

NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions Friday 20th June 2014

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Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Museum Visits

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, in light of the Triennial Review into participation in culture, arts and leisure showing that 55 per cent of young people visited a national museum last year, what action she is taking to increase this figure.

(AQO 6391/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am pleased that the ‘Young Persons’ Behaviour and Attitudes Survey’ which the member refers to has shown an increase in the number of young people visiting a National Museum from 46% in 2007 to 55% in 2013. The Annual Continuous Household Survey also shows an increase amongst all individuals from 24% in 2007/08 to 35% in 2013/14. This has been possible as a result of the increased outreach work that National Museums has undertaken amongst young people particularly those from socially deprived backgrounds.

In the last financial year I was pleased to provide an additional £306k which allowed National Museums to take forward 18 projects targeted at those most in need. These initiatives have been a success with almost 14,000 people attending and taking part in the different projects. This excellent work was recognised last week when National Museums won two awards at the DCAL Learning Forum. These awards recognised creative approaches to education and lifelong learning.

In the coming financial year National Museums is focused on attracting visitors from the 20% most deprived areas in the north; including providing free admission to paid-for sites for 5,000 households and an aim to achieve 35-40% audiences from lower income households as well as increasing access to collections and outreach engagement initiatives. National Museums will also deliver 45,000 formal learning visitor events. 7,000 of these are for children from areas of multiple deprivation.

In the coming year National Museums also plan to develop a range of new strategies aimed at increasing general participation in the Museums Sector. However more can be done and the challenge that I have set The Trustees is to find new and innovative ways of reaching and meaningfully engaging with those who do not traditionally come to museums

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Department of Education

Elective Home Schooling

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education, in relation to the consultation by Education and Library Boards on Elective Home Schooling, what prompted the Northern Education and Library Board to seek legal advice on this issue; and who provided this legal advice. (AQW 33838/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I understand that in light of legal advice received by one of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) following litigation in which an issue surrounding home education arose, the ELBs decided to review their arrangements for ensuring that the parents of children and young people who are electively home educated provide an efficient full time education for their children appropriate to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. The Boards may seek legal advice from in-house experts or through Counsel as may be considered appropriate.

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Educating People on the Importance of Voting

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education whether his Department has had any discussions with the Electoral Commission, or other organisations, in relation to educating people on the importance of voting. (AQW 33851/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: While my Department has not had any recent discussions with the Electoral Commission, or other organisations, regarding educating young people on the importance of voting, it does encourage schools to play their part in the electoral registration process by completing the annual returns to the Chief Electoral Officer and by facilitating the visits to schools of Electoral Office staff. Throughout the curriculum there are also a number of opportunities for pupils to explore and discuss the issue of voting.

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Woodlands Speech and Language Unit

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education to detail the range of opinions expressed in the consultation on the proposal to close Woodlands Speech and Language Unit at the Belmont site in Londonderry.

(AQW 33928/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I approved Development Proposals 233-236 on 16 September 2013. These relocate the current four classes at the Woodlands Unit to two at Ebrington Primary School and two at St Anne's Primary School, both in Derry City, and extend the service by approving two new classes at Ballykelly Primary School.

The Development Proposal submission which includes a summary of the opinions expressed in the consultation is available on the Department of Education website at:-

http://www.deni.gov.uk/dp233-236_woodlands_unit_-_copy_of_submission.pdf

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Statement of Special Education Needs

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education should a Statement of Special Education Needs state that a child requires

- (i) speech and language therapy;
- (ii) occupational therapy; and
- (iii) physiotherapy,

to detail

- (i) the responsibility of the Education and Library Board to provide therapy; and
- (ii) the timeframe a child can reasonably expect to receive such treatments.

(AQW 33956/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised that, as outlined in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs, prime responsibility for the provision of therapeutic services, following the issue of a statement of special educational needs (SEN), rests with health and social services. Where a statement specifies such therapy as educational provision in part three of the statement of SEN and this is not provided by a health authority, ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the provision is made rests with the ELB.

Agencies work together so that this support is provided as soon as possible following the issue of a statement of SEN. However the timeframe in which a child will normally receive therapy support is beyond the immediate control of the ELB.

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Occupational Therapist Advice in Schools

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education to detail the requirement on schools to act on advice provided by occupational therapists in respect of the support required by a child to meet their education needs.

(AQW 33957/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised that if an occupational therapist recommends a programme of support to be provided by a school there is a legal requirement, as detailed in the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005, upon the school that the child is not discriminated against because of their disability.

