

NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions week ending 9 October, 2015

Building on expertise and practice of cross community practitioners

<p>AQW 47479/11- 15</p>	<p>Ms Anna Lo MBE (APNI - South Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the opportunities identified under the Together: Building a United Community strategy to build upon and invest in the existing expertise and practice of shared neighbourhood and cross community practitioners and activists.</p> <p>The Together: Building a United Community recognises that partnerships and diversity must be at its core. The delivery architecture to support the implementation of the Strategy involves a collaborative approach with government, councils, statutory and voluntary and community sector partners. The Ministerial Panel, set up to oversee Together: Building a United Community, sets the strategic direction on how to achieve good relations across our community and to identify key areas for action. The Panel comprises all Ministers from the Executive in addition to representatives from the NI Council for Voluntary Action, SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) and the NI Housing Executive.</p> <p>Thematic subgroups have also been established under the auspices of the Ministerial Panel. Two have been established to date, the Community Tensions Subgroup and the Housing Subgroup. The diverse membership of the subgroups includes cross-departmental representation, cross community representation and organisations involved in the practice of shared neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Collectively all these stakeholders acknowledge that to achieve our vision of a united community based on reconciliation, equality of opportunity and the desirability of good relations, the collective commitment and effort of everyone is required; including the participation of practitioners and groups at a local level.</p> <p>In addition to the development of ten Shared Neighbourhoods, the Department for Social Development's Housing Group is progressing a review of housing to bring forward recommendations on shared neighbourhoods.</p> <p>The review will be completed in two stages. The first stage is a review of existing evidence on shared housing. This will be completed this summer and the Department for Social Development (DSD) will use it to identify key gaps in the evidence base. This will inform stage 2 which will involve engaging an</p>
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		<p>external researcher to fill these gaps and offer recommendations on ways in which the framework for furthering shared housing can be improved. It is anticipated that stage 2 will be completed in 2016. Finally, OFMDFM has been actively supporting cross community work through various funding streams fully aligned with the Together: Building a United Community Strategy. They include: Central Good Relations Fund; District Council Good Relations Programme (delivered via local councils); Summer schools/camps (delivered by the Education Authority via the Department of Education); North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme; Planned interventions (delivered by Belfast City Council and the Education Authority); and</p> <p>Funding provided through the Community Relations Council. Collectively these funding streams have amounted to nearly £50m being provided by OFMDFM for the benefit and progress of good relations activities here over the last five years.</p>
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Update on the Together: Building a United Community strategy

<p>AQW 46259/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Chris Lyttle (APNI - East Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister for a progress update on (i) the Together: Building a United Community strategy commitment to deliver an enhanced good relations impact assessment for all policies across government; and (ii) the Stormont House Agreement commitment to deliver an independent audit of all departmental spending in order to identify how division is impacting on the delivery of goods, facilities and services to the public and how best to reconfigure this service delivery consistent with a shared future.</p> <p>Officials are currently in active discussions with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland regarding their role in the delivery of Together: Building a United Community strategy and the delivery of an enhanced good relations impact assessment is one element of these discussions.</p> <p>The commitment to deliver an independent audit of departmental spending is the responsibility of the Department of Finance and Personnel. The Minister of Finance and Personnel has informed us that the University of Ulster Economic Policy Centre has been commissioned to carry out the independent Audit of the cost of division.</p>
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Importance of equality for OFMDFM

<p>AQO 8011/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Seán Lynch (SF - Fermanagh and South Tyrone)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister what assurances they can give that equality is a priority for their Department.</p> <p>We place a great deal of importance on our equality obligations. Our Equality and Human Rights remit is extensive including policy responsibility for: age; children and young people; disability; gender equality; and sexual orientation.</p> <p>We have a range of policies in place which set out our aims and objectives for each of these areas and, as with all government policies, these are developed within the context of the equality of opportunity provisions set out in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The statutory obligations are largely implemented through equality schemes, approved by the Equality Commission, and by screening and carrying out equality impact assessments on policies.</p> <p>Our equality scheme sets out how OFMDFM proposes to fulfil the section 75 statutory duties.</p> <p>In addition, our Department has sponsorship responsibility for the Equality Commission, which provides support, advice and protection against discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, race, religion and political opinion, sex and sexual orientation. The Equality Commission also has responsibilities arising from the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in respect of the statutory equality and good relations duties, which apply to public authorities.</p>
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Applicants unsuccessful in applying for European Social Fund

