Kingsgate Street, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT52 1LB	Record Only	Shop
HB03/17/001 D	7 Kingsgate Street, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT52 1LB	Record Only	Shop - Terrace
HB03/17/001 E	9 Kingsgate Street, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT52 1LB	Record Only	Shop - Terrace
HB Ref No	Address	Survey 2	Current Use
HB03/17/001 F	11 Kingsgate Street, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT52 1LB	Record Only	Shop
HB03/17/019 A	4-6 Lime Market Street, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT52 1HD	Record Only	Public House
HB03/17/019 B	8 Lime Market Street, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, BT52 1HD	Record Only	House
HB20/08/055	Rampart and Bastion, Castle Street/Market Square, Antrim, Co Antrim	Record Only	Walling
HB26/36/001 A	276 Tennent Street, Edenderry Gardens, Belfast, BT13 3GG	Record Only	House
HB26/36/001 B	278 Tennent Street, Edenderry Gardens, Belfast, Co Antrim, BT13 3GG	Record Only	House
HB26/36/001 C	280 Tennent Street, Edenderry Gardens, Belfast, Co Antrim, BT13 3GG	Record Only	House
HB26/36/001 D	282 Tennent Street, Edenderry Gardens, Belfast, Co Antrim, BT13 3GG	Record Only	House
HB26/36/001 E	284 Tennent Street, Edenderry Gardens, Belfast, Co Antrim, BT13 3GG	Record Only	House
HB26/36/001 F	286 Tennent Street, Belfast, Co Antrim, BT13 3GG	Record Only	House
HB26/36/001 G	288 Tennent Street, Belfast, Co Antrim, BT13 3GG	Record Only	House
HB26/36/001 H	290 Tennent Street, Belfast, Co Antrim, BT13 3GG	Record Only	House
HB26/36/001 I	292 Tennent Street, Belfast, Co Antrim, BT13 3GG	Record Only	House

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 2	Current Use
HB26/36/001 J	294 Tennent Street, Belfast, Co Antrim, BT13 3GG	Record Only	House
HB26/50/181	58-66 Royal Avenue, Belfast, County Antrim, BT1 1DJ	Record Only	Shop
HB26/50/185	81-87 Royal Avenue, Belfast, County Antrim, BT1 1FE	Record Only	Shop
HB26/50/190	Imperial House, 4-10 Donegall Square East, Belfast, County Antrim, BT1 5HD	Record Only	Office
HB26/50/197	Fountain House, 17-21 Donegall Place, Belfast, County Antrim, BT1 5AB	Record Only	Shop
HB26/50/198	Donegall Chambers, 11-15 Donegall Place, Belfast, County Antrim, BT1 5AB	Record Only	Office

Buildings Delisted 01/01/2016 - 28/10/2016

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 2	Current Use
HB01/09/006 P	22 Bond's Hill, Londonderry, Co. Londonderry, BT47 6DW	Record Only	House-Terrace
HB01/09/006 Q	23 Bond's Hill, Londonderry, Co. Londonderry, BT47 6DW	Record Only	House- Terrace
HB01/09/006 R	24 Bond's Hill, Londonderry, Co. Londonderry, BT47 6DW	Record Only	House -Terrace
HB01/23/001 B	55 & 55A, Rosemount Avenue, Londonderry, Co.Londonderry, BT48 0HL	Record Only	House
HB01/23/001 D	57, Rosemount Avenue, Londonderry, Co.Londonderry, BT48 0HL	Record Only	House
HB01/23/001 E	59, Rosemount Avenue, Londonderry, Co.Londonderry, BT48 0HL	Record Only	House
HB01/23/001 F	61, Rosemount Avenue, Londonderry, Co.Londonderry, BT48 0HL	Record Only	House
HB01/23/001 G	63, Rosemount Avenue, Londonderry, Co.Londonderry, BT48 0HL	Record Only	House
HB Ref No	Address	Survey 2	Current Use
HB17/08/026	71 Ballynafoy Road, Ballynaskeagh, Banbridge, Co Down, BT32 58A	Record Only	House
HB17/11/005	Carnew Cottage, 107 Katesbridge Road, Dromara, Co Down, BT32 5HA	Record Only	House
HB19/16/009	Crimean Gun, Castle Gardens, Castle Street, Lisburn, Co. Antrim	Record Only	Memorial
HB21/02/003	Doagh, Methodist Church, The Entry, Doagh, Ballyclare, Co Antrim, BT39 0QW	Record Only	Church
HB23/15/024	Ava Cottage, 535 Belfast Road, Ballygilbert, Bangor, Co Down, BT19 1UJ	Record Only	House

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities to outline the work he has undertaken with the Minister of Health and others to introduce an alcohol harm reduction strategy.

(AQW 6335/16-21)

Mr Givan: My Department works very closely with the Department of Health, and other key stakeholders, on the implementation of the Executive's New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs (NSD). The NSD has a specific aim to prevent and reduce the harm related to all substance misuse, including alcohol, and has a clear harm reduction focus. The Department of Health is the lead Department and an official from my Department is a member of the Steering Group and Alcohol Advisory Group. Officials from the two Departments also work together developing policies to reduce alcohol related harm and to ensure that appropriate controls are in place to manage the sale and supply of alcohol, for example options for minimum unit pricing.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities for a copy of his departmental bid for additional allocations as stated in page 3 of the 2016-17 October Monitoring Round Statement made to the NI Assembly by the Minister of Finance on 25 October 2016. (AQW 6336/16-21)

Mr Givan: In his statement to the Assembly on 25 October, the Minister of Finance drew attention to a new approach taken by the Executive in relation to the monitoring round process which is consistent with arrangements already in place in Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland.

My Department continues to manage its in-year financial position within the resources that have been allocated to us.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment of expected costs of bringing polluted brownfields land, currently owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, in each local Government District up to minimum standards for housing development.

(AQW 6400/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that it does not retain a database of polluted brownfield land and is unable to provide the information requested.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment of whether regulatory changes to ensure housing associations can be reclassified back to private bodies will require dilution of tenant engagement standards within the regulatory framework.

(AQW 6401/16-21)

Mr Givan: The regulatory changes required to ensure that housing associations can be classified to the private sector will focus on technical issues and will not lead to a dilution of the tenant engagement standards in the regulatory framework.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities to detail how much Financial Transactions Capital has been allocated to housing Co-Ownership projects in each of the past five years.

(AQW 6402/16-21)

Mr Givan: My Department has allocated a total of £112.5 million in Financial Transactions Capital (FTC) loan funding to the Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association (NICHA) and its subsidiary OwnCo Homes over the past five years.

Financial Year	2012/13 (£)	2013/14 (£)	2014/15 (£)	2015/16 (£)	2016/17 (£)	Total (£)
NICHA FTC			25m	69.498m	5.502m	100m
OwnCo Homes FTC	5m		7.5m			12.5m
Total FTC	5m		32.5m	69.498m	5.502m	112.5m

This is broken down as follows:

£100 million in FTC to Co-Ownership to provide 2,800 homes between 2015/16 and 18/19 financial years; and

£12.5 million in FTC to OwnCo Homes (a subsidiary of Co – Ownership) to provide approximately 90 affordable homes through the Rent to Own scheme pilot.

Mrs Long asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 5767/16-21, to outline how his Department intends to make provision to increase the welfare supplementary payments for affected families, and specifically whether this requires amendment of The Welfare Supplementary Payments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016.

(AQW 6418/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Welfare Supplementary Payment (Benefit Cap) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 come into operation on 7th November 2016 and amend the Welfare Supplementary Payments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016. Regulation 4A(2) provides for welfare supplementary payments to be increased for families affected by the reduction in the benefit cap from 7th November 2016, which is the date the new lower benefit cap is being introduced. The link to these regulations is provided below.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2016/389/contents/made>

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Communities whether the ongoing review of the role and regulation of the private rental sector is considering greater protection for landlords from bad tenants; and to outline the measures currently being considered.

(AQW 6419/16-21)

Mr Givan: The ongoing review of the Role and Regulation of the Private Rented Sector acknowledges the need for a balanced approach.

Measures to address poor behaviour by landlords and tenants are being considered. Proposals for change resulting from the review will be published for consultation in the coming months.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Communities to outline how many Housing Executive houses are heated with wood pellet burners, broken down by NIHE district.

(AQW 6439/16-21)

Mr Givan: The table below shows the number of Housing Executive houses that are heated by wood pellet burners, by NIHE district.

District	Number of wood pellet boilers
Ballycastle	16
Banbridge	14
Downpatrick	4
Dungannon	2
Fermanagh	15
Londonderry	1
Newry	1
Total	53

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Communities to outline the supply chain of wood pellets for Housing Executive houses heated by wood pellet burners.

(AQW 6440/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised me that there is a network of local suppliers of wood pellets across Northern Ireland. The Housing Executive funds an energy advice service, through Bryson Energy, which is available to all tenants and which can give advice on supply chain matters.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Communities to detail the volume of wood pellets necessary, on average, to heat a Housing Executive house heated by a wood pellet burner, for four hours.

(AQW 6441/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has estimated that the average property uses approximately three tonnes of pellets per annum which represent 8-9 Kg per day.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Communities to detail an approximate cost per kilogram of wood pellets that meet the specification for burning in wood pellet burners that have been installed in Housing Executive properties.

(AQW 6442/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that the cost per kilogram depends on the current market price for wood pellets. It is not possible to give a figure as prices vary from supplier to supplier and can be dependent on the quantity ordered.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Communities to detail the cost of (i) maintenance; (ii) repair; and (iii) upkeep of wood pellet burners that have been installed in Housing Executive properties, for each of the last five years.

(AQW 6443/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive advised that it has a service and maintenance contract in place for its heating systems in which it pays a one-off fee of £23,100 per annum to cover the cost of maintenance, repair and upkeep of all Housing Executive wood pellet boilers. Over a 5 year period this amounts to £115,500.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister for Communities to outline the engagement he had with the Minister of Finance in relation to the October Monitoring Round, prior to his statement to the Assembly on Tuesday 25 October.

(AQW 6444/16-21)

Mr Givan: In his statement to the Assembly on 25 October, the Minister of Finance drew attention to a new approach taken by the Executive in relation to the monitoring round process which is consistent with arrangements already in place in Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland.

There is now ongoing engagement between officials in my department (and others) and officials in the Department of Finance on the key budgetary challenges we face. This engagement then informs subsequent Executive consideration of the wider public expenditure environment and enables it to focus on addressing only the most significant budget issues.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to outline how many of the 33,000 homes in severe fuel poverty will be removed from this position by April 2017.

(AQW 6445/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Affordable Warmth Scheme targets areas where severe fuel poverty is likely to be most prevalent and delivers measures to improve the energy efficiency of low income households. In 2016/17 an estimated 3,800 homes will benefit from the Affordable Warmth Scheme which includes providing loft and cavity wall insulation as well as new heating systems and replacement windows.

Fuel poverty is caused by a combination of three factors: household income; fuel prices; and energy efficiency of the home. The level of fuel poverty is measured in the Northern Ireland House Condition Survey and the next report is due in 2017.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to outline the (i) breakdown of the £11.5m Affordable Warmth spend by (a) priority and (b) category; and (ii) budget for this year.

(AQW 6448/16-21)

Mr Givan: NI Housing Executive have provided a breakdown of the Affordable Warmth Scheme spend for 2015/2016 by priority of measure and category as set out in the table below.

Priority	Category	Amount
1	Cavity Wall Insulation	263,155
1	Draught proofing	10,064
1	Loft Insulation	1,011,819
2	Heating	6,630,510
3	Windows	3,314,227
4	Solid Wall Insulation	153,756
	Building Control Fees	172,319
	Total	11,555,850

The Affordable Warmth Scheme budget for 2016/17 is currently £18 million.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) how many contractors complained of slow payment under the Affordable Warmth Scheme; (ii) the average payment times; and (iii) the timesframes of current outstanding claims.

(AQW 6449/16-21)

Mr Givan: I have been informed by NI Housing Executive that they are aware of seven contractors who have complained of slow payments under the Affordable Warmth Scheme. In most of these cases the delays were due to lack of provision of a Building Control Certificate of Completion.

NI Housing Executive have stated that payments are being processed within two weeks of submission where all relevant certificates are available, including a Building Control Certificate of Completion where applicable.

Contractors should contact local Housing Executive grants offices directly and provide details of specific cases where they are experiencing delays in payments. Housing Executive grants office staff are committed to investigating any delays, however it is essential that contractors ensure that all relevant paperwork is fully completed and submitted to ensure prompt payment.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) how many disabled adaptations have been completed by the NIHE in 2016; and (ii) the target turnaround time for such projects from request to completion.

(AQW 6450/16-21)

Mr Givan:

(i) The Housing Executive reports that in 2016 it has completed:

- Minor Adaptations 4301
(Some of these will not require an O/T referral)
- Major Adaptations 87

(ii) The Housing Executive target turnaround times from request to completion are currently:

- Minor Adaptations (urgent) 10 weeks
- Minor Adaptations (non-urgent) 40 weeks
- Major Adaptations 52 weeks

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) why there is no Code of Conduct in place in respect of staff of the Charity Commission; (ii) when does he plan to put a Code in place; and (iii) why basic failures in governance were ignored by the Regulator of charities.

(AQW 6477/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) While the Charity Commission NI (CCNI) does not yet have a stand-alone Code of Conduct, as a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) operating under a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM) between the Department and the Commission, the principles of Annex 5A 'Model Code for Staff of Executive NDPBs of Public Bodies' within 'A Guide for NI Departments' currently apply to CCNI staff. Staff conduct is currently covered by a number of policies within the Commission's Handbook.
- (ii) A CCNI stand-alone Code of Conduct will be brought to the CCNI Board for approval in November 2016.
- (iii) No governance failures have been ignored.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister for Communities whether it is a requirement for all non profit groups that invite donations or public fund grants to carry out their function, to register with the Charity Commission NI.

(AQW 6571/16-21)

Mr Givan: The requirements for registration are set out in the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. An organisation must apply for registration as a charity with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland if:

- it has exclusively charitable purposes;
- it is governed by the law of Northern Ireland; and
- it is an institution, that is, it is an organisation that is an independent body, the hallmarks of which include having control and direction over its governance and resources.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities in relation to the Volunteering Small Grants Programme, to detail (i) the date the letters of offer will be released; and (ii) when the actual funding will be released.

(AQW 6727/16-21)

Mr Givan: 727 letters of offer were issued to successful applicants on 07/11/16. Successful applicants can claim Funding upon submission of evidence of expenditure undertaken from 07/11/16 to 31/03/17.

Department of Education

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education how many school aged mothers are currently receiving financial support from the School Aged Mothers Programme for childcare fees.

(AQW 3777/16-21)

Mr Weir (The Minister of Education): Since April 2011 there have been 324 applications for childcare fees support to School Age Mothers. None of these applications were rejected and 39 School Age Mothers are currently receiving support with childcare fees.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) how many applications for childcare fee support from the School Aged Mothers Programme since April 2011 have been rejected; and (ii) to outline the reasons why rejections were made.

(AQW 3778/16-21)

Mr Weir: Since April 2011 there have been 324 applications for childcare fees support to School Age Mothers. None of these applications were rejected and 39 School Age Mothers are currently receiving support with childcare fees.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Education to outline the evidence his Department has linking school size to performance.

(AQW 5613/16-21)

Mr Weir: School performance is a complex matter that encompasses a range of factors that contribute to the educational experience of learners.

As I said in my 17 October statement on Area Planning, the educational experience of our children and young people is greatly enhanced when they attend schools that are educationally and financially viable. The Sustainable Schools Policy clearly sets out six criteria with supporting indicators, including minimum enrolment thresholds, which illustrate what a sustainable educational experience should look like: schools must deliver a quality educational experience, a broad and balanced curriculum, offer extensive extra-curricular activities, have high quality pastoral care systems, live within budget and have the confidence of the communities they serve. Larger schools by virtue of having more pupils are better resourced than smaller schools and are, therefore, better able to provide for a fuller educational experience for their children and young people.

In primary schools pupils should be in a class with no more than two year groups but ideally they should be in single year group classes. They should be able to interact with peer groups and have the best chances to prepare for successful transition to post primary school.

Inspection evidence shows that within a composite class of two year groups, it is possible for all children to be catered for effectively and make good progress. However, there are additional factors that need to be considered when the composite class spans more than two year groups. Under these circumstances ensuring adequate progression in learning and planning to meet the individual needs of children across a wider ability range and stage of development can be more challenging for the teacher. There are also issues relating to opportunities for the children to develop socially and emotionally with children of a similar age, gender and stage of development.

In post-primary schools the curriculum should provide a wide range of pathways to meet the needs and interests of all pupils. Pupils should have the best chance to succeed and attain to prepare themselves for life as an adult and contribute to our community. We know that smaller schools can struggle to provide access to a broad and balanced curriculum, particularly when it comes to the Entitlement Framework (EF). Internal analysis of EF compliance rates in 2015 indicated a correlation between enrolments below the Sustainable Schools Policy thresholds and schools failing to comply with the EF.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the guidelines by which school crossing patrols operate; and (ii) when these guidelines were established.
(AQW 5950/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has advised that it operates its School Crossing Patrol service in accordance with Road Safety GB School Crossing Patrol Guidelines, revised 2012.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education how his Department plans to ensure that the make up of school inspection panels to evaluate Irish-medium schools will include inspectors with Irish language fluency.
(AQW 5953/16-21)

Mr Weir: The overriding imperative for all schools is to provide high quality education. As such ETI makes evaluations of all schools using the same criteria.

The ETI's approach is to have teams with a range of expertise, specialisms and Irish language fluency, placing the child at the heart of the educational process.

There are 28 Irish Medium Education (IME) primary schools (and 7 IME units). Currently, all members of the inspection team for IME primary schools are fluent in Irish and have experience evaluating Irish immersion education.

There are two stand alone IME post-primary schools with 605 and 48 pupils respectively (and 3 IME units). To inspect the larger IME post-primary school ETI worked in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Inspectorate in the Republic of Ireland to increase the number of fluent Irish speaking inspectors on the team. The ETI has a long standing and productive working relationship with DES and has training and quality assurance measures in place.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of whether his Department is constrained by its School Building Handbook in terms of future-proofing the design of some schools which will be built in the Strule Shared Education Campus in Omagh; and whether his Department plans to allow some revision and amendment of the design of the planned Sacred Heart College new-build to accommodate and reflect the future requirements of a large non-selective, co-educational school and its associated curricular provision.
(AQW 5954/16-21)

Mr Weir: Development and design of all of the new post primary schools to be built at the Strule Shared Education Campus is based upon guidance provided in the Department's School Building Handbook and agreed Schedules of Accommodation.

Provided that the general principles of the Handbook are observed, some variation within reasonable limits may be considered with technical advice and support from Education Advisory Branch and the Education Training Inspectorate. The accommodation in each of the core schools will be supplemented and complemented by the development of the shared facilities on the campus.

Throughout the design development process, which is nearing its conclusion, the Department has facilitated extensive engagement between the Integrated Consultant Team and stakeholders from all of the schools, including the Board of Governors, Principal and teaching staff from Sacred Heart College. These consultations ensure all aspects of the proposed accommodation are carefully considered with regard to the current curriculum, specific school requirements and anticipated future need.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) how many candidates were considered for the post of Ministerial Special Adviser; (ii) what account was taken of any potential imbalance in religious background or gender in the pool from which he selected his Special Adviser; (iii) how wide was the trawl for candidates and how did he ensure that it was 'broadly based' as required by the Code of Practice on the Appointment of Special Advisers; and (iv) to publish the job description and person specification drawn up before the Special Adviser was appointed.
(AQW 5955/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Special Adviser was appointed in compliance with the Code Governing the Appointment of Special Advisers.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister of Education whether he plans to develop procedures and protocols for inspecting Irish medium schools that reflect the pedagogy of modern full immersion Irish language education.

(AQW 5990/16-21)

Mr Weir: Procedures and protocols are already in place for the inspection of Irish medium schools. The overriding imperative for all schools is to provide high quality education. As such ETI makes evaluations of all schools using the same criteria.

The ETI's approach is to have teams with a range of expertise, specialisms and Irish language fluency, placing the child at the heart of the educational process.

There are 28 Irish Medium Education (IME) primary schools (and 7 IME units). Currently, all members of the inspection team for IME primary schools are fluent in Irish and have experience evaluating Irish immersion education.

There are two stand alone IME post-primary schools with 605 and 48 pupils respectively (and 3 IME units). To inspect the larger IME post-primary school ETI worked in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Inspectorate in the Republic of Ireland to increase the number of fluent Irish speaking inspectors on the team. The ETI has a long standing and productive working relationship with DES and has training and quality assurance measures in place.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education whether he plans to introduce further retirement packages for teachers over 55 years of age.

(AQW 5994/16-21)

Mr Weir: There are no plans to introduce further retirement packages for teachers over 55 years of age.

The Investing in the Teaching Workforce Scheme has been introduced as a pilot Scheme for 2016/17; on conclusion the Scheme will be evaluated for further consideration.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 40818/11-15, for an update on all patrols (i) established; (ii) withdrawn; and (iii) reinstated in (a) 2015; and (b) in 2016 to date.

(AQW 6023/16-21)

Mr Weir: Since its formation on 1 April 2015, the Education Authority (EA) has operated as a single organisation and no longer reports on a regional basis. The EA has advised that the number of school crossing patrols that have been (i) established; (ii) withdrawn and (iii) reinstated in (a) 2015 and (b) 2016 to date is as follows:

	Established	Withdrawn	Reinstated
2015	3	10	6
2016	3	6	4

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Education to detail the provision of education of HIV in post-primary schools.

(AQW 6029/16-21)

Mr Weir: Matters relating to sexual health are covered under Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in the Northern Ireland curriculum.

The Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order (NI) 2007 specifies the minimum content for each area of learning of the curriculum at each key stage. Teachers have considerable flexibility to select from within those areas the aspects they consider appropriate to the ability and interests of their pupils. At post-primary level, RSE is covered within the 'Learning for Life and Work' area of learning.

In August 2015, schools were issued with revised guidance on RSE which highlighted the need for pupils to be provided with information about sexually transmitted infections and the prevention of HIV/AIDs.

Mr M Bradley asked the Minister of Education to detail how many (i) primary schools; and (ii) secondary schools in East Londonderry do not have a school crossing patrol.

(AQW 6040/16-21)

Mr Weir: The number of primary and post-primary schools that do not have a school crossing patrol in East Londonderry is as follows –

- (i) Primary Schools - 26
- (ii) Post-Primary Schools - 8

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister of Education to detail the most recent inspection results for all schools in Mid Ulster.

(AQW 6062/16-21)

Mr Weir: The requested data are shown in the table below:

DE Ref No	Name of School	Sector	Inspection Grade (Overall Effectiveness Conclusion)
3116177	Magherafelt Nursery School	Nursery	Outstanding
5116237	Cookstown Nursery School	Nursery	High level of capacity
5136627	Little Flower Nursery School	Nursery	Outstanding
3012233	Tobermore Primary School	Primary	Good
3012234	Ampertaine Primary School	Primary	Good
3012267	Magherafelt Controlled Primary School	Primary	Good
3012282	Culnady Primary School	Primary	Good
3012290	Bellaghy Primary School	Primary	Very good
3012291	Maghera Primary School	Primary	High level of capacity
3013703	Kilross Primary School	Primary	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
3013704	Castledawson Primary School	Primary	High level of capacity
3016283	Knockloughrim Primary School	Primary	Very good
3032018	St Brigid's Primary School, Tirkane	Primary	Good
3032109	New Row Primary School	Primary	Very good
3032185	St Trea's Primary School	Primary	High level of capacity
3032197	Knocknagin Primary School	Primary	Very good
3032205	St Columb's Primary School, Magherafelt	Primary	Good
3032218	Crossroads Primary School	Primary	Significant areas for improvement
3032246	St John Bosco Primary School, Ballynease	Primary	Outstanding
3032257	Anahorish Primary School	Primary	Very good
3032268	St Columba's Primary School, Straw	Primary	*
3032271	St Eoghan's Primary School	Primary	Very good
3032273	St Mary's Primary School, Draperstown	Primary	Good
3032274	St John's Primary School, Swatragh	Primary	Very good
3032275	Greenlough Primary School (St Mary's)	Primary	Good
3032281	St Mary's Primary School, Bellaghy	Primary	Very good
3036039	St Mary's Primary School, Glenview	Primary	Very good
3036103	St Brigid's Primary School, Knockloughrim	Primary	High level of capacity
3036292	St Patrick's Primary School, Glen	Primary	Very good
3036562	Holy Family Primary School, Magherafelt	Primary	Very good
3042162	Desertmartin Primary School	Primary	Good
3046678	Gaelscoil na Spéiríní	Primary	Good
3046691	Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí	Primary	Good
3066613	Spires Integrated Primary School	Primary	Good
5012280	Moneymore Primary School	Primary	Outstanding
5012615	Ballytrea Primary School	Primary	Good
5012632	Donaghmore Primary School	Primary	High level of capacity
5012643	Stewartstown Primary School	Primary	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement

DE Ref No	Name of School	Sector	Inspection Grade (Overall Effectiveness Conclusion)
5012649	Coagh Primary School	Primary	Very good
5012719	Newmills Primary School	Primary	Very good
5012726	Cookstown Primary School	Primary	Very good
5013702	Woods Primary School	Primary	Very good
5016141	Churchtown Primary School	Primary	Very good
5016200	Queen Elizabeth II Primary School, Pomeroy	Primary	Outstanding
5016221	Orritor Primary School	Primary	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
5016224	Donaghey Primary School	Primary	Very good
5016391	Bush Primary School	Primary	Very good
5032208	Ballylifford Primary School	Primary	*
5032262	Lissan Primary School	Primary	Good
5032585	Edendork Primary School	Primary	Outstanding
5032592	St Mary's Primary School, Lisbuoy	Primary	Very good
5032678	St Patrick's Primary School, Donaghmore	Primary	Very good
5032692	St Mary's Primary School, Stewartstown	Primary	Very good
5032698	St Brigid's Primary School, Mountjoy	Primary	Very good
5032699	St Mary's Primary School, Dunamore	Primary	High level of capacity
5032703	St Peters' Primary School, Moortown	Primary	Good
5032713	Derrychrin Primary School	Primary	*
5032714	Aughamullan Primary	Primary	Very good
5032717	St Patrick's Primary School, Mullinahoe	Primary	Good
5032729	St John's Primary School, Kingisland	Primary	Outstanding
5036031	St Patrick's Primary School, Loup	Primary	Outstanding
5036033	St Joseph's Primary School, Galbally	Primary	Very good
5036047	St Patrick's Primary School, Annaghmore	Primary	Very good
5036057	St Malachy's Primary School, Drumullan	Primary	Good
5036108	St Joseph's Primary School, Killeenan	Primary	Good
5036118	St Mary's Primary School, Pomeroy	Primary	Good
5036120	St Patrick's Primary School, Moneymore	Primary	High level of capacity
5036136	Sacred Heart Primary School, Rock	Primary	High level of capacity
5036567	Holy Trinity Primary School, Cookstown	Primary	Outstanding
5036590	Primate Dixon Primary School	Primary	Outstanding
5046637	Gaelscoil Uí Neill	Primary	Important area(s) for improvement
5046699	Gaelscoil Eoghain	Primary	Good
5066657	Phoenix Integrated Primary School	Primary	Good
3210035	Magherafelt High School	Post-Primary	Good
3230132	St Colm's High School, Draperstown	Post-Primary	Very good

DE Ref No	Name of School	Sector	Inspection Grade (Overall Effectiveness Conclusion)
3230142	St Mary's College, Portglenone	Post-Primary	Good
3230168	St Pius X College	Post-Primary	Very good
3230234	St Patrick's College Maghera	Post-Primary	High level of capacity
3260303	Sperrin Integrated College	Post-Primary	Good
3420058	Rainey Endowed School	Post-Primary	Very good
3420080	St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt	Post-Primary	Outstanding
5210230	Cookstown High School	Post-Primary	Very good
5230192	St Joseph's College, Coalisland	Post-Primary	Good
5230278	Holy Trinity College	Post-Primary	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
5420073	St Joseph's Convent Grammar School, Donaghmore	Post-Primary	Very good
IS89	Focus Independent School	Independent	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
3316570	Kilronan Special School	Special	Very good

Notes:

New overall effectiveness conclusions were introduced in September 2015:

- The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.
- The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.
- The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners.
- The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interests of all the learners.

* No overall effectiveness conclusion is currently available. Schools were inspected in September/October 2016 and reports have not yet been published.

Mr Logan asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of vacant places in the Irish-medium education sector. (AQW 6064/16-21)

Mr Weir: For the 2015/16 school year there were 895 available places at Irish-medium primary schools and 39 available places at Irish-medium post-primary schools.

These figures relate to Irish-medium schools only. There are an additional 10 English-medium schools (seven primary and three post-primary) that contain an Irish-medium Unit (IMU), however it is not possible to quantify available places within these units. Schools with IMUs are classed under law as one school with one approved admissions number and one approved enrolment number – there are no separate numbers set for the IMU. As a result it is not possible to identify available places for the IMU separately to that for the overall school.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education what processes are in place to ensure the speedy release of a Freedom of Information request in circumstances where the absence of clearance from either he or his Special Adviser has taken the request beyond the statutory deadline for response. (AQW 6077/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Department makes every effort to clear FOI requests within the statutory deadlines.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education what discussions he had with teaching unions prior to launching the Investing in the Teaching Workforce Scheme. (AQW 6119/16-21)

Mr Weir: The concept of an Investing in the Teaching Workforce Scheme was first proposed in 2012 by the Northern Ireland Teaching Council (NITC), which is comprised of the five recognised teaching unions in Northern Ireland.

The NITC is represented on the Investing in the Teaching Workforce Scheme Project Board and has been fully engaged in defining the criteria for the Scheme and in the development of the process prior to launch on 5 September 2016.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the negative reaction to the Investing in the Teaching Workforce scheme; and (ii) whether he has sought any legal advice on the scheme.

(AQW 6120/16-21)

Mr Weir: I am aware that teachers who are outside the criteria to apply for the Investing in the Teaching Workforce Scheme have expressed disappointment; however, I must stress that without this Scheme these additional employment opportunities would not exist.

Consideration was given to the concerns raised in relation to the Scheme and further options were explored. On that basis, it was decided that the criteria would be extended to include those graduates who have qualified in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Legal advice was sought and this informed decisions in relation to the criteria for the Scheme.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Education to detail each budgetary pressure in his Department and its arm's-length bodies; and which of these pressures were raised with officials from the Department of Finance in advance of the October monitoring round.

(AQW 6146/16-21)

Mr Weir: Any pressures raised with the Department of Finance are for the purpose of informing the Executive's deliberations in reaching an agreed Monitoring round outcome and as such this information is not disclosed.

I can however, provide details of the outcome of October monitoring. As outlined by the Finance Minister on 25 October 2016, my Department received the following allocations:

- £1.0m Resource for Other Educational pressures;
- £2.3m Resource for the Shared Education Signature Project;
- £5.1m Capital for Minor Works; and
- £7.9m Capital for Furniture and Equipment.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Education to detail how many instances were recorded of pupils reporting to staff that they had been bullied online, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 6177/16-21)

Mr Weir: Schools are not currently required to record bullying incidences (including online bullying) in school and the only figures available to the Department are for cases where bullying has been cited as the reason for a pupil being suspended or expelled. These figures are published annually by the Department and can be accessed via the following web-page:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/pupil-suspensions-and-expulsions>

The 'Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016' was granted Royal Assent on 12 May 2016. One of the specific issues this legislation is intended to address is to introduce a requirement for all schools to centrally record incidents of bullying, their motivation and their outcome. This will allow us, going forward, to quantify the true scale of the problem and any emerging trends which may require further specific interventions.

The legislation will also recognise cyber-bullying as one of the possible forms bullying can take. It was identified during the public consultation on this Bill that, disputes between pupils can begin with exchanges via social media before spilling over into physical or verbal bullying within the school itself. I recognise that in such complex situations it can be difficult for schools and parents to understand where they must take action and where they can expect the other party to do so.

Supporting guidance to the this legislation will specifically address online/cyber-bullying, providing greater clarity for both schools and parents on the boundaries of their respective responsibilities; and suggesting best-practice approaches for each to follow where the responsibility to act lies with them.

While the provisions of this Act are not yet in force, I intend that they will be in place for the start of 2017-18 school year.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Education to outline what measures are in place to inform school children of the dangers relating to sexting.

(AQW 6178/16-21)

Mr Weir: In September 2015, my Department issued a leaflet produced by the Safeguarding Board NI on 'Sexting and the Law' to all schools and education partners.

There is also a range of help and information available from the websites of voluntary and charity agencies such as Barnardos and NSPCC. The Safety Centre on the National Crime Agency Children Exploitation and Online Protection (NCA CEOP) site, has a section entitled 'ThinkUKnow' which contains information aimed specifically at different age groups as well as parents

and carers such as an animated short film entitled 'Nude Selfies: What Parents and Carers Need to Know'. My Department has links to all these organisations on its webpage.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister of Education for a copy of their departmental bid for additional allocations as stated in page 3 of the 2016-17 October Monitoring Round Statement made to the NI Assembly by the Minister of Finance on 25 October 2016. **(AQW 6201/16-21)**

Mr Weir: The approach now adopted by the Executive to the monitoring round process no longer requires the submission of bids by departments.

As outlined by the Finance Minister on 25 October 2016, my Department received the following allocations:

- £1.0m Resource for Other Educational pressures
- £2.3m Resource for the Shared Education Signature Project;
- £5.1m Capital for Minor Works; and
- £7.9m Capital for Furniture and Equipment.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Education what intervention is being made at (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary level to address the increase in suicide.

(AQW 6202/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Department of Education is very aware of the pressures facing young people today and works closely with schools to promote positive mental health and wellbeing of pupils and has provided a range of support. This includes:

- Suicide prevention guidance for schools was published in March 2016 which focuses on supporting schools in reducing the incidence of suicide and self-harm. Additional resources on suicide and self harm have also been developed and issued to schools in September 2016.
- A "Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools" along with a supporting DVD was published on 10 February 2014 to help schools be prepared for a critical incident and to ensure effective management and support before, during and after the event.
- The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) offers support for pupils of post primary age and provides in excess of 39,000 counselling sessions annually.
- The Revised Curriculum for primary and post-primary schools has elements designed to develop the young person as an individual and to make them aware of the stressors in their lives and help build their capacity to deal with them.
- The "iMatter" Programme includes resources intended to support the entire school community to be engaged in promoting resilient emotional health for all pupils. The resources are designed for young people in post-primary school and provide hints and tips on coping with emotional issues, including useful telephone numbers, websites and details of organisations that can provide assistance for particular problems.
- The Department of Education is a member of and funds the local Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF) which brings together local statutory and voluntary organisations to help schools and organisations working with young people to develop appropriate strategies to prevent and deal with bullying behaviours.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Education, given that no baseline funding exists for 2016-17 and since childcare funding relies on bids in the Monitoring Rounds, to outline what plans he has to ensure baseline funding for childcare in 2017-18.

(AQW 6223/16-21)

Mr Weir: Funding for childcare to date has been allocated during Monitoring Rounds from funds set aside by the Executive as part of the Budget process.

I hope to bring forward the full version of the Childcare Strategy to my Executive colleagues in the coming months, having taken account of the many consultation responses received, the Programme for Government and the new opportunities that now exist to align childcare and Early Years initiatives.

The budget for the final Childcare Strategy will be determined in the context of this process, along with the Executive's agreement of the overall 2017-18 Budget.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education to outline the body of educational research and evidence used by his Department to support or refute the case that primary schools with more than two year groups in a single class produce poor educational outcomes.

(AQW 6248/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Department is not aware of any research that suggests that educational outcomes are poorer for pupils taught in class with more than two year groups and at no point have I stated that the educational outcomes from primary schools that teach their pupils in a class of more than two year groups are poorer.

If the member is referring to my recent statement to the Assembly on Area Planning, what I did say is that there are a significant number of schools that are struggling, for a wide range of reasons, to deliver the best for their pupils. Pupils being

taught in a class of more than two year groups is just one of these reasons and I indicated my wish to see actions to address this issue.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the lines of responsibility for education planning in respect of the Irish-medium sector; and (ii) to detail the remit and role of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta in relation to the education planning process with regard to Irish-medium schools.

(AQW 6249/16-21)

Mr Weir:

- (i) Revised guidance on Area Planning has been published on my Department's website which outlines roles and responsibilities of all those involved in area planning.

Planning in the Irish-medium sector is taken forward within the context of the implementation of the Sustainable Schools Policy through Area Planning while recognising the Department's duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium education.

Grant-aided Irish-medium primary schools can have one of three management types. Most Irish-medium primary schools are 'other maintained' but there are also 'controlled' and 'Catholic maintained' Irish-medium schools. The Education Authority (EA) has overall operational responsibility for planning provision within the policy and strategic framework set by the Department and in addition responsibility for planning controlled school provision including controlled Irish-medium schools.

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) has a statutory duty to promote and co-ordinate, in consultation with the Trustees, the planning of the effective provision of Catholic maintained including Catholic Maintained Irish-medium schools.

- (ii) Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) is the representative body for Irish-medium Education set up by my Department to promote, facilitate and encourage Education.

The role of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) is to promote

Irish-medium education and to perform a wide range of roles in facilitating its development and extend the availability of Irish-medium education to parents who wish to avail of it for their children.

CnaG is represented in the Area Planning Governance arrangements at a strategic, operational and local level to provide advice on issues relating to all management types of Irish-medium schools and the future development of the sector.

The organisation may bring forward Development Proposals for new Irish-medium provision on behalf of and in their support role for parent groups and schools in the Irish-medium sector.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Education, pursuant of AQW 4978/16-21, who has responsibility of Special Educational Needs provision in education, employment and training for people with learning disabilities post-school.

(AQW 6250/16-21)

Mr Weir: It is my understanding that responsibility for special educational needs provision in education, employment and training for people with learning disabilities once they leave school would fall to two Departments.

The Department for the Economy has responsibility for Further and Higher Education, Employment and Skills Programmes, European Social Fund projects and Careers Service.

The Department for Communities has responsibility for the Disability Employment Service.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Education, pursuant of AQW 4979/16-21, whether there is a cost to schools that apply for training for staff.

(AQW 6251/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority (EA) has advised that it does not charge schools for providing autism training. This includes provision of resources, handouts, consultation and advice. Training is also provided free of charge by the Middletown Centre for Autism.

Additionally, the EA and, where appropriate, the Department will meet the cost of substitute cover where a teacher is undertaking approved training outside their school.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail his plans to reform the General Teaching Council.

(AQW 6274/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Department has worked closely with the Council to review its governance arrangements. In June 2016 the Council agreed a new Corporate Governance Framework and in September 2016 the Council reconstituted its supporting Committee structures. These arrangements have brought a renewed focus to the Council's oversight of the organisation.

A review of the General Teaching Council under the terms of its Management Statement and Financial Memorandum will commence within the next few months.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education how many pupils are enrolled at Coláiste Dhoire post-primary school, Dungiven.

(AQW 6275/16-21)

Mr Weir: Based on unverified data from the 2016/17 School Census, 48 pupils are enrolled at Coláiste Dhoire.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education (i) for his assessment of the impact of the exit from the European Union on his Department; and (ii) to outline what preparations his Department has made for the exit.

(AQW 6276/16-21)

Mr Weir:

- (i) It is too early to comment in detail on the implications for my Department. Further work will be required to quantify the potential impact as details emerge from the negotiations the UK Government will be having with the EU.
- (ii) An Interdepartmental Coordination Group has been set up under the direction of the Permanent Secretaries of the Department of Finance and the Department for the Economy. Its role is to identify the implications, oversee engagement and assist in the development of a negotiating strategy for the Executive on all UK exit issues. The Department of Education feeds into this process.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to outline what measures his Department has taken to ensure that the General Teaching Council has a viable and effective governance structure.

(AQW 6277/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Department has worked closely with the Council to review its governance arrangements. In June 2016 the Council agreed a new Corporate Governance Framework and in September 2016 the Council reconstituted its supporting Committee structures. These arrangements have brought a renewed focus to the Council's oversight of the organisation.

A review of the General Teaching Council under the terms of its Management Statement and Financial Memorandum will commence within the next few months.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Education to detail how many times the Health and Education Interface Project Board has met since the implementation of the Autism Act (NI) 2011.

(AQW 6308/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education and Health Interfaces Project Board was established in June 2016 and is expected to have its first meeting late November/early December.

The Project Board will oversee and provide strategic input and direction to a number of time-bound projects to improve the interfaces and co-operation by education (Education Authority) and health (the five Health and Social Care Trusts) within the special educational needs (SEN) framework, taking into account the new duties provided for under the Children's Services Co-operation Act 2015 and the SEN and Disability Act 2016.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Education to detail the work undertaken to date by the Health and Education Interface Project Board to improve the interfaces and co-operation in the special educational needs framework.

(AQW 6310/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education and Health Interfaces Project Board was established in June 2016 in order to consider, over time, the education and health interfaces within the special educational needs (SEN) framework.

The Board's first project, the "Notification, Referral and Statutory Assessment" Project, was also initiated at this time and is expected to be completed by April 2017. This first project will build on and complement the work commenced by an Education/Health working group in June 2015.

This working group was established to facilitate engagement between the education and health sectors to understand and address delays in the provision of Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust advice to the Education Authority (EA) within the statutory special educational needs (SEN) assessment process.

The working group met on four occasions from June 2015 to June 2016 and identified actions to be taken forward by the EA and HSC Trusts to help reduce the timeframe for the provision of medical advice.

Outputs from this work have included the development of a proposed new HSC Trust common pathway for dealing with requests for medical advice; greater sharing of EA information to assist the Trusts in their advice giving role; work to develop common documentation for medical advice; and use of electronic transfer of information.

It is anticipated that further time-bound education and health interface projects within the SEN framework will be considered by the Project Board, including Annual Review and Reassessment; and Transition Planning, and that further project teams would be established to take forward each piece of work.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education what measures his Department is taking to ensure the data used in assessing the maximum enrolment capacity for schools is accurate.

(AQW 6332/16-21)

Mr Weir: A school's approved enrolment figure is set by the Department of Education (DE) on an annual basis. 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 Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) on Sustainability of Schools to assess the capacity of every school. This is a complex project as schools have been designed and developed under different standards and many schools have different sizes of classrooms. As a first step DE has written to all primary schools seeking views on how the accommodation provision correlates with both the school's approved and actual enrolments. These returns will be analysed and DE will develop a categorisation process to enable robust assessment of physical capacity.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the location of each school crossing patrol in Upper Bann; and (ii) which schools are served by each patrol; broken down for each of the last three years.

(AQW 6341/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has advised that the location of each school crossing patrol in Upper Bann and the schools served by each patrol, in the last three years is as follows:

Academic Year 14/15

Name of School	Location	Schools Served
Abercorn PS Banbridge	(1) Old Newry Rd Banbridge (2) Commerical Rd Banbridge	Abercorn PS Abercorn PS, Banbridge HS, Bridge PS, St Marys PS Banbridge
Banbridge Academy	(1) Lurgan Rd Banbridge	BanbridgeAcademy, Edenderry PS Banbridge
Bocombra PS Portadown	(1) School Entrance Ballyhannon Rd Portadown	Bocombra PS
Bridge GMI PS	(1) School Entrance, Ballygowan Rd Banbridge	Bridge Integrated PS
Carrick PS Lurgan	(1) Sloan St, School Entrance	Carrick PS
Clounagh JHS Portadown	(1) Brownstown Rd, School Entrance	Clounagh JHS
Drumcree College Portadown	(1) Moy Rd, School Entrance (2) Dungannon Rd	Drumcree College Drumcree College, St John the Baptist PS
Edenderry PS Portadown	(1) Princess Way Portadown	Edenderry PS P'down
Killicomaine JHS, Portadown	(1) Upper Church Lane Portadown School Entrance	Killicomaine JHS
Kings Park PS Lurgan	(1) Queens St Lurgan (2) Queens St Lurgan (3) Avenue Rd Lurgan School Entrance	Kings Park PS Kings Park PS Kings Park PS
Lurgan JHS	(1) Gilford Rd/Toberhewny Rd	Lurgan JHS
Lurgan Model PS	(1) William St/ Victoria St Lurgan	Lurgan Model PS, St Francis PS, St Ronans College
Maralin Village PS	(1) Steps Rd, Magheralin School Entrance	Maralin PS
Millington PS Portadown	(1) Armagh Rd /Cecil St Portadown (2) Craigavon Ave Portadown school Entrance	Millington PS/Clounagh JHS Millington PS

Name of School	Location	Schools Served
Milltown PS Banbridge	(1) Lurgan Rd Banbridge school Entrance	Milltown PS
Portadown College	(1) Killicomaine Rd Portadown School Entrance	Portadown College
St Anthony's PS Craigavon	(1) Tullygally Rd School Entrance (2) Tullygally Rd School Entrance	St Anthony's PS
St Colman's PS Laurencetown	(1) Drumnascamph Rd School Entrance	St Colman's PS
St Francis PS Aghaderg	(1) Donard View Rd, Loughbrickland	St Francis PS / Newbridge GMI
St Francis PS Lurgan	(1) Old Portadown Rd/ Carrickvale Ave (2) Francis St Lurgan School Entrance	St Francis PS, St Ronans College St Francis PS
St John the Baptist PS P'Down	(1) Garvaghy Rd Portadown School Entrance	St John the Baptist PS
St Mary's PS Banbridge	(1) Scarva Rd Banbridge School Entrance (2) Ballygowan Rd (3) Edenderry Rd	St Marys PS Banbridge, St Patrick's College, Bridge Integrated PS Banbridge HS
St Patrick's PS Derrynaseer	(1) Aghalee Rd, Aghagallon School Entrance	St Patrick's PS
St Patrick's PS Aghacommon	(1) Derrymacash Rd School Entrance	St Patrick's PS
St Patrick's College Banbridge	(1) Scarva Rd Banbridge	St Patrick's College
Tannaghmore PS Lurgan	(1) North Circular Rd (2) Lake St School Entrance	Tannaghmore PS Tannaghmore PS
Tandragee PS	(1) Ballymore Rd School Entrance (2) A27, Portadown Rd	Tandragee PS Tandragee JHS
Waringstown PS	(1) Main St Waringstown/ Primary Walk	Waringstown PS

Academic Year 15/16

Name of School	Location	Schools Served
Abercorn PS Banbridge	(1) Old Newry Rd Banbridge (2) Commerical Rd Banbridge	Abercorn PS Abercorn PS, Banbridge HS, Bridge PS, St Marys PS Banbridge
Bocombra PS Portadown	(1) School Entrance Ballyhannon Rd Portadown	Bocombra PS
Bridge GMI PS	(1) School Entrance, Ballygowan Rd Banbridge	Bridge Integrated PS
Carrick PS Lurgan	(1) Sloan St, School Entrance	Carrick PS
Clounagh JHS Portadown	(1) Brownstown Rd, School Entrance	Clounagh JHS
Drumcree College Portadown	(1) Moy Rd, School Entrance (2) Dungannon Rd	Drumcree College Drumcree College, St John the Baptist PS
Edenderry PS Portadown	(1) Princess Way Portadown	Edenderry PS P'down
Killicomaine JHS, Portadown	(1) Upper Church Lane Portadown School Entrance	Killicomaine JHS
Kings Park PS Lurgan	(1) Queens St Lurgan (2) Avenue Rd Lurgan School Entrance	Kings Park PS Kings Park PS

Name of School	Location	Schools Served
Lurgan JHS	(1) Gilford Rd/Toberhewny Rd	Lurgan JHS
Lurgan Model PS	(1) William St/ Victoria St Lurgan	Lurgan Model PS, St Francis PS, St Ronans College
Millington PS Portadown	(1) Armagh Rd /Cecil St Portadown (2) Craigavon Ave Portadown School Entrance	Millington PS/Clounagh JHS Millington PS
Milltown PS Banbridge	(1) Lurgan Rd Banbridge School Entrance	MilltownPS
Portadown College	(1) Killicomaine Rd Portadown School Entrance	Portadown College
St Anthony's PS Craigavon	(1) Tullygally Rd School Entrance (2) Tullygally Rd School Entrance	St Anthony's PS
St Colman's PS Laurencetown	(1) Drumnascamph Rd School Entrance	St Colman's PS
St Francis PS Aghaderg	(1) Donard View Rd,	St Francis PS / Newbridge GMI
St Francis PS Lurgan	(1) Old Portadown Rd/ Carrickvale Ave (2) Francis St Lurgan School Entrance	St Francis PS, St Ronans College St Francis PS
St John the Baptist PS P'Down	(1) Garvaghy Rd Portadown School Entrance	St John the Baptist PS
St Mary's PS Banbridge	(1) Scarva Rd Banbridge School Entrance (2) Ballygowan Rd (3) Edenderry Rd	St Marys PS Banbridge, St Patrick's College, Bridge Integrated PS Banbridge HS
St Patrick's PS Derrynaseer	(1) Aghalee Rd, Aghagallon School Entrance	St Patrick's PS
St Patrick's PS Aghacommon	(1) Derrymacash Rd School Entrance	St Patrick's PS
Tannaghmore PS Lurgan	(1) North Circular Rd (2) Lake St School Entrance	Tannaghmore PS Tannaghmore PS
Tandragee PS	(1) Ballymore Rd School Entrance (2) A27, Portadown Rd	Tandragee PS Tandragee JHS
Waringstown PS	(1) Main St/ Primary Walk School Entrance	Waringstown PS

Academic Year 16/17

Name of School	Location	Schools Served
Abercorn PS Banbridge	(1) Old Newry Rd Banbridge (2) Commerical Rd Banbridge	Abercorn PS Abercorn PS, Banbridge HS, Bridge PS, St Marys PS Banbridge
Bocombra PS Portadown	(1) School Entrance Ballyhannon Rd Portadown	Bocombra PS
Bridge GMI PS	(1) School Entrance, Ballygowan Rd Banbridge	Bridge Integrated PS
Carrick PS Lurgan	(1) Sloan St, School Entrance	Carrick PS
Clounagh JHS Portadown	(1) Brownstown Rd, School Entrance	Clounagh JHS
Drumcree College Portadown	(1) Moy Rd, School Entrance (2) Dungannon Rd	Drumcree College Drumcree College, St John the Baptist PS
Edenderry PS Portadown	(1) Princess Way Portadown	Edenderry PS P'down

Name of School	Location	Schools Served
Killicomaine JHS, Portadown	(1) Upper Church Lane Portadown School Entrance	Killicomaine JHS
Kings Park PS Lurgan	(1) Queens St Lurgan (2) Avenue Rd Lurgan School Entrance	Kings Park PS Kings Park PS
Lurgan JHS	(1) Gilford Rd/Toberhewny Rd	Lurgan JHS
Lurgan Model PS	(1) William St/ Victoria St Lurgan	Lurgan Model PS, St Francis PS, St Ronans College
Millington PS Portadown	(1) Armagh Rd /Cecil St Portadown (2) Craigavon Ave Portadown school Entrance	Millington PS/Clounagh JHS Millington PS
Milltown PS Banbridge	(1) Lurgan Rd Banbridge school Entrance	MilltownPS
Portadown College	(1) Killicomaine Rd Portadown School Entrance	Portadown College
St Anthony's PS Craigavon	(1) Tullygally Rd School Entrance (2) Tullygally Rd School Entrance	St Anthony's PS
St Colman's PS Laurencetown	(1) Drumnascamph Rd School Entrance	St Colman's PS
St Francis PS Aghaderg	(1) Donard View Rd,	St Francis PS / Newbridge GMI
St Francis PS Lurgan	(1) Old Portadown Rd/ Carrickvale Ave (2) Francis St Lurgan School Entrance	St Francis PS, St Ronans College St Francis PS
St John the Baptist PS P'Down	(1) Garvaghy Rd Portadown school entrance	St John the Baptist PS
St Mary's PS Banbridge	(1) Scarva Rd Banbridge School Entrance (2) Ballygowan Rd (3) Edenderry Rd	St Marys PS Banbridge, St Patrick's College, Bridge Integrated PS Banbridge HS
St Patrick's PS Derrynaseer	(1) Aghalee Rd, Aghagallon School Entrance	St Patrick's PS
St Patrick's PS Aghacommon	(1) Derrymacash Rd School Entrance	St Patrick's PS
Tannaghmore PS Lurgan	(1) North Circular Rd (2) Lake St School Entrance	Tannaghmore PS Tannaghmore PS
Tandragee PS	(1) Ballymore Rd School Entrance (2) A27, Portadown Rd	Tandragee PS Tandragee JHS
Waringstown PS	(1) Main St Waringstown/ Primary Walk	Waringstown PS

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education why has he extended the period for schools to apply for shared education funding.

(AQW 6349/16-21)

Mr Weir: Early implementation of the Delivering Social Change Shared Education Signature Project was adversely impacted by industrial action by Teaching Unions in relation to the statutory assessment process. This resulted in a significant number of schools not being able to progress their four year action plans and in some cases, potential school partnerships deferring application for funding. While industrial action is continuing, agreement was reached with Teaching Unions to allow those school engaged in the Signature Project to proceed with implementation.

The decision to extend the period avoids pupils and schools being negatively impacted by the industrial action and allows schools sufficient time to progress action plans. For those partnerships that decided to proceed, the decision to extend the period allows those schools to extend the scope and/or scale of their action plans.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education how many new school partnerships have been established through the Shared Education Signature Project where no previous partnerships existed.

(AQW 6350/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Shared Education Signature Project is designed to further embed shared education within school partnerships that have previous experience of sharing. There are currently such 134 partnerships that have successfully applied for funding. An additional call for applications issued in September 2016.

The Peace IV Shared Education application call has been designed to support schools with no or limited experience of shared education; Peace IV is expected to become operational in 2017.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) how much funding for shared education has been disseminated to schools over the last four years; and (ii) how does it compare to the projected spending for the same time period.

(AQW 6351/16-21)

Mr Weir:

- (i) Over the past 3 years £2,432,721 has been made available to schools through the DSC Shared Education Signature Project, of which £1,750,674 relates to grants to schools and £682,047 relates to support for schools.
- (ii) This is less than projected spending for the Project as a result of the impact of industrial action by teaching unions that resulted in most schools that were successful in their funding application not being able to progress to implementation.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education for a breakdown of the number of pupils participating in shared education programmes in the last four years; and how this compares to the targets set in his Department's business plan.

(AQW 6352/16-21)

Mr Weir: Due to industrial action by teaching unions, implementation of the Shared Signature Project commenced in 2015/16. In this period, 22,036 individual pupils participated in shared classes, of which 12,406 participated in more than one shared activity. Figures for 2016/17 will be available at the end of the academic year but the number of pupils is set to increase as schools progress their action plans.

Targets set in the business case in respect of increasing the number of young people participating in shared education are based on "maintaining the percentage of schools engaged in shared education on a whole school basis at 15% rising to 20% by 2018/19 and maintaining the percentage of schools involving more than one class at 13% increasing to 80% by 2018/19 rather than on individual numbers of pupils." This is measured through the school omnibus survey. Results of the 2016 survey are not yet available, but the 2015 survey showed that the percentage of schools engaged on a whole school basis being maintained with the percentage of schools involving more than one class rising to 67.6%. Given the impact of industrial action during this period these are encouraging results.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Education to detail the schools in South Down that are now at risk following the publication of the Draft Area Plan.

(AQW 6353/16-21)

Mr Weir: The aim of the draft Strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland: "Providing Pathways" focuses on the educational interests of children and young people. It aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs delivered by schools that are educationally and financially viable.

In the development of the draft Strategic Area Plan for 2017-2020 the Education Authority, working with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the sectoral support bodies has analysed the current position and identified key strategic themes and issues which are impacting on the education system. It was published on 17 October for consultation which will run for eight weeks until 12 December 2016.

The draft Strategic Area Plan does not identify individual schools but will act as a catalyst for discussion at a regional and local level. The school planning and managing authorities will engage at a local level to determine the most appropriate area solutions to ensure that children and young people have access to high quality education regardless of where they live. Schools will be involved in the process at a formative stage and will have an opportunity to inform the development of the area solutions.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Education to detail the schools in Lagan Valley that are now at risk following the publication of the Draft Area Plan.

(AQW 6354/16-21)

Mr Weir: The aim of the draft Strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland: "Providing Pathways" focuses on the educational interests of children and young people. It aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs delivered by schools that are educationally and financially viable.

In the development of the draft Strategic Area Plan for 2017-2020 the Education Authority, working with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the sectoral support bodies has analysed the current position and identified key strategic themes and issues which are impacting on the education system. It was published on 17 October for consultation which will run for eight weeks until 12 December 2016.

The draft Strategic Area Plan does not identify individual schools but will act as a catalyst for discussion at a regional and local level. The school planning and managing authorities will engage at a local level to determine the most appropriate area solutions to ensure that children and young people have access to high quality education regardless of where they live. Schools will be involved in the process at a formative stage and will have an opportunity to inform the development of the area solutions.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Education to outline (i) the purpose of the School Surplus Scheme (SSS); (ii) how much money is currently available in the SSS and; (iii) the process by which a school can make an application for funding from the SSS.
(AQW 6356/16-21)

Mr Weir:

- (i) In October 2010, the Treasury announced the abolition of the existing End of Year Flexibility (EYF) scheme at the end of 2010-11, including all accumulated stocks. At that time, the Executive collectively recognised the unique position of Education and agreed that schools should be treated as a special case and have automatic access, on a managed basis, to any unspent balances/surpluses both past and future.
- (ii) As at 31 March 2016 the amount of funding not drawn down from the Department of Finance was £38.7m.
- (iii) The Education Authority (EA) is responsible for monitoring the expenditure of Schools in the controlled/maintained sector and identifying the cumulative in-year surplus drawdown requirement or new surplus amount to be banked. The EA must inform my Department of the level of surplus required to be drawn down and my Department then accesses the banked surpluses through the Monitoring round process. Once January Monitoring is completed my Department has no further opportunity to change its requirement.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) all schools that have a budget surplus; and (ii) the value of the surplus for each school.

(AQW 6357/16-21)

Mr Weir: I have arranged for this information to be placed in the Assembly Library.

The information provided is in respect of Controlled/Maintained schools only. Similar data is not available for Voluntary Grammar (VG) and Grant-Maintained Integrated (GMI) Schools, for which my Department is the Funding Authority. VG and GMI schools are not reported on in the same way as each other (the same accounting policies are not used by all) or in the same way as Controlled/Maintained schools for which the Education Authority (EA) is the Funding Authority.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Education whether (i) schools have been notified that their budgets are now confirmed; and (ii) schools forecasted to move into deficit have had formal plans agreed to rectify that situation.

(AQW 6358/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has advised that:

- i) Schools were notified of their common funding formula allocation on 16 March 2016.
- ii) Schools that are forecasting to move into deficit have not had their plans agreed. The Education Authority is continuing to work with these schools to rectify the situation.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education what discussions he has had with the Minister of Finance in relation to how schools can be given more freedom to spend their own budget.

(AQW 6359/16-21)

Mr Weir: I have had no discussions with the Minister of Finance regarding increasing delegation to schools. However, I have stated my intention, as Education Minister, to consider the scope for increasing the level of financial delegation to individual schools commensurate to their needs and size, and their capacity to administer more responsibility.

As such I have written to all schools on 9 November asking for their thoughts and comments in respect of increasing financial delegation.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education what formal mechanisms are in place to encourage schools to network and collaborate for the purpose of delivering a high quality service in their local area.

(AQW 6360/16-21)

Mr Weir: Area Learning Communities provide the mechanism within which schools come together to plan the curriculum they offer on an area basis. Schools in each area work in collaboration with other schools and further education colleges to deliver access to the Entitlement Framework, thus providing all learners with access to a broad and balanced, economically-relevant curriculum that meets their needs and aspirations.

The Shared Education Act (NI) 2016 places a duty on the Department and Education Authority to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education. Through the 'Sharing Work' policy, schools are encouraged and facilitated to work together in partnerships of two or more schools/ educational providers. Funding is provided through the Delivering Social Change Shared Education Signature Programme to embed this approach in schools that have already engaged in sharing.

The Together: Building a United Community Strategy (May 2013) contains a range of proposals including details on Shared Education Campuses (SECs). The specific aim of the strategy relating to education is 'To enhance the quality and extent of shared education provision, thus ensuring that existing sharing in education becomes a central part of every child's educational experience'.

The Department leads on delivering the headline action of commencing ten shared education campuses by 2018. The SEC will be pathfinder projects and will integrate community activities and resources and other services, including statutory provision where appropriate.

The Programme is seen as complementing the shared education activity already taking place in schools. It is aimed at schools which have a solid foundation of existing sharing and any proposals to the Programme have to demonstrate clear educational benefits.

The Community Relations, Equality & Diversity in Education (CRED) policy encourages schools to provide formal and non-formal education opportunities to enable children and young people to build relationships with those of different backgrounds and traditions. The policy applies to statutory early years, school and youth service settings.

Schools participating in the Extended Schools (ES) programme are encouraged to work collaboratively as part of a local ES 'Clustering' arrangement, providing the opportunity for three or more neighbouring schools to jointly plan and deliver additional activities and services which meet the needs of the whole school community. Those extended schools choosing to cluster are currently entitled to receive an additional funding incentive of 30% on top of their core ES allocation.

Early Years Education Support Clusters have recently been established as a pilot. The aim of the clusters pilot is to test a model for raising standards by making greater use of the teaching expertise in nursery schools and units, special schools, expertise across other relevant providers and early years specialists. The clusters will also provide an opportunity to share practice in terms of successful strategies for parental engagement. The clusters are being established to ensure a geographical spread of both statutory and non-statutory pre-school settings; the pilot is expected to run for two years and will be evaluated in the 2017/18 academic year.

The Department has invested £2.3 million in the Literacy and Numeracy Key Stage 2/3 CPD Project over three financial years. This project is doing valuable work in bringing together primary and post-primary schools to work together to ease the transition of pupils from P7 to Year 8 and to provide support and professional development for teachers on a cross-phase basis. There are over 550 schools involved in this project undertaking work such as sharing schemes of work, developing bridging units and sharing best practice.

In addition, the Department's Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning proposes the development of professional learning communities and networks to support closer collaboration between practitioners, schools and school clusters and professional learning providers. As part of a Teacher Professional Learning Framework, teachers will have access to coherent and career long professional learning built on best practice and collaboration at all stages

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail the savings made between May 2011 and March 2016 due to school closures and mergers as a result of Area Planning.

(AQW 6361/16-21)

Mr Weir: Area planning of education provision is not focused on achieving a projected level of savings; rather it focuses on maximising the impact of available resources by working towards a network of schools that are educationally and financially viable. For this reason my Department does not set a projected savings figure nor does it routinely calculate savings that accrue from the implementation of area solutions.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education what formal partnerships exist between schools and voluntary or community organisations for the delivery of health and education services.

(AQW 6364/16-21)

Mr Weir: Many schools work in partnership with the voluntary and community sector, both at an individual school and cluster group level. Schools are free to establish such partnerships as they see fit in delivering services which seek to improve health and educational outcomes for their pupils. Neither the Department of Education nor the Education Authority hold details relating to the range of partnership arrangements that exist across all schools.

Partnership working is encouraged and facilitated by funding streams such as the Extended Schools (ES) and Full Service Schools (FSS) programmes which enable schools to engage the services of a wide range of delivery partners, including voluntary and community groups, in responding to the identified needs of pupils, parents, families and the wider community. There may also be involvement between schools and voluntary and community organisations through other funded programmes or initiatives such as Neighbourhood Renewal or, for example, as part of Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) or Shared Education policy implementation. However, these working arrangements may not necessarily constitute 'formal' partnerships.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education to detail the schools in Fermanagh and South Tyrone that are now at risk following the publication of the Draft Area Plan.

(AQW 6365/16-21)

Mr Weir: The aim of the draft Strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland: "Providing Pathways" focuses on the educational interests of children and young people. It aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs delivered by schools that are educationally and financially viable.

In the development of the draft Strategic Area Plan for 2017-2020 the Education Authority, working with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the sectoral support bodies has analysed the current position and identified key strategic themes and issues which are impacting on the education system. It was published on 17 October for consultation which will run for eight weeks until 12 December 2016.

The draft Strategic Area Plan does not identify individual schools but will act as a catalyst for discussion at a regional and local level. The school planning and managing authorities will engage at a local level to determine the most appropriate area solutions to ensure that children and young people have access to high quality education regardless of where they live. Schools will be involved in the process at a formative stage and will have an opportunity to inform the development of the area solutions.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister of Education to detail the schools in Newry and Armagh that now at risk following the publication of the Draft Area Plan.

(AQW 6366/16-21)

Mr Weir: The aim of the draft Strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland: "Providing Pathways" focuses on the educational interests of children and young people. It aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs delivered by schools that are educationally and financially viable.

In the development of the draft Strategic Area Plan for 2017-2020 the Education Authority, working with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the sectoral support bodies has analysed the current position and identified key strategic themes and issues which are impacting on the education system. It was published on 17 October for consultation which will run for eight weeks until 12 December 2016.

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Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail the schools in North Antrim that are now at risk following the publication of the Draft Area Plan.

(AQW 6367/16-21)

Mr Weir: The aim of the draft Strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland: "Providing Pathways" focuses on the educational interests of children and young people. It aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs delivered by schools that are educationally and financially viable.

In the development of the draft Strategic Area Plan for 2017-2020 the Education Authority, working with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the sectoral support bodies has analysed the current position and identified key strategic themes and issues which are impacting on the education system. It was published on 17 October for consultation which will run for eight weeks until 12 December 2016.

The draft Strategic Area Plan does not identify individual schools but will act as a catalyst for discussion at a regional and local level. The school planning and managing authorities will engage at a local level to determine the most appropriate area solutions to ensure that children and young people have access to high quality education regardless of where they live. Schools will be involved in the process at a formative stage and will have an opportunity to inform the development of the area solutions.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Education to detail the schools in West Tyrone that are now at risk following the publication of the Draft Area Plan.

(AQW 6368/16-21)

Mr Weir: The aim of the draft Strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland: "Providing Pathways" focuses on the educational interests of children and young people. It aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs delivered by schools that are educationally and financially viable.

In the development of the draft Strategic Area Plan for 2017-2020 the Education Authority, working with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the sectoral support bodies has analysed the current position and identified key strategic themes and issues which are impacting on the education system. It was published on 17 October for consultation which will run for eight weeks until 12 December 2016.

The draft Strategic Area Plan does not identify individual schools but will act as a catalyst for discussion at a regional and local level. The school planning and managing authorities will engage at a local level to determine the most appropriate area solutions to ensure that children and young people have access to high quality education regardless of where they live. Schools will be involved in the process at a formative stage and will have an opportunity to inform the development of the area solutions.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to detail the schools in Upper Bann that are now at risk following the publication of the Draft Area Plan.

(AQW 6369/16-21)

Mr Weir: The aim of the draft Strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland: "Providing Pathways" focuses on the educational interests of children and young people. It aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs delivered by schools that are educationally and financially viable.

In the development of the draft Strategic Area Plan for 2017-2020 the Education Authority, working with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the sectoral support bodies has analysed the current position and identified key strategic themes and issues which are impacting on the education system. It was published on 17 October for consultation which will run for eight weeks until 12 December 2016.

The draft Strategic Area Plan does not identify individual schools but will act as a catalyst for discussion at a regional and local level. The school planning and managing authorities will engage at a local level to determine the most appropriate area solutions to ensure that children and young people have access to high quality education regardless of where they live. Schools will be involved in the process at a formative stage and will have an opportunity to inform the development of the area solutions.

Mr Allen asked the Minister of Education to detail the schools in East Belfast that are now at risk following the publication of the Draft Area Plan.

(AQW 6370/16-21)

Mr Weir: The aim of the draft Strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland: "Providing Pathways" focuses on the educational interests of children and young people. It aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs delivered by schools that are educationally and financially viable.

In the development of the draft Strategic Area Plan for 2017-2020 the Education Authority, working with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the sectoral support bodies has analysed the current position and identified key strategic themes and issues which are impacting on the education system. It was published on 17 October for consultation which will run for eight weeks until 12 December 2016.

The draft Strategic Area Plan does not identify individual schools but will act as a catalyst for discussion at a regional and local level. The school planning and managing authorities will engage at a local level to determine the most appropriate area solutions to ensure that children and young people have access to high quality education regardless of where they live. Schools will be involved in the process at a formative stage and will have an opportunity to inform the development of the area solutions.

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of Education to detail the enrolment for each post-primary school in (i) Newry; (ii) Warrenpoint; (iii) Kilkeel; (iv) Downpatrick; (v) Ballynahinch; (vi) Crossgar and (vii) Newcastle.

(AQW 6377/16-21)

Mr Weir: Information relating to the 2016/17 academic year is not currently available. The Department collects this data via the Annual School Census. The collection of data for the school census started in October and will not be finalised until early March.

Information relating to the 2015/16 academic year is listed below.

School name	Town	Enrolment
Abbey Christian Brothers Grammar School	Newry	902
Assumption Grammar School	Ballynahinch	836
Blackwater Integrated College	Downpatrick	213
De La Salle High School	Downpatrick	364
Down High School	Downpatrick	969
Kilkeel High School	Kilkeel	663
Newry High School	Newry	413
Newtownhamilton High School	Newry	177
Our Lady's Grammar School	Newry	853
Rathfriland High School	Newry	316
Sacred Heart Grammar School, Newry	Newry	854
Shimna Integrated College	Newcastle	597
St Colman's College, Newry	Newry	897
St Colman's High School, Ballynahinch	Ballynahinch	430

School name	Town	Enrolment
St Colmcille's High School, Crossgar	Crossgar	285
St Columban's College	Kilkeel	156
St Joseph's Boys' High School, Newry	Newry	348
St Joseph's High School, Crossmaglen	Newry	612
St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel	Kilkeel	588
St Mark's High School	Warrenpoint	851
St Mary's High School, Downpatrick	Downpatrick	407
St Mary's High School, Newry	Newry	570
St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick	Downpatrick	707
St Paul's High School, Bessbrook	Newry	1599
The High School Ballynahinch	Ballynahinch	174

Source: NI school census

Note:

- Schools have been selected using the town field of their address.

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number; and (ii) percentage of young people on free school meals in each post-primary school in (a) Newry; (b) Warrenpoint; (c) Kilkeel; (d) Downpatrick; (e) Ballynahinch; (f) Crossgar; and (g) Newcastle.

(AQW 6378/16-21)

Mr Weir: Information relating to the 2016/17 academic year is not currently available. The Department collects this data via the Annual School Census. The collection of data for the school census started in October and will not be finalised until early March.

Information relating to the 2015/16 academic year is listed below.

School name	Town	Number free school meal entitled	%
Abbey Christian Brothers Grammar School	Newry	155	17.2
Assumption Grammar School	Ballynahinch	99	11.8
Blackwater Integrated College	Downpatrick	87	40.8
De La Salle High School	Downpatrick	146	40.1
Down High School	Downpatrick	65	6.7
Kilkeel High School	Kilkeel	149	22.5
Newry High School	Newry	155	37.5
Newtownhamilton High School	Newry	44	24.9
Our Lady's Grammar School	Newry	123	14.4
Rathfriland High School	Newry	83	26.3
Sacred Heart Grammar School, Newry	Newry	131	15.3
Shimna Integrated College	Newcastle	181	30.3
St Colman's College, Newry	Newry	132	14.7
St Colman's High School, Ballynahinch	Ballynahinch	157	36.5
St Colmcille's High School, Crossgar	Crossgar	99	34.7
St Columban's College	Kilkeel	81	51.9
St Joseph's Boys' High School, Newry	Newry	173	49.7
St Joseph's High School, Crossmaglen	Newry	294	48

School name	Town	Number free school meal entitled	%
St Louis Grammar School, Killeel	Killeel	131	22.3
St Mark's High School	Warrenpoint	336	39.5
St Mary's High School, Downpatrick	Downpatrick	178	43.7
St Mary's High School, Newry	Newry	269	47.2
St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick	Downpatrick	95	13.4
St Paul's High School, Bessbrook	Newry	644	40.3
The High School Ballynahinch	Ballynahinch	38	21.8

Source: NI school census

Note:

2 Schools have been selected using the town field of their address.

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number; and (ii) percentage of young people with special needs in each post-primary school in (a) Newry; (b) Warrenpoint; (c) Killeel; (d) Downpatrick; (e) Ballynahinch; (f) Crossgar; and (g) Newcastle.

(AQW 6379/16-21)

Mr Weir: Information relating to the 2016/17 academic year is not currently available. The Department collects this data via the Annual School Census. The collection of data for the school census started in October and will not be finalised until early March.

Information relating to the 2015/16 academic year is listed below.

School name	Town	Number pupils on the SEN register	%
Abbey Christian Brothers Grammar School	Newry	44	4.9
Assumption Grammar School	Ballynahinch	91	10.9
Blackwater Integrated College	Downpatrick	121	56.8
De La Salle High School	Downpatrick	159	43.7
Down High School	Downpatrick	97	10
Killeel High School	Killeel	101	15.2
Newry High School	Newry	103	24.9
Newtownhamilton High School	Newry	33	18.6
Our Lady's Grammar School	Newry	20	2.3
Rathfriland High School	Newry	68	21.5
Sacred Heart Grammar School, Newry	Newry	34	4
Shimna Integrated College	Newcastle	176	29.5
St Colman's College, Newry	Newry	58	6.5
St Colman's High School, Ballynahinch	Ballynahinch	171	39.8
St Colmcille's High School, Crossgar	Crossgar	121	42.5
St Columban's College	Killeel	57	36.5
St Joseph's Boys' High School, Newry	Newry	149	42.8
St Joseph's High School, Crossmaglen	Newry	137	22.4
St Louis Grammar School, Killeel	Killeel	28	4.8
St Mark's High School	Warrenpoint	305	35.8
St Mary's High School, Downpatrick	Downpatrick	93	22.9

School name	Town	Number pupils on the SEN register	%
St Mary's High School, Newry	Newry	154	27
St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick	Downpatrick	110	15.6
St Paul's High School, Bessbrook	Newry	399	25
The High School Ballynahinch	Ballynahinch	109	62.6

Source: NI school census

Notes:

- 3 Schools have been selected using the town field of their address.
- 4 Figures include pupils at stages 1 – 5 of the special education needs code of practice.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education pursuant to AQW 1122/16-21, to detail (i) the gender of classroom assistants, broken down by (a) permanent; and (b) temporary positions.

