

NICCY Summary: NI Assembly Written Answers for Week Ending 7th February 2014

- **Work Placements for Young People**
- **Delivering Social Change Framework: South Tyrone**
- **Childcare Strategy**
- **Child Poverty Act**
- **Children's Services**
- **Boxing Clubs: Child Protection Obligations**
- **Blind and Visually Impaired Children and Young People**
- **Looked After Children and Young People**
- **Personal Education Plans**
- **Educational Psychology Services**
- **Suspensions and Expulsions**
- **Schools Enhancement Programme**
- **Shared Education**
- **Strategy for 14-19 Year Olds**
- **Free School Meals**

- **RPA: Update**
- **January Monitoring Round**
- **January Monitoring Round**
- **Looked After Children Enrolled in Universities**
- **Legislation Banning Smoking in Cars**
- **Looked After Children: Personal Education Plan**
- **Families Matter Strategy**
- **Separated Fathers**
- **Mental Health Service Provision: North Down**
- **Looked After Child: Residential Care Home**
- **Family Fund Grant Scheme**
- **HM Young Offenders Centre Hydebank Wood**
- **Welfare Reform**

Work Placements for Young People

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the establishment of an additional 10,000 work placements for young people, including the timescale for implementation.

(AQW 28060/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Following the hugely successful United Youth Design Day with young people, voluntary and community organisations and other stakeholders on 23 January, we intend to draw upon contributions at that event to inform the final design of the Programme. In addition, the Department for Employment and Learning has agreed to take on the Senior Responsible Owner role for the project and a dedicated United Youth advisor has been appointed and took up post on 13 January 2014. A joint OFMDFM/DEL design paper will now be prepared for Ministers for consideration.

[Back to Top](#)

Delivering Social Change Framework: South Tyrone

Ms McGahan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Delivering Social Change Framework in South Tyrone, including the impact it is having on addressing poverty and disadvantage.

(AQW 29887/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Delivering Social Change Framework was set up to tackle poverty and social exclusion. It represents a new level of joined-up working across Government to achieve tangible, long lasting social benefits for everyone, in particular those who need it most, across all constituencies. The early work of the Delivering Social Change has focused on the identification of the needs of children and families to ensure the most urgent and significant problems in our society are addressed.

The initial six Signature Programmes announced in October 2012 are focusing on early interventions both to tackle issues before they develop into problems and to give children a good start in life, for example pre-natal interventions, early years interventions and programmes for those who are not in education, training or employment. Significant progress has been made in relation to these programmes and they are beginning to make a real impact. Information in relation to activities taking place in the Fermanagh and South Tyrone area has been placed in the Library of the Assembly.

Whilst these programmes are important to the Delivering Social Change framework they will not alone eradicate ‘wicked’ issues such as poor health, low educational attainment and chronic unemployment. Reducing inter-generational poverty can only be achieved by all Ministers working together with a longer term view to the next Programme for Government period and the years beyond. In recognition of this, structures have been put in place under the Delivering Social Change framework to look specifically at how the Executive can improve the long-term quality of life for our communities in the areas of health, education, employment, family and community life and cohesion. It is only through a more joined up approach that changes in children’s lives are achievable. In doing so, we believe we can help break the cycle of multi-generational poverty that blights so many communities across our society.

[Back to Top](#)

Childcare Strategy

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Childcare Strategy.
(AQW 30112/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: On 25 September 2013 we launched the first phase of Bright Start – the Executive’s Programme for Affordable and Integrated Childcare. The first phase of Bright Start sets out a strategic direction for the Childcare Strategy along with 15 key first actions that will be put in place to address the main childcare priorities identified during consultation and research. All of the key first actions will be initiated before the end of the current financial year.

[Back to Top](#)

Child Poverty Act

Mr F McCann asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of whether the targets set out in the Child Poverty Act will be achieved.

