

NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions Friday 2nd May 2014

- **Use of Social Media**
- **Executive Board of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety**
- **Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission**
- **Academic Underachievement**

Use of Social Media

Mr Boylan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, given their responsibility for fostering good relations and tackling hate crime, how the use of social media to incite hatred over recent events can be addressed.

(AQO 3121/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister):

We remain committed to fostering good relations and to tackling issues of hate crime. Social media has developed very quickly over the last number of years and as such is a largely unregulated area. It is clearly the duty of those using such sites, and the owners of such sites, to ensure they are used in a legal and responsible way.

Educating young people on the responsible use of social media forms an aspect of one of the projects funded under the Contested Spaces Programme. We will look closely at what lessons can be learned from that project and how they might be applied on a wider stage.

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Executive Board of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety

Mrs Overend asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions have taken place between their Department and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to maximise the effectiveness of the Northern Ireland representation on the Executive Board of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety.

(AQW 31636/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety currently represents the Executive on the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS). We are of the view that DHSSPS is best placed to represent the Executive's interests on the Council given its overall responsibility for child protection and its oversight of the work that Safeguarding Board NI is taking forward on Child Internet Safety. Attendance by DHSSPS officials helps to ensure that that work is informed by and consistent with policy developments and best practice in the other jurisdictions and we fully support DHSSPS's continued representation. Any discussions which have taken place at official level have served to underline that position.

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Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why Northern Ireland does not have representation on the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission.

(AQW 32335/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Welfare Reform Act 2012 amended the Child Poverty Act 2010 to create the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. The Assembly must give its consent for Northern Ireland to be represented on this Commission. This matter is under consideration.

We continue to report against the targets in Child Poverty Act 2010 and are consulted in the development of the UK Child Poverty Strategy.

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Academic Underachievement

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what additional measures or strategies are being pursued to combat educational underachievement, particularly among Protestant boys.

(AQW 32739/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): I am determined to tackle educational underachievement wherever it occurs. Despite overall improvements in performance over recent years there still remains too large a gap in performance between pupils from socially disadvantaged areas and those from more affluent areas.

Since coming to office I have continued to implement policies to raise standards and tackle educational underachievement. These policies include the school improvement policy, the literacy and numeracy strategy, the revised curriculum, entitlement framework, the framework for early years' education and learning and the SEN and inclusion review.

I have redistributed school funding to target schools with high numbers of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds under the common funding scheme and injected a further £10 million specifically targeting social deprivation into school budgets from April 2014.

Within schools, the Department is implementing a range of funded programmes targeting educational underachievement. These include the Delivering Social Change programme to employ additional teachers, a literacy and numeracy CPD KS2/3 Project and support to Area Learning Communities to develop effective approaches to improving literacy and numeracy levels amongst disadvantaged pupils.

In addition, and in recognition of the importance of influences outside school, I am providing funding to support a range of programmes targeted at socially deprived communities. These include Sure Start, the extended schools and full service provision, the Community Education Initiatives Programme, the Achieving Belfast and Achieving Derry Bright Futures programme and funding to deliver projects to address educational underachievement in the Greater West Belfast.

In September 2012, I launched the 'Education Works' advertising campaign. This is aimed at informing and engaging all parents, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to become more involved in their child's education. International reports tell us that we need to have a socially balanced school system to enable all pupils to perform better. However, while some schools persist in the use of academic selection, we will be unable to achieve this. Evidence also shows that social background is the strongest factor impacting on attainment and I am determined to take action to break this link wherever it exists. There is also an important role to be played by our MLAs, local councillors and those with influence in the community in raising educational awareness and aspiration in socially deprived communities.

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