

NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions weeks ending 23 December 2016 to 6 January 2017

Week ending 23 December

Promotion of child friendly version of PfG

<p>AQW 8015/16- 21</p>	<p>Mr Steven Agnew (GPNI - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) how will the child friendly version of the Programme for Government be promoted; and (ii) what plans are there for meaningful consultation with children.[Priority Written]</p> <p>A child friendly version of the Programme for Government consultation document was published on Friday 18 November. It is available for download from the Executive's website.</p> <p>The Department has engaged with a range of major children and young people's organisations to promote the availability of the document, and to seek support in engaging directly with children and young people. Two engagement sessions have been arranged, and work is in hand to identify opportunities for further engagement.</p> <p>Departmental officials will deliver information sessions on request to interested groups, including children and young people's groups. Further information is available on the department's website</p>
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Child friendly version of PfG

<p>AQW 7710/16- 21</p>	<p>Mr Steven Agnew (GPNI - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister pursuant to AQW 3975/11-16, to detail (i) why was a child friendly version of the Programme for Government (PfG) not published along with the most recent draft of the PfG; (ii) when will a child friendly version of the PfG be published; and (iii) why children are given less time to consider and respond to the PfG consultation. [Priority Written]</p> <p>A child friendly version of the Programme for Government consultation document was published on Friday 18 November. It is available for download from the Executive's website.</p> <p>Development of a child friendly version necessarily follows production of the main document and a certain time-lag is inevitable. Publication of the Programme for Government in a range of alternative formats, including the child-friendly version, is intended to provide supplementary access to the consultation process to facilitate wider reach. It is not a substitute nor parallel process, but an addition to the Programme itself and the associated consultation exercise.</p> <p>All consultees have been given 8 weeks, until 23 December, to submit their views. As with all consultees, we encourage participation of children and young people throughout the policy formulation process and not just during the formal consultation period.</p>
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PfG consultation process

<p>AQW 7581/16- 21</p>	<p>Mrs Sandra Overend (UUP - Mid Ulster)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline (i) the rationale behind the process for the current Programme for Government consultation whereby the Delivery Plans can be altered during the time of consultation; and (ii) what measures are being taken to ensure that any changes made during the process to the Delivery Plans are clearly marked to ensure transparency and to allow respondents to fully engage with the document.</p> <p>The consultation period on the Programme for Government runs until 23 December.</p> <p>The Programme is supported by a set of delivery plans setting out the action that will be taken by departments and others to make progress towards the achievement of outcomes.</p> <p>A core principle of the Programme is that while the outcomes framework provides a fixed point of reference, a strategic direction, for the work of government and others, delivery plans are dynamic and responsive, changing in response to changing circumstances, and in light of new evidence.</p> <p>For these reasons – because plans are joint ventures between government and its delivery partners, and because delivery plans will never be 'final' – consultation for a fixed period on a static draft of a document is not the most useful way to construct the plans.</p> <p>Instead, owners of plans are at present engaging with interested stakeholders on the development of draft plans. It is expected that this process will be ongoing throughout the development and implementation phases.</p>
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		<p>In the interests of transparency in the process, the current draft of the plan is being shared as it develops. Those with a role to play in developing and implementing the plan are not being asked for their views on a draft – they are invited to get involved directly in its development.</p> <p>For the purposes of clarity, published versions of delivery plans do not show tracked changes. The Senior Responsible Officers for the plans will hold information on how the plans have developed and may share this as part of the engagement on their further development.</p>
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Investigating links in achievement and deprivation report

<p>AQW 5749/16- 21</p>	<p>Mrs Sandra Overend (UUP - Mid Ulster)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an outline of the correspondence they have had with the Department of Education in relation to the Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation report.</p> <p>The research forms part of a programme of independent research commissioned by OFMDFM through an open call in 2011 to inform the policy development process. As such, the views expressed are those of the authors and not OFMDFM/the Executive Office.</p> <p>The advisory group for the project entitled ‘Understanding differential educational achievement within and between areas of multiple deprivation in NI – a case study approach’ included representation from the Department of Education. The study itself does not examine education directly but concentrates, by way of case studies, on the social factors which may contribute to differing levels of educational outcomes.</p> <p>Any development of the research, including correspondence, was undertaken through the advisory group.</p>
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Savings made from Welfare Reform to date

<p>AQW 8842/16- 21</p>	<p>Mr Gerry Mullan (SDLP - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Communities to detail the savings made from Welfare Reform to date.</p> <p>Substantial and very real progress has been made over the last year on the implementation of Welfare Reform in Northern Ireland. A number of changes to the welfare system have recently been introduced including Personal Independence Payments, the time limiting of contributory Employment Support Allowance and the Benefit Cap.</p> <p>Social Security spending on Northern Ireland is funded as Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) directly from HM Treasury and outside of the Northern Ireland Executive Block. Any savings resulting from the introduction of Welfare Reform therefore accrue directly to HM Treasury.</p> <p>As changes to the welfare system have only recently been introduced it is not possible to quantify savings at this time. It will take a period of live running of up to 12 months before an assessment could be made.</p>
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Average waiting times for parents with care to receive child maintenance payments

<p>AQW 8806/16- 21</p>	<p>Mr Chris Lyttle (APNI - East Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Communities to outline the current average waiting time for parents with care to receive payments from Child Maintenance Service following initial application.</p> <p>CMS does not hold information on the average waiting time to receive payments following initial application. However, CMS do monitor the percentage of cases on which the first payment is made within specified timeframes.</p>
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		<p>Latest monthly data (July 16) shows that on cases where payment should be made, 75.6% of first payments due were received within 6 weeks of application, with 90.3% received within 12 weeks.</p> <p>These statistics are still in the early stages of development and assurance, and therefore may be revised in the future</p>
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Part time enforcement of 20mph speed limits at schools