<p>AQW 49086/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of groups, whose client groups included those with ill mental health, learning and physical disabilities, lone parents and disadvantaged young people, that applied to the latest European Social Fund and were unsuccessful.</p> <p>The total number of organisations that applied to the ESF 2014-2020 Programme, but were unsuccessful, was 69. These organisations can be broken down according to the following strands of the ESF 2014-2020 Programme to which they applied:</p> <p>Community and Family Support:4 Disability:9 Unemployed and Economically Inactive:27</p>
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		<p>Not in Employment, Education or Training:29</p> <p>Many of these organisations have multiple client groups. Of these 69 organisations, the Department has been able to ascertain that 23 have a client group with mental health issues; 36 have a client group with learning/physical disabilities; 24 have a client group of lone parents; and 46 have a client group of disadvantaged young people.</p>
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How DCAL is encouraging young people's participation in sport

<p>AQW 49149/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how her Department is encouraging an increase in (i) youth; and (ii) female participation in sport.</p> <p>My Department's strategy for sport, Sport Matters, contains 26 high level targets, 11 of which are specifically designed to increased participation and sport and physical activity levels across our population, including amongst young people and females. As part of this Strategy an action plan has been published, which provides specific actions for DCAL and Sport NI. The plan also includes actions to be taken forward in partnership with other government departments and a range of public bodies, including district councils.</p> <p>Since 2009, Sport NI has invested just over £63.3Million in sports participation programmes which young people and females have benefitted from. Specific actions include guidance for schools that recommends a minimum of 2 hours of physical education classes per week, the delivery of Sport NI's 'Active Eight' suite of programmes and the promotion of extra-curricular sports opportunities. Other Sport NI programmes which have a focus on increasing participation opportunities for young people and females include the delivery of Sport NI's Active Communities Programme in partnership with district councils, the Active Clubs Programme and the Boxing Investment Programme.</p> <p>Future plans to encourage participation in sport and physical activity, including amongst youth and females, are currently being developed and will be taken forward with the introduction of a new Sport NI policy – 'Everybody Active 2020'. It is anticipated that implementation of programmes to support this policy will commence during the 2016/17 financial year.</p> <p>In addition, Sport NI intends to invest a total of £17.5Million in sports facilities through its Sports Facility Fund, which was recently launched. A key objective of this investment will be to increase participation, including amongst young people and females.</p>
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Update from DE on shared education facilities and youth programmes

<p>AQO 8821/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Trevor Lunn (APNI - Lagan Valley)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education for an update on the aspects of Together: Building a United Community that fall within his departmental remit, including shared education facilities and youth programmes.</p> <p>The Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy includes a headline action to commence 10 new shared education campuses by 2018. To date, I have announced 3 projects – in Moy, Limavady and Ballycastle – to proceed in planning under the Shared Education Campuses Programme. Feasibility studies and business cases are well underway for all 3 projects.</p> <p>I hope to make an announcement on the next round of shared education campuses over the coming months.</p> <p>In addition, my Department continues to enhance the quality and extension of shared education provision through both policy and legislation.</p> <p>My officials have also drafted a business case to support the implementation of the T:BUC 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, however, been provided to my Department to allow this commitment to progress beyond the draft business case stage.</p> <p>With regards to youth, none of the youth programmes within T:BUC fall within my Department’s remit. My officials have however been involved in the design of the OFMDFM led T:BUC Summer Camps Pilot Programme delivered through the Education Authority and the design of the Department for Employment and Learning’s led T:BUC United Youth programme.</p>
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Update on introduction of shared education legislation

<p>AQO 8820/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Seán Lynch (SF - Fermanagh and South Tyrone)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education when he intends to introduce legislation on Shared Education.</p> <p>My Shared Education Bill is ready for introduction to the Assembly. I have written to the First and deputy First Ministers seeking urgent decision to introduce my Shared Education Bill at the earliest opportunity.</p>
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Update on Lisanelly Shared Education Campus

