

NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions week ending 22 May, 2015

Role the NEET Strategy Forum will have in the delivery of the European Social Fund

<p>AQW 44905/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Robin Swann (UUP - North Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Employment and Learning what role the NEET Strategy Forum will have in the delivery of the European Social Fund.</p> <p>In developing the 'Pathways to Success' strategy, my Department helped establish the independent Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) forum to engage and help join up those organisations in the voluntary and community sector who deliver services in this area. Forum members are also represented on the NEET Advisory Group.</p> <p>The voluntary and community sector will have a key role to consider the application of the empowerment principles developed by the European Social Fund (ESF) Learning Network to assist with overcoming the barriers found by ESF participants who are in the NEET category. It is hoped that the Forum will be a vehicle to consider best practice and co-ordinate the sector response to meet this need.</p> <p>The sector will be a key partner in supporting the delivery of the European Social Fund programme throughout Northern Ireland and in joining up this work and giving a voice to young people.</p> <p>The Forum is formally recognised as part of the organisational arrangements for taking forward the 'Pathways to Success' Strategy. Key priorities for the Forum are specifically identified as:</p> <p>providing better co-operation and integration of voluntary and community sector activity to address the NEET issue; acting as a source of best practice advice on community initiatives, for example, on assessment of needs, mentoring and family support; this will include the promotion of accreditation and approval of standards; providing for better engagement and involvement of young people in developments and initiatives; and considering the application of the empowerment principles developed by the European Social Fund Learning Network to assist with overcoming the barriers found by ESF participants who are in the NEET category.</p>
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<p>AQW 45760/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr David McNarry (UKIP - Strangford)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Regional Development to outline the estimated savings expected from an integration of public passenger transport services combined with Education and Library Board Transport Services, Rural Community Transport Services, Health Trust's Day Care Transport and Ambulance non-emergency Patient Care Service.</p> <p>My Department is not currently in a position to outline the estimated level of savings that could be achieved from integrating passenger transport services. It is awaiting detailed financial information from the Education Authority in order to complete an economic appraisal of the options for improved integration of services that are currently provided separately by different publicly funded operators. When the requested information is made available and the economic appraisal is completed and agreed with the other Departments involved, my Department can then provide details of the estimated savings.</p>
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Current laws in NI regarding bullying

<p>AQW 45995/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Alex Easton (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the current laws in Northern Ireland regarding bullying.</p> <p>Currently, within education, the only law regarding bullying is Article 3 of Education (NI) Order 1998, as amended by Article 19 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003. This legislation places a statutory requirement on all grant aided schools to have measures in place to promote and encourage good behaviour and respect for others, "in particular, preventing all forms of bullying among pupils." While it is a matter for each school to determine the detail of the policy, in consultation with pupils and their parents, guidance given by the Department must be considered as part of this process.</p> <p>On 23 June 2014, I announced my intention to bring forward new legislation to tackle bullying in the current mandate. The Anti-Bullying Bill will provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A common definition of bullying; A requirement for all grant-aided schools to record all incidents of bullying; and A requirement for each Board of Governors to designate one or more members, with specific responsibility for anti-bullying policies and their implementation within the school.
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Assessments for autism and SEN

<p>AQW 45941/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Steven Agnew (GPNI - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail (i) why his Department and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) use a separate assessment process for autism; (ii) why a child who is on the waiting list for an autism assessment by DHSSPS would have an assessment for Special Educational Needs rejected by the Education Authority; and (iii) what co-operation takes places between his Department and DHSSPS in relation to their assessments of Special Educational Needs and autism in children.</p> <p>The assessment process used by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety relates to establishing a medical diagnosis whereas the statutory assessment process used by the Education Authority (EA) is undertaken to determine how a child’s learning needs can best be met. As an example of co-operation between the sectors The Education (NI) Order 1996, Article 14, places a duty on Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTS) to inform the EA, after consulting with the parent, that a child who has not attained the lower limit of compulsory school age has, or probably has, special educational needs (SEN). In addition, if the EA is to undertake a statutory assessment, it will seek the advice of the HSCT’s in relation to children with SEN.</p> <p>As stated in my response to your previous AQW 44403/11-15, addressing the special educational needs (SEN) of a child is not dependent upon receipt of a medical diagnosis. It is for the EA to consider each request for statutory assessment of SEN independently of other assessments based on the individual needs of each child.</p> <p>I remain committed to the close collaboration between the Education and Health sectors and other Departments in supporting pupils with special educational needs, including those with autism.</p> <p>My Department will continue to work closely with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and other key Departments/Agencies to ensure that joined up working is effective for those children and young people with autism who rely on the services of more than one sector.</p> <p>There is currently a great deal of effective collaboration between Health and Education Autism Spectrum Disorder Services, ongoing and developing, in respect of diagnostic assessment clinics, support for pupils with autism and joint training programmes.</p>
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<p>AQW 45879/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Alex Easton (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education how many cases of bullying have been reported in each of the last three years.</p> <p>Schools are not currently required to record bullying incidences in school and the only figures available to the Department are for cases where bullying has been cited as the reason for a pupil being suspended or expelled. These figures are published annually by the Department and can be accessed via the following web-page.</p> <p>http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/facts-and-figures-new/education-statistics/suspensions-and-expulsions.htm</p> <p>On 23 June, I announced my intention to introduce Anti-Bullying legislation during the current mandate. One of the specific issues this legislation is intended to address is to introduce a requirement for all schools to centrally record incidents of bullying, their motivation and their outcome. This will allow us, going forward, to quantify the true scale of the problem and any emerging trends which may require further specific interventions.</p>
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Effectiveness of NI Anti-bullying Forum in tackling cyber bullying

