

NICCY Summary: NI Assembly Written Answers for Week Ending 3rd January 2014

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Levels of Deprivation

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in instances where statistical data is being used to determine levels of deprivation, the basis of which is then used to allocate a range of funding measures, what account is taken of the different levels of tax free welfare benefits that are paid.

(AQW 28419/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure is the official measure of spatial deprivation. The measure was introduced in 2010 by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and overseen by a steering group comprising representatives from all departments and other relevant bodies. The measure provides information on seven domains of deprivation, including income deprivation, and an overall measure comprising of a weighted combination of the seven domains. The measure used the most recent data available at the time.

The income deprivation domain comprises a count of people living in households in receipt of income related benefits and tax credits, including Income Support; State Pension Credit; and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance. The measure thus counts people and not the level of benefit. Those in receipt of multiple benefits were counted only once. The usage of the measure in the allocation of funding is the responsibility of individual departments.

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Absolute and Relative Child Poverty

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an estimate of the percentage of children who will be living in both absolute and relative child poverty in each year until 2020.

(AQW 28683/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We do not have departmental projections. However, a report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) on Child and Working-Age Poverty in Northern Ireland from 2010 to 2020 in May 2013 has been published by OFMDFM which contains projections. This is available online.

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Woodlands Speech and Language Unit

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Education, in light of the closure of Woodlands Speech and Language Unit, what plans have been put in place for students who may have been referred for speech and language places in the current year; and what action his Department has taken to set up the new classes and required resources.
(AQW 28845/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd (The Minister of Education): The Western Education and Library Board (WELB) has confirmed that any students who currently attend Woodlands Speech and Language Unit will finish their placements there.

New provision at Ebrington, St. Anne’s and Ballykelly Primary Schools will commence from September 2014. WELB has advised that meetings have taken place to progress arrangements for accommodation needs in the new settings and it plans to engage with staff in the near future.

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Outdoor Sporting Facilities

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what collaboration has taken place with the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to ensure that there are adequate outdoor sporting facilities for use by community and sporting groups and local schools in Bangor.
(AQW 28925/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: It is the responsibility of the Department of Education to ensure that schools are designed to provide an appropriate learning environment for the delivery of the curriculum. The provision of adequate outdoor sporting facilities for use by the community is not the responsibility of the Department. However, when planning new or improved play and sporting facilities at schools the Department’s Building Handbook for Primary and Post Primary Schools does provide design advice to enable all school facilities to be used by the community. The local management and arrangements for the use of such facilities by the community is a matter for a school’s Board of Governors.

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Common Funding Formula

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education how he intends to protect strategic small schools in the long term through his revision of the Common Funding Formula.
(AQW 28979/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: One of the recommendations in the Independent review of the Common Funding Scheme was to remove all small schools support factors from the current funding formula. While I accepted this recommendation in principle, I decided not to implement it at this time. The small schools support factors in the current formula will be retained for the 2014-15 financial year. I already have an extensive area based planning process underway designed to ensure that schools are planned strategically to deliver sustainable, high quality education. I want to see more progress on area planning. We have a Sustainable Schools policy that sets out the criteria and quality indicators to help managing authorities to assess schools’ sustainability. I will provide further clarification within existing policy on the circumstances as to when a small school will need to be retained and how it will be supported.

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Child Internet Safety

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Education what action his Department and its arm’s-length bodies are taking to protect children from abuse through the internet.
(AQW 29148/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: Action taken to protect children from abuse through the internet is part of the overall approach to eSafety within the education sector. Action taken has two objectives, namely, to offer a safe environment within which pupils can use the internet and for pupils to learn about potential dangers and how to keep safe. Boards of Governors of grant-aided schools have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. In the exercise of this duty schools are required to have in place eSafety policies covering the safe and effective use of the internet and digital technologies. The eSafety policies must operate in conjunction with other school policies including Behaviour, Child Protection, Anti-Bullying and Acceptable Use.

DE Circular 2007/1 – ‘Acceptable Use of the Internet and Digital Technologies in Schools’ provides advice on the matters which must be addressed by schools in ensuring safe and appropriate use of the internet. The circular also drew attention to useful sources of advice

from expert organisations involved in child protection.

Additional guidance was issued to schools in September 2011 in DE Circular2011/22 - Internet Safety. This provided advice on arrangements for preventing access to inappropriate material, the educational use of materials from blocked sites and the provision of information to parents. It also provided information about security considerations for those schools that have set up their own networks outside C2k's centrally managed service.