(AQO 5378/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The UK Child Poverty Act 2010 makes it the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that targets in relation to relative low income, combined low income and material deprivation, absolute low income and persistent poverty are met by 2020. The Act requires us to publish a child poverty strategy which sets out the measures which our departments propose to take for the purpose of contributing to the compliance by the Secretary of State to meet the targets above and for the purpose of ensuring that children here do not experience socio-economic disadvantage. The Act also requires us to report annually on the measures taken by our departments in accordance with the strategy, the effects of those measures in contributing to meeting the targets above and other effects of those measures that contribute to the purpose above. We are also required to review our strategy and publish a revised strategy every three years. We have met all of the requirements of the Child Poverty Act set out above which fall to our administration. We have not made an assessment of whether the targets which fall to the Secretary of State will be met.

On 20 January, we launched a new strategy Delivering Social Change for Children and Young People for public consultation. This represents a new Outcomes Based Approach, which uses additional indicators, in addition to the targets set out in the Child Poverty Act, to measure the impact of our actions to tackle child poverty.

[Back to Top](#)

Children's Services

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the introduction of a statutory duty on government departments and public bodies to co-operate on children's services, in relation to her Department's work to improve outcomes for children.

(AQO 5452/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Children and young people make up a significant part of our rural community and Northern Ireland also has one of the youngest populations in Europe. It is vital for all of us in Government to deliver for our young people, and as DARD Minister this is an area that is very close to my heart.

My Department is fully committed to the statutory Section 75 duties to promote equality across our business functions; and age is one of the nine equality duties specifically mentioned. Our Equality Scheme sets out how we will engage with stakeholders and sectoral interest groups to hear their views and my Department also works closely with other government departments and others in taking forward a range of cross-cutting strategies, policies and initiatives. The introduction of a statutory duty on public authorities here will help underpin the existing collaboration that takes place and encourage further joined-up working and where possible, the sharing of resources across government too.

[Back to Top](#)

Boxing Clubs: Child Protection Obligations

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether all boxing clubs are now wholly compliant with child protection obligations.

(AQW 30148/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The governing body for boxing in the north of Ireland, the Ulster Provincial Boxing Council (UPBC) has responsibility for ensuring that all boxing clubs affiliated to it are compliant with child protection obligations. The recent report from the Independent Working Group, set up to examine boxing in Ulster, highly commended the work of the UPBC to ensure that coaches, other representatives and volunteers are vetted and can operate safely within the sport. Furthermore, the Group recommended that the UPBC continue to adhere strictly to the child protection policy and procedures to maintain standards at the highest possible level. I am aware that the UPBC has a requirement that

any person seeking a coaching or judges award must agree to attend a ‘Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport’ workshop and complete an Access NI vetting check. I have been advised that over 1,000 Access NI checks have been administered by the UBPC for coaches and officials in regulated activity. Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, will continue to provide support to governing bodies, including the UPBC, on their child protection obligations. In addition, Sport NI has processes in place to ensure that any boxing clubs, who apply for direct funding, comply with child protection obligations.

[Back to Top](#)

Blind and Visually Impaired Children and Young People

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education to outline the timescale for a cross-departmental review into the provision of habitation services in blind and visually impaired children and young people.

(AQW 30245/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: As part of the Action Plan 2014-2016 contained in the Royal National Institute of the Blind’s Vision Strategy for the north of Ireland, Visually Impaired sector organisations have agreed to pursue a statutory review of habilitation services for blind and partially sighted children including referral pathways.

[Back to Top](#)

Looked After Children and Young People

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of looked after children and young people in each Education and Library Board.

(AQW 30283/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: The most up-to-date validated figures for looked after children relate to the 2012/13 school year; these are detailed in the table overleaf. Updated 2013/14 figures will be available following the completion of the annual school census which is currently being undertaken.