<p>AQW 45827/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Stephen Moutray (DUP - Upper Bann)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education for his assessment of the effectiveness of the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum in tackling the problem of cyber bullying.</p> <p>Cyber-bullying is a particularly complex problem which no single body or single course of action can hope to resolve. An effective response requires a multi-faceted approach involving awareness raising, better education concerning acceptable online behaviour and e-safety, a clear understanding of both school and parental responsibilities and an understanding of the serious criminal charges which can result from this type of behaviour.</p> <p>The local Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF) which brings together over twenty five regional statutory and voluntary organisations involved in tackling all forms of bullying. It contributes to tackling cyber-bullying through its awareness raising activities, such as the annual Anti-Bullying Week (ABW) and by providing practical support, resources and guidance to schools, parents and pupils. In November 2013, ABW adopted the theme of "I See, I Hear, I Feel" and examined how young people communicate with each other, both online and in the physical world, and the ways in which bullying, including cyber-bullying can happen as part of this. Over 650 schools and youth groups registered to take part in the week, receiving themed posters, assembly presentations and group learning activities. ABW was also used to remind schools of the importance of regularly reviewing and updating their anti-bullying policies to</p>
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		<p>take account of emerging problems, such as cyber-bullying; and of the need for pupils and their parents to be actively involved in this process.</p> <p>The Forum already makes a range of anti-bullying resources, including some on cyber-bullying, available through its website. It also developed and distributed a school resource pack, “Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour”, which highlights best practice for schools to follow. As part of an agreed 2015-16 work programme for the Forum, DE has asked it to update its existing cyber-bullying resources and prepare an additional insert for the “Effective Responses” resource pack to provide specific guidance for schools on cyber-bullying.</p> <p>The NIABF is already involved with the work of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland’s to promote all aspects of e-safety for children and young people and this will help ensure a clear and consistent government message is delivered on this issue.</p>
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Funding of NI Anti-Bullying Forum in last 4 years

AQW 45826/11-15	Mr Stephen Moutray (DUP - Upper Bann)	<p>To ask the Minister of Education how much funding his Department has allocated to the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum, in each of the last four years.</p> <p>In the last 4 years my Department has provided the following funding to the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum: 2012/13 - £87,000 2013/14 onwards - £113,000 per annum.</p>
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Percentage of Primary pupils who receive free school meals

AQW 45799/11-15	Mr Adrian McQuillan (DUP - East Londonderry)	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the percentage of primary school pupils that receive free school meals.</p> <p>The proportion of primary school pupils entitled to free school meals is 31.7%.</p> <p>This figure includes pupils in nursery, reception and year 1-7 classes.</p>
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Future of funding for Extended Schools in 2015/16 budget

<p>AQW 45727/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Fearghal McKinney (SDLP - South Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education whether he has plans to reduce the level of funding allocated to the Extended Schools budget for 2015/16.</p> <p>The Executive's Budget has been reduced by the Westminster Government by £1.5bn over the last five years. As a direct result of this reduction there is significantly reduced money to spend on frontline services such as Education.</p> <p>I have taken every action possible to protect Education funding and those frontline services within the Department of Education's (DE's) remit. However, it is simply impossible to protect everything.</p> <p>Following the Executive's Final Budget 2015-16 my Department has had to make savings of £97.6m in order to deliver my key objectives and live within the Final 2015-16 Budget settlement for the Department.</p> <p>These savings include a reduction of £2m to the Extended Schools budget of £12.6m in 2014-15 to £10.6m in 2015-16.</p> <p>On Wednesday 4 March 2015 I set out in detail to the Education Committee my Budget for 2015-16 including the allocation of £10.6m for Extended Schools. I have ensured that an Extended Schools programme will continue to be focused on those schools which serve areas of the greatest social deprivation. Currently there are 526 schools that meet the eligibility criteria for the 2015-16 programme which includes 49 new schools.</p>
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Education bids for June monitoring round