<p>AQO 8814/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Ross Hussey (UUP - West Tyrone)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education for an update on the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus in Omagh.</p> <p>I am pleased to advise that steady progress is being made in the delivery of the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus and the programme remains on track for planned opening in September 2020.</p> <p>Construction of the first school on site, Arvalee School & Resource Centre, which began in March, is well underway and the school is expected to open in September 2016.</p> <p>Site wide demolition is also underway and will be completed by the end of the year.</p> <p>I intend holding an event on site later in October to mark the significant progress made to date.</p> <p>Alongside the work on site my Department is in the process of appointing an Integrated Consultancy Team to develop detailed designs and manage the construction of the remaining five schools and shared education centres. Work is also underway: to develop and agree ownership, governance and management arrangements with managing authorities; to develop an educational model for the campus; and to explore opportunities to deliver a range of coordinated services on the campus.</p>
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Update on review of integrated education

<p>AQW 49512/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Anna Lo MBE (APNI - South Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education, following the announcement that he would be conducting a review of integrated education, to detail (i) when the review will take place; (ii) how long it will last; (iii) whether it be independent of his Department; and (iv) whether it will involve members of the integrated education sector.</p> <p>I have agreed to commission a review of the planning, growth and development of integrated education.</p> <p>The review will be carried out by an independent panel of experts. I am currently considering membership of the panel and the timeframe for the review.</p>
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Waiting times for statementing and regional variances

<p>AQW 49386/11- 16</p>	<p>Lord Morrow of Clogher Valley (DUP - <i>Fermanagh and South Tyrone</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 49005/11-16, to detail (i) why the figures for the number of children (a) waiting on the statementing process to begin in the North East Region; and (b) undergoing the statementing process in the Southern Region are higher compared to the other regions; and (ii) why the figures for the Belfast Region are lower compared to the other regions.</p> <p>Special educational provision is matched to the individual needs of the child. If a child's special educational needs (SEN) are such that the Education Authority (EA), working in conjunction with the school, parents and any other agencies, considers that it is appropriate to address the child's special educational provision by making a statement then this process will commence regardless of how many other children are either waiting for the process to begin or undergoing the process. There will, therefore, always be variances in numbers across the regions of the EA depending on the number of children presenting with SEN.</p> <p>The EA has also advised that, with effect from 1 September 2015, all statutory assessment requests are managed through a regional statutory assessment panel.</p>
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Flexibility in school starting ages

<p>AQW 49367/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Steven Agnew (GPNI - <i>North Down</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education, given the school term finishes at the end of June, to detail (i) why the cut off for children to start formal education includes children born on 1 July; and (ii) what consideration he has given to introducing flexibility to school starting ages.</p> <p>The date of commencement of compulsory school age was changed from five to four by the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. This was to take account of the fact that many parents enrolled their children at four years of age and was to ensure that all children had access to an equal number of years of school. A cut off date of 1 July, provided clarity for parents and schools on the beginning of compulsory school age that was common to all children rather than relying on the date of birth of the individual child.</p> <p>Following consultation on deferral of school starting age in exceptional circumstances earlier this year, I decided not to proceed with legislation in this Assembly mandate. As a result of calls from parents for clarity on this issue, I have asked the Education Authority to produce guidance for parents. I remain keen for legislation to be brought forward to address this issue in the next Assembly mandate.</p>
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Number of children, and distances travelled by pre-school children