(AQW 6388/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has advised that the gender of classroom assistants broken down by (a) permanent and (b) temporary positions is as follows:

Gender of Classroom Assistants

Gender of Classroom Assistants	Permanent	Temporary
Number of Male Classroom Assistants	60	324
Number of Female Classroom Assistants	4181	5570

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education pursuant to AQW 2011/16-21, whether the temporary contracts of any of the 2,974 referenced employees state that they cannot remain in their employment beyond six months.

(AQW 6389/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority (EA) has advised that temporary contracts do not state that their employment cannot exceed six months.

Guidance provided to schools on the recruitment of temporary staff advises that if the appointment is expected to last beyond six months then the position should be publically advertised.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education pursuant to AQW 2011/16-21, to detail the schools that recruited classroom assistants from the referenced 2,974 placements by advertising directly on Job Centre Online without having received completed application forms initially provided in the job packages to all applicants.

(AQW 6390/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority (EA) has advised the general practice for schools is to recruit individuals through the EA's website and simultaneously with Job Centre Online. Where it is anticipated that a vacancy exists in a school which will last for a period of 3 to 6 months, some schools may elect to directly access Job Centre Online. It is a school's responsibility to determine the most appropriate method of selection and recruitment for posts and guidance for schools is available from EA.

The EA does not track or hold information where schools choose to advertise classroom assistant vacancies directly through Job Centre Online.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education to detail the gender of the classroom assistants employed under the advertised procedures of Article 88 of the 1986 Education Order from September 2015 to September 2016.

(AQW 6391/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has advised the gender of classroom assistants employed under the advertised procedures of Article 88 from September 2015 to September 2016 is as follows:

Gender of Classroom Assistants working in Schools	
Number of Male Classroom Assistants	25
Number of Female Classroom Assistants	487

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education to outline the procedure of recruiting classroom assistants directly through Job Centre Online, without the Education Authority having publicly advertised the vacancies for (i) controlled; and (ii) maintained schools. (AQW 6392/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority (EA) has advised that the advertisement process for Classroom Assistants is managed by them for Controlled and Maintained Schools. Identified vacancies are advertised through Job Centre Online (Department for Communities) and on the EA's website simultaneously. Job Centre Online is the public Employment Service website in Northern Ireland and as such vacancies are publicly advertised.

Applicants who learn of a post through the Job Centre website are required to go through the same recruitment process as someone who has accessed a post on the EA website, including completing the relevant application form.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Education pursuant to AQW 5080/16-21, to detail (i) how private hire drivers are recruited; and (ii) their rate of pay. (AQW 6407/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has advised that private operators are responsible for the recruitment of drivers that they employ. Their rate of pay is agreed with the private operators on a case by case basis.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education pursuant to AQW 4325/16-21, whether (i) the four press officers are the entirety of his Department's Information Service; (ii) there are additional staff; and, if so, (a) how many; and (b) at what cost. (AQW 6408/16-21)

Mr Weir: As outlined in the response to AQW 4325/16-21, there are currently four press officers supporting the Education Minister. The total salary costs for EIS Press Officers in the Department of Education for 2015/16 is £169,066.

There is one additional staff member in Press Office who is not part of the Executive Information Service. This post provides support on a range of duties as required.

I am unable to provide the information you have requested at point (b). This is considered to be personal data, and its release would be in breach of the first principle of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education to outline (i) how his Department delivers education to Looked After Children in West Tyrone; and (ii) his Department's strategy for improving the attainment levels of Looked After Children in general. (AQW 6411/16-21)

Mr Weir:

- (i) Looked After Children (LAC), as with all children of compulsory school age, should be registered at a mainstream school and their education will be delivered through this mechanism. Each looked after child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). This is a living document aimed at improving the attainment of LAC by setting realistic targets to improve all aspects of the child's educational experience in partnership with other professionals, parents/carers and the child or young person.

If a looked after child is experiencing difficulties engaging with education, the EA Education Welfare Service can provide support. If there are specific special or additional needs then other EA services may support the child, the carer or the school, for example, the Behaviour Support Team and Educational Psychology. In addition, schools have also received capacity building training in relation to meeting the needs of LAC in a mainstream setting. Furthermore there are strong working relationships between the EA and the Western Health and Social Care Trust. This partnership has a clear focus on improving educational outcomes for LAC.

The EA will also provide alternative education through its Education Otherwise than at School (EOTAS) programme where a mainstream school placement cannot be sustained and it is deemed to be in the best interests of the child.

- (ii) My officials are currently developing a LAC strategy alongside a number of other LAC related work areas with an overall view of improving the attainment levels of LAC.

We have secured funding through the Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP) for a 3 year project which will provide additional support for LAC through the appointment of a LAC Champion, in a similar role to the Virtual Head in England. This will focus early intervention specifically to:

- identify effective interventions to raise educational outcomes for children at Key stage 2;
- challenge current provision for LAC at key stage 2 and
- establish structures and systems to enhance multiagency collaboration in respect of LAC education.

This is a pilot project, the outcomes of which will inform future service delivery models for LAC.

My officials are also currently reviewing the Personal Education Plan guidance and it is intended to pilot the new guidance in the coming months.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education whether he will allocate additional funding to schools to address teacher redundancies and larger class sizes.

(AQW 6412/16-21)

Mr Weir: In 2016-17, teacher redundancies are being funded from the Public Sector Transformation Fund which was allocated to my Department as part of the Budget 2016-17 process. It is normal practice that the majority of teachers exiting the profession do so on 31 August each year. Therefore the associated costs of those teachers exiting on 31 August 2016 have been fully funded, with an amount remaining to fund any further teacher redundancies which may occur in 2016-17. This funding will be allocated as the need arises.

In relation to funding for larger class sizes, I have recently announced that I am providing schools with £14m of additional spending power in 2016-17. It is up to individual schools to determine how they utilise this funding and whether they use this to address larger class sizes.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education (i) for an update on the capital funding application of St. Columbkille's Primary School, Carrickmore; and (ii) to outline the degree of priority which his Department attaches to health and safety considerations when determining the priority of applications for new build schools.

(AQW 6413/16-21)

Mr Weir: There are currently no plans for a new build for St Colmbkille's Primary School.

I fully appreciate that a new build for St Colmbkille's PS would be welcomed by those involved in the life of the School and in this regard, I understand that St Colmbkille's PS was submitted by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) for consideration as part of the Major Capital Investment announcement in June 2014. Unfortunately, the proposal was not ranked highly enough at that stage to be included in the announced list.

At present I have no immediate plans for a further Major Capital Investment announcement. However, I am considering a further call for project proposals under the Schools Enhancement Programme which you may wish to consider in consultation with CCMS.

The Department's 'Protocol for the Selection of Major Works Projects to Proceed in Planning' is applied to all projects submitted by Managing Authorities. The Protocol is available on the Department's website at the following link <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/protocol-selection-major-works-projects>

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Education to detail the financial savings from school closures in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6416/16-21)

Mr Weir: Area planning of education provision is not focused on achieving a projected level of savings rather it focuses on maximising the impact of available resources by working towards a network of schools that are educationally and financially viable. For this reason the Department does not set a projected savings figure nor does it routinely calculate savings that accrue from implementation of area solutions.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Education to detail the engagement that he had with the Minister of Finance in relation to the October Monitoring Round, prior to his statement to the Assembly on Tuesday 25 October.

(AQW 6422/16-21)

Mr Weir: Any discussions in relation to Monitoring Rounds are for the purpose of informing the Executive's deliberations in reaching an agreed Monitoring Round outcome and as such this information is not disclosed.

I can however, provide details of the outcome of October monitoring. As outlined by the Finance Minister on 25 October 2016, my Department received the following allocations:

- £1.0m Resource for Other Educational pressures, including Irish Medium Nurture Units;
- £2.3m Resource for the Shared Education Signature Project;
- £5.1m Capital for Minor Works; and
- £7.9m Capital for Furniture and Equipment.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education what professional development programmes are in place to support teachers that are participating in shared education programmes.

(AQW 6423/16-21)

Mr Weir: A capacity building strategy has been developed to provide professional development, which will include engaging Higher Education Institutions/teacher training providers. Workshops have been held with teachers/school managers to outline plans and elicit views on proposed plans. The Education Authority is now moving to implementation with the strategy being launched in two phases:

- (i) Short courses – a suite of short modules in areas key to the delivery of shared education and covering key skills for management and development of shared partnerships; and

- (ii) Networks of learning – a programme supporting and facilitating school improvement collaboration between teachers in shared education partnerships that includes coaching and mentoring, teacher knowledge exchanges and provision of online learning.

The project also provides professional development for Principals to support the delivery of a shared partnership vision. To date 218 Principals have attended.

School coordinators have also been provided with professional development in the role and skills required to perform associated duties.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education how much of the Shared Education Funding has been spent on administration and support roles in the last four years.

(AQW 6424/16-21)

Mr Weir: Funding for Shared Education has been available through the Delivering Social Change Signature project from 2014/15. Up to end September 2016, £381,850 was spent on administration and support roles to implement the DSC Shared Education Signature Project.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education how much of the shared education funding has been spent on teacher cover.

(AQW 6425/16-21)

Mr Weir: To date £954,687 has been spent on teacher cover from the DSC Shared Education Signature Project.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education how many teacher exchanges have taken place through the Shared Education Signature Project.

(AQW 6426/16-21)

Mr Weir: To date no teacher exchanges have taken place through the Shared Education Signature Project. However, teacher exchanges are one of the elements of the Shared Education Capacity Building Strategy which is commencing implementation.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education for an update on the European funding designated for schools with no previous partnerships in shared education.

(AQW 6427/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Department has been working with the Irish Department of Education and Skills and the Special EU Programmes Body to appoint a delivery agent for the programme.

This process is nearing completion and the applications process for schools and early years settings is expected to take place early in 2017. Sharing involving early years, schools and youth to school partnerships will then commence later in 2017.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education whether he will review each school crossing patrol that have been withdrawn in Upper Bann in the last twelve years.

(AQW 6482/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority (EA) has advised that it remains satisfied that where School Crossing Patrols (SCPs) have been withdrawn in Upper Bann in the last twelve years and have not been replaced, that these locations do not meet the criteria required for the provision of a SCP. The EA is content, however, to consider requests from individual school communities for re-assessment of a specific location.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to detail the criteria used by the Education Authority to assess whether a school crossing patrol should be (i) established; (ii) withdrawn; and (iii) reinstated.

(AQW 6483/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has advised that the criteria used to assess whether a school crossing patrol should be established, withdrawn and reinstated is contained within the Road Safety GB School Crossing Patrol Guidelines, revised 2012.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education to detail the subject areas included in the curriculum review.

(AQW 6508/16-21)

Mr Weir: As stated in my response to AQW 4066/16-11, a review of the curriculum is something that I intend to take forward during this mandate but the timing of such a review has yet to be determined.

I am also still at the consideration stage in terms of the specific content of such a review.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Education (i) for an update on the application for a parking improvement scheme at St Mary's Primary School, Granemore; and (ii) to detail when he expects work to commence.

(AQW 6532/16-21)

Mr Weir: A Minor Works application for car parking at the school was received in February 2011 and sent to Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) for scoping. As part of the scoping exercise a suitable area for car parking was identified, however this area was subsequently required by the school to house additional accommodation. CPD revisited the scheme and identified a further area which would be suitable for car parking; however the septic tank for the school is located on this piece of land and needs to be relocated before car parking works can commence. An area has been identified for the relocation of the septic tank; however an objection has been raised by an external party to the proposed relocation. Until this issue has been resolved the car parking scheme cannot proceed and I cannot provide a date for the completion of the car park works.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education what he is doing to avert industrial action by teachers.

(AQW 6695/16-21)

Mr Weir: As Minister for Education I have to work within the parameters of NI Executive pay policy and in doing so ensure that a balance is struck between, rightly, acknowledging the contribution that individual teachers make to our education system with protecting as many teaching jobs as possible and while addressing the not inconsiderable financial pressures being faced by schools. With a finite budget this is not a simple task.

Industrial action by teachers has been ongoing since 2011. The most recent 'escalation' of this industrial action can be linked directly to a recommendation by the Management Side of the Teachers Negotiating Committee (TNC) regarding teachers pay for 2015 and 2016.

Within the context of the environment in which we are all operating, I believe that the decision by the Management Side of the TNC in relation to teachers pay for 2015 and 2016 was the right one in the circumstances. The pay deal, which includes teachers' incremental progression for 2015, at a cost of 0.82% and incremental progression for 2016, at a cost of 0.79%, is for a 1% cost of living increase payable from September 2016. Therefore the total value of the pay deal for teachers in 2015 and 2016 is 2.61%.

The Management Side recommendation followed intense negotiations where earlier and better offers were made to the teaching unions, which they rejected. Whilst the teaching unions rejected the 2.61% pay deal they advised Management Side that the negotiations had formally ended, therefore, Management Side prepared a pay remit business case on the basis of the 2.61% deal. This received formal approval in October 2016 and teachers' will receive the pay award in their salaries as soon as possible.

The pay award for 2015 and 2016 is realistic. 2.61% does not constitute a pay cut to teachers and still allows teachers to progress along the pay scale, in addition to a cost of living increase for 2016, the issue which was the stumbling block for the unions during the pay negotiations.

The pay award is in accordance with public sector pay growth parameters, as set out in NI Executive Pay Policy. Given the parameters of NI Executive Pay policy, which applies to all public sector groups, and the tough economic circumstances, the support needs to be there for schools with a focus on the protection of pupils and teachers jobs.

The negotiating machinery for teaching staff is the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC), responsible for the negotiation of teachers' terms and conditions, including pay.

The TNC is made up of representatives from the Northern Ireland Teaching Council (NITC), comprised of the 5 recognised teaching unions, and Management Side, comprised of representatives from the Education Authority, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, sectoral interests and the Department.

As a result of the pay award the INTO has instructed its members to escalate industrial action while the NASUWT has announced a rolling programme of strike action. This is most disappointing.

I have urged the Management Side of the TNC to urgently meet with those teaching unions engaged in industrial action, in an effort to bring an end to the ongoing industrial action which is in the best interests of pupils, teachers and schools.

Department for the Economy

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for the Economy how many applications to Higher Education Institutions originated from (i) England; (ii) Scotland; and (iii) Wales, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 2605/16-21)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister for the Economy): The most recent information available, relating to (i), (ii), (iv) and (v), is provided in the tables below. Regarding (iii), my Department does not hold specific information on successful applicants from countries within Europe but outside the European Union. These students are counted as non-EU applicants.

Table 1 - Applicants to Northern Ireland Institutions by domicile 2012-2016

Domicile	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Northern Ireland	16,840	17,900	18,000	18,440	18,540
England	2,130	2,320	2,670	3,270	2,540
Scotland	180	170	130	210	210
Wales	90	80	90	110	100
Other EU	2,040	2,010	2,010	1,920	1,890
Non EU	970	1,120	1,500	1,900	1,850
Grand Total	22,250	23,600	24,400	25,840	25,110

(Information provided by the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS). UCAS has rounded data to the nearest 10, so totals may not match the figures in the table)

Table 2 - Total number of applicants accepted to Northern Ireland Institutions by domicile 2012-2015

Domicile	2012	2013	2014	2015
Northern Ireland	9,020	10,010	9,855	8,920
England	330	260	680	620
Scotland	25	15	15	25
Wales	5	5	10	15
Other EU	460	440	455	385
Outside EU (Overseas)	200	230	245	200
Grand Total	10,040	10,965	11,260	10,165

(Information provided by UCAS. UCAS has rounded data to the nearest 10, so totals may not match the figures in the table)

Additional information on applications and accepted applicants is available on my Department's website at the link below:
<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/ucas-applications-and-accepted-applicants>

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for the Economy how many applications to Higher Education Institutions originated from countries outside Europe, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 2606/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The most recent information available, relating to (i), (ii), (iv) and (v), is provided in the tables below. Regarding (iii), my Department does not hold specific information on successful applicants from countries within Europe but outside the European Union. These students are counted as non-EU applicants.

Table 1 - Applicants to Northern Ireland Institutions by domicile 2012-2016

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(Information provided by UCAS. UCAS has rounded data to the nearest 10, so totals may not match the figures in the table)

Additional information on applications and accepted applicants is available on my Department's website at the link below:
<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/ucas-applications-and-accepted-applicants>

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for the Economy how many applications to Higher Education Institutions originated from countries in Europe but outside the European Union, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 2607/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The most recent information available, relating to (i), (ii), (iv) and (v), is provided in the tables below. Regarding (iii), my Department does not hold specific information on successful applicants from countries within Europe but outside the European Union. These students are counted as non-EU applicants.

Table 1 - Applicants to Northern Ireland Institutions by domicile 2012-2016

Domicile	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
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Other EU	460	440	455	385
Outside EU (Overseas)	200	230	245	200
Grand Total	10,040	10,965	11,260	10,165

(Information provided by UCAS. UCAS has rounded data to the nearest 10, so totals may not match the figures in the table)

Additional information on applications and accepted applicants is available on my Department's website at the link below:
<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/ucas-applications-and-accepted-applicants>

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for the Economy how many applications to Higher Education Institutions originated from EU member states in each of the last five years.

(AQW 2608/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The most recent information available, relating to (i), (ii), (iv) and (v), is provided in the tables below. Regarding (iii), my Department does not hold specific information on successful applicants from countries within Europe but outside the European Union. These students are counted as non-EU applicants.

Table 1 - Applicants to Northern Ireland Institutions by domicile 2012-2016

Domicile	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Northern Ireland	16,840	17,900	18,000	18,440	18,540
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Grand Total	10,040	10,965	11,260	10,165

(Information provided by UCAS. UCAS has rounded data to the nearest 10, so totals may not match the figures in the table)

Additional information on applications and accepted applicants is available on my Department's website at the link below:
<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/ucas-applications-and-accepted-applicants>

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for the Economy how many students from (i) England; (ii) Scotland; and (iii) Wales received a place at a Higher Education Institution in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.
(AQW 2609/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The most recent information available, relating to (i), (ii), (iv) and (v), is provided in the tables below. Regarding (iii), my Department does not hold specific information on successful applicants from countries within Europe but outside the European Union. These students are counted as non-EU applicants.

Table 1 - Applicants to Northern Ireland Institutions by domicile 2012-2016

Domicile	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Northern Ireland	16,840	17,900	18,000	18,440	18,540
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Grand Total	22,250	23,600	24,400	25,840	25,110

(Information provided by the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS). UCAS has rounded data to the nearest 10, so totals may not match the figures in the table)

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Other EU	460	440	455	385
Outside EU (Overseas)	200	230	245	200
Grand Total	10,040	10,965	11,260	10,165

(Information provided by UCAS. UCAS has rounded data to the nearest 10, so totals may not match the figures in the table)

Additional information on applications and accepted applicants is available on my Department's website at the link below:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/ucas-applications-and-accepted-applicants>

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for the Economy whether his Department has plans to upgrade mobile phone and broadband connectivity in Magilligan.

(AQW 2773/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The telecommunications market in Northern Ireland is fully privatised and decisions on where and when to invest are made on a commercial basis.

The UK Government has put in place an agreement with the Mobile Network Operators, through which the mobile industry will invest £5 billion in UK infrastructure and increase coverage by 2017.

It is envisaged that, by the time this investment is completed, mobile hot-spots in Northern Ireland will be reduced to 0.3% of the landmass.

In addition, the mobile market in the UK is highly competitive and fast moving and the operators are constantly evolving their networks and developing new products and services that can offer better coverage and more adaptable packages.

My Department must await the outcome of these investments, in order to determine if further public intervention will be required.

The cabinet which serves the Magilligan area (cabinet 2 Bellarena) has already been fibre enabled under the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project.

Further upgrades are expected to take place in this area under my Department's Superfast Broadband Roll-out Programme. However, at this stage it is not possible to say which premises will be affected.

For customers that are not able to access a fixed line broadband service greater than 2 Megabytes per second, my Department has a scheme in place under the auspices of the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project, to subsidise the cost of a broadband installation. This offers support packages to provide eligible customers with a satellite or fixed wireless broadband service, from a list of registered providers and will ensure that no household or business will need to pay more than £400 to access a basic broadband service over a 12 month period. Further details can be found at <http://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-better-broadband-scheme>.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for the Economy, in relation to SEM paper SEM-16-041, whether directors of SONI also being directors of EirGrid represents a conflict of interest.

(AQW 2902/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: This is a matter for the Single Electricity Market Committee. The measures proposed are intended to create Board structures that respect the need to ensure no conflicts of interest arise from new roles emerging from the implementation of the Integrated Single Electricity Market and Delivering a Secure, Sustainable System projects.

More generally the SEMC paper also proposes measures to strengthen the independence of SONI within the EirGrid Group. These will be developed by the Regulator and included in revisions to the SONI licence.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for the Economy to outline what undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses are available for students wishing to study sign language and interpreting.

(AQW 3161/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department funded a project to enhance sign language tutoring and interpreting infrastructure within Northern Ireland. This project began in 2008 and included the development of a NVQ level 6 sign language programme at Belfast Metropolitan College, a Master of Arts programme for sign language interpreters at Queen's University Belfast and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Further Education) sign language programme at the Ulster University. Funding has also been provided for two PhD research students at Queens University Belfast.

Ongoing sign language course provision is a matter for the higher education institutions and information on this is available from each of the institutions.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for the Economy what impact the offer of a £9m subsidy to United Airlines will have on future negotiations with other carriers.

(AQW 3249/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Routes will be considered by the Department on a case by case basis.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for the Economy whether a reassessment has been made on the necessity to build a Compressed Air Energy Storage plant in Islandmagee.

(AQW 3873/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The project to develop a Compressed Air Energy Storage plant at Islandmagee is supported as a designated Project of Common Interest through two existing Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) grant agreements with the European Commission. While this is a private sector developer led project and decisions relating to the development of the plant are a matter for the developer, not my Department, the delivery of a compressed air energy storage solution has the potential to add to our energy mix and this could be important in terms of maintaining a stable grid, putting downward pressure on prices and contributing to security of supply. As the project progresses it will be subject to a range of assessments, including its interaction with electricity market arrangements, and while my Department will not lead on such work, it will be interested in the outcomes.

Ms Archibald asked the Minister for the Economy whether the tuition fee loans proposed for introduction for part-time students in 2017 will be extended to prisoner students as is the case in England and Wales.

(AQW 3961/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: It is not intended to extend part time tuition fee loans to Northern Ireland domiciled prisoners when they are introduced in academic year 2017/18.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for the Economy to detail the future plans for the area covered by license PL1/10; and whether PL1/10 will be terminated once the announced divestment of Infrastrata's remaining oil and gas exploration interests are completed.

(AQW 4295/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has formally written to the Licensee seeking details of their future plans for Petroleum Licence PL1/10.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for the Economy what is the average costs of car insurance, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 4790/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department does not hold this information.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on his Department's efforts to secure additional land in the Omagh area for inward investment.

(AQW 4828/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: An independent report commissioned by Invest NI has considered both the market failure in the availability of serviced industrial land in the Omagh area as well as a demand from businesses for such a provision.

The findings of this report are being considered in the context of the new Programme for Government.

Mr McKee asked the Minister for the Economy whether his Department has engaged with Capital for Enterprise and participating Northern Ireland banks to promote the Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme to the Agri-Food industry and encourage greater uptake, as recommended by the Going for Growth Strategy.

(AQW 4877/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Access to Finance was one of the key themes of Going for Growth, the Agri-Food Strategy for Northern Ireland. The British Business Bank manages the Enterprise Finance Guarantee (EFG) scheme on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Senior Business Bank staff most recently met with Northern Ireland banks (including Bank of Ireland, Danske and First Trust) in early summer 2016 to promote the Business Bank's programmes, encourage their use of EFG and explain the way in which EFG can benefit businesses across a wide range of industrial sectors, including the agri-food sector.

This engagement is continuing. To further promote the Bank's work in Northern Ireland, the team also met with representatives of the business community, including CBI and the business advisory community.

Mr McKee asked the Minister for the Economy whether his Department has created an expert resource with an objective of securing 0.5 per cent share of the EU Innovation Funding Programme, as recommended by the Going for Growth Strategy. (AQW 4878/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Horizon 2020 Strategy details the approach being taken to deliver the Executive's target of €145m drawdown over the course of the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. A network of Northern Ireland Contact Points was set up in 2012-2013 to provide specialist advice and assistance to businesses and researchers across a number of areas of economic relevance to NI and of priority to the European Commission. The contact point for agri-food related work is based in the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for the Economy for a breakdown of the religious background of the (i) teaching; and (ii) non-teaching staff at (a) Queen's University; (b) each campus of Ulster University; (c) St Mary's University College; and (d) Stranmillis University College. (AQW 5082/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Department does not hold the information requested.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for the Economy how many students from a (i) Roman Catholic; and (ii) Protestant background have enrolled at (a) Queen's University; (b) each campus of Ulster University; (c) St Mary's University College; and (d) Stranmillis University College, in each of the last three years. (AQW 5083/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The table below sets out Northern Ireland domiciled enrolments for those whose religious affiliation was (i) Roman Catholic and (ii) Protestant, at each of the requested Higher Education Institutions, in the academic years 2012/13 to 2014/15.

Table 1: Northern Ireland domiciled students enrolled at NI HEIs (excluding those at the Open University) by institution/campus and religious affiliation

Institution/ Campus	Academic Year					
	2012/13		2013/14		2014/15	
	Catholic	Protestant	Catholic	Protestant	Catholic	Protestant
QUB	8,800	6,460	8,720	6,230	8,780	6,220
UU Belfast	705	505	735	505	710	535
UU Coleraine	1,615	1,870	1,705	1,835	1,560	1,795
UU Jordanstown	6,240	3,685	6,170	3,615	6,020	3,510
UU Magee	2,260	635	2,365	680	2,505	700
Stranmillis	445	895	475	925	540	880
St. Mary's	1,045	10	1,155	20	1,095	15

Source: Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA)

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister for the Economy to detail the number of visits by Invest NI officials to each constituency, in each of the last five years; and (ii) the reason for each visit. (AQW 5086/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Invest NI does hold the information requested in a readily accessible format. Providing this information as requested could only be done at a disproportionate cost.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on broadband speeds in Fermanagh and South Tyrone. (AQW 5089/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Information on broadband speeds is gathered and published by Ofcom through a number of reports. The following information for Fermanagh and South Tyrone is taken from an analysis of Ofcom's Connected Nations 2015 report by the House of Commons Library.

Constituency	Superfast broadband @30Mb/s availability %	Average Download Speeds Mb/s	% of connections have speeds less than 2Mb/s	% of connections have speeds less than 10Mb/s	% of connections have speeds greater than 30Mb/s
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	56	21.9	13	48	35

Mr Chambers asked the Minister for the Economy to detail the value of upfront payments and ongoing grants awarded to domestic projects under the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme in (i) 2014/15; and (ii) 2015/16.

(AQW 5098/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The value of upfront payments and ongoing grants awarded under the domestic Renewable Heat Incentive scheme are as follows:-

Year	Upfront Payments	Annual RHI Payments
2014/15	£128,080	£0
2015/16	£842,162	£1,216,488.46

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on the Gas to the West project.

(AQW 5230/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Construction work on the first phase of the Gas to the West project, a new gas pipeline from Maydown to Strabane, is well advanced with gas connection expected to be available at Artigarvan in late 2016 and in Strabane from April 2017.

The project developers have lodged a planning application with the Department for Infrastructure's Strategic Planning Division for new gas infrastructure to connect the remaining towns in the project (Dungannon, Coalisland, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Omagh, Enniskillen and Derrylin) to natural gas. Subject to planning and other approvals, these works are anticipated to commence in 2017.

Mr McKee asked the Minister for the Economy whether his Department has put in place an Agri-Food fund to support rapid investment in the industry.

(AQW 5241/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: An Agri-Food Loan Scheme was announced in October 2013.

This Invest NI scheme supports investment in the Poultry (meat and eggs), Pork, and Red Meat and Dairy sectors.

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for the Economy to outline his plans to support small and medium-sized enterprises in areas that include Neighbourhood Renewal Programmes.

(AQW 5442/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Invest NI provides a range of support and practical assistance to businesses across Northern Ireland. These interventions may be of a financial and non-financial nature and are available in Neighbourhood Renewal areas.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister for the Economy (i) to provide an update on the Gas to the West project; and (ii) when natural gas will be available to homes and businesses in the Omagh district.

(AQW 5444/16-21)

Mr Hamilton:

(i) Construction work on the first phase of the Gas to the West project, a new gas pipeline from Maydown to Strabane, is well advanced with gas connection expected to be available at Artigarvan in late 2016 and in Strabane from April 2017.

The project developers have lodged a planning application with the Department for Infrastructure's Strategic Planning Division for new gas infrastructure to connect the remaining towns in the project (Dungannon, Coalisland, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Omagh, Enniskillen and Derrylin) to natural gas. Subject to planning and other approvals, these works are anticipated to commence in 2017.

(ii) A planning decision in the first half of 2017 will allow the main infrastructure supplying natural gas to Omagh to be completed and available for first gas connections by end of 2018. The gas distribution network supplying homes and businesses within the town will be built over subsequent years.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on a second round of the European Social Fund to cover the period beyond the end of March 2018.

(AQW 5522/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has placed an update in relation to European Social Funding on the Department for the Economy website, which is available using the following link:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/2014-2020-ni-esf-programme-funding-next-steps>

Mr Easton asked the Minister for the Economy to outline any uncommitted funds from the European Social Fund 2014-2020 successful funded projects, including reduction of budget requests and early termination of project, broken down by organisation and amount of funding uncommitted.

(AQW 5576/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The contribution from Europe and my Department to the NI European Social Fund 2014-2020 Programme is €333.7million (65%) of the total financial allocation of €513million and it is my aim to ensure that the full allocation is utilised. Any funding already or to be uncommitted from the current first call projects (detailed below) will be reallocated in full through a second call.

Organisation	65% Allocation	Revised Allocation	Reduction
Job Seekers and Economically inactive people			
Ashton Community Trust	£2,002,485	£1,513,571	£488,914
Belfast Metropolitan College	£104,602	£52,300	£52,302
Derry & Strabane District Council	£367,640	£258,910	£108,730
Extern NI	£693,997	£555,924	£138,073
First Steps Women's Centre	£337,093	£245,138	£91,955
Network Personnel	£398,125	£227,102	£171,023
Reed in Partnership	£199,255	£151,973	£47,282
Southern Regional College	£663,209	£0	£663,209
South West College	£550,999	£385,700	£165,299
Triax	£636,938	£383,241	£253,697
Women in Business NI	£82,599	£73,215	£9,474
Women's Tec	£183,537	£143,371	£40,166
Young People not in employment, education or training			
GEMS NI Ltd	£283,818	£249,234	£34,584
Network Personnel	£136,552	£80,139	£56,413
Springboard Opportunities Ltd	£195,891	£165,516	£30,375
Stepping Stones NI	£51,160	£38,797	£12,363
People with a disability			
Acceptable Enterprises Ltd	£119,860	£86,208	£33,652
Access Centre NI	£93,268	£78,781	£14,487
Action Deaf Youth	£72,224	£39,010	£33,214
Action on Hearing Loss	£104,288	£50,357	£53,931
Compass Advocacy Network	£97,571	£139,479	£41,908
Disability Action	£307,934	£194,645	£113,289
RCD/4Rs Reuse Workshop	£125,134	£110,899	£14,235
RNIB	£101,154	£69,720	£31,434
Stepping Stones NI	£124,624	£85,339	£39,285
USEL	£375,386	£325,000	£50,386
Community Family Support Programme			
Clanrye Group	£324,925	£296,465	£28,460
Network Personnel	£324,398	£241,756	£82,642

Organisation	65% Allocation	Revised Allocation	Reduction
Totals	£8,395,457	£6,241,700	£2,153,757

There will be a further reduction of £1,326,419 in respect of Southern Regional College, and £182,000 in respect of Wade Training, across Years 2 and 3 of the current call.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for the Economy, in light of the decision to put the York Street Interchange project on hold, whether any EU funded projects in his Department are at risk following the decision to Brexit.

(AQW 5934/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Projects in the pipeline are being progressed in the normal course of business in line with UK Treasury instructions and in liaison with colleagues in the Department of Finance and the Special EU Programmes Body as necessary.

Department of Finance

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance, pursuant to AQW 2377/16-21, to detail the pay scale applicable to ministerial drivers provided from the Civil Service.

(AQW 2641/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir (The Minister of Finance): The average cost to departments of employing someone at the Ministerial driver grade is £29,496 when National Insurance and pension costs are added. This figure does not include any additional costs related to overtime.

To put this figure in context, it is not untypical for my driver to work some fifty hours of overtime a month. He does this at no additional cost to the Department. If a Civil Service driver worked the same hours, the Department would expect to face an additional overtime charge of over £1,000 each month.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance, pursuant to AQW 2377/16-21, to outline the history whereby the agreed rates, terms and conditions applicable to ministerial driver arrangements came into existence.

(AQW 2645/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: When responsibility for Ministerial Drivers was passed to departments in 2011, the Department of Finance did not acquire external driver services. The Department was therefore not involved in the process at that time and therefore cannot outline the history of the arrangements.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Finance what is the average annual salary of a (i) male; and (ii) female civil servant.

(AQW 4902/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and the Office for National Statistics report using median figures as the middle number is more representative than the arithmetic mean. The mean is also included for comparison purposes. The most recent reported data is as at March 2015:

	Median	Mean
Male	£24,728	£28,244
Female	£24,728	£26,938

NISRA publishes annual pay statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service. The most recent report can be accessed on their website at http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/Pay_Statistics/2015/NICS_Pay_Statistics_2015_Report.pdf

Mr Ford asked the Minister of Finance what discussions he has had with the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Minister of Justice on funding actions arising from the Fresh Start Panel report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups.

(AQW 5154/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Executive published the Fresh Start Panel report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups on 19 July 2016.

The Executive allocated £1.3m in June Monitoring and a further £2.5 million in October Monitoring to work on 'Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime' strand of the Fresh Start Agreement.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Finance whether his Department has commissioned a review of the impact of the lack of tax relief available for agricultural building allowances.

(AQW 5239/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Executive has no powers to set capital allowances and reliefs. These are determined by the British Treasury and my Department has not undertaken specific assessments in this regard.

However, as the member knows, I am in favour of the transfer of further fiscal powers to the Executive from London. In that regard I welcome any suggestion around the Capital allowances regime from the agri-food sector.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Finance for his assessment of the case for the introduction of 300 per cent capital allowances for capital investment in the Agri-Food industry.

(AQW 5240/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Executive has no powers to set capital allowances and reliefs. These are determined by the British Treasury and my Department has not undertaken specific assessments in this regard.

However, as the member knows, I am in favour of the transfer of further fiscal powers to the Executive from London. In that regard I welcome any suggestion around the Capital allowances regime from the agri-food sector.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance how many successful claims have been made to the Rates Hardship Fund, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 5436/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The number of successful claims for hardship relief, in each of the last five rating years, is as follows:

Rating Year	Number of Successful Applications
2016/17*	0
2015/16	1
2014/15	1
2013/14	2
2012/13	0
Total	4

* As at 19th October 2016

Given that only a very small number of businesses have benefited from hardship relief, I have asked my officials to review the scheme to determine if the criteria are too stringent.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance, pursuant to AQW 4986/16-21, what processes he has put in place to assess which EU structural and investment projects, signed after the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, will be guaranteed continued funding.

(AQW 5625/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The letter from the British Government dated 4 October states that all projects which are agreed before it leaves the European Union will be guaranteed where they:

- provide value for money, in a way that has a comparable benefit to other domestically-funded programmes;
- support domestic strategic priorities, specifically projects that fit with department's priorities and the Government's agenda.

No guarantee has been offered for Structural and Investment Funding allocated after that date, which has yet to be agreed.

All current European Funding Programmes were approved by the last Executive as supporting strategic priorities identified in the Programme for Government.

Value for money in projects will continue to be guaranteed by the selection of operations in each programme by independent and representative monitoring and steering committees. Projects are assessed against relevant EU funding criteria and against the rules for economic appraisal and business-case approval established by my Department.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Finance for an update on the exposure risk to European Funds following the Chancellor of Exchequer's extension of the guarantee until the United Kingdom leaves the European Union.

(AQW 5628/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Referendum result threatens to disrupt the ability of EU programmes here to draw down their full allocations from Europe.

The British Chancellor has provided guarantees covering various EU funds to a range of sectors. Relevant correspondence from the Treasury has been placed in the Assembly Library. Unfortunately, funding remains at risk because of the unclear and incomplete character of Treasury guarantees to date.

We don't know when there will be an exit, if it takes place all future European funding to be allocated in the period after 2020 also remains at risk until our future relationship with the EU is clarified or fully compensating alternative funding streams are guaranteed to the Executive.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Finance how he plans to support businesses struggling with rates bills.
(AQW 5761/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I will make a statement on this matter on 15 November.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Finance when the next domestic rates revaluation will take place.
(AQW 5786/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: There are no current plans made within my Department in relation to the next domestic revaluation.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Finance whether he intends to bring forward proposals during the current Assembly mandate to abolish the Rates Cap for domestic properties rated at a value above £400,000.
(AQW 5787/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I will make a statement on this matter in due course.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Finance for his assessment of the recommendation by the Committee for Finance and Personnel that all relevant financial documents, including Budgets, Estimates and Resource Accounts, are simplified and harmonised to increase transparency.
(AQO 600/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: This is a subject close to the Member's heart and I have to say that I agree with him. Therefore, I hope to bring a paper to the Executive in the near future detailing the changes I plan to implement.

The aim of the original Review was to bring increased transparency to the financial processes brought before this Assembly and who could argue with that. The increased scrutiny and accountability that the implementation of the key recommendations of the Review will bring, will be of benefit to all Members of this Assembly. Fuel Laundering: Newry and Armagh

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister of Finance what discussions he has had with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to quantify the amount of revenue lost due to illegal fuel laundering in Newry and Armagh.
(AQO 601/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I have not had any discussions with HMRC on this issue.

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister of Finance how much Orange Order and Ancient Order of Hibernians halls have saved since 2011 as a result of relief from Rate liability.
(AQO 602/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Rate relief for Orange Halls and other bodies is provided under Article 41A of the Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977. Article 41A was inserted into the Rates Order from April 2006. It is estimated that £5.22 million and £0.19 million of support has been provided through exemption under the terms of Article 41A to the Orange Order and Ancient Order of Hibernians halls respectively since 1st April 2011.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Finance whether funding for PEACE IV and INTERREG programmes will be guaranteed to 2020.
(AQO 603/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The PEACE IV and INTERREG VA programmes are worth €269m and €283m respectively.

The British Chancellor's statement on 3rd October guarantees its share of finance to projects approved prior to any change of relations with the EU.

This should facilitate full commitment of funds under both PEACE and INTERREG. This will enable approved projects to draw down funds for the complete programme duration.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Finance for an update on his meeting with the Scottish, Welsh, and British governments on 24 October 2016.
(AQO 604/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Our meeting with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury was a frank exchange of views on a number of issues that affect the Celtic regions.

Our principle point of concern was around the uncertainties that are affecting our regions as a result of the EU referendum and the British Government's continuing austerity agenda and we put the case for a substantial stimulus package to maintain investment in vital infrastructure to boost growth and restore confidence.

We also discussed the upcoming Autumn Statement and the implications that new levies and taxes have on devolved policy and I pressed the Chief Secretary to ensure that our interests are considered more fully moving forward.

Finally we secured significant flexibility around the use of Financial Transactions Capital.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Finance for an update on the Executive forecasts on the benefits of reducing the rate of corporation tax to 12.5 per cent.

(AQO 605/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Ulster University's Economic Policy Centre previously projected that, by 2033, employment would be approximately 32,000 higher, and output around 8.5% greater if a 12.5% Corporation Tax rate was applied locally.

Obviously, the European Referendum result has changed the economic landscape and the Economic Policy Centre is currently updating its work to factor in the latest economic forecasts.

Irrespective of the fallout from the EU Referendum, I firmly believe that a reduced rate of Corporation Tax will help boost foreign and local investment, drive economic growth and deliver more jobs and higher wages for our people.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance for his assessment of his Department's preparations for upcoming corporation tax negotiations.

(AQO 606/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: My officials have been liaising with their counterparts in the British Treasury and Revenue & Customs to examine the basis of the estimated costs that will be applied when we devolve Corporation Tax.

My Department is also working with a number of experts in this field to provide specialist advice on a range of related issues. These include how firms react to changes in the tax system, block grant adjustment mechanisms and economic modelling.

I look forward to taking this important work forward following my meeting with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury last month.

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Finance how many letters of offer have been issued for the PEACE IV and the current INTERREG programmes.

(AQO 607/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I am pleased to report that 18 applications have been approved under INTERREG VA and PEACE IV, and that Letters of Offer are now beginning to issue to successful projects.

Over the coming weeks, further applications under PEACE and INTERREG will reach final decision and further Letters of Offer will subsequently issue to projects approved.

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Finance for an update on the reform of public sector procurement.

(AQO 609/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: New external advisors have been appointed to the Procurement Board and at the meeting in October I asked that proposals be developed to improve:

- the prompt and sustainable development of construction projects;
- the participation of SMEs, to benefit from their innovative solutions;
- the further integration of social value and social impact in contracts; and
- best practice in commissioning and procurement.

Proposals on these issues will be brought to the January meeting of the Board and will form the basis of public sector procurement reform.

Mr Aiken asked the Minister of Finance to outline the projected impact of the overspend on the Renewable Heat Incentive on the 2016-17 Executive Budget.

(AQO 610/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I understand that the Department for the Economy has projected a funding deficit of circa £30 million for the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme in this financial year.

Department of Health

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health for an update on the Paediatric Review.
(AQW 2499/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Health): My Department has developed a 'Paediatric Palliative and End of Life Care Strategy' and complementary 'Paediatric Hospital and Community Care Strategy' for 2016-2026. The Strategies are designed to modernise and further improve the standard of treatment and care provided in hospital and community settings, as well as palliative and end of life care for children and their families.

As outlined in my vision "Health and Wellbeing 2026 - Delivering Together", I am pleased to confirm that the two strategies will be shortly be published.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Health what action is being taken to address the issue of lack of GP out-of-hours services in Strabane.
(AQW 3375/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The GP Out of Hours service in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area is provided by Western Urgent Care across five bases - Altnagelvin, Enniskillen, Limavady, Omagh and Strabane. Like other out of hours providers, Western Urgent Care faces challenges due to increasing demand and difficulty in filling shifts.

In 2016/17, in addition to core funding of almost £4.8 million for its out of hours services, funding of £196,000 will also be available for Western Urgent Care to provide extra clinical capacity where it is needed most and additional bank holiday clinical capacity. £30,000 will also be available to provide training.

A further £50,000 is available to support greater skills mix within Western Urgent Care and up to £284,000 is available to fund a Localised Additional Costs Scheme to support and incentivise GPs to work additional hours, fill shifts and cover additional costs such as medical indemnity.

I can also advise that funding of £100,000 for a Local Enhanced Service will continue in the Western Trust area in 2016/17. Under this arrangement 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 in the Western area. Supporting GPs in the Altnagelvin base to address current demands helps minimise the number of times that GPs in the other 4 out of hours centres in the Western area are moved from their respective centres.

Other actions taken to support GP out of hours services in the Western area have included actively seeking the support of GPs to work a number of sessions in their local out of hours 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. In May this year, 2 GP engagement events were held within the Trust area (in Derry and Fermanagh) to encourage more GPs to work in out of hours.

The report of the Departmental-led working group set up to review the pressures facing GP-services incorporated recommendations from a review of GP out of hours services. I am carefully considering the findings of the review and am committed to ensuring that everyone in the North has access to high quality, sustainable GP services both in hours and out of hours.

Mr Lyons asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the benefits that could accrue from enhanced spend on diabetes programme's such as Dose Adjustment for Normal Eating.
(AQW 3416/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am committed to improving the health and well-being and quality of life for people with long term conditions, including those living with diabetes. A key element of this is to ensure that people have the knowledge, skills and confidence to understand and manage their condition as effectively as possible.

In March this year, a £1.7million investment package was announced to support diabetes services here. The investment will focus on a number of high priority areas that will transform the way in which diabetes services are delivered, including enhancing access to structured diabetes education for people who are newly diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes.

Structured diabetes education plays a key role in supporting people living with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes by providing the knowledge and skills to help them manage their diabetes more confidently, particularly when variations from the norm may occur, and to make daily decisions to improve their own quality of life and general well-being. The positive effects of self management information and education can include improvements in lifestyle choices including dietary habits, frequency and accuracy of self-monitoring of blood glucose, glycaemic control, and a reduced risk of developing the complications associated with diabetes. Importantly, education programmes allow people to become full partners in care and take control of their diabetes. Where people are able to have better control of their diabetes, this may result in fewer GP visits and unplanned hospital admissions. Provision of education and information will often be of particular benefit to those who have been newly diagnosed with diabetes. Diabetes structured education can also help carers who may be managing insulin on behalf of a person with diabetes.

In 2014/15 there were 396 structured diabetes education programmes available here with 3,101 participants.

My Department's draft Diabetes Strategic Framework, which was published for consultation earlier this year, includes supporting self management through structured diabetes education as one of its key themes. A key action included in the draft Diabetes Strategic Framework is to establish a plan for the delivery of structured diabetes education programmes here, with the goal that all newly diagnosed people with diabetes can be offered structured diabetes education within 6-12 months of diagnosis. Consultation on the draft diabetes Strategic Framework closed on 31 May 2016 and responses to the consultation are currently being considered.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health why prostate cancer surgery is not carried out in Northern Ireland.
(AQW 3582/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Diagnostic and treatment services for prostate cancer across the North are commissioned with reference to best available evidence, including NICE guidance on prostate cancer, issued 2014 (CG 175). The treatment options for patients in the North include surgery, radiotherapy and systemic anticancer therapies (SACT).

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health how many (i) autism; (ii) ADHD; and (iii) Aspergers diagnoses have been made in each Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last five years.
(AQW 3583/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) Table 1, overleaf, details the number of children diagnosed with autism in each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust in each of the last five years.

Please note that figures on the number of children referred for an autism assessment and a diagnosis of autism are published quarterly on the Department's website, and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/autism-spectrum-disorder-asd-statistics>

Table 1

HSC Trust	Year				
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Belfast1	-	-	-	267	353
Northern	310	297	389	356	577
South Eastern	161	165	230	268	232
Southern2	-	31	72	80	158
Western	158	164	126	174	158

Source: HSC Trusts – Community Information Administrative Systems

- 1 The Belfast HSC Trust did not routinely collect this information across all services prior to 2014/15
 - 2 The Southern HSC Trust started to record this information from September 2012
- (ii) To provide the requested information on the number of children diagnosed with ADHD in each HSC Trust in each of the last five years would require a manual trawl through hundreds of files and could therefore not be provided due to disproportionate cost.
- (iii) Children diagnosed with Asperger's are included with those diagnosed with Autism. To provide the requested information on the number of children diagnosed with Asperger's only in each HSC Trust in each of the last five years would require a manual trawl through hundreds of files and could therefore not be provided due to disproportionate cost.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Health how many children in West Tyrone have been diagnosed with autism since 2011.
(AQW 3586/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information is not available in the format requested. However, Table 1 details the number of children in the Western Health and Social Care Trust who have been diagnosed with autism since 2011.

Table1

Year	No. diagnosed with autism
2011/12	158
2012/13	164
2013/14	126

Year	No. diagnosed with autism
2014/15	174
2015/16	158
Total	780

Source: Western Health and Social Care Trust

Mr Middleton asked the Minister of Health how many people are employed by each Health and Social Care Trust as (i) audiologists; (ii) cardiac physiologists; (iii) gastro-intestinal physiologists; (iv) neurophysiologists; (v) respiratory physiologists; and (vi) sleep physiologists on a (a) full time; and (b) part time basis.

(AQW 3660/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of audiologists and physiologists employed in each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust is detailed in the tables below.

Belfast HSC Trust

Profession	Headcount / Whole Time Equivalent
Audiologist	Audiology Department (Band 5 - 8): 18.34 WTE - 16 (14.71 WTE) in post - 4.63 WTE vacancies Auditory Implant Centre (Band 6 - 8): 6 (6.0 WTE) - 4 (3.4 WTE) in post - 2.6 WTE vacancies
Cardiac Physiologist	63 (58.8 WTE) - 51 full time - 12 (7.8 WTE) part time
Gastroenterology Physiologist	0
Neurophysiologist	15 (13.56 WTE) - 8 full time - 5 (3.56 WTE) part time - 2 full time vacancies
Respiratory Physiologist	12 (11.72 WTE) - 10 full time - 2 (1.72 WTE) part time
Sleep Physiologist	2 (2.0 WTE) - 2 full time

Northern HSC Trust

Profession	Headcount / Whole Time Equivalent
Audiologist	14 (11.29 WTE)
Cardiac Clinical Physiologist	19 (15.6 WTE)
Gastroenterology Physiologist	1 (0.1 WTE)
Neurophysiologist	0
Respiratory Clinical Physiologist	4 (2.9 WTE)
Sleep Physiologist	3 (2.5 WTE)

South Eastern HSC Trust

Profession	Headcount / Whole Time Equivalent
Audiologist	Funded Posts: 9.14 WTE - 4 full time - 5 (3.41 WTE) part time - 1.73 WTE vacancies Associate Audiologists: 2.00 WTE - 2.0 WTE vacancies (currently under recruitment)

Profession	Headcount / Whole Time Equivalent
Cardiac Physiologist	23 (22.2 WTE) - 21 full time - 2 (1.2 WTE) part time
Gastroenterology Physiologist	0
Neurophysiologist	0
Respiratory & Sleep Physiologist	3 (3.0 WTE) - 3 full time

Southern HSC Trust

Profession	Headcount / Whole Time Equivalent
Audiologist	13 (12.4 WTE) - 12 full time - 1 (0.4 WTE) part time
Cardiac Physiologist	24 (19.86 WTE) - 16 full time - 6 (3.86 WTE) part time
Gastro-intestinal Physiologist	0
Neurophysiologist	3 (2.61 WTE) - 2 full time - 1 (0.61 WTE) part time
Respiratory Physiologist	8 (5.86 WTE) - 2 full time - 6 (3.86 WTE) part time
Sleep Physiologist	0

Western HSC Trust

Profession	Headcount / Whole Time Equivalent
Audiologist (Band 5 - 8)	11 (10.72 WTE) - 9 full time - 2 (1.72 WTE) part time
Cardiac Physiologists (Band 5 - 8)	22 (21.2 WTE) - 20 full time - 2 (1.2 WTE) part time
Respiratory Physiologists (Band 5 - 8)	4 (3.59 WTE) - 3 full time - 1 (0.59 WTE) part time
Gastro-intestinal physiologists	0
Neurophysiologists Band (Band 5 - 8)	2 (1.8 WTE) - 1 full time - 1 (0.8 WTE) part time
Sleep Physiologists	0

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health to detail the level of financial assistance her Department has provided for research into cardiovascular disease, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 3724/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Health and Social Care (HSC) research is carried out in all Trusts, usually in association with universities. There are a great many sources of funding, including Government, charities and industry and there is no restriction on the type of research which may be supported. The following table provides details of the level of financial assistance the HSC Research and Development Division has provided for research into cardiovascular disease, in each of the last five years, from 1 April 2012 to 26 September 2016.

Year	Amount of Funding into Cardiovascular Research
2012-13	£415,559
2013-14	£396,721
2014-15	£413,693
2015-16	£377,624
2016-17	£300,066

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health to detail the total number of nursing students that have graduated from (i) Queen's University, Belfast; and (ii) Ulster University, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 3725/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The number of nursing students who have graduated from (i) Queen's University Belfast; and (ii) Ulster University, in each of the last five years is set out in the table below. The information requested is not yet available for 2015/2016.

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Queen's University Belfast	395	395	424	402	380
Ulster University	204	204	216	218	220

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health to detail the agency nursing staff costs for HMP Maghaberry for the last three financial years.

(AQW 3748/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below details the agency nursing staff costs for HMP Maghaberry for the last three financial years:

Financial Year	Nursing Agency Costs (Bands 5 and above)
2013/2014	£0.60M
2014/ 2015	£0.50M
2015/2016	£0.55M

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health of any plans to discuss, with the Minister for Justice, establishing a house or landing in HMP Maghaberry for vulnerable prisoners and/or those on a Supporting Prisoner at Risk scheme with constant on duty medical or mental nurse provision.

(AQW 3752/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department is currently working with the Department of Justice in the development of a joint healthcare and criminal justice strategy and action plan which aims to ensure that suitable accommodation is available to all those in contact with the criminal justice system taking into account the health and social care needs of the individual concerned.

All prisoners could be considered to be vulnerable so the strategy will seek to distinguish between the wider category of vulnerable prisoners from those that have an associated physical or mental health need that may require assessment and/or healthcare treatment. The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust will continue to assess and make recommendations to the Department of Justice for transfer of prisoners to a suitable healthcare treatment unit as necessary.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health to detail what her Department is doing to help people diagnosed with cardiovascular disease.

(AQW 3753/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There are many different types of cardiovascular disease and the HSC provides a wide range of services to patients, including lifestyle advice, medication, acute specialist treatment and rehabilitation. The Department's Service Framework for Cardiovascular Health and Wellbeing, which was launched in 2014, sets out standards in relation to the prevention, assessment, diagnosis, treatment, care, rehabilitation and palliative care of individuals/communities who currently have or are at greater risk of developing cardiovascular disease. The Service Framework is available on my Department's website at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/cardiovascular-health-and-well-being-service-framework-documents>.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health what is the average waiting time for physiotherapy referrals and appointments.

(AQW 3762/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the average waiting times for physiotherapy referrals and appointments are not collected in the format requested.

However figures for waiting time bands for patients from referral to commencement of treatment are available. Table 1, overleaf, details the waiting times for patients from referral to commencement of treatment by a physiotherapist at 31 May 2016.

Table 1

Waiting time (weeks)	No. of patients
0 – 3	8,067
>3 – 6	6,262
>6 – 9	4,661

Waiting time (weeks)	No. of patients
>9 – 13	4,458
>13	9,709
Total	33,157

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Health how many cases there have been of patients being administered suspected contaminated blood; and how many of these suspected cases proved to be positive, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 3764/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested does not exist. There is no surveillance data that could show how many cases of blood-borne infection have been suspected by clinicians as having resulted from the transfusion of contaminated blood.

Information on the number of people diagnosed with HIV each year is published by Public Health England and includes data on probable routes of exposure. All HIV infections, acquired through receipt of blood/tissue products, diagnosed since 2002, have been acquired outside of Britain and the north of Ireland. The Public Health England report is at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hiv-data-tables>.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health whether the helipad at the Royal Victoria Hospital will be in use for the 2017 North West 200.

(AQW 3768/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: It is not possible, at this stage, to confirm if the helipad on the roof of the Critical Care Centre at the Royal Victoria Hospital will be fully operational for the NW200 event in May 2017. NIAS are still completing the business case for the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service. Once this has been approved the design and construction of the helipad is currently estimated at 6 – 9 months at a cost of approximately £750k - £800k.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health whether she will bring forward a cancer strategy.

(AQW 3769/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Meeting the challenge posed by cancer is, and will continue to be, one of my highest priorities. We have made great strides in tackling cancer and have seen significant progress in the past decade since the opening of the Cancer Centre at Belfast City Hospital. I wish to see that progress continue and I can assure you that I will give due consideration to the need for a comprehensive cancer strategy.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Health what discussions she has had with the Western Health and Social Care Trust on its contract specifications for domiciliary care providers being based on a formula of 70 per cent cost and 30 per cent quality.

(AQW 3800/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I have not had any discussions with the Western Health and Social Care Trust on its procurement process for domiciliary care. The criteria applied for the procurement process is a matter for each individual Health and Social Care Trust.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health whether her Department and the Western Health and Social Care Trust will work with Derry City and Strabane District Council to facilitate the extension of the Waterside greenway in Derry through the grounds of Gransha hospital.

(AQW 3838/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: A Working Group, consisting of representatives from the Department of Health, the Western HSC Trust, Derry City and Strabane District Council and Land & Property Services (LPS) has already been established to work together towards the extension of the Waterside Greenway on the Gransha Hospital site.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health whether she will lift the ban on intake of residential care at the Roddens' nursing home in Ballymoney.

(AQW 3843/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My predecessor asked the Health and Social Care Board to halt and review the process on the review of statutory residential care homes, as a precautionary measure. The Health and Social Board has now completed its review and I will consider the outcome in due course. No decisions have been made on any proposals for residential care homes under review, including the Roddens residential care home in Ballymoney.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health what is the annual cost to the Northern Ireland Prison Service of housing a mentally ill prisoner in The State Hospital, Carstairs.

(AQW 3851/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There is no cost to the Prison Service. The State Hospital, Carstairs, is one of only four high secure hospitals in Britain. It provides a service for both Scotland and the North of Ireland and is one part of the pathway of care available for those with secure care needs. Consequently, there are some notional costs borne by the Health and Social Care service in respect of clinical assessments and relative visits.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister of Health whether his Department plans to address the shortage of domiciliary care workers in rural areas of Omagh and Strabane.

(AQW 3852/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Western HSC Trust has been working with its existing local independent sector domiciliary care providers to create additional capacity through the use of block guaranteed rotas.

The Trust considers that the offer of block contracting guarantees and a rota-based service delivery model greatly assists independent sector employers with the recruitment and retention of staff to this key frontline service in both urban and rural areas.

Under new contracting arrangements, to be implemented on a phased basis over the coming months, successful independent sector providers will be required to deliver between 65% and 75% of their services via the rota based model.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Health how many people in West Tyrone have been diagnosed with cancer in the last three years, broken down by (i) location; (ii) type of cancer; and (iii) age group.

(AQW 3856/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of people diagnosed with cancer in the West Tyrone assembly area in the last three years is broken down by location, type of cancer and by age group in the tables overleaf.

- (i) The table below shows the number of people diagnosed with cancer in West Tyrone from 2012 to 2014, broken down by electoral ward of residence.

Electoral ward (2014) of residence	All Cancers ¹
Artigarvan	29
Ballycolman	51
Beragh	43
Camowen	49
Castlederg	45
Coolnagard	39
Dergmoney	57
Dromore (Fermanagh)	30
Drumnakilly	33
Drumquin	25
Dunnamanagh	45
Fairy Water	35
Finn	44
Fintona	55
Glenderg	54
Glenelly Valley	49
Gortin	49
Gortrush	37
Killyclogher	51
Newtownsaville	26
Newtownstewart	43
Owenkillew	35
Sion Mills	41
Sixmilecross	32

Electoral ward (2014) of residence	All Cancers ¹
Slievekirk	19
Strabane North	51
Strabane West	45
Strule	60
Termon	39
Trillick	30
Total	1,241

Source: NI Cancer Registry

¹ excluding non-melanoma skin cancer

- (ii) The table below shows the number of people diagnosed with cancer in West Tyrone in each of the last three years, broken down by cancer site.

Cancer Site	2012	2013	2014	Total
Lung	41	44	47	132
Breast	32	56	72	160
Colorectal	68	71	53	192
Prostate	64	54	74	192
Other ¹	185	180	200	565
Total	390	405	446	1,241

Source: NI Cancer Registry

¹ excluding non-melanoma skin cancer

- (iii) The table below shows the number of people diagnosed with cancer in West Tyrone from 2012 to 2014, broken down by age group at diagnosis.

Age-group	All Cancers ¹
0 to 24	7
25 to 29	16
30 to 34	10
35 to 39	28
40 to 44	40
45 to 49	51
50 to 54	81
55 to 59	104
60 to 64	148
65 to 69	201
70 to 74	165
75 to 79	152
80 to 84	128
85 to 89	79
90 and over	31
Total	1,241

Source: NI Cancer Registry

¹ excluding non-melanoma skin cancer

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health to detail the average cost per age-related hearing loss pathway patient in each Health and Social Care Trust of (i) GP referral to Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); (ii) ENT referral; (iii) hearing assessment in ENT; (iv)

issue of hearing aid; (v) aftercare; and (vi) the overall cost of treatment when issued with (a) one hearing aid; and (b) two hearing aids; and how these costs compare to those in England.

(AQW 3861/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health how parents of children with autism access direct payments and self-directed support.
(AQW 3868/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts have a statutory duty to provide direct payments to parents of children with autism, who are eligible for services under Article 18 of the Children (NI) Order 1995; where the Trust is satisfied that the assessed needs of the child can be met appropriately in this way. The family's key worker should be approached to arrange this.

The self directed support project, currently being rolled out across HSC Trusts, will ensure that all service users and carers will be offered access to direct payments or managed budgets, to meet all or part of their assessed support needs, at assessment and review stages. While the project is being rolled out in a phased approach across different programmes of care, HSC Trusts have the power to consider individual requests for access to self directed support, outside of the phased process, on a case by case basis.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health how parents of children with autism access UNOCINI assessments.
(AQW 3869/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Referrals for Autism Services are normally made by a GP or other health professional following a medical assessment of the child /young person.

Referrals are triaged by a Multi-Disciplinary Panel to determine the appropriate service(s) required.

Should a Social Work service be required a UNOCINI referral is completed by Autistic Spectrum Disorder practitioners in partnership with families and forwarded to the appropriate Social Work Service.

It is expected that the UNOCINI assessment is done in partnership with the child / young person and parents and their agreement sought.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of social workers employed in autism service teams in each Health and Social Care Trust, in the last three years.
(AQW 3870/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

Belfast HSC Trust

Adult autism services has one 0.5 WTE social worker. Children with Disability service has one 0.5 WTE social worker who is based within the Children's Disability Team and accepts referrals from the Autism Intervention service as well as working with children who have Severe Learning Disability and Autism.

Northern HSC Trust

Between 2nd Jan 2013 and 15th June 2015, the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Paediatric Service had one (0.61 WTE) social worker. The ASD Adult Service have no social workers.

South Eastern HSC Trust

In the last 3 years, no social workers have been employed in the South Eastern HSC Trust Autism Service.

Southern HSC Trust

Information on the number of social workers within Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Service in the Acorns Centre is detailed in the table below.

Year	Whole Time Equivalent
2014	4.2 WTE
2015	3.5 WTE
2016	3.5 WTE

Across Children with Disabilities Teams/ CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service)/ ASD CAMHS Connect and our residential services, we have a number of social work trained staff who engage children with multiple presentations including Autism.

Western HSC Trust

In the last 3 years, 4 (4.0 WTE) social workers have been employed within the Autism Service.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health to detail the level of funding allocated to autism services in the last three years.
(AQW 3871/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer the member to AQW 54262/11-16 and AQW 40024/11-15 for the information requested.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health how many social workers in the children with disabilities team in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust are (i) agency workers; and (ii) employed directly by the Trust.
(AQW 3875/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of social workers in the children with disabilities team in the Southern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust is detailed in the table below.

Children with Disabilities Teams	Headcount	Whole Time Equivalent
Employed by Trust	30	24.82
Agency Workers	3	2.76

Source: Southern HSC Trust

It should be noted that the Agency Workers are providing cover for long term sick leave, maternity leave and as backfill for a social worker who is currently in an Acting Senior Social Worker post for 3 months.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health why each Health and Social Care Trust operates a different system to enable patients to reclaim appointment travel costs; and whether consideration has been given to a unified system across Trusts.
(AQW 3876/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: All qualifying patients in the North, regardless of the Health and Social Care Trust they are being treated in, may be able to reclaim appointment travel costs from the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme.

The Scheme is publicised across all patient facilities in Health and Social Care and information on the scheme is also available on www.nidirect.gov.uk web site.

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister of Health what are the current hours of provision for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services across Mid Ulster.
(AQW 3889/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Current hours of provision for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are not available on a constituency basis. However, the current hours of provision for CAMHS across the Northern and Southern Trusts, which cover the Mid Ulster area are outlined below:

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

CAMHS in the Northern Trust operates from 9am to 5pm service, Monday to Friday and the CRISIS Resolution Home Service Team operate from 9am to 9pm Monday – Friday and 10am - 2pm Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays. There are plans for this service to be extended. A protocol between CAMHS and Emergency departments is in operation and any young person presenting with mental health needs should be seen within 2 hours. Young people requiring further CAMHS involvement are seen by CAMHS on the day or those attending after 9pm are given an appointment for the following morning.

Southern Health and Social Care Trust

CAMHS in the Southern Trust provide a 365 day service 9.00 am – 7.00 pm Monday to Friday and 9.00 – 5.00 pm Weekends and Bank Holidays.

CAMHS emergency provision is available to all children and young people, who present to either Emergency Departments within Craigavon Area hospital or Daisy Hill Hospital. A protocol between CAMHS and Emergency departments is in operation and any young person presenting with mental health needs should be seen within 2 hours.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health (i) how many children received orthodontic services in each Health and Social Care Trust area since 2011; (ii) the cost to the NHS in each year since 2011; and (iii) the average age of children receiving orthodontic support.
(AQW 3933/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Most orthodontic treatment for children is delivered within primary care through orthodontists working in General Dental Services. In relation to General Dental Services, the number of children who received orthodontic treatment in each Health and Social Care Trust area since 2011 is not available. However, the number of orthodontic treatments paid relating to patients under 18 during each full calendar year since 2011 is shown in Table 1 overleaf.

The costs of orthodontic treatments paid during each full calendar year since 2011 are shown in Table 2.

The average age of children who received orthodontic treatments, within General Dental Services, during each calendar year since 2011, was 13 years old in each year.

The data in Tables 1 and 2 relate to General Dental Services only.

Table 1: Number of Orthodontic Treatments¹ paid relating to patients aged under 182 during each calendar year, 2011 - 2015

LCG3	Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Belfast	9,733	12,613	16,137	13,689	16,474
Northern	11,822	13,319	14,255	13,103	12,293
South Eastern	3,107	3,155	3,751	3,790	3,925
Southern	3,486	4,877	5,924	6,669	7,961
Western	4,740	8,130	10,657	9,893	9,617
NI	32,888	42,094	50,724	47,144	50,270

Source: HSC Business Services Organisation

Table 2: Cost of Orthodontic Treatments¹ paid relating to patients under 182 during each calendar year, 2011 - 2015

LCG3	Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Belfast	£3.5m	£4.3m	£4.8m	£5.2m	£5.2m
Northern	£3.1m	£4.0m	£4.2m	£3.9m	£3.5m
South Eastern	£0.9m	£0.9m	£1.1m	£1.1m	£1.1m
Southern	£1.3m	£1.7m	£2.2m	£2.6m	£2.7m
Western	£1.6m	£2.1m	£3.4m	£3.6m	£3.1m
NI	£10.4m	£13.0m	£15.7m	£16.4m	£15.6m

Source: HSC Business Services Organisation

- 1 Orthodontic treatments are any paid treatment claims which contain an item with a code beginning 32 under the Statement of Dental Remuneration. If more than one claim was submitted and paid for a child within a year, then that will be counted more than once in the figures above.
- 2 Patients aged under 18 at commencement of treatment.
- 3 Data is collected at LCG area, which is coterminous with Trust area.

Orthodontic treatment is not provided by the community dental service and only a small proportion of orthodontic treatment is carried out in secondary care by Belfast, Northern, Southern and Western Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts only, usually for more complex conditions.

The number of attendances by children aged up to 18 at orthodontic appointments in the Belfast HSC Trust, in each of the last 5 financial years, are shown in Table 3 below. It is not possible to identify individual costs of orthodontic treatment for children within Belfast HSC Trust. It is possible to give an approximation or attributed cost, based on average cost of attendance at an orthodontic appointment multiplied by the number of attendances attributed to all those patients aged up to and including 18. This attributed cost per year is also shown in Table 3. Note, overall clinical costs have increased over the time period, due to the move in 2012 to the use of more disposable instrumentation in line with European guidelines.

Table 3: Attendances at orthodontic appointments, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, by children aged up to 18 years, and attributed total cost of these appointments, 2011/12 – 2015/16

Financial Year	Total number of appointments	Attributed cost
2011/2012	899	£0.05m
2012/2013	909	£0.09m
2013/2014	954	£0.09m
2014/2015	1,100	£0.10m
2015/2016	1,054	unavailable

Source: Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

The vast majority of children in the Northern HSC Trust receive orthodontic treatment within primary care through high street specialist orthodontic practitioners, as detailed in Tables 1 and 2. Data relating to secondary care orthodontic treatment could only be provided at disproportionate cost and is therefore not available.

The number of attendances by children aged up to 18 at orthodontic appointments in the Southern HSC Trust, in each of the last 5 calendar years, and the total cost per annum, are shown in Table 4 below. These costs are based on activity data in relation to the number of attendances multiplied by Trust Financial Return (TFR) average orthodontic outpatient costs for the relevant years. TFR costs are fully absorbed and therefore in addition to the direct cost of the service also include all those indirect costs and an element of Trust overheads. The average age of patients was 14 years old.

Table 4: Attendances at orthodontic appointments, Southern Health and Social Care Trust, by children aged up to 18 years, and total cost per annum 2011 – 2015

Calendar Year	Total number of appointments	Total Cost per Annum (£)
2011	2,084	£0.5m
2012	2,060	£0.5m
2013	2,032	£0.4m
2014	2,054	£0.4m
2015	1,838	£0.4m

Source: Southern Health and Social Care Trust

The number of children who have received orthodontic services in the Western HSC Trust are shown in Table 5 below. Western HSC Trust is unable to break down expenditure figures for children and adults. However, Table 6 shows Western HSC Trust total expenditure by financial year on orthodontic services; these figures are for the whole service and cannot be broken down for adults and children (and are therefore not comparable with expenditure figures for the other HSC Trusts). The Western HSC Trust provides orthodontic support for children aged 0-18 years, with the age band 12-18 years being the age band of most patients receiving orthodontic services.

Table 5: Number of children who have received orthodontic services in the Western Health and Social Care Trust during each calendar year, 2011 – 2015

	Calendar Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total No of Children	3,867	3,576	3,439	3,336	3,003

Source: Western Health and Social Care Trust

Table 6: Western Health and Social Care Trust total expenditure on orthodontic services, 2011 – 2015*

	Financial Year				
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Expenditure	£0.9m	£0.9m	£0.9m	£0.9m	Not available

Source: Western Health and Social Care Trust

*These expenditure figures are for the whole orthodontic service in Western Health and Social Care Trust and not just for children; as such, they are not comparable with expenditure figures from other Trusts which are solely for children's orthodontic services.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health to detail (i) the expected completion date of the Omagh Enhanced Local Hospital; and (ii) any additional costs incurred by the delay.
(AQW 3934/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) The Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex is being handed over to the Trust on a phased basis from late January 2017 with operational commissioning and occupation between February and May 2017.
- (ii) The additional costs incurred by the delay of this project are estimated at £5.3m.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health to outline the restrictions for the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service becoming operational by using the facilities at Musgrave Park in the next three months.

(AQW 4083/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I will make a further announcement about the commencement of HEMS after I have been fully briefed on the clinical and patient safety aspects of the service by my Chief Medical Officer. In the meantime the Ambulance Service continues to work closely with health commissioners and other HSC Trusts to plan for the implementation of HEMS as soon as is feasible. It is anticipated that the helipad facilities at Musgrave Park Hospital will continue to be used as they are at present, pending business case approval and the necessary helipad enablement works at the Royal Victoria Hospital by the Belfast Trust. The Ambulance Service is not aware of any restrictions regarding the use of Musgrave Park Hospital in the next three months.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health for an update on the pulse oximetry trial in Daisy Hill Hospital.

(AQW 4131/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The National Screening Committee, who advise the four Health Departments about all aspects of screening, recommended piloting the use of pulse oximetry as part of the newborn screening pathway to identify congenital heart defects. The main aims of the pilot have been to evaluate the feasibility of implementing newborn pulse oximetry screening on health services and to establish the effect on clinical services when pulse oximetry screening is undertaken as part of the newborn and infant physical examination.

The results of the pilot were presented to the NSC at its meeting in June 2016. The evaluation of the pilot recommended further work to inform the Committee's position on pulse oximetry. I will await a policy recommendation from the NSC and will consider their advice before taking a decision on the matter.

The pulse oximetry trial in Daisy Hill Hospital is not part of the NSC pilot.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health to outline the (i) services available in each Health and Social Care Trust for patients that have miscarried; and (ii) progress made on the implementation of the changes suggested by the Patient Client Council.

(AQW 4143/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: All Trusts in the North provide services and support for women who have miscarried. Services and support offered depend on the needs of each family and the stage of the miscarriage loss and include midwifery support, services from a bereavement midwife or bereavement co-ordinator, services from obstetrics and gynaecology staff, access to 'quiet rooms', and provision of written information and leaflets with signposting to voluntary organisations who also provide support.

The services offered by the Trusts are guided by my Department's 'Regional Bereavement Guidance on Evidence-Based, Holistic Care of Parents and Their Families after the Experience of Miscarriage, Stillbirth or Neonatal Death. Sections in the guidance cover spiritual, religious and cultural support and psychological and emotional aspects of care. This guidance was last updated in December 2015 and takes account of suggestions from the Patient and Client Council. Accompanying the guidance, and available in all Trusts, are integrated care guides for professionals for loss at different stages of pregnancy and at, or shortly after, birth.

In addition, as part of the implementation of the "Strategy for Maternity Care in NI 2012-2018" actions are being taken to improve services for women who experience recurrent miscarriage by clarifying and standardising referral criteria and pathways and developing guidance for GPs on appropriate referral. This work is currently underway and HSCB and the Public Health Agency have engaged with the Patient Client Council in relation to issues raised by service users.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister of Health (i) whether Amiodarone is prescribed by local hospitals to treat conditions other than its stated manufacturer's use; (ii) what protocols are in place to monitor patients using this drug; and (iii) when these protocols were introduced.

(AQW 4238/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I have been advised by Health and Social Care Trusts that Amiodarone is prescribed in line with the Summary of Product Characteristics of the licensed products.

There are a range of arrangements in place to monitor patients using Amiodarone. Monitoring is carried out in accordance with guidance such as that given in the Summary of Product Characteristics and the British National Formulary.

The Summary of Product Characteristics is issued when a medicine is first licensed and its contents are monitored throughout its lifespan and guidance updated accordingly. The British National Formulary is updated as necessary on a regular basis.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health on how many occasions in each month of the last year the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service were short of full staff complement.