While there is no legal requirement for the school to act on the occupational therapists advice schools do have a responsibility to liaise with therapists to consider their recommendations and in most cases will act on the advice of an occupational therapist.

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Elective Home Education

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, in light of the intention to further regulate Elective Home Education, what assessment has been conducted in respect of achievements and outcomes for children educated in this way; and what was the result of this assessment.

(AQW 33974/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: There is no intention to further regulate home education at the present time. The Education and Library Boards (the Boards) have directly prepared guidance in relation to home education which reflects their existing legislative responsibilities and are currently consulting on that guidance. The outcome of the consultation process will be of assistance in informing any future proposals in this regard.

The Boards have confirmed that they do not undertake assessments of the achievements and outcomes of children who are educated at home.

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Further Regulation of Elective Home Education

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, in light of the intention to further regulate Elective Home Education, why it is appropriate to subject this sector to more frequent inspections than other sectors.

(AQW 33975/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: There is no intention to regulate further home education at present. The Education and Library Boards (the Boards) have directly prepared guidance in relation to home education which reflects their existing legislative responsibilities and are currently consulting on that guidance. The outcome of the consultation process will be of assistance in informing any future proposals in this regard.

The Boards have advised that they do not undertake inspections of home education and that the draft home education guidance document does not include any reference to an inspection process.

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Schools Currently in the Intervention Stage

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to list the schools currently in the intervention stage.

(AQW 34131/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: As at 13 June 2014 the following schools, for which inspection reports have been published, were in formal intervention.

School

- Ballee Community High School, Ballymena
- Crumlin Integrated College*¹
- Dundonald High School
- Dunluce School, Bushmills
- Edenbrooke Primary School, Belfast
- Euston Street Primary School, Belfast
- Glenwood Primary School, Belfast
- Harryville Primary School, Ballymena
- Kirkinriola Primary School, Ballymena
- Laurelhill Community College, Lisburn
- Monkstown Community School
- Movilla High School, Newtownards
- Nettlefield Primary School, Belfast*¹
- Orangefield High School, Belfast
- Springhill Primary School, Belfast
- St Michael’s Grammar School, Lurgan*¹
- Tullygally Primary School, Lurgan
- Wheatfield Primary School, Belfast

*¹ These schools have had recent follow-up inspections and the Education and Training Inspectorate has reported that overall the quality of education provided is satisfactory or better. The Department is currently considering whether these schools can exit the Formal Intervention Process.

A list of schools in formal intervention during the current school year is published on the Department of Education website. The list can be accessed via the following link:

http://www.deni.gov.uk/mw_schools_in_the_formal_intervention_process_8_may_2014.pdf

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Upgrade of the Computer Infrastructure in Schools

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education for an update on the recent transformation process to upgrade the computer infrastructure in schools.

(AQW 34151/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: By Friday 13th June, approximately 70% of schools had their C2k Local Area Network (LAN) upgrade completed, the LAN upgrade being the final part of the transformation process being undertaken in schools.

By the end of June, 77 % will be completed with the remaining schools scheduled for transformation over the summer break. Many of the schools being installed in July and August requested a summer date so that their school could avoid any disruption during the term and C2k and Capita have worked with schools to facilitate this.

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Long Term Planning: Judgement of Mr Justice Treacy

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education when he will publish his Department's senior counsel's opinion on the Judgement of Mr Justice Treacy on his Department's approach to long term planning.

(AQW 33962/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Mr Justice Treacy's judgement clarified the scope of the Article 64 (1) of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 duty, following a judicial review brought by Drumragh Integrated College. The Court rejected the argument by the Applicants that the Area Planning process was unlawful. Legal opinion provided in relation to the case is privileged and will not be published.

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Guidance on the Court Judgement of Justice Treacy

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education when he will be issuing guidance based on the court judgement of Justice Treacy in relation to Article 64(1) of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989; and to whom will the guidance be issued.
(AQW 33963/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: The court judgement has provided clarity as to whom the Article 64 (1) duty is owed. In light of this clarification I will review the internal guidance to my Officials to ensure this is consistent with the judgement.

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Protocol to Deal with Elluminate

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Education for an update on the introduction of a protocol to deal with Elluminate.
(AQW 33968/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: I understand that development of the protocol is progressing and both management and union side are working to resolve any outstanding issues. This is a complex issue and one that needs time for full consideration from all perspectives to ensure that a workable solution is put in place regarding the use of the Elluminate software.