<p>AQW 49363/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the number of children that have to travel (i) more than three miles; (ii) more than five miles; and (iii) more than ten miles to attend their pre-school nursery.</p> <p>Analysis on distance from pupil residence to schools is based on the distance “as the crow flies” from the central point of the postcode in which the pupil lives.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="517 656 1394 922"> <thead> <tr> <th>Distance from school</th> <th>Number of pupils</th> <th>% of all pupils</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>More than three miles</td> <td>2,887</td> <td>12.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>More than five miles</td> <td>1,029</td> <td>4.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>More than ten miles</td> <td>187</td> <td>0.8%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: NI school census</p> <p>Notes: Figures include pupils in nursery schools and units and voluntary and private pre-schools.</p> <p>The figures relate to purely the distance from pupil residence to the pre-school setting they attend. The process for admission to pre-school is preference based. Parents can apply to any setting they choose and are encouraged to list a number of preferences as it is not always possible to accommodate everyone’s first choice. It is possible that there are closer pre-school settings that pupils could have been eligible for a place, however parents have chosen to send their child to a pre-school setting further away. The Department does not hold statistical data on factors influencing parental decisions underlying choice of pre-school setting.</p>	Distance from school	Number of pupils	% of all pupils	More than three miles	2,887	12.2%	More than five miles	1,029	4.3%	More than ten miles	187	0.8%
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Provisions for LGBTQ and Travelling communities in the Bullying Bill

<p>AQW 49308/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Steven Agnew (GPNi - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education what provisions are given to the LGBTQ and Irish Travelling communities in relation to the Bullying Bill, to ensure they are given adequate protections within our schools under the law.</p> <p>My officials have been working closely with the Office of Legislative Counsel (OLC) to prepare the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill. Our aim has been to ensure the legislation is legally robust, easy for pupils, parents and schools to understand and as straightforward to implement as possible.</p> <p>I agreed the final wording of the Bill on 29 September. The legislation will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a common definition of bullying; Require all schools to centrally record incidents of bullying, their motivation and their outcome; and
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		<p>Require Boards of Governors to play an active role in the preparation and implementation of anti-bullying policies and measures within their school. I have now received confirmation of legislative competence from the Departmental Solicitors Office and the Office of the Attorney General and have circulated a paper seeking Executive consent for its introduction to the Assembly.</p> <p>If this can be secured in a timely manner, it should not be necessary to seek accelerated passage; and my preference would be for the Education Committee to have the time it needs to scrutinise this important Bill.</p> <p>This Bill is, however, a priority for my Department and I will consider any steps, including accelerated passage, to ensure it passes into law before the end of the current Assembly mandate.</p> <p>The proposed definition of Bullying contained in the Bill does not differentiate between forms of bullying. My Department's position remains that no form of bullying is acceptable in our schools. We do recognise, however, that certain groups of pupils, such as those coming from the LGBT and Irish Travelling communities may be more likely to experience bullying.</p> <p>In requiring schools to record the motivation of each bullying incident, the Bill provides a non-exhaustive list of possible motivating factors which schools are required to consider. This includes all of the criteria recognised under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.</p> <p>Understanding the frequency and common motivations for bullying within their school will strengthen each Board of Governors' ability to ensure effective measures are in place to protect all of their pupils.</p>
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Update on timeline of the Bullying Bill

49307/11-16	Mr Steven Agnew (GPNI - North Down)	<p>To ask the Minister of Education (i) when he intends on bringing the Bullying Bill before the Assembly; and (ii) whether he is considering accelerated passage for the Bill.</p> <p>My officials have been working closely with the Office of Legislative Counsel (OLC) to prepare the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill. Our aim has been to ensure the legislation is legally robust, easy for pupils, parents and schools to understand and as straightforward to implement as possible.</p> <p>I agreed the final wording of the Bill on 29 September. The legislation will: Provide a common definition of bullying; Require all schools to centrally record incidents of bullying, their motivation and</p>
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Consideration for extension of Special Education Needs statements to 21

<p>AQW 49271/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail any discussions his Department has had with the Department for Employment and Learning regarding the extension of Special Educational Needs statements to 21 years of age, for young people who require a longer period of time to achieve their educational goals.</p> <p>Department of Education (DE) and Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) officials met in October 2012 to consider whether there was merit in DEL extending the age of statements beyond 19 years of age. In subsequent correspondence with me, the Minister for DEL confirmed in March 2013 that, following consideration of the issue, DEL had no plans to extend the current age limit for SEN statements.</p>
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		<p>On 10 March 2015, during the debate at second stage on the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Bill, several MLAs again raised the issue of extending the age of statements beyond 19 years of age and I undertook to raise this issue again with the Minister for DEL.</p> <p>DEL officials have, however, since confirmed that they are content with the current arrangements for young people with SEN who are in training, Further Education or Higher Education and do not believe that statements are necessary to enable appropriate supports to be made.</p>
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Transitioning of young people with Special Educational Needs

