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Office of First and Deputy First Minister

Reallocation of Policy Responsibility for Older People

Ms Claire Sugden (IND – East Londonderry) - To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the rationale behind the reallocation of policy responsibility for Older People to the new Health Department, given the breadth of non-health related issues which affect Older People.

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister exercised responsibility for the central development and co-ordination of policy in relation to a wide range of specific groups within society. However, we consider that there is no compelling reason why this function cannot also be performed effectively by another Department and, in the case of older people, by the proposed Department of Health which already has a major interest in their well-being.

All relevant Departments will, of course, continue to contribute, as now, to the development of policy in this area. We believe that this will ensure better alignment of departmental policies and associated strategies, such as active aging with the strategic framework for public health which seeks to enable and support people in achieving their full health and well-being potential. **(31st March)**

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Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland

Mr Fearghal McKinney (SDLP – South Belfast) - To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AWQ 42082/11-15, to detail the reasons for the delay in adopting a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: As outlined in the response to AQW 42082/11-15, the development of a Bill of Rights is an excepted matter and is, therefore, the responsibility of the UK Government. **(2nd April)**

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Delivering Social Change Signature Project

Mr Chris Hazzard (Sinn Féin – South Down) - To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps are being taken to extend the Delivering Social Change Signature Project to improve literacy and numeracy in schools, that was launched in 2013.

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Delivering Social Change Improving Literacy and Numeracy Signature Programme is a two year programme scheduled to finish at the end of June 2015. We are currently considering the future of the programme. **(2nd April)**

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Department Responsibility

Mr Steven Agnew (GPNI – North Down) - To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the Department that will have responsibility for (i) the Children's Commission; and (ii) the Human Rights Commission, under the proposals to reduce the number of Departments. **[Priority Written]**

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Following Executive consideration, decisions on the future reduction in the number of Departments and the allocation of departmental functions were announced in a Ministerial statement to the Assembly on 2 March 2015. This stated that, in addition to its existing responsibilities, the Department of Education would have responsibility for a range of children's services, including the current policy responsibilities of OFMDFM for the Childcare Strategy and for children and young people. The latter includes sponsorship of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. However, the appointment of the Commissioner for Children and Young People will remain our responsibility acting jointly.

The Human Rights Commission is not a devolved body and is sponsored by the Northern Ireland Office. It, therefore, does not form part of the restructuring plans. **(2nd April)**

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Staff Numbers

Mr Michael Copeland (UUP – East Belfast) - To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the full time equivalent number of staff in (i) their Department; and (ii) each of their Department's arm's-length bodies, in each of the last five years.

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Information on Departmental staffing, published annually by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, is as follows:

	1/4/2010	1/4/2011	1/4/2012	1/4/2013	1/4/2014
Staff in Department -full time equivalent	369	324	323	352	349

More recently, the Department has taken on additional responsibility for a number of Executive priority areas including;

- the development and implementation of Together: Building a United Community;
- The Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry;
- Investment of the Social Protection Fund and the Social Investment Fund; and
- Implementation of a Childcare Strategy.

Additional resources including staffing were requested and approved in order to take this work forward.

It is also important to recognise that the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister covers a wide range of functions, many of them conferred on it by statute, including sponsorship of 13 Arm's Length Bodies and that much of our work facilitates the business of other Ministers and their departments.

Information on staffing in arms length bodies:

Arms Length Bodies	1/4/2010	1/4/2011	1/4/2012	1/4/2013	1/4/2014
Office of the Attorney General	12	15	15	15	14
Planning & Water Appeals Commissions	39.4	37.1	37.3	35.56	35.56
Commission for Victims & Survivors	14	14	14	8	11
Victims & Survivors Service	-	-	13.4	25.69	40
Community Relations Council	51	53	51	40	25
NI Memorial Fund	6	6	6	3	-
Commissioner for Public Appointments	4.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8
NI Judicial Appointments Commission	16.6	17.1	16.64	14.64	12.23
Equality Commission NI	125	117	116	110	110
Commissioner for Older People	-	1	1	6	12

Commissioner for Children & Young People	26	24.5	23.5	23.5	24.5
Strategic Investment Board	33	34	44	63	73
Ilex Urban Regeneration Company	23	24	25	31	27.5
Maze Long Kesh Development Corporation	-	-	-	14	13
Economic Research Institute NI	13	12	-	-	-

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Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Support to Access and Utilise Sports Facilities

Ms Claire Sugden (IND – East Londonderry) - To ask the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how her Department is supporting the needs of children with disabilities from low income families to access and utilise sports facilities.