<p><u>AQW</u> <u>8859/16-</u> <u>21</u></p>	<p>Mr Phillip Logan (DUP - North Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Infrastructure for an update on the investigation by his Department into a more cost-effective method to provide part time enforceable 20mph speed limits at schools.</p> <p>My Department has a statutory duty to promote road safety and within the context of the Road Safety Strategy does this by supporting road safety schemes and providing road safety teaching resources free to schools.</p> <p>Regrettably over 95% of road traffic collisions where someone dies or is seriously injured are due to human error. As young children are amongst the most vulnerable people using our roads, we need to give them extra time, be patient but mostly we need to expect the unexpected from them as they continue to develop their road safety awareness and skills. Therefore, in addition to my Department's portfolio of educational activities, we also help improve safety by encouraging drivers to reduce their speed and reminding them of school children in the area through engineering initiatives.</p> <p>A more cost effective signing arrangement for part-time 20mph speed limits, which takes the form of a permanently displayed 20 mph speed limit roundel with two or four flashing amber lights and a plate that states 'When lights flash', is currently going through the formal authorisation process. This process is expected to be</p>
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		<p>complete by the end of January 2017.</p> <p>Further refinements to the proposed signing arrangement looking at how the signs can be installed more quickly and at a lower cost, including the potential to use solar power as an alternative to the current mains electric powered approach, are also being considered.</p> <p>It is planned to test the effectiveness of the new type of part time 20 mph speed limit signs at up to 15 rural primary schools on roads where the national speed limit applies. If the tests prove successful and subject to available funding, consideration will then be given to roll out of these measures at other schools.</p> <p>I am committed to continuing to work towards reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads. I recognise the continuing challenges of preventing road deaths and serious injuries and will continue to ensure that my Department uses the tools at its disposal to address the issues.</p>
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HSE investigations at Hydebank Wood

<p>AQW 8384/16- 21</p>	<p>Lord Morrow of Clogher Valley (DUP - Fermanagh and South Tyrone)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for the Economy to outline how many occasions the Health and Safety Executive (i) attended; (ii) carried out an investigation; and (iii) compiled a report following an incident in Hydebank Wood (a) Women’s Prison; and (b) Young Offender Centre, in each of the last three calendar years.</p> <p>The Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland has not attended, carried out an investigation or compiled a report following an incident at HMP Hydebank Wood in each of the last three calendar years.</p>
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Apprenticeship programmes for young people

<p>AQW 7274/16- 21</p>	<p>Mr Gordon Dunne (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for the Economy what plans are in place to increase the number of apprenticeship programmes available to young people.</p> <p>I have no plans to increase the number of apprenticeship programmes available to young people.</p> <p>The ApprenticeshipsNI Programme is the sole apprenticeship programme funded by the Department.</p> <p>ApprenticeshipsNI is an employer-led training provision, with employers creating apprenticeship opportunities in line with their business needs. Apprentices, in paid employment from day one, follow a national training framework which leads to the attainment of industry approved competence and knowledge based qualifications at Level 2 or Level 3 in conjunction with Essential Skills qualifications (where appropriate).</p> <p>The numbers of young people participating in apprenticeships are directly related to the number of employers creating job opportunities. Currently there are 7,348 apprentices participating in 83 Level 2 frameworks and 93 Level 3 frameworks under the ApprenticeshipsNI Programme.</p> <p>My Department is in the process of implementing major reforms of Northern Ireland’s professional and technical education and training. An element of these reforms focuses on a new system of apprenticeships, at Level 3 and above, and youth training, in the form of traineeships at Level 2 which will build on the existing employer-led ApprenticeshipsNI programme.</p> <p>As part of this new system, the concept of Higher Level Apprenticeships has been tested through a number of pilot programmes. From 2015, my Department has supported over 600</p>
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		<p>Higher Level Apprenticeships, across 40 occupational areas. This pilot programme has been expanded to include pilots in traineeships at Level 2 and apprenticeships at Level 3.</p> <p>My Department is continuing to work through the implementation process which will allow this new system of professional and technical training to be progressively introduced, commencing with the mainstreaming of Higher Level Apprenticeships from 2017. However, it will take time to fully deliver the reformed vision, as the new system will evolve and grow over the coming years.</p> <p>A range of support services, currently under development, are designed to encourage increased uptake of apprenticeships by demonstrating the benefits of apprenticeships to employers and will provide support to the apprentice, employer and training provider. The associated on-line portal will allow employers to advertise all apprenticeship opportunities and will encourage potential apprentices to consider a wide range of employment options across a range of sectors, relevant to the economy.</p> <p>My Department's Careers Service will work in tandem with the introduction of the online service to provide impartial advice and guidance for young people considering the youth training and apprenticeship pathway.</p>
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Early years provision for SEN placements

