

NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions week ending 27 October, 2015

Update on restructuring of Government Departments

<p>AQW 48741/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Jim Allister (TUV - North Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) whether the project to reduce the number of Departments has met all its timeline commitments and, if not, (ii) what are the consequences of not meeting those timelines.</p> <p>The decisions reached by the Executive on future departmental structures, together with details of the legislative steps needed to effect the changes, were announced in an oral statement to the Assembly on 2 March 2015. Work to implement the decisions has been progressing and, subject to passage of the legislation in the Assembly, it is envisaged that the Executive will be restructured on a nine-department basis at the time of the 2016 election. A Departments Bill has been drafted to establish the new framework, and detailed work is under way to prepare a Transfer of Functions Order which will provide for the reallocation of statutory responsibilities between departments. Extensive administrative preparations are also being taken forward under the leadership of a cross-departmental Programme Board chaired by a Permanent Secretary.</p>
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Timescale for next Programme for Government

<p>AQW 48719/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Samuel Gardiner MBE (UUP - Upper Bann)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the proposed timescale for the development of the next Programme for Government.</p> <p>The Stormont House Agreement requires that the parties that will form the next Executive will meet to resolve a Programme for Government within two weeks of the next Assembly election.</p>
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Rationale for not extending Special Educational Needs statements to 21

<p>AQW 49815/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 49271/11-16, to detail (i) his Department’s rationale for not extending Special Educational Needs statements to 21 years of age; (ii) whether he plans to reassess this need; and (iii) existing alternative support for young people with special education needs, that require a longer period of time to achieve their educational goals.</p> <p>(i) I refer the member to my previous answer to AQW 49224/11-16 regarding the same issue; (ii) at present I have no plans to reassess the need for extending statementing to age 21; and (iii) my Department provides additional support for further education students through the Additional Support Fund and for higher education students through Disabled Students Allowance. Further information is available on nidirect at: Disability Support at College and Disabled Students Allowance</p>
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How DEL tracks young people in NEETS

<p>AQW 49211/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail how his Department tracks young people who are not in education, employment or training; and for an update on the development of a system to track these individuals’ progress.</p> <p>My Department’s Client Management System is used, as far as possible, to track young people who have left school.</p> <p>Any young person who leaves education or training without a positive destination recorded in the school leaver data is case-loaded by the careers service. The Careers Service actively supports all 16 and 17 year olds who do not progress into training, education or employment on leaving school.</p> <p>The electronic transfer of year 10 pupil data from the Department of Education to my Department took place, for the first time, in October 2012 and continues with the transfer for the current year 10 pupils scheduled to take place in December 2015.</p> <p>A research report, commissioned in 2012 by my Department, into improved tracking of young people who are not in education, employment or training recommended that: in the short term, the Department’s Client Management System (CMS)</p>
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		<p>should be enhanced, assuming costs are not excessive, to enable it to function as a rudimentary tracking system for young people; and, in the medium term, (next two to three years) a new tracking system should be established in Northern Ireland drawing on the National Client Caseload Information System (NCCIS) in England.</p> <p>Since then my Department has led on the introduction of the Learning Records Service's Unique Learner Number across education and training sectors in Northern Ireland. This helps to identify those not engaged in education, employment and training and, from September 2015, all learners aged 14 plus in schools across Northern Ireland will be allocated a Unique Learner Number in Year 11.</p> <p>In addition, emerging information from a number of data sources, including the 2011 census, has been used to provide more robust information on the characteristics of those in the NEET category. Estimates of the number of those in the NEET category are published regularly by the Department of Finance and Personnel in the Quarterly Supplement to the Labour Force Survey.</p>
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Replacement of student pupil passes for single journeys