Ms C Ní Chuilín (Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Under the Recreation and Youth Service (NI) Order 1986, the provision of leisure facilities and services for all communities, including children with disabilities from low income families, rests in the first instance with District Councils. While the pricing and charging policies for leisure services is purely a matter for each Council, Sport NI works closely with Councils to provide support around the development of leisure facilities and services.

Currently, Sport NI is working with the new District Councils to develop a Sports Facilities Strategy and eleven associated Area Reports for each Council. These Area Reports will take account of existing facilities and the need for new or improved facilities in each Council area. Disabled access will also be considered as part of this work.

Other support being provided by Sport NI for children with disabilities and their families include work with Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) to open up opportunities around outdoor facilities. Examples include: -

- As part of the 'Active Outdoors - Get Outdoor Weekend' Sport NI supported the provision of 80 free of charge events at a range of family-friendly venues/sports throughout NI, many of which were suitable for people with a disability.
- Sport NI also enabled ORNI to develop a project with Autism NI to provide free of charge surfing lessons to young people with autism. As a result of this, ORNI has also provided subsidised coach education programmes for providers/instructors in paddlesports and climbing to improve understanding of how these activities can be made more inclusive for people with a disability.

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Department of Education

Procedures to Consider Private Assessments

Miss Michelle McIlveen (DUP – Strangford) - To ask the Minister of Education what procedures are in place in each Education and Library Board to consider private assessments provided by parents of children who may require a statutory assessment of their Special Educational Needs.

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education): There is agreed regional guidance applied by all Education and Library Boards (ELBs) regarding private assessments provided by parents. This guidance is underpinned by the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs which states in paragraph 3.55 that “The Educational Psychologist from whom psychological advice is sought must be employed by the Board, or engaged by it for the purpose” and in paragraph 3.57 that this Educational Psychologist “...should also be asked by the Board to consider any advice which parents may submit independently from a fully qualified educational psychologist.”

Therefore while the ELBs will take account of a private educational psychologists report, it cannot be used instead of advice provided by the psychologist employed or engaged by the relevant ELB. This approach ensures equity of access to educational psychology services for all pupils. **(31st March)**

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Special Educational Needs

Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson (UUP – Upper Bann) - To ask the Minister of Education what plans are in place for an additional schools for children with Special Educational Needs to meet the increasing demand in the Southern Education and Library Board.

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education): I am advised that, to accommodate increasing pupil enrolment, building work is planned by the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) at a number of existing special schools, in line with projected need.

The SELB has no plans at present for an additional special school. **(31st March)**

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Statement of Special Educational Needs

Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson (UUP – Upper Bann) - To ask the Minister of Education to detail the number of children who have a statement of Special Educational Needs and are (i) under 11; (ii) 11 and older, in each of the Education and Library Board, (a) currently; and (b) in each of the last 3 academic years.

Mr J O'Dowd (Minister of Education): The tables below show the number of pupils in each ELB that are statemented in each of the last four academic years, split by those aged under 11 and 11 and older. The proportion of those statemented based on the total number of pupils has also been supplied for the purposes of providing context.

Statemented pupils by ELB and age, 2014/15

		BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
(i) Under 11	Statemented pupils	1511	1010	1423	1830	1580	7353
	% Statemented pupils	5.2%	3.1%	3.3%	4.5%	3.4%	3.8%
(ii) 11 and over	Statemented pupils	1640	1683	1645	1715	1940	8623
	% statemented pupils	5.5%	6.6%	5.2%	6.8%	5.9%	5.9%