DE Circular 2013/25 – 'eSafety Guidance' was issued on 6 December 2013 and provides guidance on eSafety in the context of the new C2k contract, Education Network (NI) and also non C2k networks. The C2k managed service includes an eSafety Zone, which provides advice and guidance for teachers. The C2k Education Network service provides schools with a fully managed ICT service thus ensuring pupils' safety while using the internet in school. This service operates a rigorous internet filtering policy which blocks access to sites classed as unsuitable. The service has in place internet monitoring, web and email filtering as well as physical controls such as firewalls and password protection.

ICT plays a central role in the Revised Curriculum with 'Using ICT' set as a cross-curricular skill, statutory across all key stages. While development of ICT skills can be introduced across all subject areas, at post –primary level, the 'Learning for Life and Work' Area of Learning and at primary level, the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding Area of learning, provide direct opportunities to allow pupils to develop strategies to promote their personal safety.

Information about on line safety is targeted directly to pupils. The homework diary inserts prepared and distributed through the 'iMatter' Programme include internet safety under the topic 'Keeping Yourself Safe'. Pupils are alerted to sources of advice and support if they have concerns about a contact over the internet. Advice is available to schools from the Boards' Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS) and from PSNI.

The 'iMatter' Programme's 'Message of the Month' will highlight 'eSafety Day' in February 2014 . In other education settings where provision is made by the Education and Library Boards account must be taken of guidance issued by the Department.

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Integrated Education

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education why his Department's corporate plan 2012/15, or the 2013/14 revision, contain no reference to integrated education; and whether he will reaffirm his commitment, as required by statute to encourage and facilitate integrated education.

(AQW 29149/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department has a duty to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education (that is to say the education together, at school, of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils) and takes that duty seriously. Indeed work is currently progressing regarding the future development of integrated education.

The corporate plan sets out the high level actions to deliver on specific targets in 2013/14. There is a particular emphasis on Programme for Government targets, which identify progressing shared education as a key area. The work to progress shared education will take full and careful consideration of the Department's duty in relation to integrated education. The Department's priority of raising standards and closing the performance gap applies across all schools. This in no way takes away from the Department's focus on encouraging the development of integrated education.

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Integrated Education

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education what plans his Department has to fulfil its legal obligations in respect of integrated education.

(AQW 29150/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department takes its statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education (i.e. the education together, at school, of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils), very seriously, and will continue to do so.

To help with the facilitation of integrated education, my Department will continue to provide funding to the Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) to assist the development of integrated schools for public benefit. Funding of £646k has been allocated for 2013/14. I have met with NICIE officials, twice in recent months, to discuss proposals to further promote and facilitate the development and growth of integrated education. I remain willing to consider further innovative approaches which will facilitate the development of the sector.

The Department of Education will also continue to provide funding to help schools with the process of transformation to integrated status. This supports schools in the initial stages of the transformation process and with the employment of a teacher, from the minority community in the school, to assist with religious education. The budget available for 2013/14 is £185k.

I recognise the vital and valuable contribution that integrated education, together with all other types of education, makes to building a peaceful and stable future for our children. Going forward, the Department of Education will ensure that it continues to have a rigorous approach to its duty to integrated education.

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Relationship and Sex Education

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Education whether his department holds any information on (i) young people being shown abortion videos as part of their Relationship and Sex Education; and (ii) how often organisations such as Precious Life are given access to schools.

(AQW 29191/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: The Department of Education does not hold any information on young people being shown abortion videos or how often organisations such as Precious Life are given access to schools.

Legislation sets out the minimum content to be taught in schools as Areas of Learning (AOLs) for each Key Stage. The teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education is covered by the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding Area of Learning at primary level and the Personal Development strand of the Learning for Life and Work Area of Learning at post-primary level. While the specifics of what is taught under each Area of Learning, including topics such as abortion, is a matter for each teacher/school, the Department does require each school to have in place a RSE policy on how it will address the delivery of RSE. This policy should be subject to consultation with parents and it must be endorsed by the school’s Board of Governors. The Department does not prescribe the resources that should be used by a school in its delivery of the curriculum. It is a matter for teachers/schools to determine the resources they use to enhance their delivery of the curriculum and this includes any decision to bring external organisations such as Precious Life into the classroom.

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Relationship and Sex Education

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Education whether he has given any consideration to an immediate review and subsequent change in the Northern Ireland Curriculum on Relationship and Sex Education.

(AQW 29192/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Reading this question in conjunction with other questions you have raised I am assuming that this question about a review and change to the curriculum would relate to prescribing specific teaching about abortion in our schools.