‘Looked after’ pupils by Education and Library Board - 2012/13

Education & Library Board	Looked After Children	Total Enrolments	% of Pupils that are looked after
Belfast	223	57,396	0.4%
Western	254	56,572	0.4%
North Eastern	366	72,165	0.5%
South Eastern	315	63,077	0.5%
Southern	293	75,045	0.4%
Total	1,451	324,255	0.4%

Source: NI school census

Note:

1. Figures include pupils in nursery schools, primary (including nursery, reception and year 1-7 classes), post primary and special schools.
2. ‘Looked after children’ includes children defined in ‘The Children (NI) Order 1995’, i.e., ‘a child who is looked after by an authority is a reference to a child who is—
(a) in the care of the authority; or
(b) provided with accommodation by the authority.’ This includes children who are fostered
3. ELB refers to the school location rather than the ELB in which the pupil is resident.

[Back to Top](#)

Personal Education Plans

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education for an update on the implementation of Personal Education Plans for looked after children and young people.
(AQW 30284/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: My Department co-chairs the Regional Personal Education Plan (PEP) Implementation Group, which is representative of the Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs), Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the Youth Justice Agency.

Following the first year of PEP implementation, feedback from schools, social workers and young people suggested that the PEP should be refined. Work is now underway to do this and to revise the associated guidance. My expectations for looked after children are no less than for any other child. Given the potential impact of robust PEPs on raising educational attainment for looked after children, I have provided funding for substitute teacher costs to release teachers from the classroom to complete PEPs and to attend looked after children review meetings.

[Back to Top](#)

Educational Psychology Services

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education what is the unit cost of Educational Psychology services in each Education and Library Board.
(AQW 30288/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised that the unit cost of Educational Psychology services, in the 2012/13 financial year, was as follows:-

	Unit Cost
BELB	£32
NEELB	£26
SEELB	£34
SELB	£27
WELB	£29

The above figures have been calculated based on costs in respect of both core and earmarked funding for psychology services and psychology administration.

[Back to Top](#)

Suspensions and Expulsions

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of pupil

- (i) suspensions; and
- (ii) expulsions in each Education and Library Board in each of the last three years.

(AQW 30338/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department publishes statistics on pupil suspensions and expulsions on its website. The information is provided annually by the Education and Library Boards (ELBs). The table below details the number of pupil suspensions in each ELB in each of the last three years.

Suspensions

ELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
BELB	835	816	757
WELB	746	753	630
NEELB	1,045	866	800
SEELB	879	828	788
SELB	735	616	581
Total	4,240	3,879	3,556

The table below details the total number of school expulsions which have occurred in each of the last three years. This information cannot be broken down by individual ELB as the numbers involved are so small that doing so would carry a high risk of allowing individual pupils to be identified. This position reflects the Statistics Authority Code of Practice on Official Statistics, in particular Principle 5, relating to confidentiality.

Expulsions

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Totals	38	24	19

[Back to Top](#)

Schools Enhancement Programme

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education for an update on the Schools Enhancement Programme.

(AQO 5475/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: There are currently 51 applications to the Schools Enhancement Programme (SEP) going through Economic Appraisals to ensure any investment that is made represents best value for the public purse. As detailed within the SEP Protocol, and in recognition of the range of infrastructure issues facing schools, the programme will consider proposals within one of 3 streams: rationalisation proposals; insufficient accommodation to meet educational needs; and significant accommodation inadequacies. Proposals considered as having met the necessary criteria will be considered and ranked within each work stream. An announcement of projects which will receive funding, and the level of that funding will be made in due course.

[Back to Top](#)

Shared Education

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Education how shared education is being enhanced in the Area Planning process.

(AQO 5476/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: As the member will be aware my Department has a strong commitment to Shared Education as witnessed by the commitments made in the Programme for Government. I believe the work that I and my Department have been undertaking on a range of fronts will help to advance Shared Education here.

In relation to Area Planning the Terms of Reference I set require engagement by all sectors. They explicitly encourage creative and innovative solutions, including opportunities for shared schooling across sectors. The Area Planning Guidance emphasise my commitment to shared education and that in bringing forward area solutions or proposals I expect the Planning Authorities to explore opportunities for sharing at all levels.

I would take the opportunity to remind members that in addition to moving forward with the recommendations flowing from the work of the Advisory Group on shared education, I recently launched the Shared Education Campuses Programme. As part of the “Together: Building a United Community Strategy” this programme will help provide shared education facilities as part of delivering sustainable long term area provision.

