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Office of First and Deputy First Minister

Childcare Strategy and Children and Young People's Unit

Mr Chris Lyttle (APNI – East Belfast) - To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister what responsibilities they will have for the Childcare Strategy and the Children and Young People's Unit under the new Executive Departments arrangement; and to outline precisely what children's services will be transferring to the new Department of Education.

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Under the new arrangements OFMDFM policy responsibility in respect of the Childcare Strategy, children and young people and sponsorship responsibility for the Commissioner for Children and Young People will transfer to the Department of Education. Following the transfer OFMDFM will no longer have any direct responsibility for these functions.

The transfer of children's services in general to the Department of Education will be subject to further discussion and refinement in the coming months as the draft Bill and Transfer of Functions Order are being prepared. The range of services that may transfer has therefore yet to be determined. **(28th April)**

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Age Discrimination Legislation

Ms Claire Sugden (IND – East Londonderry) - To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether an expert group has been set up to support officials to develop and deliver age discrimination legislation.

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: An expert group to support officials to develop and deliver age discrimination legislation has not been established. We have, however, brought together a small number of key stakeholders with expertise in the area to provide officials with comments on the draft consultation document setting out our proposals for prohibiting unfair age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services. **(1st May)**

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2015 - 100 Summer Camps Programme

Ms Claire Sugden (IND – East Londonderry) - To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister what plans they have to pilot the 2015 100 summer camps programme, outside of Belfast.

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Summer Camps Pilot Programme opened for applications on 15 April 2015 with a closing date of 3pm on 8 May 2015.

The Camps will operate on both a local and regional level and will be open to young people aged 11 to 19 years. Applications to deliver a Camp are invited from registered voluntary youth organisations and statutory youth organisations or bona fide voluntary and community organisations, schools, regional organisations and Councils that have experience in working with young people.

The Application Forms and Guidance Note, which contain full details about the 2015 Programme, can be found on the Department's website at www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/summer-camps-programme-2015-pilot **(1st May)**

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Department of Education

Shadow Youth Councils

Mr David McIlveen (DUP – North Antrim) - To ask the Minister of Education what input his Department could have in the establishment of shadow youth councils. **[Priority Written]**

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education): There are presently a wide range of formal and informal structures at all levels to support and encourage young people’s participation in the youth service.

As part of the implementation of Priorities for Youth, through the Regional Youth Development Plan (RYDP) – Interim Framework for 2015-16, the Education Authority and the Youth Council for NI, with input from a range of stakeholders, will work to develop and agree a Network for Youth model by December 2015, which will be put in place by April 2016. The aim of the Network for Youth is to strengthen participation at all levels of the service.

Whilst the Department of Education is not responsible for the establishment of shadow youth councils, I would expect potential linkages between these and the Network for Youth to be explored as work progresses. **(27th April)**

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Free School Meals

Mr Stephen Moutray (DUP – Upper Bann) - To ask the Minister of Education what percentage of children in each of the Education Authority area are entitled to free schools meals.

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education): The table overleaf shows the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals split by the former Education and Library Board areas that now collectively form the Education Authority.

Proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals by former Education and Library Board area, 2014/15

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	NI TOTAL
Voluntary and Private Pre-school Education Centres	19.1%	14.7%	11.0%	8.8%	9.3%	11.4%
Nursery schools	57.4%	37.9%	18.6%	36.5%	25.8%	35.6%
Primary schools	46.6%	39.2%	25.4%	25.2%	28.8%	31.7%
Post-primary schools	29.7%	34.5%	20.3%	21.5%	25.5%	26.1%
Special schools	61.8%	78.5%	43.2%	42.5%	39.2%	52.5%
All schools	38.5%	37.0%	23.0%	23.8%	26.9%	29.2%

Source: NI school census

Notes:

- Former Education and Library Board area refers to the ELB in which the school is located rather than pupil residence.