The revised curriculum which has been taught to all pupils of compulsory school age since 2009/10 is less prescriptive, with the minimum to be taught detailed in legislation as Areas of Learning (AOLs) for each Key Stage. It provides our teachers with greater flexibility to make decisions on how best to interpret and combine minimum requirements to provide a broad and balanced curriculum and adapt their teaching to meet the needs of individual pupils. In line with this flexibility the Department does not prescribe the specifics of what should be taught or the resources that teachers should use in their delivery of any aspect of the curriculum for each of the Areas of Learning.

The Department considers that the existing Minimum Content Regulations provide appropriate cover for the delivery of this element of RSE in the classroom. The Department has no plans to review or change its current policy of giving teachers/schools the flexibility to decide how to best deliver the curriculum to meet the needs of their pupils.

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Relationship and Sex Education

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Education whether he is aware of best practice in Relationship and Sex Education; and whether he has given any consideration to a minimum Relationship and Sex Education package issued by Education and Library Boards, to include stringent, standardised guidelines to be followed by all schools.

(AQW 29193/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: An ETI report published in 2011 on the provision of Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) in our post-primary schools does give evidence of best practice and cites helpful case studies. Overall the report provides a summary of the

characteristics associated with best practice. One example is that there is a need for clear, informed and purposeful leadership from the Principal and the senior management team, ensuring that RSE has a significant role in the curriculum provision.

The Department has decided to issue a letter to schools in the New Year, as it is some time since the report was published on the ETI website and they will make schools aware of the good practice characteristics identified in the report. Regarding the latter part of your question I can confirm that the Department has not given any consideration to a minimum RSE package with stringent standardised guidelines to be followed by all schools.

The delivery of RSE within schools needs to be taken forward in a way that recognises and respects the ethos of individual schools and that involves the whole school community (including parents) in planning, delivery and review. All schools should have in place a policy for the delivery of RSE in their school. Parents should be consulted about the policy and it should be endorsed by the Board of Governors of the school. In addition, a key strength of the revised curriculum is the flexibility it provides for our teachers to make decisions on how best to interpret and combine minimum requirements to provide a broad and balanced curriculum and adapt their teaching to meet the needs of individual pupils. This flexibility was introduced as a result of the feedback received during consultation with for example teachers, pupils, the business sector and parents. Guidance on RSE is provided by the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). This guidance makes schools aware of the wide range of resources available and provides a checklist to help schools determine which resources to use that are consistent with their school's morals and values framework. CCEA is currently taking forward work to revise RSE guidance and it is intended that new guidance will be available during 2014/15.

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Relationship and Sex Education

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Education to outline the reasons why Relationship and Sex Education is taught in Religious Education and not in subjects such as learning for life or biology.

(AQW 29195/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: All schools are required to have in place a RSE policy which sets out how the school will address RSE within the curriculum. A school's policy should be subject to consultation with parents and it should be endorsed by the Board of Governors of the school.

The main Areas of Learning within the revised curriculum for the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) at primary level and the Personal Development strand of the Learning for Life and Work Area of Learning at post-primary level. However, I am aware from a report published by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in January 2011 about RSE provision in post-primary schools, that a variety of delivery models are used by schools. These range from provision as a module within Personal Development, as a discrete topic or a cross-curricular approach. The report indicated that over 83% of schools use more than one delivery method.

A copy of the ETI report is accessible at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/surveys-evaluations/surveys-evaluations-post-primary/surveys-evaluations-post-primary-2011/report-of-an-evaluation-ofrelationships-and-sexuality-education-in-post-primary-schools-2.pdf>.

If a cross-curricular approach to the delivery of RSE is being taken by a school, the revised curriculum includes a number of other Areas of Learning, such as Religious Education or Science, which could provide opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge and skills in this area. However, as with all aspects of the revised curriculum, the specifics of what is taught and how it is taught is a matter for each teacher/school.

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Delivering Social Change Literacy and Numeracy Signature Project

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail as of 1 December 2013

- (i) the number of school teachers employed in post-primary schools under the signature project to provide numeracy support;
- (ii) the number of school teachers employed in post-primary schools under the signature project to provide literacy support;
- (iii) the number of unfilled signature project posts; and to detail
- (iv) the number of primary school teachers employed under the signature project prior to the 1 December 2013.