[Back to Top](#)

Strategy for 14-19 Year Olds

Mr Douglas asked the Minister of Education for an update on the development of a strategy for 14-19 year olds in conjunction with the Minister for Employment and Learning. (AQO 5478/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: I will continue to work closely with my colleague the Minister for Employment and Learning on issues that affect the education and training of our young people. We both agree that the needs of our young people must be put first and that the coherent and joined up delivery of our respective policies is of a high priority. I regularly meet with the Minister for Employment and Learning to discuss how we can achieve even better cooperation and my officials from the most senior level down engage directly with their colleagues in the Department for Employment and Learning. This will continue to be the case. This work will focus on what is important – the young people in our schools, colleges and training organisations. Supporting them, equipping them with the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to drive the economic future of this island we live on. That is my focus, and Minister Farry’s focus. And that will continue to be our focus.

Area Learning Communities are where this partnership working is delivered on the ground. Excellent partnerships have been developed between schools and colleges and senior officials from my department have recently visited each Area Learning Community to find out the views and experience of principals and learn how we can make Area Learning Communities even more effective.

I appreciate that Members may be seeking a strategy document but my focus has been on the working strategic partnership between our two departments which remains robust. My officials continue to develop this strategic partnership, building on earlier work and to consider the development of a 14-19 Strategy in conjunction with DEL.

[Back to Top](#)

Free School Meals

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Education to outline any correspondence he has had with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development regarding the use of the Free School Meal Entitlement as an indicator of social disadvantage among the school population.

(AQO 5480/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: There has been no correspondence with the OECD specifically relating to Free School Meal Entitlement as an indicator of social disadvantage. The OECD recently published its Review of Evaluation and Assessment in Education here, which made reference to the use of free school meal entitlement as a measure of social disadvantage. They observed that whatever measure is used, we need to be transparent about the analysis and research that has informed this decision. This point was also re-iterated at a recent OECD dissemination event in Stranmillis.

My Department takes the view that entitlement to free school meals is an effective indicator of social disadvantage. Free school meals entitlement has a number of characteristics that make it the most reliable indicator for identifying social deprivation:

- It relates to the individual pupil so is more robust than a spatial measure which assumes everyone in an area is alike;
- It is updated on a yearly basis, so is current;
- It is easily gathered at school level and is available, to us, a part of the census return;
- It is highly correlated with the multiple deprivation measure and with the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)

The view of the Independent Panel that conducted the Review of the Common Funding Scheme was that free school meals entitlement provides an indication of the relative concentration of potentially disadvantaged pupils in a given school in a way that no other indicator currently does. I remain open to hearing suggestions as to better indicators that meet the characteristics I have just outlined.

[Back to Top](#)

RPA: Update

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the Review of Public Administration.

(AQO 5341/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Local Government Reform programme remains on target for 1 April 2015. The Local Government Bill was introduced into the Assembly on 23 September 2013 and is currently at Committee Stage. It is my aim to have the remaining Assembly stages scheduled for March 2014 with Royal Assent needed by early May 2014. The Bill is a major step towards making local government reform a reality and will provide the legislative framework necessary to give effect to the Executive's decisions on the future shape of local government.

Plans remain on track for elections to the new councils in May 2014. The Secretary of State has brought forward two pieces of legislation to make arrangements for the elections in May 2014. The District Electoral Areas (Northern Ireland) Order 2014 was laid before Parliament on 18 December. All 11 Statutory Transition Committees (STCs) are now established and operating as required by the Regulations. The work of the STCs is monitored by the Regional Transitional Committee, which I chair, and I am in the process of conducting a series of visits to all the Statutory Transition Committees to engage with elected members at a local level.

Councils will operate in shadow form for a period of time until April 2015 when the new councils assume full powers and responsibilities. The newly elected councils, acting in shadow form, will have the statutory authority and democratic mandate to make policy decisions. The advertisement for 10 Chief Executive posts was placed in the press with a closing date for receipt of applications of 9 December 2013. The Chief Executive post for Belfast will be advertised before the end of January 2014. The successful candidates should be selected by the end of March 2014.