<p>AQW 45707/11-15</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden [R] (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education what bids he is preparing to submit for the June monitoring round.</p> <p>I am currently in the process of reviewing my budget with a view to submitting bids in the June monitoring round which reflect the policy priorities of my Department.</p>
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<p>AQW 45699/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Chris Lyttle (APNI - East Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education for an update on the progress of the business case for the Together: Building a United Community pilot nursery and primary school buddy scheme.</p> <p>While officials have drafted a business case to support the implementation of the Together: Building a United Community commitment to roll out a “buddy scheme” in publicly run nursery and primary schools which includes the potential development of pilot schemes, no funding has been provided to my Department to allow this commitment to progress beyond the draft business case stage.</p>
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Clarification of transition from nursery to primary school and SEN exceptions

<p>AQW 45692/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education whether it remains his view that the only provision in education legislation which allows a child to be retained in a nursery school, and not commence primary school upon reaching compulsory school age, is under Article 16 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (Statement of Special Educational Needs).</p> <p>It remains the case that funded pre-school education is only available to a child who is over 2 years old and under compulsory school age. Article 16 of the Education (NI) Order 1996 provides for a child of compulsory school age with a statement of SEN where the statement specifies the type of school or other institution which the Education Authority considers would be appropriate for the child.</p> <p>Parents can, of course, arrange to have their child educated other than at school and pre-school may form part of these arrangements. Parents making these arrangements meet the cost of a pre-school place.</p>
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Timetable for introduction of Shared Education Bill

<p>AQW 45656/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Stewart Dickson (APNI - East Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to provide a timetable for the introduction of the Shared Education Bill to the Assembly.</p> <p>It is my intention to introduce the Shared Education Bill to the Assembly in advance of the summer recess.</p>
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Number of people working in the Youth Service in last 4 years

<p>AQW 45576/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Stephen Moutray (DUP - Upper Bann)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the number of people employed in the statutory sector of the Youth Service in the Education Authority Southern Region, previously the Southern Education and Library Board area, in each of the last four years.</p> <p>The following table provides details of youth service employees (full time equivalent) in the Education Authority Southern Region, previously the Southern Education and Library Board, in each of the last four years. The figures comprise youth workers, youth officers, Head of Youth, administration and support staff and other specialist youth posts.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="555 763 1394 902"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="555 763 764 831">1 April 2012</th> <th data-bbox="769 763 978 831">1 April 2013</th> <th data-bbox="983 763 1192 831">1 April 2014</th> <th data-bbox="1197 763 1394 831">1 April 2015</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="555 837 764 902">96</td> <td data-bbox="769 837 978 902">105</td> <td data-bbox="983 837 1192 902">106</td> <td data-bbox="1197 837 1394 902">103</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	1 April 2012	1 April 2013	1 April 2014	1 April 2015	96	105	106	103
1 April 2012	1 April 2013	1 April 2014	1 April 2015							
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Costs of School Age Mothers Project

<p>AQW 45476/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the (i) budget allocation; (ii) reported actual spend; and (ii) reported under spend for the School Age Mothers project in the North Eastern region, in each of the last three years.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Executive of the Education Authority has reported that budget allocation and spend over the last three years, in the North Eastern Region, is as follows. No under spends have been reported.</p> <p>2012/13 £126,000 2013/14 £113,000 2014/15 £124,000</p>
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Details of School Age Mothers projects in NE area

<p>AQW 45475/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education what School Age Mothers projects are offered in the North Eastern regional area; and how school age mothers are supported by the projects.</p> <p>SAM Co-ordinators deliver educational programmes during the summer months to engage the young people in peer support and facilitate personal development.</p> <p>Where there is an identified need and a number of SAMs who are willing to engage, SAM Co-ordinators will devise and deliver group work projects, in partnership with other agencies.</p>
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Services the Education Authority deliver for school age mothers in NE region