(AQW 4277/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below shows the number of planned Accident & Emergency and Rapid Response Vehicle shifts in each of the last twelve months and the number of vacant shifts.

Month	Accident & Emergency		Rapid Response Vehicle	
	Planned	Vacant	Planned	Vacant
Oct 2015	3568	262	1094	68
Nov 2015	3445	194	1059	38
Dec 2015	3548	467	1096	116
Jan 2016	3640	371	1122	106
Feb 2016	3476	421	1076	90
Mar 2016	3778	439	1212	122
Apr 2016	3497	363	1090	113
May 2016	3608	443	1128	124
Jun 2016	3498	407	1089	63
Jul 2016	3601	488	1129	124
Aug 2016	3581	507	1124	132
Sept 2016	3479	346	1089	85

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to list the legal fees paid by each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years, on claims for the payment of supplier invoices.

(AQW 4565/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There have been no legal fees paid by each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years, on claims for the payment of supplier invoices.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister of Health when she was first made aware of the May 2015 report Preliminary Analysis On the Impact of a UK Referendum on its Membership of the European Union, compiled by the European Policy and Coordination Unit within the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister.

(AQW 4634/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: As set out in the statement made by the Executive Office on 27th September 2016, the analysis paper was not sent to Ministers for consideration following its completion. I only became aware of the document after its release, following a Freedom of Information request.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail how many 999 calls were abandoned before being answered in each of the last five years.

(AQW 4705/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department is not responsible for answering all 999 calls. The information in this response relates only to 999 calls transferred to the Fire and Rescue Service and Ambulance Service.

The Fire and Rescue Service has no record of any calls being abandoned before being answered in each of the last 5 years.

The Ambulance Service is only able to provide information from 2014/15 onwards. In 2014/15 there were 5,424 abandoned calls and in 2015/16 there were 3,610 abandoned calls.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the average length of time it took for 999 calls to be answered, broken down by emergency service, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 4706/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department is not responsible for answering all 999 calls. The information in this response relates only to the Fire and Rescue Service and Ambulance Service.

Fire and Rescue Service

The Fire and Rescue Service's average call handling times in each of the last five financial years is detailed below. These are the average times from a call answered by the Fire and Rescue Service until its assets are mobilised.

Year	Average Call Handling Time
2011/12	54.16 seconds
2012/13	53.85 seconds

Year	Average Call Handling Time
2013/14	53.87 seconds
2014/15	54.45 seconds
2015/16	56.09 seconds

The average response times across the Fire and Rescue Service for the last five financial years is shown below. The times are from time of call to the time the first appliance was in attendance so the call handling times provided will be included in the figures.

Year	Average Response Time (from time of call)
2011/12	00:09:45
2012/13	00:08:59
2013/14	00:09:45
2014/15	00:09:55
2015/16	00:09:29

Ambulance Service

The ambulance service is not able to provide information in the form requested or over a five-year timescale. The table below provides information on the number of calls answered within the Trust's two-second standard in each month of the last two financial years, the number of calls answered outside of the standard and the average answer delay.

Month / Year	999 calls answered within 2 seconds	Calls delayed	Average answer delay minutes:seconds
2014/15			
Apr-14	14,988	544	00:04
May-14	15,433	625	00:05
Jun-14	15,911	780	00:05
Jul-14	16,633	921	00:05
Aug-14	16,244	700	00:05
Sep-14	15,389	657	00:05
Oct-14	15,870	915	00:06
Nov-14	15,945	1,195	00:07
Dec-14	18,192	1,816	00:08
Jan-15	16,687	1,261	00:07
Feb-15	16,231	1,475	00:07
Mar-15	16,971	1,506	00:07
2015/16			
Apr-15	16,168	1,119	00:06
May-15	16,885	1,476	00:08
Jun-15	16,418	1,213	00:07
Jul-15	16,373	991	00:06
Aug-15	16,896	1,241	00:07
Sep-15	15,905	974	00:06
Oct-15	16,796	862	00:05
Nov-15	16,183	1,043	00:07
Dec-15	18,614	1,300	00:07
Jan-16	17,109	791	00:05

Month / Year	999 calls answered within 2 seconds	Calls delayed	Average answer delay minutes:seconds
Feb-16	16,272	797	00:05
Mar-16	17,877	1,197	00:07

The Ambulance Service categorises its calls into Category A (immediately life threatening), Category B (serious but not immediately life threatening) and Category C (neither serious nor immediately life threatening). The Ambulance Service aims to respond to Category A calls within 8 minutes, Category B calls within 21 minutes and Category C calls within 60 minutes. The average response time for each category in the last two years is given below.

Year	Average Response Time	
2014/15	Category A	00:09:37
	Category B	00:14:05
	Category C	00:20:28
2015/16	Category A	00:10:17
	Category B	00:15:23
	Category C	00:23:50

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health for an update on the business case and timeline for the undertaking of all children's heart surgery at Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin.
(AQW 4742/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Minister Simon Harris and I approved have approved the business case for a world class all-island Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) service. Our announcement on 4 July 2016 committing up to £42m will allow the CHD Network Board to proceed with its implementation plan, which includes the phased transfer of all urgent surgical cases from the north to Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin (OLCHC) by the end of 2017, and all elective surgical cases by the end of 2018. Whilst a number of essential developments are required to facilitate this, including the expansion of Intensive Care capacity in OLCHC, and the associated requirement for additional medical and nursing staff, I am confident that the appropriate plans, structures and funds are in place to achieve it, and this will remain high on the agenda for my future meetings with Minister Harris. The Network is also on course to move to a single waiting list for cardiac catheterisations, which will benefit children across the island, by Spring 2017.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health for an update on the Innovation Fund, including when it will be open for applications.
(AQW 4793/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The public consultation on the draft health and social care Innovation Scheme closed in June 2016. Taking account of consultation responses, the shape of the Scheme is being finalised. It is anticipated that the Scheme will open for applications early next year.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the total number of surgical procedures cancelled for non-medical reasons in each hospital in each of the last 5 years, broken down by reason for cancellation.
(AQW 4795/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: For the purposes of answering this question, it is assumed that, 'non-medical reasons' refers to 'non-clinical reasons.'

Data on cancelled operations in the North of Ireland are available from 1st April 2012. The number of cancelled operations cancelled for non-clinical reasons in each hospital from 2012/13 to 2015/16 is detailed in the table below. Further breakdown by cancellation reason is not available as the list of non-clinical reasons is not exhaustive, and has not been consistently recorded across years.

The number of elective operations cancelled¹ due to non-clinical reasons in the North of Ireland, by hospital site (2012/13 to 2015/16)

Hospital	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Belfast City ^{2,3}	*630	*416	889	894
Mater	185	123	310	246
Musgrave Park	305	268	323	310
Royal Group ⁴	756	*606	1,323	1,561

Hospital	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Antrim	214	243	279	401
Causeway	264	260	244	385
Mid Ulster	36	51	76	100
Whiteabbey	40	65	93	100
Ulster	329	274	291	281
Ards	64	78	94	34
Lagan Valley	173	124	47	65
Downe	100	75	83	33
Craigavon	246	250	266	306
Daisy Hill	113	113	133	110
South Tyrone	98	155	123	91
Altnagelvin	312	229	355	506
South West Acute	111	108	95	157
Tyrone County	0	0	0	0

Source: P9 Cancelled Operations Return

- 1 Includes only elective operations which were cancelled on the day of, or up to two days prior to the planned operation.
- 2 BCH figures are unavailable for Feb 13 due to a technical issue.
- 3 BCH figures are unavailable for May 2013 due to a system error.
- 4 RVH figures are unavailable for Jan, Feb & Mar 2014 due to a system error.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the total number of surgical procedures cancelled within (i) 24; and (ii) 48 hours for non-medical reasons in each hospital in each of the last five years, broken down by reason for cancellation. (AQW 4796/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: For the purposes of answering this question, it is assumed that, 'non-medical reasons' refers to 'non-clinical reasons.'

- (i) Information on the number of operations cancelled within 24 hours is not available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.
- (ii) I refer the member to the response provided to AQW 4795/16-21 which details the number of elective operations cancelled on the day of, or up to two days prior to, the planned operation for non-clinical reasons in each hospital from 2012/13 to 2015/16. Further breakdown by cancellation reason is not available as the list of non-clinical reasons is not exhaustive, and has not been consistently recorded across years.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health how much each Health and Social Care Trust has spent on (i) locum doctors; and (ii) locum nurses in each of the last five years; and for a breakdown across each hospital when applicable. (AQW 4797/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below shows the expenditure for the last five financial years broken down by Health and Social Care Trust against the following categories: Medical and Dental Agency and Nursing and Midwifery Agency:

Medical and Dental Agency

TRUST	2011/12	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
BHSCT	£8.8m	£11.1m	£10.6m	£11.8m	£15.1m
WHSCCT	£6.6m	£6.0m	£6.9m	£10.6m	£13.0m
SEHSCT	£2.2m	£5.2m	£4.3m	£4.0m	£4.4m
SHSCT	£2.5m	£3.6m	£4.2m	£3.7m	£6.1m
NHSCT	£3.0m	£6.5m	£6.5m	£8.4m	£7.8m

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts Nursing and Midwifery Agency

Trust	2011/12	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
BHSCT	£3.1m	£3.7m	£5.3m	£5.6m	£6.7m
WHSCCT	£2.0m	£1.6m	£2.2m	£2.8m	£2.4m
SEHSCT	£2.4m	£2.8m	£2.1m	£1.9m	£2.0m
SHSCT	£0.3m	£0.7m	£0.2m	£0.2m	£1.4m
NHSCT	£0.8m	£1.0m	£1.2m	£1.6m	£3.3m

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

The Department does not routinely collect information by specific hospital site and to provide this would exceed the disproportionate cost threshold.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health how many patients in each Health and Social Care Trust have been diagnosed with Lyme disease in each of the last five years; and for her assessment of the level of treatment available locally.

(AQW 4865/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested regarding the number of cases diagnosed is not held, as Lyme disease is not a statutorily notifiable disease and medical professionals are not required to report cases to the Public Health Agency. Based on laboratory reports only, the Public Health Agency is aware of the cases given in the table below.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
BHSCT	0	1	2	0	0
SEHSCT	0	1	0	0	0
SHSCT	1	1	0	0	0
NHSCT	0	0	4	0	2
WHSCCT	0	0	0	1	0
Total	1	3	6	1	2

Lyme disease is generally treated with antibiotics, however, the details of a course of treatment may vary between patients and according to the stage at which Lyme disease is diagnosed. Detailed advice on antimicrobial agents, doses, and treatment durations can be provided by a clinician practising in the area of infectious disease.

In November 2014 the Public Health Agency issued a Lyme Disease Referral Pathway for clinicians to assist in the investigation and management of suspected Lyme disease.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health to detail the day opportunity provision available in each Health and Social Care Trust; and how many people are served by each opportunity.

(AQW 4920/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested has been provided in the attached Annex by each of the Health and Social Care Trusts.

Annex

The Day Opportunity Provision Available in Each Health and Social Care Trust; and How Many People are Served by Each Opportunity

Belfast Trust

The Belfast HSC Trust has:

- 661 service users using Statutory day centres, community based club models, community day services (providing leisure, educational, recreational and social opportunities); and
- 377 service users using independent non-statutory service providers commissioned by the Trust providing employment support, education, training, volunteering opportunities, travel training, life skills.

Northern Trust

The Northern HSC Trust has:

- 156 people engaged weekly in vocational training opportunities in nine social enterprise facilities and 212 people engaged weekly in supported employment provision with four providers across the Trust's Day Opportunities Service in contract partnership with voluntary sector and agencies;
- 50 people engaged weekly in volunteering opportunities across the Trust's Day Opportunities Service in partnership with volunteer agencies;

- 90 people engaged weekly in further and higher education provision across the Trust's Day Opportunities Service with the Northern Regional College and South West College;
- 336 people engaged weekly in social opportunities across the Trust's Day Opportunities Service in 11 Base ("Drop-In") facilities; and
- 21 people engaged weekly in community group opportunities across the Trust's Day Opportunities Service.

Please note that this information does not include buildings based adult centres or day care provision in the Northern Trust or day care contracted with the voluntary/community sector.

South Eastern Trust

The South Eastern Trust provides Day opportunities for 450 people with the following organisations:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ■ Action Mental Health – 50 | ■ Mencap - 46 |
| ■ Conlig - 15 | ■ Orchardville Society - 37 |
| ■ Core Respite - 2 | ■ Scouthall - 35 |
| ■ Croft - 5 | ■ Seymour Hill - 40 |
| ■ Down Residential Project - 5 | ■ Stepping Stones - 127 |
| ■ Glencraig - 13 | ■ St Marks - 25 |
| ■ Holyview - 25 | ■ YMCA - 25 |

Southern Trust

The Southern Trust provides Day opportunities for 327 services users with the following organisations:

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ■ The Arc - 70 | ■ Mencap employability scheme - 11 |
| ■ Bannvale Horticulture - 31 | ■ Alliance Youth Works - 60 |
| ■ ZEST - 13 | ■ Alternatives to Day Care - 47 |
| ■ Clanrye - 65 | ■ Willowbank - 10 |
| ■ Appleby Careers - 20 | |

Western Trust

The Western Trust provides Day opportunities for 506 service users with the following organisations:

Statutory Sector

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Garden Project - 16 | ■ New Horizons - 43 |
| ■ Strabane Sat. Unit - 25 | ■ Mencap Pathways - 44 |
| ■ Lilliput - 23 | ■ Inspire - 12 |
| ■ Rossville Group - 43 | ■ Mencap Lifesyle - 16 |
| ■ Sow & Grow - 24 | ■ Clanabogan - 20 |
| ■ Fresh Focus - 23 | ■ Positive Futures - 4 |
| ■ FVAD Group - 12 | ■ Potens - 1 |
| ■ New Directions - 64 | ■ Destined - 123 |
| ■ Berries – 12 | ■ Praxis Kesh – 1 |
| ■ Independent Sector | |

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health to detail the budget allocation for day opportunity provision (i) at Northern Ireland level; (ii) at Health and Social Care Trust Level; and (iii) provided to the community and voluntary sector.
(AQW 4921/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department is unable to provide the requested information as expenditure on day opportunities cannot be disaggregated from the overall expenditure on all day support services.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health to detail the best practice tariff for facility based day opportunity provision.
(AQW 4922/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Day Opportunities has existing and developing service contracts across a range of providers; however there is no best practice tariff for facility based day opportunity provision.

Day Opportunities provision aims to access a wide range of opportunities including clubs, community groups, social enterprises, Supported Employment, further education, charities, third sector organisations and outreach projects. Many of these activities do not have associated costs.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health 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, for year ending 30 September 2016.

(AQW 4924/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below details the number of recorded assaults on (i) doctors; (ii) nurses; (iii) carers; (iv) members of the Fire and Rescue Service; (v) members of the NI Ambulance Service; and (vi) all other health workers, broken down by hospital where applicable, for year ending 30 September 2016.

Hospitals (Western Trust)	No. of Recorded Assaults			
	Doctors (i)	Nurses(ii)	*Carers (iii)	Others (iv)
Altnagelvin	5	67	0	2
South West	1	31	0	1
Grangewood	9	68	0	1
Lakeview	4	169	0	19
Waterside	3	100	0	3
Tyrone County	0	5	0	0
Tyrone / Fermanagh	2	64	0	8
Hospitals (Southern Trust)				
Craigavon Area	2	312	0	43
Daisy Hill	0	33	0	8
Lurgan	0	10	0	2
St Lukes	1	57	0	34
South Tyrone	0	4	0	1
**Hospitals (South Eastern Trust)				
Ulster Hospital	6	209	0	18
Ards Hospital	2	14	0	3
Downe Hospital	3	83	0	4
Downshire	1	92	0	5
Lagan Valley	5	148	0	10
Thompson House	0	6	0	0
Hospitals (Belfast Trust)				
Belfast City	2	58	0	2
Royal Group of Hospitals	1	135	0	45
Knockbracken Healthcare Park	5	421	0	13
Muckamore Abbey	5	1473	0	48
Musgrave Park	0	44	0	5
Forster Green	5	122	0	3
Mater	3	158	0	19
Hospitals (Northern Trust)				
Antrim Area	0	103	0	6
Causeway	4	63	0	2
Whiteabbey	0	6	0	0
Holywell	1	301	0	7

Hospitals (Western Trust)	No. of Recorded Assaults			
	Doctors (i)	Nurses(ii)	*Carers (iii)	Others (iv)
Ross Thompson House	0	13	0	0
Mid-Ulster	0	13	0	0
Fire and Rescue Service (v)	4 (in total)			
NI Ambulance (vi)	218 (in total)			

* Figures for 'Carers' are included with 'Others' (Most Trusts unable to distinguish between 'hospital' and 'community' carers from the data held)

** Figures for South Eastern Trust Hospitals are for the period ending 31/8/2016 (11 months only)

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Health how many patients that have been inpatients in a psychiatric ward, or were assessed by the psychiatric liaison team in an Emergency Department, in each of the last five years have subsequently attempted or completed suicide (i) while on the ward; (ii) one week after discharge; and (iii) one month after discharge, broken down by ward. (AQW 4929/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested is not collected centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health how many times the Southern Health and Social Care Trust has sent an urgent request to cover GPs registered for the Trust's out-of-hours service, in each year since 2013. (AQW 4945/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health how many GPs were registered for the out-of-hours service at each Health and Social Care Trust in each month of the last three years. (AQW 4946/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer you to my response to your recent AQW3550/16-21, answered on 19 October 2016.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to list the meetings which representatives of her Department have attended regarding the work of the Expert Panel on the Transformation of Health and Social Care (i) prior to; and (ii) since 21 July 2016. (AQW 4947/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: This information is not routinely collected. However, given that the Expert Panel's report was commissioned and supported by the Department, and that it has informed the strategy for Health and Social Care for the next ten years, it is reasonable to assume that representatives of the Department have been involved in regular engagement and discussion with the Panel both before and after the report was completed.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of nursing vacancies across each Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 5036/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the current number of nursing vacancies in each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust is detailed in the table below.

HSC Trust	Nursing Vacancies
Belfast	255
Northern	208
South Eastern	171
Southern	180
Western	106
Northern Ireland	920

Source: HSC Trusts

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the (i) proportion; and (ii) number of doctor and nursing posts filled over each of the last five years with staff recruited from abroad, broken down by country of origin. (AQW 5037/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:**Belfast HSC Trust**

The Belfast HSC Trust has not actively recruited from outside of the north of Ireland & Britain prior to this year. As part of a regional recruitment exercise for nursing staff which commenced in May 2016, to date three Band 5 Staff Nurses have been recruited (2 from Romania, 1 from Italy). These 3 candidates commenced work in September 2016.

Northern HSC Trust

Information on doctor and nursing posts filled by country of origin is not available; however information on the number of non European Economic Area (EEA) staff taking up posts in the Northern HSC Trust between 2011 and 2013 is detailed in the table below. Information after 2013 cannot be provided.

Staff group	Year of appointment			Total
	2011	2012	2013	
Medical & Dental	3	1	0	4
Nursing & Midwifery	1	6	3	10
Total	4	7	3	14

South Eastern HSC Trust

The South Eastern HSC Trust has recruited one Staff Nurse Band 5 from Romania through international recruitment within the last 5 years. This nurse commenced employment in September 2016. The Trust has not directly recruited any Consultants, Middle Grade or Junior Doctors from abroad in the last 5 years.

Southern HSC Trust

In 2011, one doctor from Eastern Europe was recruited. There were no overseas recruitment campaigns for doctors in 2012, 2013 or 2014.

In 2015, a European recruitment initiative was launched and from this, 10 doctors accepted posts (7 in surgery, 2 in Paediatrics and 1 in Emergency Medicine). So far, 2 doctors have commenced in surgery in Daisy Hill Hospital, the others are acquiring the IELTS qualification to allow them to gain registration with the General Medical Council (GMC). There is also a new regional international recruitment campaign underway.

There were no overseas recruitment campaigns for nurses in the years 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 or 2015. In 2016, international recruitment campaigns for nurses have, to date, resulted in a total of 105 offers being made for posts in the Southern HSC Trust:

- 11 Italian Nurses commenced in September 2016 and are currently undertaking IELTS (English Language) studies to reach the required level for Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) registration. A further 4 Italian Nurses are due to commence in November 2016.
- 90 nurses from the Philippines have been offered posts and are currently undertaking CBT (computer based assessment) and IELTS tests in their own country. The first small cohort of these nurses are expected to commence in 2016 and further cohorts will commence throughout the first half of 2017. On arrival in the north of Ireland, these nurses will undertake a further clinical assessment before full NMC registration is achieved.

Western HSC Trust

The table below details the number of new starts in nursing and medical & dental who have been in post one year or more between 1st April 2011 and 30 September 2016, broken down by nationality.

Nationality*	Nursing		Medical & Dental	
	No.	%	No.	%
British	104	15.62	149	26.94
English	2	0.30	-	-
Indian	3	0.45	4	0.72
Irish	192	28.83	191	34.54
Northern Irish	18	2.70	36	6.51
Pakistani	-	-	4	0.72
Polish	1	0.15	5	0.90
Scottish	5	0.75	4	0.72
Other	5	0.75	14	2.53

Nationality*	Nursing		Medical & Dental	
	No.	%	No.	%
Not provided	336	50.45	146	26.40
Total	666	100.00	553	100.00

* voluntary information provided by staff

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health how many consultant-led appointments have been cancelled in each month of the last three years.

(AQW 5073/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of consultant-led outpatient appointments cancelled by hospitals is not available for each month as it is collected by the Department on a quarterly basis.

The number of new and review hospital cancellations for the last three financial years is shown in the following table.

Quarter ending	New hospital cancellations	Review hospital cancellations
30th June 2013	9,434	32,161
30th September 2013	8,354	31,854
31st December 2013	7,904	34,205
31st March 2014	8,400	34,918
30th June 2014	8,304	32,356
30th September 2014	8,617	33,825
31st December 2014	9,477	33,416
31st March 2015	8,804	33,756
30th June 2015	8,315	28,923
30th September 2015	8,636	30,116
31st December 2015	8,449	29,757
31st March 2016	8,437	30,865

Source: Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the urgent health treatment provided to children who require emergency heart surgery.

(AQW 5074/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer the Member to my response to AQW 4742/16-21. The £42m investment that I and Minister Simon Harris announced in July 2016 will allow the all-island Congenital Heart Disease Network Board to implement its vision of a world class Network. This includes the phased transfer of all urgent surgical cases from the north to Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin (OLCHC) by the end of 2017, and all elective surgical cases by the end of 2018. This process, which includes a number of essential developments, including the expansion of Intensive Care capacity in OLCHC and the associated requirement for additional medical and nursing staff to facilitate the transfer of surgery, is being overseen by the Network Board.

In the meantime patients from the north who require urgent and elective heart surgery are referred by their clinicians to heart centres in England, with whom clinically appropriate and safe interim arrangements continue to operate.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health what process is in place to enable all urgent heart surgery for children to take place by the end of 2017 in Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin in the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 5075/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer the Member to my response to AQW 4742/16-21. The £42m investment that I and Minister Simon Harris announced in July 2016 will allow the all-island Congenital Heart Disease Network Board to implement its vision of a world class Network. This includes the phased transfer of all urgent surgical cases from the north to Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin (OLCHC) by the end of 2017, and all elective surgical cases by the end of 2018. This process, which includes a number of essential developments, including the expansion of Intensive Care capacity in OLCHC and the associated requirement for additional medical and nursing staff to facilitate the transfer of surgery, is being overseen by the Network Board.

In the meantime patients from the north who require urgent and elective heart surgery are referred by their clinicians to heart centres in England, with whom clinically appropriate and safe interim arrangements continue to operate.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health how public satisfaction in the Health Service is measured; and to detail the level of satisfaction in each of the last five years.

(AQW 5233/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Public satisfaction in the Health Service is measured through various mechanisms including; surveys, feedback forms, service user Focus Groups, collation of patient stories, one -to-one interviews, social media and adhoc complements received when the patient episode of care has been completed. This information is gathered by various organisations, Department of Health, The Public Health Agency, Patient Client Council and the Health and Social Care Trusts.

Within the last five years, the department has delivered two surveys capturing information on patient satisfaction, the 2012/13 Health Survey NI and the 2014 Inpatient Patient Experience Survey.

The 2012/13 Health Survey reported high levels of satisfaction with 88% of inpatients, 87% of outpatients, and 83% of those who had been at A&E rating their overall care as excellent or good. Additionally, 89% of respondents who had visited their GP surgery within the previous six months were satisfied with the care they received and 78% of respondents rated the care they received from the out-of-hours GP service as good or very good. Almost all (98%) were satisfied with the service provided by their community pharmacy.

Findings from the 2014 Inpatient Patient Experience Survey indicated that over 90% of respondents were satisfied with the hospital environment, their care and treatment and staff, with 88% satisfied with their overall experience in hospital.

The Public Health Agency (PHA) is responsible for the monitoring and reporting of the standards identified in the departments Framework Document, "Improving the Patient & Client Experience Standards" published in 2009. Methodologies used include patient stories, observations of practice, questionnaires, 10,000 voices initiative and learning from complaints.

Overall, feedback for improving the patient & client experience has been very positive with core standards for respect, attitude, behaviour, communication and privacy & dignity, during the period April 2013 – March 2015 reaching 95% plus for satisfaction.

The 10,000 Voices Initiative provides a regional and robust mechanism for patients to share their experience of health and social care services. Since November 2013, over 9000 stories have been submitted from across a number of service areas which have concluded that a high proportion of patients/families/carers have a positive experience of health and social care services.

In 2012, the Public Health Agency and the Health and Social Care Board surveyed people across the north of Ireland who accessed Mental Health services to assess their experience; this survey was repeated in 2015 indicating that the proportion of service user's who viewed HSC staff to be respectful and considerate, increased from 59% to 73%.

Looking forward; work to deliver against indicator 5 in the draft Programme for Government Framework; to improve the quality of the healthcare experience through measuring the percentage of people who are satisfied with health and social care based on their experience will aim to deliver a clear regionally consistent picture of Healthcare Experience both positive and negative for all people in the north of Ireland which will inform service improvement. A draft Quality Healthcare Experience framework and implementation plan will go out for consultation as part of the Programme for Government.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of available and occupied neonatal critical care cots, or beds, in each hospital as of 10 October 2016; and for the same period in each of the last five years.

(AQW 5234/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The number of available neonatal critical care cots/beds in each hospital at 10th October is shown in the table below.

Hospital	10th October				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Altnagelvin	*	4	2	8	8
Antrim Area	16	15	14	10	14
Craigavon Area	16	16	16	16	16
Daisy Hill	6	6	6	6	6
Royal Jubilee	31	27	27	27	27
South West Acute	*	2	2	4	6
Ulster Hospital	0	0	0	2	0

Note: Neonatal critical care cots/beds include intensive care, high dependency and special care babies.

* Western HSC Trust have been unable to provide these figures.

The number of occupied neonatal critical care cots/beds in each hospital at 10th October is shown in the table below.

Hospital	10th October				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Altnagelvin	*	14	16	10	10
Antrim Area	13	13	7	12	11
Craigavon Area	13	11	11	13	14
Daisy Hill	2	3	0	3	1
Royal Jubilee	18	26	27	21	27
South West Acute	*	4	4	2	0
Ulster Hospital	1	2	1	0	0

Note: Neonatal critical care cots/beds include intensive care, high dependency and special care babies.

* Western HSC Trust have been unable to provide these figures.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of available and occupied paediatric intensive care beds in each hospital as of 10 October 2016; and for the same period in each of the last five years.

(AQW 5235/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Paediatric intensive care beds are only provided within the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children (RBHSC). As such the number of available and occupied beds as at 10th October within the RBHSC is shown in the table below.

Beds	10th October				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Available	8	8	12	12	12
Occupied	6	7	4	8	7

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of (i) available; and (ii) occupied adult critical beds in each hospital as of 10 October 2016; and for the same period in each of the last five years.

(AQW 5236/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

(i) The number of available adult critical care beds in each hospital at 10th October is shown in the table below.

Hospital	10th October				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Altnagelvin	10	10	10	10	10
Antrim Area	7	7	7	7	7
Belfast City	9	9	9	9	9
Causeway	4	4	4	4	4
Craigavon Area	8	8	8	8	8
Mater Infirmorum	6	6	6	6	6
Royal Victoria	25	25	25	25	25
South West Acute	6	6	6	6	6
Ulster	10	10	10	10	10

Note: Adult critical care beds include intensive care and high dependency beds.

(ii) The number of occupied adult critical care beds in each hospital at 10th October is shown in the table below.

Hospital	10th October				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Altnagelvin	4	6	5	6	9

Hospital	10th October				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Antrim Area	5	6	7	5	7
Belfast City	7	7	3	6	5
Causeway	4	3	4	3	4
Craigavon Area	6	8	8	7	7
Mater Infirmorum	5	4	3	3	5
Royal Victoria	22	22	22	21	24
South West Acute	5	3	3	4	5
Ulster	9	9	8	7	9

Note: Adult critical care beds include intensive care and high dependency beds.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the survival rates at stage (i) 1; (ii) 2; (iii) 3; and (iv) 4 for each type of cancer. (AQW 5415/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on five year survival rates by stage for patients diagnosed with cancer between 2005 and 2009 are shown in the table overleaf for the most prevalent cancer types (excluding skin cancer).

	5-Year Net Survival				
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Unknown ¹
Lung, Bronchus & Trachea	35.7%	28.6%	9.1%	2.2%	11.8%
Colorectal	91.2%	85.1%	58.9%	6.4%	40.6%
Breast	100.0%	91.8%	67.5%	14.4%	66.1%
Prostate	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	37.9%	84.7%
Cervix	95.4%	63.6%	48.0%	14.9%	62.4%
Uterus body	97.6%	86.8%	50.7%	17.0%	71.2%
Ovary	89.1%	49.6%	20.0%	7.8%	33.7%
Testis	100.0%	98.4%	*	*	100.0%
Oesophagus	69.6%	44.7%	15.3%	3.6%	10.1%

Source: Northern Ireland Cancer Registry (NICR)¹ stage at diagnosis could not be determined or is incomplete. * numbers are too small to produce a survival estimate.

Cancers of the blood, brain, central nervous system and malignant melanoma are not included due to different or no recommended systemic staging systems for these sites. Other sites that have been omitted include head and neck, kidney, bladder, stomach and pancreatic cancer due to the number of cases by stage at diagnosis in this period being too small to produce a stable survival estimate.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail (i) the number of medical staff, broken down by grade and speciality, on sick leave for each hospital, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 5417/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The tables below provide the percentage of hours lost for medical staff on sick leave from 2014/15 onwards. The required breakdown cannot be provided prior to 2014/15.

Belfast HSC Trust

Percentage of Hours Lost by Hospital

Hospital	Apr 14 - Mar 15	Apr 15 - Mar 16	Apr 16 - Aug 16
Non-hospital sites	3.77%	1.38%	5.33%
Royal Hospitals	1.32%	1.35%	1.10%

Hospital	Apr 14 - Mar 15	Apr 15 - Mar 16	Apr 16 - Aug 16
Musgrave Park Hospital	1.87%	1.96%	1.98%
Belfast City Hospital	1.34%	1.70%	1.33%
Mater Hospital	1.48%	0.79%	1.17%
Knockbracken Healthcare Park	2.70%	8.60%	7.56%
Muckamore Abbey Hospital	4.77%	2.06%	5.23%
Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children	3.63%	4.29%	2.81%
Royal Jubilee Maternity Hospital	2.85%	1.79%	2.52%

Percentage of Hours Lost by Department

Department	April 14 - March 15	April 15 - March 16	April 16 - August 16
Accident & Emergency	0.51%	0.46%	1.00%
Anaesthetics	1.24%	1.53%	1.68%
Blood Transfusion Service	0.00%	6.28%	4.46%
Brain Injury Service	11.88%	0.00%	0.00%
Cancer Services	0.10%	6.12%	0.49%
Cardiac Surgery	0.21%	0.44%	0.08%
Cardiology	1.11%	0.89%	0.72%
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	9.83%	5.18%	9.02%
Clinical Chemistry	0.00%	0.81%	0.00%
Community Health	1.92%	0.00%	0.00%
Cytopathology	0.00%	12.40%	0.00%
Dermatology	0.78%	0.49%	0.10%
Elderly Programme Of Care	0.00%	1.67%	0.00%
ENT - Otolaryngology	0.40%	0.91%	0.21%
Endocrinology & Diabetes	0.06%	0.00%	0.00%
Family Planning Services	2.24%	0.77%	0.75%
Fractures & Orthopaedics	0.88%	0.18%	0.00%
General Medicine	1.07%	1.94%	0.69%
General Surgery	0.47%	0.91%	0.18%
Genito-Urinary Medicine	0.70%	2.75%	0.00%
Geriatric Medicine	1.40%	0.79%	0.29%
Haematology	2.17%	0.59%	0.27%
Histopathology	1.95%	0.98%	0.07%
Immuno Pathology	2.78%	0.48%	0.00%
Infectious Diseases	0.00%	0.11%	0.00%
Learning Disability-Hosp	6.66%	6.94%	0.00%
Mammography	0.42%	0.00%	0.00%
Medical Genetics	0.07%	0.70%	0.00%
Medical Oncology	6.79%	7.91%	0.00%
Microbiology	0.22%	0.87%	2.16%
Nephrology	1.30%	0.45%	0.00%

Department	April 14 - March 15	April 15 - March 16	April 16 - August 16
Neurology	3.41%	2.23%	3.06%
Neuro Surgery	2.39%	3.29%	0.51%
Nursing Community	0.00%	0.95%	0.00%
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	2.45%	1.51%	2.63%
Occupational Health Services	3.67%	4.25%	2.45%
Ophthalmology Service	0.99%	1.23%	0.16%
Orthopaedic Surgery	1.40%	0.53%	1.12%
Paediatric Service - Community	0.89%	2.34%	14.99%
Paediatric Service - Hospital	2.75%	3.84%	1.75%
Paediatric Surgery	1.02%	4.09%	0.00%
Plastic Surgery	13.56%	0.00%	0.00%
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	3.63%	3.85%	6.17%
Radiotherapy	2.09%	1.37%	0.50%
Respiratory Investigation	14.18%	33.33%	33.33%
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	2.31%	0.29%	0.98%
Radiology	0.20%	1.35%	0.82%
Thoracic Medicine	0.00%	1.91%	0.00%
Thoracic Surgery	0.20%	0.00%	0.00%
Thor/Cardiac Surgery	1.64%	0.48%	0.31%
Urology	0.13%	0.67%	0.00%
Vascular Surgery	0.03%	0.76%	0.00%

Percentage of Hours Lost by Grade

Job Grade	Apr 14 - Mar 15	Apr 15 - Mar 16	Apr 16 - Aug 16
Consultant	1.59%	1.94%	1.53%
Associate Specialist	5.95%	3.10%	5.61%
Staff Grade	5.28%	14.43%	11.93%
Specialty Doctor	4.18%	3.05%	4.78%
Specialist Registrar	0.08%	0.00%	0.00%
Specialty Registrar (StR)	1.60%	1.20%	1.01%
Core Trainee	1.26%	2.24%	1.73%
Foundation House Officer 1	1.14%	0.92%	0.13%
Foundation House Officer 2	0.97%	1.68%	2.73%
Trust Appointment For Services	2.33%	0.19%	0.24%
Clinical Fellow	1.36%	0.63%	0.00%
Clinical Research Fellow	1.12%	0.00%	0.00%
Locum Appointment For Training	1.03%	1.68%	0.48%
Hospital/Medical Practitioner (Sessions)	2.09%	3.60%	3.87%
Fixed Term Spec Appointment	1.10%	0.00%	0.00%

Northern HSC Trust**Percentage of Hours Lost by Hospital, Department and Job Grade**

Hospital & Department	Job Grade	Apr 14 - Mar 15	Apr 15 - Mar 16	Apr 16 - Aug 16
Antrim Area Hospital				
Accident & Emergency	Associate specialist	0.00%	0.00%	14.94%
	Consultant	7.92%	9.20%	37.36%
	Core Trainee	59.91%	0.00%	0.00%
	Foundation Doctor 2	0.00%	0.00%	2.94%
	Specialty Doctor	0.00%	0.38%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar	2.54%	5.91%	1.53%
Acute Internal Medicine	Associate specialist	0.00%	0.00%	0.57%
	Consultant	0.00%	0.00%	1.53%
	Core Trainee	0.00%	0.00%	1.54%
	Foundation Doctor 1	0.00%	0.00%	4.67%
	Foundation Doctor 2	0.00%	0.00%	2.56%
	Specialty Registrar	0.00%	0.00%	1.15%
Anaesthetics	Consultant	10.35%	11.91%	5.84%
	Core Trainee	3.54%	2.15%	7.52%
	Specialty Doctor	1.78%	0.38%	1.15%
	Specialty Registrar	1.75%	5.51%	14.94%
Cancer Services	Specialty Doctor	0.00%	1.55%	0.00%
Cardiology	Foundation Doctor 1	0.00%	3.74%	100.00%
	Foundation Doctor 2	0.00%	2.22%	0.00%
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant	2.08%	0.77%	0.00%
Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	Consultant	0.00%	0.00%	1.72%
Clinical Chemistry	Consultant	0.00%	0.38%	0.00%
Clinical Radiology	Consultant	0.00%	0.00%	0.57%
Dermatology	Consultant	5.89%	4.90%	39.08%
	Specialty Doctor	1.02%	0.00%	1.15%
ENT - Otolaryngology	Associate specialist	0.00%	1.15%	0.00%
	Core Trainee	0.00%	0.77%	8.70%
	Foundation Doctor 2	0.00%	52.94%	0.00%
General Admin	Consultant	0.00%	0.77%	0.00%
General Medicine	Associate specialist	2.03%	2.30%	0.00%
	Consultant	4.26%	5.38%	0.00%
	Core Trainee	2.09%	3.16%	4.35%
	Foundation Doctor 1	2.91%	2.56%	6.00%
	Foundation Doctor 2	3.66%	9.40%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	6.89%	4.63%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar	3.30%	3.87%	0.00%

Hospital & Department	Job Grade	Apr 14 - Mar 15	Apr 15 - Mar 16	Apr 16 - Aug 16
General Psychiatry	Consultant	0.00%	0.00%	1.25%
	Core Trainee	0.00%	0.00%	16.99%
	Foundation Doctor 2	0.00%	0.00%	2.35%
General Surgery	Consultant	5.33%	18.01%	0.57%
	Core Trainee	11.17%	1.60%	1.96%
	Foundation Doctor 1	1.69%	1.80%	1.18%
	Foundation Doctor 2	0.00%	2.68%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	21.07%	5.23%	0.00%
Haematology	Consultant	0.00%	4.21%	1.44%
Histo/Cyto	Consultant	0.00%	3.83%	0.00%
Histopathology	Consultant	29.82%	5.58%	20.11%
Medical Mgmt	Consultant	11.17%	0.00%	0.00%
Nephrology	Core Trainee	0.00%	6.33%	0.00%
Neurology	Consultant	1.52%	0.00%	0.00%
Not assigned	Foundation Doctor 2	76.47%	0.00%	0.00%
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant	1.52%	6.51%	44.77%
	Foundation Doctor 2	0.00%	17.19%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar	49.12%	22.27%	0.00%
Otolaryngology	Associate specialist	0.00%	0.00%	20.69%
Paediatric Service - Community	Specialty Doctor	19.80%	1.15%	0.00%
Paediatric Service - Hospital	Consultant	7.54%	0.51%	0.00%
	Foundation Doctor 2	3.33%	3.41%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	1.02%	0.00%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar	8.34%	6.28%	9.52%
Paediatrics	Associate specialist	0.00%	0.00%	0.71%
	Consultant	0.00%	0.00%	11.21%
	Foundation Doctor 2	0.00%	0.00%	4.41%
	Specialty Doctor	0.00%	0.00%	0.57%
	Specialty Registrar	0.00%	0.00%	3.19%
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	Core Trainee	0.00%	19.83%	0.00%
Radiology	Consultant	20.18%	8.04%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar	0.00%	3.80%	0.00%
Renal	Specialty Doctor	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Rheumatology	Consultant	0.00%	0.00%	86.21%
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	Consultant	0.00%	48.66%	0.00%
Specialist Services	Consultant	0.00%	10.73%	0.00%

Hospital & Department	Job Grade	Apr 14 - Mar 15	Apr 15 - Mar 16	Apr 16 - Aug 16
Causeway Hospital				
Accident & Emergency	Associate specialist	7.09%	0.00%	99.43%
	Consultant	25.89%	10.34%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	0.00%	0.38%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar	1.89%	12.66%	0.71%
Acute Internal Medicine	Consultant	0.00%	0.00%	3.83%
	Core Trainee	0.00%	0.00%	0.77%
	Foundation Doctor 1	0.00%	0.00%	2.40%
	Foundation Doctor 2	0.00%	0.00%	1.81%
	Specialty Registrar	0.00%	0.00%	0.78%
Anaesthetics	Associate specialist	0.00%	0.38%	100.00%
	Consultant	1.52%	12.26%	6.21%
	Specialty Doctor	6.09%	15.66%	0.57%
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Specialty Registrar	0.00%	0.42%	0.00%
Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	Specialty Registrar	0.00%	0.00%	1.54%
General Medicine	Consultant	12.69%	1.63%	0.00%
	Core Trainee	1.14%	0.65%	0.00%
	Foundation Doctor 1	4.50%	1.75%	0.00%
	Foundation Doctor 2	4.08%	1.70%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	0.76%	2.68%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar	1.10%	2.34%	0.00%
General Psychiatry	Consultant	0.00%	0.00%	0.57%
	Foundation Doctor 2	0.00%	0.00%	1.76%
	Specialty Doctor	0.00%	0.00%	6.90%
General Surgery	Associate specialist	81.34%	22.99%	12.93%
	Consultant	0.00%	4.98%	22.99%
	Core Trainee	3.30%	0.93%	0.77%
	Foundation Doctor 1	7.14%	0.00%	0.00%
	Foundation Doctor 2	0.00%	9.71%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	0.00%	0.00%	0.57%
	Specialty Registrar	0.00%	0.84%	0.00%
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Specialty Doctor	0.00%	0.00%	12.64%
Paediatrics	Associate specialist	0.00%	0.00%	8.05%
	Consultant	0.00%	0.00%	70.42%
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Associate specialist	0.00%	2.30%	0.00%
	Consultant	1.02%	57.28%	0.00%
	Foundation Doctor 2	1.54%	0.00%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar	2.28%	3.74%	0.00%

Hospital & Department	Job Grade	Apr 14 - Mar 15	Apr 15 - Mar 16	Apr 16 - Aug 16
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	Consultant	24.55%	0.00%	0.00%
	Foundation Doctor 2	1.10%	1.56%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	1.02%	0.00%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar	3.77%	0.00%	0.00%
Radiology	Consultant	2.54%	14.56%	0.00%
Urology	Consultant	8.12%	67.62%	0.00%
Other Sites				
Acute Internal Medicine	Associate specialist	0.00%	0.00%	6.45%
	Consultant	0.00%	0.00%	2.87%
General Medicine	Associate specialist	6.09%	6.32%	0.00%
	Consultant	50.25%	0.77%	0.00%
	Other	1.02%	0.00%	0.00%
General Psychiatry	Consultant	0.00%	0.00%	14.87%
	Core Trainee	0.00%	0.00%	3.92%
	Foundation Doctor 2	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
	Specialty Doctor	0.00%	0.00%	19.25%
	Specialty Registrar	0.00%	0.00%	0.65%
General Surgery	Foundation Doctor 2	0.00%	0.00%	10.59%
Paediatrics	Associate specialist	0.00%	0.00%	0.57%
Paediatric Service - Community	Specialty Doctor	2.03%	0.38%	0.00%
Paediatric Service - Hospital	Associate specialist	0.51%	0.00%	0.00%
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	Associate specialist	1.02%	1.92%	0.00%
	Consultant	12.99%	11.00%	0.00%
	Core Trainee	2.43%	26.17%	52.38%
	Foundation Doctor 2	1.67%	12.33%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	3.21%	6.72%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar	5.21%	1.05%	0.00%
	Staff grade	0.00%	1.53%	0.00%

South Eastern HSC Trust**Percentage of Hours Lost by Hospital and Job Grade**

Hospital & Job Grade	April 14 - March 15	April 15 - March 16	April 16 - August 16
Ards Community Hospital			
Specialty doctor	20.69%	0.00%	0.00%
Consultant	7.66%	1.00%	0.91%
Downe Hospital			
Foundation House Officer 1	0.44%	0.00%	0.74%
Foundation House Officer 2	0.09%	0.00%	0.00%
Core Trainee	0.65%	1.09%	0.00%
Consultant	0.00%	1.38%	0.00%

Hospital & Job Grade	April 14 - March 15	April 15 - March 16	April 16 - August 16
Lagan Valley Hospital			
Consultant	1.80%	26.74%	13.17%
Foundation House Officer 1	0.06%	0.10%	0.29%
Foundation House Officer 2	0.00%	0.70%	0.00%
Specialty doctor	2.96%	1.14%	0.21%
Specialty registrar (StR)	0.00%	0.24%	0.26%
Core trainee	0.00%	0.16%	0.34%
Ulster Hospital			
Hosp Practitioner (Sessions)	0.00%	3.21%	9.17%
Foundation House Officer 1	0.48%	0.39%	0.04%
Foundation House Officer 2	0.36%	1.26%	0.34%
Specialty registrar (StR F/T)	1.57%	11.82%	2.06%
Specialty registrar (StR)	0.00%	0.57%	0.00%
Specialty doctor	4.92%	5.48%	3.41%
Core trainee	0.69%	0.25%	0.12%
Consultant	0.58%	0.76%	0.47%

Southern HSC Trust**Percentage of Hours Lost by Hospital, Department and Job Grade**

Hospital & Department	Job Grade	Apr 14 - Mar 15	Apr 15 - Mar 16	Apr 16 - Aug 16
Craigavon Area Hospital				
Accident & Emergency	Associate Specialist	0.13%	0.00%	0.00%
	Consultant	1.97%	2.80%	0.92%
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0.00%	0.46%	0.00%
	Foundation House Officer 2	1.86%	0.16%	0.63%
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0.99%	0.08%	0.94%
Anaesthetics	Consultant	0.00%	2.28%	1.66%
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	7.69%	0.00%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	1.15%	3.82%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0.27%	2.79%	0.54%
Cancer Services	Consultant	0.00%	5.11%	0.46%
	Specialty Doctor	28.74%	5.34%	50.46%
Dermatology	Assoc Specialist	1.28%	0.00%	27.22%
	GP Sessions	0.00%	2.04%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	9.12%	8.13%	0.00%
ENT - Otolaryngology	Consultant	0.00%	0.60%	0.68%
	Specialty Doctor	0.21%	0.16%	0.00%
General Medicine	Consultant	0.88%	1.74%	0.00%
	Foundation House Officer 1	0.12%	0.16%	0.00%
	Foundation House Officer 2	1.28%	0.00%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	2.24%	0.00%	1.88%

Hospital & Department	Job Grade	Apr 14 - Mar 15	Apr 15 - Mar 16	Apr 16 - Aug 16
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0.62%	0.27%	0.00%
General Surgery	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0.00%	18.25%	0.00%
	Foundation House Officer 1	0.00%	0.68%	0.17%
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0.00%	6.95%	6.58%
Geriatric Medicine	Associate Specialist	0.00%	4.01%	36.24%
	Consultant	0.32%	0.00%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	0.26%	0.14%	0.00%
Mental Health - Hosp	Consultant	1.23%	0.38%	0.00%
	Foundation House Officer 2	0.00%	1.44%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	8.89%	15.79%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0.00%	5.98%	0.00%
	Trust Appt For Services	1.23%	4.20%	2.75%
Neurology	Consultant	0.00%	0.19%	0.00%
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant	0.98%	0.00%	0.00%
	Foundation House Officer 2	0.00%	4.20%	0.00%
	Specialist Registrar	19.78%	0.00%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	1.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	2.44%	3.33%	0.81%
Orthopaedic Surgery	Consultant	1.33%	0.22%	0.00%
	Foundation House Officer 1	0.00%	0.37%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	0.00%	0.44%	0.00%
Paediatric Serv - Hospital	Specialty Doctor	0.10%	1.09%	0.23%
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0.00%	0.20%	2.68%
Pathology	Consultant	0.11%	0.99%	1.03%
Radiology	Consultant	0.05%	1.67%	0.00%
Daisy Hill Hospital				
Accident & Emergency	Consultant	0.52%	0.79%	0.00%
	Foundation House Officer 2	0.53%	12.21%	38.42%
	Specialty Doctor	9.96%	0.00%	0.00%
Anaesthetics	Consultant	8.02%	1.04%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	0.31%	0.76%	0.18%
Day Care Serv	Consultant	3.83%	10.31%	0.00%
General Medicine	Consultant	0.00%	2.94%	13.87%
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0.00%	0.00%	31.19%
	Foundation House Officer 1	1.36%	0.28%	6.17%
	Foundation House Officer 2	0.00%	1.92%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	0.00%	0.16%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0.60%	0.00%	1.17%
General Surgery	Consultant	0.00%	1.26%	0.40%
	Foundation House Officer 2	0.00%	18.70%	1.38%

Hospital & Department	Job Grade	Apr 14 - Mar 15	Apr 15 - Mar 16	Apr 16 - Aug 16
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Associate Specialist	2.28%	0.00%	0.00%
	Consultant	0.00%	10.36%	9.17%
	Specialty Doctor	0.00%	2.14%	0.00%
Paediatric Service - Hospital	Associate Specialist	4.60%	0.00%	0.00%
	Consultant	12.55%	0.99%	25.32%
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	GP Sessions	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	GP With Specialist Interest	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	1.05%	3.93%	0.17%
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0.09%	1.18%	0.00%
	Trust Appt For Services	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Radiology	Consultant	0.00%	13.36%	0.00%
Lurgan Hospital				
Geriatric Medicine	Consultant	4.21%	0.00%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	0.18%	0.00%	0.00%
Paediatric Serv - Community	Associate Specialist	7.28%	0.00%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	0.00%	1.91%	0.00%
South Tyrone Hospital				
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant	5.36%	0.00%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	0.38%	0.00%	0.00%
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0.00%	30.00%	0.00%
	Trust Appt For Services	0.00%	0.00%	4.76%
Geriatric Medicine	Associate Specialist	0.00%	4.58%	0.00%
Mental Health - Community	Consultant	0.00%	1.34%	0.00%
St Luke's Hospital				
Home Treatment /Crisis Response	Consultant	0.00%	1.72%	0.00%
Learning Disability -Hosp	Consultant	0.00%	1.40%	0.00%
Mental Health - Hospital	Consultant	0.00%	2.44%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	8.05%	2.01%	11.79%
Tower Hill				
Mental Health - Hospital	Consultant	0.00%	5.73%	0.00%
Paediatric Serv - Community	Consultant	0.00%	35.88%	36.63%
Other Sites				
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant	0.42%	1.03%	0.00%
	Specialty Doctor	3.51%	1.68%	4.86%
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	2.65%	0.38%	0.00%

Hospital & Department	Job Grade	Apr 14 - Mar 15	Apr 15 - Mar 16	Apr 16 - Aug 16
Orthopaedic Service	GP ICATS	0.52%	0.48%	0.00%
Paediatric Serv - Hospital	Consultant	0.38%	11.07%	0.00%

Western HSC Trust**Percentage of Hours Lost by Hospital and Department**

Hospital & Department	April 14 - March 15	April 15 - March 16	April 16 - August 16
Altnagelvin Hospital			
General Medicine	0.74%	0.92%	0.00%
Obstetrics	0.36%	1.47%	0.00%
Anaesthetics	3.70%	3.85%	3.60%
General Surgery	1.51%	0.64%	0.68%
Paediatrics Medical	5.82%	1.90%	2.25%
COTE Medical	11.84%	0.00%	0.00%
Urology Department	0.00%	4.46%	1.91%
Orthopaedics	0.97%	2.07%	3.53%
G.U.M. Clinic	15.50%	0.00%	0.00%
E.N.T.	3.31%	0.53%	3.59%
A&E Department	2.44%	1.97%	0.00%
Oncology Medical 1	6.90%	0.00%	0.00%
Acute Medical Unit	3.62%	0.49%	0.00%
Rheumatology	6.64%	0.00%	0.00%
X-Ray Department	8.19%	2.74%	0.00%
Ophthalmology	3.69%	6.45%	0.08%
Oral Surgery	3.67%	0.07%	0.00%
Haematology	5.36%	12.91%	0.00%
Palliative Care	1.81%	0.74%	8.15%
Stroke Services	0.00%	0.00%	29.36%
General Medicine Training	0.00%	0.38%	4.49%
Radio CTR-General IN	0.00%	0.00%	1.49%
Occupational Health	1.23%	0.48%	0.00%
Gransha Hospital			
Medical Staff	0.00%	10.54%	18.61%
Junior Doctors Training	1.15%	1.94%	3.81%
South West Acute Hospital			
Medical Staff	0.09%	5.36%	0.00%
General Medicine	0.66%	2.59%	0.13%
Gynaecology Ward	7.91%	0.67%	0.00%
Maternity Ward	12.03%	0.00%	0.00%
Paediatric Medicine	0.00%	2.39%	4.29%
Surgical Specialty	5.78%	1.37%	1.77%
Anaesthetics	4.53%	0.95%	3.09%

Hospital & Department	April 14 - March 15	April 15 - March 16	April 16 - August 16
Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital			
Consultant Psychiatrist	2.14%	5.60%	3.57%
Omagh Elderly CMHT	39.46%	100.00%	0.00%

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the waiting times for biopsies in each hospital, in each of the last five years. (AQW 5418/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the waiting times for biopsies is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health how many patients in each (i) Health and Social Care Trust; and (ii) hospital, have chosen to self-pay in the independent sector for diagnosis or treatment, in each of the last five years. (AQW 5419/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of patients who have chosen to self-pay in the independent sector for diagnosis or treatment is not collected by the Department.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of procedures that have been cancelled in South Tyrone Hospital in each of the last three years; and how many were cancelled as a result of (i) the patient not being present; (ii) pressures on hospital resources; and (iii) the consultant or surgeon not being present. (AQW 5426/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of cancelled operations in South Tyrone hospital during the last three years are provided in the table below.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Total cancellations ¹	504	483	581
Patient Cancellations ²	167	132	307
Cancellations due to pressures on hospital resources ³	0	0	0
Cancellations due to Surgeon unavailable	0	17	26

Source: P9 Cancelled Operations Information return

- 1 Includes both non-clinical and other reasons.
- 2 Includes patient could not attend; did not attend; and patient refusal.
- 3 Includes cancellations due to ward beds and ICU/ HDU beds unavailable.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to list each person outside of her departmental staff that have had sight of the Bengoa Report before it's publication. (AQW 5525/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: A limited number of officials in key posts within the Health and Social Care system had advance sight of the Expert Panel's Report as I discussed, considered and developed my response to it. I do not propose to list individual names.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, other than her Department, to outline the alternate streams of funding for the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority. (AQW 5905/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below details Departmental funding and the alternate streams of funding to the RQIA in each of the last two financial years

Funding Source	2014 - 15	2015 - 16
(Capital Resource Limit and Revenue Resource Limit)	£7,220,652	£7,247,846
Income From Fees	£954,459	£929,147

RQIA is one of seventeen Arms Length Bodies for which my Department provides sponsorship.

The relationship between the RQIA and my Department is set out in the current Management Statement and Financial Memorandum: <https://www.rqia.org.uk/RQIA/files/ce/ce03c675-8a6a-410d-9fa5-7e1db1ef775f.pdf>

The Management Statement and Financial Memorandum expands on the provisions of Managing Public Money NI which sets out the main principles for dealing with resources used by public sector organisations in the north of Ireland.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health to outline her Department's relationship with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority.

(AQW 5906/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below details Departmental funding and the alternate streams of funding to the RQIA in each of the last two financial years

Funding Source	2014 - 15	2015 - 16
(Capital Resource Limit and Revenue Resource Limit)	£7,220,652	£7,247,846
Income From Fees	£954,459	£929,147

RQIA is one of seventeen Arms Length Bodies for which my Department provides sponsorship.

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The Management Statement and Financial Memorandum expands on the provisions of Managing Public Money NI which sets out the main principles for dealing with resources used by public sector organisations in the north of Ireland.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health to outline the departmental funding to the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority in each of the last two financial years.

(AQW 5907/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below details Departmental funding and the alternate streams of funding to the RQIA in each of the last two financial years

Funding Source	2014 - 15	2015 - 16
(Capital Resource Limit and Revenue Resource Limit)	£7,220,652	£7,247,846
Income From Fees	£954,459	£929,147

RQIA is one of seventeen Arms Length Bodies for which my Department provides sponsorship.

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The Management Statement and Financial Memorandum expands on the provisions of Managing Public Money NI which sets out the main principles for dealing with resources used by public sector organisations in the north of Ireland.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health on what the £8m funding allocated to learning disability programmes of care in the Western Health & Social Care Trust will be spent.

(AQW 5908/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Western Health and Social Care Trust confirmed that it is planning to increase its resourcing in the Learning Disability Programme of Care by £8m. Plans totalling an investment of £3m have already been provided by the Trust and plans for the remaining £5m will be developed with families and carers in the area.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health what extensions or additions are to be made for the provision of fibromyalgia services, including practitioners in pain management and mental health support.

(AQW 5909/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Health Social Care Board (HSCB) and Public Health Agency (PHA) in collaboration with the Pain Forum recently prepared a five year plan for pain management service improvement including for patients with fibromyalgia.

The plan outlines the benefits of increasing the number of specialist pain management staff in hospitals, primary and community care settings as well as the upskilling of other professional staff and an expansion of voluntary services working with patients who suffer from painful conditions.

This plan will be considered by the HSCB/PHA and the Department in the context of sustainability and affordability as we work to transform Health and Social Care in the North in line with the principles set out in Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health (i) how many couples have undergone In-Vitro Fertilisation treatment in each month of the last three years; (ii) what costs are associated with the treatment; and (iii) for her assessment of the success rates. (AQW 5910/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Some of this information is not readily available in the breakdown requested and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

However, from 26/10/13 – 25/10/14 an average 62 couples per month commenced publicly funded in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) or intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) treatment. From 26/10/14 – 25/10/15 an average 57 couples per month commenced treatment and 26/10/15 – 26/10/16 an average 61 couples per month commenced treatment.

HSC costs for IVF are £3120 per cycle.

Success rates at the Regional Fertility Centre (RFC) in Belfast were 25% in 2014 and 26.6% in 2015. Data for 2016 is still subject to change.

The RFC does not use Primo Vision Time Lapse monitoring but uses the similar EEVA Time Lapse monitoring. Private patients pay £600 for EEVA Time Lapse and HSC patients can also request this as an add-on to their HSC cycle, if they wish to pay for it.

So far 208 patients have availed of this option, 145 of whom are HSC patients.

EEVA improves outcomes by providing quantitative information to aid the embryologist in the selection of those embryos with the highest potential and therefore those embryos which are suitable for embryo transfer and freezing.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health (i) how many couples have undertaken Primo-Vision Time Lapse treatment in each month since the system has been available through the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) what costs are associated with the treatment; and (iii) for her assessment of the success rates. (AQW 5911/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Some of this information is not readily available in the breakdown requested and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

However, from 26/10/13 – 25/10/14 an average 62 couples per month commenced publicly funded in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) or intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) treatment. From 26/10/14 – 25/10/15 an average 57 couples per month commenced treatment and 26/10/15 – 26/10/16 an average 61 couples per month commenced treatment.

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EEVA improves outcomes by providing quantitative information to aid the embryologist in the selection of those embryos with the highest potential and therefore those embryos which are suitable for embryo transfer and freezing.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health how many couples have privately purchased Primo Vision Time-Lapse treatment (i) through the Health Service; and (ii) through a private provider, in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 5912/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Belfast Health and Social Care Trust have advised that Primo Vision Time-Lapse treatment is not used in the Regional Fertility Centre.

Information on the number of couple who have privately purchased Primo Vision Time-Lapse treatment through a private provider is not collected centrally by the Department.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Health to detail any capital developments being planned at Daisy Hill Hospital in Newry. (AQW 5915/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Southern Trust has identified the provision of bed lifts for the evacuation strategy at Daisy Hill Hospital, at an anticipated cost of £5.4m, as a major capital priority. Decisions on this project will be considered alongside other capital investment priorities and will be dependent on future budget availability, value for money and affordability. In addition there are a number of smaller schemes, including infrastructure works and various minor works which will be taken forward during the year.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Health to detail any expansion of services proposed for Daisy Hill Hospital in Newry. (AQW 5916/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Construction of a new purpose designed paediatric centre is currently underway at Daisy Hill Hospital and works are expected to complete in November 2017. The new paediatric centre will include a theatre suite, recovery area, a 19 bed inpatient ward and an ambulatory care unit.

There is ongoing discussion between the Southern Local Commissioning Group and the SHSCT about plans to enhance acute services at Daisy Hill Hospital.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of community nursing provision in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 5945/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware there is a shortfall in registered nurses in community and acute services across the Western Health and Social Care Trust. The Trust is taking forward a number of actions to address this shortfall. These include:

- A working group to review and streamline processes to improve the effectiveness of recruitment of band 5 registered nurses;
- Active engagement in the Regional International Nurse Recruitment Campaign, which has resulted in offers of employment to 106 nurses from the Philippines due to arrive in January 2017; and
- Participation in one European Recruitment event, which resulted in 16 offers of employment to Italian nurses, 10 of which arrived in September 2016.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health how the Adult Safeguarding team in the Western Health and Social Care Trust is highlighting and combatting the financial abuse of older people.

(AQW 5962/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The financial abuse of older people is considered within the Western Trust's Local Adult Safeguarding Partnership. The Trust continues to work with its partners on the issue and to use campaign opportunities such as World Elder Abuse Day to increase awareness of the prevalence and impact of financial abuse on older people. The Trust also intends to introduce the issue into its core Adult Safeguarding learning and development programme to improve staff knowledge and understanding of financial abuse on older people.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health whether all Rapid Response Vehicles are staffed by paramedics in every circumstance.

(AQW 5964/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Yes.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health (i) how many people under 18 years old are diagnosed with epilepsy in each Health and Social Care Trust area; (ii) how many are being prescribed medication; (iii) what medication is used to treat these young people; and (iv) to list the alternative treatments being used.

(AQW 5966/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information about the prevalence of people under 18 years old being diagnosed with epilepsy, or being prescribed epilepsy medication, in each Health and Social Care Trust area is not routinely collected by the Department.

Medication is prescribed in line with NICE guidelines, which dictate that an anti-epileptic drug treatment strategy should be individualised according to the seizure type, epilepsy syndrome, co-medication and co-morbidity, the child, young person or adult's lifestyle, and the preferences of the person and their family and/or carers as appropriate. As the combinations of drugs that can be prescribed are so numerous it is not possible to give a definitive list.

Epilepsy patients can avail of a range of alternative treatments including vagus nerve stimulation, use of ketogenic diets, psychology services, specialist nursing and, if necessary, surgery.

During the Assembly debate on epilepsy on 3 October 2016 I gave an undertaking that officials would look at what information is currently held and whether there would be merit in creating a distinct database for epilepsy patients.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health how much funding is available for the treatment of patients with eating disorders.

(AQW 5969/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The average annual investment in the treatment of people with an eating disorder is £5m.

Investment in specialist community-based eating disorder services is £2.6m recurrently. In addition, an average of £1m is spent per annum on the use of general medical and mental health acute beds for patients with eating disorders, and an average of £1.4m per annum is spent on extra contractual referrals for the treatment of eating disorders outside of the North of Ireland.

These figures do not include the estimated expenditure on use of CAMHS beds by children and young people with eating disorders.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health what services for people with eating disorders are available in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 5970/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Eating Disorder Services are based upon a stepped model of care, ranging from early intervention to inpatient care. Services available within the South Eastern HSC Trust area are as follows:

- local step 2 and 3 services provided through the South Eastern HSC Trust's community mental health teams;
- specialist adult eating disorder community-based services for the treatment of severe and complex patients (service managed by the Belfast Trust);
- a specialist eating disorder youth service for the treatment of children and young people with an eating disorder; and
- inpatient care, usually provided within psychiatric hospitals with in-reach support from the specialist eating disorder teams.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health what is the policy regarding GPs and Health and Social Care Trusts contacting families to inform them that a family member has been admitted to hospital.

(AQW 5971/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has no specific policy on this matter. Health and Social Care Trusts and GPs will take appropriate steps depending on the circumstances of each individual case. In general, if a patient is capable of giving consent they will be asked about their wishes with respect to information about their admission to hospital being shared with their next of kin or carer. If a patient is unable to communicate with hospital staff, for example if they are brought to hospital unconscious, staff would attempt to identify and contact their next of kin.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health what steps her Department is taking to address the practice of hiring agency nursing staff rather than nurses on regional waiting lists.

(AQW 5972/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am committed to ensuring a first-class health service, in which services are delivered primarily from the Health and Social Care (HSC) in-house nurse workforce. In recognition of this I have invested in providing an additional 100 pre-registration nurse training places from September 2016.

The use of agency staff by the HSC is to ensure that service provision is maintained for patients and clients, in specific short-term circumstances, to address workforce shortages. My Department looks to the HSC Trusts to ensure that agency staff are only engaged when alternative workforce supply sources have been exhausted. HSC Trusts have been asked to examine reliance upon agency staff and my Department will continue to monitor expenditure closely.

Regional recruitment initiatives are being progressed by the HSC including: job offers to all year 3 students in training; streamlining and standardisation of recruitment processes; and, open advertising by Trusts of vacancies. There are currently no regional waiting lists for adult, mental health or learning disability nurses, and the regional waiting list for children's nurses is soon to be exhausted.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health what impact the practice of hiring nursing agency staff has on nursing regional waiting lists.

(AQW 5973/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am committed to ensuring a first-class health service, in which services are delivered primarily from the Health and Social Care (HSC) in-house nurse workforce. In recognition of this I have invested in providing an additional 100 pre-registration nurse training places from September 2016.

The use of agency staff by the HSC is to ensure that service provision is maintained for patients and clients, in specific short-term circumstances, to address workforce shortages. My Department looks to the HSC Trusts to ensure that agency staff are only engaged when alternative workforce supply sources have been exhausted. HSC Trusts have been asked to examine reliance upon agency staff and my Department will continue to monitor expenditure closely.

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Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the practice of hiring agency nursing staff rather than nursing staff on the regional waiting lists.

(AQW 5974/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am committed to ensuring a first-class health service, in which services are delivered primarily from the Health and Social Care (HSC) in-house nurse workforce. In recognition of this I have invested in providing an additional 100 pre-registration nurse training places from September 2016.

The use of agency staff by the HSC is to ensure that service provision is maintained for patients and clients, in specific short-term circumstances, to address workforce shortages. My Department looks to the HSC Trusts to ensure that agency staff are only engaged when alternative workforce supply sources have been exhausted. HSC Trusts have been asked to examine reliance upon agency staff and my Department will continue to monitor expenditure closely.

Regional recruitment initiatives are being progressed by the HSC including: job offers to all year 3 students in training; streamlining and standardisation of recruitment processes; and, open advertising by Trusts of vacancies. There are currently no regional waiting lists for adult, mental health or learning disability nurses, and the regional waiting list for children's nurses is soon to be exhausted.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health whether the Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital site has been considered as a location for addiction services in Omagh.
(AQW 6000/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Western Health & Social Care Trust Community Addiction Team already has a site based at the Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital in Omagh. This facility is being upgraded to provide a 24/7 enhanced services for people with complex substance misuse issues and will re-open as a complex detox unit on 7 November 2016.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health to detail her Department's plans for the Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital once services relocate to the new hospital.
(AQW 6001/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The main Tyrone and Fermanagh (T&F) Hospital is a listed historic building which will be retained by the Western Health and Social Care Trust to deliver administrative healthcare services following the opening of the new Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex in May 2017.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of addiction services in Omagh.
(AQW 6002/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Under the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs Phase 2, the Public Health Agency, the Health and Social Care Board and the Western Health and Social Care Trust commission and provide a range of substance misuse services which cover the Omagh area. These services include; prevention, information and awareness raising, community support, early intervention and harm reduction, and counselling for family members. Treatment and support is provided by the Community Addiction Team and by the inpatient unit based at Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital.

The full detail of the service available can be accessed online at: <http://www.drugsandalcoholni.info/services-near-you/>.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health what consideration has been given to the establishment of an addiction unit in Omagh.
(AQW 6003/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Western Health & Social Care Trust Community Addiction Team has a site in Omagh. This team provides a range of specialist services, within community and hospital settings, including addiction day treatment services. The Omagh Addiction Treatment Unit at the Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital site is being refurbished and upgraded to provide a 24/7 facility and enhanced services for people with complex substance misuse issues. The unit will re-open as a complex detox facility on 07 November 2016.

The full range of substance misuse services available to residents in the Omagh area is set out in AQW 6002/16-21.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health whether a business case was put forward by the Western Health and Social Care Trust on the establishment of an addiction unit in Omagh.
(AQW 6004/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The provision of an addictions ward was included in the Western Health and Social Care Trust's business case for a mental health hospital in Omagh. The business case remains under consideration.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health what inpatient and community-based care services are accessible for people diagnosed with mental health problems in North Down.
(AQW 6010/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust provides three acute mental health inpatient wards, with a 24 bedded mental health acute admission ward located on the Ulster Hospital site.

Mental health acute care services within the North Down area consist of a Home Treatment Team and a mental health day hospital. These services are provided in individual's homes and in the community as an alternative to hospital inpatient. Trust provides emergency, urgent and routine GP assessments through a single point of entry at an assessment centre which is based in Ards Hospital.

Community mental health services include outpatient services with Consultant Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Psychological therapists (CBT practitioners) and a Dialectic Behavioural Therapist (DBT). The latter provides specialist treatment and care for individuals diagnosed with Personality Disorders. Other community services that are available within the North Down sector include three Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT). The Trust also contracts with a range of independent sector organisations to deliver care, support and advocacy.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health to detail the waiting times for dermatology red flag cancer referrals.
(AQW 6017/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on red flag referral waiting times for cancer services by tumour site are published quarterly on the Department's website: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/cancer-waiting-times>

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health whether her Department has plans to improve HIV self testing kits.
(AQW 6028/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has no role in improving or regulating HIV self-testing kits. Approved HIV self-testing kits that carry a CE mark shows they have gone through the proper regulatory processes and, when used in accordance with their instructions, can be used safely.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency administers and enforces the law on medical devices, including HIV self-testing kits, to ensure their safety and quality. A problem experienced or concern about a medical device may be reported to MHRA through the Yellow Card Scheme <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/the-yellow-card-scheme/>.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health, given that recent reports are British based, whether her Department has plans to commission local research into HIV.
(AQW 6030/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has no plans to commission local research into HIV. The Health and Social Care Research and Development (HSC R&D) Division of the Public Health Agency is responsible, on behalf of my Department, for managing funding to support research that focuses on benefits for patients and the population. At present, the HSC R&D Division has no plans to commission local research into HIV. It is not possible to carry out local research on all diseases or conditions, especially where there may not be a critical mass of experienced researchers in a given speciality area. Nonetheless, submission of proposals for research into HIV would be welcomed for consideration across any existing responsive R&D programmes. The clinical care of patients here continues to be informed by best evidence and guidelines.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health what plans her Department has to address the stigma surrounding HIV.
(AQW 6031/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Public Health Agency provides public information about sexual health issues, including HIV. A recent workshop to consider key sexual health issues included public awareness; and the feedback from stakeholders will help inform future action. The delivery of HIV Awareness Training in HSC Trusts contributes to addressing the stigma surrounding HIV. My Department also funds a number of voluntary organisations that raise awareness of HIV, and provide information and support services to those living with or affected by HIV.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health for an update on the consultation on independent prescribing regulations 2016.
(AQW 6032/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Pharmaceutical Society (the 'Society') is taking forward a consultation titled 'Consultation on Supplementary Prescribers and Independent Prescribers Regulations 2016'. The consultation document is due to be launched shortly and will be available on the Society's website.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health to outline her Department's relationship with the Food Standard Agency.
(AQW 6295/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Food Standards Agency is a non-ministerial government department. It is not an arm's-length body of my Department.

My Department and the Public Health Agency work closely with the FSA on a range of matters concerning food safety, diet and nutrition, as does the Food Safety Promotion Board (SafeFood).

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health how many blood transfusions were carried out over the last twelve months.
(AQW 6297/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of blood transfusions carried out over the last twelve months is not readily available.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health how many people work for the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service.
(AQW 6299/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: At 30 June 2016, 179 (155.5 WTE) staff were employed in the NI Blood Transfusion Service.

This information is published in the quarterly NI Health and Social Care (HSC) Key Facts Workforce Bulletin on the Department of Health website at the following link: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/staff-numbers>

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health why Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's speech and language therapy provision has been reduced for Tor Bank Special School.

(AQW 6307/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: A part-time speech and language therapy assistant at Tor Bank School has recently resigned, unfortunately this has caused a reduction in capacity. However, action is being taken to address the situation. The recruitment process to fill this position is underway and until this process is completed, this temporary gap is being partially filled by existing staff.

Mr McGuigan asked the Minister of Health to detail the capital investment in each Health and Social Care Trust since 2011.
(AQW 6311/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below details the capital investment in each Health and Social Care Trust since 2011.

HSC TRUST	Belfast £m	Northern £m	South Eastern £m	Southern £m	Western £m
2011/12	78.8	21.8	24.5	20.1	36.4
2012/13	54.1	35.5	23.5	26.6	144.4*
2013/14	55.8	20.7	46.6	44.7	38.1
2014/15	38.2	25.0	54.9	31.5	44.0
2015/16	26.2	17.3**	51.7	21.2	62.4
2016/17	45.6	10.1	47.7	17.7	63.2

* Includes £100m bullet payment for South West Acute Hospital

** Includes £1.7m for Renal Contract payment

Mr McGuigan asked the Minister of Health what capital investment is planned for the Northern Health and Social Care Trust over the next four years.

(AQW 6312/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The following table lists capital investments which are currently ongoing in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

Project	Total Value
Ballymena Health Care Centre	£24.8m
Antrim Area Hospital replacement MRI Scanner	£1.5m
Antrim Area Hospital 2nd MRI scanner	£2.9m
Antrim Area Hospital Decontamination	£1.3m
Antrim Area Hospital Adult Orthodontics	£2.0m

Future capital investment projects in the Trust will be considered by my Department and the Executive as part of Budget 2017 which will conclude in the autumn.