(AQW 29198/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As of 1 December 2013, under the Delivering Social Change Improving Literacy and Numeracy Project, a total of 135.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) teachers are employed in post-primary schools. These teachers have been employed either to provide direct support to pupils or to fill the post of a more experienced teacher released to provide the direct support. It is therefore difficult at this time to specify exactly the number of schools providing numeracy and/or literacy support as a number of schools are providing both. As advised by the participating schools or the WELB for the centrally appointed teachers;

- (i) There are 72 FTE of teachers employed in post-primary schools to provide numeracy support.
- (ii) There are 54 FTE teachers employed in post-primary schools to provide literacy support.
- (iii) There are 45.2 FTE unfilled posts in the primary and post primary sectors as of 1 December 2013.
- (iv) There are 86 FTE teachers out of a total of 100.7 FTE teaching posts employed in primary schools.

Interviews took place in early December to appoint further teachers to the Signature Project.

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Average Spend on Home to School Transport

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to detail the average spend on home to school transport per

- (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary pupil in the
 - (a) maintained;
 - (b) controlled;
 - (c) integrated;
- (d) Irish medium sectors, in each of the last six years.
(AQW 29349/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The tables below show the average spend on Home to School Transport per (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary pupil in the maintained, controlled, integrated and Irish medium sectors, in each of the last four years. Data in the format requested is not available for the 2007/08 and 2008/09 years.

Primary

Year	Maintained	Controlled	Integrated	Irish Medium
2009/10	£783	£802	£737	£926
2010/11	£816	£810	£649	£862
2011/12	£745	£701	£651	£1,129
2012/13	£751	£696	£729	£1,227

Post-Primary

Year	Maintained	Controlled	Integrated	Irish Medium
2009/10	£667	£668	£646	£602
2010/11	£651	£654	£638	£828
2011/12	£639	£623	£616	£594
2012/13	£644	£644	£611	£603

NB. Data provided by the Education and Library Boards. Controlled Integrated schools are recorded under the Integrated heading, while Controlled Irish Medium (IM) schools are recorded under the Irish Medium heading. Figures for the Integrated sector include both Grant Maintained Integrated and Controlled Integrated schools. Some Boards record IM Units attached to Maintained schools under the Maintained heading, while others record such Units under IM.

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Children Awaiting Assessment by an Educational Psychologist

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education, during the period 1 September 2012 to 30 April 2013, what was the average waiting time between a pupil being referred to an educational psychologist and having their first appointment, broken down by Education and Library Board.

(AQW 29350/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have confirmed that the average waiting time between a pupil being referred to an educational psychologist and having their first appointment, during the period 1 September 2012 to 30 April 2013, is as follows:

BELB 33 days, NEELB 90 days, SEELB 278 days, SELB 60 days, WELB 75 days

These figures refer to Stage 3 (non-statutory assessments) as outlined in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (COP). With regard to the waiting time for an assessment in terms of statutory requirements, at Stage 4 of the COP, the ELBs consider the need for a statutory assessment of special educational needs which will include an assessment by an educational psychologist. ELBs have 16 weeks from the date that the ELB notifies the parents that it is considering making an assessment or from the date that the request to carry out an assessment is received by the ELB from the parent or the school to complete the assessment.

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Bodies Responsible for Providing Support to Schools: Transformation

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education which (i) statutory; and (ii) sectoral bodies are responsible for providing support to

- (a) Irish Medium;
- (ii) nursery;
- (iii) Catholic Maintained; and
- (iv) Grammar schools that wish to explore transformation.

(AQW 29389/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Support to any grant-aided school (with the exception of special schools) wishing to explore transformation, and those schools that have already transformed, is available from a range of organisations. The statutory bodies which can provide support

include the Education and Library Boards. Each Education and Library Board has arrangements in place to support schools that have transformed or wish to transform. The Transferors Representative Council (TRC) and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) can also provide advice to schools that wish to undertake, or have already undertaken, the transformation process. Sectoral bodies which can provide support to any grant-aided school (with the exception of special schools) that wish to undertake, or have already undertaken, the transformation process include the Integrated Education Fund (IEF), and the Council for Integrated Education (NICIE).

Transforming schools can apply to the IEF for a grant to help with the additional costs of the transformation process. NICIE can provide support through the provision of training, and has developed a support programme which guides schools through the planning and implementation processes to help the school to achieve full integration.

Once a school has transformed, the Department of Education can provide support through the allocation of additional resources to assist with the transformation process. This funding is available to schools during the first five years of transformation. Funding of £185k has been made available for 2013/14.

The Department may also reimburse a school's Boards of Governors for the fees charged by the Electoral Reform Services in connection with holding the transformation ballot of parents. Full details of the advice and support available to schools is contained with the Department's document entitled "Transformation – An Information Pack for Schools".