<p>AQW 50040/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr David Hilditch (DUP - East Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Regional Development what plans Translink has to introduce a multi-journey ticket to replace the student pupil pass for single journeys. [Priority Written]</p> <p>Translink has advised me that for school pupils using its bus services on a daily basis they can avail themselves of multi-journey smartcard products where any journeys loaded onto the card can be used as required over a 12-month period.</p> <p>Translink has no plans to introduce a similar product for rail travel. Translink does not offer any single leg product for any group of customers on its rail network nor is it aware of any similar products available from any rail operator in GB mainland for monthly/annual travel in one direction. Smartlink products for rail travel can be used on any service at any time of day or on any day of the week.</p> <p>Translink wrote to fare paying pupil pass holders in June 2015 to inform them of its plans and to provide information on alternative products, including Smartlink products.</p>
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Sustainability of Women's Centre Childcare Fund

<p>AQW 50072/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Social Development for an update on the sustainability of the Womens' Centre Childcare Fund.</p> <p>Since 2006, the Women's Centres Childcare Fund has continued as an emergency funding package pending development, by OFMdFM, of a new childcare strategy, which is currently the subject of consultation. In the context of the childcare strategy I have indicated that this will be the last year of funding under WCCF.</p>
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Number of integrated schools built in last five years

<p>AQW 50101/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Alex Easton (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education how many Integrated schools have been built in the last five years</p> <p>The following table indicates the number of schools in the Maintained, Controlled, Controlled Integrated and Grant Maintained Integrated sectors that have been announced in the last five years and are either complete or are currently at construction stage.</p> <p>There are a number of new build projects from all school sectors that are currently at the various stages of planning, some of which are due on site shortly.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="552 1272 1394 1809"> <thead> <tr> <th>School Sector</th> <th>Number of Schools Complete</th> <th>Number of Schools Currently at Construction Stage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Maintained</td> <td>8</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Controlled</td> <td>4</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Controlled Integrated</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Grant Maintained</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	School Sector	Number of Schools Complete	Number of Schools Currently at Construction Stage	Maintained	8	4	Controlled	4	2	Controlled Integrated	-	1	Grant Maintained		
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Accessibility of childcare and early years groups for children with a disability

<p>AQW 50038/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education how his Department supports childcare and early years groups that want to increase their staffing capacity or purchase resources and equipment in order to make services accessible to families with disabled children.</p> <p>My Department funded a three year SEN Early Years capacity building pilot in DE-funded early years' settings which finished at the end of September 2014.</p> <p>The pilot aimed to improve early identification, assessment and intervention for children with SEN and / or disability in statutory nursery settings and voluntary and private settings offering funded Pre - School Education Programme funded places.</p> <p>ETI positively reviewed the pilot and subsequently the Early Years Inclusion Service, which is provided by the Education Authority (EA), commenced on 1 September 2015 and will build on the progress achieved during the Pilots and the Interim Arrangements.</p> <p>I have recently provided further funding to the EA to extend the development of the Early Years training model used for pre-school settings to early years' children with SEN entering primary schools at P1.</p>
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Eligibility criteria for funding under the Extended School Programme

<p>AQW 50023/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail (i) the eligibility criteria for the Extended Schools Programme; and (ii) whether eligible schools will receive Extended Schools Programme funding automatically or are they required to make a case for funding via an application.</p> <p>The current Extended Schools criteria, based on information provided via the Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM 2010), apply equally across all schools. My Department includes all schools for Extended Schools funding with:</p> <p>51% or more of pupils from a Neighbourhood Renewal Area or the 30% most disadvantaged wards/super output areas; and/or 37% or more of pupils with a Free School Meal Entitlement or in the case of Nursery Schools, pupils with parents in receipt of Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance at or above 37%.</p>
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		<p>The programme is not subject to an application process; funding is made available to all schools which meet the eligibility criteria. Schools entitled to Extended Schools funding are identified by my Department via the data submitted by individual schools as part of the annual School Census exercise.</p>
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Assessment of Erasmus+ programme