<p><u>AQW</u> <u>9020/16-</u> <u>21</u></p>	<p>Lord Morrow of Clogher Valley (DUP - Fermanagh and South Tyrone)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education in relation to the decision of the Education Authority to change Early Years Provision for Special Educational Needs placements for children aged three, to detail (i) what consultation was conducted; (ii) the evidence and/or report of same; (iii) who or which agencies and/or arm's-length bodies were involved in the decision; (iv) who proposed this change; (v) on what date; (vi) who made the final decision; and (vii) on what body of evidence.</p> <p>The Education Authority (EA) has advised that it has not changed Early Years' provision for special educational needs placements for children aged three.</p> <p>In establishing a consistent approach to the allocation of pre-school places and the assessment of children, the EA has confirmed that there have been some changes to procedures previously operated in former Education and Library Boards.</p>
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% of children studying A-Levels in non grammar schools

<p><u>AQW</u> <u>9006/16-</u> <u>21</u></p>	<p>Mrs Sandra Overend (UUP - Mid Ulster)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the (i) number; and (ii) percentage of children studying A-levels in (a) maintained non-grammar; (b) controlled non-grammar; (c) maintained integrated; and (d) Irish medium schools, in each of last five years.</p>
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Figures are as follows:

Catholic Maintained non-grammar schools

	Number of pupils studying A Levels or equivalent	Percentage of all pupils studying A Levels or equivalent
2012/13	7,081	17.4%
2013/14	7,406	18.5%
2014/15	7,651	19.4%
2015/16	7,598	20.0%
2016/17 (provisional)	7,095	19.0%

Controlled non-grammar (including controlled and controlled integrated schools)

	Number of pupils studying A Levels or equivalent	Percentage of all pupils studying A Levels or equivalent
2012/13	3,602	20.9%
2013/14	3,787	22.1%
2014/15	3,816	22.6%

			2015/16	3,820	23.1%
			2016/17 (provisional)	3,645	22.4%
		Grant maintained integrated schools			
				Number of pupils studying A Levels or equivalent	Percentage of all pupils studying A Levels or equivalent
			2012/13	1,642	17.3%
			2013/14	1,705	17.9%
			2014/15	1,728	18.2%
			2015/16	1,692	18.0%
			2016/17 (provisional)	1,653	17.3%
		Irish medium schools (i.e. other maintained schools)			
				Number of pupils studying A Levels or equivalent	Percentage of all pupils studying A Levels or equivalent
			2012/13	133	24.6%

			2013/14	141	25.0%
			2014/15	129	22.2%
			2015/16	135	21.8%
			2016/17 (provisional)	133	19.2%

Source: NI school census

Notes:
Figures refer to all pupils who are studying a level 3 qualification i.e. an A Level or equivalent.

Reform of the school meals system

AQW 8898/16- 21	Mrs Sandra Overend (UUP - Mid Ulster)	<p>To ask the Minister of Education whether he has any plans to reform the school meals system.</p> <p>I do not have any current plans to revise the policy relating to the provision of school meals.</p> <p>The day-to-day operation of the school meals service is a matter for the Education Authority (EA) in the controlled and maintained sectors and individual voluntary grammar and grant-maintained integrated schools.</p> <p>The EA, voluntary grammar and grant-maintained integrated schools are responsible for ensuring that the delivery of the school meals service is efficient and effective.</p>
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Funding for school delivering special needs education

<p>AQW 8897/16- 21</p>	<p>Mrs Sandra Overend (UUP - Mid Ulster)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail (i) how schools delivering special needs education are funded; and (ii) whether there are any plans to reform this.</p> <p>Special schools are funded by the Education Authority (EA) from its Block Grant allocation.</p> <p>In mainstream schools, the Education Authority (EA) determines the level of assistance and associated equipment needs, as per the Statement of Special Educational Need (SEN), in respect of each individual stage five pupil. The EA also provide parents of these pupils with a list of recommended school settings. Once a pupil with a Statement of SEN is registered at the specific school of choice, the school then applies for funding to the relevant funding authority to cover the associated costs of the pupil.</p> <p>Mainstream schools delivering special needs education are responsible for meeting any additional needs of pupils within the first three stages of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN) from within their overall delegated budget. If pupils have more significant needs these can be supported by EA pupil support services that are funded centrally by the EA and are provided to complement the teaching and support available in school, at stage 3 of the Code of Practice.</p> <p>Some mainstream schools also provide special education to children through Learning Support Centres, Autism Specific Classes and other specialist provision. The cost of Learning Support Centres support for children with statements is funded by the Education Authority from its Block Grant allocation. Additionally, the Special Units Factor, within the Common Funding Scheme, is designed to support pupils in special</p>
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		<p>units (i.e. Learning Support Centres) and not pupils with Statements of SEN in mainstream classes. Schools with approved special units will be allocated an appropriate lump sum for each class within the unit. This will be adjusted by the relevant Funding Authority where a special unit opens or closes during a year.</p> <p>A review of the Common Funding Scheme was implemented in 2014-15 for mainstream schools. Special Schools were not included in this review. The Education Authority is beginning the process of engagement with Special Schools to agree a scheme of allocating funds to Special Schools on a consistent basis. Consideration will also be given to the funding of Special Schools when the issue of School Autonomy is being Considered</p>
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Early years home schooling programme for children with SEN

AQW 8864/16- 21	Mr Philip McGuigan (SF - North Antrim)	<p>To ask the Minister of Education for his assessment of the Early Years Home Schooling Programme for Special Educational Needs children.</p> <p>The statutory responsibility for securing provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) rests with schools, and the Education Authority (EA) which is responsible under legislation for identifying, assessing and making provision for children with SEN.</p> <p>The EA provides a continuum of valued early support, intervention and provision for pre-school children with identified special educational needs in a range of settings, including the home. Pre-school home teachers are an integral part of this continuum of support. They work in collaboration with parents and colleagues in Education and Health to provide structured programmes for very</p>
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			<p>young children with identified needs in advance of more formal education and, as such, form a vital link for parents and children between home and school.</p> <p>The EA recognises that measures are required to deliver this service on an equitable basis across the region. In this regard, further steps will be taken by the EA to enhance the service and to bring more consistency to the intervention that is provided.</p>
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Time allocation model used for educational psychologists referrals