[Back to Top](#)

January Monitoring Round

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown of his intended spend of the extra £30m of resource which he secured from the January Monitoring Round.

(AQW 30035/11-15)

Mr Poots: The January Monitoring allocation will play a critical role in helping to address a range of pressures in those front line services that affect the most vulnerable in our society, including looked after children and our elderly population. Trusts have been experiencing increasing pressures and demands within unscheduled care /emergency admissions and domiciliary care services. There is also a focus on maintaining and improving the safety and quality of patient care across all our settings.

In terms of children's services, there has been an increase in the numbers of Looked After Children during 2013/14, requiring additional expenditure on child protection registration, costs of care (in foster care or residential care), legal costs and social work costs.

[Back to Top](#)

January Monitoring Round

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how the £30m allocated to his Department in the January Monitoring Round will be spent; and whether it will be used to deal with medical negligence cases.

(AQW 30037/11-15)

Mr Poots: The January Monitoring allocation will play a critical role in helping to address a range of pressures in those front line services that affect the most vulnerable in our society, including looked after children and our elderly population.

The Health and Social Care Trusts have been experiencing increasing pressures and demands within unscheduled care / emergency admissions and domiciliary care services. There is also a focus on maintaining and improving the safety and quality of patient care across all our settings. In terms of children's services, there has been an increase in the numbers of Looked After Children during 2013/14, requiring additional expenditure on child protection registration, costs of care (in foster care or residential care), legal costs and social work costs. Funding has not been provided at this stage for clinical negligence cases.

[Back to Top](#)

Looked After Children Enrolled in Universities

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how many looked after children are currently enrolled in universities in

- (i) Northern Ireland;
- (ii) England;
- (iii) Scotland;
- (iv) Wales; and
- (v) the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 30078/11-15)

Mr Poots: This question has been interpreted to mean the number of looked after children from Northern Ireland enrolled at university in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland.

Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts have informed the Department that there were no looked after children from Northern Ireland enrolled at university in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales or the Republic of Ireland. HSC Trusts do however support a number of care leavers attending university across these nations. Table 1 below details the number of care leavers attending university in each of the requested nations.

Table 1: Care Leavers Attending University by Nation

Nation	No. of Care Leavers
Northern Ireland	28
England	18
Scotland/Wales	9
Republic of Ireland	0
Total	55

* Due to small numbers the Scotland and Wales categories have been merged.

Source: HSC Trusts

[Back to Top](#)

Legislation Banning Smoking in Cars

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that he announced on 14 November 2011 and 28 February 2012 that a public consultation on legislation banning smoking in cars was to be launched during 2012, for an update on these proposals.

(AQW 30092/11-15)

Mr Poots: Banning smoking in private vehicles is one of a range of tobacco control measures under consideration by my Department. While I had intended to launch a consultation seeking views on this issue towards the end of 2012, work on other important measures such as the Tobacco Retailers Bill, and standardised packaging for tobacco products, has meant that progress on smoking in cars has been delayed. I have written to Executive colleagues on a range of options relating to smoking in private vehicles, and I intend to address the issue in the near future. In the meantime, my officials are continuing to monitor developments in other jurisdictions with regard to the banning of smoking in private vehicles where children and young people are present.

[Back to Top](#)

Looked After Children: Personal Education Plan

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many looked after children in each Education and Library Board have a completed Personal Education Plan.

(AQW 30095/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not available by Education and Library Board. Figures below have been provided by the Health and Social Care Board and Trusts. Looked After Children of school age 'in care for 12 months or longer' to have a completed Personal Education Plan.

HSC Trust	Completed Personal Education Plan	When collated by Trusts
Belfast	281	January 2014
South Eastern	154	January 2014
Northern	140	December 2013
Western	133	January 2014
Southern	169	November 2013
Total	877	

Source: Health & Social Care Board and Trusts

My Department is for the first time collecting information on Personal Education Plans from Health and Social Care Trusts. Provisional information on PEPs for 2012/13 is expected to be available centrally from March 2014.