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Middletown Centre Support

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

- (i) pupils;
- (ii) parents; and
- (iii) professionals from
 - (a) Northern Ireland; and
 - (b) the Republic of Ireland, supported by the Middletown Centre in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34169/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: The Chief Executive of the Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA) has confirmed that the number of pupils, parents and professionals who have been supported by MCA, in each of the last three financial years, in the north and south of Ireland, is as follows:

	Pupils North	Pupils South	Parents North	Parents South	Professionals North	Professionals South
2011/12	10	0	710	1,854	3,171	2,180
2012/13	10	0	597	2,261	3,331	2,024
2013/14	33	0	895	6,410	2,962	4,495

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Allocations of Pre-School Places for September 2014

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many children in each constituency have yet to be allocated a pre-school place for September 2014.

(AQW 34085/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have advised that 24 children, whose parents engaged fully with the pre-school application process to the end, have yet to be allocated a funded pre-school place. The table below provides this information on a constituency basis. Pre-school places remain available in each child's local area, should their parents wish to apply for them. I would, therefore, expect this number to fall in the coming weeks.

Constituency	No. of Children Unplaced – June 2014
East Belfast	13
South Belfast	5
North Down	3
Foyle	3
Total	24

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Department for Employment and Learning

Extraordinary Ventures of North Carolina

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he is aware of the work of the not-for-profit organisation Extraordinary Ventures of North Carolina who are creating employment opportunities for young adults with developmental disabilities, including those on the autism spectrum; and if he intends to bring forward a similar scheme to help local people who suffer from this disorder to find employment.
(AQW 33777/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): My Department was not aware of Extraordinary Ventures until now. It is worth noting that there are a number of similar employment operations being delivered throughout Northern Ireland, primarily through the social enterprise business model. Indeed, my Department, through the European Social Fund and the Disability Employment Service is directly supporting some of these schemes. Specifically, there are social enterprise businesses in operation that are providing services and products such as; catering and hospitality, arts and crafts, business administration support, as well as a very successful bottle sorting operation in Belfast. The common factor amongst all these social enterprise organisations is that they are directly employing people with disabilities, and specifically people with learning difficulties and those on the autism spectrum.

The Department for Employment and Learning is delighted to support such initiatives and will continue to encourage similar models of best practice. The Department's Disability Employment Service has extensive experience of working in partnership with a number of local organisations engaged in training adults with developmental disabilities; including those on the autistic spectrum and helping them move into and retain employment. Examples of effective partnership projects include; the design and publication of an employer booklet with The National Autistic Society; work with Queens University Autism Research and Treatment Centre, (QUART) to evaluate the Orchardville and NOW Project Able programme; developing referral and signposting partnerships with Specialisterne, a new Community Interest Company dedicated to providing IT job opportunities for people on the autistic spectrum; and working with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust to establish an Adult Autism Advisory Service in the Northern Trust Region.

During the past two years, staff from the Disability Employment Service have worked very closely with local disability organisations and a number of employers to secure ring-fenced recruitment and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. This initiative resulted in a considerable number of successful job outcomes for the target applicant group, including people with autism or Asperger's syndrome.

It is critical that the Department, in conjunction with its partner organisations, tries to maximise the breadth of employment opportunities available to people with disabilities, and the ultimate aim is to help those who are capable of doing so, to secure employment in the open labour market where they become a valued member of a fully inclusive and diverse workforce.

Finally, the department's Occupational Psychology Service is currently working with colleagues from Analytical Services to examine research literature and rehabilitation projects on an international basis. This will provide greater opportunity to identify initiatives such as Extraordinary Ventures that may inform the service delivery landscape of the future.

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Department of Finance and Personnel

Health Service: Cost of Welfare Reform

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what the estimated added cost is to the Health Service arising from Welfare Reform proposals; and whether his Department has carried out the estimates for this cost.

(AQW 34089/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In the first instance it is for the Health Minister to determine any additional costs for his Department as a consequence of the introduction of Welfare Reform. Should any such costs arise, the Health Minister may seek additional funding from the Executive through in-year monitoring rounds or the Executive's Budget process.

To date, DHSSPS has not brought any cost pressures to my attention as a consequence of Welfare Reform. Of course HM Treasury has advised that should the Executive not agree Welfare Reforms, then it will cut the Executive's DEL budget by £87 million in 2014-15 and £114 million in 2015-16. This cost will continue to increase beyond 2015-16.

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Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mental Health Service Provision

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many posts will be lost in 2014 in frontline mental health service provision in each Health and Social Care Trust as a result of efficiency savings.

(AQW 33400/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): All of the Health and Social Care Trusts have advised that there are no current plans for a reduction in frontline mental health service provision as a result of efficiency savings in 2014.

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Department of Justice

Teenage Dating Violence

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Justice to detail the

- (i) awareness raising schemes; and
- (ii) support mechanism in place to deal with teenage dating violence.