<p>AQW 49270/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail how his Department is working with the Department for Employment and Learning to provide options and support for young people with statements of Special Educational Needs during the transition between school and further education.</p> <p>The statutory responsibility for securing provision for school aged pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) rests with both schools and the Education Authority (EA).</p> <p>The EA's Transition Service works in conjunction with the Department for Employment and Learning's Careers Service and Health and Social Care Trust professionals to ensure the provision of comprehensive and co-ordinated information about the range of post-school options available to young people with statements of SEN.</p> <p>DE is currently working with other key departments, including DEL, and the EA on improving and strengthening the transition planning process and has been actively involved with the cross-departmental focus group on Post-19 Transitions which was set up to identify gaps in the provision of transition services for young people with severe learning difficulties.</p>
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Transitioning for young with Special Educational Needs but are not statemented

<p>AQW 49268/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail how his Department is working with the Department for Employment and Learning to provide options and support for young people that have Special Educational Needs but who are not statemented, during the transition between school and further education.</p> <p>The statutory responsibility for securing provision for school aged pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) rests with both schools and the Education Authority (EA).</p> <p>Paragraph 6.51 of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of SEN (CoP) recognises that, in some instances, a pupil approaching the age of 16 may have SEN which do not call for a statement, but which are nevertheless likely to require some support during the transition process.</p> <p>The Code makes clear that schools should seek to provide appropriate help and guidance for these young people. This may include the provision of school/FE college link courses or work placements. In some cases, such pupils may benefit from having a transition plan and schools should consider preparation of their own transition plans for non-statemented pupils with SEN who require additional support if going on to further or higher education or training.</p> <p>The Department for Employment and Learning's Careers Service has Partnership Agreements in place with post-primary schools to support the schools' careers education programmes and to provide advice and guidance on post-school options. These agreements allow schools, in consultation with qualified careers advisers, the opportunity to avail of impartial guidance services appropriate to the needs of their pupils, whether or not they are statemented, and to support them in their career decision making and the transition planning process.</p> <p>I am satisfied that the CoP , which is underpinned by legislation, together with the intervention of DEL's Careers Service, provide appropriate guidance and support during the transition period for those young people with SEN who do not have a statement and who wish to progress to further education.</p>
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Upper age limit for Special Educational Needs statements

<p>AQW 49252/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail any discussions he has had with the Department for Employment and Learning on extending the upper age limit for Special Educational Needs statements.</p> <p>Department of Education (DE) and Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) officials met in October 2012 to consider whether there was merit in DEL extending the age of statements beyond 19 years of age. In subsequent correspondence with me, the Minister for DEL confirmed in March 2013 that, following consideration of the issue, DEL had no plans to extend the current age limit for SEN statements.</p> <p>On 10 March 2015, during the debate at second stage on the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Bill, several MLAs again raised the issue of extending the age of statements beyond 19 years of age and I undertook to raise this issue again with the Minister for DEL.</p> <p>DEL officials have, however, since confirmed that they are content with the current arrangements for young people with SEN who are in training, Further Education or Higher Education and do not believe that statements are necessary to enable appropriate supports to be made.</p>
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Budget for Shared Education Signature Project

<p>AQW 49249/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the total budget for the Shared Education Signature Project.</p> <p>To date no funds have been withheld as a result of letters of offer being “rescinded”.</p> <p>Twelve partnerships, comprising twenty six schools, have formally responded to the Education Authority’s letter of offer stating that they are unable to meet the conditions for receipt of DSC Shared Education Signature Project funding. As a consequence, the Education Authority has had to withdraw their letter of offer. As there was no formal contract in place, these have not been “rescinded”. Funding offers can of course be re-instated should their situation change. The total value of the twelve letters of offer is £264,741 for year one of the project. The total budget for the Shared Education Signature Project is £25 million.</p>
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Special Educational Needs statements and future employment and further study