Mr McGuigan asked the Minister of Health what investment is planned for mental health services in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 6313/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Expenditure in the mental health programme of care in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust in 2014/15 was £57.4m (per the Trust Financial Return). The Trust Financial Returns for 2015/16 are not yet available.

New investments totalling over £1.6m have been planned or are already being implemented in mental health services in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust during 2016/17.

The new investments are primarily directed towards the resettlement and discharge of long stay patients and those with highly complex needs from Holywell Hospital into community settings and facilities. Other investments are in addictions services, both in general hospital liaison and community settings. There has also been investment in psychological therapy services in the establishment of primary care hubs across the Trust; in providing support to people with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome; and in commencing the establishment of a regional mental trauma network.

In addition, the Trust received a non-recurrent £860k to allow the continuing operation of the Referral, Assessment, Intervention and Discharge (RAID) mental health liaison service at Antrim and Causeway hospitals.

Mr McGuigan asked the Minister of Health how her Department will attract nursing home beds to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 6314/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There has been a reduction in the number of available nursing home beds in the Northern Trust area over the past 12 to 18 months. The Northern Trust has established a specific workstream within its reform and modernisation programme to address this issue, and is working closely with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and nursing homes owners to increase the availability of nursing homes beds within the area.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health how she plans to retain GPs trained in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 6333/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am pleased to note that a recent review by the NI Medical and Dental Training Agency of the 295 trainees who gained a Certificate of Completion of Training in General Practice in the north of Ireland between August 2010 and August 2015, found that at January 2016, 282 (96%) were registered on the NI Primary Medical Performers List.

I recognise that there are increasing pressures facing general practice. I want to ensure that GPs are supported to face these challenges and help make a career in general practice in the North more attractive both to existing GPs and those in training.

On 25 October 2016, I published 'Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together' setting out the approach and actions I will take to lead the transformation of health and social care services in the North. This includes a number of actions to improve access and resilience in primary care such as increasing the number of GP training places over the next 2 years to 111, investing in primary care to put in place multi-disciplinary teams embedded around general practice, ensuring that every GP Practice has a named District Nurse, Health Visitor and Social Worker to work with, continuing to invest in the Practice Based Pharmacist scheme, and helping free up GP time through the further roll out of the AskMyGP system.

I also indicated that funding for undergraduate training will be re-directed to increase the percentage of the undergraduate medical curriculum spent in general practice, helping to better prepare doctors for a role in primary care.

The nature of the GP workforce has changed significantly over recent years. The way in which general practice is organised and delivered must respond to these changes to ensure that it remains an attractive career option for new and existing GPs.

I am committed to exploring options to provide more opportunities for flexible and part-time working in general practice and support for doctors to balance work with other responsibilities. Schemes such as the GP retainer scheme are already in place to support GPs to remain in practice who may otherwise consider leaving and to provide protected time to complete a structured training package and mentoring programme.

My Department has made significant investment in general medical services over recent years. In 2016/17 for example, my Department will provide additional investment up to £7 million to help meet additional demand for GP services; roll out the practice based pharmacists programme and develop online booking and repeat prescribing systems.

The establishment of GP Federations is also helping practices work together collaboratively and at scale to help build resilience in general practice, increase the range of services that GPs will be able to provide, and support a greater skills mix. In July, I announced additional funding of £900,000 to support the work of Federations.

I am currently considering the findings and recommendations of the GP-led care working group's report to help address the challenges facing GP-led services here. I intend to provide a full response to the recommendations of the GP-led Care working group before the end of the year.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister of Health for a copy of her departmental bid for additional allocations as stated in page 3 of the 2016-17 October Monitoring Round Statement made to the NI Assembly by the Minister of Finance on 25 October 2016.

(AQW 6338/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The approach now adopted by the Executive to the monitoring round process no longer requires the submission of bids by departments.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health for an update on the use of robot-assisted cancer surgery.

(AQW 6343/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: On 24 October 2016, my Department approved the business case for the procurement and installation of a surgical robot for urology services. The Trust is currently preparing an implementation plan for the purchase of this robot.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health to detail her work with the Minister for Communities and others to introduce an alcohol harm reduction strategy.

(AQW 6347/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department works very closely with the Department for Communities, and other stakeholders, on the implementation of the Executive's New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs Phase 2 (NSD Phase 2). NSD Phase 2 has a specific aim to prevent and reduce the harm related to all substance misuse, including alcohol, and has a clear harm reduction focus. The Department for Communities is a key member of the NSD Steering Group and Alcohol Advisory Group. Both Departments work collectively to ensure that appropriate controls are in place to manage the sale and supply of alcohol.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health how many nurses in each Health and Social Care Trust exited health and social care through the Voluntary Exit Scheme.

(AQW 6380/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: No nurses have been released through the Health and Social Care Voluntary Exit Scheme.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the number (i) private nursing homes; (ii) private residential homes; and (iii) statutory residential homes in each Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 6383/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested is published annually in the statistical bulletin "Statistics on Community Care for Adults in NI" and can be found in tables 2.15 and 2.16 of the latest publication.

Information for 2015/16, and prior publications since 1998/99, can be found online at the following web address:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/doh-statistics-and-research/care-not-home-statistics>

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Health how her Department has identified and responded to the importance of early identification and intervention in speech and language difficulties.

(AQW 6387/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There are a number of initiatives in place which will enhance early identification and intervention of speech and language difficulties.

Speech and Language Therapy clinical pathways have been developed across the region ensuring standardisation of provision based on clinical need.

Funding has been secured to appoint Allied Health Professional staff in neonatal wards in each Health Trust area, including Speech and Language Therapists; this will help ensure children's needs are assessed at an early stage.

As part of the Early Intervention Transformation Programme there is now a named Health Visitor aligned to every Department of Education funded education setting in the region. Their role is to support the need of children and signpost them to services including Speech and Language Therapists as necessary.

A regional review of Speech and Language Therapy support in Sure Starts has been completed and an evidence based model developed and is currently being implemented. In addition there is now standardised Speech and Language Therapy provision in each Sure Start project across the region. This will enable children in their pre-school years to gain access to early identification and intervention.

Mr Bell asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the provision of autism services.

(AQO 611/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Autism services in the North continue to be under significant pressure. Although staff in all of the HSC Trusts have been carrying out additional assessments since April by reliance on overtime and additional hours, the unprecedented demand for autism assessments continues to increase. The demand for assessments increased last year by 17% and this upward trend has continued into the current year.

As part of the Trusts' recovery plans and utilising the additional £2m investment made available this year, recruitment for additional permanent staff is well underway who, when in post, will have a key role in improving waiting list management. In addition, discussions are taking place to facilitate the assessment of children in some Trust areas to be undertaken by other Trusts where targets are currently being met.

However, sustained improvements across the system require us to change the way services are currently configured and this why the HSC Board has been leading on a project to design a new regional model for autism services. I am pleased to be able to report that this work is now at an advanced stage. It is hoped that by the end of November, this new model which will improve both the diagnostic process and access to early intervention in line with current best practice and NICE guidelines will be finalised. Crucially, the new model will also optimise the scope for the integration of child development, emotional and mental health services, as well as closer working with the education sector to ensure the provision of coordinated and appropriate support for children with autism.

We need to ensure that we have the right services in place not just for children with autism, and their families, but also during their adolescence and into adulthood and that is why I intend to write later this year to my Executive colleagues with details on a review of the current cross-departmental Autism Action Plan. The aim of that review will be to identify where the gaps are in current service provision and produce an agreed set of effective interventions to address those gaps, informed by the views of people with autism and other key stakeholders.

Mr McGuigan asked the Minister of Health how she will ensure that patients' views are taken into account during the transformation of health and social care.

(AQO 612/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Securing better health and well being outcomes for patients and other people who use health and social care services will be at the centre of the transformation programme that I have announced.

The experiences and needs of service users and their families will therefore be at the forefront of shaping our new service model. I am therefore committed to ensuring that the HSC works in partnership with service users to design and implement the lasting and meaningful changes we need to improve the health outcomes for our population. This is what I mean by delivering together.

This new way of engaging patients is built on the principle of co-production. Co-production will underpin how we engage service users in the future in designing new services, new treatment pathways, or at the point of care.

Patients and service users have a vital contribution to make to transformation. I have already embarked on a period of engagement with those who use services, and staff across our HSC to listen to their views on the future of health and social care services.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to outline the total number of people that have been waiting longer than 18 weeks for their first consultant-led appointment at Craigavon Area Hospital.

(AQO 618/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The latest available information for Craigavon Area Hospital shows that at 30 September 2016, 11,545 patients were longer than 18 weeks for their first consultant-led outpatient appointment.

The 18 week target for consultant-led outpatient appointments relates to 2015/16. The current targets for consultant-led outpatient appointment are that:

- 50% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for an outpatient appointment; and
- no patient waits longer than 52 weeks.

Latest available information for Craigavon Area hospital as at 30 September 2016, shows that 32% of patients were waiting less than 9 weeks, and 2,393 patients, longer than 52 weeks.

I have said many times that long waiting times are unacceptable. I understand the worry and stress that it causes for patients and their families. I visited Craigavon Area Hospital just after I announced

Delivering Together and I know that the staff I met there feel the same way about the need for transformation.

Long waiting times are a product of the increased pressure on our health service. The long term solution is the transformation I have set out in Delivering Together. We need to move to a population health model and we need to create a more sustainable service - one that makes the best use of the resources we have to deliver the best possible service to patients.

However, this future model cannot succeed if it inherits the waiting lists that we have currently. I will bring forward a strategy to reduce waiting lists early in the New Year.

Ultimately, I want to get to the point where we have the capacity within the HSC to deliver the services patients need. But my overriding concern is ensuring that patients receive their treatment in a timely manner.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health for an update on the work of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority in ensuring compliance with the regulations and care standards governing nursing homes.

(AQO 619/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The registration and inspection of a range of health and social care services is a key function of RQIA. Nursing homes are regulated establishments and are legally required to be inspected at least twice each year. The majority of inspections are unannounced and examine compliance with regulations and the minimum standards in the areas of care, estates, medicines management and safeguarding service users' finances. RQIA's inspections are conducted by a team of qualified and experienced nurses, social workers, pharmacists, estates and finance officers.

Where necessary, RQIA may take enforcement action to drive improvements in the quality of care. This may include issuing notices of failure to comply with regulations; placing conditions of registration; taking action to impose fines; prosecuting or closing a service.

All RQIA inspection reports and enforcement activity can be found on the Authority's website (www.rqia.org.uk)

Ms Gildernew asked the Minister of Health to outline her plans to introduce legislation on breastfeeding.
(AQO 620/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I attach great value to breastfeeding, benefitting both child and mother. The reasons why women choose not to breastfeed or stop breastfeeding are varied and complex. There must be convincing evidence to support the introduction of legislation. I will consider the matter carefully over the coming months before making any decision on the way forward.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health how she is ensuring there is adequate nursing provision in the health service.
(AQO 621/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I believe that investing in our local talent is strategically the right course of action, if we are to strengthen our existing nursing workforce and ensure future sustainability.

My Department has increased investment in nurse education for 16/17 by commissioning an additional 100 pre-registration nursing places and I am increasing that number by a further 100 places for the new academic year 17/18.

I am committed to supporting student nurses in training and have ruled out the approach being taken in England to remove bursaries that require students to take on additional debt. The nursing bursary will continue in the North of Ireland.

I support alternative pathways into nursing. In 2016/17, my Department increased places on the Open University pre-registration nursing course. I have increased investment in access courses designed for health care support workers, as a route into the Open University nursing course.

My Department has increased investment in the Return to Practice nursing programme delivered by Ulster University which enables nurses out of practice, to re-enter the profession. During 2015/16 a total of 83 completed the programme.

Implementation of my Department's "Delivering Care; Nurse Staffing" policy resulted in £12 million investment in 2015 for additional HSC nursing staff within acute and general surgical and medical wards.

Despite best efforts to recruit nurses there continues to be in excess of 800 nursing vacancies, and a consequent reliance on bank and agency staff.

International recruitment is a necessary short measure to maintain safe staffing levels. Over 700 conditional job offers have been made to nurses from Europe and the Philippines.

Implementation of my Department's 10 year Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Plan will ensure resourced and skilled future workforce. The Plan endorses a strategic approach to the supply and demand of nursing and making the North a destination 'Employer of Choice'.

Local third year students in training are now being offered permanent posts in the Trusts when they qualify, in an effort to encourage them to stay.

Post registration education builds the knowledge of nurses quality and improves patient outcomes. My Department has invested £8.5 million in the post registration education commissioning budget for 16/17.

Workforce investment is essential if we are to effectively address the problem of nursing shortages. The measures I have outlined will, collectively secure our nursing workforce now and into the future

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health for an update on paediatric cardiac services.
(AQO 622/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: In July I visited Our Lady's Children's Hospital in Crumlin to announce, along with Minister Simon Harris, our joint commitment and investment of up to £42m in the development of the all-island Congenital Heart Disease Network. This will allow the all-island Network Board to implement its plan for a world class CHD network over the next 5 years.

The plan envisages completing the phased implementation of the transfer of all urgent surgical cases from the north to OLCHC between now and the end of 2017 and all elective surgical cases by the end of 2018. Ensuring that the plan remains on course will remain high on my agenda for future discussions with Minister Harris.

It is important to emphasise the place of the Belfast Trust within that plan – I want to see children getting the diagnostic and post-surgical care they need as close to home as possible, and that is why part of the funding commitment included £1m to further develop the specialist Children's Heart Centre at the Clark Clinic.

The purpose of this network is to deliver benefits for children throughout Ireland through mutual collaboration and I am pleased to report that Our Lady's has now received the committed funding from the Health Department in the South to begin moving towards a single all-island waiting list for catheterisations by Spring 2017. To me this will be a sign of real progress for the two systems working together to benefit patients and families. Children from the North and South will have their procedures carried out in the new state of the art hybrid lab in Our Lady's which I had the pleasure of formally opening with Minister Harris.

Whilst good progress is being made, I am conscious that we remain reliant on the majority of urgent and elective procedures for local children still being carried out by specialist heart centres in England, until sufficient capacity can be developed in Dublin. In the interim the Belfast Trust will continue to operate a service level agreement with OLCHC to provide emergency surgical treatment in OLCHC for patients from the North.

It is of central importance for the families to be able to have world class surgery here on the island of Ireland without the upheaval of additional travel. The Network implementation plan and the funding is now in place to deliver this so I want to see concerted action by the Network on increasing the surgical capacity in Our Lady's in line with its plan, whilst acknowledging that there will be constraints outside the direct control of the Network to be overcome.

Mr Murphy asked the Minister of Health whether she is committed to working in partnership with health and social care staff to deliver better outcomes for local people.

(AQO 623/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Working in partnership with health and social care staff to deliver better health and well-being outcomes for the people of the North is one of my key priorities. One of my early actions as Health Minister has been to reinvigorate the Health Partnership Forum, comprised of key stakeholders across the HSC including Trade Unions, professional bodies and HSC Chief Executives, under my chair. I will work with the Forum to ensure that there is meaningful strategic engagement, at the highest level, so that the voice of staff is listened to as we take forward the transformation of health and social care.

I chaired the first meeting of the Forum on 12 October and I have committed to chairing a second meeting in November so that we can begin discussions on next steps following my announcement last week. This Forum will make an important contribution to informing my approach on the implementation of my plan, Health & Wellbeing 2026 'Delivering Together' and the Expert Panel's recommendations.

At a local level it is clear that change needs to happen right across the HSC system – the current configuration of services is unsustainable and together we need to develop a health and social system that will meet the future needs of our society. Engagement with staff working in front-line services to draw from their knowledge and experience will be an important element of my approach to transformation.

Our Health and Social Care system belongs to all of us and we all bring valuable insights to how it can improve. We must work in partnership – patients, service users, families, staff and politicians – if we are to co-produce lasting change which benefits us all.

I am fully committed to this new approach and will support this new way of working across the HSC. We will strengthen the capacity of both those who use our services and those who deliver them to bring about positive change for and by themselves. Together we will ensure our health and social care system can deliver better outcomes for everyone in our society.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health for an update on the Making Life Better strategic framework for public health.

(AQO 624/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Making Life Better, published in 2014, is the Executive's overarching strategic framework for public health. It provides strategic direction up to 2023 for action to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.

In line with the evidence base, it is structured around themes and outcomes which focus on underlying social determinants of health that impact across the lifecourse. A key aim is to put in place a whole system approach to health improvement, with greater coherence of action across all levels of delivery.

A focus of work to date, therefore, has been to put in place governance and implementation structures that will ensure leadership and a cohesive, joined up approach from strategic through to local levels.

The Public Health Agency have been working with Local Government to align the community planning arrangements and Making Life Better, with the aim of identifying areas of collaboration based on local need and ensuring regional priorities are reflected in local plans. This broad direction of travel was endorsed by the Ministerial Committee for Public Health, which oversees Making Life Better, when it met in February 2016.

In addition, the Ministerial Committee endorsed a proposal for a sub-group to be established to explore better co-ordination and integration of policy and delivery responses in the areas of health and work.

Making Life Better is also a living document to be reviewed and updated on a rolling basis in line with Programme for Government and budgetary periods. My Department has been working closely with other Departments in the development of the Programme for Government to ensure this happens.

Mr McCausland asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the opportunity to reconfigure the Mater Hospital's estate to release land currently occupied by prefabricated buildings opposite the main hospital building.

(AQO 625/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Mater Hospital site is owned by the Belfast HSC Trust.

There is no current opportunity to reconfigure the Mater Hospital's estate to release land currently occupied by prefabricated buildings located opposite the main hospital building. These buildings are in use and provide a wide range of key services including Alcohol Liaison Services, Self Harm Services, Older Peoples Services and Family & Childcare Services.

Department for Infrastructure

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the plans for the proposed dualling of Buncrana Road, Derry, including any timescales.

(AQW 243/16-21)

Mr Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure): Firstly I would like to apologise for the lateness of this reply. However, as Minister for Infrastructure I recognise the importance of the proposed Buncrana Road scheme in terms of improving traffic flow and I have been engaging with my officials to see what needs to be done to expedite its progression.

I am delighted to confirm that, as part of the Stimulus Package Funding announced last month, I have secured funding as to resume the development work on the Buncrana Road improvement scheme. I expect that my Department will appoint an engineering consultant to assist with the development of the scheme in the coming weeks.

The next step in the development process will be to complete the preliminary design work, including reviewing the junction strategy. On completion of the preliminary design works the Department will publish the draft statutory orders and Environmental Statement which will be subject to a public consultation. The outcome of the public consultation may lead to the need for a Public Inquiry.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Infrastructure (i) for an update on the implementation of residents' parking schemes in Belfast, Antrim and Londonderry; and (ii) to detail whether his Department will consider an extension of the scheme to include areas in North Down.

(AQW 3221/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department is currently pursuing a number of resident's schemes which are at various stages of development.

- (i) There are two schemes in Belfast, one in the Lower Malone area and one in the Rugby Road area. In terms of progress, I have recently decided to begin implementation of the scheme in Rugby Road, whilst the Lower Malone scheme has been formally consulted on. Both proposals attracted significant levels of objection and officials are currently considering how to address the concerns raised by both residents and businesses in the areas.

The Derry scheme, which is in the Rossville Street area and the small scheme in Massereene Street/Clarke Court in Antrim on successful completion of the necessary legislative requirements will both be implemented as fully operational residents' parking scheme and not as pilots. In Derry, informal consultation with residents has been undertaken to help inform both the residents and the detailed design process ahead of any formal consultation. TransportNI has examined the responses received and local officials are now liaising with the community to seek to address issues raised. Development work is ongoing on the much smaller scheme in Antrim.

- (ii) I recognise that commuter parking is causing local difficulties in many locations across the north of Ireland and a number of areas, including Bangor and Holywood in the North Down area, have been identified which would benefit from such schemes. Unfortunately, until the trial sites in Belfast, Derry and Antrim have been implemented and evaluated I am unable to indicate a timescale when further schemes might be taken forward.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline what steps he is taking to address severe traffic congestion in Belfast. **(AQW 5788/16-21)**

Mr Hazzard: My Department's Traffic Control Centre is generally operational Monday to Saturday. The Control Centre also operates on Sundays as required to handle traffic disruption in response to significant Road works such as the recent work on the M3 Lagan Bridge, an event in the city or anticipated increased traffic flows such as in the run-up to Christmas.

Staff at the Control Centre monitor 156 CCTV cameras across the city and use this information to continuously update traffic signal timings at over 200 traffic light junctions based on actual traffic flows. This "live, up to the minute" programming of signal timings ensures the road network operates at its maximum efficiency.

The Control Centre also provides live traffic information via the Trafficwatchni website and on social media such as Twitter so Road Users can make informed decisions and plan their journeys more effectively. On trip information to Road Users is also provided by roadside variable message signs on the approaches to the city to display information on abnormal traffic conditions and when necessary to take alternative routes.

Work is well under way to deliver the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme which is a major new transformational public transport project for Belfast which will help to address the current and future transport needs in the city and support sustainable economic growth and regeneration. It will provide a modern, safe, efficient and high quality service which will encourage people to travel by public transport instead of by car. It will help to integrate communities and link people to jobs, shops, leisure, health and education services. BRT will connect East Belfast, West Belfast and Titanic Quarter via the city centre.

The Belfast public transport network currently has over 50km of bus lanes and 135 traffic signalled controlled junctions where all Metro buses are detected and are afforded priority. This network is continually being extended as opportunities are identified and resources permit.

Much of the traffic congestion in Belfast is the result of an over reliance on the private car as many people continue to use the private car for what are relatively short journeys and this generates congestion at busy times of the day. In many of these cases walking or cycling is a feasible option. Data obtained from the 'Cycling and Walking to / from Work in Northern Ireland' module of the Continuous Household Survey in 2014/15 reported that 24% of people working in Belfast already commute by walking and 5% by cycling. The availability of Belfast Bikes also provides an option for travelling between the numerous bike hire stations within the city centre if the first leg of the journey is undertaken by bus. My Department is currently developing better bicycle infrastructure as part of the work to deliver its vision of 'a community where people have the freedom and confidence to travel by bicycle for everyday journeys'.

The York Street Interchange Scheme remains one of my priorities given its location at the junction of our busiest roads, the M1/Westlink, M2 and M3. This scheme will address a major bottleneck on the strategic road network in Belfast, replacing the existing signalised junction at York Street with direct links between Westlink, M2 and M3, the three busiest roads in the north. It will also separate strategic traffic from local traffic movements via underpasses below the existing road and rail bridges and underneath a new bridge at York Street. The Public Inquiry for the York Street Interchange was held in November 2015 and the Inspector's report has been received by my Department. I intend to make a decision on the status of the scheme and release the Inspectors' report from the Public Inquiry in the coming weeks.

Furthermore, my Department has a proposal to extend the existing M1 hard-shoulder running busway and to construct a new M2 hard-shoulder running busway. On the M1, the existing busway between Ballyskeagh over-bridge and Black's Road will be extended back to Junction 8 at Blaris, providing an additional 3.5km of busway. On the M2 a new busway will be constructed between Junction 2 (Greencastle) and Junction 1B (Duncrue) providing approximately 2.5km of new busway. The proposed scheme will operate from 07:30am to 9:30am providing improved journey times and journey time reliability to Belfast bound commuters travelling at peak times. The scheme is currently being prepared for tender and it is anticipated that works will begin on the ground next year.

Mr O'Dowd asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail over the last five years (i) whether Translink has removed bus services from a route as a result of an attack on the driver or the bus; (ii) to detail the (a) location; and (b) duration of each suspension; (iii) whether any services have been removed indefinitely as a result of such attacks; and (iv) services that were removed indefinitely.

(AQW 5931/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Translink do not hold a central database recording all of the information requested but, based on their records, I can provide the following:

- (i) A small number of bus services have had to be suspended over the past five years due to attacks on drivers and vehicles.
- (ii) The table provided below details of all the incidents recorded including the locations and the length of suspension.
- (iii) Due the seriousness of some attacks some services have been removed indefinitely and Translink will continue to monitor the situation on the affected routes.
- (iv) Details of the affected routes are shown on the table below.

Metro Services

	Details	Indefinite Suspension?
Oldpark	Translink have had problems and suspended services operating on Oldpark Road.	No
Newtownabbey	No service withdrawals due to anti-social behaviour/stone throwing incidents within the past two years, however services have been temporarily suspended in the past in areas such as Monkstown Road, Rathcoole, Shore Road, Ballyduff and Rathfern.	No
Falls Park	27/02/16 – services temporarily withdrawn from Falls Park for the rest of the evening due to youths stoning buses and the Translink mobile inspectors' vehicle. 04/03/16 – services temporarily withdrawn from Falls Park for the rest of the evening due to youths stoning buses and throwing objects onto the road. 09/03/16 – Translink met with Paul Maskey MP re the escalation of anti-social behaviour and agreed an action plan with Sinn Féin representatives being present in the Park and speaking to parents.	No

	Details	Indefinite Suspension?
Lagmore View	<p>This service had been attacked on most weekends and particularly during school holidays and is currently suspended</p> <p>Key dates below:</p> <p>16/02/16 – air rifle shot at bus, targeting driver's side window. Services temporarily withdrawn for the rest of the evening.</p> <p>27/06/16 – stoning of buses. Services temporarily withdrawn for the rest of the evening.</p> <p>29/06/16 – stoning of bus and golf club thrown at bus. Services temporarily withdrawn for the rest of the evening.</p> <p>30/06/16 – catapult shot at bus with customers on board. Services temporarily withdrawn for the rest of the evening and reduced to last service at 7pm for Friday – Sunday for that week only.</p> <p>09/07/16 – petrol bomb/brick thrown at bus targeting driver. Services withdrawn from area and agreed plan with community reps and Jennifer McCann MLA that Translink would stay out of area due to threat and anti-social behaviour over the Twelfth & 8th August. Agreed to reinstate services on 15th August.</p>	Yes – from 01/09/2016
	<p>15/08/16 – stones/bricks thrown at bus at midday. Services withdrawn from area and agreed plan with community reps and Jennifer McCann MLA that Translink would stay out of area due to continued threat and anti-social behaviour. Agreed to reinstate services on 1st September.</p> <p>01/09/16 – replica gun pointed at driver by hooded youths in turning circle. Services withdrawn from area until further notice.</p> <p>Lagmore has been a stone throwing and anti-social behaviour hotspot for a number of years.</p> <p>Previous to the incidents listed above, on 16/01/15, services were withdrawn from the area for the rest of the evening due to attacks on drivers by youths throwing missiles (snowballs) to target buses in service and hitting drivers when stopped to board passengers.</p>	

Ulsterbus Services**Southern Area – Ulsterbus**

Date	Details	Indefinite Suspension?
Ongoing since 2011	Service 46 Lurgan to Portadown via Brownlow omits Brownlow. Discussions between Translink and local MLAs are currently ongoing to restore bus services to the Brownlow area of Craigavon.	Yes
Ongoing since 2011	Greyabbey to Portaferry via Portavogie, half a mile diversion in Portavogie due to stone throwing near square, 2250 late bus affected,	Yes
April 2012	Mulacreevy Estate on Armagh Town Service route 371 during April 2012 for four nights due to stone throwing, estate omitted from route	No

Northern Area - Ulsterbus

2012		Indefinite Suspension?
Date	Details	
10/03/2012	Bus withdrawn from Gobnascale Estate from 18.30 due to buses being stoned and broken window.	No
02/06/2012	Buses taken out of Creggan on advice of PSNI due to youths stoning traffic.	No

2012		Indefinite Suspension?
Date	Details	
25/08/2012	Buses curtailed from top half of Ballymagroarty Estate from 15.00 due to broken window.	No
08/10/2012	Buses curtailed from top half of Ballymagroarty Estate from 20.15 due to broken window.	No
27/10/2012	Buses withdrawn from Ballymagroarty Estate from 15.00 due to a crowd of youths stoning traffic.	No

2013		
Date	Details	
20/11/2013	Hijacking in Ballymagroarty. Buses withdrawn for 2 days.	No
09/12/2013	After 2 buses were stoned at 15.30 services were withdrawn from Ballymagroarty Estate for the rest of the day.	No

2014		
No records of any services being withdrawn		

2015		
Date	Details	
04/02/2015	Bus withdrawn from Heather Road (Elaghmore) from 20.20 due to buses being stoned and broken window for rest of night.	No
07/02/2015	Bus withdrawn from Heather Road (Elaghmore) from 18.30 due to buses being stoned and broken window for rest of night.	No
27/02/2015	Buses withdrawn from Ballymagroarty Estate for rest of day from 19.00 due to youths stoning buses.	No
19/03/2015	Buses withdrawn from Galliagh Estate from 20.25 for rest of day due to youths stoning buses.	No
02/11/2015	Buses withdrawn from Curryneirin from 19.00 due to a large crowd of youths stoning buses.	No

2016		
09/04/2016	Buses withdrawn from Ringfort Road and Hazelbank from 16.00 for rest of day due to a large crowd of youths stoning buses.	No
11/04/2016	Buses withdrawn from Ballymagroarty Estate for rest of day from 17.30 due to youths stoning buses.	No
16/05/2016	Bus withdrawn from Heather Road (Elaghmore) from 20.00 due to buses being stoned and broken window for rest of night.	No
20/09/2016	Bus withdrawn from Heather Road (Elaghmore) from 20.30 due to buses being stoned and broken window for rest of night.	No
10/10/2016	Bus withdrawn from Heather Road (Elaghmore) from 20.25 due to buses being stoned and broken window for rest of night.	No

Mr M Bradley asked the Minister for Infrastructure (i) to detail how many schools in East Londonderry have specific road safety signage installed in close proximity to their school entrances; and (ii) whether this signage will be implemented to all schools in East Londonderry.

(AQW 6041/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department has a statutory duty to promote road safety and, within the context of the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy, does this through a range of rolling road safety educational activities and engineering initiatives.

My Department continues to take a range of actions to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads and focuses on the key causes of road casualties, and on groups which are over-represented in the casualty figures. As children and young people are amongst the most vulnerable groups using our roads, my Department uses a range of initiatives to ensure that they are taught how to use our roads safely.

Over 95% of road traffic collisions where someone is killed or seriously injured are due to human error; therefore, in addition to our work in schools, my Department also helps improve safety by encouraging drivers to reduce their speed and reminding them of school children in the area through engineering initiatives. One such example is the use of road safety signage in close proximity to school entrances.

All schools in East Londonderry have specific road safety signage installed in close proximity to their school entrances. A total of 25 schools have additional safety measures such as "Safe Routes to School" (SRS) signs, red surfacing and yellow backed signs.

Transport NI has a school assessment procedure which enables each request to be assessed and prioritised based on collision history, mean speed, traffic volumes and existing local infrastructure measures. These projects are placed on a programme of works for each Council area and delivery depends on the level of capital funding made available to my Department in each financial year.

I am committed to continuing to work towards reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads. I recognise the continuing challenges of preventing road deaths and serious injuries and will continue to ensure that my Department uses the tools at its disposal to address the issues.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for Infrastructure, pursuant to AQW 4666/16-21, (i) whether feedback on the progress on the repair of the defect is available online; and (ii) whether this facility can be added to the system.

(AQW 6042/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The NI Direct web site indicates how to track the progress/status of an enquiry on-line by inputting the reference number into the 'Track a Fault' feature. For your convenience the relevant web page link is <http://reportfaultproblem.nidirect.gov.uk/track.html>

Please note that not all enquiries received will result in a defect and work order being raised by my Department, as the condition or risk may not meet our current intervention policy or indeed the issue may be the responsibility of a third party, e.g. a Utility company. Furthermore my Department also carries out a system of routine safety inspections of the entire road network and due to resourcing constraints, enquiries that are considered a lower risk to the public will not be dealt with until the next routine inspection.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for Infrastructure, pursuant to AQW 4667/16-21, for his assessment of advertising all road closures on trunk roads, including those with a duration of less than two weeks, in the local press; and whether he plans to develop methods of advertising all road closures on social media.

(AQW 6043/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As the Member will be aware, current legislation requires publication of road closures over two weeks duration to be advertised in the local press. The lead-in time can be several weeks to publication. As road and lane closure dates, by their nature, need to be flexible e.g. weather issues, it is not practical or helpful to advertise any closure of less than two weeks in the press.

My Department manages TrafficwatchNI, a public facing information service on the Department for Infrastructure website containing all closures on the public road network. The main advantage over local press is that continuous updating communicates details including alterations quickly.

It is also common practice to use on-site matrix signage in advance of any works requiring closures on the Trunk road network to inform road users of impending road works.

In addition the TrafficwatchNI, the Department's twitter account tweets information about all road and traffic conditions across the North. It currently has some 27,500 followers and is considered to be an effective method of communication.

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail any plans for new road resurfacing in Mid Ulster over the next four years.

(AQW 6061/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: TransportNI carries out an annual programme of resurfacing in all council areas commensurate with the available budget. At present TransportNI does not know what budget it will have for resurfacing, or indeed any other activity, in future financial years and therefore I cannot provide a definitive programme at this time.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Infrastructure for an update on the A5/B48 Strathroy Link Road scheme.

(AQW 6089/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The development of the A5/B48 Strathroy Link Road is progressing well and is on schedule for completion in summer 2018. The Department of Education, which is funding the construction of the new road, has recently given approval for my Department to proceed to make the vesting order and also issue the tender documents for construction of the Link Road.

It is intended that the contract will be awarded in February 2017 to enable construction to commence in spring 2017. It is expected that construction will take 15 months to complete.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether local councils have the power to identify parts of the countryside, outside of designated settlement limits, where it will be possible to build a dwelling subject to siting, design and integration principles but without the requirement of providing agricultural justification or meeting personal circumstances, replacement or infill criteria.

(AQW 6090/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Member will be aware that my Department's Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) provides the current strategic planning policy framework for the consideration of development proposals for dwellings in the countryside. The SPPS consolidates and reflects the provisions of Planning Policy Statement 21 (PPS21): 'Sustainable Development in the Countryside', which sets out a range of types of residential and non-residential development which in principle are considered to be acceptable in the countryside. Under the transitional arrangements of the SPPS the provisions of PPS21 are retained until such times that councils bring forward the Plan Strategy element of their Local Development Plans. As such, planning applications for dwellings in the countryside are considered by councils, on a case by case basis against the policy contained within the SPPS, PPS21, the Local Development Plan and all other material considerations. The relevance of and weight to be attached to planning policy and all other material considerations is a matter of planning judgement for the decision maker.

The provisions of the SPPS must also be taken into account in the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs) which are now the responsibility of councils. LDPs are key to furthering sustainable development, the implementation of the SPPS, and realising the vision and aspiration of local communities. Councils must carry out a sustainability appraisal (which will incorporate Strategic Environmental Assessment) of LDPs which should ensure that the key objectives of sustainable development are fully taken into account in assessing the effects of the plan. As long as a council's LDP takes proper account of the SPPS and the objective of furthering sustainable development in the countryside, then councils may develop their own approaches to deal with the local issues they face. Ultimately, at independent examination, LDPs will be tested for 'soundness'. This will include assessing that they are sufficiently evidence based, take proper account of the SPPS and satisfy all other relevant requirements.

Finally, in relation to the future direction of strategic planning policy the Member will be aware that on the 27 September 2016, I announced a priority review of strategic planning policy for Development in the Countryside (and Renewable Energy), as currently contained within the SPPS. I can assure you that this review will consider the range of issues in relation to the needs of all those who live and work in the countryside, including the impact and effectiveness of current policy provisions. My officials are now progressing work necessary to inform the review which will include detailed research. There will be opportunities for stakeholder engagement and public consultation next year, and I encourage all interested parties to get involved in this strategic policy review process.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail how the £15m capital funding for road maintenance will be spent.

(AQW 6091/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As part of October monitoring, my Department has been allocated an additional £15m of Capital for structural maintenance activities, including the resurfacing of roads.

TransportNI allocates additional funding to its four Divisions on the basis of need, using a range of weighted indicators, tailored to each maintenance activity i.e. resurfacing, patching, gully emptying, grass cutting etc. Divisions use these indicators when apportioning across council areas to ensure, as far as possible, an equitable distribution of funds.

The additional £15m for structural maintenance activities is to be allocated as follows:

Northern Division	£3.5m
Southern Division	£4.7m
Eastern Division	£2.5m
Western Division	£4.3m

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Infrastructure what processes are in place to ensure the speedy release of a Freedom of Information request in circumstances where the absence of clearance from either he or his Special Adviser has taken the request beyond the statutory deadline for response.

(AQW 6121/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: There have been no such circumstances and I would refer the Member to my response to Assembly Written Question 5883/16-21.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the latest figures for the peak number of traffic movements per day at the busiest point in relation to (i) the York Street interchange; (ii) the A5; and (iii) the A6.

(AQW 6130/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My department is currently progressing a programme of major road improvements to address bottlenecks on the strategic road network. The York Street Interchange and A5 Western Transport Corridor are two of these schemes. There are also two major schemes planned to improve the A6 route between Derry and Belfast; the Randalstown to Castledawson and Derry to Dungiven schemes. The peak daily traffic flow associated with each of these schemes is listed in the table below.

Scheme Name	Peak Daily Traffic Flow	Location
York Street Interchange	111,800	Vehicles approaching the junction
A5 Western Transport Corridor	20,704	Omagh Throughpass
A6 Randalstown to Castledawson	20,630	East of Deerpark Road
A6 Derry to Dungiven	26,720	South of Altnagelvin Roundabout

Figures are from traffic surveys undertaken in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Traffic flows vary along the length of each route. To account for this variability, the economic appraisal uses a scheme specific traffic model developed from traffic information at various locations along and adjacent to the proposed scheme.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail from the most recent business case the figures for the economic impact of the proposed investment in relation to (i) the York Street interchange; (ii) the A5; and (iii) the A6.

(AQW 6131/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The York Street Interchange, A5 Western Transport Corridor and A6 schemes will provide a positive return on investment. The estimated Benefit to Cost ratio for each scheme is listed in the table below. My Department is progressing two separate projects on the A6 route; the Randalstown to Castledawson and Derry to Dungiven schemes. Figures for both of these have also been included below.

The Benefit to Cost ratio demonstrates the level of return on investment. For example, every £1 spent on York Street Interchange should deliver £2.33 of public, business and user benefits, through improved journey times, accident savings and motoring efficiencies.

The A5 Western Transport Corridor, A6 Randalstown to Castledawson and York Street Interchange schemes utilise an innovative Early Contractor Involvement procurement strategy. Due to the nature of this strategy, it is only the most advanced scheme; A6 Randalstown to Castledawson, that has a finalised business case approved by the Department of Finance. The procurement strategy for the A6 Derry to Dungiven project is currently being developed. The Benefit to Cost ratio for the York Street Interchange, A5 Western Transport Corridor and A6 Derry to Dungiven schemes may therefore change as development continues.

Scheme Name	Benefit to Cost Ratio
York Street Interchange	2.33
A5 Western Transport Corridor	1.88
A6 Randalstown to Castledawson	2.35
A6 Derry to Dungiven	1.35

Mr Smith asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail each budgetary pressure in his Department and its arm's-length bodies; and which of these pressures were raised with officials from the Department of Finance in advance of the October monitoring round.

(AQW 6143/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Any pressures raised with the Department of Finance are for the purpose of informing the Executive's deliberations in reaching an agreed Monitoring round outcome and as such this information is not disclosed.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure (i) to detail the number of oil spillages that have taken place on roads in the last five years; and (ii) to outline what changes to legislation he intends to make to address this.

(AQW 6159/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Information on the number of oil spills on roads is not available for the entire period requested. However, following the introduction of a new road maintenance computer system in December 2013 the numbers of oil spills recorded on roads in each of the last 3 financial years, is set out below:

- 2013/14 238 (recorded in the period December 2013 - March 2014)
- 2014/15 703

■ 2015/16 734

Matters, such as oil spilling onto roads from vehicles is covered under Article 95 of the Roads (NI) Order 1993. The current legislation is considered adequate and I have no plans to amend it.

The Member will, however, appreciate the many difficulties in identifying offenders and proving a case regarding oil spills, as the courts will require substantial and clear evidence before an effective prosecution can be brought.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Infrastructure how many claims for compensation have been received by his Department as a result of roads or footpaths being left in disrepair following work by contractors when consent hadn't been granted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6169/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: A range of statutory bodies and utilities can lawfully carry out works on or near public roads and footpaths. Appropriate legislative cover, together with other forms of approval, allows such works to take place. In addition, private individuals and organisations can obtain permission/consent to carry out work on or near public roads and footpaths. Although the Department has received claims for compensation as a result of unlawful works on or near public roads and footpaths, it is not possible to extract the requested information from the Department's claims database.

Table (i) below details the number of personal injury and vehicle damage claims received as a result of alleged incidents pertaining to works by Departmental contractors and individuals/organisations granted permission/consent to carry out works on or near public roads and footpaths. In cases where the Department confirms that the alleged cause of the incident was works by contractors employed by statutory bodies and utilities, the claims are rejected and dealt with by the relevant body or utility.

Table (i)

Financial Year	No. of Claims
2011/2012	150
2012/2013	155
2013/2014	191
2014/2015	138
2015/2016	125

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure (i) to detail all water and sewage plants that have outlets for surface waste that exit into local inland waterways; and (ii) whether these outlets are clearly marked in the event of a spillage inside the works.

(AQW 6179/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: NI Water has advised that chemicals are used in the treatment process at 55 Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) of which 40 discharge to local inland waterways. The location of these 40 WWTWs is listed in the table below:

Location of Wastewater Treatment Works Using Chemicals

Aghalee	Claudy	Dunloy	Limavady	Newtownbreda
Annsborough	Coalisland	Dunmurry	Lisburn	Omagh
Antrim	Cookstown	Enniskillen	Liscoleman	Rathfriland
Ballybogey	Creagh	Garrison	Lisnaskea	Saintfield
Ballyclare	Derrycrin	Glenavy	Loughgolie	Sion Mills
Ballymena	Downpatrick	Glenstall	Maghera	Strabane
Ballynahinch	Dromore	Kesh	Magherafelt	Tandragee
Banbridge	Dungannon	Kilrea	Moneyreagh	Waringstown

There are no Water Treatment Works where spillages transfer to inland waterways.

Where chemicals are used on a treatment works site, the Environmental System requires the site drainage plans to be produced and held on the site. The site drainage plans will clearly mark the underground drainage pipework within the works.

Following the recent Annsborough incident, the site drainage plans at all WWTW sites where process chemicals are being used will be checked and surveyed to ensure that the drainage pipework configurations enable all chemical spillages to be contained within the site.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Infrastructure how many claims for compensation have been received by his Department as a result of roads or footpaths being left in disrepair following work by contractors when consent has been granted by his Department, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6204/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: .

A range of statutory bodies and utilities can lawfully carry out works on or near public roads and footpaths. Appropriate legislative cover, together with other forms of approval, allows such works to take place. In addition, private individuals and organisations can obtain permission/consent to carry out work on or near public roads and footpaths. Although the Department has received claims for compensation as a result of unlawful works on or near public roads and footpaths, it is not possible to extract the requested information from the Department's claims database.

Table (i) below details the number of personal injury and vehicle damage claims received as a result of alleged incidents pertaining to works by Departmental contractors and individuals/organisations granted permission/consent to carry out works on or near public roads and footpaths. In cases where the Department confirms that the alleged cause of the incident was works by contractors employed by statutory bodies and utilities, the claims are rejected and dealt with by the relevant body or utility.

Table (i)

Financial Year	No. of Claims
2011/2012	150
2012/2013	155
2013/2014	191
2014/2015	138
2015/2016	125

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Infrastructure what plans Transport NI have to reduce the speed limit at (i) play parks; (ii) housing developments; and (iii) villages to 20 mph.

(AQW 6205/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) has a statutory duty to promote road safety and, within the context of the Road Safety Strategy, does this through a wide range of rolling road safety educational activities, including road safety public information campaigns and education programmes; and engineering initiatives.

My Department continues to take a range of actions to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads and focuses on key causes of road casualties, and on groups which are over-represented in the casualty figures. Children and young people are particularly vulnerable.

My Department will introduce 20 mph limits and zones in situations where there is a particular risk to vulnerable road users especially in residential areas. Successful 20 mph zones employ 'self enforcing' engineering measures such as road humps, central islands and other traffic calming measures to reduce traffic speeds resulting in substantial reductions in the number and severity of injury collisions. I am particularly keen to see more part-time 20mph speed limits outside schools, especially where the school is on a road where the national speed limit applies. I have asked my officials to consider further refinements to the policy for this measure that would facilitate an increased provision, subject to available funding.

A total of 713 streets have enforceable 20 mph speed limits in place. These are part of almost 500 traffic calmed areas that include measures aimed at reducing speeds to 20mph, the majority of which do not have posted reduced speed limits. These have been engineered to maximise road safety benefits, and implemented in areas where there was a history of collisions or where there are high levels of vulnerable road users such as children, cyclists and pedestrians.

When designating any speed limit for a road, including those under 30 mph, my Department's traffic engineers comply with the policy guidelines set out in RSPPG E051 Setting Local Speed Limits in Northern Ireland. This document is available to download from the internet at www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/setting-local-speed-limits-northern-ireland-rsppg-e051

Engineering interventions are an important tool in my road safety portfolio, but it is important for us all to remember that over 95% of road traffic collisions where someone is killed or seriously injured are due to human error. Therefore, in addition to designating 20mph zones, my Department will continue to challenge driver behaviour and, through the road safety campaigns, remind motorists of their responsibility to themselves and other road users. My Department's current anti speeding campaign, aimed at drivers, reinforces the message that 'you can never control the consequences if you speed', with the reminder that the equivalent of a classroom of our children have been killed due to speeding since 2000.

I am committed to continuing to work towards reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads. I recognise the continuing challenges of preventing road deaths and serious injuries and as such my Department will continue to address the issues through various educational and engineering activities.

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail what advice has been given to Translink staff to switch off their vehicle's engines when they are stationary.

(AQW 6221/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The advice given to Translink staff regarding the switching off their vehicle's engines varies according to whether it is bus or train operations.

All bus drivers are advised that when the bus is stopped for more than 5 minutes at a terminal point, bus stop, on a stand, in a depot yard or any other location, the engine must be switched off.

Train drivers are advised to switch off engines when stationary at planned stabling locations. The current Class 3000 and Class 4000 trains which are the most recently purchased by Translink are fitted with an automatic function that switches off all engines (with the exception of one) after a short period of time in order to save fuel. One engine is kept on so as to maintain the necessary auxiliary power to key systems for operational and safety reasons.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) the criteria; and (ii) the assessment that takes place in order for a certificate of lawful development to be issued.

(AQW 6224/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As of April 2015, the majority of planning functions transferred to the 11 new councils, therefore most applications for Certificates of Lawful Developments are no longer processed by my Department. The Member should contact the relevant council with any concerns in relation to specific cases.

The issue of a Certificate of Lawful Use or Development depends entirely upon factual evidence about the history and planning status of the building or other land and the interpretation of planning legislation. There are two types of Certificates of Lawful Use or Development that can be applied for – one for an existing use/development and the other for a proposed use/development.

In determining an application for either, the onus of proof is firmly on the applicant. This means that the applicant should clearly state the reason(s) why the existing or proposed use/development is lawful. In the case of an application for an existing use, this can be demonstrated through the submission of evidence (for example to show that the current use has been operating for a period of 5 years without planning permission). This may include sworn statements, utility bills, copies of rates bills, other statutory approvals etc. It will be for the planning authority to make an assessment of such evidence against the relevant planning legislation and planning history records.

In the case of an application for a proposed operation or use, most applications are made on the basis that the proposed works or uses do not require planning permission because they constitute 'permitted development', or that they do not involve development at all. The planning authority will again assess the application against the relevant legislation and planning history before coming to a decision.

There are several mechanisms in place and available to councils to prevent the misuse of the Certificate process. Section 172 of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 states that if any person applying for a Certificate –

- (a) knowingly or recklessly makes a statement which is false or misleading in a material particular;
- (b) with intent to deceive, uses any document which is false or misleading in a material particular; or
- (c) with intent to deceive, withholds any material information,

that person shall be guilty of an offence. A person guilty of such an offence shall be liable-

- (a) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum;
- (b) On conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or a fine, or both.

Furthermore, under Section 171 (7) of the Planning Act, a council may revoke a certificate if, on the application for the certificate-

- (a) a statement was made or document used which was false in a material particular; or
- (b) any material information was withheld.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Infrastructure how many certificates of lawful development were issued in Lagan Valley in the last year.

(AQW 6225/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Table 1 below details the number of certificates of lawful development that were issued in Lagan Valley in the 2015/16 financial year. Furthermore (not included in the table below) there has been an additional 2 certificates issued in Lagan Valley in the first quarter of 2016/17 (latest published information). Both certificates were approved.

Table 1: Decisions issued¹ for Certificates of Lawful Development in Lagan Valley^{2,3}, 2015/16

	Approved	Total Decided	Approval Rate ⁴
Certificates of Lawful Development - Existing	13	13	100.0%
Certificates of Lawful Development - Proposed	11	13	84.6%
Total	24	26	92.3%

Source: NI Planning Portal

Notes:

- 1 Cases decided do not include withdrawn cases.
- 2 The method of classifying the Parliamentary Constituencies is based on the x and y co-ordinates as recorded on the cases in conjunction with Westminster Parliamentary Constituency boundaries (2008).
- 3 Parliamentary Constituency has been assigned based on the areas from which cases arise rather than processing authorities.
- 4 The number and per cent of cases approved is based on the number of decisions issued in the same time period.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Infrastructure what mechanisms are in place to prevent the misuse of a certificate of lawful development.

(AQW 6226/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As of April 2015, the majority of planning functions transferred to the 11 new councils, therefore most applications for Certificates of Lawful Developments are no longer processed by my Department. The Member should contact the relevant council with any concerns in relation to specific cases.

The issue of a Certificate of Lawful Use or Development depends entirely upon factual evidence about the history and planning status of the building or other land and the interpretation of planning legislation. There are two types of Certificates of Lawful Use or Development that can be applied for – one for an existing use/development and the other for a proposed use/development.

In determining an application for either, the onus of proof is firmly on the applicant. This means that the applicant should clearly state the reason(s) why the existing or proposed use/development is lawful. In the case of an application for an existing use, this can be demonstrated through the submission of evidence (for example to show that the current use has been operating for a period of 5 years without planning permission). This may include sworn statements, utility bills, copies of rates bills, other statutory approvals etc. It will be for the planning authority to make an assessment of such evidence against the relevant planning legislation and planning history records.

In the case of an application for a proposed operation or use, most applications are made on the basis that the proposed works or uses do not require planning permission because they constitute 'permitted development', or that they do not involve development at all. The planning authority will again assess the application against the relevant legislation and planning history before coming to a decision.

There are several mechanisms in place and available to councils to prevent the misuse of the Certificate process. Section 172 of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 states that if any person applying for a Certificate –

- (d) knowingly or recklessly makes a statement which is false or misleading in a material particular;
- (e) with intent to deceive, uses any document which is false or misleading in a material particular; or
- (f) with intent to deceive, withholds any material information,

that person shall be guilty of an offence. A person guilty of such an offence shall be liable-

- (c) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum;
- (d) On conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or a fine, or both.

Furthermore, under Section 171 (7) of the Planning Act, a council may revoke a certificate if, on the application for the certificate-

- (c) a statement was made or document used which was false in a material particular; or
- (d) any material information was withheld.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister for Infrastructure for an update on the recent clearance of an informal skateboard park on NI Water property at Seacliff Road, Bangor.

(AQW 6252/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: NI Water is aware of the use of the top of one of its storm tanks as a makeshift skateboard park at Lukes Point Wastewater Pumping Station outside the fenced area of the station. This has raised serious Health and Safety concerns with NI Water.

NI Water has erected a sign to warn against unauthorised use of the area and all moveable equipment has been located to the boundary of the site to allow for collection by the owners. If the equipment is not removed within the next few weeks then NI Water will make arrangements for its disposal. Arrangements have also been made with a NI Water contractor to remove the constructed ramps.

NI Water local managers have visited the site on a number of occasions within the last few weeks and advised some of the people using the area of the Company's concerns over Health & Safety, and its intentions to remove the equipment off the surfaced area. This will provide time for the owners of any equipment to remove it, rather than being disposed of by NI Water.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail for the Dungannon area (i) the policy for the cutting of dangerous hedges and trees; (ii) the steps taken to identify and implement same; and (iii) the number of notices issued in the last two financial years.

(AQW 6258/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: TransportNI's policy in relation to roadside trees and hedges is the same across all council areas.

Most roadside trees and hedges are on lands adjacent to public roads, and it is the responsibility of property owners or occupiers of those lands to ensure that such trees and hedges do not endanger or obstruct road users. From time to time TransportNI places notices in the local press and in farming journals reminding owners/occupiers of this responsibility.

Overgrown trees and hedges that endanger or obstruct road users are usually identified by TransportNI staff during routine maintenance inspections. Members of the general public would also from time to time report suspect trees/hedges to one of our local section offices.

TransportNI does not usually take action unless it is absolutely essential for road safety purposes. As a first step, owners / occupiers are identified and are requested to co-operate in removing or cutting the trees or hedges. If that fails, TransportNI has powers under Article 50 of the Roads (NI) Order 1993 to serve a notice on the owner/occupier requiring him/her to remove or cut back the tree or hedge so as to remove the danger or obstruction. Where an owner/occupier does not comply with the requirements of the notice, TransportNI may carry out the necessary works and seek to recover the costs.

Where TransportNI and public interests can be protected by persuasion and informal discussion, this is by far the preferred approach. While no 'formal' notices have been issued in the Dungannon area in the last two years a number of land owners have been contacted and their cooperation has been obtained in carrying out the necessary work without having to revert to issuing formal notices.

With regard to the relatively small number of trees which are the responsibility of TransportNI, specialist external contractors are generally employed to undertake this type of work as the in house contractor does not have the necessary specialist skills or equipment. This work is prioritised and undertaken subject to availability of resource.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) the number of road traffic accidents that were caused by fallen trees; and (ii) the number of fatalities attributed to fallen trees over the last five years.

(AQW 6259/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: A manual inspection of collision records by PSNI has detected 32 collisions that were caused by fallen trees covering the period 1st January 2011 to 31st August 2016. Of these collisions, 2 people have been killed as a result, both of which occurred in 2015. See table below for further detail:

Injury Road Traffic Collisions which involved a fallen tree¹ by severity of injury 1st January 2011 – 31st August 2016

Year	Injury Collisions	Killed	Seriously Injured	Slightly Injured	Total Casualties
2011	9	0	2	7	9
2012	3	0	0	4	4
2013	8	0	1	12	13
2014	3	0	0	4	4
2015	7	2	3	5	10
2016 (to 31 Aug) ²	2	0	1	1	2
Total	32	2	7	33	42

1 Collisions resulting either from a tree falling directly onto a vehicle or where its presence has contributed to an injury collision

2 2016 Statistics are provisional and subject to minor amendment

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) the number of road openings carried out by utilities in the Dungannon area; and (ii) the number of failed openings identified in the last three financial years.

(AQW 6260/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The following table details the number of road openings and associated failed reinstatements by utilities in the Dungannon area over the last three financial years.

	No of openings	No of failed reinstatements
2013/14	1,273	18
2014/15	1,390	17
2015/16	1,741	12

These numbers include all openings by non Departmental utilities within the boundaries of the public road.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether (i) all protocols were followed in closing Ballyrobert Road, Crawfordsburn and Ballymiscaw Road, Craigantlet for maintenance work; and (ii) local businesses affected by these closures have been accommodated to permit normal trading.

(AQW 6261/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I can advise the member that my Department, TransportNI followed all the necessary protocols in the closure of the Ballyrobert Road, Crawfordsburn and Ballymiscaw Road, Craigantlet.

At all times access for residents, emergency services and local businesses has been accommodated.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Infrastructure for an update on the planned hub at the Europa Bus Centre/Great Victoria Street railway station.

(AQW 6269/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The first stage Outline Business Case (OBC) for the Belfast Transport Hub, identifying a preferred option, has been approved by my Department and the Department of Finance.

The project is currently at design and planning stage and a budget has been identified to progress it this year and next before a further OBC will be produced. Before developing a full planning application Translink has started a consultation which runs until 2 December 2016 which will provide members of the public with the opportunity to review the proposals and provide their feedback. Details are set out at www.translink.co.uk.

The feedback from this consultation will help to inform the design and masterplan for the project and further consultation is planned.

The estimated cost of the project could be over £175m up to 2021.

It is an Executive flagship project and we need to consider all options including funding and phasing.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) current road schemes; and (ii) future road schemes.

(AQW 6270/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Current major road schemes include the recently completed A31 Maghjerafelt Bypass, which I was delighted to open on the 6 October, and the A26 Glarryford to A44 Dualling which is on schedule to open by next summer.

In addition the Executive, in the December 2015 Budget Statement, has committed almost £490m between 2016 and 2021 to the two Flagship road projects, the A5 and A6. This aligns with one of my key priorities as Infrastructure Minister, to redress the north's infrastructure deficit, particularly west of the Bann.

Subject to the successful completion of statutory procedures, construction of a first phase of the A5 Western Transport Corridor, the Newbuildings to north of Strabane section, could commence in 2017.

My Department is currently progressing two projects on the A6 route to improve road links between our two principal cities of Derry and Belfast. I am hopeful that construction of the first of these, the £160m A6 Randalstown to Castledawson scheme, will commence in the near future. Work is also underway to determine the extent of the Derry to Dungiven scheme that can be delivered with the indicative funding allocations contained in the December 2015 Budget Statement, with priority being given to commencing construction with a bypass of Dungiven and progressing westwards towards Drumahoe.

The York Street Interchange Scheme remains one of my priorities given its location at the junction of our busiest roads, the M1/Westlink, M2 and M3. As I am sure you are aware, this scheme had been highly likely to be eligible for a significant EU funding contribution towards construction. I had intended to award the contract for the design phase of this scheme by October 2016. However as result of the funding uncertainty created by the EU referendum result, the procurement period has been extended to allow further consideration of funding availability for this project, along with other capital schemes, as part of the 2016 Budget process.

In addition, my Programme for Government Delivery Plan sets out a range of integrated interventions designed to improve transport connections for people, goods and services. The Delivery Plan includes a number of priority road schemes that will be taken forward subject to budget availability.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Infrastructure on what date will the Inspector's report from the York Street Interchange scheme's public inquiry be released.
(AQW 6272/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The York Street Interchange Scheme remains one of my priorities given its location at the confluence of our busiest roads, the M1/Westlink, M2 and M3. I can confirm that I intend to make a decision on the status of the scheme and release the Inspectors' report from the Public Inquiry in the coming weeks.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline what steps he proposes to put in place to reduce the backlog in processing Blue Badge applications.
(AQW 6330/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I am fully aware and extremely appreciative of the needs of the people who rely on their Blue Badges. I wish to assure you that my Department is doing everything that is reasonably practicable to resolve the situation as quickly as possible. This includes the following measures:

- Employing additional agency staff to process Blue Badge applications (there are presently 8 agency staff);
- Preference is being given to first time applications whilst other cases are dealt with in date order as we currently have approximately 7500 applications, including the backlog of approximately 1850 applications to be processed;
- Applicants that hold an expired badge and have sent in a renewal application are being advised that traffic attendants on street and in council car parks will not issue parking tickets to any badge displayed that has expired after 1 June 2016. This information is also available to the public on the NI Direct website;
- The main organisations, such as The Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry and The Department of Health, who have responsibilities for disseminating information to hospitals and businesses including private car park operators, have also been informed about the situation.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the number of winter service call-outs carried out by (i) Transport NI or Roads Service Southern Division; (ii) DBFO 1 contractor; and (iii) DBFO 2 contractor for the last three financial years.
(AQW 6331/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: TransportNI hold records for the number of call outs by winter service season as shown on the table below:

Section	Number of winter service call outs		
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Transport NI Southern Division	70	98	67
DBFO 1 contractor	77	100	63
DBFO 2 contractor	70	103	80

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Infrastructure for a copy of his departmental bid for additional allocations as stated in page 3 of the 2016-17 October Monitoring Round Statement made to the NI Assembly by the Minister of Finance on 25 October 2016.
(AQW 6337/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The approach now adopted by the Executive to the monitoring round process no longer requires the submission of bids by departments.

Mr M Bradley asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) how many checks have been carried out by his Department on taxis in the Causeway Coast and Glens area since the introduction of the new taxi legislation; and (ii) how many drivers have been found not to be using their meters for fares.
(AQW 6406/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: From 31 May 2016, when new taxi legislation was introduced, until 30 June 2016, the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) has not conducted any roadside enforcement checks on taxis in the Causeway Coast and Glens area.

Statistics in respect of DVA enforcement activities are released on a quarterly basis in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Statistics for the period 1 July 2016 to 30 September 2016 are due to be published in December 2016.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail what work has been carried out to date in Clady village since the flooding in 2015.
(AQW 6414/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Following significant flooding in 2015 a comprehensive post flood investigation was completed by DfI Rivers and emergency works were undertaken to restore the previous level of protection. These works included the repair of breaches in the existing flood defences and the provision of temporary defences, in the form of 2 tonne sandbags, on Donnygowan Burn.

Maintenance work to the NI portion of the Finn river (the border with ROI is the middle of the river) to improve the cross-sectional area of the channel downstream of Clady bridge to accommodate increased flows has been completed. There has been significant liaison between DfI Rivers, the Office of Public Works and Donegal Council to discuss flooding and maintenance issues on Border Rivers including the River Finn this co-operation will continue regarding Flood Risk Management for both jurisdictions.

At the June meeting of the Drainage Council, the lower section of the Donnygowan Burn running through the village was designated, this allowed the Department to carry out maintenance to this watercourse and it will now be routinely inspected for impediments to flow in the future. We also removed a buildup of material from the confluence of the Finn River.

DfI Rivers is currently in the process of installing a High Water-Level Alert Station at Clady Village which is planned to be completed and operational by the end of November 2016. The provision of a sandbag store for use by home and business owners is also being explored with the community group.

You may also be interested to know that four applications for the Home Owner Flood Protection Grant Scheme have been submitted by residents in Clady and these have all been approved. This grant scheme enables home owners to modify their homes to reduce the likelihood of flood water entering the property.

I hope this demonstrates that my Department is doing all that it can to manage the risk of flooding to the village of Clady.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Infrastructure for his assessment of whether all councillors serving on planning committees within local councils are adequately trained to make a fair and equitable judgement of a planning recommendation which appears before the committee.

(AQW 6428/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: In order to ensure that councillors serving on planning committees were adequately trained to decide on planning applications, the then Department for the Environment ran a number of capacity building and training events for councillors, including one on the operation of planning committees, prior to the transfer of planning powers to the new 11 councils on 1 April 2015.

In January 2015, a Protocol was issued on the Operation of Planning Committees to provide advice, guidance and best practice to councils. Councillors are also bound by the Councillors' Code of Conduct, which contains a section on planning. In February 2015 guidance was issued to assist councillors on how to apply the Code with regard to planning matters.

Councillors on planning committees are also advised by their planning officers and, where necessary, by receive legal advice.

Of course, training for councillors is an ongoing necessity, as councillors change over time and responsibility for this now rests with the councils. Indeed, I am aware that NILGA recently ran a refresher training event for elected members and the planning committee.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline his powers to review a planning decision taken by any of the local councils in relation to (i) a refusal; or (ii) an approval.

(AQW 6429/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Councils are the appropriate bodies statutorily empowered to determine the vast majority of planning applications. I believe locally elected and locally accountable councils are best placed to decide planning applications at a local level.

There are however important checks and balances in the system. For instance under the Planning Act (NI) 2011 my Department may "call in" a planning application from a council to allow the Department to determine it. In relation to reviewing a planning decision made by a council, Part 10 of the Act includes powers for my Department to conduct an assessment of how a council deals with applications for planning permission, including the basis on which determinations have been made. The Department, however, has not undertaken any such assessments as I believe it is important that councils have time to settle in to their new planning role.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the current number of street lights in West Tyrone in need of repair.

(AQW 6431/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As at the end of October, TransportNI has been made aware of 183 street lights needing repair in West Tyrone. Instructions for the repair of these street lights have been issued to our contractor and it is expected that the majority will have since been repaired.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure when he will be in a position to announce the re-opening of the Ulster Canal.

(AQW 6434/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: In July 2007, NSMC agreed that Waterways Ireland proceed with the restoration of the south-western section of the Ulster Canal, between Lough Erne and Clones. Work on the first phase of this section, Lough Erne to Castlesaunderson, is now under way and is scheduled to be completed in 2018.

As part of the Fresh Start Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan, the Executive and the Irish Government agreed to undertake a review to identify options for jointly developing future phases of the Ulster Canal restoration project.

In line with this, officials from my Department and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs are currently finalising a paper for consideration by Ministers at the NSMC Plenary to be held in Armagh on 18 November. The paper will set out options for any further development of the Ulster Canal restoration project.

To inform this process, Minister Humphries and I have established the Ulster Canal Advisory Forum to:

- explore and examine ways to support and help advance the Ulster Canal Project;
- examine possible funding options for the project, including existing funding streams in place in public/statutory bodies and also EU schemes that are open for applications for funding;
- consider the potential for private sector investment and patronage from philanthropic societies.

The Forum consists of representatives from the local Councils, Sponsor Departments and Waterways Ireland. Interested stakeholders from other organisations will be invited to attend future meetings of the Forum as appropriate.

The inaugural meeting, which Minister Humphreys and I chaired, was held on 23 September 2016.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Infrastructure, apart from the pipe fracture at the Annsborough Waste Treatment Works which led to the pollution incident and fish kill; whether he can confirm if all other required precautions were in place in relation to the storage of chemicals at this site.

(AQW 6486/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: NI Water undertook a full investigation to establish the cause of the incident and to ensure that any lessons learned are applied across the organisation to ensure all reasonable steps are taken to minimise the risk of accidental discharges to the environment. The investigation revealed that a fractured plastic fitting on the polyelectrolyte dosing pipe was the primary source of the problem. The fracture enabled an uncontrolled chemical discharge from the storage container. In addition, it was found that the bunding arrangements around the storage container for the liquid polyelectrolyte weren't adequately sized to contain the spillage, thus enabling the chemical to spill through the site drainage pipework.

Steps were quickly taken at Annsborough to replace the plastic poly dosing pipe fitting with a stainless steel component and to put in place suitable temporary bunding protection for the polyelectrolyte storage container. As part of the planned refurbishment at the Works, measures are presently in hand to construct a permanent bunding arrangement for the polyelectrolyte and to carry out remedial work to the site drainage pipework.

NI Water is very mindful of the crucial role it plays in the protection of the local environment and treats each and every pollution incident with the utmost seriousness.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Infrastructure why parking restrictions have not been put back in place for Abbey Street, Bangor which has resulted in a local business having to close.

(AQW 6533/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I am pleased to advise that enforcement of the parking and waiting restrictions in Abbey Street, Bangor recommenced on 17 October 2016. My Department's Parking Enforcement Attendants are actively enforcing the waiting restrictions in this area.

Department of Justice

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 4759/16-21, to outline the date the Health and Safety Executive attended HMP Maghaberry to carry out an investigation into this matter; and to provide or place a copy of their report in the Assembly Library.

(AQW 5988/16-21)

Ms Sugden (The Minister of Justice): The Health and Safety Executive have not attended Maghaberry Prison to carry out an investigation into the matters addressed in AQW 4759/16-21, and as such there is no report to be placed into the Assembly Library.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Justice whether her Department will work closely with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council to support, develop and grow the Omagh Safer Streets Project, including the provision of resource funding to administer and manage the efforts of its volunteers.

(AQW 5992/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Omagh Street Safe Project is an initiative set up by the previous Omagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) and currently receives funding from the Fermanagh and Omagh PCSP. My Department and the Northern Ireland Policing Board provide funding to PCSPs to enable local initiatives to be developed to tackle crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. I understand that the existing project delivery model involves two PCSP officers who work alongside 22 volunteers on a Friday and Saturday night.

There is recognition that this service is not sustainable in its current format and, while this is an operational issue for the PCSP to address, I am aware that discussion is ongoing between the PCSP and volunteers to consider a volunteer led service which can be supported and sustained in the future.

I very much value and will continue to support the role of all volunteers and people who come from the community and voluntary sector.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Justice whether her Department plans to introduce legislation prohibiting the detention of children alongside adults in custody.

(AQW 6021/16-21)

Ms Sugden: There have been no children held in Hydebank Wood College since November 2012, when administrative arrangements were put in place to locate all children in Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre.

Unfortunately, there is no simple legislative fix which can be inserted into the current legal framework to underpin this arrangement.

One of the aims of the Scoping Study into children in the justice system is to review the current cumbersome and complicated youth justice legislation with a view to introducing new legislation which is more effective and easier to understand. This work is at an early stage, and full and careful consideration, including consultation, is necessary before any legislation can be introduced.

Such legislation will place the current administrative arrangement, which ensures that no children are detained in an adult setting, onto a statutory footing.

I shall ensure the current arrangement continues in the meantime.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Justice whether her Department plans to introduce new bail legislation, including a requirement in relation to children that bail must not be refused on the sole ground that a child does not have any or any adequate accommodation.

(AQW 6022/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I have no plans to introduce new bail legislation at this time.

However, bail in relation to children was considered as part of the Department's Scoping Study into children in the justice system, which included the issue of accommodation. I am currently considering the high-level proposals which emerged from that Study, and will engage with my Ministerial colleagues in taking the proposals forward, including those in relation to bail and accommodation.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Justice to detail when the road safety equipment used by the Northern Ireland Road Safety Partnership for their mobile and fixed camera vehicles was last (i) updated; and (ii) modernised.

(AQW 6033/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Decisions regarding the purchase and use of such equipment are operational matters for the Chief Constable. However, I have been advised by the PSNI that new safety camera vans were purchased in 2010 and new mobile cameras in 2011. The PSNI advise me that there is a need to invest in the safety camera scheme. My Department is exploring this with the Department of Finance.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Justice to detail how much income generated from (i) mobile; and (ii) fixed road safety cameras through the work of the NI Road Safety Partnership broken down in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 6034/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The income generated from safety cameras is not captured at the level requested as there are various methods of disposal that each detection can follow, with varying values attached to the method of disposal. The total income generated by cameras is provided in the table below.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Total
Income (,000)	£1,969	£1,858	£2,230	£6,057

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Justice to detail how the income generated from mobile and fixed road safety cameras through the Northern Ireland Road Safety Partnership has been (i) spent; and (ii) allocated, broken down for each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 6035/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Expenditure has only been incurred on daily running and administration costs. This includes maintenance and calibration of the equipment. Total expenditure is provided in the table below.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Total
Expenditure (,000)	£1,006	£1,021	£1,002	£3,029

Mr O'Dowd asked the Minister of Justice to detail the cost of maintaining and securing the former Legahory PSNI station in Craigavon.

(AQW 6049/16-21)

Ms Sugden: These are operational matters for the Policing Board, which owns the police estate, and the Chief Constable, who manages it on behalf of the Board. However, I am advised by the PSNI that there are two closed police stations in the Upper Bann area – the former Legahory station in Craigavon, and Tandragee. Legahory is now completely closed; Tandragee is closed for normal operational purposes but has still been used occasionally, so figures for utilities and maintenance are higher in respect of it. Recent costs are set out in the table below:

	Rates (2016/17)	Utilities (2015/16)	Maintenance (Last 12 months)
Craigavon	£45,460	£2,000	£1,359
Tandragee	£3,159	£8,000	£5,807

Mr O'Dowd asked the Minister of Justice to outline the (i) closed PSNI stations still under ownership of the PSNI in Upper Bann; and (ii) cost to manage and secure each closed site.

(AQW 6050/16-21)

Ms Sugden: These are operational matters for the Policing Board, which owns the police estate, and the Chief Constable, who manages it on behalf of the Board. However, I am advised by the PSNI that there are two closed police stations in the Upper Bann area – the former Legahory station in Craigavon, and Tandragee. Legahory is now completely closed; Tandragee is closed for normal operational purposes but has still been used occasionally, so figures for utilities and maintenance are higher in respect of it. Recent costs are set out in the table below:

	Rates (2016/17)	Utilities (2015/16)	Maintenance (Last 12 months)
Craigavon	£45,460	£2,000	£1,359
Tandragee	£3,159	£8,000	£5,807

Mr Beattie asked the Minister of Justice to outline when the final in-year pay deal for 2016 for the Northern Ireland Prison Service will be (i) acknowledged; (ii) agreed; and (iii) published.

(AQW 6051/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I am keen to reach an agreement, at the earliest opportunity, on a 2016 pay award for Northern Ireland Prison Service operational staff.

Given his role in respect of NICS pay policy I been in contact with the Finance Minister on a number of occasions to do so. As engagement with the Finance Minister is ongoing it would be inappropriate to comment on any detail including timescales at this stage.

Mr Beattie asked the Minister of Justice to outline her Department's actions to ensure homosexual men convicted of having, or seeking, homosexual sex receive the same pardon as those in Great Britain.

(AQW 6052/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I have received agreement from the Executive to ask the Northern Ireland Assembly to approve a legislative consent motion so that the UK Parliament can include provision in the Policing and Crime Bill which would provide Northern Ireland with the same arrangements as proposed in England and Wales for pardoning abolished homosexual offences.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline the dates the Health and Safety Executive attended and conducted an investigation into the deliberate fire in Erne House, HMP Maghaberry on 25 April 2015; and to provide or place in the Assembly Library a copy of the report.

(AQW 6059/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Health and Safety Executive have not attended Maghaberry Prison to carry out an investigation into the matter above and as such there is no report to be placed into the Assembly Library.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice for a breakdown of the implementation of the Steele Report recommendations on staff safety and support shown (i) per recommendation; and (ii) per year of implementation since 2004.

(AQW 6060/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Steele Report provided commentary on issues which arose during the review.

Given that these observations were made prior to the devolution of policing and justice, and the significant passage of time, an account of how they were specifically addressed cannot be provided.

It is clear however that specific staff training and rotation were introduced following the Steele Report and were effective in sustaining staff morale for those working in separation. Those arrangements are still in place.