(AQW 33912/11-15)

Mr Ford: Preventing and responding to violence and abuse within all intimate relationships remains a key priority for my Department and our partners in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors through the work of the Regional Strategy Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse. Local delivery networks, such as the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and Domestic Violence Partnerships had led and funded initiatives for children and young people aimed at promoting and raising awareness of healthy relationships and providing information on the full range of support available.

The DOJ funded support service provided by Victim Support is available to all victims of crime, including all victims of violence within intimate relationships. Further help and support is available to teenage victims of intimate relationship violence through the Government funded 24 hour Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline. Should this abuse include sexual violence and abuse teenage victims can also avail of the services of The Rowan (Sexual Assault Referral Centre).

It is important to note that children and young people up to the age of 18 who have been abused in an intimate relationship will be responded to under the requirements of The Children (NI) Order 1995; the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland child protection policy and procedures; and the Protocol for Joint Investigation by Social Workers and Police Officers.

The member will be aware that during the recent public consultation on the new draft strategy 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse', which ended on 11 April 2014, officials met with young people aged fourteen to eighteen years old. These groups have now responded formally to the consultation. It is anticipated that their feedback will help to inform the strategic priorities for raising awareness of and supporting victims of teenage dating violence.

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Associated Sexual Charges in which Trafficking was Included

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice why a number of cases within the court system involving associated sexual charges in which trafficking was included on the original charges, have since had the human trafficking element dropped.

(AQW 34042/11-15)

Mr Ford: It is the role for the Public Prosecution Service to be satisfied that the evidence which can be adduced in court is sufficient to provide a reasonable prospect of conviction. There are a variety of reasons why charges can be dropped, any of which could lead to the Test for Prosecution no longer being met for a particular offence. Every case is different and considered on its own merits.

While evidence may be insufficient to prosecute for the offence of human trafficking a prosecution may proceed for other offences such as controlling prostitution for gain, brothel keeping or proceeds of crime offences. It should be acknowledged that an effective means of combating human trafficking is disruption, which includes prosecution and the confiscation of criminal assets. The prosecution of other, also serious offences is still effective in disrupting trafficking and making Northern Ireland a hostile place for traffickers, and most importantly, that victims have been recovered. The Public Prosecution Service is independent of me as Justice Minister and I am not in a position to comment on individual cases. You may however wish to seek advice from the Director of Public Prosecutions.

I am committed to ensuring that those who would traffic and enslave others will be made to feel the full force of the criminal law. Ensuring that we have a robust and effective legislative framework is a vital part of the fight against human trafficking and slavery.

Following public consultation, I intend to bring forward legislative changes to strengthen further Northern Ireland's response to these crimes. These include new measures to consolidate offences which will make it administratively simpler for investigators and prosecutors to bring forward prosecutions. As set out in the 2014-15 Northern Ireland Action Plan on human trafficking and exploitation these legislative measures will be supported and complemented by a range of other administrative and nonlegislative responses including training, awareness raising and support for victims and witnesses.

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Sexual Offences Act 2003: Victims

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33659-11-15, whether the alleged victims in these cases are adults or children.

(AQW 34071/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is one child and two adult alleged victims in the three cases identified in AQW33659-11-15.

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Department of Social Development

The Homelessness Monitor Northern Ireland

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development what actions his Department will take as a result of the findings of The Homelessness Monitor Northern Ireland, produced by Crisis and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

(AQW 33803/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): NIHE presented at the launch in Belfast of the Homelessness Monitor Northern Ireland. This report provided a ‘baseline’ account of how homelessness stood in Northern Ireland in 2013. It also highlighted emerging trends and forecasts of some of the likely changes, identifying developments likely to have the most significant impacts on homelessness. These include welfare, housing and other social policy reforms, including cutbacks in public expenditure.

The report indicates that rates of statutory homelessness are higher in Northern Ireland than the rest of the UK. However, it did qualify that this was partly as a result of different policy and administrative practices that differ than those in Great Britain as can be seen in the two quotes from the report below:

- i “This reflects in part the fact that acceptances have fallen in England and Wales as a result of the vigorous implementation of the Homelessness Prevention/Housing Options model. There has also been a more recent but similarly substantial drop in the levels of statutory homelessness in Scotland as a result of the later adoption of the Housing Options model”
- ii. “Another contributory factor to the rates of statutory homeless in Northern Ireland may be local administration tradition of the treatment of certain categories of applicants. In particular, older people whom it is unreasonable to expect to continue to occupy their current accommodation (e.g. because they cannot manage the stress), are treated as statutory homeless in Northern Ireland whereas they are generally accommodated via mainstream allocation processes elsewhere in the UK.”