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Education and Skills Authority

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education for an update on the Education Bill; and the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority.

(AQW 29476/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Bill completed its Committee Stage on 8 April, 2013. The depleted state of existing structures means that it is now very urgent that the Executive agrees the Bill's progress to Consideration Stage. The establishment of the ESA can then follow at the earliest opportunity after the legislative stages of the Education Bill have been completed.

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Proposed Way Forward on the Education Bill

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) whether his Department has drafted a paper on a proposed way forward on the Education Bill, and (ii) if so, the options contained within it.

(AQW 29477/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are a number of amendments to the Bill which I intend to move at consideration stage, subject to the prior agreement of my Executive colleagues. I hope that the Executive will agree these amendments in the very near future.

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Number of Young People not in Education, Employment or Training

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training broken down by constituency. (AQW 29291/11-15)

Dr Farry: Northern Ireland does not have a comprehensive data source on those young people Not in Employment, Full time Education or Training (NEET). Estimates are derived from a sample survey for Northern Ireland as part of the overall Labour Force Survey (LFS), and it is not possible to disaggregate the figures further. Figures for Quarter 3 (July-September) 2013 estimate the number of young people aged 16-24 who are NEET to be 48,000 or 22.1% of the population in that age group.

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Free School Meals Policy

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much of the £136 million Barnett Consequentials is linked directly to the UK Government's Free School Meals policy. (AQW 29183/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: As a result of the Free School Meals policy announcement in Whitehall Northern Ireland received a Barnett share of £38.4 million. Importantly, this allocation is unencumbered, which means it is for the Executive to decide how this funding should be spent in line with local needs and priorities.

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Welfare Reforms Implementation

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the outworking of the penalty imposed by Her Majesty's Government, given the failure to implement welfare reforms by the 1 January 2014.

(AQW 29479/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Without any progress on the Welfare Reform Bill in this financial year, the Executive will be faced with penalties of £15 million. The Executive will need to consider, as part of its January monitoring round, the impact of these penalties on the 2013-14 financial position. Should the delay in implementing welfare reforms stretch beyond this financial year, then the Executive will need to consider the implications of this in future years.

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Offenders: Alcoholism, Substance Abuse and Learning Difficulties

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department works with other jurisdictions to find suitable facilities for offenders with complex needs such as alcoholism, substance abuse and learning difficulties once they leave prison.

(AQW 28056/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Arrangements are not in place for my Department to work with other jurisdictions to find suitable facilities for offenders with complex needs such as alcoholism, substance abuse and learning difficulties once they leave prison. Rather arrangements are in place between the South East Health and Social Care Trust and the other HSC Trusts to ensure that all relevant information is shared when a prisoner is discharged into the community.

The Department of Justice works closely with a range of agencies, in a number of other jurisdictions, in designing and developing interventions to ensure a co-ordinated approach to dealing with offenders with complex needs and inform the implementation of best practice programmes.

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Health Service Staff: Signs of Human Trafficking

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps are being taken in the Health Service to train staff to spot signs of human trafficking.
(AQW 28997/11-15)

Mr Poots: A range of measures are in place to train and support staff working in the Health Service to recognise the signs of Human Trafficking.

In February 2011 the DHSSPS, with the Police Service of Northern Ireland issued Guidance on “Working arrangements for the Welfare and Safeguarding of Child Victims/Suspected victims of Human Trafficking. In October 2012 the DHSSPS and the Department of Justice jointly issued Guidance on “Working arrangements for the Welfare and Protection of Adult Victims of Human Trafficking”. Further Guidance “Pathway for Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of separated children” was launched in November 2013. Following the launch the Health and Social Care Board is leading on a training needs analysis. This will form the basis for specific training to be provided by HSCTs to staff in relation to this area of practice for 2014/15.

In addition, awareness training and/or specialist training is provided for social workers as appropriate in relation to their duties.

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Learning Disability - Life Transitions

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department is working with the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Education to identify and respond to specific barriers faced by young people with a learning disability at key life transitions during school, training and employment and day centre opportunities.
(AQW 29018/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department and the HSC continues to work closely with the Department for Employment and Learning, the Department of Education, and their agencies, to assist young people with a learning disability during transition from children’s to adult services and, on leaving school, to have access to the fullest possible range of day opportunities and support in appropriate settings.

To assist young people with a learning disability in overcoming barriers encountered during such transitions, each Health and Social Care Trust has designated individuals/teams who collaborate with other Departments/Agencies, allied health professionals and the voluntary and community sector, to assist the young person and their family in planning ahead. These plans should take into account the aspirations and aptitudes of the young person and seek to assist their progression into meaningful day opportunities - involving further education, training, supported employment, social and leisure activities, along with appropriate care and support.