Additionally the Prison Service Protection Scheme (PSPS) is available to all staff; this scheme provides physical security measures at the homes of staff.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Justice what processes are in place to ensure the speedy release of a Freedom of Information request in circumstances where the absence of clearance from either her or her Special Adviser has taken the request beyond the statutory deadline for response.

(AQW 6073/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The only instance where I, as Minister must clear a response to a Freedom of Information Request, is where the release of all or part of the requested information would be likely to "cause prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs". This situation is defined in s36 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) where a public authority must have a "Qualified Person" provide their opinion that the release of the requested information would actually cause the prejudice described, and therefore that s36 of the FOIA is engaged. As per s36(5)(b), the qualified person for the Department is myself as Justice Minister, and it is my decision whether s36 is engaged.

Further information regarding the application of s36 can be found at the link below. The points I have covered can be found on page 4, points 7-9 (Identifying the qualified person) and page 6, points 15 -17 (Qualified person's opinion needed to engage s36 exemption).

https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1175/section_36_prejudice_to_effective_conduct_of_public_affairs.pdf

There have been no occasions when my consideration of the s36 exemption has caused a response to miss the statutory deadline.

There are no circumstances where my Special Adviser is required to give clearance.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Justice how she will provide greater protections for the elderly and vulnerable.

(AQW 6081/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The safety of older people is a priority area for me as Justice Minister. This is emphasised by the inclusion of measures to address fear of crime within my Department's Community Safety Strategy, "Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities".

A multi-agency Older Persons Delivery Group, chaired by my Department, has developed an Action Plan which contains a range of measures being taken forward by the relevant organisations to tackle fear of crime among older people.

My Department has been working with Age Sector Platform, a member of the Delivery Group, over recent years to tackle a range of issues affecting the safety of older people and their fear of crime. In particular, they have been working with their members to research why older people are fearful of becoming a victim of crime and to develop initiatives to tackle those fears. This culminated in the development of a "Feel Safe" guide and subsequent workshops, which aimed to promote practical crime prevention advice and provide details of organisations that can help older people to feel safer.

My Department continues to work with members of the Delivery Group to develop initiatives that aim to protect older people, and is currently liaising with the PSNI, the Policing Board and other partners to take forward a partnership approach to tackling scams.

I understand that, from an operational perspective, the PSNI continue to progress measures to tackle burglary, with an emphasis on protecting older people aged 60 plus. Operation Cordella was renewed between 26 September and 9 October to reduce the number of burglaries across Northern Ireland. This resulted in 42 arrests, 27 searches and 64 charges or reports to the Public Prosecution Service. The PSNI have, in tandem with this Operation, promoted their 'Nominated Neighbour' scheme, which instructs callers to contact the individual's 'nominated neighbour' who can then check the caller's identity.

In addition, a range of initiatives are run at a local level by Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) to help keep older people safe. Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon PCSP, for example, are participating in a call blocking initiative, facilitated by my Department, the PSNI and the Northern Ireland Policing Board. This initiative aims to install call blocking devices in the homes of older people who are vulnerable to scam calls.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of anti-social behaviour orders that have been (i) issued; and (ii) breached in each of the last five years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 6082/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Building safer communities by preventing anti-social behaviour and reducing the harm that it causes is a key priority for my Department.

As you are aware, anti-social behaviour (ASB) is a broad term used to describe a wide range of behaviours which people consider anti-social. It is used to describe inconsiderate and nuisance behaviours, such as excessive noise, littering and neighbourhood disputes.

While I welcome the overall downward trend since 2007 of reported incidents of ASB, I am fully aware of the impact ASB and its associated issues have on local communities and individuals.

The Anti-social Behaviour (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 provides for the making of a civil order, to protect the public from behaviour that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. An Anti-social Behaviour Order (ASBO) can be made on application by a 'relevant authority' (a district council, the Chief Constable or the Northern Ireland Housing Executive) to a magistrates' court, or by a court where an offender is convicted of a relevant offence.

The number of ASBO's made and the number of defendants convicted of a breach of an ASBO is outlined below in Tables 1 and 2, presented by constituency.

Further to my response of 7 October (AQW/4142/16-21 refers), my Department is represented on several working groups to strategically address anti-social behaviour and its associated issues. These include Reducing Offending Partnerships, Police & Community Safety Partnerships, Interagency Advisory Groups, ASB forums and other partnership initiatives, all of which have key strands that focus on addressing ASB through local initiatives.

The outworking of some of these groups, including the effectiveness of ASBOs, has led me to ask my officials to scope out, in association with relevant stakeholders, how a holistic review of anti-social behaviour can be taken forward.

Table 1: Number of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders¹ made, by constituency of defendants residence: 2011 to 2015

Constituency	Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Belfast East	1	1	0	0	0
Belfast North	6	3	4	1	0
Belfast South	0	0	0	0	0
Belfast West	1	0	0	1	0
East Antrim	3	0	0	1	0
East Londonderry	0	0	1	0	0
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	0	0	0	0	0
Foyle	0	0	0	0	0
Lagan Valley	0	0	2	2	0
Mid Ulster	0	0	0	1	0
Newry and Armagh	2	0	0	0	0
North Antrim	2	2	0	1	0
North Down	0	1	0	0	0
South Antrim	2	3	1	4	2
South Down	0	2	2	2	0
Strangford	0	0	0	0	0
Upper Bann	1	0	1	0	0
West Tyrone	0	0	0	0	0
Northern Ireland Total	18	12	11	13	2

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

1 Include ASBOs made on appeal

Table 2: Number of defendants² convicted of a Breach of an Anti-Social Behaviour Order, by constituency of residence: 2011 to 2015

Constituency	Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Belfast East	6	3	2	1	0
Belfast North	18	25	15	7	1
Belfast South	4	3	5	3	0
Belfast West	1	2	0	5	1
East Antrim	2	6	1	1	0
East Londonderry	10	0	2	2	2
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	0	0	0	0	0
Foyle	0	0	1	0	1
Lagan Valley	0	0	0	5	2
Mid Ulster	2	0	0	0	0
Newry and Armagh	0	0	1	0	0
North Antrim	19	1	1	0	0
North Down	6	3	6	5	2
South Antrim	10	21	13	7	13
South Down	1	6	13	13	4
Strangford	2	0	6	3	1
Upper Bann	2	0	0	1	0
West Tyrone	3	0	0	0	0
Not recorded	2	2	0	0	0
Northern Ireland Total	88	72	66	53	27

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

²Defendants relate to individuals involved in court cases. An individual may be involved in multiple court cases and will be recorded as a different defendant on each occasion.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Justice to provide details on the meetings she had with key agencies relating to anti-social behaviour.

(AQW 6083/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Building safer communities by preventing anti-social behaviour and reducing the harm that it causes is a key priority for my Department.

As you are aware, anti-social behaviour (ASB) is a broad term used to describe a wide range of behaviours which people consider anti-social. It is used to describe inconsiderate and nuisance behaviours, such as excessive noise, littering and neighbourhood disputes.

While I welcome the overall downward trend since 2007 of reported incidents of ASB, I am fully aware of the impact ASB and its associated issues have on local communities and individuals.

The Anti-social Behaviour (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 provides for the making of a civil order, to protect the public from behaviour that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. An Anti-social Behaviour Order (ASBO) can be made on application by a 'relevant authority' (a district council, the Chief Constable or the Northern Ireland Housing Executive) to a magistrates' court, or by a court where an offender is convicted of a relevant offence.

The number of ASBO's made and the number of defendants convicted of a breach of an ASBO is outlined below in Tables 1 and 2, presented by constituency.

Further to my response of 7 October (AQW/4142/16-21 refers), my Department is represented on several working groups to strategically address anti-social behaviour and its associated issues. These include Reducing Offending Partnerships, Police & Community Safety Partnerships, Interagency Advisory Groups, ASB forums and other partnership initiatives, all of which have key strands that focus on addressing ASB through local initiatives.

The outworking of some of these groups, including the effectiveness of ASBOs, has led me to ask my officials to scope out, in association with relevant stakeholders, how a holistic review of anti-social behaviour can be taken forward.

Table 1: Number of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders¹ made, by constituency of defendants residence: 2011 to 2015

Constituency	Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Belfast East	1	1	0	0	0
Belfast North	6	3	4	1	0
Belfast South	0	0	0	0	0
Belfast West	1	0	0	1	0
East Antrim	3	0	0	1	0
East Londonderry	0	0	1	0	0
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	0	0	0	0	0
Foyle	0	0	0	0	0
Lagan Valley	0	0	2	2	0
Mid Ulster	0	0	0	1	0
Newry and Armagh	2	0	0	0	0
North Antrim	2	2	0	1	0
North Down	0	1	0	0	0
South Antrim	2	3	1	4	2
South Down	0	2	2	2	0
Strangford	0	0	0	0	0
Upper Bann	1	0	1	0	0
West Tyrone	0	0	0	0	0
Northern Ireland Total	18	12	11	13	2

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

1 Include ASBOs made on appeal

Table 2: Number of defendants² convicted of a Breach of an Anti-Social Behaviour Order, by constituency of residence: 2011 to 2015

Constituency	Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Belfast East	6	3	2	1	0
Belfast North	18	25	15	7	1
Belfast South	4	3	5	3	0
Belfast West	1	2	0	5	1
East Antrim	2	6	1	1	0
East Londonderry	10	0	2	2	2
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	0	0	0	0	0
Foyle	0	0	1	0	1
Lagan Valley	0	0	0	5	2
Mid Ulster	2	0	0	0	0
Newry and Armagh	0	0	1	0	0
North Antrim	19	1	1	0	0

Constituency	Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
North Down	6	3	6	5	2
South Antrim	10	21	13	7	13
South Down	1	6	13	13	4
Strangford	2	0	6	3	1
Upper Bann	2	0	0	1	0
West Tyrone	3	0	0	0	0
Not recorded	2	2	0	0	0
Northern Ireland Total	88	72	66	53	27

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

2 Defendants relate to individuals involved in court cases. An individual may be involved in multiple court cases and will be recorded as a different defendant on each occasion.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Justice for her assessment of the effectiveness of anti-social behaviour orders. (AQW 6084/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Building safer communities by preventing anti-social behaviour and reducing the harm that it causes is a key priority for my Department.

As you are aware, anti-social behaviour (ASB) is a broad term used to describe a wide range of behaviours which people consider anti-social. It is used to describe inconsiderate and nuisance behaviours, such as excessive noise, littering and neighbourhood disputes.

While I welcome the overall downward trend since 2007 of reported incidents of ASB, I am fully aware of the impact ASB and its associated issues have on local communities and individuals.

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Belfast North	6	3	4	1	0
Belfast South	0	0	0	0	0
Belfast West	1	0	0	1	0
East Antrim	3	0	0	1	0
East Londonderry	0	0	1	0	0
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	0	0	0	0	0
Foyle	0	0	0	0	0
Lagan Valley	0	0	2	2	0

Constituency	Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Mid Ulster	0	0	0	1	0
Newry and Armagh	2	0	0	0	0
North Antrim	2	2	0	1	0
North Down	0	1	0	0	0
South Antrim	2	3	1	4	2
South Down	0	2	2	2	0
Strangford	0	0	0	0	0
Upper Bann	1	0	1	0	0
West Tyrone	0	0	0	0	0
Northern Ireland Total	18	12	11	13	2

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

1 Include ASBOs made on appeal

Table 2: Number of defendants² convicted of a Breach of an Anti-Social Behaviour Order, by constituency of residence: 2011 to 2015

Constituency	Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Belfast East	6	3	2	1	0
Belfast North	18	25	15	7	1
Belfast South	4	3	5	3	0
Belfast West	1	2	0	5	1
East Antrim	2	6	1	1	0
East Londonderry	10	0	2	2	2
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	0	0	0	0	0
Foyle	0	0	1	0	1
Lagan Valley	0	0	0	5	2
Mid Ulster	2	0	0	0	0
Newry and Armagh	0	0	1	0	0
North Antrim	19	1	1	0	0
North Down	6	3	6	5	2
South Antrim	10	21	13	7	13
South Down	1	6	13	13	4
Strangford	2	0	6	3	1
Upper Bann	2	0	0	1	0
West Tyrone	3	0	0	0	0
Not recorded	2	2	0	0	0
Northern Ireland Total	88	72	66	53	27

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

2 Defendants relate to individuals involved in court cases. An individual may be involved in multiple court cases and will be recorded as a different defendant on each occasion.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of prisoners in Magilligan Prison (i) that have literacy and numeracy learning difficulties; and (ii) in receipt of education provision to address those problems.

(AQW 6133/16-21)

Ms Sugden: All prisoners are assessed by learning and skills staff on committal to custody. Any individual assessed as having learning difficulties is encouraged and offered the opportunity to enrol in education provision.

- (i) There are 20 prisoners in Magilligan who have been assessed as having learning difficulties. This represents five percent of the current population of 431.
- (ii) Of these 20 prisoners, 10 are currently enrolled in essential skills literacy and numeracy classes.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Justice to outline her plans for the provision of court services in Limavady.

(AQW 6134/16-21)

Ms Sugden: As explained in my statement to the Assembly on 25 October 2016 I have decided to overturn the decision of my predecessor to proceed with the closure of courthouses including Limavady Court Hearing Centre. Consequently, there are currently no plans to change the provision of court services in Limavady. A wider review of the future provision of court services across the court estate will now be established.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of cattle (i) stolen; and (ii) recovered in West Tyrone in the last five years.

(AQW 6135/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The recording of items that are stolen and any subsequent recovery of such items is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

You may therefore wish to direct your question to the PSNI.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of cattle (i) stolen; and (ii) recovered in the last five years.

(AQW 6136/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The recording of items that are stolen and any subsequent recovery of such items is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

You may therefore wish to direct your question to the PSNI.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister of Justice for her assessment of the future use of Bangor Courthouse.

(AQW 6162/16-21)

Ms Sugden: My officials are engaged with North Down and Ards Borough Council and representatives of Bangor Open House Festival (BOHF) to consider the feasibility of transferring Bangor Courthouse to BOHF under the auspices of the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) scheme.

A business case from BOHF has been submitted.

No final decision will be made on the disposal of the Courthouse until the proposal has been properly assessed by my officials in conjunction with officials from the Department of Communities.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice to outline how many people within the criminal justice system have (i) mental health problems; (ii) substance abuse issues; and (iii) both.

(AQW 6165/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Data is not routinely collected on the number of people who have mental health and or substance misuse problems across my Department as a whole.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) and the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) collate data and that information is presented below. The data available from NIPS and YJA is based on information available on the 27 October 2016. PBNI information covers the number of people assessed during the 2013/14 business year.

Northern Ireland Prison Service

Information held on the PRISM computer system for the prison population as a whole		
Mental illness	Addictions	Both
388	713	254

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

Information based on the number of people who started an order or license and an ACE (Assessment, Case Management & Evaluation System) risk assessment		
Mental health: small, medium or high score	Alcohol or drugs: small, medium or high score	Both
1,015	2,183	838

Youth Justice Agency

Information based on population of Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre		
Receiving support from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services	Substance misuse issues	Both
9	15	8

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 4892/16-21, to detail the (i) date; (ii) reasons; and (iii) outcome of the amnesty at Hydebank Wood.

(AQW 6207/16-21)

Ms Sugden:

- (i) 16 October 2013 to 4 November 2013;
- (ii) Reduce the amount of clothing held by female students; and
- (iii) Items passed out during the amnesty were not recorded; any items passed out were destroyed.

Mr Beattie asked the Minister of Justice to outline how many prisoners were in separated regime at HMP Maghaberry by designation on 26 October 2016; and will still be serving their sentence in 2026.

(AQW 6218/16-21)

Ms Sugden: On 26 October 2016 there were 42 separated prisoners held at Maghaberry Prison. 16 are loyalist and 26 republican. No judgement can be made of those currently on remand.

Those on Extended Custodial Sentences are subject to rulings by the Parole Commissioners in regard to release dates, as a consequence it is not possible to state how many of the prisoners currently in custody and held in the separated units will still be serving sentences in 2026. New charges, the results of appeals and upcoming convictions and acquittals will also impact on the numbers.

There are also currently six prisoners serving life sentences; these prisoners are subject to determinations of the Life Sentence Review Commissioners.

Mr Beattie asked the Minister of Justice (i) whether the National Crime Agency has made a bid via a departmental stakeholder of the Action Plan for Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime for next year's funding (ii) how much have they asked for; and (iii) from which Department.

(AQW 6219/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The National Crime Agency (NCA) has not yet made a bid for funding to the Cross-Departmental Programme Board, either independently or via a departmental stakeholder. My Department continues to engage with the NCA on matters relating to organised crime, and I understand that the NCA is liaising with the PSNI on a collaborative approach in support of action C4, including an assessment of funding that will be required to deliver.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the future use of Bangor Courthouse.

(AQW 6232/16-21)

Ms Sugden: My officials are engaged with North Down and Ards Borough Council and representatives of Bangor Open House Festival (BOHF) to consider the feasibility of transferring Bangor Courthouse to BOHF under the auspices of the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) scheme.

A business case from BOHF has been submitted.

No final decision will be made on the disposal of the Courthouse until the proposal has been properly assessed by my officials in conjunction with officials from the Department of Communities.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Justice to detail each budgetary pressure in her Department and its arm's-length bodies; and which of these pressures were raised with officials from the Department of Finance in advance of the October monitoring round.

(AQW 6290/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Departmental officials engage with their Assembly committee in advance of each monitoring round in relation to the department's in-year budgetary position.

Any pressures raised with the Department of Finance are for the purpose of informing the Executive's deliberations in reaching an agreed Monitoring round outcome and as such this information is not disclosed.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline (i) whether the NIPS were supplied with the report into POA members work-related stress and wellbeing survey, and on what date; (ii) their response to the report; and (iii) her assessment on the report.

(AQW 6301/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Northern Ireland Prison Service can find no record of receiving this report.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline the (i) extent of damage caused; (ii) repairs required, including when they were carried out and completed; and (iii) the total cost of repairs, following the end of the dirty protest in Roe House, HMP Maghaberry in November 2012.

(AQW 6302/16-21)

Ms Sugden:

- i Floor, wall and ceiling finishes to cells and landings, cell doors and furniture were damaged/contaminated. Some in-cell sanitary ware was also damaged.
- ii. Repairs were carried out to all cells and landings, including redecoration of walls, windows and ceilings, replacement floor coverings, refitting sanitary ware and decontamination, refurbishment and redecoration of all cell doors and frames. This work was carried out between January '13 and January '14.
- iii. The total cost of the repair work was £268,884.34

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice in relation to the report by Dr Jackie Bates-Gaston (i) to outline why the content was not discussed with prison officers and/or their representatives as key stakeholders before being rejected; and (ii) whether she can provide an assurance that she will include prison officers and/or their representatives in all further considerations or actions she or her officials make in relation to this report.

(AQW 6303/16-21)

Ms Sugden:

- (i) This was a Report which the Prison Service Management Board chose not to accept, therefore there was no need to share the report with stakeholders.
- (ii) NIPS is reviewing the report to establish if there is merit in any of the recommendations. As part of a staff engagement exercise under its modernisation programme NIPS will be engaging with staff to examine of staff support.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the staff ratio per the number of Supporting Prisoner at Risk in a (i) house; and (ii) landing, shown per day and night shift.

(AQW 6304/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Staff are detailed to locations in a prison to perform a full range of duties, including the management of prisoners subject to SPAR arrangements. There is no specific ratio applied.

If there are any specific pressures in a location these will be managed dynamically by the responsible Governor.

Mr Ford asked the Minister of Justice pursuant to AQO 524/16-21, to outline the impact the UK Government's decision to not release the £5 million until a more detailed action plan has been produced has had on this progress.

(AQW 6305/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Executive has not sought to draw down funding available from the UK Government in 2016/17. This has had no impact on progress. The funding promised by the UK Government remains available to us over the next four years and we are taking the time to work with statutory agencies and communities to get this important strategy right, before drawing down funding from the UK Government from April 2017 onwards.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Justice to outline what action she is taking to address cyber bullying and cyber criminality.

(AQW 6316/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Whilst technological change and widening choice of digital media presents extensive educational benefits, it also poses considerable challenges in terms of keeping the wider public and vulnerable groups safe from the associated dangers of cyber criminality and of bullying, exploitation and grooming. This is an area where there is a wide range of ongoing work across the Executive.

In respect of cyber bullying, my Department, through the local Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs), has done much to develop internet safety and tackle the growing prevalence of cyber bullying and some of its very harmful consequences. PCSPs, in partnership with Health Trusts, the PSNI, Youth Justice Agency and Probation Board, Northern Ireland, have developed and are delivering a range of e-safety resources endorsed by the Safeguarding Board NI for children, parents and practitioners on internet and on-line safety, sexting, cyberbullying and reporting abuse.

During November 2016 Mid and East Antrim PCSP is delivering the play "Control-Alt-Delete", which addresses cyber bullying and internet safety at venues in Larne, Ballymena and Carrickfergus. This work is directed at safeguarding young people and the vulnerable, raising awareness and educating them so they feel safe when accessing the internet. It will be followed up by bespoke workshops with key partner organisations in each school with the development of training toolkits and sustainable training packages for future delivery. All 14-17 year olds in the Borough have been invited to attend through their schools.

In addition, to coincide with Anti Bullying Week which commences on 14 November 2016, a number of PCSPs are funding the placement of a full page Cyber Safety advertisement in the following publications; Coleraine Chronicle series, Ballymena Guardian, Tyrone Courier, Tyrone Constitution, Strabane Weekly News, Ulster Gazette, Newry Democrat and Co. Down Outlook.

These responses from within the justice sector are further reinforced by a range of other initiatives that are being taken forward across the wider Executive. The previous Executive agreed to the commissioning of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) to develop an E-Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to enable the safe use of digital and internet technology by children and young people. This work is being overseen by the Department of Health through an E-safety Project Board composed of officials from a range of Departments and agencies. My Department is represented on the Project Board which is developing the draft Strategy in advance of public consultation.

In addition, the Addressing Bullying in Schools' Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, which was brought by the Minister for Education, received Royal Assent earlier this year. The Act provides a clear legal basis for schools to address cyber bullying by taking whatever action they deem reasonable in each case. If less serious incidents can be resolved at school level before they escalate into criminal action that can only be to the benefit of everyone involved.

On cyber criminality more generally, it is estimated that more than 50% of all crimes committed nowadays utilise the cyber environment to some degree. Cybercrime is a priority for the PSNI, which has established a dedicated Cybercrime Unit and which works closely with the National Cyber Security Centre and other stakeholders in response to the threat.

In addition, the Organised Crime Task Force, which I chair, working with PSNI, has a wide reaching engagement process which utilises business briefings, local media and other engagement events to highlight the issue and educate people and businesses. One example is this October's Get Safe Online Day, which was marked by a series of events at shopping centres in Belfast, Londonderry and Lisburn on 20-22 October.

The PSNI, working with Action Fraud, has introduced a dedicated reporting portal for businesses affected by cyber crime and proactive engagement by PSNI has also led many local companies to sign up to the national Cyber Information Sharing Partnership. This joint industry and government initiative has been established to exchange cyber threat information in real time, in a secure, confidential and dynamic environment.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to outline why Her Majesty's Government rejected the Executive's action plan in respect of paramilitarism.

(AQW 6320/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Government has not rejected the Executive's action plan. The Executive has shared its action plan with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and are continuing to engage with the NIO as we work to develop more detailed plans to support implementation of the Executive action plan.

Dr Farry asked the Minister of Justice to outline what representations she has made to the UK Government regarding continued participation in (i) the European Arrest Warrant; and (ii) Europol.

(AQW 6321/16-21)

Ms Sugden: In my recent meetings with UK Government Ministers, including the Home Secretary, the Northern Ireland Secretary and the Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Department for Exiting the EU, I have stressed the absolute necessity for Northern Ireland to have effective cross-border criminal justice co-operation measures, such as the European Arrest Warrant and Europol.

I have written to the Home Secretary on the UK's opt-in to the revised Europol Regulation. I noted that opting in would build upon the excellent co-operation between law enforcement agencies and that not doing so risks jeopardising this co-operation, which is vital to law enforcement.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Justice for an update on her discussions with the PSNI regarding addressing rural crime.

(AQW 6373/16-21)

Ms Sugden: My Department's Community Safety Strategy 2012-2017 contains a commitment to making rural communities safer by reducing opportunities to commit crime. It also highlights my Department's commitment to supporting the outcomes of the Executive's Rural White Paper and Action Plan, led by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

(DAERA), to support and sustain rural communities and to deliver initiatives in rural areas across Northern Ireland that will contribute to safer rural communities.

The Rural Crime Partnership (RCP), which consists of representatives from my Department, the PSNI, NFU Mutual, the Ulster Farmers' Union and DAERA, delivers actions taken forward at a strategic level to support safer rural communities. The primary focus of the RCP has been on developing a collaborative response to crime which is specific to rural areas – agricultural crime.

In addition to this, my Department meets regularly with the PSNI to further develop opportunities and initiatives, which focus on addressing rural crime.

At a local level, Policing and Community Safety Partnerships continue to deliver a wide range of initiatives to address crimes in their local areas.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister of Justice for a copy of her departmental bid for additional allocations as stated in page 3 of the 2016-17 October Monitoring Round Statement made to the NI Assembly by the Minister of Finance on 25 October 2016.

(AQW 6403/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The approach now adopted by the Executive to the monitoring round process no longer requires the submission of bids by departments.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline the total legal aid costs to date for court challenges to the release of the Boston Tapes.

(AQW 6420/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Legal Aid Agency does not hold information on the specific nature of the proceedings for which Legal Aid has been granted. As the information requested is not recorded separately it could only be obtained by a manual search of files which would incur a disproportionate cost.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice pursuant to AQW 4629/16-21, (i) to ensure the report is read in conjunction with all appendices and related archived material; (ii) for assessment on the report; and (iii) to place copy, all appendices and related achieved material in the Assembly Library.

(AQW 6421/16-21)

Ms Sugden:

- (i)(ii) The Northern Ireland Prison Service is reviewing the report to establish if there is merit in any of the recommendations. The review will be considering the recommendations therein and where appropriate taking these forward. As part of the modernisation programme NIPS will be engaging with staff to examine staff support.
- (iii) The report was prepared for internal use by the Northern Ireland Prison Service Management Board. It was not an official publication therefore it is not considered appropriate to place this in the NI Assembly library.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice pursuant to AQW 5062/16-21, to answer in the context of new intake since the recruitment of officers on the changed scheme commenced.

(AQW 6437/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The first intake of recruits to the new Custody Prison Officer grade was in September 2012. Of the new intake of officers recruited since this date, the five shortest durations of service, of those that subsequently left, are as follows;

- 1 Member of Staff left after 1 day's service
- 2 Members of Staff left after 7 days of service
- 2 Members of Staff left after 57 days of service

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline how many prisoners have been returned to Maghaberry whilst on final or latter stage release, in 2016 to date.

(AQW 6438/16-21)

Ms Sugden: 11 prisoners have been returned to Maghaberry whilst on final or latter stage release, in 2016 to date.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice pursuant to AQW 5051/16-21, to outline whether (i) there were 47 police chases terminated at the border from 2011 - 2015; (ii) that this information was supplied to a local news agency under Fol; (iii) discussions took place on the issue of cross border pursuits under the review of the Cross Border Policing Strategy; and (iv) steps have been taken to ensure the Londonderry Donegal border has sufficient cross border co-operation to deal with offending motorists or fleeing criminals.

(AQW 6476/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I understand that PSNI, in response to a FOI request, did release details of 47 vehicle pursuits by the PSNI or An Garda Siochana where a border crossing occurred between 7 April 2011 and 25 November 2015. PSNI have, however, advised me that the data is not captured in the same way by the two police services and, therefore, these statistics are not conclusive. Nor does this data capture the many successful pre-planned operations conducted between PSNI and An Garda Siochana.

As stated previously, I have not discussed the issue of cross border pursuit specifically with Frances Fitzgerald, and the topic has not been raised with me as a matter of concern for PSNI.

In relation to the Londonderry Donegal border, PSNI have advised that they work very closely with An Garda Siochana along the border. Their Control rooms/Contact centres are in constant contact in respect of spontaneous incidents that involve the border; and local police officers are in regular communication with their counterparts as appropriate.

Mr Stalford asked the Minister of Justice to detail how much legal aid was granted to the recent failed legal challenge brought by Mr Raymond McCord concerning the triggering of Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon.

(AQW 6478/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Agency is precluded from providing information on civil legal aid applications. For applications received on or after 1 April 2015, the non-disclosure falls under the Civil Legal Services (Disclosure of Information) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether Gerard Mulligan was on a Supporting Prisoners at Risk programme at the time of his death in HMP Maghaberry.

(AQW 6540/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Mr Mulligan was not on a Supporting Prisoners At Risk (SPAR) at the time of his death.

Mr Kearney asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the circumstances surrounding the death of an inmate in Maghaberry prison on Saturday 5 November 2016.

(AQW 6573/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Any death in custody is tragic. My thoughts and sympathies are with those affected by the death in Maghaberry on Saturday. The Prisoner Ombudsman will conduct an investigation and it would not be appropriate to comment on the specifics of this case until that has been completed.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) takes the duty of care for all the individuals it holds in custody extremely seriously. Identifying and supporting prisoners with mental health issues during custody remains a priority for the Prison Service.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Justice to detail the amount collected in speeding fines for (i) mobile; and (ii) fixed cameras in each of the last four years.

(AQW 6582/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The income generated from safety cameras is not captured at the level requested. The total fine income generated by cameras is provided in the table below.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Fine Income (£,000)	1,035	1,087	1,014	1,342

These figures relate only to Northern Ireland Road Safety Partnership (previously the Safety Camera Scheme) detections. All other fine income from officer detections is paid directly to the Northern Ireland Court Service.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission whether computers supplied to Members' offices have anti-virus programmes installed; and if not, to outline the reasons.

(AQW 6181/16-21)

Mr Maskey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): All computers supplied by the Assembly Commission to Members' offices have antivirus software installed.

Lord Morrow asked the Assembly Commission to outline (i) the locations of defibrillators in Parliament Buildings; (ii) how many people have been trained in usage; and (iii) whether they plan to offer training to MLA's and their staff.

(AQW 6283/16-21)

Mr Hussey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission):

- (i) The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission currently has 5 defibrillators and these are located at the front reception desk, in the Blue Flax Restaurant and the Control Room in the Basement; outside the Long Gallery on the First Floor and on the Fourth Floor South corridor. A list of their locations is held on Assist and is posted on noticeboards in the building.
- (ii) There are currently 20 staff trained in the use of defibrillators and these include Security Guards, Ushers, front of house staff and staff from various directorates. These staff have all successfully completed the first aid at work certificate.
- (iii) There are currently no plans to train MLAs or their staff.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 18 November 2016

Written Answers to Questions

The Executive Office

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what are the categories of powers exercised by Ministers exclusively under the royal prerogative.
(AQW 3598/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): The categories of powers which may be exercised by this prerogative are extensive and cannot be defined exhaustively.

Ms Mallon asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) for an update on the Programme for Government Framework; and (ii) when it will be published.
(AQW 4908/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The Programme for Government was published for consultation on 28 October 2016, with a view to securing Executive agreement to a final document following the consultation period.

Mrs Dobson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail all meetings at which they or representatives of their Department have attended regarding the work of the Expert Panel on the Transformation of Health and Social Care; (i) prior to 21 July 2016; and (ii) since 21 July 2016.
(AQW 4949/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The First Minister attended the Health Summit held by the Expert Panel on 17th February. The deputy First Minister met Professor Bengoa on 15th February.

We anticipate further engagement on the Report of the Expert Panel following its consideration by the Minister of Health.

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the introduction of age discrimination legislation.
(AQW 5345/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: We refer the member to the recent answer provided to AQW 3688/16-21.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) how many agency staff have been engaged in their Department via the Civil Service during and since the Voluntary Exit Scheme; (ii) at what cost; and (iii) how many of those staff exited under the scheme then returned as agency staff.
(AQW 5563/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The first tranche of staff left under the Voluntary Exit Scheme on 30 September 2015. Over the period between 30 September 2015 and 30 September 2016, a total of 13 agency staff were engaged across the Department to address a number of short-term needs at a cost of £160,601.43.

None of the Departmental staff who exited under the Scheme have returned as agency staff.

Dr Farry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the timetable for the formulation of the new Investment Strategy, including the period for public consultation.
(AQW 5564/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Following the issue of the draft Programme for Government we intend to publish the new draft Investment Strategy in the coming weeks for an eight week consultation period.

Following the consultation we will take account of the responses from stakeholders and feedback from the Assembly's own scrutiny processes and will seek agreement to the publication of a final document.

Mr Dickson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the departmental (i) art; (ii) artefacts; and (iii) other historic items either displayed or held in storage; and to itemise their value.

(AQW 5639/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The Executive Office does not own any art, artefacts or historic items as these form part of the NICS collection. The items held by our Department are on-loan from the Department of Finance, which maintains a database of all works throughout the NICS. You may therefore wish to refer this question to the Minister of Finance.

Mrs Overend asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an outline of the intended purpose of the Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation report.

(AQW 5751/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The project entitled 'Understanding differential educational achievement within and between areas of multiple deprivation in NI – a case study approach' is being carried out by Professor Ruth Leitch, Professor Joanne Hughes, supported by Dr Ian Shuttleworth and Dr Michael Ievers from the Queen's University, Belfast.

This research aims to understand the reasons for differing educational achievement within and between deprived areas and aims to do this through a case study approach, exploring and understanding the factors behind differential educational achievement.

The research forms part of a programme of independent research commissioned by OFMDFM through an open call in 2011 to inform the policy development process. As such, the views expressed are those of the authors and not OFMDFM/the Executive Office.

Mr Ford asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline (i) when they expect the Executive to agree a more detailed action plan for tackling paramilitary activity; and (ii) what steps they will take to ensure this action plan meets HM Treasury's expectations in terms of detail.

(AQW 6129/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The implementation plans referenced in the foreword to the Executive Action Plan will be submitted to the Executive for consideration at the appropriate time. The Executive is now focused on getting this important strategy right and will work with communities and statutory organisations to ensure effective implementation plans are developed. We intend to devote sufficient time to get the plans right and to ensure that the funding, which has been secured, is drawn down at the appropriate time and put to best and proper use.

Ms Mallon asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline their position on Brexit.

(AQW 6340/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: We refer the Member to our letter to the Prime Minister of 10th August and our comments following the Joint Ministerial Committee meeting on 24th October, both of which can be found at:

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/letter-prime-minister-rt-hon-theresa-may-mp>

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/news/foster-and-mcguinness-comment-following-joint-ministerial-committee-meeting>

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the attendance record for each member of each steering group of the nine social investment zones.

(AQW 6548/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The Department does not retain a central attendance record for each member of each of the nine Social Investment Fund Steering Groups.

Mr Storey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the outcomes-based approach used in developing the Programme for Government 2016-21.

(AQO 573/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: We believe the outcomes-based approach the Executive has taken in its Draft Programme for Government gives us the best chance of making a real difference to the quality of people's lives.

On education, on health and on the economy we want to change the way we work so that we are focused on real and meaningful improvements in wellbeing.

The shift to an outcomes-focus has changed the way we plan for the future – with a bigger emphasis on collaboration and shared accountability. The challenge now is to make sure that translates into better services, and better outcomes, on the ground.

Mr Clarke asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on Social Investment Fund projects in South Antrim.

(AQO 574/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The Social Investment Fund is investing £9 million in projects in its Northern Zone which includes the South Antrim constituency.

Four of these projects, worth £6.9 million, are Zone-wide and therefore will potentially impact on the South Antrim constituency. These include the £3.3 million Building to Employment through Education project, which is operational and currently has over 3000 participants; the £0.8 million Access to Employment project, which is also operational and enhances the Dial-a-Lift service; the £1million Community Mental Health and Wellbeing project and the £1.8 million fuel poverty project, which are both finalising delivery plans in order to commence delivery as quickly as possible.

Mr Kearney asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the steps they have taken to engage communities in the design and delivery of the Executive Action Plan for Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime. (AQO 577/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: When we published the Executive's action plan, we made clear our commitment to work with local communities and to build on the good work we know goes on already. We have made some early allocations of funding to support the work of communities and the Cross-Departmental Programme Board is taking forward a process of co-design with local communities to develop appropriate interventions.

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline how her Department has improved the marketing/branding of local seafood products, particularly through highlighting key unique selling points, including provenance and the acceleration of voluntary labelling and certification for fish products.

(AQW 5375/16-21)

Miss McIlveen (The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs): The Agri-Food Strategy Board, within Going for Growth, recommended that:

'Government improve the marketing/branding of local seafood products, particularly through highlighting key unique selling points, including provenance and the acceleration of voluntary labelling and certification of fish products with appropriate support.' (Recommendation 6).

The Executive Response to Going for Growth was published in October 2014 and outlined agreed actions to be taken forward by government departments and agencies.

An update on Executive-led actions outlined in the response is available on the DAERA website at

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/Going%20for%20Growth%20Progress%20Update%20-%20period%20ending%2030%20June%202016.pdf>.

This update has also been shared with the Assembly's Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee on 22 September 2016.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether her Department plans to repeal the legislation imposing the Nitrates Directive when the United Kingdom leaves the European Union.

(AQW 6044/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My officials are scoping the potential impact that leaving the EU will have on the legislation that my Department currently operates under and are liaising with the Departmental Solicitors Office to assess the scale of the legislative changes ahead. This is a considerable task.

My officials are also considering the domestic policies that will need to be amended, developed and implemented to better suit our local needs. This is at a very early stage and we will be engaging with our counterparts in England, Scotland and Wales, as well the Brexit Consultative Committee and other stakeholders, as we seek to shape our approach to UK and regional policy frameworks.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs detail the number of (i) senior management posts in Forestry Service in Dundonald House prior to the relocation to Enniskillen; (ii) equivalent posts transferred to Enniskillen, including whether these posts are filled; and (iii) senior managers using the tele-working facility following relocation.

(AQW 6045/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: There were 8 posts in Forest Service at Grade 7 level and above based in Dundonald House, Belfast prior to the relocation of the Agency HQ to Inishkeen House, Enniskillen on 28th September 2015.

All posts have been filled. 5 of the 8 posts transferred to new HQ. 1 post was relocated from Dundonald House to Garvagh, Co. Londonderry and two remain in Dundonald House.

All senior managers use tele-working facilities following relocation, and 6 do so regularly.

Mrs Long asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the actions she has taken to raise awareness of the risks of buying a pet via an online advertisement, as per the recommendations in the Review of the Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 final report.

(AQW 6086/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Following publication of the Final Report of the Review of the Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011, my Department has formalised its links with the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG) and the Irish Pet Advertising Advisory Group (IPAAG) and works with these organisations to promote better self regulation of online sites advertising pets. This fulfils one of the Review's recommendations.

These organisations are advisory groups made up of leading animal welfare organisations, trade associations and veterinary bodies. They aim to ensure that pet animals are only advertised for sale legally and ethically by engaging with websites and publications to ensure those organisations have up to date knowledge on animal welfare issues in relation to advertising pets for sale. They also highlight illegal adverts to website providers so that they can be removed promptly, and they encourage websites advertising pets for sale to self regulate and comply with agreed minimum standards that underpin a legal and ethical approach to the trade in pets. They also help to raise public awareness of the need to act responsibly when buying pets from websites and publications. I am happy that my Department continues to support and endorse this work.

In line with another recommendation of the Review, my Department has established a single animal welfare presence on the NIDirect website to improve communication with the public around animal welfare issues. This includes informing the public about buying and caring for animals. It advises the public to be careful when buying a pet that has been advertised in the media, such as on the internet, in a local paper or on a notice board, and recommends that they should only buy an animal from a known breeder or source, and check its history by talking to its previous owner.

The NIDirect website also provides links to the PAAG website and others, such as Dogs Trust and the Kennel Club, to encourage the public to make use of the guidance they offer on sourcing a pet. There is information to highlight the risks that can be associated with buying a pet advertised online, and encourages anyone who has bought a pet from a classified ad or website that has turned out to be a problem, or anyone who is aware of an illegal or unethical ad, to report the matter to PAAG or to Trading Standards.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail the number of river and waterway pollution incidents in Fermanagh and South Tyrone in the last five years.

(AQW 6132/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The table below details the total number of river and waterways incidents confirmed in the Fermanagh and South Tyrone constituency in the last five years.

Year	Total Number Confirmed As Pollution
2011	126
2012	117
2013	138
2014	149
2015	126

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs when the designation of Areas of Special Scientific Interest will be completed.

(AQW 6230/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: To date, my Department has designated 387 Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs). On the basis of an earlier review (2006), there remains around 50 sites which were identified as potential ASSIs. However, designations are only made when detailed surveys confirm that ASSI designation criteria have been met, making it difficult to provide a final completion date for the network.

Greater emphasis is now being placed on managing existing sites while maintaining progress towards completion of the site network. One of the primary delivery mechanisms will be through the new Environmental Farming Scheme.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether she plans to introduce National Parks Legislation.

(AQW 6233/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I have no plans to introduce additional national parks legislation, nor have I plans to utilise existing legislation to designate any national parks.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail the projected cost of administration for her Department in 2016.

(AQW 6263/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Based on the outcome of the October Monitoring Round the latest projected cost of administration in DAERA for 2016-17 is £47.0m.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail how many farmers that submitted their Single Application online and before the deadline will not receive payment this month through the Advance Payment Scheme; and of these how many are Young Farmers.

(AQW 6371/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: A total of 14,473 farmers who submitted their Single Application Forms online in 2016 meet the eligibility criteria for Basic Payment. Of these, 13,066 have been issued an advance payment in October, including 957 Young Farmers.

1,407 eligible online applicants have not received an advance payment in October, including 452 Young Farmers.

There are a number of reasons why an eligible applicant may not have received an advance payment. These include outstanding inspections and factors outside my Departments control such as bank account details or Young Farmer supporting evidence not provided, or cases in probate. I remain committed to paying 95% of applicants in December.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail how many farmers had cross compliance penalties applied in 2016.

(AQW 6376/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: This year, to date, 228 farmers have had a cross compliance breach detected. However, not all of these will result in a cross compliance penalty. My Department is in the process of assessing these breaches and determining whether penalties will apply.

Dr Farry asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on the review of waste regulations and legislative powers in relation to the illegal importation and disposal of asbestos.

(AQW 6417/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I am unaware of any current review of waste regulations and legislative powers in relation to the illegal importation and disposal of asbestos. Legislation already exists to deal with this matter.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail the number of incidents illegal meat has been (i) produced; and (ii) sold, over each of the last five years, including details of each; and on how many occasions were those responsible (a) identified and (b) prosecuted.

(AQW 6496/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: This is a matter for The Food Standards Agency (FSA), a UK non-ministerial government department.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail (i) the number of reported cases of fly-tipping, broken down by Council area over each of the last ten years; and (ii) how many occasions were those responsible (a) identified; and (b) prosecuted.

(AQW 6497/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) commenced a Flytipping Partnership Project with Local Councils, in June 2012. Prior to this, NIEA was not involved in the clean-up of flytipped waste. 6 Councils first joined the Project, and by the time the Councils were reformed in April 2015, 21 of the then 26 Local Councils had joined the Partnership (reflected in Appendix 1). Under the Partnership, NIEA is responsible for the clean-up of hazardous wastes and non-hazardous wastes over 20m³ in volume only (a truckload), with Councils responsible for the remainder.

- (i) NIEA only has the details associated with its own clean-up, which is detailed in Appendix 1.
- (ii) (a) and (b) it is extremely difficult for the NIEA to find any evidence as to the perpetrators of flytipping crime, due to its clandestine nature of often being carried out in the cover of darkness and in remote locations. However, this summer NIEA carried out 8 investigations of flytipping at bonfire sites, where there was sufficient evidence to issue five Fixed Penalty Notices at £300 each.

Appendix 1

Number of cases reported to NIEA of hazardous waste and non-hazardous waste over 20m³ per council since June 2012. For ease of comparison, this has been kept to the old council areas.

Council area	June- Dec 2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Ards	1	0	2	0	1

Council area	June- Dec 2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Antrim	0	8	12	8	15
Armagh	26	58	29	16	10
Banbridge	0	2	6	2	3
Castlereagh	0	0	1	0	2
Carrickfergus	2	1	2	3	7
Coleraine	5	5	1	28	4
Cookstown	0	6	8	3	0
Craigavon	7	6	11	0	12
Down	0	1	2	3	0
Fermanagh	0	2	6	1	9
Lisburn	0	6	4	5	13
Limavady	1	2	2	2	3
Londonderry	2	7	2	7	15
Magherafelt	0	7	3	0	0
Moyle	1	4	1	2	4
North Down	0	1	4	5	2
Newtownabbey	0	1	7	2	1
Newry	52	81	73	48	32
Omagh	0	2	2	4	1
Strabane	0	1	2	2	6

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment on a commitment to not banning the practice of beak trimming in laying flocks.

(AQW 6498/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Beak trimming of poultry in Northern Ireland is permitted by The Welfare of Animals (Permitted Procedures by Lay Persons) Regulations 2012. It can only be performed on chicks under 10 days old, and in order to prevent injurious feather pecking.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline how much each Council area has spent on clearing the products of fly-tipping over each of the last ten years.

(AQW 6499/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My Department does not hold this information. It is held by each of the Councils.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail (i) how many incidents of large-scale illegal waste dumping have been investigated over each of the last ten years; and (ii) to detail on how many occasions those responsible were (a) identified; and (b) prosecuted.

(AQW 6500/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Data held by NIEA does not routinely record 'large scale' illegal dumping in the format requested. However, its Environmental Crime Unit (ECU) primarily deals with serious and or organised waste crime.

The table below illustrates the cases presented to the Public Prosecution Service – PPS – by the ECU over the last ten years. This is considered to best represent the requested information on 'large scale' dumping. However, this should be treated with caution as there are a number of variables including, for example, a prosecution may have resulted from the polluting nature of the material, rather than the amount of material.

The number of defendants investigated in each of the last ten years is detailed; files presented to the PPS can include multiple defendants (individuals and/or Companies). Also set out is the number of successful prosecutions that concluded in each year (again, measured in terms of numbers of defendants). These figures are not a straight 'read across' in each year because, as you will appreciate, some prosecution cases can take several years to progress through the courts system. Some cases that are investigated do not result in prosecutions; this can be due to lack of evidence, or because they are deemed (by the PPS) not to be in the public interest.

Accurate volumes of waste cannot be recorded in all investigations into environmental criminality; this is often due to the nature of the offences, e.g. burning, or the transit of waste through a waste transfer station where most is moved off site. In other cases, the topography of the infilled area makes it too dangerous, or risks too much further contaminated, and so assessing the exact amount of waste there is simply not possible.

In addition, there will be a range of cases where, following investigation, responsible people are identified and actions other than prosecution are taken. The latter could include advice and or warning, fixed penalty notices or statutory notices which are subsequently complied with. It may also be the case that statutory notices are issued and are also the subject of prosecution proceedings.

Year	No of defendants investigated in-year	No. of successful prosecutions concluded in-year
2007	146	58
2008	133	43
2009	119	35
2010	40	16
2011	69	28
2012	70	24
2013	71	26
2014	95	29
2015	96	3
2016	61	0*

* No court cases derived from investigations opened in 2016 have concluded yet.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline how the money raised from the carrier bag levy was allocated between April 2016 and October 2016.

(AQW 6541/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The table below shows the carrier bag levy allocations for the current financial year, which reflect the position at the end of October, based on the estimated income to be realised from the levy for 2016-17 coupled with the carry forward of unspent income from 2015-16.

Funding stream	Amount Allocated (2016-17) (£k)
Grant Schemes	
Environment Fund	3,204
Challenge Fund	400
Exploris grant (Seal sanctuary)	60
EU environmental projects (match funding)	40
Sub Total	3,704
Contracted Services	
Water pollution clean up and hotline	42
Data and recording support (CeDAR)	160
Funding to councils for local clean up support	350
Repatriation of illegal waste	90
Habitats Directive (Research and surveillance)	175
Fish monitoring and analysis of fresh water	115
Waste studies	130
Marine litter and other marine studies	27
Maintenance of NI air quality website	40
Contributions to climate change committees (GB and NI)	162

Funding stream	Amount Allocated (2016-17) (£k)
Sub Total	1,291
Administration Costs	531
Total	5,526

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 4326/16-21, how many press officers and support staff are employed by her Department; and at what cost.

(AQW 6574/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) came into existence on 8 May 2016 bringing together functions from DARD, DCAL, DOE and OFMdFM.

DAERA employs 5.4 FTE press officers and 2 FTE associated support staff. The total cost of these staff for the period 8 May 2016 to 8 November 2016 was £167,285.51.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to list (i) each port that has issued Authority to Travel permits to their passengers; and (ii) the number of permits issued in each port in 2016.

(AQW 6641/16-21)

Miss McIlveen:

- (i) DAERA has issued boarding passes at the locations of Larne Harbour and Belfast Port;
- (ii) During 2016, 274 boarding passes have been issued for consignments of dogs at Larne Harbour. The relevant figure at Belfast Port is 244.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether it is a legal requirement for ferry passengers travelling with four or more pets to have an Authority to Travel permit.

(AQW 6642/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: There is no legal requirement for an Authority to Travel permit. An administrative system is in place where DAERA issues a boarding pass in respect of relevant consignments. (One local ferry operator requires passengers travelling with four or more dogs to declare the consignment; the other company requires all animals to be declared).

Department for Communities

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Communities for an update on plans to refurbish Clare House, Newry.

(AQW 3971/16-21)

Mr Givan (The Minister for Communities): The Housing Executive has advised that it has now completed an economic appraisal for Clare House. The appraisal examines a range of options from repairs to major refurbishment, to clearance and rebuilding of the properties.

This appraisal is currently under consideration before a final decision on the future of Clare House is made. The Housing Executive anticipates that this review will be completed shortly.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Communities to detail his Department's funding streams for Irish dancing groups.

(AQW 5107/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department for Communities funding for the Arts is mainly disbursed through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI).

ACNI has advised that they don't have any funding streams specifically for Irish Dancing groups. However, groups may apply to their Small Grants Programme which is open on a rolling basis for grants from £500 to £10,000.

Although Irish Dancing is not a recognised sport, dancing is a recognised activity and groups would also be eligible to apply as a community/voluntary organisation to Sport NI (SNI) through their small grants programme known as Active Awards. Applications to the programme for 2016/17 are now closed. However, subject to the continued availability of exchequer funding in the period 2017-20, SNI hopes that future rounds of the Active Awards programme will open in 2017/18 and beyond. A registration link is available on the SNI website at <http://www.sportni.net/funding/funding-registrations> for groups who are interested

in applying for funding or who would like to be informed of any future funding programmes.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Communities to outline how many Repairs Grants have been approved by the Housing Executive in the Londonderry, Omagh and Enniskillen Offices broken down by (i) office; (ii) year; and (iii) community background, since 2006.

(AQW 5854/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that the Repairs Grant has been approved as set out in the tables below. The Housing Executive does not require grant applicants to submit information on their community background in order to process a grant application.

Year	Londonderry Office	Fermanagh Office	Omagh Office
2006-7	27	74	94
2007-8	10	86	47
2008-9	32	62	81
2009-10	31	64	121
2010-11	18	70	58
2011-12	5	76	118
2012-13	19	80	100
2013-14	10	82	77
2014-15	17	84	62
2015-16	19	76	58
2016-17 (to Sept 2016)	11	38	31

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for Communities how his Department assesses allegations made of an organisation it funds being linked with, or being used by, paramilitaries.

(AQW 6019/16-21)

Mr Givan: All of my Departments funding is managed in accordance with 'Managing Public Money Northern Ireland', the key document which sets out the main principles for dealing with resources used by public sector organisations in Northern Ireland.

It is the responsibility of staff to report any suspicion or alleged misuse of Departmental funds so that all allegations (anonymous or otherwise) can be investigated by the Department and, where necessary, forwarded to the PSNI for potential criminal proceedings.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities to outline what discussions he has had with the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs regarding remediation of polluted brownfield sites owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to allow the development of housing on this land.

(AQW 6280/16-21)

Mr Givan: I have not had any discussions with the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs regarding remediation of polluted brownfield sites owned by the Housing Executive.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to detail the cost of administering the Affordable Warmth Scheme compared with its predecessor Warm Homes or the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme.

(AQW 6446/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Warm Homes Scheme ended on 31 March 2015 and was replaced by the Affordable Warmth Scheme. The Affordable Warmth Scheme is fundamentally different from the former Warm Homes self referral scheme as it targets low income households most at risk of fuel poverty.

The following tables detail the cost of administering the Affordable Warmth Scheme and the Warm Homes Scheme. The Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programmes is administered by the Utility Regulator.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Communities to outline whether a window replacement scheme is under consideration for Ballyclose Street, Limavady.

(AQW 6567/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that eight properties in Ballyclose Street, Limavady are included in a window replacement scheme that is currently programmed to start in the last quarter of 2016/17.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Communities to outline whether a window replacement scheme is under consideration for Kings Lane, Ballykelly.

(AQW 6568/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that forty-two properties in Kings Lane, Ballykelly are included in a window replacement scheme that is currently programmed to start in the last quarter of 2016/17.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Communities to outline whether a window replacement scheme is under consideration for Lilac Avenue, Aghanloo.

(AQW 6569/16-21)

Mr Givan: The NIHE has advised that twenty-three properties in Lilac Avenue, Aghanloo are included in a window replacement scheme that is currently programmed to start in the last quarter of 2016/17.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Communities to outline whether housing association properties in Alexander Road, Limavady will receive windows under the scheme announced for Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties.

(AQW 6570/16-21)

Mr Givan: The housing association properties in Alexander Road are owned by Choice Housing Association and as such are not included in the NIHE proposed window replacement scheme.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Communities to outline the reasons, including identifying any legislative barriers, that prevents local residents from participating in national draws.

(AQW 6572/16-21)

Mr Givan: Gambling in Northern Ireland is regulated by the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (NI) Order 1985; in Great Britain the Gambling Act 2005 is the relevant legislation.

Participation in certain national draws and lotteries operated under the 2005 Act may be restricted in Northern Ireland by the requirements of the 1985 Order.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 3424/16-21, whether he will consider future funding programmes that could be open to application from athletes competing in the World Transplant Games.

(AQW 6576/16-21)

Mr Givan: I understand that athletes competing in Team GB & NI at the World Transplant Games are selected by Transplant Sport UK and are asked to raise funds to meet their costs of attending. In doing so, this activity has the potential to significantly raise the awareness of organ donation which is the main aim of Transplant Sport UK and the World Transplant Games.

Sport NI, an Arms Length Body of my Department, currently provide funding to athletes through its athlete investment programme, Sporting Winners investment 2017 – 2021. This programme aims to support sports and athletes who have the potential to achieve success at the highest levels of sport such as the Olympic/Paralympics and Commonwealth Games.

I can advise that there are no plans to develop any further funding programmes at this time that would support athletes competing in the World Transplant Games.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities following the Minister of Finance's October Monitoring Round statement to the Assembly, to outline the reason for an £8m reduced requirement related to Employment Services Programmes and Welfare Support Measures.

(AQW 6639/16-21)

Mr Givan: In the October 2016 Monitoring Round the Department for Communities declared an £8m reduced requirement relating to Employment Service Programmes and Welfare Support Measures. The easements are as a result of

- Reduced requirement in Employment Programmes due to a fall in the Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) register resulting in lower than expected expenditure on JSA clients entering the Steps2Success programme. As a result output related funding has been less than expected.
- Reduced requirement in respect of Fresh Start Welfare Reform Support Measures given that some schemes have only recently commenced.

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Communities to outline the action his Department is taking to protect the historical and architectural value of the Crumlin Road Courthouse.

(AQW 6652/16-21)

Mr Givan: I am supportive of any credible proposal to rescue and bring back into use this important listed building at risk. I have therefore asked my officials to ascertain the barriers that arise to doing so, and how to remove them.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Communities whether his Department commissioned an independent hotel study for the North Coast area; and when will it be published.

(AQW 6677/16-21)

Mr Givan: My Department did commission a hotel study for Portrush, and intends to publish the findings of this study in December.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 6055/16-21, to outline the reason the land was not reused for housing, broken down by each instance.

(AQW 6690/16-21)

Mr Givan: The development of new social housing must be supported by an assessment of projected housing need in the locality in question.

The Housing Executive has advised that on all of the sites set out in AQW 6055/16-21 where there was sufficient projected housing need, new social housing was built following demolition. Where there is currently not sufficient projected housing need, the NIHE is continuing to explore options for redevelopment.

One exception to this is the single property that was demolished in Drumbawn Close, Enniskillen. In this instance due to ground conditions the cleared site was amalgamated into the adjacent property rather than redeveloped.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister for Communities for an update on why the Volunteering Small Grants Programme has been put on hold.

(AQW 6784/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Volunteering Small Grants has not been put on hold. The programme opened for application from 05/07/16 to 29/07/16. During this period 856 applications were received and each underwent assessment by our delivery partner with input from key volunteering stakeholders including volunteer centres and local authorities. Following this process 727 of the applicants were deemed eligible for support and letters of offer were issued to successful applicants on 07/11/16.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Communities whether there is a formal policy in place by Libraries NI which disallows them from putting notices relating to schools on their notice boards inside the library building.

(AQW 6791/16-21)

Mr Givan: Libraries NI operates a Community Information policy which allows branch libraries to provide information to communities on local statutory, voluntary and other community services, events (eg concerts) etc that may be of interest to users and non users of libraries. Such information may, with the agreement of Libraries NI, be displayed on notice boards inside a library building.

In line with its Community Information policy, Libraries NI is happy, where feasible, to display notices relating to schools on branch notice boards. The main exception is information that promotes attendance at one school rather than another or advertises events designed to achieve that. Libraries NI also makes no commitment, under its policy, to display or hold all community information submitted to it.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 5608/16-21, to provide a time frame for the new scheme.

(AQW 6827/16-21)

Mr Givan: Subject to appraisal and procurement, it is anticipated that scheme designs will be completed by 31 March 2017 with construction works carried out during the 2017/18 financial year. Derry City and Strabane District Council will be responsible for managing the delivery of the project.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) how many informal and formal cases of threats, harassment or sexual harassment and/or stalking have been lodged by staff in his Department, over the past three years; and (ii) the internal procedures taken and the support for victims.

(AQW 6842/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) No records of informal cases are retained. A total of 11 formal cases of threats, harassment or sexual harassment and/or stalking have been lodged by staff in my Department and in its legacy Departments since November 2013 to date;
- (ii) The procedures taken were determined by the nature of the case. Each case was managed in accordance with the NICS Dignity at Work and/or Standards of Conduct and/or Discipline policies. NICS policies include a range of support options for staff, including the Employee Assistance Programme, Carecall and Welfare Support Services. Access to named Harassment Contact Officers is also available in cases dealt with under the NICS Dignity at Work policy.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Communities whether he plans to progress sign language legislation.

(AQW 6846/16-21)

Mr Givan: My predecessor, the former Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure,

Carál Ní Chuilín, launched a consultation on the Sign Language Framework which included policy proposals for legislation on 15th March 2016. The consultation period closed on 4th July 2016. My Departmental officials are currently assessing the responses received to the consultation in various formats. This includes a large number of filmed sign language clips and signed Facebook posts offering feedback from many people from the Deaf community, who have been able, for the first time in Northern Ireland, to give their views on a consultation using Sign Language and Facebook.

Upon completion of this analysis I will decide on the way forward.

Mr McKee asked the Minister for Communities to detail the number of people in receipt of pension credit, over each of the last five years.

(AQW 6848/16-21)

Mr Givan: The table below shows the number of recipients of Pension Credit over the last five years.

Year	Month	Claimants
2012	May	94,650
2013	May	92,360
2014	May	88,860
2015	May	84,730
2016	May	80,580

* Figures rounded to nearest 10.

The Information provided 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 Communities pursuant to AQW 6281/16-21, to outline why his Department does not know how much brownfield land it owns in each local government district.

(AQW 6858/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that it is only required to classify its land holdings in terms of:

- 1) Development potential; and
- 2) Existing open space

This is to provide an indication of feasibility for future development and for valuation purposes.

The Housing Executive does not therefore hold information on whether land it holds could be considered 'brownfield' land or not.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 6279/16-21, to provide a list of meetings between officials from his Department and the Department of Finance relating to the reclassification of housing associations by the Office of National Statistics, including the date of these meetings and the civil service grade of the most senior official at each meeting.
(AQW 6862/16-21)

Mr Givan: Meetings have taken place between officials from My Department and the Department of Finance in relation to the reclassification of housing associations as follows -

- 28 June 2016 – Senior Official – Grade 3
- 28 September 2016 – Senior Official – Grade 3

Aside from meetings lead Officials in both Departments continue to be in regular contact.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline the grants available through his departmental groups.
(AQW 7011/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department for Communities (DFC) offers a range of potential funding streams to local community organisations such as the Volunteering Small Grants Programme, the Community Halls Minor Works Pilot Programme and the Small Grants Pilot Programme.

Full details of the various funding streams and how to apply for these can be found on the DfC website <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/>

or by using the NICVA grant tracker tool which can be accessed at www.grant-tracker.org/

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Communities to outline the steps taken by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to terminate its lease of land in Ardoyne to 'Ardoyne, Bone and Ligoniel Heritage Association' in view of the breach of covenant involved in developing the site with a memorial to terrorists.

(AQW 7075/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that the land in Ardoyne has been leased to Ardoyne, Bone and Ligoniel Heritage Association from April 2014 for use as a community garden. The Housing Executive is currently investigating this matter and intends to engage with the Heritage Association directly in relation to its compliance with the provisions of the lease.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Communities to outline the preparations his Department has made in relation to the forthcoming implementation of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

(AQO 671/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 will come into effect for Northern Ireland departments on 1 June 2017. It provides a statutory basis for an existing Executive commitment to undertake rural proofing of all new and revised policies and strategies across government.

In preparation to the forthcoming implementation of the Act, officials across my Department have been engaged with colleagues in the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

I understand that in advance of the Act coming into operation, DAERA will review and update the existing guidance for public authorities on rural proofing, "Thinking Rural: The Essential Guide to Rural Proofing". Similarly, DAERA will update the existing training course for NICS Departmental policy makers, "Think Rural", to reflect the requirements of the Act and this training will be rolled out to departments, local councils and public authorities.

Once the guidance has been reviewed and updated and similarly once the training course for NICS Departmental policy makers has been rolled out to departments, my officials will comply with any statutory requirements of the Act in developing policy.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment of the locations of Jobs and Benefits Offices.

(AQO 677/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department for Communities is a regional organisation and I am committed to the current network of 28 local Jobs & Benefits offices located across Northern Ireland which play an important role in supporting unemployed claimants to get into work and provide them with benefit information and advice.

These offices are at the core of the delivery of services to working age claimants, including the new Universal Credit and Discretionary Support.

A new Jobs & Benefits office is also being created in Rathkeltair House, Downpatrick and options are under consideration with the Department of Finance for the North Belfast Jobs & Benefits office.

My officials are also continuing to work with the Department of Finance on finding solutions for Jobs & Benefits offices in Bangor and Newtownards.

This will put in place a network of 32 Jobs & Benefits offices located across Northern Ireland providing modern 'fit for purpose' accommodation from which to deliver services and which can accommodate the new ways of working including the increasing use of telephony and digital services.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Communities to outline the support his Department provides for local Credit Unions.

(AQO 678/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department recognises that credit unions could help improve financial inclusion among low income households.

In that context my officials have been working with the Irish League of Credit Unions and the Ulster Federation of Credit Unions to explore options to improve access to services for people living on low incomes and to improve financial inclusion.

The Department agreed to provide financial support for a pilot (primarily for smaller credit unions) to modernise operations and improve access to services.

Two credit unions, representing both affiliations and providing a mix of rural and urban, initially expressed an interest in participating. Both displayed a willingness to improve access, increase membership, maximise access to financial products and become more financially sustainable. One of the credit unions (based in Belfast) subsequently withdrew from the pilot. Initial discussions are currently taking place with another credit union interested in participating in the pilot.

Macnean credit union, based in Belcoo, has received financial support to assist them to modernise operations. This includes increasing opening hours, training for staff, provision of marketing material and support to upgrade Information Technology (IT) hardware, for example computers and CHIP and PIN devices. Evaluation of this support is ongoing.

Ulster Federation of Credit Unions has received financial support for governance measures to assist their affiliated credit unions meet required standards and ensure that they are financially sustainable and positioned well to continue to serve the needs of low income households in the local community.

Ms Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment of social housing need in North Belfast.

(AQO 679/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- There are 2,567 applicants in housing stress on the waiting list in the North Belfast Parliamentary constituency.
- My Department and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are working with the Housing Association sector to reduce this waiting list.
- As part of the Social Housing Development Programme there are currently 372 new build units under construction with plans to deliver a further 459 new units over the next three years. The Housing Executive is continuing to identify further development opportunities.
- In addition, re-lets help to address the waiting list and the Housing Executive has advised me that from 30 September 2015 to 30 September 2016 there were 865 re-lets of accommodation in the North Belfast Parliamentary constituency.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the provision of advice services for Welfare Reform.

(AQO 680/16-21)

Mr Givan: On 27th September I announced £2.5 million funding for the Welfare Reform Advice Services Consortium (Citizens Advice, AdviceNI and the Law Centre NI) to fund:

- Nine advisers to operate the Independent Welfare Change Helpline from 1st November 2016 to provide a contact point for anyone needing help or advice regarding any of the welfare changes; and
- Thirty five additional advisers across NI to deliver face-to-face assistance.

I also announced £810k of additional funding through local councils to support and prepare existing frontline services in advance of the new services.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Communities to outline any proposed schemes for Housing Executive properties, including window and kitchen replacement, in the Limavady area by 2018.

(AQO 681/16-21)

Mr Givan: There are a number of programmes both already on site and planned for Limavady in 2016/17 and 2017/18, including window and kitchen replacement schemes.

I will write to the Member outlining the schemes in the coming days.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQO 537/16-21, to outline the specific practical proposals to benefit the community that were delivered as part of these contracts.

(AQO 682/16-21)

Mr Givan: The schedule of community engagement activities carried out to date includes:

- A career presentation and site visit by Hazelwood Integrated College as part of an ongoing PR campaign that was televised by BBC and UTV.
- A competition held with Belfast MET's school of art and design to design a 3D model of the stadium, funded by O'Hare and McGovern.
- Site visits held for University of Ulster Jordanstown students, the Chartered Institute of Building and individual dissertation students.
- Participation at interview skills day at Mercy College and SERC campus. Site visits held for University of Ulster Jordanstown students, the Chartered Institute of Building and individual dissertation students for the Prince's Trust.
- Short term work placements held for year 12 pupils from Abbey Grammar School.
- Grow your own event to teach local residents how to create hanging baskets and vegetables patches.
- 'Litter Pick' planned within the local area after International Match days.
- A charity football match between Windsor Park site staff and subcontractors. The money raised went to Action Cancer along with other O'Hare and McGovern fundraising efforts, with £8,500 raised in total.
- "Get in to Construction" programme organised with the Prince's Trust resulted in 5 NEET group participants being offered full time employment.
- "Get Hired" programme organised in conjunction with the Prince's Trust where an offer of employment was made to 2.
- 3 staff helped to promote social clauses during an event at Colaiste Feirste. Each staff member delivered a speech explaining how the implementation of social clauses improved their lives.
- 2 senior staff from O'Hare and McGovern participated in a video with the Department which was designed to promote Social Clauses.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Communities to outline the safeguards being put in place to ensure that the income declared by self-employed, non-resident parents is verified fully by the Child Maintenance Service.

(AQO 683/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- Since the introduction of the new statutory child maintenance scheme all income from earnings is collected directly by an interface with HMRC
- Child Maintenance Service no longer has a role in verifying wage details as this will already have been undertaken by HMRC through self assessment.

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the Sub-Regional Stadia Programme for Soccer.

(AQO 684/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- The consultation on the Sub Regional Stadia Programme for Soccer proposals resulted in 1,279 responses being received by my Department.
- My officials are currently finalising their consideration and analysis of the responses to the consultation together with all other relevant information to inform recommendations to me on the way forward.
- I hope to make a decision on the programme going forward shortly and I anticipate that the programme will be launched and open for applications in the coming months.

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the current staffing levels in Newry Jobs and Benefits Office.

(AQO 685/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- Similar to other parts of Northern Ireland, the decline in the number of claimants on the Jobseeker's Allowance register and associated workloads has reduced the total number of staff needed in the Newry Jobs & Benefits office and the office currently is in a surplus position of 41 staff.
- Staffing levels in all local offices are continually being reviewed as part of the normal business cycle using a staff complementing model, to ensure there are sufficient staff to meet business need.
- The Department for Communities management are committed to ensuring that any surplus staff are either redeployed to other suitable posts in the same Department or in another Department.

Department of Education

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education what formal partnerships exist between his Department and the Department of Health for the delivery of health and education services.

(AQW 6363/16-21)

Mr Weir (The Minister of Education): There are a range of mechanisms through which the Departments of Education (DE) and Health (DoH) work together for the delivery of health and education services.

In respect of the Sure Start Programme and Bright Start School Age Childcare Grant Scheme, there are Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) which formalise the financial governance and accountability arrangements between DE and DoH in respect of services provided and delivery of the schemes. These are supplemented by respective Service Level Agreements between DE and the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB).

As part of the Northern Ireland Executive / Atlantic Philanthropies Delivering Social Change Signature Programme, the DoH and DE work collaboratively in the delivery of Workstream 1 of the Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP). EITP aims to improve outcomes for children and young people across Northern Ireland through embedding early intervention approaches which are both transformation and sustainable. Workstream 1 is led by DoH and the Terms of Reference for EITP Workstream 1 sets out the working arrangements which include a Steering Group and Task Groups with representatives from health and education.

Another partnership project under EITP is a 3-year project which aims to raise educational outcomes of Looked After Children (LAC) through improving support at Key Stage 2 level. A LAC Champion, similar to the 'Virtual School Head' in England, has been appointed to provide the necessary oversight and challenge on behalf of the LAC KS2 cohort. The overall aim of the project is to improve the performance of LAC at KS2.

In the area of Special Educational Needs (SEN), at an operational level under the Special Educational Needs Framework, the Education Authority (EA) works with health authorities in regard to the provision of medical advice in connection with the statutory SEN assessment process.

The EA also works with Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs) in regard to the provision of therapeutic services, as identified in a child's statement. Prime responsibility for the provision to children of therapeutic services rests with health and social services. This applies generally and also to any specification of such services in a statement of SEN.

The EA's Education Transition Service works in conjunction with HSCT professionals to ensure the provision of comprehensive and co-ordinated information as part of the statutory education transition planning process for statemented children.

There is a recently established Education/Health SEN Interfaces Project Board which is jointly chaired by DE and DoH and which will oversee a number of time-bound projects related to improving education and health interfaces within the SEN framework.

Finally, DE and DoH, and indeed other Departments, also collaborate on the delivery of a number of cross-departmental policies and strategies on areas such as autism, mental health and learning disability, suicide prevention and domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of primary schools in deficit; (ii) the amount of deficit; (ii) the number of primary schools in surplus; and (iv) the amount of surplus.

(AQW 6435/16-21)

Mr Weir: The table below details (i) the number of primary schools in deficit (ii) the amount of the deficit (iii) the number of primary schools in surplus and (iv) the amount of surplus.

	Primary Schools Closing in Deficit at 31 March 2016	Primary Schools Closing in Surplus at 31 March 2016
Number of Primary Schools	175	616
Value	£5,271,148	£34,635,060

Note: The Education Authority's 2015-16 accounts are not yet finalised therefore these figures are subject to change.

The information provided is based on the latest information available from the Education Authority.

The information provided is in respect of Controlled/Maintained schools only. Similar data is not available for Voluntary Grammar (VG) and Grant-Maintained Integrated (GMI) Schools, for which my Department is the Funding Authority. VG and GMI schools are not reported on in the same way as each other (the same accounting policies are not used by all) or in the same way as Controlled/Maintained schools for which the Education Authority (EA) is the Funding Authority.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the current number of post-primary schools in deficit; (ii) the amount of deficit; (ii) the number of post-primary schools in surplus; and (iv) the amount of surplus; broken down by constituency.

(AQW 6436/16-21)

Mr Weir: The table below details (i) the number of post-primary schools in deficit (ii) the amount of the deficit (iii) the number of post-primary schools in surplus; and (iv) the amount of surplus; broken down by constituency as at 31 March 2016.

Constituency	No. of Post -Primary Schools in Deficit at 31 March 2016	Deficit Value £	No. of Post-Primary Schools in Surplus at 31 March 2016	Surplus Value £
Belfast East	2	449,533	3	201,633
Belfast North	3	740,913	4	677,147
Belfast South	0	0	3	451,845
Belfast West	1	471,145	7	1,947,470
East Antrim	2	225,490	4	567,382
East Londonderry	5	1,290,023	4	1,317,459
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	8	2,076,926	6	1,671,466
Foyle	0	0	5	1,083,839
Lagan Valley	0	0	5	1,458,768
Mid Ulster	3	103,708	5	1,019,707
Newry & Armagh	4	1,284,123	7	1,122,167
North Antrim	3	436,881	6	687,590

Constituency	No. of Post -Primary Schools in Deficit at 31 March 2016	Deficit Value £	No. of Post-Primary Schools in Surplus at 31 March 2016	Surplus Value £
North Down	0	0	4	301,513
South Antrim	3	1,259,138	3	206,946
South Down	4	1,600,212	5	992,273
Strangford	2	464,186	6	866,971
Upper Bann	5	3,115,141	7	790,901
West Tyrone	2	1,190,763	6	2,251,197
Total	47	14,708,182	90	17,616,274

Note: The Education Authority's 2015-16 accounts are not yet finalised therefore these figures are subject to change.

The information provided is based on the latest information available from the Education Authority (EA).

The information provided is in respect of Controlled/Maintained schools only. Similar data is not available for Voluntary Grammar (VG) and Grant-Maintained Integrated (GMI) Schools, for which my Department is the Funding Authority. VG and GMI schools are not reported on in the same way as each other (the same accounting policies are not used by all) or in the same way as Controlled/Maintained schools for which the Education Authority is the Funding Authority.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) all school closures and mergers between May 2011 and March 2016 as a result of Area Planning; (ii) what savings were made by each school closure and merger and (iii) where the savings were invested in each instance.