<p>AQW 49982/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education (i) for his assessment of the Erasmus+ programme; and (ii) to detail how his Department are promoting greater access to this programme for (a) youth service providers: (b) disadvantaged young people.</p> <p>The Erasmus+ programme offers a wide range of opportunities for all our young people and teachers to participate in partnership and exchange activities across Europe. The EU programme aims to boost skills and employability whilst modernising education, training and youth work. In the 2014 and 2015 funding rounds, circa 67 schools and youth service providers here have benefited from the programme receiving funding in excess of 3.3 million Euros.</p> <p>My Department is continuing to work with the British Council and the Department for Education and Skills in the south to promote the programme to schools and the youth sector to ensure that participation in Erasmus+ is maximised.</p>
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International youth work

<p>AQW 49981/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education (i) for his assessment of international youth work as an aspect of informal learning; (ii) to detail how his Department supports access to international learning opportunities for (a) young people; and (b) youth work practitioners.</p> <p>International youth work is the overall name given to a strand of youth work which focuses on the engagement of youth service participants, leaders and policy makers with their peers from a wide range of countries, cultures and backgrounds. International youth work provides the opportunity to explore and appreciate diversity.</p> <p>Support for those organisations and young people wishing to participate in international youth work is provided through the Youth Council (YCNi) in the form of:</p>
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		<p>Training and promotional activities; Assistance with the Erasmus+ application process; One to one clinics for potential applicants; Provision of up to date information through – E bulletins. Additional funding provided by EU funded initiatives such as Erasmus+ provide the sector with opportunities to complement and support the implementation of Priorities for Youth.</p>
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School suspensions in last five years

<p>AQW 49936/11 -16</p>	<p>Mr John Dallat (<i>SDLP - East Londonderry</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the number of pupils suspended from (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school in each of the last 5 years; and what strategies are in place to address this.</p> <p>The Department publishes statistics on pupil suspensions on its website. The information is provided annually by the Education Authority (EA). The table below details the number of pupil suspensions in each of the last five years broken down by Primary and Post Primary School</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="534 1079 1441 1462"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2009/10</th> <th>2010/11</th> <th>2011/12</th> <th>2012/13</th> <th>2013/14</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Primary</td> <td>248</td> <td>185</td> <td>200</td> <td>191</td> <td>228</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Post Primary</td> <td>4471</td> <td>4055</td> <td>3594</td> <td>3296</td> <td>3380</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Figures for 2014/15 are in the process of being analysed and will be published on the Departments website in due course.</p> <p>The Board of Governors (BoG) of every grant-aided school is under a duty to ensure that policies designed to promote good behaviour and discipline on the part of pupils attending the school are pursued at the school. Each school must therefore have a discipline policy which details the required standards of behaviour expected of pupils and the sanctions, including suspension and expulsion, which may be imposed whenever a pupil contravenes these standards. It is a matter for the school to periodically review this policy and ensure it remains fit for purpose.</p> <p>Overarching this, each employing authority within the education sector is also required to prepare a scheme specifying the procedures to be followed, by schools under its management, in relation to suspensions or expulsions.</p>		2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Primary	248	185	200	191	228	Post Primary	4471	4055	3594	3296	3380
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		<p>In April 2015, the Education Authority (EA) issued an interim scheme to all controlled schools setting out procedural steps which must be rigorously followed when suspending or expelling a pupil. This scheme was informed by and builds upon the best practice that existed within the former ELBs and other employing authorities, including CCMS.</p> <p>This will be reviewed before the EA adopts a scheme for long term use. As part of this, a consultation will be undertaken with controlled schools and other key stakeholders.</p>
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Number of educational psychologists employed by Educational Authorities

<p>AQW 49813/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Stephen Moutray (DUP - Upper Bann)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail how many educational psychologists are (i) employed by the Education Authority; and (ii) available to work in the Southern region of the Education Authority.</p> <p>The Education Authority has advised that by November 2015 the number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Educational Psychologists will be: 145.5 employed by EA 32.1 employed in Southern region</p>
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Strategies for encouraging community based education provision