The need for inter-departmental and inter-agency working was highlighted in the Bamford Equal Lives Report and many actions and strategies stemming from that, including the Regional Day Opportunities Model, recently consulted on by the HSC Board. It is also represented in the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership in which key agencies work together to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children. One of their sub-groups focuses on Transitions of children and young people with disabilities into adulthood.

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Protect Life Strategy

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the impact that the Protect Life Strategy has had on suicide rates and on the care for an person at risk of suicide.

(AQW 29048/11-15)

Mr Poots: International evidence indicates that efforts to reduce national suicide trends need to be sustained and long term. Over the seven year period leading up to the publication of the Protect Life Strategy in late 2006, the Northern Ireland suicide rate almost doubled. Since then the rate has remained high with an average of 277 recorded deaths each year since 2007.

Undoubtedly, lives have been saved through Protect Life services, but it is not possible to estimate how many. The Northern Ireland Audit Office has acknowledged that the relative impact of the Protect Life strategy on suicide is difficult to estimate. This difficulty is due to the fact that suicide is primarily a societal issue and is, therefore, influenced by a very wide

range of interacting factors. This fact is recognised in other jurisdictions, some of which do not set reduction targets as part of their suicide prevention strategies.

A wide range of measures have been implemented through Protect Life to care for a person at risk of suicide. These include: training courses on suicide prevention and mental health awareness for health and social care staff; the emergency department Card Before You Leave scheme; the Shine project in the Western HSC Trust area which takes self-harm referrals from emergency departments and provides counselling services; community-led suicide prevention and bereavement support services; and the Lifeline 24/7 crisis response helpline.

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Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the statutory function of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority as a prescribed body under whistleblowing legislation.
(AQW 29141/11-15)

Mr Poots: Prescribed persons are responsible for investigating allegations that fall under their jurisdiction, and for protecting the whistleblower and their interests while conducting an investigation.

The RQIA is prescribed as having a role in relation to matters relating to the quality, safety, and availability of health and social care services provided by statutory, independent, community and voluntary providers in Northern Ireland.

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Internet Safety for Children

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department and its arm's-length bodies are taking to protect children from abuse through the internet.

(AQW 29146/11-15)

Mr Poots: At Departmental level, a senior official sits on the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) Executive Board. The overall mission of the UKCCIS is to coordinate the efforts of Government, industry and others to keep children safe online.

My Department also sponsors the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI). As a strategic priority, the SBNI has agreed to develop a co-ordinated strategy and working model to help children at risk of: becoming criminalised through online activity; bullying through cyber activity; and sexual abuse through sexting and online exploitation. To date the SBNI has undertaken a number of initiatives in this area including: a presentation to the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure (CAL) in relation to the Investigation into Gaps in Child Protection and Safeguarding across the CAL remit; the funding of training for all SBNI member agencies in the use of the UK Safer Internet Centre risk assessment; and the commissioning of the National Children's Bureau to research e-safety messages available in Northern Ireland to young people, parents and practitioners with which to inform delivery of the SBNI's Strategic Priority, this will be launched in January 2014.

The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) continues to prioritise the protection of children through the commissioning of services to protect children from all forms of abuse. The HSCB is supported by all five HSC Trusts which have developed a number of initiatives to protect children from abuse through the Internet. Those initiatives include specific training for Trust staff, including Looked After Children Teams, Residential Staff, and Foster Carers; the agreement of an individual safe caring plan for each Looked After Child at the beginning of their placement which includes safe practices for computer usage; the placing of restrictions on IT equipment provided to Looked After Children to prevent the access of inappropriate material; and the development of leaflets advising children on how to keep safe online.

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Regional Day Opportunities Model for Adults with a Learning Disability Consultation

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he would finance the day care model referred to in the Regional Day Opportunities Model for Adults with a Learning Disability consultation.

(AQW 29208/11-15)

Mr Poots: Once the Regional Day Opportunities Model is agreed and any recommended amendments are made, each of the five Health and Social Care Trusts will benchmark their current services against this regional model. It is fully recognised that, given demographic pressures on learning disability services and the improvements to services which the Model will require, there will be an additional need for both revenue and capital. The vision set out in the Bamford Review and confirmed in Transforming Your Care is to enable people with Learning Disabilities to lead full and meaningful lives in their own communities.