Statemented pupils by ELB and age, 2013/14

		BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
(i)							
Under 11	Statemented pupils	1371	972	1325	1652	1556	6876
	% statemented pupils	4.8%	3.0%	3.1%	4.1%	3.4%	3.7%
(ii) 11 and over	Statemented pupils	1530	1573	1600	1748	1922	8373
	% statemented pupils	5.1%	6.1%	5.0%	6.9%	5.8%	5.7%

Statemented pupils by ELB and age, 2012/13

		BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
(i)							
Under 11	Statemented pupils	1307	866	1269	1492	1479	6413
	% statemented pupils	4.7%	2.7%	3.1%	3.8%	3.4%	3.5%
(ii) 11 and over	Statemented pupils	1432	1492	1571	1723	1923	8141
	% statemented pupils	4.7%	5.7%	4.8%	6.7%	5.8%	5.5%

Statemented pupils by ELB and age, 2011/12

		BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
(i)							
Under 11	Statemented pupils	1229	855	1193	1522	1461	6260
	% statemented pupils	4.5%	2.7%	2.9%	4.0%	3.4%	3.5%
(ii) 11 and over	Statemented pupils	1355	1406	1474	1732	1863	7830
	% statemented pupils	4.5%	5.3%	4.5%	6.6%	5.6%	5.2%

Source: NI school census

Notes:

- Figures include children in voluntary and private preschool centres, nursery schools, grant-aided primary (including nursery, reception and year 1-7 classes), post primary and special schools.
- Figures include pupils at stage 5 on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.
- Age is at 1st July.

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Statement of Special Educational Needs

Miss Michelle McIlveen (DUP – Strangford) - To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW43478/11-15, in relation to a private educational psychological report and the subsequent production of a statement of special educational needs, what is meant by, will take account of.

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education): Paragraph 3.57 of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs states that “The educational psychologist from whom the Board seeks advice must consult, and record any advice received from, any other psychologist, such as a clinical or occupational psychologist, who may have knowledge of or information about the child.” **(31st March)**

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Assessment of Numbers of Pupils in Special Schools

Miss Michelle McIlveen (DUP – Strangford) - To ask the Minister of Education for his assessment of the current numbers of pupils in special schools, as categorised in para 4.2 of the 2012-13 Education and Training Inspectorate report.

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education): The survey was commissioned by my Department to examine the extent of challenging behaviour across Special Schools and the report provided an extensive evidence base about the impact of challenging behaviour in special schools. I note and acknowledge the numbers of pupils who are displaying challenging behaviours and my officials have already engaged with Special School Principals to identify issues and consider what approaches could be adopted to meet the needs of pupils with challenging behaviour. **(1st April)**

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Number of Pre-School Places

Ms Claire Sugden (IND – East Londonderry) - To ask the Minister of Education to detail the number of pre-school places provided by the (i) statutory; (ii) voluntary; and (iii) private/independent, sectors in each of the last three years.

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education):

Department of Education funded pre-school places

Sector	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Statutory	14,613	14,804	15,047
Voluntary	7,453	7,319	7,516
Private	957	1,041	1,105

Source – 2014 School Census

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Early Years Funding

Ms Claire Sugden (IND – East Londonderry) - To ask the Minister of Education what impact the cut to Early Years funding will have on his Department’s Programme for Government Commitment 43, to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it.

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education): I remain committed to ensuring that every child whose parents want it will have a funded pre-school place within the Pre-School Education Programme. To that end I have allocated sufficient funding to Education and Library Boards to meet the projected need for pre-school places for children in their final pre-school year. I note that just over 1600 of the places are provided by groups in which some salaries are currently supported by the Early Years Fund. These places will continue to be funded under the Pre School Education Programme in the usual way. **(2nd April)**

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Role of the Early Years Organisation and Associated Bodies

Ms Claire Sugden (IND – East Londonderry) - To ask the Minister of Education for his assessment of the role of the Early Years Organisation, and associated bodies, in driving forward improvement in education provision through (i) raising standards; (ii) supporting all children to reach their full potential; and (iii) narrowing the performance gap at an early age.

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education): Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children (EYO) administers the Early Years Fund (EYF) on behalf of my Department under Service Level Agreement. They fulfil a management and accountability role in respect of the funds allocated and provide additional support and guidance to those groups in receipt of funding to ensure that quality standards are raised.