<p>AQW 49243/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Fearghal McKinney (<i>SDLP - South Belfast</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education for his assessment of the effectiveness of Special Educational Needs statements in facilitating future employment or further study for children.</p> <p>I am content that there is an effective and well embedded statutory transition planning process in all of our schools for young persons aged 14+ with statements of SEN. The Education Authority's Transition Service helps young people with statements and their parents/carers access appropriate information, guidance and support to allow them to make informed choices for the future.</p> <p>Depending on the nature of an individual's needs, a young person with a statement of SEN may opt to progress to further or higher education, training or employment. Young people with particularly complex learning difficulties may also move to health and social care provision.</p> <p>The Transition Service works in conjunction with the Department for Employment and Learning's Careers Service and Health and Social Care Trust professionals to ensure the provision of comprehensive and co-ordinated information about the range of post-school options available to young people with statements of SEN.</p>
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Autism diagnosis waiting times and impact on children with SEN statements

<p>AQW 49242/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Fearghal McKinney (<i>SDLP - South Belfast</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education for his assessment of the waiting times for autism diagnosis; and the impact this is having on children being assessed for Special Educational Needs statements.</p> <p>The responsibility for diagnosis of autism in children rests with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS). Addressing the individual special educational needs (SEN) of a child with autism is not, however, dependent upon receipt of a diagnosis. The identification, assessment and provision for children with SEN, including those with autism, will be addressed in line with the procedures outlined in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs. A non-diagnosis does not preclude a child with special educational needs from receiving appropriate support including, if required, a formal assessment or statement of his or her SEN.</p>
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Waiting lists for autism diagnosis

<p>AQW 49241/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Fearghal McKinney (SDLP - South Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the discussions he has had with the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on the current waiting lists for autism diagnosis.</p> <p>The responsibility for diagnosis of autism in children rests with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS). I have not, to date, been approached by the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to specifically discuss current waiting lists for autism diagnosis.</p> <p>I remain committed, however, 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. 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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Support for schools meeting their obligations to pupils with SEN

<p>AQW 49239/11- 16</p>	<p>Mrs Jo- Anne Dobson (UUP - Upper Bann)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education what arrangements are in place to help schools meet their statutory obligation to provide a full-time, age appropriate curriculum for pupils with special educational needs, given one-to-one SEN assistance ends before the end of the school day.</p> <p>The Board of Governors and principal of every grant-aided school have a statutory duty to secure that 'the minimum content for each area of learning is taught'. Article 13 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 refers. A statement of special educational needs may provide for the curriculum to apply with modifications or for the curriculum not to apply. A principal may direct that due to temporary circumstances it is not appropriate for the curriculum to apply to a child or that the curriculum should not apply while a child is being assessed with a view to making or amending a statement of special educational needs.</p>
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Update on anti-bullying legislation proposals

<p>AQW 49229/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Gregory Campbell (DUP - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education whether he intends to bring anti-bullying legislation proposals to the Executive before the end of the current Assembly mandate.</p> <p>On 23 June 2014, I announced my intention to introduce new Anti-Bullying Legislation in the current Assembly mandate. This was the subject of a public consultation which launched in January 2015 and attracted 4,860 responses, over 4,000 of which came from pupils and young people.</p> <p>My officials have been working with the Office of Legislative Counsel (OLC) to prepare a Bill reflecting our original proposals and the views expressed during the consultation. Our aim has been to ensure the legislation is legally robust, easy for pupils, parents and schools to understand and as straightforward to implement as possible. I agreed the final wording of the Bill on 29 September. The legislation will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a common definition of bullying; Require all schools to centrally record incidents of bullying, their motivation and their outcome; and Require Boards of Governors to play an active role in the preparation and implementation of anti-bullying policies and measures within their school. <p>I have now sought confirmation of legislative competence from the Departmental Solicitors Office and the Office of the Attorney General and will, at the earliest opportunity, be seeking Executive consent for its introduction to the Assembly.</p> <p>It remains my full intention not only to see this Bill introduced, but to have it complete its legislative passage before the end of the current Assembly Mandate.</p>
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Steps to address school children not claiming free school meals