The Model recommends that future services should be delivered on a joint cross-departmental and inter-agency basis, recognising that day opportunities are not solely a responsibility of Health and Social Care. Consequently, as with the general response to Bamford, some of the costs in making a reality of the Model will be shared with other Government Departments who may also bid for further resources.

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Female Genital Mutilation

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department is aware of any cases of female genital mutilation; and whether victims have been treated in hospital.

(AQW 29213/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on cases of Female Genital Mutilation is not currently collected by my Department or the Health and Social Care Board. The Northern Ireland Maternity System is currently undergoing an update and information on women presenting to maternity services who have undergone Female Genital Mutilation will be collected in future.

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People Diagnosed with Autism in North Antrim

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what resources have been invested to support people diagnosed with autism and their families in the North Antrim constituency, in each of the last three years; and to outline his Department's policies for assisting these families and the charities that support them.

(AQW 29253/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information is not available for the North Antrim constituency; however investment in autism specific services in the NHSCT is outlined in the table below:

Year	Children's services (£)	Adult services (£)
2011	294,866	
2012	340,977	139,857
2013	340,977	170,357

Given that autism is a spectrum disorder, support services for individuals and their families are based on assessed need. In addition to the health and social care services available to the local population, the Northern HSC Trust provide both Children's and Adult's ASD services which operates across the entire Trust area. These are multidisciplinary autism teams which are made up from a number of different professions. Additional support is available to the teams through education and voluntary sector providers in accordance with an individual's needs.

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Mental Health Issues

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what measures he has taken to address the stigma surrounding mental health issues.

(AQW 29308/11-15)

Mr Poots: In October 2011, I launched the Public Health Agency's "Under the Surface" public information campaign which aimed to de-stigmatise mental illness and raise awareness of the early warning signs and symptoms. The Agency has just launched a new campaign which continues the emphasis on encouraging people to discuss their feelings, builds on the previous approach to stigma reduction, and focuses on recovery.

Other action taken forward by the Public Health Agency to improve awareness of mental health issues, reduce stigma associated with mental illness, and encourage help-seeking behaviour includes: local seminars and educational workshops; mental health awareness training; the hosting of websites providing advice and information; and work with the media to encourage more positive reporting on the issue. The reduction of stigma associated with mental illness will be a priority in the new Suicide Prevention and Positive Mental Health Strategy currently being developed.

My Department is also continuing work on the draft Mental Capacity Bill. The approach of the Bill means that mental capacity and mental health legislation will, for the first time in any jurisdiction, be encompassed into a single piece of legislation. This will reduce the stigma associated with separate mental health legislation which was a key recommendation of the Bamford Review. It remains my intention that the Bill will be enacted within the current mandate of the Assembly.

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Mental Health Services for Young People

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what mental health services exist for young people; and specifically in the South Down area.

(AQW 29309/11-15)

Mr Poots: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Northern Ireland are provided through a stepped care model, based on the clinical needs of the individual. CAMHS for the northern part of the South Down constituency area are provided by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, on behalf of the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust from a local community based team in the Lagan Valley Hospital site. This team also provides outreach to Downpatrick. CAMHS for the southern part of the South Down constituency area are provided by the Southern Trust in local community based teams in Newry and Portadown. CAMHS consist of multidisciplinary teams that specialise in the assessment and intervention for under 18s with mental health needs and their families/carers.

Services for children and young people presenting in crisis, and requiring urgent assessment and intervention, are provided by Crisis Assessment Teams which are available 7 days per week. Inpatient care for young people, when required, is provided in Beechcroft, the Regional Child and Adolescent Inpatient Mental Health Unit in Belfast.

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Social Services Safeguarding Team

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 28643/11-15, how many children have been referred to the social services safeguarding team in each of the last three years.

(AQW 29396/11-15)

Mr Poots: All Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts have a Gateway Service that receive all new referrals regarding children and young people in need, including children where there are safeguarding concerns.

In general, although there are some variations between the HSC Trusts, the HSC Trusts do not have dedicated social services children's safeguarding teams. Those children referred to social services who are deemed to require an ongoing service following initial assessment will be referred to appropriate Family Intervention/Support teams.

The table below contains the number of children referred to social services (Gateway Teams) in each of the last three years.

Table 1: The number of children referred to Social Services (2010/11 – 2012/13)

Year	Children Referred to Social Services ¹
2010/11	26,725
2011/12	28,496
2012/13	29,508

Source: 1. Children Order Return N1

This information is available in 'Children's Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland 2012/13' which can be found on the Department's website at the following link: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib/statistics_and_research-cib-pub/children_statistics/stats-cib-children_order.htm

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Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the points in legislation where young people are defined, for the purposes of the work of the Children's and Young People's strategic partnership, as outlined in The NI Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14, Appendix 2, Section 2.2.