The Early Years Fund was originally established in 2004 to help sustain certain early childhood services in areas of greatest need which were facing funding difficulties when Peace II funding ended. It has effectively remained as a “closed” Fund since then to only those groups that were identified as in need at that time.

The current criteria for receipt of EYF funding, which the eligible groups must demonstrate to EYO are to;

- Provide direct early years care and education to children;
- Provide a service in areas of low provision, disadvantaged areas or where the service is considered critical for children;
- Ensure inclusion and diversity; and
- Ensure a standard of excellence in relation to quality.

Any new Department of Education funding to support the Early Years sector will be strategically aligned to the Department’s framework for Early Education and Learning - “Learning to Learn”. Alignment will ensure improved outcomes for young children and their families. **(2nd April)**

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Department for Employment and Learning

Youth Training Provision

Mr Pat Ramsey (SDLP – Foyle) - To ask the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the process of collection, analysis and monitoring of data on the care status of young people participating in the new youth training provision.

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education): My Department recently completed a review of youth training in Northern Ireland for 16 – 24 year olds. This comprehensive review included an in-depth examination of international best practice in youth training, including data collection and analysis.

To help ensure that data collection and monitoring accurately highlights how the new youth training system is working for different groups the review duly proposed that the youth training system be underpinned by robust data collection, analysis and evaluation, including for those young people who may face barriers to engagement and progression, such as those leaving care.

The review of youth training consultation has recently concluded, with the new strategy for youth training expected to be finalised in the coming weeks. Detail regarding how such data, including for care leavers, will be collected, monitored and evaluated, will be developed comprehensively over the coming months. **(30th March)**

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Youth Training Scheme

Mr Pat Ramsey (SDLP – Foyle) - To ask the Minister for Employment and Learning what action his Department has taken to record the views of young people who are furthest away from formal, mainstream education and training provision; and how these views have influenced his Departments proposals for the new youth training scheme.

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education): My Department recently published the interim report of the review of youth training in Northern Ireland. This report drew from research of international best practice and engagement with a wide group of stakeholders, including young people who are furthest away from formal, mainstream education and training provision.

The stakeholder engagement, carried out as part of the development of the interim report, built on existing mechanisms established by my Department to engage young people furthest away from mainstream provision. In developing the ‘Pathways to Success’ strategy for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), my Department helped to establish the independent NEET Strategy Forum to engage and help co-ordinate those organisations in the voluntary and community sector which deliver services in this area. The forum has established the NEET Youth Forum, a regional network of young people who have experienced difficulties in accessing meaningful education, employment and training.

The NEET Strategy Forum, currently consisting of over 80 members, works collaboratively to inform and showcase proactive work that respects the voice of young people and focuses on the right of young people to access, maintain and progress to employment of their choice in Northern Ireland and beyond.

As part of the development process for the interim report, the review team met with members of the NEET Strategy Forum to discuss the review and the emerging proposals for youth training. The NEET Strategy Forum has also facilitated engagement events with hard-to-reach young people to inform the development of the United Youth programme, a key connected initiative to youth training. This engagement built on the findings of a Design Day for United Youth held in January 2014 by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister to gather views from young people and other interested parties.

In the development phase of the interim report for the review of youth training, my Department also sought feedback through a series of stakeholder engagement events, held in January 2014 across Northern Ireland. This included a specific event for young people to give their views and help shape the review's proposals. At this event the importance of valued and relevant qualifications such as GCSEs was highlighted, along with the importance of a high quality work-based learning experience with an employer. This feedback informed both the proposal for youth training to deliver a new, baccalaureate-style professional and technical award that equated to a minimum of 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, including English and mathematics, and the proposal that youth training would include structured work-based learning as a mandatory element for all participants.

In addition to the review's stakeholder events, the views of over 40 young people disengaged from formal, mainstream education and training provision were recorded through discussion with participants on the Springboard Opportunities Headstart programme.

Topics discussed included, amongst other things, the duration of training, desired qualifications, work-based learning, advice and support, careers advice and how best to engage young people. In particular the importance of mentoring and pastoral support was highlighted, and this feedback helped to inform the proposals related to supporting young people both through their training provider and while on placement with an employer.