- Figures for pupils in nursery schools/units and pre-schools include parents who are in receipt of Income Support (IM) and income-based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA). These are two of the benefits which determine eligibility for free school meals.
- Figures for primary include nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes.
- Figures include funded pupils only.

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Home Schooled Children

Mr Danny Kinahan (UUP – South Antrim) - To ask the Minister of Education on what legal basis the Education Authority will interview home schooled children to ascertain whether they consent to be educated outside of a school environment.

Mr J O'Dowd (Minister of Education): There is no requirement in legislation for the Education Authority to meet with a child who is being educated at home to ascertain whether they consent to be educated outside of a school environment. On occasion, however, officials from the Education Authority, with parental consent, meet with parents and their child to discuss their education. **(28th April)**

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Pre-School Places at Stage 1

Miss Michelle McIlveen (DUP – Strangford) - To ask the Minister of Education to list by (i) sector; and (ii) region the numbers of children who were unsuccessful in receiving a pre-school place at Stage 1.

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education):

(i) Pre-school provision is not defined according to sectors.

(ii) The following table shows the number of unplaced children in each region of the Education Authority at the end of Stage 1 of the Pre-School Admissions process:

Region	Number of children unplaced at end stage 1
Belfast	296
Western	121
North Eastern	112
South	248
South Eastern	229
TOTAL	1006

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Miss Michelle McIlveen (DUP – Strangford) - To ask the Minister of Education to outline the terms of reference for the area planning process for special schools, including the anticipated timescale for its publication.

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education): I commissioned a review of Special Schools provision, the terms of reference of which included an assessment of existing provision and a recommended regional plan for the future structure and provision of Special Schools. The final report was presented to me last month and I am considering the findings and recommendations on the way forward before publication. **(28th April)**

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Youth Council for Northern Ireland

Mr Gregory Campbell (DUP – East Londonderry) - To ask the Minister of Education to detail the total expenditure incurred in connection with the Youth Council for Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education): The total expenditure incurred by the department in connection with the Youth Council in each of the last five years, is detailed in the following table:

YJNI	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Grant-in-aid	4.4	4.4	4.9	4.7	5.0

Notes:

- Information sourced from Department of Education resource accounts
- (28th April)**

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Special Education Needs

Mr Steven Agnew (GPNI – North Down) - To ask the Minister of Education how much money has been spent by his Department on Special Education Needs, in each of the last three years.

Mr J O'Dowd (Minister of Education): The table below provides the total departmental spend on Special Educational Needs (SEN) in each of the last three years.

	2011-12 £m	2012-13 £m	2013-14 £m
Total	194	214	230

The above figures include spend on statemented pupils in mainstream schools, pupils in special schools and home to school transport for statemented pupils attending primary, post-primary and special schools. The table also includes funding provided for a number of capacity-building initiatives within the Review of SEN and Inclusion.

Schools are also responsible for meeting any additional needs of pupils within the first three stages of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of SEN. Such funding is not separately identified from within the overall delegated budget distributed to schools, nor is it separately reported on. The level of spend by schools for such pupils cannot be disaggregated from the schools' overall expenditure.

During the same three year period additional funding has been provided by the Department to support children with SEN in relation to the Middletown Centre for Autism.
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Child Referrals

Ms Bronwyn McGahan (Sinn Féin – Fermanagh and South Tyrone) - To ask the

Minister of Education, in relation to child referrals by an Educational Psychologist to an Autism Assessment Clinic, how many children waited longer than two months in the Southern Health and Social Care Board for a referral, in the last two years.

Mr J O'Dowd (Minister of Education): Educational Psychologists would not be the primary source of referrals for children and young people to access the health-based Autism Assessment Clinic (AAC) run by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust.

Through their educational assessment work with children, Educational Psychologists may determine that the support of an AAC is appropriate and they can make an onward referral to such a facility. However, it is not possible in advance of such an educational assessment to anticipate for which children such a referral might prove to be appropriate and therefore there are no waiting lists for the specific purpose of Educational Psychologists employed by the Educational Authority making a referral to an AAC.