<p><u>AQW</u> <u>8847/16-</u> <u>21</u></p>	<p>Ms Carla Lockhart (DUP - Upper Bann)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education what his Department is doing to assess the time allocation model used for educational psychologist referrals.</p> <p>Statutory responsibility for the Education Psychology Service (EPS) lies with the Education Authority (EA). The EA has advised that, with the establishment of a single EPS, it is now delivering a common model for the allocation of psychology services to all primary and post-primary schools.</p> <p>The move to this common model has involved some adjustments to previous arrangements to ensure equity across the EA, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> delegation to schools of some additional education psychology time previously held centrally by the EA; from this academic year, the time allocated to each school has been calculated on a regionally based formula which takes into account the size of the school, educational attainment and a social index of need; while previously, time allocation in some EA offices included the first consultation planning meeting of the year with the psychologist; and report writing and follow up meetings with parents and others, the new time allocation model is for face to
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face contact time in school, with other more administrative aspects of the assessment provided from hours held by the EA; and the number of psychologists operating in each area has been adjusted to meet the needs of the regionally based formula.

Schools are asked to prioritise those children who do not appear to have been responsive to the school's special educational needs support. A staged approach in line with the Code of Practice, Provisional Criteria and Good Practice Guidelines is recommended for all schools. As part of this process, schools are asked to demonstrate that relevant and purposeful measures as well as reasonable adjustments have been put in place to help support a pupil before considering a referral to the EPS.

If information is presented to the educational psychologist during consultation which indicates that a pupil has exceptional circumstances, and the school has exhausted its time allocation, such referrals, while not guaranteed, will continue to be prioritised and an allocation of time is held by the EA for this purpose. As part of the ongoing work in developing and delivering a regional EPS, an additional recording and monitoring mechanism is currently being put in place to closely monitor the real time provided to each school.

It is important to note that the EPS also provides advice in relation to statutory (Stage 4) assessments and assessments for children in pre-school in addition to the support to children at Stage 3 through the time allocation model.

Social disadvantaged priority criterion for pre-school admissions

<p><u>AQW</u> <u>8838/16-</u> <u>21</u></p>	<p>Mr Stewart Dickson (APNI - East Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education what consideration was applied when creating the social disadvantaged priority criterion for pre-school admission places; and what evidence exists of the effectiveness of this priority criterion in combatting social disadvantage.</p> <p>When the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme was launched in 1998, funded places were available for only around 45% of children in their pre-school year and the social disadvantaged priority criterion was put in place to help ensure that the children considered most in need of pre-school education had priority access to those limited places.</p> <p>The social disadvantaged priority criterion was first introduced in 1999 and was designed to give priority in the pre-school admissions process to children from socially disadvantaged circumstances. Research shows that children from socially disadvantaged circumstances tend to experience more difficulty at school than other children, therefore, as part of wider efforts to tackle educational underachievement children from socially disadvantaged circumstances were prioritised for pre-school admission.</p> <p>Pre-school provision is now universal. Currently, the Department is committed to ensure that at all children whose parents want it can access a year of funded pre-school education in their immediate pre-school year. In each of the last five years, at least 99.8% of children whose parents engaged with the pre-school admissions process to the end obtained a funded pre-school place.</p> <p>Given the current position with regard to levels of pre-school provision and changes to qualifying benefits with the introduction of Universal Credit, I plan to review the priority criterion. I will consider a range of issues in determining what changes are required. Any proposed changes will be subject to consultation.</p>
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Review of priority criterion for socially disadvantaged children applying for pre-school

<p><u>AQW</u> <u>8836/16-21</u></p>	<p>Mr Stewart Dickson (APNI - East Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education when the current priority criterion for socially disadvantaged children applying for pre-school will be reviewed.</p> <p>Pre-school education, whilst non-compulsory, is an important phase of early education.</p> <p>If a pre-school setting, either statutory or non-statutory, is over-subscribed, it will apply the published admissions criteria in order of priority.</p> <p>The pre-school education providers set the admissions criteria. However, as research has shown that children from socially disadvantaged circumstances tend to experience more difficulty at school than other children, the Department requires that they are given priority within the pre-school admissions process as part of wider efforts to tackle educational underachievement.</p> <p>Given changes to qualifying benefits with the introduction of Universal Credit, I plan to review the priority criterion, and will consider a range of issues in determining what changes are required. Any proposed changes will be subject to consultation.</p>
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Update on publication of Independent Review of Integrated Education

<p>AQW 8709/16- 21</p>	<p>Ms Kellie Armstrong (APNI - Strangford)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education for an update on when he will publish the Independent Review of Integrated Education.</p> <p>I am currently considering the review report. No final decision has been made on the date of publication.</p>
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Details of measures used in school inspections

<p>AQW 8704/16- 21</p>	<p>Mr Barry McElduff (SF - West Tyrone)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the measures, both socio-economic and educational, which his Department plans to deploy when inspecting schools in the future.</p> <p>There are no plans to deploy any different measures in the inspection of schools in the future. The main emphasis of the inspection will continue to be on the education or training provision and outcomes, as seen in the quality of the learners' recent standards and achievements and the quality of learning and teaching. There is also an emphasis on the leadership and management of the whole organisation and how this contributes to improvement. A wide range of evidence is considered as part of the inspection process and information relating to how inspections are carried out is available on the ETI website. https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/type/supportmateria</p>
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Priority criteria for parents applying for pre-school places