A public consultation was recently completed by my Department on the interim report. In addition to written responses from eight groups representing young people, more than one hundred and twenty young people directly responded to the consultation through focus groups, workshops and a complementary consultation response document specifically aimed at young people.

Views of young people who are furthest away from formal, mainstream education and training provision were further received through focus groups which included disengaged young people, through the NEETS forum, the Prince's Trust Young Ambassadors, and Unity Training's FIT4Life Education Programme. Focus group participants also included some young people with physical and learning disabilities and those from a care background.

All the views received from the young people during this consultation are presently being considered in tandem with the views received during the formal consultation process, and will inform the final strategy in its totality. The new strategy for youth training will be published in Spring 2015. **(2nd April)**

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Department of Finance and Personnel

Welfare Reform Bill

Mr Alex Easton (DUP – North Down) - To ask the Minister of Finance and Personnel what will be the shortfall of money to his Department should the Welfare Reform Bill fail to pass through the NI Assembly.

Mr S Hamilton (Minister of Finance and Personnel): Should the Welfare Reform Bill fail to pass through the NI Assembly the £114 million reduction set out by HM Treasury will apply in full to the Northern Ireland Executive’s Budget in 2015-16.

HM Treasury have not indicated the level of reductions beyond 2015-16 however Social Security Agency (SSA) estimates of the foregone UK Exchequer savings of not implementing welfare reform in Northern Ireland are as follows:

Years			£million
2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
196	283	366	366

In addition to the Resource DEL reductions applied by HM Treasury non-implementation will also lead to significant capital costs associated with developing a bespoke IT system for Northern Ireland – SSA have suggested that this may be in the region of £705 million over a number of years.

Failure to proceed with the Welfare Reform Bill will also put at risk the other aspects of the financial package agreed under the Stormont House Agreement.

The non-implementation of welfare reform will reduce the level of funding available to the Executive which will in turn impact on the budgets of all departments, my own included.

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Department of Health

Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland Report

Mr Jim Allister (TUV – North Antrim) - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland reports of child neglect/abuse submitted by schools to the Gateway Social Service Teams, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in the last 5 years; (ii) the average length of time for a social worker to be allocated to a case; and (iii) the current cases that have not been allocated and the length of time they have gone unallocated.

Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The information was requested from the Health and Social Care Trusts.

Table one below details the number of Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland (UNOCINI) reports of child abuse/neglect submitted by schools to the Gateway Social Service Teams broken down by Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust in the each of the last five years.

Table 1: The number of UNOCINI reports of child abuse/neglect submitted by schools to Gateway Social Service Teams by HSC Trust area in each of the last five years

HSC Trust	Year					Total
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15*	
Belfast	26	57	44	49	80	256
Northern	15	20	18	10	74	137
South Eastern	137	184	105	128	150	704
Southern	180	113	113	73	81	560
Western	40	44	49	71	64	268
Total	398	418	329	331	449	1,925

Source: Health and Social Care Trust Information Systems

Note: These figures have been extracted from the Trusts’ “live” systems and may therefore vary to some extent when compared with previously published figures.

Note: These figures have not been validated by the Department; Figures for the Belfast Trust are for 1st March – 28th/29th February, all other Trust figures range from 1st April – 31st March

* Figures up to mid March 2015

All Child Protection referrals (i.e. child abuse/neglect) are allocated to a social worker within 24 hours from the point of referral. All other referrals are prioritised on the basis of risk. On average cases are allocated within 20 days across Northern Ireland. There are currently no unallocated child protection referrals in Northern Ireland. **(30th March)**

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Paediatric Cardiac Procedures

Mr Robin Swann (UUP – North Antrim) - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of paediatric cardiac procedures performed on children from Northern Ireland by each Health Trust outside Northern Ireland in each of the last two years.

Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Information on the number of paediatric cardiac surgery procedures carried out on children from Northern Ireland in each of the last two years is detailed in the table below. Information on the Health Trust of Residence of these patients could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Year	Republic of Ireland	England	Total
2012/13	40	34	74
2013/14	13	91	104

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Note: - The figures above do not include cardiac catheterisation procedures.