<p>AQW 45474/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education what services the Education Authority deliver for school age mothers in the North Eastern region.</p> <p>In the North Eastern Region, the focus of the School Aged Mothers (SAM) Programme is to ensure that all young women remain within mainstream schooling. In exceptional cases where this is not possible, referrals can be made to extend home tuition or application can be made for placement on an EOTAS Programme.</p> <p>Each of the SAM Co-ordinators aim to ensure that all school age mothers referred to the service have an Education Support Plan in place to meet their educational, health, social and emotional needs prior to and following the birth of their babies. They undertake assessments of need and secure registered childminder services, to enable young women to return to mainstream education, following a post natal health check. Other responsibilities include referrals for home tuition during maternity periods, referrals for benefits advice and community resources, ongoing liaison with health care professionals, social services, education providers, childminders and other relevant professionals.</p>
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Funding bid for the Early Years fund in June monitoring round

<p>AQW 45387/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Patsy McGlone (SDLP - Mid Ulster)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education whether he will be making a bid under the June monitoring round to obtain funding for the Early Years Fund. [Priority Written]</p> <p>I will continue to review my budget and any other opportunities for funding to establish if a new fund can be developed for the Early Years sector, which would be open to all applicants, not just current recipients of the Early Years Fund, and reflect the policy priorities of DE.</p>
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Definitions of social disadvantage to include working parents in pre-school admissions

<p>AQW 45257/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Danny Kinahan (UUP - South Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 32828/11-15, whether his Department has developed proposals to widen the definition of social disadvantage to include working parents when giving priority in pre-school admissions.</p> <p>Learning to Learn – a Framework for Early Years Education and Learning - includes an action to implement remaining actions from the Review of Pre-School Admissions Arrangements, one of which is to examine the definition of socially disadvantaged circumstances ‘with a view to mirroring the relevant economic elements of the definition of Free School Meal Entitlement.’</p>
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		<p>The proposed introduction of Universal Credit (UC) under Welfare Reform would mean changes to the eligibility criteria for free school meals. It is planned, therefore, to undertake a review of the definition of socially disadvantaged circumstances once the position on Welfare Reform is clearer. Research has shown that children from socially disadvantaged circumstances experience more difficulty at school than other children and priority is, therefore, given to these children as part of wider efforts to tackle educational underachievement.</p> <p>Any proposed change to the definition will, of course, be subject to consultation.</p>
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Request for DFP update on June monitoring round

<p>AQW 45716/11- 15</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Finance and Personnel for (i) an update on the June monitoring round, including what money is expected to be available and (ii) to detail priority allocation areas.</p> <p>Departmental returns on the June monitoring round are due on 4th June. The level of funding available will depend upon a number of factors including the level of resources carried forward under the Budget Exchange Scheme, reduced requirements declared by departments and the position in relation to implementation of the Stormont House Agreement.</p> <p>It will be for the Executive to agree any allocations in the June monitoring round in the context of pressures identified by departments and the level of resources available.</p>
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Deaths in SE Trust regions from use of Legal Highs

<p>AQW 45633/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Alex Easton (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many people have died in the SE Trust region because of the use of Legal Highs over the last three years.</p> <p>'Legal highs' are defined as substances that mimic the effects of illegal drugs but are structurally different enough to avoid being classified as illegal substances under the Misuse of Drugs Act.</p> <p>Death certificates, for the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust that were registered in 2011 to 2013, were examined to determine if the recorded cause of death text included a reference to New Psychoactive Substances¹ that were legal during this time. None were found to mention these substances.</p>
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		<p>It should however be noted that drug related deaths are referred to the Coroner's Service and thus there is usually a period between when a death occurs and when it is registered. As a result, drug related deaths that occurred in the period 2011 to 2013 may not have been registered during these years. Finalised mortality data for the 2013 registration year are the latest available. Finalised data for 2014 will be available in summer 2015.</p> <p>1 Methylphenidate based New Psychoactive Substances including ethylphenidate, dichloromethylphenidate, methylnaphthidate, isopropylphenidate & propylphenidate, as well as dimethocaine and salvia divinorum.</p>
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Update on recommendations from review of paediatric congenital cardiac services

<p>AQO 8182/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Robin Swann [R] (UUP - North Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the progress made on the recommendations of the International Working Group in the review of paediatric congenital cardiac services.</p> <p>The all-island Congenital Heart Disease Network Board has met twice since 1 April 2015. The Board has formed subgroups to plan and implement the phased transfer of surgery and cardiac catheterisation to Dublin from Belfast. A Northern Ireland Implementation Subgroup is planning the implementation of proposals put forward by Belfast Trust cardiologists to strengthen the Northern Ireland hub in the all-island network. The first fortnightly session for cardiac catheterisations for Northern Ireland patients started in Dublin on 30 April. Two babies from Northern Ireland were recently delivered at the Coombe Hospital in Dublin who were fetally diagnosed in Belfast with heart conditions and had their procedures carried out in Dublin before transfer to Belfast. Recruitment for an additional Family Liaison Nurse is underway and recruitment for a Network Manager will begin this month. Good progress is therefore being made with implementing the International Working Group's recommendations. However, we remain reliant on the majority of elective procedures being carried out by specialist heart centres in England until sufficient capacity has been developed in Dublin to accommodate Northern Ireland patients.</p>
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Child and family support while waiting an autism assessment