<p>AQW 8696/16- 21</p>	<p>Mr Stewart Dickson (APNI - East Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education what consideration his Department has given for a statutory priority criterion for parents applying for pre-school places, who are medically disadvantaged and/or are in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance only.</p> <p>Pre-school education, whilst non-compulsory, is an important phase of early education. If a pre-school setting, either statutory or non-statutory, is over-subscribed, it will apply the published admissions criteria in order of priority.</p> <p>Pre-school education providers set the admissions criteria. However, research has shown that children from socially disadvantaged circumstances tend to experience more difficulty at school than other children; therefore, the Department requires</p>
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		<p>that they are given priority within the pre-school admissions process as part of wider efforts to tackle educational underachievement.</p> <p>Currently children from socially disadvantaged circumstances are defined as children whose parents are in receipt of Income Support, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance where an award of Income-based Jobseekers Allowance has been converted and the amount of the award remains unchanged.</p> <p>Given changes to qualifying benefits with the introduction of Universal Credit, I plan to review the priority criterion, and will consider a range of issues in determining what changes are required. Any proposed changes will be subject to consultation.</p>
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Child protection responsibility by Youth Service

<p>AQW 8603/16- 21</p>	<p>Mr Colin McGrath (SDLP - South Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education (i) whether the Education Authority intends to remove the responsibility for Child Protection from Youth Service to another section of the Education Authority; and (ii) if so, to detail the consultation process that has been undertaken in reaching this decision.</p> <p>The Education Authority (EA) has advised that child protection arrangements for youth services are currently managed within the EA's Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) Directorate. The EA will be working with services within the CYPS Directorate to strengthen consistency for child protection support.</p> <p>The EA has commenced engagement with relevant staff regarding child protection support and this process precedes any future consultation that may be required, should proposed changes be identified.</p>
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Public consultation on academic selection

<p>AQW 8545/16- 21</p>	<p>Mrs Sandra Overend (UUP - Mid Ulster)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education when he will be consulting with the public on academic selection.</p> <p>There are no plans to engage in a public consultation on academic selection.</p> <p>Professor Peter Tymms (Durham University) and his team have been commissioned by the Department to consider what improvements could be made to the current arrangements for academic selection in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. That engagement is currently underway. I do not wish to pre-empt the conclusion of that engagement but it is in the best interests of children to find a way forward in a timely manner.</p>
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Early intervention programme to address underachievement

<p>AQW 8539/16- 21</p>	<p>Mrs Jenny Palmer (UUP - Lagan Valley)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail (i) what funding is available; or (ii) will be made available to community groups looking to implement early intervention programmes to address underachievement.</p> <p>Underachievement is where an individual learner's performance is below what might be expected. It is important that issues, which lead to underachievement, are addressed as soon as possible, and at whatever stage they arise, so that children are provided with every opportunity to realise their potential. Education practitioners are best placed to identify those children at risk of underachievement and to consider the most appropriate strategies to address this.</p> <p>My Department makes funding available to eligible community groups for various programmes in the early years to help children establish a strong foundation for learning and achievement:</p>
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Approximately £16m was provided through the Pre-School Education Programme in 2015/16, which delivered approximately 8,700 funded pre-school places in non-statutory settings.

The Pathway Fund provides funding (£2.7m in 2016/17) to providers or facilitators of registered early years education and learning services to support the improved development of children who are at risk of not reaching their full potential within the school system. In 2016/17 around 3,140 children assessed as in greatest need are benefiting from support, directly because of Pathway funding.

Getting Ready to Learn, part of the Delivering Social Change / Atlantic Philanthropies Early Intervention Transformation Programme, is available to all pre-school education settings (including voluntary / community settings) with DE-funded places and focuses on improving outcomes for children in pre-school by engaging and empowering parents to help sustain positive home learning environments. £3m is available for the three year programme from 2016/17; and

Extended Services funding (£157k in 2016/17) is available to non-statutory pre-school education settings (including voluntary / community settings) with DE-funded places in the Pre-school Education Programme. This funding is available to help pre-school settings who meet the eligibility criteria to identify and address underdeveloped social, emotional, communication and language skills of the young children in their setting.

My Department has also provided funding to the West Belfast Partnership Board (WBPB) and the Greater Shankill Partnership Board (GSPB) since 2013/14 to support the West Belfast Community Project. In the current financial year, the GSPB is continuing to receive funding of £59k to support this Project. The aim of this project is to deliver a range of programmes and activities to address the root causes of educational

		<p>underachievement.</p> <p>Funding of £200k has also been allocated to the WBPB to deliver the Sharing the Learning Programme. This Programme will help build the capacity of schools and the community to work together to improve educational outcomes.</p>
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Update on Shared Education Signature Project

AQW 8531/16- 21	Ms Kellie Armstrong (APNI - Strangford)	<p>To ask the Minister of Education in light of The Executive Office requiring all Signature Projects to reconfigure their targets in line with Outcome Based Accountability framework, whether he will publish the reconfigured targets for the Shared Education Signature Project.</p> <p>The DSC Shared Education Signature Project has used the Outcome Based Accountability (OBA) framework from its commencement. The OBA framework is used for monitoring and evaluation purposes against business plan targets. There is therefore no need to reconfigure existing business case targets.</p>
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Funding for school counselling services