[Back to Top](#)

Families Matter Strategy

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the progress of the Families Matter Strategy.

(AQW 30153/11-15)

Mr Poots: Families Matter, launched in March 2009, emphasised the need to prioritise early intervention and prevention services to support families in Northern Ireland. The strategy focuses on joint and partnership working at strategic and operational levels. The strategy acts as a framework to support early intervention and prevention family support services. In addition to the £2.8m allocated by the Department, additional funding

has been allocated by the HSC to deliver services in support of the aims and objectives of Families Matter. Since 2009, a wide range of services have been supported, including;

- Family Support Hubs;
- A regional directory of family support and child care services across Northern Ireland - www.familysupportni.gov.uk;
- Parenting education and support programmes;
- Relationship counselling;
- Family mediation;
- Child Contact Centres;
- Children's Court Officers.

Since 2009, the development of new health and social care structures and the formation of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership has created new opportunities for partnership working in the field of early intervention family support services. My Department has taken advantage of the opportunities afforded by these new operational structures as it has reviewed and amended the various activities in the Strategy.

In the last year, the Family Support Hub concept has been developed and is being rolled out across Northern Ireland. 10 Family Support Hubs are being opened in the Northern and Belfast HSC Trust areas utilising funding through Delivering Social Change.

The Family Support Website has been a particular success and receives up to 30,000 hits per month. The information available continues to provide a valuable service to families and service providers, and is increasingly used as a platform for delivery of information by other Departments. For example, there has been significant development of the Family Support NI website to help support the Executive's Child Care Strategy, Bright Start. Officials are in process of reviewing the operation of Child Contact Centres to identify best practice and future support needs for this valuable service.

My Department is leading on a review of alternative dispute resolution services, which will inform the development of family mediation and relationship support work under Families Matter. The intention of Families Matter was to serve the needs of all families with children. As we have reviewed the implementation of the Strategy, we have identified that the needs of some specific groups are best served by explicitly addressing the issues that they face.

For example, in future we will include recognition of the role of fathers, and particularly the importance of a separated father's continued involvement in his child's life. We will also highlight the needs of parents of children with a disability.

Working collaboratively with other Departments and private philanthropy, we are in the process of establishing an Early Intervention Transformation Programme, supported by a £30m fund. The aim of the programme and fund is to transform how we engage with children and families by acting earlier and in different ways to prevent family difficulties emerging or escalating and to produce improved outcomes in later life. Families Matter has provided the strategic framework that has enabled my Department to collaborate effectively with other Departments and Agencies to improve outcomes for families and children.

[Back to Top](#)

Separated Fathers

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of

- (i) Parental Separation: A Father's Guide; and
- (ii) Separated fathers: Fathers, Separation and Co-Parenting policy paper.

(AQW 30154/11-15)

Mr Poots: I would like to commend the partnership behind Man Matters for their excellent work in publishing these documents.

Separated fathers often find it difficult to know where to go for advice and support. A Father's Guide is an excellent resource that can help guide separated fathers through a very difficult period. The Separated Fathers briefing paper highlights a number of key messages to be considered by policy makers and service planners and I can confirm that they reflect the principles set out in my Department's Families Matter strategy. Parents and families seeking additional information and support can also access the HSCB website www.familysupportni.gov.uk, which is a comprehensive directory of family support and childcare services across Northern Ireland. A child's best interests are almost always enhanced by a safe and loving relationship with both parents. While divorce is an all too common occurrence in today's society, it is important to remember the important role that each parent plays in their child's development.

A number of my Executive colleagues share my views on this subject and I am committed to working with them to improve the support available to families who have separated, or who are in the process of separation.

[Back to Top](#)

Mental Health Service Provision: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what mental health service provision is in place for young people in North Down.

(AQW 30174/11-15)

Mr Poots: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Northern Ireland are provided through a stepped care model, based on the clinical needs of the individual.