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Ministerial Co-ordination Group on Suicide Prevention

Mr Michael McGimpsey (UUP – South Belfast) - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the dates that the Ministerial Co-ordination Group on Suicide Prevention has met.

Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The Ministerial Co-ordination Group on Suicide Prevention has met on eleven occasions: 26 June 2007, 5 July 2007, 16 October 2007, 23 June 2008, 20 January 2011, 28 June 2012, 31 January 2013, 18 September 2013, 26 March 2014, 4 September 2014 and 16 April 2015. **(28th April)**

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Services for those with Ultra-Rare Diseases

Mr Kieran McCarthy (APNI – Strangford) - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he intends to provide services for those with ultra-rare diseases, including adults or children who are the only sufferer, or one of only a few sufferers, of a particular ultra-rare disease.

Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I plan to publish by June 2015 the Northern Ireland Implementation Plan for Rare Disease. The plan covers all rare diseases, generic and non-generic conditions; ultra-rare disease is a subset of rare disease in this context. While the plan will focus on actions to ensure that rare disease patients, their families and carers have access to the best possible healthcare and treatment within available resources, it will also reinforce awareness of the need to ensure that patients have access to appropriate social services and financial support. **(28th April)**

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Assessment Waiting Times

Mr Steven Agnew (GP NI – North Down) - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the current waiting times for an assessment for children with suspected autism in each Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) how this complies with his Department’s objective of early intervention in the Autism Strategy; and (iii) his Department’s understanding of the impact a prolonged delay in assessment for autism has on a child’s development.

Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The table below shows the current waiting times for an assessment for children with suspected autism in each HSC Trust as at the end of February 2015.

Trust	0 to 4 wks	> 4 to 8 wks	> 8 to 13 wks	>13 to 18 wks	>18 to 26 wks	>26 to 39 wks	>39 to 52 wks	> 52 wks	Total Waiting
Belfast	62	37	59	66	87	168	126	24	629
Northern	59	68	65	71	65	37	0	0	365
South Eastern	16	33	19	28	28	3	0	0	127
Southern	14	8	9	0	0	0	0	0	31
Western	30	31	31	30	42	17	0	0	181
Regional	181	177	183	195	222	225	126	24	1333

Although the increase in waiting times is unhelpful and can delay Autism specific intervention, child and family support is not predicated on a diagnosis. Each HSC Trust is required to identify risks and provide families with information about how to access family support services whilst waiting on Autism specific assessment.

The HSC Board is working with all HSC Trusts to develop a new standard operating model which will focus on developing early intervention teams and seek to integrate and align autism services with other child development and young people’s mental health services. It is anticipated that, in the medium to longer term, this will help in the development of new ways of working with a view to improving access to a timely assessment. **(29th April)**

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Spend on Special Education Needs

Mr Steven Agnew (GPNI – North Down) - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been spent by his Department on Special Education Needs, in each of the last three years.

Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Article 3 of the Education (NI) Order 1996 provides a definition for “special educational needs” as someone who has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

As this is a term utilised in the educational context, my Department does not gather such data. **(1st May)**

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Department for Social Development

Welfare Reform

Mr Robin Swann (UUP – North Antrim) - To ask the Minister for Social Development whether he has worked with the Minister of Finance and Personnel to calculate how much the failure of the Northern Ireland Assembly to agree the Final Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill has cost the Northern Ireland Executive since 9 March 2015.

Mr M Storey (Minister for Social Development): The Minister of Finance and Personnel and I continually discuss the financial and operational implications of the continuing delay in the Welfare Reform Bill completing its legislative passage through the Assembly.

In March the Minister of Finance and Personnel informed the Assembly that the continuing delay in the implementation of welfare reform will mean that the £114 million reduction will apply in full to the Executive's budget in 2015-16. Whilst HM Treasury have not yet indicated the level of reductions beyond 2015-16, the Social Security Agency (SSA) estimates that the foregone UK Exchequer savings of not implementing Welfare Reform in Northern Ireland are as follows:

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

In addition to the Resource DEL reductions applied by HM Treasury, non-implementation could also lead to significant capital costs associated with developing a bespoke IT system for Northern Ireland which is likely to cost in the region of £705 million along with the annual maintenance costs of the system.