AQW 7991/16- 21	Mr Colin McGrath (SDLP - South Down)	<p>To ask the Minister of Education whether (i) primary school children in need of counselling have their costs paid from within their school's budget; and (ii) post-primary school children in need of counselling services have their costs paid for by (a) the Education Authority; or (ii) his Department.</p> <p>Any primary school that chooses to offer a counselling service must do so from within the school's budget. I am aware that some primary schools choose to use funding provided through the Department's Extended Schools Programme for</p>
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		<p>counselling services however that is a decision for each school based on an identified need.</p> <p>The contract for the Independent Counselling Service for Schools in the post-primary sector is held by the Education Authority and costs for that service are met by the Education Authority.</p>
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Number of hours of physio provided to special schools

<p><u>AQW 9013/16-21</u></p>	<p>Ms Carla Lockhart (DUP - Upper Bann)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health how many hours of physio have been provided in each of the special schools over the last five years.</p> <p>This information is not regularly collected and to provide it would require a manual trawl through hundreds of records at disproportionate cost.</p>
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Ministerial targets on mental health services

<p><u>AQW 8990/16-21</u></p>	<p>Mr Robbie Butler (UUP - Lagan Valley)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health to list every Ministerial Target she has on mental health services; and to detail the performance on each as at 31 October 2016, including how many patients are currently waiting beyond the maximum target length of time for each across each Health and Social Care Trust.</p> <p>Mental health is one of my key priorities. I am committed to moving towards parity of esteem for mental health, as well as continuing to reform and improve services.</p> <p>The following Ministerial targets in relation to mental health services have been set for 2016/17: From April 2016, no patient waits longer than: nine weeks to access child and adolescent mental health services; nine weeks to access</p>
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adult mental health services; nine weeks to access dementia services; and 13 weeks to access psychological services (any age). From April 2016, ensure that 99% of all mental health discharges take place within seven days of the patient being assessed as medically fit for discharge, with no discharge taking more than 28 days.

Performance against these targets as at 31 October 2016 is as follows:

106 patients were waiting longer than nine weeks to access child and adolescent mental health services;

898 patients were waiting longer than nine weeks to access adult mental health services;

33 patients were waiting longer than nine weeks to access dementia services; and

1,548 patients were waiting longer than 13 weeks to access psychological services.

Regionally during October 2016, 97% (380 out of 391) of mental health discharges took place within seven days of the patient being assessed as medically fit for discharge, and five took more than 28 days.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for

		<p>patients.</p> <p>It is important to recognise HSC staff who, notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.</p>
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Allocation of Autism Spectrum Disorder services

AQW 8904/16- 21	Mr Chris Lyttle (APNI - East Belfast)	<p>To ask the Minister of Health whether Autism Spectrum Disorder services are being allocated by each of the Health and Social Care Trusts irrespective of an individual having a co-existing condition or disability, such as a learning disability.</p> <p>The Health and Social Care Trusts provide support services based on assessment of need, regardless of co-existing conditions or disability, in line with relevant legislation and NICE guidelines.</p> <p>People with autism who have co-morbid learning disability, mental health or medical issues will have their presenting needs addressed by the Autism Spectrum Disorder service and/or other appropriate Trust services.</p>
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TOR for Health and Education SEN Project Board

AQW 8796/16- 21	Ms Carla Lockhart (DUP - Upper Bann)	<p>To ask the Minister of Health to outline the terms of reference for the Health and Education Special Educational Needs Interface Project Board.</p> <p>The Special Educational Needs and Health Interfaces Project Board is jointly chaired by the Department of Education and my Department. It was established in June 2016 to consider each of the education and health</p>
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interfaces within the special educational needs framework. The draft Terms of Reference for the Project Board are provided in the attached Annex. These are currently undergoing amendment following a meeting of the Project Board on 12th December 2016.

Annex

SEN Education and Health Interfaces Project Board Draft Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out a terms of reference for an Education and Health Interfaces Project Board. The Project Board will oversee and provide strategic input and direction to a number of time-bound projects to improve the interfaces and cooperation by education (Education Authority (EA)) and health (the five Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs)) within the special educational needs (SEN) framework, thereby improving the services to children and young people with SEN.

2. Background and Context

The Children's Services Cooperation (CSC) Act 2015 has placed a duty on children's authorities and other children's service providers to co-operate.

Importantly, the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Act 2016, through Assembly amendment, will put in place very specific duties (not yet commenced) regarding co-operation between health and education to identify, assess and provide services to children with SEN, including in the preparation of a transition plan.

During the progress of the SEND Bill, a Department of Education (DE) led group was formed in order to understand the delays within the statutory assessment process for children with SEN with a specific focus on the process for receipt of health advice. The group has representatives from DE; Department of Health (DoH); Education Authority (EA);

the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB); the Public Health Agency (PHA), and Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs). It is proposed that this group is used to form the new SEN Education and Health Interfaces Project Board.

3. Scope and Aims

The Project Board's primary focus relates to the range of interfaces between education and health within the current SEN framework and taking into account the new duties provided for under the CSC Act 2015 and the SEND Act 2016.

The aim is to agree and implement, for SEN related processes, improvements to Education/Health interfaces and co-operation. To do this a series of time-bound focussed projects will be taken forward. The outputs from the projects, namely practical improvements, should also assist in informing the content of the revised Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of SEN.