(AQW 29502/11-15)

Mr Poots: The legislative mandate for the Children's and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) is the statutory duty placed on the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) under The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (the 1995 Order) as amended by The Children (1995 Order) (Amendment) (Children's Services Planning) Order (Northern Ireland) 1998 (the 1998 Order). Under the 1995 Order, the HSCB is required to: annually review services provided to children and families under Articles 18, 21, 23, 27, 35 and 36 of the 1995 Order; and, taking account of the annual review and any review conducted under Article 20 (which relates to childminding and day care services), prepare a Children's Services Plan.

In constructing the Plan, the 1995 Order requires the HSCB to consult with a range of agencies, named in paragraph 3 of Schedule 2. Article 2 of the 1995 Order, defines a child as a person under the age of 18. The 1995 Order (by way of amendment by The Children (Leaving Care) Act (Northern Ireland) 2002) also makes provision for advice, assistance and support to be provided to former looked after children and young people up to the age of 21.

In addition, Articles 35, 35A, 35B, 35C and 35D of the 1995 Order also enables a young person to receive assistance in respect of employment, education or training until age 24 in specified circumstances.

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Research into Prostitution

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 28048/11-15, when he intends to commission research into prostitution, including the estimated commencement and conclusion dates; and when he will publish the Terms of Reference.

(AQW 29033/11-15)

Mr Ford: I refer the Member to the reply I gave him on 27 November 2013 (AQW/28153/11-15). The terms of reference will be shared with the Justice Committee in early January. It is anticipated that the contract for completion of the research will have concluded by autumn 2014.

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Female Genital Mutilation

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the scale of the problem of female genital mutilation.

(AQW 29215/11-15)

Mr Ford: There have been no convictions for offences under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 for the period for which data is available (from commencement to 2009). The Department of Justice does not hold any other data on which to base an assessment.

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Child and Family Law Proceedings

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Justice what actions his Department has taken to establish a more efficient and financially viable system for child and family law proceedings.

(AQW 29304/11-15)

Mr Ford: Further to a recommendation by the Access to Justice Review for a fundamental review of family justice, my Department, together with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, undertook work scoping a review of the operation of the family justice system. That exercise has been completed and the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety and I have agreed to begin to address the issues found to be impacting on the operation of the system by adopting a staged approach to reform. The initial stage will include:

- the development of proposals for a pilot to minimise unnecessary delay in care proceedings;
- the development of a cross-departmental strategic approach to alternative dispute resolution services for families; and
- consideration of options for dealing with breaches of contact orders.

This initial stage will inform consideration of the need to take forward legislative reform in the future.

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All Party Group on Human Trafficking

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 29220/11-15, whether he will reconsider the decision to refuse to disclose the nationalities and average age, as the corresponding information for the 2012/13 year was made readily available to the All Party Group on Human Trafficking in September 2013.

(AQW 29452/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department has previously provided information on potential victims of human trafficking who have been referred to the National Referral Mechanism. This information relates to the potential victims' countries of origin, a breakdown between minors and adults and, where available, exploitation type.

Specific information about those who have been confirmed as victims of human trafficking, however, is not shared in order to protect their identities. This is in line with the Data Protection Act 1998, which precludes the disclosure of information that could lead to the identification of an individual. Having taken advice from the UKHTC, however, I can now advise that the average age of the confirmed victims since 1 April 2013, who are minors, is 16. I hold by my decision not to disclose information on nationality.

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20mph Zones Outside Schools

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 5340/11-15, for an update on the introduction of 20 mph zones outside schools.
(AQW 29156/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department continues to deliver safety measures at schools and is developing policy to improve the safety of children on their journey to school. The concept of introducing part-time 20 mph speed limits outside schools has been agreed following the success of pilot schemes installed outside three primary schools.

However, as the cost of the safety measures used in the pilot schemes was higher than anticipated and given that financial resources are limited, my Department has been developing equally effective lower-cost safety measures, which will allow more schools to be treated within available budgets.

A new road safety at schools policy, which will encompass all available safety engineering measures, is also nearing completion. It is anticipated this policy will be in place for the next financial year.

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Homeless People: Under the Age of Eighteen

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many people who are classified as homeless are under the age of eighteen.
(AQW 29463/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that at 1st December 2013 there was a total of 44 single applicants awarded Full Duty Applicant status (homeless) and aged under 18 recorded on the waiting list.

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