<p>AQW 49795/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail what strategies his Department is pursuing to encourage community based education provision.</p> <p>My Department is committed to building stronger links between schools and the communities they serve. I want to see schools work in partnership with local people in an effort to serve the needs of pupils, families and the wider school community.</p> <p>My Department therefore encourages schools to make provision for wider community involvement through a range of policies. The policy for school improvement 'Every School a Good School' sets out the characteristics of a good school and points to the value of the school connected to its local community; guidance issued to School Governors highlights the responsibility governors have in promoting the use of the school in the community. The Extended Schools and Full Service School programmes enable greater community access to schools and the Community Education Initiatives Programme and West Belfast Community Project have helped to promote partnership working between voluntary and community organisations and schools through educationally focused programmes.</p>
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		<p>My 'Education Works' advertising campaign specifically encourages parents and families to become more directly involved in the education of their children. Additionally, my efforts to promote increasing use by communities of school premises include publication of a Guidance Toolkit for Schools designed to assist and encourage more schools in providing community access to school facilities. My Department is also working closely with the Shankill Children's and Young People's Zone to support that community in its efforts to improve the life chances of its children and young people. It is also worth noting that the Education Act (NI) 2014 has placed a duty on the Education Authority to encourage, facilitate and promote the community use of premises of grant-aided schools.</p>
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Funding for schools since Common Funding Formula were introduced

<p>AQW 49739/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail (i) the schools that have had their budgets reduced since changes to the Common Funding Formula were introduced in 2014; and (ii) which schools received transition payments; and the amount awarded in each case.</p> <p>Despite significant reductions to my budget, I have been able to maintain funding levels for school delegated budgets. The Aggregated Schools' Budget in 2015/16 was some 2.1% higher than in 2013/14. Funding at school level will reflect the overall level of funding available for distribution, identified needs across all schools and pupils enrolled, as well as any changes to the funding arrangements during this period. However, at individual school level, the share of budget will also reflect any changes in its characteristics, year on year – and in particular; pupil enrolments, their stage of education, additional need pupils and levels of identified social deprivation.</p> <p>In line with my commitment that no school would lose funding in 2014-15 solely as a result of any changes I made to the Common Funding Formula, Transitional funding support has been made available to schools, in addition to their formula calculated funding share, over the last two years.</p> <p>I have arranged for details of schools, and the funding amounts received under the Transitional funding arrangements in the last two years, to be placed in the Assembly Library.</p>
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Funding for schools in areas of high deprivation

<p>AQW 49738/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail how needs assessments are carried out to ensure schools in areas of high levels of deprivation are not disproportionately impacted by budget reductions.</p> <p>Despite significant reductions to my budget, I have been able to maintain funding levels for school delegated budgets.</p> <p>Following a report by the Independent Review Panel on funding arrangements for schools, changes were introduced to increase weighted funding levels for schools with significant concentrations of pupils identified as being socially deprived. Additionally, funding for schools received a further £10 million for distribution in the formula to help support schools with the greatest concentrations of disadvantage – to address underachievement among their disadvantaged pupils.</p> <p>Within the finite resources available to the Education budget, I will continue to seek to maximise available funding for schools and to target resources to those children most in need.</p>
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How the Assembly Commission’s Engagement Strategy is increasing engagement

<p>AQW 49669/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Assembly Commission to detail how the Assembly Commission’s Engagement Strategy 2015-16 is increasing engagement with (i) young people; (ii) older people; and (iii) other under-represented groups.</p> <p>The Assembly Commission’s Engagement Strategy 2015-16 includes a commitment to “build partnerships with relevant stakeholders to create and improve engagement opportunities with citizens and under-represented groups”. This work is primarily undertaken by the Education Service and Assembly Community Connect, managed by the Outreach Service.</p> <p>Engagement with young people is primarily, but not exclusively undertaken by the Education Service through an inward and outward visit programme for schools, universities, Colleges of Further and Higher Education and the informal youth sector.</p> <p>In the academic year 2014-15, nearly 15,200 participants in 449 groups took part in the Assembly’s Education Programme; 12,500 on educational visits to Parliament Buildings and just over 2,500 as part of the outreach programme. The programme is available in English and Irish.</p>
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The Education Service has worked with Assembly Committees to gain young people's views on a range of issues and enquiries, for example, Shared and Integrated Education and the School Inspectorate, the Road Traffic Bill's proposed changes for learner and new drivers and the Together Building a United Community Strategy.