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Children in Care Council

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (Sinn Féin – Foyle) - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he intends to deliver a Children in Care Council in each Health and Social Care Trust.

Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I understand that Children in Care Councils are intended to provide a formal mechanism to facilitate effective engagement with looked after children (LAC). A range of LAC engagement mechanisms currently exist. For example, under contract with the Health and Social Care Board, the voluntary organisation, *Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC)*, provides advocacy and mentoring services to looked after children. This provides an independent process whereby the views of children and young people in care can be represented.

Where appropriate, VOYPIC and other agencies working with young people will be asked to undertake consultations or engage with care-experienced young people to ascertain their views on a range of matters. Also by way of example, arrangements exist within residential care settings to enable young people cared for in those settings to have a voice. Independent visitors, formal complaints and representations processes and inspection processes also provide opportunities for LAC to raise their concerns or make their views known.

My Department is currently developing a strategic statement for looked after children which will set out LAC priorities for the next 3-5 years; it will be subject to consultation. In consultation, we will invite views on the concept of Children in Care Councils (CiCC) and how these would work alongside, and fit with, existing LAC engagement mechanisms. It is crucial that we strike the right balance between ensuring that individual children have their voices heard at critical points and establishing fora on which nominated children and young people represent the views of their peers. **(30th March)**

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Early Years Fund

Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson (UUP – Upper Bann) - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the impact the Minister of Education's decision to withdraw the funding for the Early Years Fund will have on the health and well-being of the children affected.

Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): All Executive Ministers are having to make difficult funding decisions in difficult financial circumstances. It would not be appropriate for me to second guess decision-making any other Executive Minister.

In terms of our mutual early year's commitments, my Department is working with collaboratively with the Department of Education and three other departments to deliver a range of new early intervention projects under the Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP). The EITP is underpinned by a £30 million Fund. The Fund is made up of contributions from the Delivering Social Change Programme, all five participating government departments and private philanthropy. The Programme aims to improve outcomes for children and young people across Northern Ireland by embedding early intervention approaches in a transformative way in services for children and families, including services to address children's physical and emotional health. **(31st March)**

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Applied Behavioural Analysis

Ms Paula Bradley (DUP – North Belfast) - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behavioural Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Although my Department recognises that there are a number of interventions for autism, including ABA, it does not advocate any particular approach. This is a decision for clinicians to make, based on individually assessed needs and good practice evidence. HSC Trusts provide a range of individually tailored programmes which are drawn from a wide body of research and evidence and many of these use approaches from the theoretical frameworks which contribute to ABA.

Following assessment, Trusts work collaboratively with children and their families to provide a systemic-based therapeutic intervention, which includes working with children, young people and their families in their communities. Whilst most ABA programmes focus solely on the child, the approach adopted by HSC Trusts means they can work with the child but also the parent (developing supports, effective and consistent parenting strategies, etc) or the school, to support the young person with autism (**1st April**)

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Waiting Time for Tonsillectomy Surgery

Mr Daithí McKay (Sinn Féin – North Antrim) - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current average waiting time for tonsillectomy surgery in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust for paediatric and adult cases.

Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): There were no paediatric patients waiting longer than 8 months for tonsillectomy surgery in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust at the 31st December 2014, the latest time point for which official statistics are available.

Information on the average waiting time for tonsillectomy surgery in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, broken down by patient age, at the 31st December 2014, is shown in the table below.

Patient age (years)	Average number of weeks waiting for tonsillectomy surgery at 31st December 2014
< 18	8.16
≥18	8.59

Source: DHSSPS Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

Tonsillectomy surgery has been identified using the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys tabular list of operations and procedures (OPCS – 4.7) codes F34.1 – F34.9. The figures in the answer refer to the intended primary procedure. **(2nd April)**

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Tonsillectomy Surgery

Mr Daithí McKay (Sinn Féin – North Antrim) - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of paediatric cases waiting more than eight months for tonsillectomy surgery in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

[Priority Written]

Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): There were no paediatric patients waiting longer than 8 months for tonsillectomy surgery in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust at the 31st December 2014, the latest time point for which official statistics are available.