The work of the Project Board may be informed by other relevant EA or HSCTs initiatives.

4. Project Structure

DE and DoH will jointly establish, and jointly chair, a cross-cutting SEN Education and Health Interfaces Project Board to provide strategic direction and oversee the progress of the interfaces projects.

The Project Board will be responsible for the delivery of a number of phases representing specific time-bound projects. Each time-bound project will identify, recommend and agree implementation of improvements to the SEN Education and Health interfaces within the SEN framework. Project Board membership shall consist of nominees from DE; DoH; EA; HSCB; PHA/AHP and HSCTs.

Project Teams will be established to ensure the practical delivery of the various agreed time-bound projects. Discrete terms of reference for each of these projects will be agreed in advance with the Project Board. Each Project Team shall

			<p>report back to the Project Board at agreed intervals.</p> <p>Each Project Team will normally be made up of staff from DE; key operational staff from the EA and the 5 HSCTs, with additional support from the Special Education and Inclusion Review Team (DE); the Special Education Team (DE), and the Learning Disability Team (DoH), as required.</p> <p>Membership of each Project Team may change throughout the life of the time-bound projects so that those involved with each project will have the appropriate knowledge and expertise - for example, assistance from IT staff in the Trusts and the EA may be required at certain points.</p> <p>5. Timescales of projects</p> <p>It is envisaged that appropriate time-bound projects will take place in phases:</p> <p>Phase 1: October 2016 to April 2017 - Notification, Referral and Statutory Assessment Project.</p> <p>Future phases: Whilst in no particular order (as priority and timing will be determined by the Project Board), it is anticipated that further time-bound interface projects could include:</p> <p>Annual Review and Reassessment.</p> <p>Determination of whether a child with a statement who is leaving school has a disability.</p> <p>Transitions and EA/Trusts co-operation and joint planning [‘prepare a joint plan for the exercise of those functions’ detailed in Clause 4 (specifically 12A (2) (b) inserted in 1996 Education Order), Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.]</p> <p>Determination of how the monitoring of the new processes will take place and how refinements can be put in place (requirement for this to take place at defined periods in the future).</p> <p>6. Project Board representative membership</p> <p>Department of Education (Joint Chair)</p> <p>Department of Health (Joint Chair)</p>
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			<p>Education Authority Health and Social Care Board Health and Social Care Trusts Public Health Agency/Allied Health Professionals</p>
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Post 19 provision for Health and Education SEN Interface Project Action Plan

<p>AQW 8795/16- 21</p>	<p>Ms Carla Lockhart (DUP - Upper Bann)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health what is included in the Health and Education Special Educational Needs Interface Project Board’s Action Plan for Post-19 provision.</p> <p>The Action Plan you refer to is a cross-departmental Action Plan being led by the Department for Economy which aims to improve gaps in provision for young people with severe learning disabilities transitioning from school to adult services. The main actions for my Department in this Action Plan are being taken forward through the implementation of the Regional Model for Day Opportunities for People with Learning Disabilities. The roll out of this model is being progressed across all Health and Social Care Trusts to ensure that the range and quality of post-19 opportunities for those with a learning disability across the North is more consistent. It is anticipated that this programme of change could take up to five years to complete and its success is highly dependent on the cooperation of relevant government departments and their agencies, the new local government Councils and voluntary and community organisations.</p>
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Update on Maynard Sinclair ward at the Ulster Hospital

<p>AQW 8776/16- 21</p>	<p>Mr Robbie Butler (UUP - Lagan Valley)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health for an update on the Maynard Sinclair ward in the Ulster Hospital.</p> <p>The temporary closure of the Maynard Sinclair ward, and any inconvenience caused to young patients and their families, is regrettable.</p> <p>However, this was an out-of-the-ordinary situation resulting from staff illness and requiring an immediate operational response from the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. The provision of safe services to patients must always take priority. Temporary amalgamation of the paediatric medical and surgical wards at the hospital has allowed the Trust to continue to provide the level and range of services largely as normal, with virtually all paediatric medical emergency admissions being accommodated in the unit and virtually all surgical elective patients also being managed as normal.</p> <p>The South Eastern Trust will continue to monitor the situation on a daily basis and liaise with other Paediatric Units and the Public Health Agency to manage the issue. All appropriate support is also being provided to staff and both the Trust and I are extremely grateful for the continued commitment and dedication of staff.</p>
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Week ending 20 December 2016

North-South collaboration in paediatric cardiac services

<p><u>AQW</u> <u>7531/16-</u> <u>21</u></p>	<p>Mr Mark Durkan (<i>SDLP</i> - <i>Foyle</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health what action is being taken to secure North-South collaboration in paediatric cardiac services.</p> <p>The establishment of the all-island Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) Network in April 2015 provided the structure for securing a permanent, collaborative approach to providing paediatric cardiac services, in line with the recommendations of the International Working Group. I refer the Member to my Joint Statement with Minister Simon Harris TD on 4 July 2016 setting out our shared commitment and investment of up to £42m to realise the Network Board’s vision of a world class, family-centric CHD service for the island of Ireland. Ensuring this remains on course will remain high on my agenda for future discussions with Minister Harris.</p>
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Impact of Brexit on impact as a result of protections in EU law

<p>AQW 4621/16- 21</p>	<p>Mr Steven Agnew (<i>GPNI</i> - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health how a UK exit from the European Union will impact on children, with reference to any protections enshrined in EU law that are not currently transposed into UK and Northern Irish legislation.</p> <p>We have undertaken some initial scoping which has identified a number of potential areas of difficulty. These will be considered as part of a detailed assessment of the potential impact for us of a withdrawal from the EU and will feed into negotiations going forward. In particular, we will consider what, if any, EU law relating to children is not reflected in domestic legislation.</p>
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Week ending 6 January 2017