(AQW 6464/16-21)

Mr Weir:

- i) A list of school of closures and mergers, as a result of Area Planning, between May 2011 and March 2016 are shown in the tables below.

School Closures

School	School Type
Drumcree College, Portadown	Post Primary
Evisch Primary School, Strabane	Primary
Holy Family Nursery School Belfast	Nursery
St Joseph's College, Coleraine	Post Primary
Gortnagarn Primary School, Omagh	Primary
Avoniel Primary School, Belfast	Primary
Lisnagelvin Primary School, Londonderry	Primary (Special Unit)
St Anthony's Primary School, Bellarena, Limavady	Primary
Crievagh Primary School, Cookstown	Primary
Clintyclay Primary School, Dungannon	Primary
Envagh Primary School, Omagh	Primary
St Francis of Assisi Primary School, Castlederg	Primary
Down High School Prep Dept, Downpatrick	Primary*
Immaculate Conception College, Derry	Post Primary
St Macartan's Primary School, Dromore	Primary
St Brigid's High School, Armagh	Post Primary
Ballee Community High School, Ballymena	Post Primary
Clontifleece Primary School, Warrenpoint	Primary
Drumard Primary School, Maghera	Primary

School	School Type
Cullycapple Primary School, Coleraine	Primary
Bridgehill Primary School, Castlederg	Primary
Orangefield High School, Belfast	Post Primary
St Eugene's Primary School, Knock	Primary
Ballygolan Primary School, Newtownabbey	Primary
Ballycolman Nursery School, Strabane	Nursery
St Gemma's High School, Belfast	Post Primary
Garvagh High School, Coleraine	Post Primary
St Davog's Primary School, Scraghey, Castlederg	Primary
St Eugene's High School, Castlederg	Post Primary
Dalriada School Prep Department, Ballymoney	Primary*
St Peter's High School, Londonderry	Post Primary
Carlane Primary School, Toomebridge	Primary
St Canice's Primary School, Dungiven	Primary (Irish Medium Unit)
Altnagelvin Hospital School and Tuition Service, Londonderry	Special School
Redburn Primary School, Holywood	Primary
Dunmurry High School, Belfast	Post Primary
Ballykeigle Primary School, Comber	Primary
Aghavilly Primary School, Armagh	Primary
Keady Primary School, Armagh	Primary
Lourdes Primary School, Whitehead	Primary
Braid Primary School, Broughshane	Primary
Vere Foster Primary School, Belfast	Primary
Connor House Prep Dept, Bangor GS	Primary*

* Preparatory Departments

School Amalgamations

School	School Type
Little Flower Girls' School, Belfast St Patrick's College (Bearnageha), Belfast	Post Primary
St Comhghalls College, Lisnaskea St Eugene's College, Roslea	Post Primary
St Paul's College, Kilrea St Mary's College, Clady	Post Primary
St Mary's Primary School, Glassdrumman Moneydarragh Primary School, Newry St Joseph's Primary School, Ballymartin	Primary
Collegiate Grammar School, Enniskillen Portora Royal School, Enniskillen	Post Primary
Coleraine Academical Institution, Coleraine Coleraine High School, Coleraine	Post Primary
Craigbrack Primary School, Londonderry Listress Primary School, Londonderry Mullabuoy Primary School, Londonderry	Primary

School	School Type
Monkstown Community School, Newtownabbey Newtownabbey Community High School, Newtownabbey	Post Primary
Glenravel Primary School, Ballymena St Mary's Primary School, Ballymena	Primary
St Michael's Grammar School, Craigavon St Mary's Junior High School, Craigavon St Paul's Junior High School Lurgan, Craigavon	Post Primary
St Lukes Primary School, Belfast St Marks Primary School, Belfast	Primary
St Anne's Girls Primary School, Strabane Barrack Street Boys Primary School, Strabane	Primary
Belmont Special School, Londonderry Foyle View Special School, Londonderry	Special School
Newtownbreda High School, Belfast Knockbreda High School, Belfast	Post Primary
Devenish College, Enniskillen Lisnaskea High School, Enniskillen	Post Primary
Ardstraw Primary School, Omagh Drumlegagh Primary School Newtownstewart, Omagh	Primary
St Aidan's Christian Brothers Primary School, Belfast St Bernadette's Primary School, Belfast	Primary
Edmund Rice Primary School, Belfast Star of the Sea Girls' Primary School, Belfast	Primary
St Mary's Boys' Primary School, Strabane St Mary's Girl's Primary School, Strabane	Primary
Elmbrook School, Enniskillen Erne School, Enniskillen	Special School

- (ii) & (iii) Area planning of education provision is not focused on achieving a projected level of savings rather it focuses on maximising the impact of available resources by working towards a network of schools that are educationally and financially viable. For this reason the Department does not set a projected savings figure nor does it routinely calculate savings that accrue from implementation of area solutions.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education pursuant to AQW 5626/16-21, whether he can then detail (i) the current number of primary schools currently in a budget deficit; (ii) the current number of post-primary schools currently in a budget deficit; (iii) how many primary schools will be in a budget deficit by 2018-19; and (iv) how many post-primary schools will be in a budget deficit by 2018-19.

(AQW 6501/16-21)

Mr Weir: The table below provides the Education Authority's (EA) analysis of (i) the current number of primary schools currently in a budget deficit; (ii) the current number of post-primary schools currently in a budget deficit; (iii) how many primary schools will be in a budget deficit by 2018-19; and (iv) how many post-primary schools will be in a budget deficit by 2018-19.

	Primary Schools	Post-primary Schools
Number of schools in budget deficit as at 31 March 2016	175	47
Number of schools in budget deficit as at 31 March 2019	439	104

This information relating to schools forecast position as at 31 March 2019 is based on the school plans which were submitted to the EA at the start of the financial year.

Schools' financial plans are reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout the period and are therefore subject to change.

The information provided is in respect of Controlled/Maintained schools only. Similar data is not available for Voluntary Grammar (VG) and Grant-Maintained Integrated (GMI) Schools, for which my Department is the Funding Authority. VG and GMI schools are not reported on in the same way as each other (the same accounting policies are not used by all) or in the same way as Controlled/Maintained schools for which the EA is the Funding Authority.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail all organisations that provide or oversee primary and post-primary education in a non-school setting.

(AQW 6502/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has provided the following tables, broken down by Area, which detail all the information requested in each of the three questions.

South

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Lough Road Learning Centre 27 Lough Road, BT6 6JJ	28	0	28	28	0
Tamnamore Learning Centre 151 Tamnamore Road, BT71 6HW	13 (in Centre) 10 (Outreach Support)	13 (in Centre) 7 (Outreach Support)	3 (Outreach)	23	0
Kinnego Centre 56 Lislaly Road, BT71 6TB	11 (in Centre) 13 (Outreach Support)	0	11 (in Centre) 13 (Outreach)	24	0
Newry EOTAS 61 Dominic Street, BT35 8BW	21	0	21	21	0
Home Tuition	27	3	24	2	25

North East

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Sunlea Educational Guidance Centre 180 Ballycastle Road, BT52 2EH	3	0	3	3	0
Thornberry PRU EOTAS 180 Ballycastle Road, BT52 2EH	8	8	0	8	0
Dromard EOTAS 70 Tamlaght Road, BT46 5XB	10	0	10	10	0
Braid EOTAS 187 Carnlough Road, BT43 7JW	11	0	11	11	0
Newtownabbey EOTAS 231 Jordanstown Road, BT37 0LX	12	0	12	12	0
Rathmore Educ Guidance Centre 10 Loughanmore Road, BT41 2HQ	3	0	3	3	0
Lea Green PRU EOTAS Glenvarna Drive, BT36 5JB	7	7	0	7	0
Newtownabbey Educ Guidance Centre 231 Jordanstown Road, BT37 0LX	4	0	4	4	0
Home Tuition	94	7	87	53	41

Belfast

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Pathways EOTAS	36	0	36	36	0
Newstart Education Centre 1a Dunlewey Street, BT13 2QH	9	0	9	9	0
Conway Mill 5-7 Conway Street, BT13 2DE	8	0	8	8	0
Belfast Hospital School (Tuition)	32	5	27	0	32
Belfast Hospital School (In-patients)	27	16	11	0	27
Belfast Hospital School (TOPS) Falls Road, BT12 6BE	17	0	17	0	17
Loughshore 889 Shore Road, BT36 7DH	83	0	83	83	0
Link Centre 8-30 Barrack Street, BT12 4AJ	10	0	10	10	0

South East

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Groomsport ISU Springwell Drive, BT19 6TB	9	0	9	9	0
Redburn AEP (Holywood Road) 364 Old Holywood Road, BT18 9QH	12	0	12	12	0
Poleglass (Lagan Valley AEP) 4a Colinbrook Green, BT17 0PQ	20	0	20	20	0
Castlereagh Support Centre 56 Merok Park, BT9 6LT	7	0	7	7	0
Ardmore EOTAS Saul Road, BT30 6NJ	12	0	12	12	0
Home Tuition	34	4	30	6	28

West

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Fir Trees Learning Centre, Knockavoe Resource Centre 10A Melmount Gardens, BT82 9EB	5	5	0	5	0
Little Oaks, Ardnashee School, Upper Campus 17 Racecourse Road, BT48 7RE	16	16	0	16	0
Treetops KS1/2 Learning Centre, Rossmar 2 Ballyquin Road, BT49 9ET	4	4	0	4	0
Longtower EOTAS Anne Street, BT48 6PB	14	0	14	14	0
EDIT 86 Rosstowney Road, BT47 5SU	5	0	5	5	0

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	Ill Health
Limavady EOTAS 2 Ballyquin Road, BT49 9ET	7	0	7	7	0
Maydown EOTAS 1 Maydown Road, BT47 6UF	16 *	0	16	16	0
Arvalee EOTAS 15 Deverney Road, BT79 0ND	10	0	10	10	0
Ballinamallard EOTAS 35 Lettermoney Road, BT94 2LY	9	0	9	9	0
Strabane EOTAS, Knockavoe Resource Centre Melmount Gardens, BT82 9EB	8	0	8	8	0
Home Tuition	8	0	8	0	8

* 8 KS3, 8 KS4

Other Agencies

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	Ill Health
Woodlands Youth Justice 1 Mosswood Close, BT19 1TA	20	0	5 (CSA) 15 (non CSA)*	0	0
Iveagh Centre 67 Broadway, BT12 6HF	7	0	7	7	0
Glenmona Glen Road, BT11 8BX	2	0	2	2	0
Beechcroft 110 Saintfield Road, BT8 6HD	14	0	14	0	14

* 5 of statutory school age (4 committed to sentence, 1 on remand), 15 over 16 year olds (3 committed to sentence, 12 on remand)

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education how many children are receiving primary or post-primary education (i) in hospital; or (ii) at home due to illness.

(AQW 6503/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has provided the following tables, broken down by Area, which detail all the information requested in each of the three questions.

South

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	Ill Health
Lough Road Learning Centre 27 Lough Road, BT6 6JJ	28	0	28	28	0
Tamnamore Learning Centre 151 Tamnamore Road, BT71 6HW	13 (in Centre) 10 (Outreach Support)	13 (in Centre) 7 (Outreach Support)	3 (Outreach)	23	0

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Kinnego Centre 56 Lislaly Road, BT71 6TB	11 (in Centre) 13 (Outreach Support)	0	11 (in Centre) 13 (Outreach)	24	0
Newry EOTAS 61 Dominic Street, BT35 8BW	21	0	21	21	0
Home Tuition	27	3	24	2	25

North East

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Sunlea Educational Guidance Centre 180 Ballycastle Road, BT52 2EH	3	0	3	3	0
Thornberry PRU EOTAS 180 Ballycastle Road, BT52 2EH	8	8	0	8	0
Dromard EOTAS 70 Tamlaght Road, BT46 5XB	10	0	10	10	0
Braid EOTAS 187 Carnlough Road, BT43 7JW	11	0	11	11	0
Newtownabbey EOTAS 231 Jordanstown Road, BT37 0LX	12	0	12	12	0
Rathmore Educ Guidance Centre 10 Loughanmore Road, BT41 2HQ	3	0	3	3	0
Lea Green PRU EOTAS Glenvarna Drive, BT36 5JB	7	7	0	7	0
Newtownabbey Educ Guidance Centre 231 Jordanstown Road, BT37 0LX	4	0	4	4	0
Home Tuition	94	7	87	53	41

Belfast

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Pathways EOTAS	36	0	36	36	0
Newstart Education Centre 1a Dunlewey Street, BT13 2QH	9	0	9	9	0
Conway Mill 5-7 Conway Street, BT13 2DE	8	0	8	8	0
Belfast Hospital School (Tuition)	32	5	27	0	32
Belfast Hospital School (In-patients)	27	16	11	0	27
Belfast Hospital School (TOPS) Falls Road, BT12 6BE	17	0	17	0	17
Loughshore 889 Shore Road, BT36 7DH	83	0	83	83	0

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Link Centre 8-30 Barrack Street, BT12 4AJ	10	0	10	10	0

South East

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Groomsport ISU Springwell Drive, BT19 6TB	9	0	9	9	0
Redburn AEP (Holywood Road) 364 Old Holywood Road, BT18 9QH	12	0	12	12	0
Poleglass (Lagan Valley AEP) 4a Colinbrook Green, BT17 0PQ	20	0	20	20	0
Castlereagh Support Centre 56 Merok Park, BT9 6LT	7	0	7	7	0
Ardmore EOTAS Saul Road, BT30 6NJ	12	0	12	12	0
Home Tuition	34	4	30	6	28

West

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Fir Trees Learning Centre, Knockavoe Resource Centre 10A Melmount Gardens, BT82 9EB	5	5	0	5	0
Little Oaks, Ardnashee School, Upper Campus 17 Racecourse Road, BT48 7RE	16	16	0	16	0
Treetops KS1/2 Learning Centre, Rossmar 2 Ballyquin Road, BT49 9ET	4	4	0	4	0
Longtower EOTAS Anne Street, BT48 6PB	14	0	14	14	0
EDIT 86 Rosstown Road, BT47 5SU	5	0	5	5	0
Limavady EOTAS 2 Ballyquin Road, BT49 9ET	7	0	7	7	0
Maydown EOTAS 1 Maydown Road, BT47 6UF	16 *	0	16	16	0
Arvalee EOTAS 15 Deverney Road, BT79 0ND	10	0	10	10	0
Ballinamallard EOTAS 35 Lettermoney Road, BT94 2LY	9	0	9	9	0
Strabane EOTAS, Knockavoe Resource Centre Melmount Gardens, BT82 9EB	8	0	8	8	0
Home Tuition	8	0	8	0	8

* 8 KS3, 8 KS4

Other Agencies

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	Ill Health
Woodlands Youth Justice 1 Mosswood Close, BT19 1TA	20	0	5 (CSA) 15 (non CSA)*	0	0
Iveagh Centre 67 Broadway, BT12 6HF	7	0	7	7	0
Glenmona Glen Road, BT11 8BX	2	0	2	2	0
Beechcroft 110 Saintfield Road, BT8 6HD	14	0	14	0	14

* 5 of statutory school age (4 committed to sentence, 1 on remand), 15 over 16 year olds (3 committed to sentence, 12 on remand)

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education how many children are receiving primary or post-primary education in a non-school setting.

(AQW 6504/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has provided the following tables, broken down by Area, which detail all the information requested in each of the three questions.

South

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	Ill Health
Lough Road Learning Centre 27 Lough Road, BT6 6JJ	28	0	28	28	0
Tamnamore Learning Centre 151 Tamnamore Road, BT71 6HW	13 (in Centre) 10 Outreach Support)	13 (in Centre) 7 (Outreach Support)	3 (Outreach)	23	0
Kinnego Centre 56 Lislaly Road, BT71 6TB	11 (in Centre) 13 (Outreach Support)	0	11 (in Centre) 13 (Outreach)	24	0
Newry EOTAS 61 Dominic Street, BT35 8BW	21	0	21	21	0
Home Tuition	27	3	24	2	25

North East

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	Ill Health
Sunlea Educational Guidance Centre 180 Ballycastle Road, BT52 2EH	3	0	3	3	0

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Thornberry PRU EOTAS 180 Ballycastle Road, BT52 2EH	8	8	0	8	0
Dromard EOTAS 70 Tamlaght Road, BT46 5XB	10	0	10	10	0
Braid EOTAS 187 Carnlough Road, BT43 7JW	11	0	11	11	0
Newtownabbey EOTAS 231 Jordanstown Road, BT37 0LX	12	0	12	12	0
Rathmore Educ Guidance Centre 10 Loughanmore Road, BT41 2HQ	3	0	3	3	0
Lea Green PRU EOTAS Glenvarna Drive, BT36 5JB	7	7	0	7	0
Newtownabbey Educ Guidance Centre 231 Jordanstown Road, BT37 0LX	4	0	4	4	0
Home Tuition	94	7	87	53	41

Belfast

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Pathways EOTAS	36	0	36	36	0
Newstart Education Centre 1a Dunlewey Street, BT13 2QH	9	0	9	9	0
Conway Mill 5-7 Conway Street, BT13 2DE	8	0	8	8	0
Belfast Hospital School (Tuition)	32	5	27	0	32
Belfast Hospital School (In-patients)	27	16	11	0	27
Belfast Hospital School (TOPS) Falls Road, BT12 6BE	17	0	17	0	17
Loughshore 889 Shore Road, BT36 7DH	83	0	83	83	0
Link Centre 8-30 Barrack Street, BT12 4AJ	10	0	10	10	0

South East

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Groomsport ISU Springwell Drive, BT19 6TB	9	0	9	9	0
Redburn AEP (Holywood Road) 364 Old Holywood Road, BT18 9QH	12	0	12	12	0
Poleglass (Lagan Valley AEP) 4a Colinbrook Green, BT17 0PQ	20	0	20	20	0
Castlereagh Support Centre 56 Merok Park, BT9 6LT	7	0	7	7	0

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Ardmore EOTAS Saul Road, BT30 6NJ	12	0	12	12	0
Home Tuition	34	4	30	6	28

West

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Fir Trees Learning Centre, Knockavoe Resource Centre 10A Melmount Gardens, BT82 9EB	5	5	0	5	0
Little Oaks, Ardnashee School, Upper Campus 17 Racecourse Road, BT48 7RE	16	16	0	16	0
Treetops KS1/2 Learning Centre, Rossmar 2 Ballyquin Road, BT49 9ET	4	4	0	4	0
Longtower EOTAS Anne Street, BT48 6PB	14	0	14	14	0
EDIT 86 Rosstown Road, BT47 5SU	5	0	5	5	0
Limavady EOTAS 2 Ballyquin Road, BT49 9ET	7	0	7	7	0
Maydown EOTAS 1 Maydown Road, BT47 6UF	16 *	0	16	16	0
Arvalee EOTAS 15 Deverney Road, BT79 0ND	10	0	10	10	0
Ballinamallard EOTAS 35 Lettermoney Road, BT94 2LY	9	0	9	9	0
Strabane EOTAS, Knockavoe Resource Centre Melmount Gardens, BT82 9EB	8	0	8	8	0
Home Tuition	8	0	8	0	8

* 8 KS3, 8 KS4

Other Agencies

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	III Health
Woodlands Youth Justice 1 Mosswood Close, BT19 1TA	20	0	5 (CSA) 15 (non CSA)*	0	0
Iveagh Centre 67 Broadway, BT12 6HF	7	0	7	7	0
Glenmona Glen Road, BT11 8BX	2	0	2	2	0

Name of Facility	Total No. of Children	No. of Primary Children	No. of Post-Primary Children	SEBD	Ill Health
Beechcroft 110 Saintfield Road, BT8 6HD	14	0	14	0	14

* 5 of statutory school age (4 committed to sentence, 1 on remand), 15 over 16 year olds (3 committed to sentence, 12 on remand)

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Education what are the projected savings to be made by 2018-19 as a result of the implementation of the Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision.
(AQW 6505/16-21)

Mr Weir: The draft strategic Area Plan is the outworking of Area Planning which is the process to implement the Sustainable Schools Policy. It aims to ensure children and young people have access to educational pathways and a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs. Area planning of education provision is not focussed on achieving a projected level of savings rather it focuses on maximising the impact of available resources by working towards a network of schools that are educationally and financially viable. For this reason the Department does not set a projected savings figure nor does it routinely calculate savings that accrue from implementation of area solutions.

The draft strategic Area Plan covers the three year period from April 2017 to March 2020. Over this period it would be expected that there will be a reduction in the number of unsustainable schools which will lead to a more effective use of the budget available for the benefit of pupils in all schools.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the total deficit projected for all 62 post-primary schools predicted to be in a budget deficit by 2018-19 as detailed in the Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision; and (ii) a breakdown for each of the 62 schools of the projected deficit for each year between now and 2018-19.
(AQW 6506/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority (EA) published a revised Draft Strategic Area Plan on 28 October 2016. The revised Plan states that 104 post-primary schools are projected to be in a deficit position at 31 March 2019.

- (i) The total deficit for the 104 post-primary schools forecasting a budget deficit by 2018-19 as detailed in the Draft Strategic Area Plan is £54,397,483.
- (ii) I have arranged for the information requested to be placed in the Assembly Library.

This information relating to schools forecast position is based on the school plans which were submitted to the Education Authority at the start of the financial year. Schools' financial plans are reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout the period and are therefore subject to change.

The information provided is in respect of Controlled/Maintained schools only. Similar data is not available for Voluntary Grammar (VG) and Grant-Maintained Integrated (GMI) Schools, for which my Department is the Funding Authority. VG and GMI schools are not reported on in the same way as each other (the same accounting policies are not used by all) or in the same way as Controlled/Maintained schools for which the Education Authority is the Funding Authority.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the total deficit projected for all 325 primary schools predicted to be in budget deficit by 2018-19 as detailed in the Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision; and (ii) a breakdown for each of the 325 schools of the projected deficit for each year between now and 2018-19.
(AQW 6507/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority published a revised Draft Strategic Area Plan on 28 October 2016. The revised Plan states that 439 primary schools are projected to be in a deficit position at 31 March 2019.

- i) The total deficit for all 439 primary schools forecasting to be in a budget deficit by 2018-19 as detailed in the revised Draft Strategic Area Plan is £22,097,711.
- ii) I have arranged for the information requested to be placed in the Assembly Library.

This information relating to schools forecast position is based on the school plans which were submitted to the Education Authority at the start of the financial year. Schools' financial plans are reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout the period and are therefore subject to change.

The information provided is in respect of Controlled/Maintained schools only. Similar data is not available for Voluntary Grammar (VG) and Grant-Maintained Integrated (GMI) Schools, for which my Department is the Funding Authority. VG and GMI schools are not reported on in the same way as each other (the same accounting policies are not used by all) or in the same way as Controlled/Maintained schools for which the Education Authority (EA) is the Funding Authority.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education to outline his Department's action plan for childcare in rural areas.

(AQW 6513/16-21)

Mr Weir: The first phase of the Childcare Strategy has, to date, supported 51 childcare settings serving rural areas representing some 1,500 low cost, childcare places. Development of the full Executive Childcare Strategy has been taken forward on a co-design basis with ongoing involvement from the relevant Government Departments, the childcare sector and childcare stakeholders, including stakeholders representing rural interests. The issue of childcare availability in rural areas was raised during last year's public consultation on the draft Executive Childcare Strategy.

I hope to bring forward the full version of the Childcare Strategy to my Executive colleagues in the coming months, having taken account of the many consultation responses received, the Programme for Government and the new opportunities that now exist to align childcare and Early Years initiatives.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to outline (i) his plans; and (ii) the timeline his Department has to continue the Pathways Early Years Fund, managed by Early Years in the 2017-18 period, given that the previous call was for a twelve month period only.

(AQW 6536/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Pathway Fund was introduced from 1 April 2016, replacing the former Early Years Fund and funding was awarded for the period April 2016 to March 2017.

The Department, with input from Early Years - the Organisation for Young Children (the Fund administrator), is reviewing the outcome of the first year of the Pathway Fund, to inform my approach to future calls for applications to the Pathway Fund.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of pupils accepted into each grammar school, broken down by grade, over the last three years.

(AQW 6544/16-21)

Mr Weir: The table below shows the Year 8 intake into each grammar school over the last three years. There are three grammar schools in the Dickson Plan that operate for Years 11-14 only and the Year 11 intake is shown in a separate table below.

My Department does not hold data on the grades or scores achieved by pupils who sit either the AQE or GL transfer tests.

Grammar School	Yr 8 Enrolment 2013/14	Yr 8 Enrolment 2014/15	Yr 8 Enrolment 2015/16
Wellington College	119	116	118
Bloomfield Collegiate	101	100	101
Campbell College	113	122	135
St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School	178	169	181
Methodist College	243	244	241
The Royal Belfast Academical Institution	156	154	157
Belfast Royal Academy	203	205	202
St Dominic's High School	149	142	142
St Malachy's College	156	154	155
Dominican College	152	149	152
Strathearn School	112	111	117
Rathmore Grammar School	184	185	186
Victoria College	132	130	131
Hunterhouse College	103	103	103
Grosvenor Grammar School	157	156	157
Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School	118	115	118
Collegiate Grammar School	71	71	61
Limavady Grammar School	131	130	132
Omagh Academy	95	99	95
Strabane Academy	100	83	83
Mount Lourdes Grammar School	97	97	98

Grammar School	Yr 8 Enrolment 2013/14	Yr 8 Enrolment 2014/15	Yr 8 Enrolment 2015/16
Portora Royal School	72	74	76
St Michael's College	101	104	104
Thornhill College	200	203	206
St Columb's College	227	223	221
Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Omagh	136	137	141
Loreto Grammar School, Omagh	126	126	127
Foyle College	129	123	125
Lumen Christi College	123	125	123
Ballyclare High School	188	187	188
Carrickfergus Grammar School	117	117	119
Antrim Grammar School	107	105	105
Cambridge House Grammar School	140	140	140
St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena	144	142	146
Ballymena Academy	179	175	177
Dalriada School	126	129	128
Coleraine High School*	121	121	Closed
Coleraine Academical Institution*	122	130	Closed
Coleraine Grammar School*	-	-	157
Loreto College, Coleraine ***	125	123	121
Larne Grammar School	111	110	110
Rainey Endowed School	106	104	103
Dominican College, Portstewart	72	73	69
Belfast High School	138	136	137
St Mary's Grammar School	159	154	156
Regent House School	215	210	213
Down High School	129	133	132
Glenlola Collegiate	159	157	157
Bangor Grammar School	130	128	129
Sullivan Upper School	153	150	153
Friends' School	143	144	143
Wallace High School	171	172	175
Assumption Grammar School	121	121	120
St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick	99	99	102
Our Lady and St Patrick's College	184	182	183
Banbridge Academy	187	185	187
St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel	81	81	83
Abbey Christian Brothers Grammar School	134	131	127
Our Lady's Grammar School	122	120	124
St Colman's College	129	127	128
St Joseph's Grammar School	100	97	110

Grammar School	Yr 8 Enrolment 2013/14	Yr 8 Enrolment 2014/15	Yr 8 Enrolment 2015/16
Sacred Heart Grammar School	122	123	121
The Royal School Dungannon	97	87	94
The Royal School Armagh	102	104	100
St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh ***	119	148	132
St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon	202	199	196
St Ronan's College** and ***	-	-	211

* Coleraine High and Coleraine Academical Institution amalgamated from 2015/16 to form Coleraine Grammar School

** St Ronan's College opened in 2015/16

*** The school has a wholly non-academic selective intake

The following grammar schools are in the Dickson Plan and provide for Years 11-14 only.

Grammar School	Yr 11 Enrolment 2013/14	Yr 11 Enrolment 2014/15	Yr 11 Enrolment 2015/16
Lurgan College	115	106	115
Portadown College	200	202	204
St Michael's Grammar	148	147	Closed

Mr Robinson asked the Minister of Education pursuant to AQW 4735/16-21, what opportunities will exist for schools to provide afterschool childcare from 4:00pm to 6:00pm under the final version of the Childcare Strategy.
(AQW 6667/16-21)

Mr Weir: The first phase of the Childcare Strategy, launched in September 2013, included actions to support school age childcare services (breakfast clubs, afterschool clubs and summer schemes). The Strategy has, to date, supported some 3,000 low cost school age childcare places. I am currently considering the need for a similar scheme in the forthcoming strategy.

I hope to bring forward the full version of the Childcare Strategy to my Executive colleagues in the coming months, having taken account of the many consultation responses received, the Programme for Government and the new opportunities that now exist to align childcare and Early Years initiatives.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Education to detail the price of primary school meals in East Londonderry.
(AQW 6672/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has confirmed that the current price for a primary school meal in the East Londonderry constituency is £2.50.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Education whether he has any plans to purchase school buses other than those provided by Translink during this financial year.
(AQW 6747/16-21)

Mr Weir: The amalgamation of five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) to one regional organisation means the Education Authority (EA) must consider their entire fleet across the five former ELBs when determining their need for additional school vehicles to ensure the efficient and effective use of resources. Once the EA has established its requirements, a business case will be developed and bid placed with the Department. I will then be able to assess this need alongside other pressures on my budget.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Education to outline how his Department is addressing (i) Education Authority delays in payments to staff following job evaluations; and (ii) staffing issues in the payroll department.
(AQW 6802/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Department of Education is not the employer of staff in the Education Authority (EA). The EA has advised that (i) job evaluations which result in changes in rates of pay can lead to extensive calculations and checking. The EA strives to make any payments in a timely manner and within a number of competing priorities; and (ii) The EA keeps staffing issues under review. This involves balancing the competing demands within payroll offices and the need to deliver services within reduced budgets.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to outline the schools in North Down that are to benefit from the £4.5m investment in minor works projects.

(AQW 6803/16-21)

Mr Weir: There is a substantive programme of work progressing under the Minor Capital Works Programme across the schools' estate. At present only schemes that meet inescapable statutory requirements such as Health and Safety, Fire Protection and statutory obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act, are progressing to delivery.

Due to the reactive nature of these works it is not possible to give a breakdown of planned projects in North Down that will benefit from any additional funding that becomes available.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education given that the incorrect storage of the chemical 2, 4-dinitrophenylhydrazine may impose an immediate risk to the health and safety of those working and studying in schools, to outline why the email sent from the Education Authority notifying schools of the risk only requested a response by 18 November 2016.

(AQW 7030/16-21)

Mr Weir: There are hazards and risks with all chemicals and schools should be following guidance from the Consortium of Local Education Authorities for the Provision of Science Services (CLEAPSS) on the storage, preparation, use and disposal of chemicals.

2,4-dinitrophenylhydrazine (2,4-DNPH) is on the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) legacy and revised A Level Chemistry specification and will have been used by schools continuously. It is also on the revised specifications for OCR, Edexcel and WJEC.

2,4-DNPH is safe if stored correctly and schools are already aware of the storage requirements.

Following notification of several incidents in England involving 2,4-DNPH, the Department of Education asked the Education Authority (EA) to contact all post-primary schools to identify which schools had stocks of the chemical. This audit circular was issued on 1 November, although many schools were on half term break at that time. A response date of 18 November was included to make sure schools responded; however the term "as a matter of urgency" was included to encourage schools to respond promptly. A further circular was issued on 7 November asking schools to respond as soon as possible.

The EA also issued guidance to schools advising what steps they should take if they had concerns about their stock of 2,4-DNPH and CCEA updated its Chemistry microsite with storage information.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Education how he plans to ensure baseline funding for childcare in 2017-18.

(AQO 660/16-21)

Mr Weir: Funding for childcare has been allocated during Monitoring Rounds from funds set aside by the Executive as part of the Budget process. To date, nearly £9 million has been allocated to childcare initiatives.

I hope to bring forward the full version of the Childcare Strategy to my Executive colleagues in the coming months, having taken account of the many consultation responses received, the Programme for Government and the new opportunities that now exist to align childcare and Early Years initiatives.

The budget for the final Childcare Strategy will be determined in the context of this process, along with the Executive's agreement of the overall 2017-18 Budget.

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Education how he is addressing the lack of post-primary places in north and west Belfast.

(AQO 661/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Department sets the policy and priorities for planning of education provision through the implementation of the "Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools" through the Area Planning Process. It is a matter for the Education Authority working with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and other sectoral support bodies to bring forward proposals that meet the needs of children and young people.

The draft strategic Area Plan entitled "Providing Pathways", published for consultation by the EA on 17 October 2016, identifies strategic priorities for action at Local Government District planning area level. This plan is intended to act as a catalyst for discussion at a regional and local level to help inform any emerging proposals for change. I urge local communities and their representatives to actively engage in the current consultation process being undertaken by the Education Authority.

The key to ensuring that there are enough schools of the right size and in the right place is effective Area Planning.

Its workings will identify proposals for permanent change. Where the proposals for change are significant, such as an adjustment to a school's enrolment, a statutory Development Proposal will be required.

Currently, there are no published Development Proposals for post-primary provision in North or West Belfast. But I would expect that any proposals coming forward will have taken account of provision and places within the wider area context and align with the Area Plan.

For short term demographic pressures my Department can, on request, create additional places at a school by way of a Temporary Variation under very tightly defined circumstances.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister of Education how much of the £25 million funding for the Shared Education Signature Project has been spent to date.

(AQO 662/16-21)

Mr Weir: Total spend to end of September for the Shared Education Signature Project is £3.097m.

Mr Douglas asked the Minister of Education to outline the action his Department is taking in schools to encourage healthier lifestyles through exercise, including cycling.

(AQO 663/16-21)

Mr Weir: I fully recognise the importance of encouraging young people to take part in physical activity, not only for the clear health benefits but also for the impact it can have in terms of improving pupils' concentration levels, raising their self-esteem and confidence, and increasing their motivation to learn.

Physical Education (PE) is a compulsory part of the curriculum for all pupils at every Key Stage from age 4 to 16. There are many opportunities within the curriculum for teachers to discuss and encourage cycling as a healthy and sustainable mode of transport; for example, through The World Around Us at primary level and The Environment and Society at post-primary level. Pupils also have opportunities to explore the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and the importance of being physically active within the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding area of learning at primary level and Learning for Life and Work at post-primary level.

In addition, physical activity is promoted in schools through the Curriculum Sports Programme, which is funded by the Department of Education. This Programme aims to develop the generic physical literacy skills of our youngest pupils through taking part in enjoyable sports activities, and was delivered last year in 486 primary schools, reaching over 37,000 pupils.

Finally, the Cycle Proficiency Scheme, which is delivered by the Road Safety Education Officer Service, is offered to all primary schools throughout Northern Ireland. This falls under the remit of the Department for Infrastructure which is responsible for road safety education.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education how his Department and the Education Authority will ensure all of the £50 million capital investment from the Fresh Start Agreement will be used.

(AQO 664/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Department is working closely with the Education Authority to progress the Fresh Start Agreement (FSA) programme of new capital builds for schools.

It will not be possible to spend £50 p.a. in the early years of the programme given that no initial work had commenced on the vast majority of the projects when they were announced. These projects are in the early stages of planning with procurement currently ongoing to appoint integrated consultant teams.

I have already raised the issue of carry-over of unspent funding in the first 3 years of the scheme with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The Department will continue to engage with the Northern Ireland Office regarding future tranches of projects to ensure that allocation of FSA funding has a maximum impact on shared and integrated education here.

In addition I announced a call for new proposals for Shared Education Campus projects in September.

I have also raised with the Secretary of State the possibility of directing FSA funds to assisting Integrated schools under a future School Enhancement Programme call for capital projects.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education to outline the savings achieved by the Education Authority's review of Special Educational Needs nursery provision.

(AQO 665/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority's (EA) review of nursery provision in special schools was formally launched on 25 October 2016 and is not yet concluded.

The review is not focused on achieving savings; rather, its aims will be to identify a model of high quality early years' education for pre-school children who require specialist provision; to provide consistency across all special school early years' settings; and to provide equal access to targeted support in line with the assessed needs of the child.

Subject to agreement and the outcome of consultation, the EA is working towards commencement of implementation of new arrangements in September 2017, with full implementation by September 2018.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister of Education for an update on his Department's capital development plans for Gaelscoil na gCrann.

(AQO 666/16-21)

Mr Weir: Gaelscoil na gCrann was announced to advance in planning in June 2014, to provide a seven class primary school and single nursery unit, at an estimated cost of just under £3million.

The design process is well advanced, with the RIBA Stage 3 submission expected in the coming weeks. The procurement of the Design & Build contractor has commenced and I currently expect work to commence on site in the first quarter of next financial year.

My officials and the project design team are currently engaging with Council Planners as part of the Pre-application Discussion (PAD) process.

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister of Education to outline the schools in Mid Ulster that have applied for or received training from the Autism Advisory and Intervention Service.

(AQO 667/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has advised that in Mid-Ulster 7 Nursery schools, 66 Primary schools and 12 Post Primary have applied for or received training from the Autism Advisory Service. This information relates to the past three-year period only. The details are listed in the tables below:

Nursery Schools

- | | |
|--|--|
| ■ Cookstown Nursery | ■ Magherafelt Nursery School |
| ■ Holy Family Nursery [unit](Magherafelt) | ■ St Mary's Nursery School [unit] Bellaghy (Magherafelt) |
| ■ Holy Trinity Primary School (Nursery unit) Cookstown | ■ St Oliver Plunkett Nursery School [unit] (Toomebridge) |
| ■ Little Flower Nursery (Coalisland) | |

Primary Schools

- | | |
|--|---|
| ■ Ampertaine Primary School | ■ Moneymore Primary School |
| ■ Anahorish Primary School | ■ Moneynick Primary School |
| ■ Ballylifford Primary School | ■ Moorfields Primary School |
| ■ Ballytrea Primary School | ■ Moyle Primary School |
| ■ Bellaghy Primary School | ■ Newmills Primary School |
| ■ Castledawson Primary School | ■ Oakfield Primary School |
| ■ Churchtown Primary School | ■ Orritor Primary School |
| ■ Coagh Primary School | ■ Phoenix Integrated Primary School (Cookstown) |
| ■ Cookstown Primary School | ■ Primate Dixon Primary School (Coalisland) |
| ■ Creggan Primary School | ■ Queen Elizabeth II Primary School (Pomeroy) |
| ■ Culnady Primary School | ■ Rathcoole Primary School |
| ■ Derrychrin Primary School | ■ Stewartstown Primary School |
| ■ Desertmartin Primary School | ■ St Anne's Primary School |
| ■ Donaghey Primary School | ■ St Brigid's Primary School (Mountjoy) |
| ■ Donaghmore Primary School | ■ St Brigid's Primary School (Tirkane) |
| ■ Duneane Primary School | ■ St Columb's Primary School (Magherafelt) |
| ■ Edendork Primary School | ■ St John's Primary School (Carnlough) |
| ■ Gaelscoil an tSeanchai Primary School | ■ St John's Primary School (Kingsisland) |
| ■ Gaelscoil Na Speirini Primary School | ■ St Joseph's Primary School (Galbally) |
| ■ Gaelscoil Eoghain Primary School (Cookstown) | ■ St Joseph's Primary School (Killeenan) |
| ■ Gaelscoil Ui Neill Primary School (Coalisland) | ■ St Malachy's Primary School (Drummullan) |
| ■ Holy Trinity Primary School (Cookstown) | ■ St Mary's Primary School (Bellaghy) |
| ■ Kilross Primary School (Tobermore) | ■ St Mary's Primary School (Dunamore) |
| ■ Knocknagin Primary School | ■ St Mary's Primary School (Lisbuoy) |
| ■ Landhead Primary School | ■ St Mary's Primary School (Pomeroy) |
| ■ Lissan Primary School | ■ St Mary's Primary School (Stewartstown) |
| ■ Macosquin Primary School | ■ St Oliver Plunkett Primary School |
| ■ Magherafelt Primary School | ■ St Patrick's Primary School (Annaghmore) |
| ■ Maine Integrated Primary School | ■ St Patrick's Primary School (Donaghmore) |
| ■ Mallusk Primary School | ■ St Patrick's Primary School (Loup) |

- St Patrick's Primary School (Moneymore)
- St Patrick's Primary School (Mullinahoe)
- St Peter's Primary School (Moortown)
- St Trea's Primary School
- Walker Memorial Primary School
- Woods Primary School

Post-Primary Schools

- Cookstown High School
- Holy Trinity College (Cookstown)
- Magherafelt High School
- Rainey Endowed Grammar School
- Sperrin Integrated College
- St Joseph's College (Coalisland)
- St Joseph's Convent Grammar School (Donaghmore)
- St Colm's High School
- St Mary's College
- St Mary's Grammar School
- St Patrick's College (Maghera)
- St Pius X College (Magherafelt)

Ms Archibald asked the Minister of Education if his Department will allocate the funding identified in the Fresh Start Agreement for Mill Strand Integrated School in Portrush to pay for mobile classrooms for the school.

(AQO 668/16-21)

Mr Weir: Mill Strand Integrated School in Portrush has been selected to receive a new build under the Fresh Start Agreement (FSA) funding for capital projects.

The provision of replacement mobile classrooms on the existing site would not be eligible for FSA capital funding. Rather it would fall under the Minor Works programme funded through the Department of Education capital budget.

As a result of the school's inclusion in the recent Fresh Start announcement the school has been advised that the department will only be progressing capital works at the existing site that are required to address essential Health and Safety issues.

The Education Authority has completed a detailed condition survey report on requirements for essential health and safety works at the existing site. The report is currently under consideration by Estate Operations Team but the content indicates that maintenance repairs would allow the safe use of the existing mobiles for the next five years.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Education to outline his commitment to capital investment in the controlled sector in Upper Bann.

(AQO 669/16-21)

Mr Weir: There are several ongoing capital programmes to improve accommodation across the schools' estate funded from the Department's capital budget.

A new 23 class school for King's Park Primary School, Lurgan was announced to advance in planning in March 2016 at an estimated expenditure of £8 million.

Under the School Enhancement Programme Millington Primary School, Portadown and Donard Special School, Banbridge are currently on site with an estimated expenditure of £3.1 million. A five class extension for Ceara Special School, Lurgan is due to commence at a cost of £2.2 million.

In addition, there is a substantive programme of work progressing under the Minor Capital Works Programme.

A total of £1.83 million has been committed for schemes due to be completed this financial year and subject to the capital budget availability beyond 2016/17 an estimated £1.02 million has been proposed to carry out minor works at a number of schools in the Upper Bann area.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the impact on small rural schools of the Providing Pathways Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020.

(AQO 670/16-21)

Mr Weir: I should emphasise that children and young people in rural areas are entitled to a high quality educational experience in sustainable schools that meet their needs and equip them with the knowledge and skills to fulfil their potential.

The focus of the Education Authority's (EA) draft Area Plan for 2017 to 2020 is high level and strategic and identifies issues to be addressed at a regional and Local Government District level. Following assessment of responses to the public consultation, the EA will present a report on them and the final Area Plan to me. My key objective will be to ensure that the Area Plan has identified the main issues to be addressed to deliver a network of educationally and financially viable schools that will provide a high quality educational experience for all pupils. I expect the planning authorities to address the issues that are having the greatest impact on the educational experience of pupils. The final Area Plan will form the basis for proposals for actions to determine the shape of education provision at a more local level. This way, local communities will be clear on what needs addressed and how the planning authorities propose to respond.

Should a significant change be proposed for a school, a statutory process ensues including the publication of a Development Proposal which will trigger a further (statutory) public objection period in which views and comments may be expressed to my Department and will be considered before I make a final decision.

Department for the Economy

Mr Swann asked the Minister for the Economy what plans are in place to promote the sport of road racing as a tourist attraction.

(AQW 2828/16-21)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister for the Economy): Tourism NI regularly promotes road racing as a tourist attraction through its various marketing channels.

Road racing events funded by Tourism NI's Tourism Event Funding Scheme feature across its consumer website discovernorthernireland.com and digital channels including blogs and social sharing. This is further supported through consumer PR by press releases and editorial mentions.

Tourism NI also promotes the exploration of Northern Ireland via motorbikes. Recently, Tourism NI facilitated international media to write a review of biking tourism experiences in Northern Ireland.

To help ensure that the tourist accommodation industry supports Northern Ireland as a host for world class road races, Tourism NI offers a 'Bikers welcome' accreditation.

This scheme is designed to help direct guests to suitable establishments that pay particular attention to their needs etc. Tourism NI currently has 112 accommodation providers accredited with its Bikers welcome scheme and these awards are promoted via our consumer website www.discovernorthernireland.com

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on efforts to attract jobs to Strabane industrial estate which has been empty for the last three years and to the old Fruit of the Loom factory at Campsie which has been empty for more than a decade.

(AQW 3093/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Invest NI proactively promotes Strabane Business Park to investors, both indigenous and those located internationally, through its commercial property database which can be accessed through the NI Business Information website. It is also included in property searches undertaken for investors in line with their particular business requirements. Developing a business park, and selling all the available sites can take anything up to 15 years.

Where a company chooses to locate is a matter that it must take on the basis of its own particular circumstances and business requirements.

The Fruit of the Loom factory does not fall within the ownership of Invest NI. The agency does, however, market the facility on behalf of the private sector through its commercial property database.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for the Economy how many (i) females; and (ii) males entered into work upon finishing an apprenticeship in (a) 2014-15; and (b) 2015-16.

(AQW 4648/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department's ApprenticeshipsNI training programme eligibility criteria include a requirement that all apprentices "be in or about to take up permanent remunerative employment with a Northern Ireland-based company".

This requirement ensures that all apprentices enter employment either before or shortly after training commences - rather than upon finishing an apprenticeship.

Programme data, including starts and occupancy (broken down by gender), can be accessed with the link to the most recent ApprenticeshipsNI Statistical Bulletin below:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/AppsNI-Bulletin-Aug-16.pdf>

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for the Economy to outline how his Department is promoting West Tyrone as a place to invest in by United States firms.

(AQW 4684/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Invest NI continues to work closely with the local District Councils to support the development of their Community Plans and to assist them to identify their unique propositions to help attract investment into the West Tyrone area.

Invest NI competes globally to attract inward investment to Northern Ireland as a whole. Where a potential investor indicates particular needs for a project, Invest NI will suggest possible suitable locations to best meet those needs. The decision as to where to locate, however, ultimately remains with the investor.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister for the Economy to detail the value of upfront payments and ongoing grants awarded to non-domestic projects under the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme in (i) 2012/13; (ii) 2013/14; (iii) 2014/15; and (iv) 2015/16.

(AQW 5112/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: There are no upfront payments made under the non domestic Renewable Heat Incentive scheme. The ongoing payments made are shown below:-

Year	£ RHI Payments
2012/13	Nil
2013/14	365,632.05
2014/15	3,996,568.84
2015/16	18,965,348.24

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on the 800 jobs announced for Teleperformance in Enniskillen.

(AQO 445/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The announcement that Teleperformance will create 800 jobs in Enniskillen is excellent news and will make a valuable contribution to the local economy – in this case nearly £12 million annually in salaries.

Before Teleperformance can begin creating these new jobs major communications infrastructure works are required, including the construction of a new communications room which I understand was completed in June 2016.

Teleperformance is also installing new telephone lines to meet their business needs. Teleperformance requires two independent telecommunications exchanges and Enniskillen is only served by one. The company is therefore investing in a new line to the Enniskillen Exchange and then a separate line that would connect to the Omagh exchange via the BT backbone.

The work for the first new line to the Enniskillen Exchange was completed in August 2016, work on a second line to the Omagh Exchange has still to be completed. This level of investment in infrastructure by the company to support its base in Enniskillen is a clear commitment to the project, jobs and the area.

It is important to note that this project was in addition to the deal announced in July 2015 that involved the transfer of Liberty Insurance staff to Teleperformance under the Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment arrangements.

The project with Liberty has gone extremely well and 170 staff are now employed under the Liberty contract.

Invest NI remains in regular contact with the company and receives updates on its progress with the infrastructure investments and recruitment plans.

Mr McKee asked the Minister for the Economy whether his Department has provided financial support to accelerate research and development and collaborative uptake initiatives, to make Northern Ireland a world leader in safe food production, as recommended by the Going for Growth Strategy.

(AQW 5336/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Invest NI has offered financial assistance of up to £4.98million over 5 years to the Agri-Food Quest Competence Centre's which was established in October 2015.

Invest NI has also provided grant of £155,000 to support the establishment of The Food Fortress Collaborative Network to develop new innovative testing processes to safeguard the animal feed supply chain from contamination.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for the Economy for his assessment of the importance of National Occupation Standards for skills development.

(AQW 5481/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: National Occupational Standards provide a valuable mechanism for ensuring that vocational/ professional and technical education, training and qualifications equip the workforce with the skills the economy requires. The Scottish and Welsh Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive are committed to maintaining National Occupational Standards for the good of learners, employers and associated users across the United Kingdom.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on his Department's provision of Irish language courses, including Degree level, at local Higher Education and Further Education institutions.

(AQW 5583/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The table below sets out the number of enrolments at Northern Ireland's Higher Education Institutions in 2014/15 on courses with the subject code 'Irish Gaelic':

Queen's University, Belfast	Ulster University	Total
50	240	2951

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

1 To prevent the identification of individuals, figures have been rounded to the nearest 5, in line with HESA rounding strategy, with 0, 1 and 2 rounded to 0. Due to rounding the sum columns may not match the totals shown.

The table below sets out the number of regulated and non-regulated enrolments at Further Education Colleges for the academic year 2014/15:

FE College	Non-regulated	Regulated	Total
Belfast Metropolitan College	0	13	13
North West Regional College	323	23	346
Southern Regional College	0	30	30
Total	323	66	389

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Mr McKee asked the Minister for the Economy how his Department has increased the number of training places in agri-food. (AQW 5629/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is supporting skills development in the agri-food sector through a number of measures.

The number of students studying agri-food related subjects at Further Education Colleges is increasing. In 2013-14 there were 189 students across agriculture, horticulture and forestry rising to 275 in 2014-15.

There are also currently 398 people undertaking apprenticeship training in food manufacturing funded through my Department's ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

In addition, five Moypark employees are undertaking a Higher Level Apprenticeship in Food Engineering.

The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise is currently developing a Higher Level Apprenticeship in Food and Drink Manufacture which is due to commence in September 2017.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for the Economy for his assessment of the sectors of the economy that will be most affected through non-participation in the EU single market. (AQW 5740/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: At this stage we do not know what the outcome of the negotiations with the European Union will be. It would be unhelpful to speculate at this stage on sectors of the economy which would be most affected through non-participation in the EU single market.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for the Economy whether his Department will make a formal submission to Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's Local Development Planning process to secure appropriate zoning in Omagh town and the wider Omagh district for industrial development, the expansion of local businesses and attracting new inward investment. (AQW 5963/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Invest NI has been engaging with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council as they continue work on their new Local Development Plan. Through this the agency has articulated details of both its current land holding and anticipated future requirements in order to meet the needs of its client base. Ultimately, however, it is for the Council to determine the land zonings in line with their vision for future development across the district.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for the Economy to outline the funding schemes available for small businesses involved in the tourism sector. (AQW 5975/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Tourism NI provides funding for tourism related events, details of which can be accessed via

<http://www.tourismni.com/Grow-Your-Business/funding-schemes/events/>

Tourism NI can also provide capital funding for tourism projects. Currently there are no capital funding schemes open for applications, however businesses can register for updates for any future schemes.

Invest NI offers tourism accommodation businesses capability and capital support. Non-accommodation tourist businesses may qualify for capability support. Details can be accessed at:

http://www.investni.com/invest-in-northern-ireland/sectors-and-opportunities/tourism.html?_ga=1.26051514.646621735.1409313015

Northern Ireland tourism businesses can also avail of funding from organisations such as, the Big Lottery Fund and Heritage Lottery Fund. Details of some of these providers can be accessed at:

<http://www.tourismni.com/Grow-Your-Business/funding-schemes/other-funding-bodies/>

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister for the Economy to outline his plans for a replacement to the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation for onshore wind energy.

(AQO 561/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Since its introduction in 2005, the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation has successfully supported a wide range of renewable electricity technologies, including onshore wind.

Over 900 megawatts has now been connected, meaning that around a quarter of our electricity needs are now met through renewable technologies such as onshore wind, solar PV, anaerobic digestion and hydro. With a further 700 megawatts of committed projects with accepted grid connection offers, the Executive's 40% target by 2020 can be achieved.

The NIRO is now closed to new onshore wind projects and will close to all other technologies on 31 March 2017. It is important to note, however, that projects accredited to the NIRO will continue to be supported by Northern Ireland electricity consumers until 2037.

Looking beyond the NIRO, I will consider the future direction of renewable electricity policy within the context of wider energy strategy development, ensuring energy costs for all consumers in Northern Ireland remain as low as possible.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for the Economy what processes are in place to ensure the speedy release of a Freedom of Information request in circumstances where the absence of clearance from either the he or his Special Adviser has taken the request beyond the statutory deadline for response.

(AQW 6079/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has a process in place to track, follow up and report on the status of all FOI requests to ensure that responses are issued as promptly as possible.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister for the Economy, pursuant to AQW 3981/16-21, for a timeline as to when the project will reach (i) Enniskillen; and (ii) other parts of Fermanagh.

(AQW 6128/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: If an approval decision on the Gas to the West planning application is provided in the first half of 2017, it is anticipated that this would allow the main infrastructure supplying natural gas to Enniskillen and Derrylin in Co. Fermanagh to be completed and available for first gas connections by the end of 2018. The gas distribution network supplying homes and businesses within the areas connected will be built out over subsequent years.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for the Economy to outline his engagement with the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions since May 2016.

(AQW 6172/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has had ongoing engagement on a number of fronts with the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions since May 2016. The Northern Ireland Committee receives funding from the Department in relation to three projects: the Union Learning Fund; a Migrant Workers Project; and an Employment Training Programme. Each of these projects requires regular engagement between Northern Ireland Committee representatives and the Department.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for the Economy, pursuant to AQW 2527/16-21, whether the higher tariff in GB was capped at 1300 hours, in contrast to Northern Ireland's operation under a single tariff.

(AQW 6182/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The biomass tariff in the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme in Great Britain is tiered with a higher rate applicable to the first 1,314 annual hours and reduced level thereafter.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for the Economy why it was not possible to reduce the tariff offered on the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme in the same manner as the scheme's closure in February 2016.

(AQW 6184/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The tariff changes made to the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme in November 2015 were in response to an increase in uptake during the year. The necessary legislative changes were made through the Assembly's normal draft affirmative procedures, which was the appropriate response. However, an unprecedented spike in applications prior to the November 2015 changes created significant budgetary pressures. This necessitated progressing legislation by the quickest possible means to close both schemes in February 2016. This included securing approval through the Executive's urgent procedures.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for the Economy how the recommendations of the Energy and Manufacturing Advisory Group are being implemented.

(AQW 6194/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I am currently considering how best to progress a Northern Ireland energy strategy that will seek to address both our short to medium term needs and also position us to meet the longer-term challenges out to 2030 and beyond.

In considering the way forward, I am giving careful consideration to the recommendations made by the Energy and Manufacturing Group report.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for the Economy for a copy of their departmental bid for additional allocations as stated in page 3 of the 2016-17 October Monitoring Round Statement made to the NI Assembly by the Minister of Finance on 25 October 2016.

(AQW 6199/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The October Monitoring outcome was agreed following a series of discussions between departmental Ministers. This reflected a change of approach due to the new dynamic in the Executive with the presence of an official opposition. As such, there is not an official document that sets out departments' bids as was the case in previous mandates.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on efforts to address the gender imbalance in people studying STEM subjects.

(AQW 6327/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The STEM Strategy, 'Success through STEM' was published in 2011 and detailed 20 recommendations to be taken forward by business and government to address the declining interest in, and uptake of, STEM subjects amongst our young people.

Addressing gender bias in STEM was one of the five recommendations to be taken forward by business. A STEM Business Sub Group was established to drive progress on the business-focused recommendations and a number of initiatives have since been implemented in the area of improving gender diversity.

'Addressing Gender Balance – Reaping the Gender Dividend in STEM' was published by the STEM Business Sub Group in 2013. It set out the business case for increasing gender equality in STEM, examined best practice in the area and set in motion the establishment of the STEM CEO Charter.

This Charter was launched, in conjunction with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in 2014 and provides STEM employers with the opportunity to make a clear commitment to ensuring that men and women have equality of opportunity in terms of accessing jobs in their companies. My officials are continuing to work with the Equality Commission to examine how work can continue on this important issue.

In addition, the STEM Business Sub Group has produced a series of STEM supplements which published in the local press to coincide with key junctures at which students make decisions regarding their future education and careers. These supplements included the profiles of several females who have successfully followed a STEM careers pathway. The most recent supplement produced in September this year was issued by Catalyst Inc and the Northern Ireland Science and Industry Panel, MATRIX.

My Department's Careers Service continues to provide advice and guidance to young people at key decision points in their careers including when making subject choices. Careers Advisers ensure all students are aware of the opportunities in STEM-related sectors and the skills and qualifications required to access those opportunities.

The 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. In particular the strategy aims to increase the number of enrolments in economically relevant, including narrow STEM related, subjects.

However, it is clear that gender diversity remains a considerable challenge in STEM. A significantly higher proportion of males study economically relevant narrow STEM subjects at our local universities than females. During academic year 2014/15, 36.8% of males were studying narrow STEM subjects compared with 15.6% of females.

Increasing the proportion of females studying economically relevant STEM subjects will remain a key consideration as we continue to deliver and develop skills policy in line with our economic and societal ambitions.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for the Economy whether the Renewable Heat Incentive contract has a provision to disallow beneficiaries of the scheme who are deemed not to be using the scheme as intended.

(AQW 6453/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Under the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012, the Department has enforcement powers to permanently withhold a participant's periodic payments and/or revoke their accreditation where there has been a material or repeated failure to comply with an ongoing obligation.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for the Economy whether any MLAs or political party staff members are in receipt of payments under the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme.

(AQW 6456/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is unable to make public the details of individuals, as to do so would breach the first principle of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Department of Finance

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Finance to detail how much has been spent on hospitality by his Department since May 2016; and to provide a breakdown.

(AQW 3702/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir (The Minister of Finance): Within the Department of Finance the term "hospitality" is interpreted as meaning the provision of food and/or drink while entertaining clients, delegates or external guests during meetings, working lunches and training courses.

The Department of Finance has spent £8k on hospitality since May 2016. A breakdown of this expenditure by month is provided in the table below.

Month	£'000
May	1
June	5
July	2
August	0
Total	8

To ensure a high level of scrutiny all hospitality expenditure is required to be approved at Grade 7 or above. In authorising this type of expenditure the approver is confirming it is in line with the guidelines which require appropriate justification (that is, in the direct interest of the Department), proportionate to the needs of the occasion and value for money.

The Department continues to focus on reducing areas of discretionary expenditure including hospitality. The comparative expenditure in 2015/16 was £9k. The 2016/17 figure is a 5% reduction (based on non-rounded figures).

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance to list the publicly owned land and buildings that have been notified to Land and Property Services as being surplus to requirement, in the last five years; and what is the current status of each asset.

(AQW 5084/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: There have been 1,021 publicly owned land and buildings notified to Land & Property Services as being surplus to requirements within the last five years. A detailed list showing the status of each is included within the attached tables.

Status - Sold on the Open Market or to Former/Adjoining Owners

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
BHSCT	29A Annadale Avenue	Belfast	12/10/2011
Roads Service	180 Ballyeaston Road	Ballyclare	17/10/2011
Roads Service	Land Adj 115 Carryduff Road	Lisburn	17/10/2011
Roads Service	Land at Plot 2 A26 Newbridge Rd	Coleraine	21/10/2011
WELB	2 Station Road, Kesh	Fermanagh	07/10/2011
Roads Service	Land at 1 Adam Clarke Gardens	Coleraine	25/10/2011
Roads Service	Carpark at Kent Street	Belfast	01/11/2011
Roads Service	Land North Of 60 Lisnevenagh Rd	Ballymena	01/11/2011
Roads Service	Land at Antrim Road	Ballymena	02/11/2011
Roads Service	Land at A27 Tandragee Road	Newry	02/11/2011
DSD	Land at Plot B Kernan C10	Portadown	03/11/2011
Roads Service	Land at 27 & 29 Browning Drive	Londonderry	04/11/2011

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
Roads Service	Land at 7 Loughanmore Rd	Antrim	04/11/2011
BELB	Grove Primary School Site	Belfast	16/11/2011
BELB	Shankill Youth Club	Belfast	16/11/2011
Roads Service	Land at Drumragh Ave Car Pk	Omagh	21/11/2011
DARD	Land at Tullyhogue	Cookstown	28/11/2011
Roads Service	Land at Quoile Road	Downpatrick	01/12/2011
Roads Service	Land at Strabane Old Road	Londonderry	08/12/2011
Roads Service	Land at 378A Saintfield Road	Belfast	05/01/2012
Roads Service	Land at Ballyblaugh Road	Newry	18/01/2012
NI Water	Moygashel Lane	Dungannon	18/01/2012
NI Water	Molesworth Road	Cookstown	18/01/2012
NI Water	Cloonagh Road	Downpatrick	18/01/2012
NI Water	Newmills Road Lower	Coleraine	18/01/2012
NI Water	172 North Road	Carrickfergus	18/01/2012
NI Water	Ballybrakes Road	Ballymoney	18/01/2012
NI Water	Blackstick Road	Enniskillen	18/01/2012
NI Water	Belfast Road, Derryvolgie House	Lisburn	18/01/2012
SEELB	Ballycloughan Ps, 38 B'gowan Rd	Saintfield	23/01/2012
DSD	Land South Of Belmont Road A15	Antrim	27/01/2012
Roads Service	Land at Tobar Park, Cullybackey	Ballymena	27/01/2012
Roads Service	Land at Plot 26A Rossbay	Londonderry	30/01/2012
Roads Service	Land at Plot 26B Rossbay	Londonderry	30/01/2012
Roads Service	Land at 177 Old Kilmore Road	Lurgan	01/02/2012
NIHE	Land at 74 Deerpark Road	Belfast	15/02/2012
NILA	Moy Library, 1 The Square, Moy	Dungannon	15/02/2012
Roads Service	Land at 65 & 67 Hillsborough Road	Dromore	17/02/2012
Roads Service	Land at Killyliss Road	Dungannon	17/02/2012
BHSCT	Victoria Day Centre 25A Tamar St	Belfast	20/02/2012
BHSCT	449 Antrim Road	Belfast	20/02/2012
BHSCT	1-4 Minnowburn Terrace	Belfast	20/02/2012
SEHSCT	1 Glenwood Green, Poleglass	Dunmurry	27/02/2012
SEHSCT	Greyabbey Clinic 17 Main Street	Greyabbey	27/02/2012
SEHSCT	D'patrick Hc 12-14 Pound Lane	Downpatrick	09/03/2012
Roads Service	Land at Prince Andrew Way	Carrickfergus	26/03/2012
Roads Service	Land at Plot 1 Belt Road	Londonderry	26/03/2012
NRC	Former Campus Fountain Street	Antrim	23/03/2012
PSNI	7 Convent Hill	Bessbrook	02/04/2012
Roads Service	Land at Shaftesbury, Belfast Rd	Bangor	03/04/2012
Roads Service	Land at Moorfields Road	Ballymena	04/04/2012
NIHE	Land at 14 Broomhill	Antrim	06/04/2012
NIHE	Land at 26 Moss Drive, Glenburn	Antrim	06/04/2012

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
Roads Service	1 Kenbella Parade	Belfast	19/04/2012
Roads Service	Land at Sconce Road, Articlave	Coleraine	25/04/2012
Roads Service	Land at Ashdown/ Portadown Rd	Lurgan	08/05/2012
DFP	21 Hospital Road	Omagh	09/05/2012
NIHE	Land at 3 Collon Terrace	Londonderry	09/05/2012
Roads Service	Land at Glen Road	Maghera	15/05/2012
PSNI	96-98 Main Street Bushmills	Bushmills	29/05/2012
PSNI	36 Downpatrick Road	Killyleagh	29/05/2012
PSNI	6 Saintfield Road	Crossgar	29/05/2012
PSNI	5 Millisle Road	Donaghadee	29/05/2012
PSNI	49 Church Street	Irvinestown	29/05/2012
PSNI	16A Killinchy Street	Comber	29/05/2012
PSNI	31-33 Main Street	Cloughmills	29/05/2012
Roads Service	Land at 45 Victoria Manor	Ballyclare	30/05/2012
Roads Service	Land at Castle Park	Antrim	01/06/2012
Roads Service	Land at 14 Orchard Street	Londonderry	07/06/2012
Roads Service	Land at 109 Dublin Road	Omagh	07/06/2012
PSNI	13 The Cloney Glenarm	Larne	14/06/2012
PSNI	28 New Street Randalstown	Antrim	14/06/2012
PSNI	1 Liskey Brae Fintona	Omagh	14/06/2012
SELB	T'macarette Ps 23 Uppquilly Rd	L'brickland	19/06/2012
BHSCT	16 Cupar Street	Belfast	26/06/2012
Roads Service	Land at 100 Beech Drive	Ballymena	29/06/2012
NIHE	Land at Churchill Gdns, Dromara	Lisburn	04/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Westland Mews	Portadown	04/07/2012
DIO (Defence)	3 Magheralave Park East	Lisburn	06/07/2012
DIO (Defence)	4 Magheralave Park East	Lisburn	06/07/2012
DIO (Defence)	10 Magheralave Park East	Lisburn	06/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Corcrair Avenue (Site 3)	Portadown	06/07/2012
DHSSPS	Branial Clinic & Library 16 Glen Rd	Belfast	11/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Clanabogan Road	Omagh	18/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Site C Patrician Villas	Strabane	19/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Glebe, Macosquin	Coleraine	23/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Old Westland Road	Belfast	25/07/2012
PBNI	32-38 Fountain Street	Antrim	07/08/2012
Roads Service	Land at Glenshane Road	Castledawson	13/08/2012
Roads Service	Land at Glenshane Road	Londonderry	23/08/2012
Roads Service	Land at 83 The Park, Millars Forge	Dundonald	18/09/2012
Roads Service	Land at Kennel Lane Car Park	Newtownards	26/09/2012
Roads Service	Land at 100 Clooney Road	Limavady	26/06/2012
Roads Service	Land at Ballee Road East	Ballymena	27/09/2012

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
Roads Service	Land at 180 Creggan Road	Londonderry	09/10/2012
Roads Service	Land at 209 Knock Road	Belfast	22/10/2012
Roads Service	Land at 76 Sea Road	Castlerock	25/10/2012
PSNI	50 Ballymiscaw Road	Hollywood	26/10/2012
Roads Service	Land at 27 Caw Park	Londonderry	29/10/2012
Roads Service	Land at 117 Ballyrobin Road	Antrim	18/12/2012
Roads Service	Land at 219 Clooney Rd, Greysteel	Londonderry	20/12/2012
Roads Service	Land at 31-33 Belfast Road	Larne	04/01/2013
SEELB	Newport Ps 117 Culcavey Road	Hillsborough	08/01/2013
Roads Service	Land at The Square	Stewartstown	08/01/2013
PSNI	Former Police Station Main St	Dungiven	10/01/2013
Roads Service	Land at Annesborough Road	Lurgan	16/01/2013
DSD	Land To Rr Of 43 Carbet Road C61	Portadown	25/01/2013
Roads Service	Land at Baranailt Road	Limavady	04/02/2013
Roads Service	Land Adj To 3 Carnearney Road	Ahoghill	05/02/2013
SEELB	Site at Drumbeg Road	Lisburn	21/02/2013
PSNI	79 Charlotte Street	Ballymoney	25/02/2013
NIEA	Land at Blacks Road	Dunmurry	08/03/2013
DFP	2B Portaferry Road	Newtownards	13/03/2013
PSNI	Frm Psni Station, Banbrdige Rd	Dromore	19/03/2013
Roads Service	Land at Melmount Road	Strabane	03/04/2013
Roads Service	Land at 3 Tirkeeran Road Garvagh	Coleraine	03/04/2013
Roads Service	Land at 58 Upper Rd Greenisland	Carrickfergus	03/04/2013
Roads Service	Land at B10 Rathfriland Road	Banbridge	04/04/2013
Roads Service	Land Adj To Drumgask Road	Craigavon	04/04/2013
Roads Service	Land at 2 Carnalea Road	Fintona	04/04/2013
Roads Service	Land at Broad End/Ringsend Road	Limavady	05/04/2013
SEHSCT	70 Hillsborough Road	Lisburn	08/04/2013
Roads Service	Land at Shore Rd / N'wood Pde	Belfast	10/04/2013
PSNI	Former Psni Station Davis Street	Keady	12/04/2013
NIHE	Land at Annadale Crescent	Belfast	18/04/2013
NILA	Former Gilford Library 37 Mill St	Gilford	22/04/2013
PSNI	Fmr Psni Station 21 Limavady Rd	Garvagh	24/04/2013
PSNI	Former Psni Station Main Street	Eglinton	24/04/2013
PSNI	Riddels Building 87-91 Ann Street	Belfast	02/05/2013
Roads Service	Land at 16 Riverview Park	Ballymoney	13/05/2013
DSD	Land at Plt 2 Drumnagoon Road C6	Portadown	14/05/2013
PSNI	Former Psni Station 20 Lisburn Rd	Hillsborough	15/05/2013
DSD	Land at Plot A Kernan C9	Portadown	17/05/2013
BELB	Land K'cubbin Sailing Cb, Shore Rd	Kircubbin	22/05/2013
Roads Service	Land at Ashbourne Manor	Ballymena	29/05/2013

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
Roads Service	Land at Castlegore Road	Castledearg	06/06/2013
Roads Service	Land at 46 Cregagh Park	Belfast	11/06/2013
Roads Service	Land at 105 Annareagh Road	Richhill	18/06/2013
DHSSPS	63 Clarendon Street	Derry	19/06/2013
NHSCT	Lynwood Hostel 1-11 Ballyfore Pk	Newtownabbey	26/06/2013
Roads Service	Land Adj To 41 Hydepark Road	Newtownabbey	28/06/2013
NIFRS	Fire Station Mountjoy Road	Omagh	28/06/2013
Roads Service	Land at Kevlin Road	Omagh	18/07/2013
Roads Service	Land at Green Road 2Nd Trawl	Bangor	22/07/2013
Roads Service	Land at 22 Belt Road	Londonderry	24/07/2013
Roads Service	Land at Plot 1 & 2 Ashwood	Lurgan	05/08/2013
Roads Service	1 Station Road	Greenisland	15/08/2013
Roads Service	Land at 45 Annaghilla Road	Augher	15/08/2013
Roads Service	Land at 2 Lisburn Road	Ballynahinch	20/08/2013
Roads Service	Pt 17 & 19 Halftown Rd, Annaghilla	Ballygawley	23/08/2013
Roads Service	Land at 25 Lurgan Road	Aghagallon	28/08/2013
Roads Service	23 Cherry Valley	Enniskillen	28/08/2013
Roads Service	25 Cherry Valley	Enniskillen	28/08/2013
DFP	Ut 4 Bridgeview, Glenville Ind Est	Newtownabbey	05/09/2013
Roads Service	Land at 1 Tudor Brook	Magherafelt	13/09/2013
Roads Service	Land at 3 Mullybrannon Road	Dungannon	23/09/2013
PSNI	Fmr Psni Station 6-8 Ballymena Rd	Portglenone	26/09/2013
Roads Service	Land at Queensway/Moss Road	Lisburn	02/10/2013
DHSSPS	44A Tempo Road	Fermanagh	14/10/2013
NI Water	K'bracken Reservoir S'field Rd	Belfast	17/10/2013
Roads Service	Land at 2 Millbrook Court	Lurgan	22/10/2013
Roads Service	Land at Caw Park	Londonderry	04/11/2013
SERC	Land Adj 1 Castlewellan Road	Newcastle	20/11/2013
Loughs Acy	Land at Culmore Point	Londonderry	10/12/2013
BHSCT	14 Lower Crescent	Belfast	13/12/2013
Roads Service	2 Kilkeel Road	Newry	17/12/2013
Roads Service	Land at Newport Primary School	Hillsborough	16/12/2013
Roads Service	Land at 44 Vicarage Road	Portadown	02/01/2014
Roads Service	Land at Hurtletoot Road	Antrim	10/01/2014
Roads Service	Land at Magowans Filling Station	Dungannon	30/01/2014
Invest Ni	Land at Hightown Industrial Est	Newtownabbey	05/02/2014
Roads Service	Land at 3 Rathmore Road	Limavady	06/02/2014
Roads Service	Land at 115 Old English Road	Dungannon	06/02/2014
NIHE	Land at Montague Villas Dromore	Omagh	07/02/2014
NIHE	Land at Burn Road, Ballysally	Coleraine	19/02/2014
Roads Service	Land at 1 Ashbourne Court	Ballymena	05/03/2014

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
Roads Service	Land at Plots 1&2 Weavers Mdw	Banbridge	18/03/2014
Roads Service	Land at Crebarkey Rd	Dungiven	20/03/2014
NIHE	Land at 2 Ards Drive	Newtownabbey	01/04/2014
NIHE	Land at L'patrick Gdns Artigarvan	Strabane	01/04/2014
Roads Service	Land at Plots 1 & 2 Shore Road	Belfast	02/04/2014
Roads Service	Land at 61 Irvinestown Road	Fermanagh	04/04/2014
NIHE	Land at Corporation Street	Enniskillen	14/04/2014
NIHE	Land at Carnany Drive	Ballymoney	14/04/2014
Roads Service	Land at Old Eglisk Road	Dungannon	15/04/2014
Roads Service	Land at Plot 1 B10 Rathfriland Rd	Banbridge	06/05/2014
Roads Service	Land at 5 Rathmore Road	Limavady	12/05/2014
Roads Service	Land at Cloyfin Road	Coleraine	13/05/2014
NILA	Ligoniel Library, Ligoniel Road	Belfast	05/06/2014
NILA	Oldpark Library, Oldpark Road	Belfast	05/06/2014
Roads Service	Land at 36 Banbridge Road	L'brickalnd	06/06/2014
Roads Service	Land at 292-296 Shore Road	Newtownabbey	17/06/2014
BHSCT	37 Glantane Drive	Belfast	30/06/2014
NIHE	Ld at Loughview Cottages Site 1	Omagh	16/07/2014
Roads Service	Land at Quoile Crescent	Downpatrick	01/08/2014
Roads Service	Land at Old Saintfield Road	Belfast	12/08/2014
NIHE	Land at 78 Lettershandoney Ave	Londonderry	10/09/2014
Roads Service	Land at Wilmar Road/Belsize Road	Lisburn	29/09/2014
NIW	Land at Duncrue Street	Belfast	30/09/2014
Roads Service	Land at Longfield Road	Newry	07/10/2014
Roads Service	Land at 24 Deanfield	Londonderry	10/10/2014
NIHE	Land at Thistlewood Gardens	Antrim	23/10/2014
NIHE	Land at Breezemount Rise	Conlig	24/10/2014
NIHE	Land at St Donard's Walk	Dundrum	24/10/2014
NIHE	Land at 5 Creevy Avenue	Belfast	06/11/2014
Roads Service	Land at Reaskmore Road	Dungannon	17/11/2014
NIHE	Land at Moyola Drive	Londonderry	22/12/2014
DSD	Land at Plot C Kernan C10	Portadown	20/01/2015
Roads Service	Land at Station Green, Hollyhill	Enniskillen	13/02/2015
Roads Service	Land at Raceview Road, B'shane	Ballymena	16/02/2015
Roads Service	Land at Plot 1 Ardglass Road	Downpatrick	19/02/2015
Roads Service	Land Adj 17 Castlehill Place	Ballymoney	11/03/2015
Roads Service	Land at 274A Comber Road	Dundonald	12/03/2015
DSD	Land at Moyraverty	Craigavon	23/03/2015
Roads Service	Land at 1, Rushcroft Park	Londonderry	23/03/2015
Transport Ni	Ld at 1 Temple Road Strathfoyle	Londonderry	24/03/2015
Roads Service	Ld at Trewmount Close Killyman	Dungannon	25/03/2015