The Service works with the NEETs Forum (young people not in employment, education or training) to encourage hard to reach groups to engage with democratic politics. This involves outreach visits to NEET groups and encouraging forum members to participate in special projects.

Further engagement with young people is underway as part of an Erasmus+ Connections' Project, which aims to promote dialogue between decision makers and young people. Young people were challenged to research an issue of their choice and communicate their findings to the Assembly. The young people focussed on mental health and will deliver their findings to Assembly Committees in early 2016. The Education Service organises a series of Let's Talk events around Northern Ireland to bring together young people and their MLAs. In 2014-15, these events involved around 100 young people and were held in Ballymena, Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Newry and Omagh. We hope to increase the number of these events to eight this year.

This year we worked with Belfast City Council and Cinemagic on the 'Reel Politics' project. It involved 24 young women from across Northern Ireland to explore the under-representation of women in politics by producing three films on the topics of Social Media, Domestic Abuse and lack of female representation in the Science, Technology, Engineering Arts and Maths sector. The films were screened on International Women's Day on 6 March.

In November we will facilitate the Northern Ireland Youth Forum's Youth Congress annual sitting in the Assembly Chamber to coincide with the UK Youth Parliament debate in the House of Commons Chamber, Westminster. More than 100 young people from a range of youth organisations will be involved.

Educational Resources

We continue to develop new educational materials like the Education website to support teaching and learning about the Assembly and will launch four new videos for young people this year.

We have published an iBook – *A Guide to the Assembly and Parliament*

Buildings - for students aged 16+ and an updated edition and e-book version will be available in March 2016.

Older People

The Assembly Community Connect (ACC) programme works to enhance connections between the Assembly and the Community and Voluntary sector through education and outreach.

In October, to mark the International Day of Older Persons, ACC brought together members of the Age Sector Platform and members of the Northern Ireland Youth Forum to Parliament Buildings to debate a motion as Northern Ireland's inaugural Intergenerational Parliament. Members of Age Sector Platform will return to Parliament Buildings in December for its annual Pensioners' Parliament.

Other under-represented groups

While ACC works with groups and individuals from across the Community and Voluntary sector, from 2014 to the present time, it has chosen to focus on engagement with women, persons with disabilities and the black and minority ethnic sector. In that time, ACC has engaged with nearly 6,000 people.

We have arranged and participated in a range of events focussed on these sectors, including a 'Women in Politics' panel event as part of Women of the World festival, Corrymeela's 'Stop Peace Unravelling' event, the Belfast Mela, Chinese New Year, One Assembly; Many People event to mark Community Relations week, which included communities from across Northern Ireland sharing their culture through performances in Parliament Buildings.

We have developed tailored training programmes for a range of organisations including Guide Dogs for the Blind and Disability Sport NI, the latter involved Members and individuals taking part in a wheel-chair slalom in the Long Gallery.

Most recently, we have been working with the NOW project on its Reading Rooms initiative to promote social inclusion and support people with learning disabilities.

Citizens and a wide range of representative groups continue to take part in ACC's free monthly training programmes offered to community and voluntary groups to raise awareness of how to engage with and facilitate participation with the Assembly.

		<p>This is just a sample of the engagement work undertaken by the Assembly and the Information and Outreach Directorate continues to proactively seek and identify opportunities for working with citizens and groups from across Northern Ireland and welcomes Members' suggestions for and participation in engagement events and projects.</p>
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