Information on the average waiting time for tonsillectomy surgery in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, broken down by patient age, at the 31st December 2014, is shown in the table below.

Patient age (years)	Average number of weeks waiting for tonsillectomy surgery at 31st December 2014
< 18	8.16
≥18	8.59

Source: DHSSPS Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

Tonsillectomy surgery has been identified using the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys tabular list of operations and procedures (OPCS – 4.7) codes F34.1 – F34.9. The figures in the answer refer to the intended primary procedure. **(2nd April)**

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Autism Referral to Assessment

Mr Seán Rogers (SDLP – South Down) - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage of children with autism waited longer than 13 weeks from referral to assessment in each Health and Social Care Trust in the last three years.
[Priority Written]

Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The figures requested are not held centrally and were requested from the Health and Social Care Board. Table 1 below details the percentage of children referred for an assessment for autism that waited longer than 13 weeks for an assessment in each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust in the last three years.

Table 1

HSC Trust	Year		
	At 31 March 2013	At 31 March 2014	At 28 February 2015
Belfast	30%	0%	75%
Northern	13%	0%	47%
South Eastern	1%	33%	46%
Southern	0%	0%	0%
Western	7%	0%	49%
Total	15%	9%	59%

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Please note these figures have not been validated by the Department. (2nd April)

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Department of Justice

Female Genital Mutilation

Mrs Sandra Overend (UUP – Mid Ulster) - To ask the Minister of Justice what steps he is taking to raise public awareness of female genital mutilation; and what he is doing to improve co-ordination of the work of Departments, agencies and organisations with responsibilities for preventing and responding to female genital mutilation.

Mr D Ford (Minister of Justice): My Department has raised awareness of the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM) with agencies and stakeholders of the justice system such as PCSPs, Human Trafficking Support Service Providers and Public Prosecutors. Raising awareness of the issue from a Health, Safeguarding and Cultural perspective would sit with other Executive colleagues.

My officials will ensure and deliver a co-ordinated approach within the Department of Justice and associated agencies. As I have highlighted previously, my Department stands ready to play its role in any targeted Executive response to tackling FGM. **(1st April)**

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Department for Regional Development

A8 Project

Mr Sammy Wilson (DUP – East Antrim) - To ask the Minister for Regional Development whether any people along the route of the A8 project have been provided with a free taxi service to and from school during work on the project; and if so, to detail the (i) reasons; and (ii) cost.

Mr D Kennedy (Minister for Regional Development): I have been advised, in the light of a number of Freedom of Information Act/Environmental Information Regulations requests and an associated appeal to the Information Commissioner’s Office, that the requested information constitutes personal information.

Therefore, placing this personal information into the public domain would be a breach of the Data Protection Act 1998. **(31st March)**

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Travelling to School

Ms Claire Sugden (IND – East Londonderry) - To ask the Minister for Regional Development what percentage of (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school pupils walk or cycle to school.

Mr D Kennedy (Minister for Regional Development): Data on travel behaviours, including journeys to and from school, is routinely collated through the Travel Survey for Northern Ireland (TSNI). The following information, setting out the percentage of journeys to or from school by walking/bicycling, is extracted from the most recent report covering the calendar years 2011, 2012 and 2013.

Age Group	Travel Mode	2011-2013
4-11	Walk	26%
	Bicycle	<1%
	All modes	100%

Age Group	Travel Mode	2011-2013
12-18	Walk	15%
	Bicycle	<1%
	All modes	100%

My Department's 'Active School Travel Programme' began in September 2013. The statistics provided in the most recent edition of the Travel Survey for Northern Ireland covers the period substantially before this programme began. **(2nd April)**

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Speed Restrictions at Primary and Post-Primary Schools

Mr Peter Weir (DUP – North Down) - To ask the Minister for Regional Development to detail speed restrictions at (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools in North Down.

Mr D Kennedy (Minister for Regional Development): There are 25 schools in the North Down area: 19 primary and 6 post primary. All of the schools lie within 30mph speed limit zones.

Eighteen of the schools have already had additional measures put in place under my Department's Safer Routes to Schools initiative. **(2nd April)**

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