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NIHE	Land at 206 Clonmeen	Craigavon	12/05/2015
NIHE	Land at Articlave	Coleraine	12/05/2015
Transport NI	28 Shore Road	Greenisland	13/05/2015
Transport NI	30 Shore Road	Greenisland	13/05/2015
NIHE	Land at 6 Curragh Walk	Londonderry	13/05/2015
Transport NI	33 Shore Road	Greenisland	13/05/2015
Transport NI	40 Shore Road	Greenisland	14/05/2015
Transport NI	94 Shore Road	Greenisland	14/05/2015
Transport NI	96 Shore Road	Greenisland	14/05/2015
NIHE	Land at Moyarget Road	Ballycastle	21/05/2015
Transport NI	Ld at Summerhill, Rathfriland Rd	Banbridge	21/05/2015
NIHE	Land at 81 Bay Road	Larne	26/05/2015
NIHE	Land at 5 Woodland Place	Newtownabbey	26/05/2015
DFP	Rosepark House, 717 Up N'ards Rd	Belfast	03/06/2015
Transport NI	44 Shore Road	Greenisland	18/06/2015
NIHE	Land at Fernisky Road	Antrim	19/06/2015
NIHE	Land at Shantallow Avenue	Londonderry	19/06/2015
Transport NI	36 Shore Road	Greenisland	07/07/2015
NIHE	Land at 13 Nelson Park	Fivemiletown	15/07/2015
Transport NI	Site at 46 Shore Road	Greenisland	21/07/2015
NIHE	Land at 87 Moat Street	Donaghadee	27/07/2015
Transport NI	42 Shore Road	Greenisland	28/07/2015
Transport NI	Land at 4 Loughermore Road	Limavady	12/08/2015
NIHE	Land at 11 Drumawillan Park	Ballycastle	13/08/2015
NIHE	LAND AT 21 KEMP PARK	BALLYCASTLE	13/08/2015
NIHE	LAND AT NORTH ROAD	CARRICKFERGUS	01/09/2015
Transport NI	98 Shore Road	Greenisland	08/09/2015
NIHE	Land at Dorset Court	Antrim	08/09/2015
Transport NI	34 Shore Road	Greenisland	17/09/2015
NIHE	Land at Riverside Crescent	Bessbrook	22/09/2015
NIHE	Land at Elizabeth Avenue	Carrickfergus	24/09/2015
Transport NI	38-44 Shore Road	Greenisland	26/10/2015
NIHE	Ld at Deerfin Way/Cushendall Rd	Ballymena	21/12/2015
NIHE	Land at Ballyduff Road	Newtownabbey	21/12/2015
Transport NI	Land at 39 Hillsborough Road	Carryduff	15/01/2016
Transport NI	Land at Meadow Lane	Portadown	26/01/2016
NIHE	Land at 1 Orkney Street	Antrim	05/02/2016

Status - Sold - Public Sector I.E. Other Dept's or Public Bodies

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NI Water	Scroggy Road	Limavady	18/01/2012

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NI Water	Ardmore Road	Armagh	18/01/2012
DIO (Defence)	1-12 Dog Kennel Crescent	Lisburn	06/03/2012
DIO (Defence)	1-8 Dog Kennel Close	Lisburn	06/03/2012
SELB	Clogher Ps 4 Augher Road	Clogher	09/03/2012
SEHSCT	Loch Cuan House, 4 Dakota Ave	N'ards	09/03/2012
DHSSPS	Land Adj To 18 Market Street	Downpatrick	26/03/2012
SERC	46C Castle Street	Lisburn	30/04/2012
PSNI	26 Crossgar Road	Saintfield	29/05/2012
PSNI	2 North Queen Street	Belfast	29/05/2012
BHSCT	Transfusion Centre 89 Durham St	Belfast	21/06/2012
DIO (Defense)	Mountview Drive	Lisburn	09/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Wyncroft	Ballymena	19/07/2012
Roads Service	Land at York Street Station	Belfast	08/08/2012
Invest NI	Land at Killough Road	Downpatrick	24/09/2012
Roads Service	Land Adj 294 Old Belfast Road	Bangor	01/10/2012
BELB	Youth Club, 61-63 Donegall Pass	Belfast	11/10/2012
SEELB	Former Tor Bank Special School	Dundonald	06/11/2012
Roads Service	Land at Newry Street Car Park	Warrenpoint	14/11/2012
DSD	Ld at Oldstone Rd/Six Mile Water	Antrim	27/11/2012
DSD	Ld at Oldstone Rd/Six Mile Water	Antrim	27/11/2012
NITHCO	Former Bus Depot Killinchy St	Comber	29/11/2012
BHSCT	B'voir Clinic/Library Drumart Sq	Belfast	27/12/2012
WELB	Duke of W'minster Hs Ederney Rd	Fermanagh	11/02/2013
SEELB	Dunmurry Hs, River Road	Belfast	15/02/2013
Roads Service	Kenlis Street Carpark	Banbridge	12/03/2013
NEELB	Glenarm Ps, 2 Straidkilly Road	Glenarm	22/03/2013
NIHE	Land at Main Street, Rosslea	Fermanagh	18/04/2013
Roads Service	Depot at Dergbrough Road	Plumbridge	12/06/2013
SEHSCT	Ravara House Eph, 13 Ravara Gdns	Bangor	08/07/2013
NHSCT	Land at Abbots Road	Whiteabbey	12/08/2013
NEELB	Maghera Hs Tobermore Road	Maghera	16/09/2013
PSNI	Former Psni Station 244 Antrim Rd	Glengormley	26/09/2013
PSNI	Former Psni Station 5 Main Street	Broughshane	26/09/2013
NHSCT	Elderly Persons Home Shore Rd	Greenisland	04/10/2013
NIHE	Land at Millar Park	Lawrencet'n	28/10/2013
SEELB	Lisnasharragh Hs, Stirling Ave	Belfast	07/11/2013
SEELB	3 Manor Drive	Lisburn	07/11/2013
Roads Service	Land at 2 Shore Road	Larne	28/11/2013
BHSCT	Grovetree Hse 106 Cullingtree Rd	Belfast	10/12/2013
Roads Service	Land at Gt Patrick St/Dunbar Link	Belfast	12/12/2013
DSD	Land at Lisnisky Lane C62	Portadown	15/01/2014

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NIHE	Land Adj Greenhaw Ps	Londonderry	06/03/2014
OFMDFM	St Patrick's Bks Demesne Ave	Ballymena	19/03/2014
BHSCT	Land at Knockbracken Hc Pk	Belfast	10/04/2014
Roads Service	Land at Frederick Street Car Pk	Belfast	11/04/2014
NIHE	Land at Riverside, Leitrim Road	Banbridge	02/05/2014
NIHE	Land at Iveagh Drive	Banbridge	18/06/2014
BELB	Roslyn Street Youth Club	Belfast	09/07/2014
Roads Service	Abbey Street Car Park	Bangor	30/07/2014
Roads Service	Dufferin Avenue Car Park	Bangor	30/07/2014
NIHE	Land at Crilly Park, Killeter	Tyrone	09/10/2014
OFMDFM	Land at Halftown Road	Lisburn	27/10/2014
Roads Service	Pt 27B Browning Drive, Ebrington	Londonderry	28/11/2014
NIEA	Land at Old Golf Course Road	Dunmurry	08/12/2014
BHSCT	Millars Ln Day Ctre Enler Pk Est	Belfast	22/12/2014
NIHE	Land at Irish Street	Londonderry	28/01/2015
NIHE	Land at Rose Court	Londonderry	16/02/2015
NIHE	Land at Seacourt Road	Larne	18/03/2015
NIHE	Land at John Street	N'ards	09/03/2015
NILA	Former Lisnaskea Library	Enniskillen	09/04/2015
Transport NI	80 Shore Road	Greenisland	18/05/2015
NIHE	Land at Bankmore Street	Belfast	19/05/2015
Transport NI	82 Shore Road	Greenisland	18/06/2015
NIHE	Land at Elder Crescent	Londonderry	19/06/2015
Transport NI	Land at Coastguard Road	P'balintrae	23/06/2015
Transport NI	76 Shore Road	Greenisland	22/07/2015
Transport NI	78 Shore Road (76-82)	Greenisland	22/07/2015

Status - Public Sector Transfer Sales in Progress

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
COURTSNI	Bangor Courthouse 6 Quay St	Bangor	16/01/2013
N'abbey BC	Ld at Whitehouse Pk / Gideons Gn	Newtownabbey	12/03/2013
OFMDFM	Woodside Ind Estate (Bunker)	Ballymena	13/08/2013
Roads Service	Land Adj 234 Glenshane Road	Londonderry	13/11/2013
Roads Service	Land at 24 & 26 Browning Drive	Londonderry	16/01/2014
Roads Service	Land at B'clare Road/ Manse Rd	Newtownabbey	24/01/2014
BELB	Fmr B'golán Ps 41 Serpentine Rd	Newtownabbey	06/02/2014
Roads Service	Land at Paget Square	Enniskillen	18/03/2014
Roads Service	Plots X 2 Seymour St/Queens Rd	Lisburn	01/05/2014
NI Water	Portavoe, Lower Balloo Road	Bangor	29/04/2014
NI Water	B'sallagh Ir, Ballysallagh Rd	Bangor	29/04/2014
NI Water	Leathemstown Ir, L'town Rd	Lisburn	29/04/2014

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NI Water	Creightons Green Ir, Creightons Green Rd	Holywood	29/04/2014
Roads Service	Land at 42 Main Street, Moira	Lisburn	12/05/2014
NIHE	Land Knockenagh Ave, Rathfern	Newtownabbey	21/07/2014
DSD	Former Railway Track Lands	Coalisland	22/07/2014
NIFRS	Land at Slieve Croob	Castlewellan	30/09/2014
NIHE	Land at Albertbridge Road	Belfast	03/12/2014
NEELB	B'money Music Ctre Charles St	Ballymoney	22/12/2014
Rivers Agy	Land at Woodside Avenue	Omagh	23/03/2015
NIHE	Land at Castle Hill	Gilford	08/04/2015
INVEST NI	Land at Culmore Landfill Site	Londonderry	20/04/2015
NIHE	Land at Finvoy Street	Belfast	01/05/2015
NI Water	Former Niw Office, Steeple Road	Antrim	05/05/2015
NIHE	Land at Butler Crescent	Londonderry	13/05/2015
Transport NI	14-16 Parkgate Avenue	Belfast	15/05/2015
Transport NI	Land at Rushmere Centre	Craigavon	15/05/2015
Transport NI	Land at Severn Street	Belfast	22/05/2015
NIHE	Land at Scally Park	Ballymoney	22/05/2015
NIHE	Land at Nailors Row	Londonderry	22/05/2015
BHSCT	Land at Muckamore Abbey Hosp	Antrim	29/05/2015
Transport NI	18-30 Grampian Avenue	Belfast	02/06/2015
Transport NI	Land at Connswater Street	Belfast	05/06/2015
NIHE	Land at Falls Road/Albert St	Belfast	01/07/2015
NIEA	Land at Stewartstown Road	Belfast	15/07/2015
NI Water	Niw Depot at Steeple Road	Antrim	07/09/2015
Belfast Met	Parkmore Building, Ormeau Road	Belfast	25/09/2015
NIHE	Land at Rushmore Drive	Lisburn	28/09/2015
Transport NI	Footpath at Galgorm Castle	Ballymena	01/10/2015
Transport NI	Land at Divis Street/West Link	Belfast	01/10/2015
NIHE	Land at Rathvarna Drive	Lisburn	05/10/2015
Transport NI	10-12A Parkgate Avenue	Belfast	21/10/2015
NIHE	Killymerron Park Play Area	Dungannon	09/11/2015
NIHE	Land/Footpath at Riverside Cres	Bessbrook	24/11/2015
NIHE	Land at Millar's Lane Day Centre	Castlereagh	08/12/2015
NIHE	Land St Killians Pk Whitecross	Armagh	09/12/2015
NIHE	Land at Rathmullan Drive	Newtownabbey	23/12/2015
OFMDFM	Former St Lucia Barracks	Omagh	11/01/2016
WHST	Tyrone Hospital, 14 Hospital Rd	Omagh	13/01/2016
NIHE	Land at Donaghane Road	Omagh	28/01/2016
Transport NI	Land Crebilly Road/Larne Link Rd	Ballymena	01/02/2016
SELB	Former Lisnaskea High School	Enniskillen	04/02/2016
Transport NI	Land Cherry Road/Creighton Rd	Belfast	04/02/2016

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NIHE	Land Cherry Road/Creighton Rd	Belfast	17/02/2016
SEELB	Fme Derriaghy Ps, 14 Milltown Pk	Lisburn	22/02/2016
SHSCT	17-21 Scarva Street	Banbridge	11/03/2016
Belfast Met	Tower St Campus, 4 Tower St	Belfast	16/03/2016
Transport NI	Land at Troopers Lane Road	Carrickfergus	07/04/2016
BELB	Mount Gilbert College	Belfast	11/04/2016
NIHE	Land at Slievegallion Drive	Belfast	12/04/2016
NIHE	Land at Glenmore Drive	Lisburn	19/04/2016
Transport NI	Land at Frederick Street	Newtownards	22/04/2016
PSNI	Fmr Psni St18-36 Donegall Pass	Belfast	25/04/2016
NIHE	Land Old Warren Est, Lagan Bank	Lisburn	05/05/2016
NIHE	Land Dollingstown War Mem	Dollingstown	14/06/2016
WHSCT	Omagh Hc 1 Old Mountfield Rd	Omagh	08/07/2016
NIPS	Ps College, Ballywalter Rd	Millisle	21/07/2016
NIHE	Land at Belvoir Drive	Belfast	17/08/2016
PSNI	Former Psni Station Irish Street	Downpatrick	19/08/2016
NIHE	Land at Causeway End Road	Lisburn	26/08/2016

Status - For Sale on the Open Market

Disposing Body	Address	Town	Date Received
NIHE	Fountain Hill/Donegore Drive	Antrim	06/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Festival Road	Portadown	11/07/2012
NIHE	Land Glenelly View, Plumbridge	Strabane	19/07/2012
WELB	Land Drumlegagh Ps, Archill Rd	N'stewart	07/02/2013
NIHE	Land at Hillside Terrace	Lisburn	01/04/2014
NI Water	Craigahullier Road, Corbally	Portrush	29/04/2014
NI Water	Ballyversal Road Reservoir	Coleraine	29/04/2014
NI Water	Ballydoolagh Road	Enniskillen	29/04/2014
NIHE	Land at Tiree Street	Antrim	16/05/2014
NIHE	Land at Tassagh Road	Keady	30/05/2014
NIHE	Land Adj 178 Banbridge Road	Dromore	04/06/2014
Notch	Former Bus Depot, 46 Parade	Donaghadee	04/06/2014
NIHE	Land at Windyhall Estate	Coleraine	22/07/2014
WHSCT	1 & 2 Hazelwood Park	Omagh	18/08/2014
NIHE	Land at Lisnamuck Park	Coleraine	16/09/2014
NI Water	The Old Labs, 9 Highfield Road	Craigavon	06/02/2015
Invest NI	Land at Carnbane Business Park	Newry	23/02/2015
PSNI	5 Ballymullan Road	C'burn	31/07/2015
NIHE	Land at Mount Hall	Portadown	08/09/2015
Transport NI	82 Larne Road, Ballynure	Ballyclare	21/09/2015
WELB	Bridgehill Ps, 48 Ednagee Road	Castlederg	05/10/2015

Disposing Body	Address	Town	Date Received
SHSCT	5 Downshire Place	Newry	06/10/2015
Transport NI	12-14 Shore Road	Greenisland	23/10/2015
Transport NI	16 Shore Road	Greenisland	23/10/2015
Transport NI	18 Shore Road	Greenisland	23/10/2015
Transport NI	20 Shore Road	Greenisland	23/10/2015
Transport NI	22 Shore Road	Greenisland	23/10/2015
Transport NI	24 Shore Road	Greenisland	26/10/2015
Transport NI	26 Shore Road	Greenisland	26/10/2015
PSNI	Fmr Psni Station, 332 Ormeau Rd	Belfast	19/11/2015
SHSCT	Shsct Office at 10 Victoria St	Armagh	20/11/2015
SHSCT	5 St Mark's Place	Armagh	04/12/2015
NIHE	Land Mcfarland Trce, Beragh	Omagh	11/12/2015
NIHE	Land at Grove Road, Maghera	Coleraine	07/01/2016

Status - Notifications with no Public Sector Interest – Referred Back to Disposing Body with LPS Valuation & Disposal Advice (Primarily Small Inconsequential Portions of Land of Limited Value E.G. Road Verge)

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
Roads Service	Land at 949 Upper N'ards Rd	Castlereagh	10/10/2011
Roads Service	Land at Plot 1 A26 Newbridge Rd	Coleraine	21/10/2011
Roads Service	Land at 10 Agherton Halls	Coleraine	24/10/2011
Roads Service	Land at 11 Agherton Halls	Coleraine	24/10/2011
Roads Service	Land at 12 Acherton Halls	Coleraine	24/10/2011
Roads Service	Land at 14 Agherton Halls	Coleraine	24/10/2011
Roads Service	Land at 5 Adam Clarke Gardens	Coleraine	25/10/2011
Roads Service	Land at 243-267 Upper Lisburn Rd	Belfast	27/10/2011
Roads Service	Land at 21 Deanfield	Londonderry	04/11/2011
NIHE	Land at 58 Gilpin Gardens	Craigavon	07/11/2011
NIHE	Land at 5 Rathgill Gardens	Bangor	07/11/2011
NIHE	Land at 13 Lisnaclin Court	Dungannon	07/11/2011
Roads Service	Land at 170-172 Larne Road	Ballymena	16/11/2011
Roads Service	Land at Obins Street	Portadown	24/11/2011
Roads Service	Land at 10-12 Scotch Street	Downpatrick	13/12/2011
Roads Service	Land Regent Street/Clifton St	Belfast	23/12/2011
Roads Service	Land at Bridge End	Belfast	05/01/2012
NIHE	Land at 62 Primity Crescent	Londonderry	05/01/2012
NIHE	Land at 2A Templemore Street	Belfast	05/01/2012
NIHE	Land at Ardina Road, Articlave	Coleraine	30/01/2012
NILA	Dunmurry Library	Lisburn	30/01/2012
NIHE	Land at Parkhead Crescent	Newry	23/02/2012
NIHE	Land at Comber Rd/Blenheim Rd	Newtownards	23/02/2012
NITHCO	Land at Falcon Road	Belfast	29/02/2012
Roads Service	Land Edward St/Millennium Way	Lurgan	05/03/2012

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
Roads Service	Land at 2 Church Park	N'abbey	06/03/2012
NIHE	Land 8 Kirkistown Park Cloghy	Cloghy	06/03/2012
NIHE	Land at 27 Rosconnor Place	Rathfriland	06/03/2012
Roads Service	Land at Bradley Way	Strabane	12/03/2012
Roads Service	Land New Street, Randalstown	Antrim	22/03/2012
Roads Service	Land at Monaghan Road Milford	Armagh	23/03/2012
Roads Service	Land at 7 Derriaghy Road	Lisburn	26/03/2012
SEHSCT	Fields 21,22,23 & 24 Ardglass Road	Downpatrick	02/04/2012
NIHE	Land at 2 Eliza Street	Belfast	05/04/2012
NIHE	Land at 20 De Courcey Way	Dundrum	06/04/2012
NIHE	Land at Ballysillan Avenue	Belfast	20/04/2012
NIHE	Land at 48 Lir Gardens, Keady	Armagh	20/04/2012
NIHE	Land at Lynn Doyle Place	Downpatrick	20/04/2012
NIHE	Land at 2 Annadale Terrace	Belfast	30/04/2012
NIHE	Land at Linfield Road/Sandy Row	Belfast	02/05/2012
DSD	Land Belfast Rd, Muckamore A11	Antrim	08/05/2012
NIHE	Land at Troutbeck Avenue	Lisburn	09/05/2012
NIHE	Land at 38 Horn Walk	Belfast	09/05/2012
Roads Service	Land at 27 Annesborough Rd	Lurgan	11/05/2012
NIHE	Land at 4 Clovelly Street	Belfast	15/05/2012
NIHE	Land at Moeran Park	Portadown	23/05/2012
NIHE	Land at Ballinahone Avenue	Armagh	01/06/2012
Roads Service	Land at 19 Carhill Road	Garvagh	07/06/2012
NIHE	Land at Antrim Street	Belfast	18/06/2012
NIHE	Land at 504 Ardowen	Craigavon	18/06/2012
Roads Service	Land at 58 Ballydougherty Road	Newry	19/06/2012
Roads Service	Land at 1 Buchanans Road	Newry	19/06/2012
NIHE	Land at 33 Ferney Rise	Enniskillen	25/06/2012
NIHE	Land at 34 Avondale Drive	Ballyclare	25/06/2012
NIHE	Land at 301 Mullacreevie Park	Armagh	25/06/2012
NIHE	Land at Derryhaw Road Tynan	Armagh	04/07/2012
Roads Service	Land at Woodgreen Road	Ballymena	04/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Hawkes Crescent	Omagh	18/07/2012
Roads Service	Land at Derrydry Lane	Dungannon	18/07/2012
Roads Service	Land at Sea Road	Coleraine	24/07/2012
Roads Service	Land at Carnagat Road	Newry	25/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Antrim Street	Belfast	25/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Strand Park	N'ards	26/07/2012
NIHE	Land at 7 Carntall Gardens	Antrim	06/08/2012
NIHE	Land at Blackcave Manor	Larne	06/08/2012
NIHE	Land at 28 Ashvale Park	Larne	06/08/2012

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NIHE	Land at 88 Tobergill Gardens	Antrim	06/08/2012
Belfast Met	Land at Connswater Greenway	Belfast	09/08/2012
NIHE	Land at 11 Grange Drive	Ballyclare	15/08/2012
Roads Service	Land at 5 Woodlands Court	Belfast	16/08/2012
NIHE	Land at Galliagh Park	Londonderry	18/09/2012
NIHE	Land at 29 Islandbawn Street	Belfast	21/09/2012
NIHE	Land at Rainey Street	Magherafelt	08/10/2012
SEHSCT	Land Seymour House, Laurel Way	Lisburn	09/10/2012
DSD	Land Grosvenor Rd / Durham St	Belfast	12/10/2012
NIHE	Land at Gray's Park	Castlereagh	17/10/2012
NIHE	Land at Bracken Park	Londonderry	22/10/2012
NIHE	Land at 2 Newtownards Road	Comber	22/10/2012
Roads Service	Land at 38-40 Dublin Road	Omagh	25/10/2012
Roads Service	Land at Madam's Bank Road	Londonderry	05/11/2012
NIHE	Land Rear Of Flat 12 Hillside Pk	Whitehead	07/11/2012
NIHE	Land Rear Of Flat 15 Hillside Pk	Whitehead	07/11/2012
Roads Service	Land at 34 Muskett Gardens	Carryduff	08/11/2012
Roads Service	Land at 74 Hillhead Road	Toombebridge	08/11/2012
NIHE	Land at 1 Rose Gardens	Comber	08/11/2012
Roads Service	Land Adj To 64-67 Coleraine Road	Garvagh	09/11/2012
Roads Service	Land at 7 Main Street	Millisle	27/11/2012
NIHE	Land at Elizabeth Avenue	C'fergus	10/12/2012
Invest NI	Land at Teagy Road/Mandeville	Craigavon	27/12/2012
Roads Service	Land 135 Kilrea Road Upperlands	Magherafelt	10/01/2013
Roads Service	Land Adj To 67 Coleraine Road	Garvagh	16/01/2013
NIHE	Land at Derriaghy Road	Lisburn	16/01/2013
Roads Service	Land 18 Church Hill J'borough	Newry	29/01/2013
NIHE	Land at 18 Moss Drive	Antrim	29/01/2013
Roads Service	Land at Ballynease Road	Bellaghy	06/02/2013
NIHE	Land at Watson Park	Omagh	18/02/2013
NIHE	Land at Main Street	B'borough	18/02/2013
COURTSNI	Larne Courthouse Victoria Road	Larne	01/03/2013
NIHE	Land at 70 Knockwood Crescent	Belfast	06/03/2013
NIHE	Land at 26 Willowfield	Tandragee	12/03/2013
NIHE	Land at 44 Ashfield Gardens	Omagh	20/03/2013
NIHE	Land at 23-25 Kilbroney Road	Rostrevor	21/03/2013
DSD	Land at New Lodge Road A9	Antrim	21/03/2013
NIHE	Land at 20 Brandywell Road	Londonderry	22/03/2013
NIHE	Land at Ashfield Gardens	Fintona	26/03/2013
NIHE	Land at 16 Castle View	Gilford	26/03/2013
Roads Service	Land at Magherabeg Road	Dromore	04/04/2013

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NIHE	Land at Ledley Hall Close	Belfast	09/04/2013
NIHE	Land Adj 38 Stewartstown Ave	Cookstown	12/04/2013
NIHE	Land at Crevenish Park, Kesh	Fermanagh	18/04/2013
NIHE	Land at Station Road, Kesh	Fermanagh	18/04/2013
NIHE	Land Leathem Crescent Ederney	Fermanagh	18/04/2013
NIHE	Land Pound Street Irvinestown	Fermanagh	18/04/2013
BELB	Land Adj To Fairhill Walk	Belfast	15/05/2013
NIHE	Land Adj 116 Tobar Park	Cullybackey	21/05/2013
NIHE	Land Adj 23 Kylemore Gardens	Larne	22/05/2013
NIHE	Land Adj 166 Edenderry Park	Banbridge	22/05/2013
NIHE	Land at 10 Somerset Park	Antrim	28/05/2013
Roads Service	Land at Queens Road	Lisburn	29/05/2013
Roads Service	Land at Obins Street	Portadown	29/05/2013
SELB	Keady Ps Crossmore Road	Armagh	14/06/2013
Roads Service	Land at Campsie Road Car Park	Omagh	26/06/2013
NIHE	Land 38 Forthill Gdns, Ballyduff	N'abbey	09/07/2013
Roads Service	Land at 33 Craveny Road	Dungannon	17/07/2013
NIHE	Land at 14 Elmgrove Crescent	Portaferry	19/07/2013
WHST	Ld Adj Rossneal Children's Home	Londonderry	19/07/2013
NIHE	Land Adj 9 Keely Gardens	Coleraine	07/08/2013
NIHE	Land at 4 Knockburn Grove	Lisburn	15/08/2013
Roads Service	Lands at Drumard & Drumhoney	Kesh	16/08/2013
Roads Service	Land Near 264 Foreglen Road	Limavady	21/08/2013
Roads Service	Plots 1 & 2 Craigtown Road	Randlastown	22/08/2013
Roads Service	Land at (Plot 25) Annaghilla Road	Ballygawley	23/08/2013
NIHE	Land at 23 Munro Villas	Kilkeel	28/08/2013
NIPS	Land at 4 Landscape Terrace	Belfast	17/09/2013
Roads Service	Land at Killyliss Road	Dungannon	19/09/2013
Roads Service	Land at Dungannon Road	Portadown	25/09/2013
Roads Service	Land at Blacks Road	Belfast	30/09/2013
NIHE	Land at Butler Walk/Place	Belfast	04/10/2013
COLERAINE BC	Land at 9 Somerset Road	Coleraine	11/10/2013
NIHE	Land at Lothian Avenue	Belfast	17/10/2013
NIHE	Land at 1 Laburnum Court	Comber	17/10/2013
Roads Service	Land at Upper Dunmurry Lane	Lisburn	17/10/2013
Roads Service	Ld Gracefield Lge, Dollingstown	Craigavon	24/10/2013
Roads Service	Land at Castlekeele Heights	Newry	29/10/2013
Roads Service	Land at Killybrack Road	Omagh	06/11/2013
Roads Service	Land at Frederick Street	Belfast	21/11/2013
NIHE	Land at Sandy Row	Belfast	22/11/2013
Roads Service	Land Adj To Orchard Mews	Belfast	20/12/2013

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NIHE	Land at Hillview Park	Enniskillen	02/01/2014
Roads Service	Land at Bonds Hill, Waterside	Londonderry	10/01/2014
NIHE	Land at Cliftonpark Avenue	Belfast	14/01/2014
NIHE	Land Adj 48 Station Rd C'backey	Ballymena	17/01/2014
Roads Service	Land at Martins Lane	Newry	22/01/2014
NIHE	Site at Urney Road, Clady	Strabane	23/01/2014
NIHE	Land at 276A Comber Road	Dundonald	03/02/2014
NIHE	Land at Faughan View Pk, Clady	Londonderry	05/02/2014
NIHE	Land at Boyne Court	Belfast	06/02/2014
Roads Service	Land at Railway Street	Ballymena	18/02/2014
NIHE	Land at Margaret Street	Portadown	19/02/2014
NIHE	Land at 127 Clonmeen	Craigavon	19/02/2014
Roads Service	Land at 15 Bridge Road	Moira	24/02/2014
Roads Service	Land at 76 Finvoy Road	Ballymoney	25/02/2014
NIHE	Land Adj 25 Orchard Hill	Crumlin	28/02/2014
NIHE	Land at 717 Rosmoyle	Craigavon	04/03/2014
DSD	Land Adj 211 Drumgor Park C19	Craigavon	06/03/2014
Roads Service	Plots 4,6 & 7 Annaghilla Road	Ballygawley	07/03/2014
NIHE	Land at 88 Killowen Drive	Magherafelt	12/03/2014
NIHE	Land at Moltke Street/Ebor St	Belfast	13/03/2014
NIHE	Land at James Connolly Park	Newry	20/03/2014
NIHE	Land at 9 Bawnmore Grove	N'abbey	24/03/2014
NIHE	Land at 126 Lettershandony Ave	Londonderry	24/03/2014
Roads Service	Land at 64 Bridge Street	Kilrea	25/03/2014
NIHE	Land at Newmills Road	Dungannon	01/04/2014
NIHE	Land Adj 19 Lisnafin Park	Strabane	10/04/2014
NIHE	Land at Linley Drive	Comber	11/04/2014
NIHE	Land at 29 Ballymena Road	Ahoghill	15/04/2014
Roads Service	Land at Rossbay/Deanfield	Londonderry	25/04/2014
Roads Service	Land at Long Commons Car Park	Coleraine	25/04/2014
Roads Service	Land Adj Magowans Petrol Stn	Dungannon	29/04/2014
NI Water	Lough Cowey, Deer Park Road	Portaferry	29/04/2014
NI Water	Conlig Lower, Bangor Road	Bangor	29/04/2014
NI Water	Quolie Lower, Longmore Road	Broughshane	29/04/2014
NI Water	Conlig Upper, Main St, Conlig	Bangor	29/04/2014
NI Water	Stoneyford Ir, Stoneyford Road	Lisburn	29/04/2014
NI Water	Lough Money, Ballystokes	Downpatrick	29/04/2014
NI Water	Altmore Ir, Reclain Road	Dungannon	29/04/2014
NI Water	B'sallagh Lower Millbrook Rd	Bangor	29/04/2014
NI Water	Upper Killea Road Reservoir	Londonderry	29/04/2014
NI Water	Church Rd Ir & Sr, Church Rd	Holywood	29/04/2014

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NI Water	Dunalis Reservoir, Windyhill Rd	Coleraine	29/04/2014
NI Water	Boomers Ir, Derriaghy Road	Lisburn	29/04/2014
NI Water	Crockacleaven, Clogher	Tyrone	29/04/2014
NI Water	Ballylane Lough, Glenanne	Armagh	29/04/2014
NI Water	Ballintemple Wtw, B'temple Rd	Newry	29/04/2014
NI Water	Altmore Ir, Cappagh Road	Dungannon	29/04/2014
Roads Service	Land Adj 238 Gilford Road	Portadown	07/05/2014
NIHE	Land at Kintyre Road	Larne	16/05/2014
NIHE	Land at Clarawood Park	Belfast	19/05/2014
DHSSPS	Land at Ulster Hospital	Belfast	20/05/2014
Roads Service	Roads Service Depot, Aghalun	B'borough	21/05/2014
NIHE	Land Adj 558 Carnhill	Londonderry	05/06/2014
NIHE	Land at Old Rectory Park	Portadown	11/06/2014
NIHE	Land at Queens Park	Saintfield	11/06/2014
NIHE	Land at Rockland Drive	Moneyreagh	17/06/2014
NIHE	Land at 2 Inniskeen Close	Enniskillen	19/06/2014
NIHE	Ld The Creamery Swanlinbar Rd	Fermanagh	20/06/2014
NIHE	Land at Laburnum Court	Comber	25/06/2014
NIHE	Land at 13 North Street	Greyabbey	25/06/2014
NIHE	Land at Ballyrobert Road	Bangor	25/06/2014
Roads Service	Land at Glenariff Road	Ballymena	01/07/2014
NIHE	Land Nth Lurgan Community Ctre	Lurgan	04/07/2014
Roads Service	Land at 18 Poyntzpass Road	Scarva	04/07/2014
NIHE	Land at Old Colin	Belfast	04/07/2014
Roads Service	Land at Annaghilla Road	Ballygawley	07/07/2014
NIHE	Land Loughview Cottages Site 2	Omagh	07/07/2014
Roads Service	Land at 160 Coalisland Road	Dungannon	08/07/2014
NIHE	Land at Monbrief	Craigavon	08/07/2014
Coleriane BC	Land at 15 Ballyreagh Road	Portrush	11/07/2014
NIHE	Land at 53 Rathvarna Drive	Lisburn	18/07/2014
NIHE	Land at 65 Ardmore Avenue	Dundonald	22/07/2014
NIHE	Land at Ballee Drive	Ballymena	25/07/2014
DARD	Land at Toome Wharf, Agivey Rd	Kilrea	28/07/2014
NIHE	Land at 26 New Street, Ederney	Fermanagh	29/07/2014
NIHE	Land 19 St Patrick's Pk Rosslea	Fermanagh	29/07/2014
NIHE	Land at Coagh Crescent	Cookstown	01/08/2014
NIHE	Land at Bligh's Gardens	Londonderry	06/08/2014
NIHE	Land 1 Cottages, Whinney Hill	Hollywood	20/08/2014
NIHE	Land at 186 Lincoln Court	Londonderry	10/09/2014
NIHE	Land at Riverside, Leitrim Road	Cookstown	15/09/2014
Roads Service	Land Plots 1&2 Garvary, Teemore	Fermanagh	18/09/2014

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
Roads Service	Land at 131 Shore Road	N'abbey	06/10/2014
NIHE	Land at Avonmore	Armagh	06/10/2014
NIHE	Land at Barnagh Park	Donaghadee	08/10/2014
Roads Service	Land at 107 Dublin Road	Newry	08/10/2014
Roads Service	Land at Edenbane Road	Kilrea	20/10/2014
NIHE	Land at Mckeens Green	C'fergus	20/10/2014
Roads Service	Land at 113 Colinglen Road	Dunmurry	23/10/2014
NIHE	Land Adj 6 Lisneal Court	Londonderry	24/10/2014
Roads Service	Land at Syerla Road, Moygashel	Dungannon	29/10/2014
NIHE	Land at Church View	Strabane	07/11/2014
NIHE	Land at 127 Clonmeen	Craigavon	18/11/2014
Roads Service	Land at 2 Shankbridge Road	Ballymena	19/11/2014
Roads Service	Land at 107 Colinglen Road	Dunmurry	24/11/2014
NIHE	Land at 2 Rural Cottages	Drumbo	24/11/2014
CITB	Land at 17 Dundrod Road	Crumlin	03/12/2014
NIHE	Land at 347 Ballyoran Park	Portadown	04/12/2014
NIHE	Land at 7 Clanrolla Park	Craigavon	05/12/2014
NIHE	Land at Divis Street	Belfast	12/12/2014
NIHE	Land at 30 Austin Drive	Tandragee	12/12/2014
NIHE	Land at Thornhill Drive	Dromore	12/12/2014
NIHE	Land at 99 Edenderry Park	Banbridge	12/12/2014
NIHE	Land Adj 113 Craighill	Antrim	18/12/2014
NIHE	Land at 16 Glenville Crescent	Antrim	02/01/2015
Roads Service	Land at Pennybridge Road	Ballymena	02/01/2015
Roads Service	Land at Upper Church Lane	Portadown	16/01/2015
Roads Service	Land Clonmakate Road, Birches	Portadown	21/01/2015
NIHE	Land at Belvoir Drive	Castlereagh	27/01/2015
NIHE	Land at 79 Diamond Road	Dromore	03/02/2015
Roads Service	Land at Fruitfield Filling Station	Armagh	13/02/2015
NIHE	Land Suffolk Rd/Glen Rd Jctn	Belfast	18/02/2015
NIHE	Land at Stirling Road	Belfast	18/02/2015
SEELB	Land at 4 Ballygowan Road	Comber	19/02/2015
NIHE	Land at 27 Foyle Park	Londonderry	20/02/2015
NIHE	Land at 90 Orkney Drive	Ballymena	03/03/2015
NIHE	Land at 20 Balmoral Square	Bangor	10/03/2015
NIHE	Land at 237 Melmount Road	Strabane	23/03/2015
NIHE	Land at 2 Carron Close	Enniskillen	26/03/2015
NIHE	Land at Monbrief	Craigavon	26/03/2015
NIHE	Land Alfred Tce Dollingstown	Craigavon	26/03/2015
NIHE	Land at 37/39 Moneymore Road	Magherafelt	27/03/2015
DSD	Land at Garrymore	Craigavon	02/04/2015

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
Roads Service	Land at Goland Road	Dungannon	09/04/2015
NIHE	Land at Coshowen Road	Londonderry	10/04/2015
NIHE	Land Sheelin Pk/O'naullian Cres	Londonderry	10/04/2015
NIHE	Land at 22 Sperrin Park	Londonderry	10/04/2015
NIHE	Land at Finwood Park	Belfast	14/04/2015
NIHE	Land at Tullyhugh Park	Tandragee	20/04/2015
NIHE	Land at Seaview Drive	Belfast	29/04/2015
Transport NI	22 Parkgate Avenue	Belfast	29/04/2015
Transport NI	26 Parkgate Avenue	Belfast	29/04/2015
NIHE	Land at Brae Grove	Ballygowan	30/04/2015
Transport NI	Land at Mullaghbane Road	Dungannon	01/05/2015
NIHE	Land at 137 Darragh Road	Comber	07/05/2015
NIHE	Land at Longlands Drive	Comber	07/05/2015
Transport NI	62 Upper Newtownards Road	Belfast	07/05/2015
Transport NI	64 Upper Newtownards Road	Belfast	07/05/2015
Transport NI	68 Upper Newtownards Road	Belfast	07/05/2015
NIEA	Land Garvey Glen Old Suffolk Rd	Belfast	08/05/2015
NIHE	Land at 1 Parkview	Pomeroy	11/05/2015
NIHE	Land at 1A Beaumont Square	Lurgan	12/05/2015
NIHE	Land at Springhill Park	Strabane	13/05/2015
NIHE	Land Adj 42 Falls Road	Belfast	19/05/2015
NIHE	Land at Donegall Close	Whitehead	21/05/2015
NIHE	Land at 24 Seagoe Park	Portadown	22/05/2015
NIHE	Land at 274A Comber Road	Dundonald	22/05/2015
NIHE	Land Adj 38 Forthill Gardens	N'abbey	26/05/2015
NIHE	Land at Bush Road	Ballymoney	26/05/2015
NIHE	Land at 116 Tobar Park	Cullybackey	26/05/2015
Transport NI	35 Upper Newtownards Road	Belfast	27/05/2015
NIHE	Land at Kilreish	Cookstown	29/05/2015
DSD	Land at Moyraverty	Craigavon	10/06/2015
NIHE	Land at Mountpottinger Road	Belfast	11/06/2015
NIHE	Land 30 Millar Pk, Lawrencetown	Banbridge	16/06/2015
Transport NI	68-72 Shore Road	Greenisland	17/06/2015
Transport NI	74 Shore Road	Greenisland	17/06/2015
NIHE	Land at Ballymacrui Park	Millisle	22/06/2015
Transport NI	380-388 Newtownards Road	Belfast	23/06/2015
Transport NI	65 Holywood Road	Belfast	25/06/2015
Transport NI	Land at 359 Albertbridge Road	Belfast	30/06/2015
NIHE	Land at Gortnamona Court	Belfast	01/07/2015
NIHE	Land at 18 Brae Grove	Ballygowan	01/07/2015
Transport NI	15 Parkgate Avenue	Belfast	02/07/2015

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
Transport NI	355-357 Albertbridge Road	Belfast	02/07/2015
NIHE	Former Bus Shelter Garrymore	Craigavon	06/07/2015
NIHE	Land at Ardcarne Park	Newry	16/07/2015
NIHE	Land Adj 93 Laurelbank	Poleglass	21/07/2015
NIHE	Land at Tamar Street	Belfast	22/07/2015
NIHE	Land at 1 Rosscolban Avenue	Kesh	27/07/2015
NIHE	Land at 25 Brookvale Walk	Lurgan	29/07/2015
NIHE	Land at Killultagh Road	Lisburn	29/07/2015
NIHE	Land at 28 Knockburn Drive	Lisburn	30/07/2015
NIHE	Land at 23 Drumard Drive	Lisburn	30/07/2015
NIHE	Land at Craigdarragh Road	Helens Bay	30/07/2015
NIHE	Land at Castlevue Gardens	Lisburn	03/08/2015
NIHE	Land at Gortmore Park	Lisburn	04/08/2015
NIHE	Land at 51 Ramoan Gardens	Belfast	05/08/2015
NIHE	Land at 12 Fernwood Park	Antrim	10/08/2015
NIHE	Land at 13 Creeve Place	Lisburn	17/08/2015
NIHE	Land at 113 Westacres	Craigavon	17/08/2015
NIHE	Land at 96 Warren Gardens	Lisburn	17/08/2015
NIHE	Land at 1 Colinmill	Poleglass	18/08/2015
NIHE	Land at 84A Colinmill	Poleglass	24/08/2015
NIHE	Land at Knockburn Court	Lisburn	26/08/2015
Transport NI	Land at Sheepsbridge Road	Newry	28/08/2015
NIHE	Land at 46 Windsor Lodge	Waringstown	03/09/2015
NIHE	Land at 47 Windsor Lodge	Waringstown	03/09/2015
NIHE	Land at 42 Barra Street	Antrim	07/09/2015
NIHE	Land at Seymour Hill	Lisburn	07/09/2015
Transport NI	Land at Loughermore Road	Limavady	07/09/2015
Transport NI	Land at Tullyvar Road	Aughnacloy	08/09/2015
Transport NI	Land at Tillysburn Roundabout	Belfast	10/09/2015
NIHE	Former Nihe Depot, Catherine St	Limavady	10/09/2015
NIHE	Land at 37 Stewart Street	Belfast	14/09/2015
NIHE	Land at 13 Edenvale Gardens	Lisburn	15/09/2015
NIHE	Land at 2 Commons Way	Newry	15/09/2015
NIHE	Land 8 Calmor Crescent, Lislea	Armagh	15/09/2015
NIHE	Land at Mullaghmore Drive	Omagh	16/09/2015
NIHE	Land at 1 Ashgrove Park	Magherafelt	16/09/2015
Transport NI	Land at Carnbane Road X 2	Newry	16/09/2015
NIHE	Land at Gardenville Avenue	Omagh	17/09/2015
NIHE	Land at Shancraig Villas	Cookstown	18/09/2015
NIHE	Land at 7 Clonard Crescent	Belfast	22/09/2015
NIHE	Land at Killynether Walk	Belfast	23/09/2015

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NIHE	Land at Temple Park	Castlerock	23/09/2015
NIHE	Land at 36 Logan Drive	Armagh	24/09/2015
NIHE	Land at Linn Road	Larne	25/09/2015
NIHE	Land 20 C'town Pk Ballynure	Larne	28/09/2015
NIHE	Land at 94 Cullingtree Road	Belfast	28/09/2015
NIHE	Land at St Matthews Estate	Keady	30/09/2015
NIHE	Land at Sheelin Park	Londonderry	05/10/2015
DHSSPS	Ardavon House, Northland Road	Londonderry	06/10/2015
NIHE	Land at 98 Dominic Street	Newry	07/10/2015
NIHE	Land at 10 Inniskeen Park	Enniskillen	07/10/2015
Transport NI	Land at Oakridge	Lurgan	08/10/2015
NIHE	Land at Monaghan Road	Armagh	09/10/2015
NIHE	Land at 1 Riverside South	Castledawson	09/10/2015
NIHE	Land at 2 Westland Road	Portadown	13/10/2015
NIHE	Land at 25 Brookvale Walk	Lurgan	13/10/2015
DSD	Land at Lisnisky Lane C63	Portadown	15/10/2015
Transport NI	Land Adj 9 Groganstown Road	Dunmurry	19/10/2015
Transport NI	Land at Derrycraw Road	Newry	19/10/2015
NIHE	Land at Ashfield Gardens	Fintona	21/10/2015
Transport NI	6-8 Shore Road	Greenisland	23/10/2015
NIHE	Land at 22 Aghalee Road	Aghagallon	26/10/2015
NIHE	387-397 North Queen Street	Belfast	27/10/2015
NIHE	Land at 56 Dunlea Vale	Dungannon	29/10/2015
NIHE	Land at 57 Dunlea Vale	Dungannon	29/10/2015
NIHE	Land at 58 Dunlea Vale	Dungannon	29/10/2015
NIHE	Land at 59 Dunlea Vlae	Dungannon	29/10/2015
NIHE	Land at 12 Duneane Crescent	Toomebridge	29/10/2015
NIHE	Land at 19 Garvaghy Avenue	Portglenone	29/10/2015
NIHE	Land at 3 Woodgreen	Antrim	29/10/2015
NIHE	Land at 25A Beechwood Avenue	N'abbey	30/10/2015
NIHE	Land at Hazelbrook Drive	Belfast	02/11/2015
NIHE	Land at 140A Belvoir Drive	Belfast	02/11/2015
NIHE	Land at Clonallon Road	Warrenpoint	04/11/2015
NIHE	Land Adj Milburn Court	Belfast	11/11/2015
NIHE	Land at 10 Colane Road	Aghagallon	11/11/2015
NIHE	Alleyway at 12 Suffolk Court	Belfast	18/11/2015
Transport NI	Land Adj M1, Tamnamore	Dungannon	19/11/2015
NIHE	Land at 28 Cregagh Gardens	Armagh	20/11/2015
NIHE	Land at 12 Virginia Court	Londonderry	23/11/2015
NIHE	Land at Bottier Road	Moira	24/11/2015
NIHE	Land at Chapel Lane	Castlewellan	24/11/2015

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NIHE	Land at 5 Mckinley Park	Cullyhanna	26/11/2015
NIHE	Land at 46 Garden Village	Antrim	26/11/2015
NIHE	Land at Cupar Street	Belfast	30/11/2015
NIHE	Land at Quality Hill	Armagh	01/12/2015
NIHE	Land 8 Dunure Park, Ballybeen	Belfast	02/12/2015
NIHE	Land at 20 Burnside Park	Ballymoney	03/12/2015
NIHE	Land at 11 Moyle Gardens	Carnlough	03/12/2015
NIHE	Land at 18 Windmill Avenue	Ballynahinch	08/12/2015
WHST	Land Rossneal Children's Home	Londonderry	09/12/2015
NIHE	Land at Granville Terrace	Dungannon	11/12/2015
NIHE	Land at Rectory Avenue, Beragh	Omagh	11/12/2015
NIHE	Land at 16 Annahugh Road	Loughgall	14/12/2015
NIHE	Land at 18 Annahugh Road	Loughgall	14/12/2015
NIHE	Land at William Street Court	Newtownards	15/12/2015
NIHE	Land at Slemish Way	Lisburn	17/12/2015
NIHE	Land Adj 21 Rainey Way	Belfast	17/12/2015
NIHE	Fmr Garage Sites, Hillside Ave	Armagh	18/12/2015
NIHE	Land at 31 Ballymena Road	Ballymena	21/12/2015
NIHE	Land at Gilnahirk Road	Belfast	31/12/2015
NIHE	Land at 24 Gloucester Avenue	Portadown	04/01/2016
NIHE	Land Dunseverick Lodge, Belvoir	Belfast	06/01/2016
NIHE	Land at Norburgh Park	Londonderry	06/01/2016
NIHE	Land at Mullagh Close	Ballymartin	06/01/2016
NIHE	Land at 9 Rural Cottages	Drumbo	07/01/2016
Transport NI	2 Shore Road	Greenisland	11/01/2016
NIHE	Land at 120 Thornhill Drive	Dromore	12/01/2016
Transport NI	Land at Drumcairn Road/Moy Rd	Armagh	14/01/2016
NIHE	Land 32 Orkney Street	Antrim	15/01/2016
NIHE	Land at Ballee Way, Drumtara	Ballymena	15/01/2016
NIHE	Land at Ballysillan Avenue	Belfast	19/01/2016
NIHE	Land at 22 Beech Hill	Eniskillen	21/01/2016
NIHE	Land at 9 Kerry Gardens	Killyleagh	21/01/2016
Transport NI	Land at 198 Belsize Road	Lisburn	25/01/2016
NIHE	Land at Maple Drive	L'brickalnd	26/01/2016
NIHE	Land at 2 The Hollies	C'fergus	28/01/2016
NIHE	Land at 1 Spence Crescent	Cullybackey	29/01/2016
NIHE	Land Thornhill Cres, Twinbrook	Belfast	29/01/2016
NIHE	Land at Ballystrudder Gardens	Larne	02/02/2016
NIHE	Land at 19 Warrenpoint Road	Rostrevor	02/02/2016
NIHE	Land at Loanda Crecent	Newry	04/02/2016
NIHE	Land at Dukes Grove	Armagh	05/02/2016

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NIHE	Land at 44 Knockburn Drive	Lisburn	10/02/2016
NIHE	Land at 3 Rockview Park	Hillsborough	10/02/2016
Transport NI	Land Adj 186 Belfast Road	Newry	11/02/2016
NIHE	Land at 45 Seagoe Park	Portadown	12/02/2016
NIHE	Land at Newry Street	Crossmaglen	16/02/2016
Transport NI	Derrylileagh Road	Portadown	17/02/2016
Transport NI	Land at Ballee Road East	Ballymena	18/02/2016
NIHE	Land at Brownstown House,	Portadown	22/02/2016
NIHE	Land at 14 Mourne Park	N'stewart	23/02/2016
WHST	Riverside Hse, 16 Woodvale Ave	Omagh	23/02/2016
NIHE	Land Comber Road/Blenheim Dr	Newtownards	29/02/2016
NIHE	Land at 114 Kinsale Park	Londonderry	07/03/2016
NIHE	Land at 45 Meadowbrook	Craigavon	10/03/2016
Transport NI	Land Adj 150 Moira Road	Glenavy	10/03/2016
NIHE	Land at 20 Alexander Avenue	Armagh	14/03/2016
NIHE	Land at 27D Ballybeen Park	Belfast	16/03/2016
NIHE	Land at Trillick Court	Belfast	24/03/2016
NIHE	Land at 323 Clonmeen	Craigavon	01/04/2016
Transport NI	Land at 61 Thornleigh Park	Lisburn	04/04/2016
NIHE	Land at 53 Whitechurch Road	Ballywalter	04/04/2016
NIHE	Land at 28 Malfin Street	Belfast	05/04/2016
NIHE	Land at 102 Rathvarna Drive	Lisburn	07/04/2016
NIHE	Land at York Road	Belfast	08/04/2016
NIHE	Land at Abbot View	Newtownards	11/04/2016
NIHE	Land at 37 Lisgoole Park	Enniskillen	11/04/2016
NIHE	Land at 22 Crew Hill Court	Ardglass	11/04/2016
NIHE	Land at 65 Glenavy Road	Lisburn	12/04/2016
NIHE	Land at Churchview	Portaferry	12/04/2016
NIHE	Land at 19 Culross Drive	Dundonald	13/04/2016
NIHE	Land To Rear 1-6 Millbrook Lane	N'stewart	13/04/2016
NIHE	Land at Stoneyfalls Park	Dunamanagh	14/04/2016
NIHE	Land at 96 Ballycolman	Strabane	14/04/2016
EANI	Land at Charley Memorial Ps	Belfast	18/04/2016
NIHE	Land at 4 Filbin Crescent	Lurgan	18/04/2016
NIHE	Land at Gortfin Street	Belfast	21/04/2016
NIHE	Land at Carnany Court	Ballymoney	25/04/2016
Transport NI	Land at Loughgall Road	Armagh	26/04/2016
NIHE	Land at 21 Lammy Crescent	Omagh	03/05/2016
NIHE	Land at 2 Gortmore Park	Omagh	04/05/2016
NIHE	Land at 111 Westacres	Craigavon	06/05/2016
NIHE	Land Adj 57A Ambleside Street	Belfast	10/05/2016

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
Transport NI	Land Adj 1 Mountview Drive	Moneymore	11/05/2016
NIHE	Land Adj 63 Ivan Street	Lisburn	11/05/2016
NIHE	Land at Lammy Crescent	Omagh	13/05/2016
NIHE	Land at 1 Laburnum Way	Comber	18/05/2016
NIHE	Land at Princeton Avenue	Lurgan	18/05/2016
NIHE	Land at Maryville	Camlough	18/05/2016
EANI	Land Taughmonagh Youth Club	Belfast	19/05/2016
NIHE	Land at Columbkille Road	Portadown	23/05/2016
NIHE	Land at 12 Virginia Court	Londonderry	23/05/2016
NIHE	Land at 2-6 Maryville Park	Banbridge	23/05/2016
Transport NI	Land Moira Road/Beechfield Bge	Hillsborough	24/05/2016
NIHE	Land at Killyvilly	Enniskillen	25/05/2016
NIHE	Land at Glebetown Drive	Downpatrick	25/05/2016
NIHE	Land at 15 Rural Cottages	Drumbo	25/05/2016
Transport NI	Land at 63 Thornleigh Park	Lisburn	13/06/2016
NIHE	Land at 332 Ballycolman	Strabane	16/06/2016
NIHE	Land at 4 Edenmore Park	Limavady	16/06/2016
NIHE	Land at 65 Coolessan Walk	Limavady	16/06/2016
NIHE	Land at Strangford Road	Ardglass	21/06/2016
NIHE	Land at 32 Dublin Street	N'stewart	24/06/2016
NIHE	Land at 8 Edendell	Banbridge	27/06/2016
NIHE	Land at 9 Belvoir Close	Belfast	30/06/2016
NIHE	Land at 3-5 Tassagh Road	Keady	30/06/2016
NIHE	Land at 2 Crevenish Park, Kesh	Fermanagh	05/07/2016
NIHE	Land at 34 Parkside Gardens	Strabane	06/07/2016
Transport NI	Land at Scullions Road	Mallusk	11/07/2016
Rivers	Land at 14 Blackthorn Way	N'abbey	29/07/2016
NIHE	Land at 18 Tynan Drive	N'abbey	02/08/2016
Transport NI	Land Ann Street/Donegall Quay	Belfast	03/08/2016
NIHE	Land at Tobar Park, Cullybackey	Ballymena	10/08/2016
PSNI	Fmr Legahory Psni St & Land	Craigavon	10/08/2016
NIHE	Land at 74 Rathvarna Drive	Lisburn	26/08/2016
NIHE	Land at Townsend Street	Strabane	31/08/2016
Belfast Met	Land Springvale Ed Village	Belfast	05/09/2016
NIHE	Land at 31 Linley Drive	Comber	07/09/2016
NIHE	Land at 43 Academy Road	Londonderry	08/09/2016
Transport NI	Land at Saintfield Road	Lisburn	14/09/2016
NIHE	Land at 17 Ashcroft Park	Lisburn	21/09/2016
NIHE	Land at 34 Fulmar Crescent	Lisburn	21/09/2016

Status - Notifications Withdrawn by Disposing Body

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
Fermanagh DC	Land Necarne Est Irvinestown	Fermanagh	11/10/2011
Roads Service	Land at 154 Glenville Road	Whiteabbey	02/11/2011
SEHSCT	16 Cranston Court	Bangor	22/03/2012
Roads Service	Land at Woodside Road	Ballymena	01/06/2012
NIHE	Land at Rosmoyle	Craigavon	04/07/2012
NIHE	Mountcollyer Phase 2	Belfast	04/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Moyraverty	Craigavon	04/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Woodvale Road	Belfast	04/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Church View Way	Lawrencetown	06/07/2012
Roads Service	Land at University Road	Belfast	11/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Ballyclare Road	Newtownabbey	11/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Shore Road	Newtownabbey	11/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Grange Drive	Ballyclare	11/07/2012
NIHE	Sites 1 & 2 Blackcave North	Larne	11/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Blackcave Park	Larne	18/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Sites 1-4 Rathenraw	Antrim	18/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Dhu-Varren	Portrush	18/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Riverside Gardens	Castledawson	18/07/2012
Roads Service	Land at Boating Club Lane	Londonderry	18/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Sandown Park	Ballymena	19/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Phase 2 Gainsborough	Belfast	19/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Alliance Avenue	Belfast	21/03/2013
NIHE	Land Castlebalfour Pk Lisnaskea	Fermanagh	18/04/2013
Roads Service	Land at Moneygran Road	Magherafelt	16/05/2013
Roads Service	Land at Newtownbreda Road	Belfast	12/06/2013
Roads Service	Land at 41 Wyndell Heights	Newtownards	18/07/2013
Roads Service	Plot 15 Annaghilla Road	Ballygawley	19/08/2013
Roads Service	Land at Fisher Park, Bridge St	Newry	22/08/2013
DSD	Land Adj To Drumgor Park C19	Craigavon	03/10/2013
NIHE	Land at York Road	Belfast	14/02/2014
SHSCT	Portadown Hc, Tavanagh Ave	Portadown	13/03/2014
NIHE	Land at Ardowen	Craigavon	08/07/2014
NIHE	Land at Drumellan	Craigavon	08/07/2014
NIHE	Land Churchview Way, Lawrencetown	Banbridge	16/07/2014
DSD	Land at Carbet Road C51	Portadown	20/08/2014
PBNI	39 Bowling Green	Strabane	25/11/2014
NIHE	Land at River Terrace	Belfast	20/04/2015
TNI	Land at Frederick Street	Newtownards	04/06/2015
NIHE	Land at The Village Phase 3	Belfast	17/07/2015
NIHE	Land at Mountcollyer Phase 2	Belfast	17/07/2015

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NIHE	Land at Gainsborough Phase 2	Belfast	17/07/2015
NIHE	Land at Lawnbrook Phase 2	Belfast	17/07/2015
NIHE	Land at 24 Thornhill Drive	Newtownabbey	22/07/2015
NIHE	Land at Suffolk Road	Belfast	29/07/2015
NIHE	Land at Old Colin	Poleglass	28/09/2015
NIHE	Land at 60-62 Scotch Quarter	Carrickfergus	30/09/2015
NIHE	Land Bus Shelter, A'glass Rd	Downpatrick	27/10/2015
NIHE	Land at The Fountain	Londonderry	23/11/2015
NIHE	Land at Glenbrook Road	Newtownards	22/12/2015
SEELB	Fmr Cottown Ps, 92 Cotton Rd	Bangor	15/01/2016
Transport NI	Land at Scrabo Street	Belfast	01/02/2016
NIHE	Land Adj 87 Moyard Crescent	Belfast	13/05/2016

Status - Currently Being Circulated to Public Sector Bodies

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NIHE	Land at Kells Avenue	Belfast	17/08/2016
NIHE	Land Adj 52 Meelmore Drive	Omagh	01/09/2016
Transport NI	Land at Sugar Island	Newry	14/09/2016
LGSC NI	Commission Hse, 18 Gordon St	Belfast	16/09/2016
Transport NI	Land at Carnbane Road	Newry	19/09/2016
EANI North	Plot 1 Garvagh High School	Garvagh	22/09/2016
EANI North	Plot 2 Garvagh High School	Garvagh	22/09/2016
NIHE	Land at Stewartstown Road	Belfast	26/09/2016

Status - Awaiting Additional Information from Disposing Body

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
Transport NI	Land at Millmount Road	Dundonald	23/09/2015
Transport NI	Land at Creighton Road	Belfast	08/09/2016

Referrals Re-Submitted Following Amendment

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
Transport NI	28 Shore Road, Greenisland	Newtownabbey	01/02/2012
NIHE	Land at Church Hill Gardens	Dromara	06/03/2012
NIHE	Carnary Drive	Ballymoney	06/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Tiree Street	Antrim	06/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Leckpatrick Gardens	Strabane	11/07/2012
NIHE	St A & B Loughview Cottages	Omagh	11/07/2012
NIHE	Land Burn Road, Ballysally	Coleraine	11/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Kintyre Road	Larne	18/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Drumellan	Craigavon	18/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Windyhall Estate	Coleraine	18/07/2012
NIHE	Land at Stirling Road	Castlereagh	19/07/2012

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
NIHE	Land at Queens Park	Saintfield	19/07/2012
Transport NI	Plot 20 Annaghilla Road	Ballygawley	15/08/2013
NEELB	Garvagh Hs	Garvagh	03/12/2014

Sales of Split Sites in Progress E.G. Part Public Sector Transfer Part Open Market Sale

Disposing Body	Address/Location	Town	Date Received
SHSST	Mourne Hospital, Newry St	Kilkeel	30/01/2012
Roads Service	Land at Castle Hill Car Park	Gilford	14/11/2012
OFMDFM	Shackleton Bcks, Ballykelly	Limavady	19/11/2013
Transport NI	Land at 74 Mosside Road	Lisburn	18/03/2016

Summary

Status	Number of Referrals
Sold on the open market or to former/adjoining owners	254
Sold to public sector i.e. other Dept's or public bodies	68
Public sector transfer sale in progress	70
For sale on the open market	34
Notifications with no public sector interest – referred back to disposing body with LPS valuation and advice	515
Notifications withdrawn by disposing body	52
Currently being circulated to public sector bodies	8
Awaiting additional information from disposing body	2
Referrals re-submitted following amendment	14
Sales of split sites in progress	4
	TOTAL 1,021

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Finance whether she plans to renew the Gender Recognition Act 2004 to grant transgender and non-binary people the right of self-declaration, rather than applying to a judicial panel.

(AQW 5763/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I would like to thank the Member for raising this important issue. I have asked my officials to look again at the Gender Recognition Act 2004 in light of the introduction in the South of Ireland of the Gender Recognition Act 2015. That 2015 legislation introduces a simple self-declaratory model of gender recognition without the applicant needing to present supporting medical evidence of gender dysphoria. This could perhaps provide a model for a simplified recognition process here. My officials will also monitor the separate reviews of the 2004 Act being carried out in England & Wales and in Scotland.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister of Finance, in light of the decision to put the York Street Interchange project on hold, whether any EU funded projects in which he, or his Department, is involved are at risk following the decision to Brexit.

(AQW 5936/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I understand that the procurement period for the York Street Interchange project has been extended to permit further consideration of funding availability. The project remains a priority for the Executive, and I am confident that it will be delivered.

While my Department is not directly engaged in EU funded projects, I have joint responsibility for the work of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), the Managing Authority for the INTERREG VA and PEACE IV cross border programmes, along with my counterpart in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER).

I am determined to ensure that no funds allocated by the EU to our programmes are put at risk, and have engaged with Ministers in Dublin and Westminster to this end. The British Chancellor has guaranteed to underwrite funds to all projects approved before the conclusion of negotiations with the EU. To ensure that we fully avail of that guarantee, I have initiated action to streamline decision making, increased financial delegations and deployed extra resources to ensure that applications are assessed and successful projects are issued with Letters of Offer in a timely manner. That process has borne

fruit, evident in my recent announcement that SEUPB has now begun the process of issuing Letters of Offer. I will continue to closely monitor progress in the coming months.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance, pursuant to AQW 4986/16-21, whether he has received any further assurance that PEACE and INTERREG funding will be guaranteed by the Treasury.
(AQW 6011/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Chief Secretary's letter of 4th October, which has been placed in the Assembly library, provides a guarantee for its share of finance to projects approved prior to any change in relations with the EU. This guarantee still leaves at risk those funds which cannot be committed prior to any change. It is not known when the British Government intends to leave the EU.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Finance what processes are in place to ensure the speedy release of a Freedom of Information request in circumstances where the absence of clearance from either he or his Special Adviser has taken the request beyond the statutory deadline for response.

(AQW 6078/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: My Department is fully committed to compliance with the Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation.

There are no formal arrangements whereby clearance of responses to FOI requests is required by either myself or the Special Adviser, other than those specified when relying on exemptions under sections 24 & 36 of the FOI Act (national security and conduct of public affairs), whereby the Minister must act as the qualified person of the Department in relation to decisions on disclosure.

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister of Finance to detail the number of businesses that currently benefit from sports and recreation rate relief.

(AQW 6106/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Businesses cannot benefit from Sport and Recreation relief as this relief only applies to a 'club, society or other organisation that is not established or conducted for profit'.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Finance how many people have died by suicide in each of the last five years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 6174/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The table overleaf details the number of deaths registered due to suicide¹ in each Parliamentary Constituency between 2011 and 2015, the latest year for which finalised figures are available.

Number of Deaths from Suicide¹, Registered by Year and Parliamentary Constituency (2011-2015)

Parliamentary Constituency	Registration Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Belfast East	14	11	23	11	16
Belfast North	31	24	26	24	36
Belfast South	21	19	13	20	21
Belfast West	29	30	27	16	33
East Antrim	12	16	12	8	13
East Londonderry	12	21	16	8	11
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	16	17	18	24	17
Foyle	15	15	21	19	18
Lagan Valley	15	19	19	8	18
Mid Ulster	14	10	15	10	11
Newry and Armagh	19	12	25	14	21
North Antrim	13	12	18	17	12
North Down	8	7	10	9	12
South Antrim	14	13	15	14	11
South Down	9	12	18	17	17

Parliamentary Constituency	Registration Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Strangford	10	9	7	18	16
Upper Bann	26	20	11	20	24
West Tyrone	11	8	9	11	10
Resident Outside Northern Ireland	-	3	-	-	1
Overall Total	289	278	303	268	318

- 1 In considering suicide events it is conventional to include cases where the cause of death is classified as either 'Suicide and self-inflicted injury' or 'Undetermined intent'. Since 2001, the ICD10 codes used for 'Suicide and self-inflicted injury' are X60-X84 and Y87.0 and the ICD10 codes used for 'Undetermined intent' are Y10-Y34 and Y87.2

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance for his assessment of the role of statutory Assembly committees and MLAs outside the Executive in the budget process.

(AQW 6191/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Statutory Committees have an important role to play both in terms of providing their views to inform the development of the Budget and in providing scrutiny once the Budget is presented.

The Assembly will have the opportunity to vote on the Budget agreed by the Executive.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance in relation to his October Monitoring Round statement, whether the bidding process still exists; and whether Departments will be able to bring this material to committees for scrutiny.

(AQW 6192/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Executive has adopted a more efficient and effective approach to the monitoring round process.

This process no longer requires the submission of bids by departments. The submission of a wish list of bids did not give a good indication of real pressures and it led to a slow and cumbersome negotiation.

Instead key pressures are now identified through ongoing engagement between DoF and departments. The new process will allow the Executive to focus on, and react quickly to, the key emerging pressures.

The new approach is consistent with the position adopted in Scotland, Wales and the South of Ireland where Parliamentary scrutiny takes place through the Estimates process and focuses upon in-year changes to budgets with no reference to bids.

In keeping with the practice in those jurisdictions, the Executive does not disclose its deliberations in reaching an agreed Monitoring round outcome. The focus of scrutiny is on the outcomes.

The swift conclusion of the June and October Monitoring Rounds demonstrates the efficiency on the new approach.

It is for individual departments to determine the information presented to their Committees.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Finance to detail (i) when they were first advised by HM Treasury that they would not be releasing funding for the action plan to tackle paramilitarism; (ii) what specific areas do the UK government require more detail on; and (iii) when do they anticipate this work will be completed.

(AQW 6220/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The profile of funding for the five year period of the 'Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime' strand of the Fresh Start agreement has not yet been finalised and as such no funding has been requested from the British government in the 2016/17 financial year. The overall package is £50m over 5 years, with the Executive and the British government funding half each. There are no stipulations as to how that budget is profiled over the 5 years.

In line with the usual protocol, I will engage with Treasury when the Executive has agreed a profile for the full term of this work. There is no risk that this funding will be lost as the commitment in the Fresh Start Agreement was for an additional £25 million over 5 years. As such £25 million remains available over the coming 4 years.

DoJ are taking this work forward in order to draw down funding from April 2017. In the meantime, £4m of the £5m provided by the Executive in 2016/17 in support of early work to support communities and enhance law enforcement has been allocated. If any of the remaining £1m is not required this year it can be reallocated in the January monitoring round, and the funding restored at any point over the 5 years.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Finance to outline the timescale for application of rates relief for amateur sporting groups; and the list of eligible clubs.

(AQW 6292/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: A sports club will be entitled to have its 80% Sport and Recreation relief enhanced to a 100% relief if it is a Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) registered with HMRC, and with no licensed bar facility. The enhanced relief is applicable from 26 October 2016, subject to application.

Although HMRC is responsible for the CASC registration, there is no list of eligible clubs for rate relief; each application will be treated on the individual circumstances. Each club needs to make an application to the District Valuer in Land & Property Services. There is no set timescale for such applications; however, the earliest date from which the enhanced relief will be effective is 26 October 2016. Further information can be accessed at the following link:-

<https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/sports-and-recreation-rate-relief>

Ms Mallon asked the Minister of Finance for a copy of his departmental bid for additional allocations as stated in page 3 of the 2016-17 October Monitoring Round Statement made to the NI Assembly by the Minister of Finance on 25 October 2016. **(AQW 6339/16-21)**

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The approach now adopted by the Executive to the monitoring round process no longer requires the submission of bids by departments.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Finance of the £500m agreed in the A Fresh Start Agreement for education and housing, for a breakdown of the (i) spend to date; and (ii) projected expenditure. **(AQW 6384/16-21)**

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The 'Fresh Start Agreement' provided for up to £50 million of additional Capital expenditure per year over a ten year period for investment in integrated and shared education; and shared housing. The previous Secretary of State, Theresa Villiers MP, announced the first tranche of shared / integrated education projects on 23 March 2016. Spend to date on these projects is only available from the Department of Education.

Any additional planned expenditure requires the agreement of the current Secretary of State and it is anticipated that further announcements in this respect will be made after the Executive has agreed its next Budget.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Finance what date Her Majesty's Treasury was repaid the £100m loan secured for the Executive in 2014. **(AQW 6385/16-21)**

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The repayment of the £100 million access to the reserve was factored into the Executive's 2015-16 Budget.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Finance how the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme impacted on his allocations in the October Monitoring Round. **(AQW 6395/16-21)**

Mr Ó Muilleoir: As part of my October Monitoring statement I confirmed that the Executive has set aside £20 million Resource DEL centrally to meet pressures anticipated in relation to the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme.

This pressure contributed to the Executive's overcommitment following the October Monitoring round.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Finance whether a formal record exists detailing (i) the in-year pressures Departments are facing; and (ii) their monitoring round bids. **(AQW 6396/16-21)**

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Monitoring rounds no longer require the submission of bids by departments.

Key pressures are now identified through ongoing engagement between DoF and departments and this is reflected in the advice provided to the Finance Minister and the Executive in their deliberations on the Monitoring round.

In line with governments in Scotland, Wales and the South of Ireland the Executive does not disclose its deliberations in reaching an agreed Monitoring round outcome.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Finance pursuant to AQW 5795/16-21, how many projects in the current financial year have been prepared in accordance with the arrangements agreed with their independent monitoring committees. **(AQW 6451/16-21)**

Mr Ó Muilleoir: In my capacity as Minister of Finance I have responsibility for the PEACE IV and INTERREG VA programmes.

In the current financial year 18 projects (17 in INTERREG VA and 1 in PEACE IV) have been agreed in accordance with Programme Monitoring Committee arrangements.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister of Finance whether the Community Regeneration Fund, announced in his statement on October Monitoring, has been equality screened; and to place a copy in the Assembly library.

(AQW 6452/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: In bringing projects to the Executive for funding through the in-year monitoring process, departments must ensure proposals have been subject to equality screening.

In that respect I would expect proposals for funding under the Community Regeneration Fund to be no different from other proposals brought forward in the January Monitoring round.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance to detail the discussions he has had with the Treasury around the use of Financial Transaction Capital.

(AQW 6458/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I have had a number of discussions with Treasury Ministers on the use of Financial Transactions Capital. At the most recent meeting with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury we discussed the issues around the use of FTC for our proposed Investment Fund, as well as the possibility of extending the flexibility to carry forward FTC funding from one year to the next.

I am happy to report that I was able to secure additional flexibility in this area.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance pursuant to AQW 4744/16-21, to publish the cumulative numbers from each community background that left under the Voluntary Exit Scheme.