This means that the information on levels of statutory homelessness compared to Great Britain are not directly comparable.

The Housing Executive has produced a Homeless Strategy 2012 – 2017 to address homelessness in Northern Ireland with the aim of eliminating long term homelessness and rough sleeping across Northern Ireland by 2020. The Homeless Strategy 2012 – 2017 has recently been reviewed, taking account of the findings of the Homeless Monitor Northern Ireland 2013. Key themes have been identified going forward;

- Given the significant impact within Great Britain the adoption of a Housing Options approach in Northern Ireland will be investigated which will examine an individual's options and choices in the widest sense when they look for housing advice. This approach features early preventative intervention and explores all possible housing options including social renting, private renting, owner-occupation and remaining in current accommodation.
- The implementation of a Housing First approach is based on the concept that a homeless individual's first and primary need is to obtain stable housing, and that the other issues that may affect them can and should be addressed once housing is obtained. This approach moves away from the use of temporary accommodation hostels towards an emphasis on placing homeless households directly into mainstream accommodation with appropriate support provided. A Housing First pilot scheme managed by the Depaul organisation is currently operating in Belfast. It helps chronically homeless people with complex needs move from a hostel environment to independent living with necessary support and prevents repeat homelessness.
- The development of a Common Assessment Tool to comprehensively assess the health and social care needs of those presenting as homeless. This approach, which has been agreed with the sector, would ensure that an initial assessment of a homeless person's housing and support needs would be easily accessible to a wide variety of agencies across Northern Ireland thus allowing appropriate help to be provided in a timely manner.
- The introduction of a Central Access Point for all homeless services will be explored examining the creation of a centralised facility which advises on current temporary and permanent housing vacancies and has access to a range of support services. This model, which will remove the need to travel or contact a range of homeless agencies, will provide a known single point of contact for a homeless person who requires immediate help with accommodation or other support requirements. The Housing Executive will establish revised inter-agency structures to develop these themes both centrally and locally.

Within these new forums it will continue to work with a wide range of voluntary, statutory and private stakeholders to produce and deliver on action/commissioning plans.

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Level of Homelessness

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development to outline his Department's plans to address the level of homelessness.

(AQW 33804/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has produced a Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2017 with the main aim that long term homelessness and rough sleeping is eliminated across Northern Ireland by 2020. There has been steady progress to date relevant to the strategy's 38 recommendation action plan. The Housing Executive achievements funded from the Homelessness Budget include;

- Simon Community undertaking a preventative homeless programme within schools
- Housing Rights Service working with prisoners to find suitable accommodation on release
- Women's Aid extending their Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline to aid vulnerable women
- The procurement of a Private Rented Sector Access Scheme by Smartmove NI
- The establishment of a Multi-Disciplinary Team in Belfast to support homeless people with complex needs
- The development of crisis facilities an accompanying street outreach services for rough sleepers and street drinkers in Belfast and Londonderry.

In addition through the Housing Related Support Strategy £26.6 million funding for homeless linked services has been provided within the Supporting People programme for 2014/15.

The Homeless Strategy 2012 – 2017 has recently been reviewed, taking account of the findings of the Homeless Monitor Northern Ireland 2013.

Key themes have been identified going forward;

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options and choices in the widest sense when they look for housing advice. This approach features early preventative intervention and explores all possible housing options including social renting, private renting, owner-occupation and remaining in current accommodation.

- The implementation of a Housing First approach is based on the concept that a homeless individual's first and primary need is to obtain stable housing, and that the other issues that may affect them can and should be addressed once housing is obtained. This approach moves away from the use of temporary accommodation hostels towards an emphasis on placing homeless households directly into mainstream accommodation with appropriate support provided.

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The Housing Executive will establish revised inter-agency structures to develop these themes both centrally and locally. Within these new forums it will continue to work with a wide range of voluntary, statutory and private stakeholders to produce and deliver on action/commissioning plans.

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Criteria Used by the Charity Commission

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development what criteria the Charity Commission uses to decide whether to carry out a statutory inquiry; and how does it apply the risk-based approach described on its website.

(AQW 34165/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There are a number of criteria, which include the seriousness of the issues presented, the risk to governance within the charity, the risk to the charities assets and the need to use the powers assigned to the Commission under the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

A risk assessment is carried out on initial receipt of the concern and this risk assessment is repeated throughout the life of the investigation as new information is received and conclusions drawn. The opening of a statutory inquiry is ratified by at least three Commissioners before being taken forward.

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