Services are provided by four CAMHS teams, with Belfast HSC Trust providing services to both the Belfast and South Eastern HSC Trust areas, including North Down. Inpatient care for young people, when required, is provided in Beechcroft, the Regional Child and Adolescent Inpatient Mental Health Unit at the Forster Green Hospital site in Belfast. CAMHS to the North Down area are provided by a local community based team in James Street, Newtownards. This is a multidisciplinary team which specialises in the assessment and intervention for under 18s with mental health needs and their families/carers.

Services for children and young people presenting in crisis, and requiring assessment and intervention within 24/48 hours, are provided by a mobile Crisis Assessment Intervention Team, available 7 days per week to GPs and Emergency Departments. There are also specialist services for young people with eating disorders or drug and alcohol issues. A number of voluntary sector organisations also provide support to young people with mental health problems.

[Back to Top](#)

Looked After Child: Residential Care Home

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

- (i) why a looked after child was placed in a residential care home for older people;
- (ii) why it took four months to find a suitable placement for the child;
- (iii) whether this incident was reported as a Serious Adverse Incident; and if so
- (iv) by whom it was reported.

(AQW 30246/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have not been made aware of any looked after child being placed in a residential home for older people. However I have been informed by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust that a young adult aged 19 was placed in a nursing home for adults with learning disabilities for a period of 15 weeks until a placement was found in a specialist unit which was deemed to offer the necessary skills, expertise and physical environment to meet their needs. In line with current governance arrangements none of the criteria was met to report the matter to the Department as a Serious Adverse Incident

[Back to Top](#)

Family Fund Grant Scheme

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given the demand for support through the Family Fund grant scheme, the premature conclusion in the processing of grant applications for the 2013/14 financial year and the number of families currently unable to avail of grant support, what consideration he has given to increasing the funding allocation for the 2014/15 Family Fund scheme.

(AQW 30272/11-15)

Mr Poots: Through funding support of £1.57m provided by my Department to the Family Fund in the current year, 2870 families in Northern Ireland with disabled children have been helped. I am aware that the Family Fund has recently announced that, due to a significant increase in demand for support, all funding received from this Department for the current financial year has been allocated and it is unable to process any further applications from families in Northern Ireland. I regret this position but due to the ongoing financial challenges facing my Department I am currently unable to increase their funding provision. However, DHSSPS officials will be meeting with the Family Fund in the near future to further discuss this issue and how best it can help support families in NI.

[Back to Top](#)

HM Young Offenders Centre Hydebank Wood

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice why a prison escapee was invited to talk about his experiences to prisoners in HM Young Offenders Centre Hydebank Wood.

(AQW 30480/11-15)

Mr Ford: During 2013 a book club was established for inmates at Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre and on a number of occasions individual authors have attended to discuss their works. They include Eoin McNamee, Sheena Wilkinson and Lucy Caldwell.

In December 2013, the group expressed an interest in Gerry Kelly MLA's book "The Escape", and when it became known that Mr Kelly might be interested in attending, an invitation was made for him to visit. The visit was scheduled for the evening of 4 February 2014, although these arrangements were made without the knowledge of the establishment's Governor. When all the circumstances of these arrangements were considered, he made the decision that the event should no longer go ahead as he did not feel it was appropriate for a Young Offenders Centre.

[Back to Top](#)

Welfare Reform

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on any discussions on the implementation of welfare reform.

(AQO 5435/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Since coming into office in May 2011, I have been engaged with ministers within the Executive and in Westminster to seek ways to ameliorate some of the more negative aspects of the reform of the welfare system to meet the needs of Northern Ireland. The outcome of this is that I have developed a package of measures designed to tailor how the reform of the welfare system is implemented in Northern Ireland. This package will not only help simplify the social security system but more importantly it will involve measures which protect the most vulnerable in our society.

I presented the current package of measures to the Welfare Reform Executive sub-committee on 27 January and indicated my intention to bring it to the Executive meeting on the 30 January; however, the ultimate decision to bring it forward rests with the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. [Back to Top](#)