<p>AQW 49198/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 48861/11-16, what steps his Department is taking to address the number of eligible school children who do not claim free school meals.</p> <p>The Department recognises that there are parents who are on benefits and would be eligible to apply for free school meals (FSM), who either choose not to apply or are not aware that they can apply for FSM. As detailed in the answer to AQW 48861/11-16, the Department issues a press release on an annual basis reminding all parents to consider whether they may be eligible to FSM and if so to apply. My officials are also working with colleagues in the Department for Social Development to explore ways of maximising the take up of benefits and additional support to which households are entitled including entitlement to FSM. Both the EA and individual schools also play a key role in encouraging parents to claim their FSM entitlement. Some examples of the activities which they are involved in are detailed in AQW 48861/11-16.</p>
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Numbers of young people with SEN who progress to further education

<p>AQW 49197/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education for his assessment of the number of young people who have statements of special education needs, who progress to further education or training once they leave school.</p> <p>Depending on the nature of an individual's needs, a young person with a statement of SEN may opt to progress to further or higher education, training or employment. Young people with particularly complex learning difficulties may also move to health and social care provision.</p> <p>The 2013/14 School Leavers Survey indicates that the majority of young people in mainstream schools with statements of special educational needs (SEN) progressed to either institutions of further education or training opportunities when they left school.</p> <p>There is a well embedded statutory transition planning process in all of our schools for young persons aged 14+ with statements of SEN. The Education Authority's Transition Service helps young people with statements and their parents/carers access appropriate information, guidance and support to allow them to make informed choices for the future.</p> <p>The Transition Service works in conjunction with the Department for</p>
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		<p>Employment and Learning's Careers Service and Health and Social Care Trust professionals to ensure the provision of comprehensive and co-ordinated information about the range of post-school options available to young people with statements of SEN.</p>
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Strategies for addressing crime committed in schools

<p>AQW 49118/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education what strategies or actions are being pursued to address the problem of crimes committed in schools.</p> <p>The safety of pupils, staff and school buildings and property is very important and thankfully schools are generally very safe places. Crimes of course can and do happen occasionally in schools and on school premises and need to be dealt with appropriately. If they know or suspect that a criminal offence has taken place, schools have a duty to report this to the relevant authorities, normally the PSNI.</p> <p>One of the most common problems relates to theft, fraud and damage to school property. There are very clear guidelines set out for schools that require the reporting of all instances of theft and fraud no matter how small to their managing authority for investigation and follow up. Equally, reports of damage to property receive careful attention.</p> <p>Assaults on teachers – or any other staff employed in schools – whether physical, verbal, written or through social media, are intolerable and totally unacceptable. The Department would therefore encourage any teachers or staff who experience abuse, in any form, to report it immediately to their school principal, in the first instance.</p> <p>There are also established procedures and guidance in place in respect of concerns about safeguarding. These processes are clearly outlined in the DHSSPS document 'Co-Operating to Safeguard Children', which is currently under review, and the Department's document, 'Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection'.</p> <p>A common thread across all these arrangements is the importance of reviewing any incident that takes place to ensure that risks can be reassessed and lessons learned and shared to prevent recurrence. The Education Authority provides invaluable support to schools in ensuring that this step is taken.</p>
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Current laws on anti-social behaviour

<p>AQW 49406/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Alex Easton (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Justice to outline the current laws on anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Anti-social behaviour is a broad term used to describe a wide range of behaviours which people consider anti-social. It is used to describe inconsiderate and nuisance behaviours, such as excessive noise, littering and neighbourhood disputes.</p> <p>Given the wide spectrum of behaviours which people may consider to be anti-social means that there is a range of legislation which relates to this issue. In terms of my Department, the key piece of anti-social behaviour legislation for which I have responsibility is the Anti-social Behaviour (Northern Ireland) Order 2004. This legislation provides for the making of a civil order, to protect the public from behaviour that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress.</p> <p>An Anti-social Behaviour Order can be made on application by a 'relevant authority' (a district council, the Chief Constable or the Northern Ireland Housing Executive) to a magistrates' court, or by a court where an offender is convicted of a relevant offence.</p> <p>An Order can contain conditions prohibiting an individual from carrying out specific anti-social acts or from entering defined areas. Breach of an Order is a criminal offence.</p>
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