Failure to proceed with the Welfare Reform Bill will also put at risk the other aspects of the total package agreed in the Stormont House Agreement. **(27th April)**

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Food Banks

Mrs Pam Cameron (DUP – South Antrim) - To ask the Minister for Social Development how many food banks are currently in operation within each constituency, broken down by year of opening.

Mr M Storey (Minister for Social Development): The Department for Social Development does not hold the detail of the number of food banks currently in operation in Northern Ireland. However, my Department has undertaken research to have a better understanding of how many food banks are in operation and why people in Northern Ireland are using food banks. It is anticipated that this work will be published before summer 2015. **(28th April)**

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Welfare Reform Update

Mr Basil McCrea (NI21 – Lagan Valley) - To ask the Minister for Social Development for an update on welfare reform.

Mr M Storey (Minister for Social Development): The Welfare Reform Bill did not complete its legislative passage through the Assembly, as scheduled on the 9th March 2015. This further delay in the Bill receiving Royal Assent has meant that the work which is needed to prepare for implementation of the changes has also had to be stopped. This continuing delay is frustrating not only for those involved in delivering social security or even for those who advise claimants on their rights but more importantly for the thousands of people across Northern Ireland who are now becoming totally confused as to what changes will be brought in by the Bill and how these changes will impact on them. This further delay will also result in additional costs for the Executive as the HM Treasury reduce the Northern Ireland Block grant because we have not implemented Welfare Reform. For this financial year the cost will be £114 million and my colleague the Minister for Finance and Personnel has already advised the Assembly, in March of this year that the potential costs for the Block in 2016/17 will be a further £196 million. From a departmental perspective, this further delay also has the effect of putting the Executive and this Assembly in the position which there are no agreed arrangements for how social security benefit and tax credits payments will be made to new claimants from mid 2016 as DWP/HMRC start to turn off the legacy benefit systems.

As Minister for Social Development I am concerned about this extremely serious situation and I believe it is important to bring the attention of all in this Assembly the implications of not having an agreed way forward on how social security and tax credit payments are to be made to new claimants. **(28th April)**

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Disability Living Allowance

Mr Gregory Campbell (DUP – East Londonderry) - To ask the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to to AQW 44106/11-15, how many Disability Living Allowance recipients in each constituency were aged between (i) 0 and 16; (ii) 16 and 35; and (iii) 35 and 65 years old.

Mr M Storey (Minister for Social Development): The table below details the number of people in receipt of Disability Living Allowance as of November 2014 for the age groups requested broken down by constituency.

ASSEMBLY AREA	DLA Recipients (15 and under)	DLA Recipients (16-34)	DLA Recipients (35-65)
BELFAST EAST	990	1,100	4,570
BELFAST NORTH	1,410	1,940	8,040
BELFAST SOUTH	840	1,230	4,610
BELFAST WEST	1,700	2,410	9,570
EAST ANTRIM	870	950	3,910
EAST LONDONDERRY	830	1,120	4,970

ASSEMBLY AREA	DLA Recipients (15 and under)	DLA Recipients (16-34)	DLA Recipients (35-65)
FERMANAGH AND SOUTH TYRONE	880	1,260	5,200
FOYLE	1,060	1,760	7,770
LAGAN VALLEY	980	960	3,820
MID ULSTER	1,050	1,280	5,610
NEWRY AND ARMAGH	1,040	1,480	6,590
NORTH ANTRIM	930	1,180	4,750
NORTH DOWN	690	830	3,350
SOUTH ANTRIM	1,080	1,010	4,340
SOUTH DOWN	1,160	1,480	6,070
STRANGFORD	840	920	3,990
UPPER BANN	1,000	1,530	6,870
WEST TYRONE	890	1,580	7,220
UNKNOWN	50	110	490

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