<p>AQW 45723/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Steven Agnew (GPNl - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 44402/11-15, what child and family support is available for children and families awaiting an autism assessment.</p> <p>Each Health and Social Care Trust, as part of its triaging process at referral stage, is required to identify risks and provide families with information about how to access family support services (including Community Paediatrics, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Psychology, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Social Services or Educational Psychology) whilst waiting on Autism specific assessment.</p> <p>Trusts should provide families with information about the range of services available through Family Support Hubs and other support services such as Family Support NI see: http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/, and including community and voluntary services. The Health and Social Care Board is also in the process of auditing the current level of support being provided to those children, young people and parents whilst awaiting a diagnosis.</p>
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Services available in North Down for addiction to legal highs

<p>AQW 45678/1 1-15</p>	<p>Mr Alex Easton (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are available to young people under-16 in North Down to deal with addiction to legal highs.</p> <p>Under the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs Phase 2, a range of alcohol and drug education, early intervention, and treatment and support services are commissioned from a number of providers by the HSC in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) area – details of these services are provided at the following link: http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/DrugsAlcohol_Directory_SouthEastern_12_12.pdf.</p> <p>These services are available to people living in North Down.</p> <p>A number of these services are targeted specifically at young people and their families. While the services available may not have a specific focus on New Psychoactive Substances, all are designed to provide appropriate advice, guidance and treatment for those who have issue with these substances.</p> <p>In terms of referral pathways, I would advise that if young people or their parents are concerned about their drug misuse they should speak to their GP in the first instance. Information can also be sought confidentially from the Talk to Frank service on 0800 776 600 or any of the local service providers. Where young people present in crisis or in an emergency there are a range of service responses in place: the Trust Gateway</p>
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Service and the Regional Out-of-Hours Service; CAMHS Crisis Resolution & Home Treatment Service. In addition the Lifeline service which operates across the region also provides a response.

Number of autisms referrals in last 5 years

<p>AQW 45461/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Jim Allister (TUV - North Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of referrals for autism in each of the last five years.</p> <p>The information requested is not held centrally and was requested from the Health and Social Care Trusts. Table 1 below details the number of referrals for autism in each of the last five years.</p> <p>Table 1: Referrals for autism in each of the last five years (year ending 31 March)</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="512 920 1398 1137"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2010/11</th> <th>2011/12</th> <th>2012/13</th> <th>2013/14</th> <th>2014/15</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Referrals for Autism</td> <td>1,452</td> <td>2,181</td> <td>2,465</td> <td>2,979</td> <td>3,394</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: HSC Trusts Please note these figures have not been validated by the Department</p>		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Referrals for Autism	1,452	2,181	2,465	2,979	3,394
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15									
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Number of young people prosecuted for assaults in schools

<p>AQW 45996/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Alex Easton (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Justice how many people have been prosecuted for assaults in schools in the last three years.</p> <p>The information requested is not available. Court prosecutions and convictions datasets do not distinguish the location in which an offence took place and there is no specific offence which relates to an assault which took place in a school.</p>
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Back log in completion of Access NI checks

<p>AQO 8198/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Pat Ramsey (<i>SDLP</i> - <i>Foyle</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Justice, given his own Department's figures showing that roughly 800 people have been waiting in excess of two months for Access NI checks to be completed, what steps will he take to address this back log.</p> <p>AccessNI receives approximately 125,000 applications per year. Currently all applications are being processed within 3 days of receipt. Where applications are received on-line, which has been possible since 31 March as a result of the introduction of a new IT system, these are being processed on the same day or the day after they are received.</p> <p>Approximately 27% of all enhanced checks must be referred to the PSNI or other police forces across the United Kingdom. This process identifies whether the force have any relevant information about the applicant which ought to be disclosed. This is a vital element in the process for safeguarding the most vulnerable people in our society.</p> <p>On 11 May 2015 there were 762 enhanced checks that had been with the PSNI for 60 days or more and 9 cases with police forces in Great Britain. I naturally regret the delay in this relatively small proportion of cases.</p> <p>While they fall to the police, my officials, mindful of the impact on applicants who are unable to secure positions of employment without an AccessNI check, are working closely with PSNI to determine what can be done to reduce this backlog.</p>
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