(AQW 6463/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: A full analysis of the Voluntary Exit Scheme, including the community background of leavers, has been published on the Scheme website at http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/nics_voluntary_exit_scheme

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Finance to outline the purpose of the new process for in-year monitoring; and how the new process will improve accountability and transparency.

(AQW 6492/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Executive has adopted a more efficient and effective approach to the monitoring round process.

This process no longer requires the submission of bids by departments. The submission of a wish list of bids did not give a good indication of real pressures and it led to a slow and cumbersome negotiation.

Instead key pressures are now identified through ongoing engagement between DoF and departments. The new process will allow the Executive to focus on, and react quickly to, the key emerging pressures.

The new approach is consistent with the position adopted in Scotland, Wales and the South of Ireland where Parliamentary scrutiny takes place through the Estimates process and focuses upon in-year changes to budgets with no reference to bids.

In keeping with the practice in those jurisdictions, the Executive does not disclose its deliberations in reaching an agreed Monitoring round outcome.

The focus of scrutiny under this process will be on the outcome of the monitoring round.

The swift conclusion of the June and October Monitoring Rounds demonstrates the efficiency on the new approach.

Departments will continue to engage with Assembly Committees on their in-year budgetary position.

Mrs Long asked the Minister of Finance in light of his announcement of the establishment of a £5million Community Regeneration Fund, (i) whether this policy has been, or will be, subjected to equality screening in line with the commitment under paragraph 4.5 of the Department's statutory equality scheme; and (ii) whether the fund will be allocated on the basis of objective need, with the funding for external organisations undertaken through an open application process on the basis of published criteria.

(AQW 6586/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: In bringing projects to the Executive for funding through the in-year monitoring process, departments must ensure proposals have been subject to equality screening. In that respect I would expect proposals for funding under the Community Regeneration Fund to be no different from other proposals brought forward in the January Monitoring round.

The Community Regeneration Fund will seek to target infrastructure projects in our most deprived and marginalised communities, and seek to maintain momentum on peace building and enhance our diverse heritages. Funding must be allocated in the January Monitoring round and spent in this year. To this end I will be engaging with Ministerial Colleagues over the coming weeks to identify suitable capital projects.

The Executive will then agree allocations from the £5 million available after considering the projects identified by departments.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Finance when he will answer AQW 6220/16-21.
(AQW 7201/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: AQW 6220/16-21 was answered on 17 November 2016.

Department of Health

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, pursuant to AQW 1246/16-21 and AQW 2074/16-21, for a breakdown of her Department's bid for the June Monitoring Round.
(AQW 2830/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Health): The Minister of Finance has advised that a new approach to in-year monitoring has been adopted for 2016/17, whereby input to monitoring rounds will be informed by ongoing engagement between departments and officials from the Department of Finance (DoF). Based on this engagement, DoF will provide details of key pressures to be considered alongside an analysis of the overall public expenditure position. This will inform Ministerial discussions and Executive agreement on allocations through the in-year monitoring process. The new approach allows for an objective assessment of genuine pressures across departments and as such, it is more appropriate that the focus should be on what the outcome of the monitoring round means for health and social care services. On that basis, I do not intend to publish the input provided to DoF.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health to detail the tests and assessments in place in the Health and Social Care service to test for Acquired Brain Injury.
(AQW 2952/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The diagnosis of an acquired brain injury is by clinical assessment. The majority of acquired brain injuries are diagnosed through the use of scanning techniques of Computerised Tomography (CT) and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI). Assessments undertaken to help support a diagnosis of an acquired brain injury may include those such as medical, psychometric, functional, occupational, psychological, behavioural and relational.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health whether she will consider funding ADHD services.
(AQW 2980/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: ADHD services for children and young people under the age of 18 are currently provided by mainstream Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in line with current NICE clinical guidelines. Adults with ADHD who have co-occurring mental health needs are treated through mainstream Adult Mental Health Services.

Health and Social Care Trusts have individually identified a number of current and future ADHD initiatives which the Health and Social Care Board, and my Department, will develop into a more cohesive approach as part of my commitment to improve mental health in the North of Ireland. Any potential service developments on ADHD will need to be considered and prioritised along with other proposals across the range of health and social care provision.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the adequacy of the provision of addiction and mental health services for young people in (i) Belfast; and (ii) Northern Ireland.
(AQW 3004/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There is very considerable demand for addiction and mental health services for young people throughout the region, and services are under constant pressure.

In Belfast, the demand for the Drug and Alcohol Mental Health Service (DAMHS) resulted in it becoming a very specialist team with a largely consultative role, directly dealing with very high risk individuals. Step 3 CAMHS community services continue to see and treat young people who have either a significant mental health issue as a result of their substance misuse, for example, a psychotic presentation; or who have co-morbid mental health and substance misuse issues.

Regionally, the PHA has confirmed recurrent investment in DAMHS and Trusts are currently in the process of recruiting to those teams. In addition a range of alcohol and drug education, early intervention, and treatment and support services was launched in July 2015 across all five Health and Social Care Trust areas. A number of these services are targeted specifically at children, young people and their families, and work is ongoing to improve awareness of the services. It will, of course, require time for these relatively new services to bed in properly and to allow for meaningful assessment of their effectiveness.

In the meantime, the need for any additional support will continue to be monitored and kept under review.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to outline the arrangements by which voluntary crews and private ambulance crews assist the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, including (i) how responses are allocated between Northern Ireland Ambulance Service crews and voluntary and private crews; and (ii) how the geographic catchment areas of private crews are allocated.
(AQW 3015/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Ambulance Service has a contract in place with independent ambulance service providers (voluntary and private) who provide support to Ambulance Service at times of high levels of activity. The independent ambulance services mostly attend patients who are less seriously ill, for example healthcare professional calls where a patient has already consulted a doctor and a decision has been made as to which hospital/department they need to go; and for inter-hospital transfers or patient discharges. The independent ambulance services provide support from wherever they can supply their crews; they are then moved to where additional coverage is required by Ambulance Service.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health what links the Public Health Agency has with schools to assist in the promotion of healthy eating amongst young people.

(AQW 3016/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Public Health Agency (PHA) works with a range of organisations across Government, statutory, voluntary and community sectors to promote healthy eating. The school setting is a significant area of focus for this work, with the Food in Schools policy being a key area of joint activity.

The Food in Schools policy advocates a 'wholeschool approach' to all food provided in schools, and to the development of the necessary knowledge and skills in relation to healthy eating and lifestyles. A Food in Schools Coordinator is jointly funded by the PHA and Department of Education. Supporting the Food in Schools policy, the PHA promotes a number of other healthy eating initiatives in schools including: School Food – Top Marks; Stop, Look and Cook; Eat, Taste and Grow; and the Healthy Break Scheme.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health how many patients have received treatment from the multi-disciplinary Autism Team in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 3017/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Table 1 overleaf details the number of patients who have received intervention from the whole multi-disciplinary Autism Team in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last five years.

Table 1

Year	Referrals for Autism Intervention
2011/12*	-
2012/13*	-
2013/14*	185
2014/15	402
2015/16	490

Source: Southern Health and Social Care Trust

* Please note that systems for recording Intervention Referrals were only established in 2014, therefore information is not available for prior years.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the success of the multi-disciplinary Autism Team in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust; and whether she will consider using this service as a template across all Health and Social Care Trusts.

(AQW 3018/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Southern Health and Social Care Trust has a well-established Multi-Disciplinary Autism Team which is successful in commencing assessments within the regional 13 week time frame; and providing a range of interventions and supports to those who have a confirmed diagnosis of autism.

Following a regional review of Autism Services, discussions are ongoing about the potential for collaborative working between all the Trusts in order to address the significant waiting lists and times in some Trust areas. The Southern Trust have been involved in these discussions and are currently finalising arrangements to carry out assessments on children who have been waiting for assessment in the Belfast Trust area.

Work is also progressing on the regional alignment of Autism Services taking account of the geographical and demographic features unique to each Trust area. There is collaboration and engagement between my Department, the Health and Social Care Board, Public Health Agency and Trusts in taking this work forward. Clinicians from each Trust and service user representatives are also engaged in the development and improvement of these services.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health how many people have been treated for Sepsis, in the each of the last five years.

(AQW 3047/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of people treated for sepsis is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health to detail the level and type of support available to help cancer patients travel to appointments.

(AQW 3064/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Hospital Travel Costs Scheme provides help with travel costs to hospital for health service treatment for people and their dependants who are in receipt of qualifying social security benefits, or who are on a low income. Details are available at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/hospital-travel-costs-scheme>.

The Ambulance Service's Patient Care Service provides transport and care for eligible patients travelling to hospital for appointments. Eligibility for Patient Care Service transport is based on medical need as determined by a medical practitioner.

Hospitals can also advise patients with cancer about other sources of transport available locally such as Volunteer Driver Services or transport provided by local voluntary organisations.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the consistency between Health and Social Care Trusts in the weighting attached to quality when award criteria and tenders for domiciliary care are set; and whether this raises an equality issue for those for whom care packages are being determined.

(AQW 3065/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The criteria applied for the procurement process for domiciliary care services is a matter for each individual Health and Social Care Trust. All organisations seeking tenders must be registered with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and must comply with the contract domiciliary care terms and conditions, which focuses primarily on the quality of service delivered to the client.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Health for an update on the cross departmental Internet Safety Strategy.

(AQW 3070/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland has engaged the National Children's Bureau to draft the strategy, overseen by a Project Board chaired by the Department of Health. Extensive engagement has taken place with stakeholders and a consultation draft is near completion. Executive agreement to consult on the draft strategy will be sought prior to public consultation.

The work remains on track for completion early next year.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Health how many patients missed appointments at the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine in the last twelve months; and what is the estimated cost to the Health Service.

(AQW 3101/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of hospital appointments missed by patients in NI is published annually on the Department of Health website as part of the NI Hospital Statistics: Outpatient Activity publication. Information relating to 2015/16 is available at the following link;

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/hospital-statistics-outpatient-activity-statistics-201516>

Information on the cost of missed appointments is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of times each Health and Social Care Trust has suspended placements to nursing homes due to concerns about the quality of the care provided, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 3190/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The following table details the number of times each Health and Social Care Trust has suspended placements to nursing homes in each of the last five years.

Year	Belfast HSCT	Northern HSCT	South East HSCT	Western HSCT	Southern HSCT
2012	0	6	0	0	5*
2013	0	2	0	1	2
2014	0	1	1	3	2
2015	1	4	2	2	2
2016	1	0	1	0	1

* Includes 1 suspension, by Southern Trust, in placement outside Trust area

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Health whether she will request a report from the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency on the Keep In Touch Day applications it has refused in the last three months; and to determine whether these were reasonable refusals.

(AQW 3252/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I have no plans to request a report from the Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA) on Keep In Touch (KIT) day applications.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister of Health how many young people known to the child and adolescent mental health services and drug and alcohol mental health services have died through suicide in the last three years.

(AQW 3410/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of young people known to the child and adolescent mental health services and drug and alcohol mental health services that have died through suicide in the last three years is not available.

The 2015 National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness found that during 2003-2013, 741 suicides were identified as patient suicides, i.e. the person had been in contact with mental health services in the 12 months prior to death. This represents 27% of general population suicides, compared with 23% in Wales, 28% in England, and 30% in Scotland.

Ms Bunting asked the Minister of Health to outline the criteria the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust uses to prioritise patients on the waiting list for autism spectrum disorder assessments.

(AQW 3441/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has advised that referrals for an autism assessment are dealt with on a chronological basis. However, an expedited assessment is considered when there is evidence of an identified clinical need. Examples for children are deliberate harm to self or others; risk to a family/Looked After Child/school placement and children with severe global regression of development.

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Health for an update on the future of Northern Health and Social Care Trust nursing homes and residential care homes in South Antrim.

(AQW 3656/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Health and Social Board has been leading on a regional review on the future role and function of statutory residential care homes. I have not yet made final decisions on proposals for any of the homes included in the review. The review does not extend to nursing homes.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, in relation to the Family Division Court Case of TG and A Health and Social Care Trust (KEE10030), will she order an investigation into the role of Social Services in this matter.

(AQW 4113/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Given the significant issues raised in the Appeal Court judgement, I have asked the Chief Social Worker to write to the Trust concerned to ensure that this case is referred to the Safeguarding Board to consider whether a Case Management Review should be undertaken.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health other than her Department, to outline the alternate streams of funding for the Food Standards Agency.

(AQW 6296/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Food Standards Agency is a non-ministerial government department. It is not an arm's-length body of my Department. The FSA in North of Ireland receives its budget directly from the North of Ireland block grant and not from my department.

Regulation (EC) 882/2004 requires Member States to charge a minimum fee for meat hygiene official controls which are carried out in approved slaughterhouses, cutting plants and game handling establishments. Meat hygiene official controls are carried out by the Veterinary Public Health and Trade Programme (VPHTP) of DAERA under the terms of a service level agreement. Costs are calculated using the hours of attendance of DAERA officials in each establishment multiplied by the applicable hourly rates. A discount may be applied to the full cost of meat hygiene official controls in some establishments. Income from fees levied for meat hygiene official controls in the 2015-16 financial year was £3.6m (58% of the full cost) The FSA is forecasting a similar cost recovery from meat hygiene official controls during the 2016-17 financial year.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health what support her Department and its arms'-length bodies can offer to private nursing homes to recruit nurses.

(AQW 6381/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department is aware of the challenges faced by private nursing homes in recruiting nurses. This is reflective of a global nursing shortage impacting across these islands.

My Department's Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Plan takes account of the Independent Sector and recommends that all employers should review their recruitment processes and work to make their organisation an employer of choice to encourage the recruitment and retention of nurses.

My Department is taking forward a range of measures to address the shortage of nurses across the North, which will increase the supply of nurses. This includes strengthening the local workforce through increased investment in pre-registration nurse training and the Return to Practice programme and a regional international recruitment nurse campaign.

The HSC team managing the international recruitment campaign have remained in contact with the independent sector and have shared information on the recruitment process, accommodation and English training to support them in addressing their recruitment challenges.

The Public Health Agency (PHA) is providing advice to the Independent sector on work the Nursing home sector are progressing which explores the enhanced role of care assistants in the nursing home environment.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the total number of (i) available and occupied adult critical beds; (ii) available and occupied paediatric intensive care beds; and (iii) available and occupied neonatal critical care cots and beds as of 1 September in each hospital, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 6382/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

(i) The number of available adult critical care beds in each hospital at 1st September is shown in the table below.

Hospital	1st September									
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Altnagelvin	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Antrim Area ¹	-	-	-	-	-	7	7	7	7	7
Belfast City	11	11	11	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
Causeway ¹	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	4	4	4
Craigavon	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Erne/South West Acute	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Mater Infirmorum	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Royal Victoria	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Ulster	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

Note: Adult critical care beds include intensive care and high dependency beds.

¹ Figures not available for 2007-2011.

Hospital	1st September									
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Altnagelvin	5	6	7	10	11	7	7	5	9	7
Antrim Area ¹	-	-	-	-	-	7	2	3	6	7
Belfast City	9	9	8	5	7	4	4	6	4	7
Causeway ¹	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	4	2	2
Craigavon	5	4	7	8	7	6	8	8	6	7
Erne/South West Acute ²	-	3	4	4	2	2	3	4	6	3
Mater Infirmorum	6	4	6	5	4	4	3	3	5	6
Royal Victoria	22	24	21	21	21	24	23	24	25	24
Ulster	7	8	8	5	8	13	6	9	10	12

The number of occupied adult critical care beds in each hospital at 1st September is shown in the table below.

Note: Adult critical care beds include intensive care and high dependency beds.

^{1,2} Figures not available for 2007-2011 or 2007.

- (ii) Paediatric intensive care beds are only provided within the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children (RBHSC). As such the number of available and occupied beds as at 1st September within the RBHSC is shown in the table below.

Beds	1st September									
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Available	7	8	8	8	8	8	8	12	12	12
Occupied	5	6	5	5	5	6	4	11	8	6

- (iii) The number of available neonatal critical care cots/beds in each hospital at 1st September is shown in the table below.

Hospital	1st September									
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Altnagelvin	6	8	5	3	12	8	6	0	5	3
Antrim Area1	-	-	-	-	-	16	15	14	10	14
Craigavon	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Royal Jubilee	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	27	27	27
Ulster	12	12	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13

Note: Neonatal critical care cots/beds include intensive care, high dependency and special care babies.

1 Figures not available for 2007-2011.

The number of occupied neonatal critical care cots/beds in each hospital at 1st September is shown in the table below.

Hospital	1st September									
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Altnagelvin	12	10	13	15	6	10	3	9	4	6
Antrim Area1	-	-	-	-	-	15	8	12	9	12
Craigavon	8	7	3	3	1	8	4	8	3	6
Royal Jubilee	25	24	29	29	21	26	16	24	20	26
Ulster	10	10	13	15	12	16	10	13	8	12

Note: Neonatal critical care cots/beds include intensive care, high dependency and special care babies.

1 Figures not available for 2007-2011.

Department for Infrastructure

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Infrastructure, pursuant to AQW 5709/16-21, to detail (i) his Department's key priorities for projects for the next ten years; and (ii) the York Street Interchange scheme's place within these priorities.

(AQW 6271/16-21)

Mr Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure):

- (i) The Executive has set out four flagship infrastructure projects for my Department which will benefit people across the region. These include the Belfast Hub and Belfast Rapid Transit projects, as well as the A5 and A6. These projects are key and will reflect my priorities for transport which I have set out in my Programme for Government Delivery Plan. These will be focused on addressing infrastructure deficit, particularly in the west and increasing the number of people choosing to travel by means of walking, cycling and public transport.

In addition to the Executive's flagship projects the Delivery Plan includes a number of priority schemes that will be subject to budget availability including the York Street Interchange, Derry Transport Hub, advancing the Narrow Water Bridge and the Newry Southern Relief Road.

Another key priority will be the continued funding of the base maintenance and enhancement needs of NI Water, which is currently around £165m per annum until 2021. The Utility Regulator will lead a Price Control in 2021 will determine the capital needs to 2027.

My Department is also leading the 'Living with Water Programme' to develop a Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Plan for Belfast, the main parts of which will be implemented between 2019 and 2027. This will deliver works to reduce the

risk of flooding, comply with environmental legislation and provide the increased drainage and wastewater treatment capacity necessary for the city to continue to grow.

- (ii) The York Street Interchange project remains a priority for me as it would deliver significant social and economic benefits, both in terms of alleviating traffic congestion and also in terms of improving access to key ports and gateways.

For this reason I am committed to do all that I can to deliver the scheme within the current financial context, working with the Finance Minister and other Executive colleagues.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Infrastructure what measures his Department is planning to undertake in order to alleviate traffic congestion in Moneymore.

(AQW 6430/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: It is considered that traffic delays through the village of Moneymore are not excessive even during peak times and are of a similar nature to those experienced in many small and medium sized towns across the North.

The recently completed Magherafelt Bypass provides an important link and journey time savings for those travelling from Moneymore towards the A6 but it may have increased traffic flow through Moneymore. Traffic counts are currently being carried out to measure any change in traffic flows in Moneymore following the opening of Magherafelt Bypass.

You will be interested to know that my Department is also currently developing a balanced programme of strategic road improvement (SRI) schemes across the North. This programme emanates from a number of strategic policy documents including; the Investment Strategy for NI, the Regional Development Strategy, the Regional Transportation Strategy and the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan. Given the financial constraints, there is clearly a need to prioritise projects and a bypass of Moneymore would not be considered as high a priority as other strategic roads projects across the north of Ireland.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Infrastructure pursuant to AQW 4382/16-21, what procedures are in place between his Department, agencies that report to his Department and local councils with regards to collaboration on maintenance of locations and facilities that may fall in part under both jurisdictions, to ensure that work is completed as efficiently as possible and duplication is minimised.

(AQW 6510/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department holds regular formalised meetings with local Councils and provides a report at each meeting which includes details of planned work activities, including maintenance activities by TransportNI within each Council area over the period. In addition, local TNI Staff meet with Councillors on a regular basis throughout the year including District Electoral Area meetings to agree on local issues that may require collaboration.

The arrangements include for example (i) cutting of grass in urban areas where councils wish to have a better standard of cutting for cosmetic / amenity purposes than is required by TransportNI for road safety purposes (ii) salting of busy urban footways during prolonged periods of severe weather and (iii) collection of litter at various park and ride sites throughout the province.

My Department also collaborates and consults with Councils on a wide range of other functions including Development Plans, capital works projects, Emergency Planning and Public Realm works.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Infrastructure what surplus finance remains from public realm money for roads resurfacing in Donaghadee.

(AQW 6534/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I must advise the Member that resurfacing works carried out by my Department's TransportNI on behalf of the Department for Communities and Ards and North Down Borough Council in Donaghadee are not yet complete. As such the final cost of the works is not known therefore I am not in a position to confirm if, in the first instance, there is surplus finance, or the amount.

I should point out that the funds for this work have been provided to TransportNI by the Department for Communities and the Council and it is they who will have the final say as to what use any surplus finance is put.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he will review the current weight limit on HGV lorries passing through Clady village.

(AQW 6559/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: While there are no road maintenance or capacity issues that would preclude HGV lorries from passing through Clady village, I appreciate the benefit that such a restriction would have for the local residents. There is currently a weight restriction proposal for Hillsborough, County Down and following the conclusion of this process I will consider all the issues that arise and how they might relate to other locations such as Clady.

Mrs Long asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline what capital investment projects his Department will undertake in East Belfast by May 2021.

(AQW 6612/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As the Executive has yet to agree on Budget allocations for the period 2017-18 to 2020-21 I am unable to provide details of investment in East Belfast for that period. However, my response to AQW 4961/16-21 sets out details of investment in East Belfast for the current financial year together with committed spend in future years arising from those capital projects.

Mrs Long asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail how much European Union funding was spent in East Belfast on departmental projects between May 2011 and March 2016.

(AQW 6615/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: 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.

A total of £76.63m has been secured from various EU funding sources towards a wide range of infrastructure projects since 2011 and I have included a breakdown of this at Annex A.

Annex A

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme		5,800,000	10,735,500	7,185,000		23,720,500
A2 Upgrade – Belfast Shore Road to Greenisland			5,485,000			5,485,000
A2 Upgrade – Belfast Shore Road to Greenisland Extension				3,450,000		3,450,000
Replacement of Goldline & Metro Fleet		5,800,000				5,800,000
Extended Bus Replacement Project			5,250,000			5,250,000
Optares and Goldlines				3,735,000		3,732,000
INTERREG IVA		2,400,000	10,278,822			12,678,822
Portadown Railway Station		2,400,000				2,400,000
Drogheda Viaduct			3,168,072			3,168,072
Enterprise Phase 3 Overhaul Programme – Stage 2			7,110,750			7,110,750
INTERREG IVB (Arc Atlantique)	284,000					284,000
BATTERIE Project	284,000					284,000
TEN-T	2,440,506	15,724,595		2,860,473		21,025,574
Belfast Intermodal Transport Hub (Development Studies)				2,860,473		2,860,473
Coleraine to Derry Track Relay Phase 1	1,309,006					1,309,006
Dualling of the A8 Coleman's Corner to Ballyrickard Roundabout		15,724,595				15,724,595
Installation of rapid charging points for electric vehicles and a supporting IT system	110,232					110,232
York Street Interchange (Scheme Development Studies)	1,021,268					1,021,268
Connecting Europe Facility					18,917,875	18,917,875
Bottleneck Alleviation and Cross Border Connectivity Works Knockmore to Lurgan					7,576,200	

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
Technical Equipment and Infrastructure Upgrade: Derry to Coleraine Rail Line					11,341,675	
Grand Total	2,724,506	23,924,595	21,014,322	10,045,473	18,917,875	76,626,771

Mr Middleton asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline his plans on the potential relocation of (i) the Newbuildings Vehicle Test Centre; and (ii) the Glenaden Complex site, Londonderry.

(AQW 6657/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) currently operate a network of 15 test centres and two satellite driving test centres. In 2015-16, DVA provided appointments for over 1 million roadworthiness checks and almost 60,000 practical driving tests.

The demand for tests has risen significantly over the past decade and is projected to continue to grow. The DVA is currently reviewing how best to increase capacity across the entire network of test centres, including looking at alternative sites, to meet this growing demand.

At this stage in the process, it is too early to confirm the location of any future test centres.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Infrastructure what plans he has to change the current monopoly his Department has for (i) MOT testing; (ii) PSV testing; and (iii) taxi meter and printer testing.

(AQW 6666/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I have no plans to change the existing statutory delivery model for the Ministry of Transport (MOT) motor vehicle test or public service vehicle (PSV) test, both will continue to be delivered within the public sector.

On 3 August 2016, I announced a review of The Taxis Act (NI) 2008 which may include a review of the delivery of the taxi and taximeter testing schemes. Any future changes to the taxi schemes will be dependent on the outcome of that review.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the rationale for testing meters and printers fitted in taxis before establishing if the vehicle they are fitted in meet the criteria for passing the PSV test to be used as a taxi.

(AQW 6668/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department's Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) is responsible for conducting the taximeter and printer tests in compliance with The Taxis (Taximeters, Devices and Maximum Fares) Regulations (NI) 2015.

These Regulations provide for the taximeter test to be conducted in advance of the public service vehicle (PSV) taxi licensing test. However, the DVA vehicle examiner is not required to commence the taximeter test where the vehicle is obviously unsuitable for licensing as a Class A or Class B taxi. Therefore, the general suitability of the vehicle is determined in advance of the taximeter test.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline (i) the qualifications required for staff that are testing fare meters and printers in taxis; (2) whether staff would be deemed qualified to carry out this process in the private sector; and (iii) whether fare machines used in public transport undergo the same testing procedure.

(AQW 6669/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department's Driver & Vehicle Agency's (DVA) vehicle examiners are responsible in law for conducting taximeter and printer tests.

All vehicle examiners hold a professional qualification in motor vehicle engineering issued by City & Guilds, the National Council for Vocational Qualification (NVQ), or the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC).

My Department has no statutory responsibility for private sector testing and has no knowledge of the qualification requirements.

The fare machines used in other forms of public transport, such as buses and trains, are not used to calculate fares on the basis of distance travelled, and therefore would not be subject to the same testing procedures as taximeters.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline why his Department charges to test a fare meter and printer in taxis, when this is can be carried out by private sector companies.

(AQW 6670/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I would refer the member to the answers I gave to AQW 3030/16-21 and AQW 2292/16-21.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Infrastructure pursuant to AQW 5996/16-21, to detail the amount of compensation paid out each year.

(AQW 6712/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Pursuant to the answer I provided to AQW 5996/16-21, the table below details the total amount of personal injury and vehicle damage compensation paid due to alleged incidents on public roads and footpaths in each of the last five financial years. The figures include compensation for claims where the alleged causes of the incidents were defects on public roads and footpaths.

Financial Year	Compensation Paid
2011/2012	£2,271k
2012/2013	£2,402k
2013/2014	£2,315k
2014/2015	£2,339k
2015/2016	£1,894k

It should be noted that the amount of compensation paid in any specific financial year may not necessarily relate to claims received in that year. This is because the timescale for dealing with claims can span financial years due to investigatory and legal processes which vary depending on the nature and specific details of each case.

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the costs incurred by Translink due to vandalism in each of the last five years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 6717/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Translink has advised that this information is not collated by constituency but rather by company and location. The totals for each company are as follows:

	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Ulsterbus	132,353	188,676	256,675	295,008	261,979
Metro	99,675	93,222	149,871	140,884	105,346
NI Railways	319,331	336,173	349,097	296,928	259,903
TOTAL	551,359	618,071	755,643	732,820	627,228

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to list the (i) board members; and (ii) dates of meetings of the Translink Holding Company; and why the board's minutes are not published.

(AQW 6722/16-21)

Mr Hazzard:

(i) The NI Transport Holding Company's (NITHC) board members are as follows:

- Frank Hewitt (Chair) – Non Executive Director (NED)
- Tony Depledge – NED
- Bernard Mitchell – NED
- Hilary McCartan – NED
- Angela Reavey – NED
- Mark Sweeney – NED
- Chris Conway – Executive Director (ED)
- Paddy Anderson – ED
- Philip O'Neill – ED

Details of membership are published annually in the Annual Report and Accounts.

(ii) NITHC Board meetings normally take place on the 3rd Wednesday of each month.

(iii) Summary minutes of the board meetings are published. They can be found at: <http://www.translink.co.uk/Corporate/About-Us/translink-corporate-governance/How-we-make-decisions/NITHC-Meeting-Minutes/>. There is a commitment that the minutes will be published within three months of the meeting subject to approval. Minutes of the Board are shared with the Department and reviewed as part of the monitoring meeting process.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Infrastructure pursuant to AQW 5952/16-21, whether he has considered amending the system to enable an email to be sent to a member of the public who has submitted a report of a defective street light or pothole online via the NI Direct website following an update in progress or status of the enquiry.

(AQW 6736/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department does not currently have an on-line fault reporting facility to provide a progress e-mail on the status of a defect reported at this time.

However, the electronic clearing of defects by our contractors is being investigated which will allow real-time e-mail updates to the public.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he plans to give Transport NI a fuel rebate.

(AQW 6737/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The NI Fuel Duty Rebate (FDR) scheme ceased on 29 March 2015 due to budget decisions at the time.

To qualify for Fuel Duty Rebate an applicant had to be a provider of bus services and comply with other scheme conditions as set down by the Department. The key condition was that it operated a stage carriage bus service open to the general public.

TransportNI is not an operator of public transport bus services, and thus was not eligible to join the NI Fuel Duty Rebate scheme.

I have made a case for additional revenue funding for Public Transport in the upcoming Budget and if successful will consider restoring the scheme as part of the Programme for Government target to increase Public Transport.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister for Infrastructure what contingency plans he has to spend the allocation for construction of the new A5 dual carriageway in the event that work is not able to proceed during the current financial year pursuant to the public inquiry in December.

(AQW 6741/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Public Inquiry into the proposed scheme opened as planned on 4 October 2016 and was originally scheduled to finish on 11 November 2016. However, this has been extended until mid December 2016, with the Inspector's Report expected around May 2017. The Report will be considered in detail and then I will make a decision on how the scheme should proceed.

Subject to the successful completion of all the statutory procedures it is anticipated that, in line with the 'Fresh Start' Agreement, construction of Phase 1A, Newbuildings to north of Strabane, could commence in late 2017.

The Public Inquiry had always been envisaged and had been factored into project timescales. The extension of the public inquiry into December does not affect current year financial allocations as construction was always programmed to commence in 2017/18.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister for Infrastructure what contingency plans he has to spend the allocation for construction of the new A6 dual carriageway from Randalstown to Castledawson in the event that work is not able to proceed during the current financial year pursuant to the currently adjourned legal challenge.

(AQW 6742/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: An Application for Leave to hear a Judicial Review was received by the Judicial Review Office in Belfast dated 27 September 2016. My Department is challenging the Leave Application and made strong representations during the initial hearing on the 28 October 2016 to defend its position. The conclusion of the Leave hearing is scheduled for the 21 November 2016, with a judgement on the granting of leave for a Judicial Review expected in the weeks following.

The Leave application refers only to the Toome to Castledawson section of the scheme. Advance works are currently continuing on the Randalstown to Toome section and if the outcome of the hearing goes against my Department, contingency measures are being explored to advance this section to construction in this financial year.

The A6 road scheme was declared one of the Executive's flagship projects in the 2016/17 Budget Statement. To provide funding certainty the Executive has given a commitment to fund this project up to the period 2020-21. The funding for this flagship project, currently provided to my Department for 2016/17, is ring fenced and any easement in this allocation would need to be offered back to the Department of Finance. If I am required to declare an easement on this project, due to extended legal proceedings, I will put forward other opportunities to the Department of Finance that could utilise additional funding in this financial year.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the proposals he plans to bring forward by May 2021 to revise the system of objections to residential parking schemes, so that priority is given specifically to objections with genuine local interest.

(AQW 6743/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I am well aware that despite considerable effort since the former Department for Regional Development (DRD) first drafted a Residents' Parking policy in 2007 it has not been possible to implement any Residents' Parking schemes.

I have asked that my Department's current Residents' Parking policy, and its associated processes for engaging and consulting with the public, inherited from the former DRD, be reviewed and compared against policies and approaches in cities in England and in Dublin to test if they are still appropriate. This work is largely complete and I plan to engage with my officials before the end of November to see what can be done to advance schemes.

I am keen to make progress with this issue and hope to see schemes being implemented well ahead of May 2021.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Infrastructure for a breakdown on how much of the recently announced £15m allocated funding will be used for structural road maintenance.

(AQW 6751/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As part of October monitoring, my Department has been allocated an additional £15m of Capital funding. This funding is targeted entirely on capital structural maintenance activities, primarily resurfacing of roads. Structural Maintenance is the collective term for activities which maintain the integrity of the road and footway structure. The main activities include resurfacing and reconstruction, surface dressing, patching and structural drainage.

TransportNI allocates additional funding to its four Divisions on the basis of need, using a range of weighted indicators, tailored to each maintenance activity i.e. resurfacing, patching etc. Divisions use these indicators when apportioning across council areas to ensure, as far as possible, an equitable distribution of funds.

The additional £15m for structural maintenance activities is to be allocated as follows:

- Northern Division £3.5m
- Southern Division £4.7m
- Eastern Division £2.5m
- Western Division £4.3m

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) who has primary responsibility for clearing leaves from streets; and (ii) how many claims for liability have been linked to fallen leaves for each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 6769/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Local councils have primary responsibility for clearing litter and leaves from public streets. Although fallen leaves may be a contributory factor in some claims, there is no way of identifying claims received by the Department which may be linked to fallen leaves. This is because the system used by the Department to record claims does not have a category specifically related to leaves.

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Infrastructure how many vehicles have failed an MOT test as a result of the presence of bullbars, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6796/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: No vehicles have failed an MOT test as a result of the presence of bullbars in the last five years.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure pursuant to AQW 6068/16-21, whether neighbourhood notifications requires full and accurate details of the development proposal.

(AQW 6865/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The requirements of neighbour notifications are set out in Article 8(2) of the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (NI) 2015. Such a notice must include, amongst other things, a description of the proposed development, its location, the reference number assigned to the application and information on how the application and related plans and drawings may be inspected.

If any person who receives a neighbour notification has an interest in the development that person may view the application on the planning portal or in person at the relevant council office or in the headquarters of my Department if the application is one which the Department is processing.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline why there are low water levels in the Woodburn Reservoirs, Carrickfergus.

(AQW 6953/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The overall storage in the impounding reservoirs that supply Dorisland Water Treatment Works, which include the Woodburn Reservoirs outside Carrickfergus, is typical for the end of the summer period when storage levels are at their lowest point during the year. NI Water has no concerns regarding raw water storage in this area.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline how much funding was allocated to road and footpath maintenance in the financial year 2015/16, broken down by TransportNI division.

(AQW 6956/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department's expenditure in 2015-16 on the structural maintenance of the carriageway and footway network by each TransportNI Division is detailed in the table below.

Division	Outturn 2015-16 £k
Eastern	6,365
Northern	12,470
Southern	16,640
Western	18,574
Total	54,049

Department of Justice

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Justice to outline how many convicted paedophiles have their location listed as unknown and are in breach of their supervision requirements with the PSNI.

(AQW 6520/16-21)

Ms Sugden (The Minister of Justice): Statistical data of this nature is valid at the point in time when it is ascertained and PSNI have indicated that, as at 14 November 2016, there are no convicted sex offenders, for whom they hold risk management responsibility, whose current whereabouts are unknown and who are in breach of their police supervision requirements.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice pursuant to AQW 5517/16-21, to clarify whether investigations have been or will be conducted to ascertain if there is any link between the drugs taken by the four people that became unwell and the recent deaths from drug intake in Coagh and Newtownabbey.

(AQW 6538/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Northern Ireland Prison Service has no authority or the means to conduct such an investigation.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether she plans to hold discussions with the Minister of Health to develop a strategy on Stockholm Syndrome with a view to assisting victims of domestic violence that are unwilling to report abuse or give evidence against abusers, or victims that would seek to defend such abuse, in line with her action against domestic violence.

(AQW 6539/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse' Strategy recognises the barriers to disclosure and reporting and the adverse psychological impact domestic violence and abuse has on victims and survivors. During the extensive consultation and engagement the specific issue of Stockholm Syndrome was not raised.

Whilst I do not envisage the development of a Strategy on this specific issue, I am committed to working with Executive Colleagues to tackle the underreporting of these incidents, which happen for a range of reasons. A series of initiatives continue to be progressed by my Officials, for example, I am creating a new Domestic Abuse Offence, seeking out best practice and working with justice partners to deliver innovative approaches such as the pilot of a court-supervised perpetrator programme.

These initiatives will seek to support victims engaging with the criminal justice system as they can identify, at an early stage, that the abuse they are being subjected to is now a crime. The offence may provide further opportunity to explore the progression of cases with limited evidentiary requirements being put on victims, however there is no doubt that prosecutions are likely to remain challenging.

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Justice to list the invitees for the Parades Commission Meeting in Whiterock/Springfield, held on Wednesday 16 November in BMC E3 Springvale Campus.

(AQW 6645/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Parades Commission is a body independent of Government. I have no involvement in, or knowledge of its business arrangements.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline how many prison officers have been medically returned, per leave year since 2012 to date.

(AQW 6653/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The total number of Prison Officers that have retired early on medical grounds, since 1 February 2012, is 175. This is broken down as follows:

Leave Year	Number of Prison Officers retiring early on medical grounds
1/2/12 - 31/1/13	20
1/2/13 - 31/1/14	21
1/2/14 - 31/1/15	23
1/2/15 - 31/1/16	70
1/2/16 to date	41
Total	175

You will wish to note the leave year runs from 1 February to 31 January and that the figures quoted above include the grades of Custody Prison Officers, Governors, Night Custody Officers, Main Grade Officers, Operation Support Grades, Prisoner Custody Officers, Senior Officers, and Unit Managers.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of children imprisoned (i) that were sentenced following a conviction; (ii) as a result of being remanded formally into custody; and the number of children that are Police and Criminal Evidence admissions, since 2013.

(AQW 6783/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The number of children admitted to custody on sentence, remand and under the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) order are shown in the table below.

Individual children admitted to custody by status, 2012/13 to 2015/16

Year	Number of individual children admitted to custody	Number of individual children admitted to custody		
		Sentence	Remand	PACE
2015/16	163	43	127	115
2014/15	199	52	165	130
2013/14	196	56	154	149
2012/13	211	49	141	145

It is important to highlight that children can be admitted multiple times to custody under each of these categories and can change status between them in one period of imprisonment or during the year, such as from PACE to remand and remand to sentence. In these figures, a child is counted once under each status they have held at any stage during a given year. The sentence, remand and PACE figures therefore sum to more than the number of individual children who were admitted to custody during that year.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Justice to outline when she expects the judgement for the appeal in the case of R v David Lee Stewart.

(AQW 6828/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The timing of the judgment is a matter for the Court of Appeal and therefore not something on which I can comment.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Justice to outline her Department's plans to make Omagh Courthouse accessible for people with disabilities.

(AQW 6830/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Since 2014 the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service has completed the following works to improve the accessibility of Omagh Courthouse:

- the installation of new automated door closures and push pads;
- the installation of new door closures (non-automatic);
- the redesign of the public counter;
- the installation of an induction loop; and
- improvements to the ironmongery.

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service is committed to keep the issue of disability assess under review across the court estate.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail on how many occasions a pardon in legislation in Northern Ireland has been provided in respect of obsolete criminal offences.

(AQW 6903/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I am not aware of any statutory provision, in modern times, for a pardon for obsolete criminal offences.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to outline how the selection process for homosexuals only receiving pardons in respect of obsolete criminal offences promotes equality of opportunity between persons of different sexual orientation, as required of her under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(AQW 6958/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Department must carry out its functions with due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different sexual orientation.

The amendments to the Policing and Crime Bill, originally proposed by Lord Lexden, will provide an opportunity, in this respect, for the Executive and the Assembly to address the historical wrongs suffered by gay and bisexual men who were criminalised over a long period for something that society regards today as normal sexual activity.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice pursuant to AQW 6540/16-21, how many times a Supporting Prisoner at Risk programme was opened and closed, stating the dates and duration of each, whilst Mr Gerard Mulligan was in HMP Maghaberry.

(AQW 6960/16-21)

Ms Sugden: As the support Mr Mulligan received while in Maghaberry Prison will form part of the independent investigation by the Prisoner Ombudsman, it would be inappropriate to provide the details requested.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice how many lay magistrates are in post.

(AQO 645/16-21)

Ms Sugden: There are currently 143 Lay Magistrates in post.

Ms Archibald asked the Minister of Justice to outline her Department's timeframe for legislating on coercive control.

(AQO 647/16-21)

Ms Sugden: My Department has consulted on the potential introduction of a Domestic Abuse offence. My officials attended the Justice Committee on 27 October to present the consultation Summary of Responses report. The report has also been published on the Department of Justice website.

I have previously made clear my intention to introduce a specific Domestic Abuse Offence in Northern Ireland given the widespread support demonstrated through the consultation process. My Officials are now working with key stakeholders to develop the shape of the offence for Northern Ireland. This work will also be informed by benchmarking with other jurisdictions.

I hope to introduce the offence early in the New Year and I recognise that this is a challenging target.

Naturally this will require the support of Assembly and Executive colleagues in taking this process forward.

However, I want to be clear that whilst it is important to legislate as quickly as possible we need to ensure that the new offence is both comprehensive and practical. I know that members of the Justice Committee share this view.

Mr Sheehan asked the Minister of Justice how her Department is addressing the rising levels of hate crime.

(AQO 648/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Hate crime, whatever form it takes, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in our society. I fully acknowledge that some communities have felt more vulnerable at this time when they should be feeling welcome within our society. Advice from the PSNI indicates that there has not been a rise in reported levels of hate crime across most categories, but we know that some crimes go unreported.

It is therefore important that we continue to work to address the underlying causes of hate and intolerance, and support affected individuals and communities where this manifests itself in hate crimes.

Hate and intolerance, more widely, are issues that require an Executive-wide approach if they are to be tackled effectively and I am committed to playing my part in that.

The Executive Office leads on this through the 'Together: Building a United Community' Strategy, and my Department supports their work. I recently met with Junior Ministers Fearon and Ross to discuss how my Department could further support the work they are taking forward to ensure that individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds feel welcome and safe in our community. Further engagement between our Departments will take place over the coming weeks to move this work forward.

In terms of the justice contribution to dealing with hate crime, my Department's Community Safety Strategy sets out our approach to tackling all forms of hate crime and the harm it causes through prevention, awareness, education and support for

victims and communities. To deliver on this commitment, my Department chairs a multi-agency Hate Crime Delivery Group, which takes forward a range of actions from the criminal justice perspective.

Initiatives taken forward by Group members include: the Hate Crime Advocacy Service, which provides personal support to victims; and the Hate Incident Practical Action Scheme which provides personal protection and safety measures to help victims feel safer in their homes.

At a local level, Policing and Community Safety Partnerships deliver targeted projects to respond to the needs of communities impacted by hate crime. In the Belfast area, this includes the 'No Hate Here' initiative, which aims to engage the community in standing up to hate crime; programmes on exploring identity and change; and the establishment of Friendship Clubs.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Justice what research exists that shows the positive or negative outcomes on crime and community relations in areas where there is community funding for addressing paramilitarism and organised crime.
(AQO 650/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Fresh Start agreement and Executive action plan are a new approach to tackling paramilitarism and organised crime. We have not done anything like this before. The action plan is based on the comprehensive Report of the Three Person Panel, which was the product of their extensive consultation, research, and informed consideration of the issues.

Fresh Start, and the Panel report, stress the importance of building capacity and empowering communities to support them in completing the transition away from paramilitary activity. We want to support community programmes aimed at achieving that goal. Of course, such interventions must be effective and we will need to properly evaluate the outcomes achieved. We will be putting in place arrangements to monitor and evaluate the impact of programmes that we provide funding for and I would hope that we will deliver positive outcomes, including in terms of crime and community relations.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Justice what reasons the UK government gave for withholding the £5 million to address paramilitary activity identified as part of the Fresh Start Agreement.
(AQO 652/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The UK Government is not withholding the funding and has been clear that there is a £25 million commitment to the Executive in relation to tackling paramilitarism. We have not sought to draw the funding down for this financial year. The funding remains available to us and we are progressing our plans for implementation which will profile the funding required over future years.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Justice for her assessment of the impact on cross-border crime in the event of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union.
(AQO 653/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Co-operation between PSNI and An Garda Síochána is excellent and it is my aim that this continues to be the case in the Brexit context.

The impact on cross-border crime needs to be understood and my officials are working with operational colleagues on this issue at present. In addition, I meet with Minister Fitzgerald through the IGA arrangements and Brexit implications are part of those discussions.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Justice whether a full disability access assessment will be carried out on Newtownards courthouse.
(AQO 654/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Disabled access at Newtownards Courthouse includes ramped access to the building, power assisted doors and induction loop systems. A platform lift for wheelchair users or persons with reduced mobility allows disabled access to the courtrooms on the first floor. Lift access to the first floor court office is not available, but an area on the ground floor is available for disabled court users to access court office services. There are also disabled toilet facilities and a disabled parking bay within the court precincts.

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service is committed to keep the issue of disability assess under review across the court estate including at Newtownards Courthouse and will be conducting an assessment at Newtownards early in 2017.

Mrs Long asked the Minister of Justice for an update on her response to the report of the working group on fatal foetal abnormality.
(AQO 655/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Health Minister and I received the working group's report on 11 October and are considering its findings and recommendations. When we are both content, the report will be submitted to the Executive for their consideration and then their approval. Decisions on how to proceed will be for the Executive to take.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline who or which agency was the Designated Risk Manager for Leo Hoad whilst in the community up to his most recent offences.

(AQW 7188/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Designated Risk Manager was the Probation Board for Northern Ireland.

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

Friday 4 November 2016

Revised Written Answer

Department for Communities

In Bound Volume 119, page WA 229, replace the answer given for AQW 5590/16-21 with:

Dr Farry asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the timetable, including the period for public consultation, for the formulation of the new Social Strategy.

(AQW 5590/16-21)

Mr Givan (The Minister for Communities): I plan to bring a draft Social Strategy to the Executive with the intention of having it issued for public consultation, subject to Executive approval.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 11 November 2016

Revised Written Answers

Department for Communities

In this Bound Volume, page WA 188, replace the answer given for AQW 5761/16-21 with:

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Finance how he plans to support businesses struggling with rates bills.
(AQW 5761/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir (The Minister of Finance): I will make a statement on this matter in due course.

Department for Infrastructure

In this Bound Volume, page WA 245, replace the answer given for AQW 6131/16-21 with:

Dr Farry asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail from the most recent business case the figures for the economic impact of the proposed investment in relation to (i) the York Street interchange; (ii) the A5; and (iii) the A6.
(AQW 6131/16-21)

Mr Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure): The York Street Interchange, A5 Western Transport Corridor and A6 schemes will provide a positive return on investment. The estimated Benefit to Cost ratio for each scheme is listed in the table below. My Department is progressing two separate projects on the A6 route; the Randalstown to Castledawson and Derry to Dungiven schemes. Figures for both of these have also been included below.

The Benefit to Cost ratio demonstrates the level of return on investment. For example, every £1 spent on York Street Interchange should deliver £2.33 of public, business and user benefits, through improved journey times, accident savings and motoring efficiencies.

The A5 Western Transport Corridor, A6 Randalstown to Castledawson and York Street Interchange schemes utilise an innovative Early Contractor Involvement procurement strategy. Due to the nature of this strategy, it is only the most advanced scheme; A6 Randalstown to Castledawson, that has a finalised business case approved by the Department of Finance. The procurement strategy for the A6 Derry to Dungiven project is currently being developed. The Benefit to Cost ratio for the York Street Interchange, A5 Western Transport Corridor and A6 Derry to Dungiven schemes may therefore change as development continues.

Scheme Name	Benefit to Cost Ratio
York Street Interchange	2.33
A5 Western Transport Corridor	1.88
A6 Randalstown to Castledawson	2.35
A6 Derry to Dungiven	1.35

Journal of Proceedings

Minutes of Proceedings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 7 November 2016

The Assembly met at noon, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Prayers

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Private Members' Business

2.1 Motion: Review of On-Street Parking

Proposed:

That this Assembly believes that the mandatory £90 car parking fine should be reduced significantly; further believes that greater flexibility needs to be introduced to encourage trade across Northern Ireland by allowing for the first 30 minutes of parking to be free of charge across our towns and cities, and for on-street parking time limits to be extended in rural towns and villages; and calls upon the Minister for Infrastructure to review urgently the contract for on-street parking.

Mr E Poots

Mr W Humphrey

Mr G Robinson

Mr A Easton

2.2 Motion: Amendment

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'Assembly' and insert:

'recognises the vital importance of adequate and affordable on-street parking for the growth and development of our town centres; notes the need for the Minister for Infrastructure to review the provisions for on-street parking; calls on the Minister for Infrastructure to carry out an investigation into the reduction of mandatory car parking fines; and further calls on the Minister for Infrastructure to look at options to review on-street car parking fees and times.'

Mr D McAleer

Mr F McCann

Mr S Lynch

Debate ensued.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Ms Ruane) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the amendment was **made** (Division 1).

The Question being put, the motion, as amended, was **carried** without division.

2.3 Motion: Addressing the Past**Proposed:**

That this Assembly believes in a victim-centred approach to addressing the past and that victims and survivors should have a meaningful input to the content and design of legacy proposals; further believes that justice, truth and accountability, acknowledgement and support for victims and survivors are essential elements in a comprehensive approach to the past; notes the comments by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on a public phase on legacy proposals; and calls on the British and Irish Governments for an urgent, renewed effort to conclude legacy issues including the further development of the proposed roles and powers of the Oral History Archive, Historical Investigations Unit, Independent Commission on Information Retrieval and the Implementation and Reconciliation Group and rejects any attempts by state, state agencies, illegal groups and others to evade justice, suppress the truth of and resist accountability for the past.

*Mr C Eastwood
Mr A Attwood
Mr D McCrossan
Ms N Mallon*

2.4 Motion: Amendment 1**Proposed:**

Leave out all after the first 'proposals;' and insert:

'further believes that all parties should work towards an early resolution of these matters; and welcomes the Government's proposals to consult on a way forward.'

*Mr P Frew
Mrs P Cameron
Mr S Douglas*

The debate was suspended for Question Time.

The Speaker took the Chair.

3. Question Time**3.1 The Executive Office**

Questions were put to, and answered by, the First Minister, the Rt. Hon Arlene Foster. The junior Minister, Mr Alastair Ross, also answered a number of questions.

3.2 Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for the Economy, Mr Simon Hamilton, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

4. Question for Urgent Oral Answer**4.1 United Airlines**

The Minister for the Economy, Mr Simon Hamilton, responded to a Question for Urgent Oral Answer tabled by Ms Sinéad Bradley.

5. Matter of the Day**5.1 Violent Incidents in West Belfast on 6 November 2016**

Mr Alex Attwood made a statement, under Standing Order 24, in relation to Violent Incidents in West Belfast on 6 November 2016. Other Members were also called to speak on the matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy) took the Chair.

6. Private Members' Business (cont'd)

6.1 Motion: Amendment 2

Proposed:

Insert after 'issues':

'prior to any public consultation'

Mr G Kelly

Ms J McCann

Mr R McCartney

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, Amendment 1 **fell** (Division 2).

The Question being put, Amendment 2 **fell** (Division 3).

The Question being put, the motion was **carried** without division.

7. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 5.50pm.

Mr Robin Newton

The Speaker

7 November 2016

Northern Ireland Assembly

7 November 2016

Division 1

Motion – Review of On-Street Parking (Amendment)

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'Assembly' and insert:

'recognises the vital importance of adequate and affordable on-street parking for the growth and development of our town centres; notes the need for the Minister for Infrastructure to review the provisions for on-street parking; calls on the Minister for Infrastructure to carry out an investigation into the reduction of mandatory car parking fines; and further calls on the Minister for Infrastructure to look at options to review on-street car parking fees and times.'

Mr D McAleer

Mr F McCann

Mr S Lynch

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 57

Noes: 32

AYES

Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Ms Archibald, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Ms Dillon, Mrs Dobson, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Ford, Ms Gildernew, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Long, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Mr McGlone, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Mr McKee, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Mullan, Mr Murphy, Mr Nesbitt, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Ms Seeley, Mr Smith, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Lynch, Mr F McCann.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lyons, Mr McCausland, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan, Mr Robinson.

The following Members voted in both Lobbies and are therefore not counted in the result:

Mr Agnew, Ms Bailey

The Amendment was **made**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

7 November 2016

Division 2

Motion – Addressing the Past (Amendment 1)

Proposed:

Leave out all after the first ‘proposals;’ and insert:

‘further believes that all parties should work towards an early resolution of these matters; and welcomes the Government’s proposals to consult on a way forward.’

Mr P Frew
Mrs P Cameron
Mr S Douglas

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 34

Noes: 59

AYES

Mr Anderson, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lyons, Mr McCausland, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Poots, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McQuillan, Mr Robinson.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Ms Archibald, Ms Armstrong, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Ms Dillon, Mrs Dobson, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Ford, Ms Gildernew, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mrs Long, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Mr McGlone, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Mr McKee, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Mullan, Mr Murphy, Mr Nesbitt, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr O’Dowd, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McGrath, Mr Mullan.

The following Member voted in both Lobbies and is therefore not counted in the result:

Mr Allister.

Amendment 1 **fell**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

7 November 2016

Division 3

Motion – Addressing the Past (Amendment 2)

Proposed:

Insert after 'issues':

'prior to any public consultation'

Mr G Kelly

Ms J McCann

Mr R McCartney

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 46

Noes: 47

AYES

Mr Agnew, Ms Archibald, Ms Armstrong, Ms Bailey, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Carroll, Mr Dickson, Ms Dillon, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Ford, Ms Gildernew, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mrs Long, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Mr McGlone, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Mullan, Mr Murphy, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr O'Dowd, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Ms Sugden.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Kelly, Mr McCartney.

NOES

Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mr Butler, Mrs Cameron, Mr Chambers, Mr Clarke, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lyons, Mr McCausland, Mr McKee, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Poots, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Smith, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan, Mr Robinson.

Amendment 2 **fell**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 26 October 2016 – 7 November 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

Report on an Unannounced Inspection of Hydebank Wood Secure College: 9-19 May 2016 (Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland) (DoJ).

Report on an Unannounced Inspection of Ash House Women's Prison Hydebank Wood: 9-19 May 2016 (DoJ).

Legislative Consent Memorandum: Policing and Crime Bill (DoJ).

Legislative Consent Memorandum: Higher Education and Research Bill (DfE).

Annual Report on the Social Fund 2015-16 (DfC).

Legislative Consent Memorandum: Health Service Medical Supplies (Costs) Bill (DoH).

Local Government Staff Commission Annual Report and Accounts 2015-16 (DfC).

Legislative Consent Memorandum: Policing and Crime Bill (DoJ) (withdrawn and relaid).

5. Assembly Reports

6. Statutory Rules

SR 2016/386 The Attorney General's Human Rights Guidance (Cooperation and Operational Independence) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (Attorney General for Northern Ireland).

SR 2016/389 The Welfare Supplementary Payment (Benefit Cap) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfC).

SR 2016/390 The Child Support (Deduction from Earnings Orders Amendment and Modification and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfC).

SR 2016/391 The Further Education (Governing Body of Institution of Further Education) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfE).

SR 2016/392 The Groganstown Road, Belfast (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfI).

SR 2016/393 The Social Security (Great Britain Reciprocal Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfC).

7. Written Ministerial Statements

Draft Programme for Government Public Consultation (TEO).

8. Consultation Documents

Programme for Government Consultation Document (TEO).

9. Departmental Publications

10. Agency Publications

11. Westminster Publications

12. Miscellaneous Publications

Press Recognition Panel: Annual Report on the Recognition System (Press Recognition Panel).

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 8 November 2016

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Prayers

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Executive Committee Business

2.1 Motion – Child Support (Deduction Orders and Fees) (Amendment and Modification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

Proposed:

That the Child Support (Deduction Orders and Fees) (Amendment and Modification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister for Communities

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

3. Private Members' Business

3.1 Motion – Ending All Forms of Paramilitarism

Proposed:

That this Assembly believes that, 18 years after the Good Friday Agreement, all paramilitary organisations should have ceased to exist; notes the Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland and the lacklustre response from the Executive; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Minister of Justice to produce a substantive response to the report which contains clear targets, timescales and resources for implementation, identifies which Departments have responsibility for specific actions, and commits to developing a protocol on state and public sector engagement with individuals with perceived paramilitary connections.

Mr S Dickson

Mr T Lunn

Dr S Farry

3.2 Motion: Amendment 1**Proposed:**

Leave out all after 'believes' and insert:

'that twenty-two years on from the ceasefires, and eighteen years since the Good Friday Agreement, all paramilitary organisations should have ceased to exist; condemns all paramilitary activities; notes the Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland and the lacklustre response from the Executive; regrets that the Executive has allocated only £3.8 million of a potential budget line of £10 million in this financial year; further notes the statement of the Minister of Finance that British Government funding to address paramilitary activity will not be released until the Executive agrees a more detailed Action Plan on Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Minister of Justice to rectify the inadequacies of the Action Plan by producing a substantive response to the report which contains clear targets, timescales and resources for implementation, identifies which Departments have responsibility for specific actions, and commits to developing a protocol on state and public sector engagement with individuals with perceived paramilitary connections.'

*Mr C Eastwood
Mr R McPhillips
Mr M Nesbitt
Mr D Beattie*

3.3 Motion: Amendment 2**Proposed:**

Leave out all after 'Groups' and insert:

'and the publication of an Executive Action Plan; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Minister of Justice to ensure the full and robust implementation of all forty-three recommendations in a manner that aligns resources with needs, is prompt and innovative, engages and empowers communities, builds unequivocal commitment to the rule of law, supports transition, tackles criminality and that addresses the systemic issues that perpetuate paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime.'

*Mr G Kelly
Ms J McCann
Mr P McGuigan*

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone) took the Chair.

The Question being put, Amendment 1 **fell** (Division 1).

The Question being put, Amendment 2 was **made** (Division 2).

The sitting was suspended at 12.57pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Principal Deputy Speaker (Ms Ruane) in the Chair.

4. Question Time**4.1 Finance**

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Finance, Mr Máirtín Ó Muilleoir.

4.2 Health

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Health, Mrs Michelle O'Neill.

5. Private Members' Business (cont'd)

5.1 Motion: Ending All Forms of Paramilitarism (cont'd)

The Question being put, the motion, as amended, was carried without division.

5.2 Motion: Legacy Inquests

Proposed:

That this Assembly endorses the five-year plan, advanced by the Lord Chief Justice in consultation with victims' families, to deal with the backlog in legacy inquests; and calls on the British Government, in recognition of its obligations under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to provide the funding required.

Mr D Kearney

Ms M Boyle

Mr P Sheehan

Ms J McCann

5.3 Motion: Amendment 1

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'Assembly' and insert:

'notes the five-year plan, advanced by the Lord Chief Justice in consultation with victims' families, to deal with the backlog in legacy inquests; cautions against a continued hierarchy of investigations; further notes that the closure of the Historical Enquiries Team has left a large number of people without access to any review or investigation into their loved one's murder; and calls on the Executive to bring forward proposals that are fair, balanced, impartial and proportionate.'

Mr M Nesbitt

Mr D Kennedy

Mr D Beattie

5.4 Motion: Amendment 2

Proposed:

Insert after 'inquests;':

'notes the call of the Lord Chief Justice that the local Executive, legislature and the British Government should, as a matter of urgency, play their part in the release of monies; further notes that the Executive has failed to agree a request to the British Government to release funding further to the Stormont House Agreement proposals;'

Mr A Attwood

Mr D McCrossan

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone) took the Chair.

The Question being put, Amendment 1 **fell** (Division 3).

The Question being put, Amendment 2 **fell** (Division 4).

The Question being put, the motion **fell** (Division 5).

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy) took the Chair.

6. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

Mr Gordon Dunne spoke to his topic regarding Improvements to A2 Dual Carriageway Junctions in North Down.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.32pm.

Mr Robin Newton

The Speaker

8 November 2016

Northern Ireland Assembly

8 November 2016

Division 1

Motion – Ending All Forms of Paramilitarism (Amendment 1)

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'believes' and insert:

'that twenty-two years on from the ceasefires, and eighteen years since the Good Friday Agreement, all paramilitary organisations should have ceased to exist; condemns all paramilitary activities; notes the Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland and the lacklustre response from the Executive; regrets that the Executive has allocated only £3.8 million of a potential budget line of £10 million in this financial year; further notes the statement of the Minister of Finance that British Government funding to address paramilitary activity will not be released until the Executive agrees a more detailed Action Plan on Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Minister of Justice to rectify the inadequacies of the Action Plan by producing a substantive response to the report which contains clear targets, timescales and resources for implementation, identifies which Departments have responsibility for specific actions, and commits to developing a protocol on state and public sector engagement with individuals with perceived paramilitary connections.'

*Mr C Eastwood
Mr R McPhillips
Mr M Nesbitt
Mr D Beattie*

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 36

Noes: 57

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Durkan, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Hanna, Mr Kennedy, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr McCrossan, Mr McGrath, Mr McKee, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Mullan, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Butler, Mr McNulty.

NOES

Mr Anderson, Ms Archibald, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Ms Dillon, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Ms Fearon, Mr Frew, Ms Gildernew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Mr McElduff, Mr McGuigan, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr Maskey, Mr Middleton, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Murphy, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Poots, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Ms Ruane, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Kelly, Mr Robinson.

Amendment 1 **fell**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

8 November 2016

Division 2

Motion – Ending All Forms of Paramilitarism (Amendment 2)

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'Groups' and insert:

'and the publication of an Executive Action Plan; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Minister of Justice to ensure the full and robust implementation of all forty-three recommendations in a manner that aligns resources with needs, is prompt and innovative, engages and empowers communities, builds unequivocal commitment to the rule of law, supports transition, tackles criminality and that addresses the systemic issues that perpetuate paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime.'

*Mr G Kelly
Ms J McCann
Mr P McGuigan*

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 56

Noes: 36

AYES

Mr Anderson, Ms Archibald, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Ms Dillon, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Ms Fearon, Mr Frew, Ms Gildernew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Mr McElduff, Mr McGuigan, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr Maskey, Mr Middleton, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Murphy, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Poots, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Ms Ruane, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Kelly, Ms J McCann.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Durkan, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Hanna, Mr Kennedy, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr McCrossan, Mr McGrath, Mr McKee, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Mullan, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Dickson, Mr Lyttle.

Amendment 2 was **made**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

8 November 2016

Division 3

Motion – Legacy Inquests (Amendment 1)

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'Assembly' and insert:

'notes the five-year plan, advanced by the Lord Chief Justice in consultation with victims' families, to deal with the backlog in legacy inquests; cautions against a continued hierarchy of investigations; further notes that the closure of the Historical Enquiries Team has left a large number of people without access to any review or investigation into their loved one's murder; and calls on the Executive to bring forward proposals that are fair, balanced, impartial and proportionate.'

*Mr M Nesbitt
Mr D Kennedy
Mr D Beattie*

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 15

Noes: 73

AYES

Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Butler, Mr Chambers, Mrs Dobson, Mr Kennedy, Mr McKee, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Aiken, Mr Kennedy.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Anderson, Ms Archibald, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Carroll, Mr Clarke, Mr Dickson, Ms Dillon, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Durkan, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Ms Gildernew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mr Hamilton, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Mr McElduff, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Mr McQuillan, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Middleton, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Mullan, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Poots, Mr Ross, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Kearney, Mr Sheehan.

Amendment 1 **fell**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

8 November 2016

Division 4

Motion – Legacy Inquests (Amendment 2)

Proposed:

Insert after 'inquests;':

'notes the call of the Lord Chief Justice that the local Executive, legislature and the British Government should, as a matter of urgency, play their part in the release of monies; further notes that the Executive has failed to agree a request to the British Government to release funding further to the Stormont House Agreement proposals;'

Mr A Attwood

Mr D McCrossan

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 20

Noes: 68

AYES

Mr Agnew, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Carroll, Mr Dickson, Mr Durkan, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Hanna, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr McGrath, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Mullan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McGrath, Mr Mullan.

NOES

Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Ms Archibald, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mr Butler, Mrs Cameron, Mr Chambers, Mr Clarke, Ms Dillon, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Ms Fearon, Mr Frew, Ms Gildernew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Mr McElduff, Mr McGuigan, Mr McKee, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr Maskey, Mr Middleton, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mrs O'Neill, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Poots, Mr Ross, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Smith, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Kearney, Mr Sheehan.

Amendment 2 **fell**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

8 November 2016

Division 5

Motion – Legacy Inquests

Proposed:

That this Assembly endorses the five-year plan, advanced by the Lord Chief Justice in consultation with victims' families, to deal with the backlog in legacy inquests; and calls on the British Government, in recognition of its obligations under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to provide the funding required.

Mr D Kearney

Ms M Boyle

Mr P Sheehan

Ms J McCann

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 43

Noes: 45

AYES

Mr Agnew, Ms Archibald, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Carroll, Mr Dickson, Ms Dillon, Mr Durkan, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Ford, Ms Gildernew, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McElduff, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Mullan, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mrs O'Neill, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Ms Sugden.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Kearney, Mr Sheehan.

NOES

Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mr Butler, Mrs Cameron, Mr Chambers, Mr Clarke, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mr Hamilton, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lyons, Mr McCausland, Mr McKee, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Poots, Mr Ross, Mr Smith, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Aiken, Mr McQuillan.

The motion **fell**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 8 November 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
Legislative Consent Memorandum: Savings (Government Contributions) Bill (DfC).
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules
SR 2016/394 The Public Use of the Records (Management and Fees) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfC).
7. Written Ministerial Statements
8. Consultation Documents
9. Departmental Publications
Managing Emergency Hospital Admissions (NIAO).
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.

Proceedings as at 8 November 2016

2016-2021 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
Budget (No.2) Bill 1/16-21	13.06.16	14.06.16	/	/	20.06.16	21.06.16	27.06.16	29.07.16
Assembly Members (Reduction of Numbers) Bill 76/11-16	12/01/16	25/01/16	/	/	02.02.16	16.02.16	23.02.16	22.07.16
Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill 2/16-21	19/09/16	27/09/16	15/11/16					

2016-2021 Mandate

Non-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

/ Bills progressing by accelerated passage

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 14 November 2016

The Assembly met at noon, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Prayers

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Committee Business

2.1 **Motion: Extension of Committee Stage – Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 02/16-21)**

Proposed:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 23 February 2017, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 02/16-21).

Chairperson, Committee for Communities

Debate ensued.

*The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.*

3. Private Members' Business

3.1 **Motion: Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together and Systems, Not Structures: Changing Health and Social Care**

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the publication of Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together and Systems, Not Structures: Changing Health and Social Care.

Mrs J Dobson

Mr R Butler

3.2 **Motion: Amendment**

Proposed:

At end insert:

'; further notes that these reforms are based on expert analysis and must be implemented in a holistic manner without delay; and calls on the Minister to provide a detailed action plan for the implementation of the proposed reforms over the current Assembly term.'

Ms P Bradshaw

Dr S Farry

Mr S Dickson

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the amendment was **made** without division.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

3.3 Motion: Sporting Events and Activity-based Tourism

Proposed:

That this Assembly welcomes the success that the Executive has had in attracting major sporting events in recent years and attracting visitors engaged in sports tourism; notes the high value economic benefit that can arise from events-based and activity-based sports tourism; and calls on the Minister for the Economy, through his Department, agencies and the new tourism strategy to promote and encourage growth in this sector.

*Mr M Storey
Mr T Buchanan
Mr G Dunne
Mr G Lyons*

The debate was suspended for Question Time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy) took the Chair.

4. Question Time

4.1 Infrastructure

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Infrastructure, Mr Chris Hazzard.

4.2 Justice

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Justice, Ms Claire Sugden.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Ms Ruane) took the Chair.

5. Private Members' Business (cont'd)

5.1 Motion: Amendment

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'Executive' and insert:

' , tourist agencies and sporting organisations have had in attracting major sporting events in recent years and attracting visitors engaged in sports tourism; notes the high value economic benefit that can arise from events-based and activity-based sports tourism; further notes the failure to publish a Tourism Strategy in the 2011-16 mandate; and calls on the Executive to agree and publish urgently a Tourism Strategy, which addresses the capital, resource, marketing, skills and training requirements of the sports events and tourism sector, to enable the Minister for the Economy, his Department, tourism agencies and sporting organisations to deliver real and sustainable growth in this sector.'

*Ms S Bradley
Mr J McNulty
Mr G Mullan*

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the amendment **fell** (Division).

The Question being put, the Motion was carried without division.

6. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.14pm.

Mr Robin Newton

The Speaker

14 November 2016

Northern Ireland Assembly

14 November 2016

Division

Motion: Sporting Events and Activity-based Tourism (Amendment)

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'Executive' and insert:

'; tourist agencies and sporting organisations have had in attracting major sporting events in recent years and attracting visitors engaged in sports tourism; notes the high value economic benefit that can arise from events-based and activity-based sports tourism; further notes the failure to publish a Tourism Strategy in the 2011-16 mandate; and calls on the Executive to agree and publish urgently a Tourism Strategy, which addresses the capital, resource, marketing, skills and training requirements of the sports events and tourism sector, to enable the Minister for the Economy, his Department, tourism agencies and sporting organisations to deliver real and sustainable growth in this sector.'

Ms S Bradley

Mr J McNulty

Mr G Mullan

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 38

Noes: 56

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Durkan, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Hanna, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCrossan, Mr McGlone, Mr McGrath, Mr McKee, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Mullan, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McNulty, Mr Mullan.

NOES

Mr Anderson, Ms Archibald, Mr Bell, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Ms Dillon, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Ms Gildernew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Mr McElduff, Mr McGuigan, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr Maskey, Mr Middleton, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Murphy, Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Stalford, Ms Sugden, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan, Mr Robinson.

The Amendment **fell**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 9 November 2016 – 14 November 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
The Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland (NICCY) Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2016 (DfC).
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules
SR 2016/395 The Energy Performance of Buildings (Certificates and Inspections) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DoF).
SR 2016/396 The Civil Legal Services (Remuneration) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DoJ).
SR 2016/397 The Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings (Costs) (Amendment No. 3) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DoJ).
SR 2016/398 The Magistrates' Courts and County Court Appeals (Criminal Legal Aid) (Costs) (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DoJ).
7. Written Ministerial Statements
York Street Interchange Project - Publication of Notice of Intention to Proceed and Making of the Designation Order (DfI).
8. Consultation Documents
9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 15 November 2016

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Prayers

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Private Members' Business

2.1 Motion: Middletown Centre for Autism

Proposed:

That this Assembly is deeply concerned by the failure to provide residential assessments and therapies at the Middletown Centre for Autism; believes that this represents a setback for Autism services across the island of Ireland; and calls on the Minister of Education to work with his Executive colleagues and the Minister for Education and Skills to evaluate the development of Middletown Centre for Autism, to renew their commitment to the original priorities of the Middletown Centre for Autism and ensure that all services are fully funded.

Mr B McElduff

Ms C Seeley

Ms J McCann

Debate ensued.

The Motion was, by leave, **withdrawn**.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Ms Ruane) took the Chair.

2.2 Motion: Nurture Provision

Proposed:

That this Assembly welcomes the report by the Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation at Queen's University, Belfast, entitled The impact and cost-effectiveness of Nurture Groups in Primary Schools in Northern Ireland; welcomes the commitment of the Minister of Education to continuing to fund the thirty-two nurture units across Northern Ireland; and calls on the Minister of Education to examine potential options to mainstream nurture provision within the current education budget.

Lord Morrow

Mr D Hilditch

Ms C Lockhart

Mr P Logan

2.3 Motion: Amendment 1**Proposed:**

Leave out all after the second 'Northern Ireland;' and insert:

'recognises the role effective early years' interventions can play in reducing the need for Nurture Units; and calls on the Minister of Education to examine potential options to develop a universal early years education provision.'

Mr S Agnew

2.4 Motion: Amendment 2**Proposed:**

Leave out all after the second 'Northern Ireland;' and insert:

'and, as recommended in the report by Queen's University, calls on the Minister of Education to ensure that a sustainable funding model is put in place for the longer term viability of nurture group provision, to plan the further expansion of nurture provision in each primary school sector targeted in the areas of greatest need, to develop appropriate training for staff and to conduct research into models for the delivery of nurture provision.'

Mr C McGrath

Mr M Durkan

Mr A Attwood

Debate ensued.

The sitting was suspended at 12.59pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone) in the Chair.

3. Question Time**3.1 Education**

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Education, Mr Peter Weir.

3.2 Communities

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Communities, Mr Paul Givan.

The Speaker took the Chair.

4. Question for Urgent Oral Answer**4.1 York Street Interchange Project**

The Minister for Infrastructure, Mr Chris Hazzard, responded to a Question for Urgent Oral Answer tabled by Ms Kellie Armstrong.

4.2 Mental Health Waiting Times

The Minister of Health, Mrs Michelle O'Neill, responded to a Question for Urgent Oral Answer tabled by Mr Mark Durkan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy) took the Chair.

5. Private Members' Business (cont'd)

5.1 Motion: Nurture Provision (cont'd)

Debate resumed.

Amendment 1 was, by leave, **withdrawn**.

The Question being put, Amendment 2 was **made** without division.

The Question being put, the Motion as amended, was **carried** without division.

The Speaker took the Chair.

6. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

Ms Linda Dillon spoke to her topic regarding the Proposed Closure of the Cookstown Social Security Office.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.54pm.

Mr Robin Newton

The Speaker

15 November 2016

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 15 November 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
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules
SR 2016/416 Draft The Civil Legal Services (Scope) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DoJ).
7. Written Ministerial Statements
8. Consultation Documents
9. Departmental Publications
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.

Proceedings as at 15 November 2016

2016-2021 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
Budget (No.2) Bill 1/16-21	13.06.16	14.06.16	/	/	20.06.16	21.06.16	27.06.16	29.07.16
Assembly Members (Reduction of Numbers) Bill 76/11-16	12/01/16	25/01/16	/	/	02.02.16	16.02.16	23.02.16	22.07.16
Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill 2/16-21	19/09/16	27/09/16	23/02/17					

2016-2021 Mandate

Non-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

/ Bills progressing by accelerated passage