Addressing rising cost of childcare

<p><u>AQW</u> <u>9097/16-</u> <u>21</u></p>	<p>Mr Danny Kennedy (UUP - Newry and Armagh)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education what he is doing to address the rising cost of childcare</p> <p>The affordability of childcare has been recognised as a key issue for families during the development of the Childcare Strategy. The first phase of the Strategy led to the establishment of the Bright Start School Age Childcare Grant Scheme, which financially supports low cost childcare places and has, to date, supported some 3,000 low cost childcare places across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The first phase of the Childcare Strategy has sought to promote and encourage uptake of financial assistance available to help parents meet the costs of childcare, principally, childcare vouchers and the childcare element of Working Families' Tax Credit. This is something I hope to build on in the future as HMRC introduces the Tax-Free Childcare scheme.</p> <p>I am aware of the recent report 'Northern Ireland Childcare Cost Survey 2016', issued by Employers for Childcare, which highlighted a number of issues with the costs of childcare including the cost variations across areas, different types of settings and for different services such as summer schemes, breakfast clubs and afterschool clubs.</p> <p>The forthcoming Childcare Strategy will seek to address accessibility and affordability issues. I hope to bring forward the full version of the Childcare Strategy to my Executive colleagues in the new year.</p>
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Funding for 10 year Strategy for Affordable and Integrated Childcare 2015-25

<p><u>AQW 9091/16-21</u></p>	<p>Mrs Sandra Overend (UUP - Mid Ulster)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to outline what funding model he will propose to the Executive to ensure the delivery of the Ten Year Strategy for Affordable and Integrated Childcare 2015-2025.</p> <p>I hope to bring forward the final version of the Childcare Strategy to my Executive colleagues in the new year.</p> <p>The budget for the Childcare Strategy from 2017 will be determined in the context of the Executive’s consideration of future year budgets.</p>
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Consultation in Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision

<p><u>AQW 9090/16-21</u></p>	<p>Mrs Sandra Overend (UUP - Mid Ulster)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education pursuant to AQW 8446/16-21, whether trade unions were consulted by either (i) himself; or (ii) the Education Authority before the Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision was published in October 2016.</p> <p>Consultation on the “Providing Pathways” draft strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020 (the draft Area Plan) was led by the Education Authority (EA).</p> <p>The EA led the development of the draft Area Plan through the Area Planning support structures in partnership with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, as a statutory planning authority, and sector support bodies.</p> <p>All other interested parties, including trade unions, were invited to comment on the draft Area Plan through the online questionnaire and a face-to-face meeting on 25 November 2016 which the Ulster Teachers’ Union and GMB representatives attended.</p>
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HRC annual statement on poverty

<p><u>AQW 9064/16- 21</u></p>	<p>Mr Trevor Lunn (APNI - Lagan Valley)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Communities for his assessment on the Human Rights Commission’s annual statement’s findings that anti-poverty strategy is an area which requires urgent attention.</p> <p>I have already announced that I plan to bring a draft Social Strategy to the Executive with the intention of having it issued for public consultation, subject to Executive approval. The Social Strategy will be our strategy to promote opportunity, tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation based on objective need. The definition of ‘overall poverty’ adopted by the UN includes social discrimination and exclusion. This is precisely why we have incorporated our work to tackle poverty in a much wider social strategy looking at all these inter-related issues</p>
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HRC annual statements which includes corporate punishment of children

<p><u>AQW 9063/16- 21</u></p>	<p>Mr Trevor Lunn (APNI - Lagan Valley)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Justice for her assessment on the Human Rights Commission’s annual statement’s findings that corporal punishment of children is an area which requires urgent attention.</p> <p>I have noted the Human Rights Commission’s annual statement with regard to the corporal punishment of children and the defence of reasonable chastisement. This is an issue that has been raised with me previously and I am considering my position alongside the need to consult with Executive colleagues.</p>
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HRC annual statement on children on remand

<p>AOW 9062/16- 21</p>	<p>Mr Trevor Lunn (APNI - Lagan Valley)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Justice for her assessment on the Human Rights Commission’s annual statement’s findings that the remand of children is an area which requires urgent attention.</p> <p>The information set out in the Human Rights Commission annual statement in relation to children held on remand has been drafted following face-to-face meetings and correspondence between the Commission and myself, and is therefore an accurate assessment of the current position. I share the desire to ensure that children are only admitted to custody as a last resort and only for reasons of seriousness of offending.</p> <p>There is clearly an issue in terms of the number of children admitted to custody in Northern Ireland who do not ultimately serve a custodial sentence. This overuse of remand was a key consideration of the Scoping Study conducted into children in the justice system, and the Department and its agencies are continuing to seek ways to address each of the contributing factors.</p> <p>There is no simple solution, as there is no single root cause of the problem; rather there are a range of diverse causes including delay in processing cases, lack of viable alternative accommodation in the community, and legislative provision in need of revision. Consideration is being given to each of these issues, but until we address the multiple issues which affect children in the justice system in a truly cross-departmental way, they are likely to continue to end up in custody. Working with our colleagues in other Departments to make these long-term changes is what lies at the heart of the Scoping Study, and I am undertaking bilateral discussions with my counterparts in those key Departments to take the work forward.</p>
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