

NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions week ending 24 April, 2015

- **Departmental Signature Projects**
- **Early Years Funding Cuts**
- **Controlled Schools**
- **Integrated Education**
- **Integrated Education**
- **Joint Management**
- **Assessing Shared Education Projects**
- **Free School Transport**
- **Delivering Social Change Signature Projects**
- **Free School Meals**
- **Child Protection Measures**
- **Welfare Reform Bill**
- **Unemployment Figures**

- **Local Annual Income**
- **Meningitis B Vaccine, Bexero**
- **Female Genital Mutilation**
- **Legal Age for Shotgun Licence**
- **Statutory Time Limits – Youth Justice Cases**
- **Human Trafficking**
- **Enforceable 20mph Speed Limits Scheme**

Office of First and Deputy First Minister

Departmental Signature Projects

Mr Chris Lyttle (APNI – East Belfast) - To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many children with a disability have benefited from departmental Signature Projects, particularly parenting programmes.

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Signature Programmes are providing a series of direct family support measures through the Community Family Support Programme, the Family Support Hub Signature Programme and the Support for Parents Signature Programme. Through these, it is expected that children with a disability are benefiting. However, currently the only available data relates to the Family Support Hubs Programme, this is set out in the table below:

Total in year Q1 – Q3 of 2014 / 2015

Adult Disability	Total
Physical	40
Learning	10
Sensory	6
Total	56
Child Disability	Total
Physical	28
Learning	80
Sensory	34
Total	142

(22nd April)

[Back to Top](#)

Department of Education

Early Years Funding Cuts

Ms Claire Sugden (IND – East Londonderry) - To ask the Minister of Education to detail the public bodies and relevant stakeholders who were consulted with, prior to his Department's announcement of cuts to Early Years Funding.

Mr J O'Dowd (Minister of Education): The Executive's Budget has been reduced by the Westminster Government by £1.5bn over the last five years. As a direct result of this reduction there is significantly reduced money to spend on frontline services such as Education. I have taken every action possible to protect Education funding and those frontline services within the Department of Education's (DE) remit. However, it is simply impossible to protect everything.

My Department's 2015-16 budget consultation process invited all stakeholders within the Education sector to express their views on the 2015-16 Budget for Education. Over 23,000 responses to the consultation were received, which provided me with a significant basis of evidence to inform my final 2015-16 Budget spending plans. In reaching final decisions on the 2015-16 Budget allocations, I:

- Focused on protecting frontline services as far as possible, promoting equality and raising education standards;
- Secured the continuation of specific programmes that reflect the Department's statutory responsibilities;
- Continued to tackle social disadvantage; and
- Ensured that support for children with Special Education Needs is prioritised.

On the 13th January 2015 there was an assembly debate specifically on the Education budget. The majority of MLAs voted to protect school budgets as a priority. During this debate I pointed out that education was much broader than the classroom.

I have protected the Sure Start budget as far as possible so that the original reduction of £2m has been reduced to £1m. The reduction of £1m leaves a Sure Start budget of £24.7m for 2015/16. I was also able to re-instate fully the budget for the Pre School Education Programme. I have also ensured that budget is available in 2015/16 to enable all recipient groups in the Early Years Fund to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015.

Despite the difficult budgetary position I am continuing to invest over £216m in early years education services to ensure that key services are protected as far as possible.

(21st April)

[Back to Top](#)

Controlled Schools

Mr Steven Agnew (GPNI – North Down) - To ask the Minister of Education how many schools the new controlled body will cover; and how many schools are already covered by another sectoral body.

Mr J O'Dowd (Minister of Education): There are currently 566 Controlled schools, all of which may avail of support through the Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC) when it is established.

There are a total of 62 integrated schools and 29 Irish medium schools which can avail of support through NICIE and CnaG respectively.

Of the 62 Integrated schools 24 are controlled, and of the 29 Irish medium schools 2 are controlled. These schools can also avail of support from the CSSC. **(21st April)**

[Back to Top](#)

Integrated Education

Mrs Dolores Kelly (SDLP – Upper Bann) - To ask the Minister of Education to outline his Department's plans to improve availability of integrated education in Lurgan, Portadown and Banbridge over the next five years.

Mr J O'Dowd (Minister of Education): I commissioned the then Education and Library Boards, now the Education Authority (EA), working in close conjunction with the Catholic Council for Maintained Schools (CCMS) and engaging extensively with other school sectors, to develop collective strategic plans on an area basis, within the published terms of reference.

The NI Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) is funded by my Department to lead, promote and facilitate the development and growth of integrated education.

Planning for new integrated schools is dependent therefore upon collaboration between NICIE and the EA and CCMS.

As part of the area planning process, the EA is required to consider proposals from all sectors, including the integrated sector. Proposers must make a robust case for change which clearly demonstrates demand and is based on the creation of viable and sustainable provision in line with the Sustainable Schools Policy.

Last year I commissioned NICIE, in conjunction with the Southern Education and Library Board and CCMS, to carry out a strategic review of the need for additional integrated primary provision in the Portadown, Craigavon and Lurgan areas. I understand this review is still ongoing. **(21st April)**

[Back to Top](#)

Integrated Education

Mrs Dolores Kelly (SDLP – Upper Bann) - To ask the Minister of Education how many schools have requested, or been invited, to transform into integrated education schools in the last three years.

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education): It is a matter for the Board of Governors of a school in consultation with the wider school community to consider transformation.

In the last three years, three development proposals have been published by schools seeking to transform to integrated status.

The three schools are Clintyclay Primary School, Mallusk Primary School and Loughries Primary school. **(21st April)**

[Back to Top](#)

Joint Management

Mr Steve Agnew (GPNI – North Down) - To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant AQW 43070/11-15, whether joint management will take the form of two schools coming together under joint management but remain in separate buildings or come together in one school.

Mr J O'Dowd (Minister of Education): A jointly managed school will be a single school under one Board of Governors, but as with other existing schools could operate on a split site arrangement. **(21st April)**

[Back to Top](#)

Assessing Shared Education Projects

Mr Steven Agnew (GPNI – North Down) - To ask the Minister of Education what experience and practical knowledge members of the Education and Training Inspectorate have in relation to assessing shared education projects.

Mr J O'Dowd (Minister of Education): The ETI has established a core team of inspectors for shared education. The inspectors have experience of evaluating shared education through the Inspectorate's evaluation of the 19 projects included in the International Fund for Ireland's Sharing in Education Programme over the period 2010-13.

Inspectors also have experience of evaluating the impact of the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education (CRED) policy which encourages schools and youth settings to work collaboratively. Both reports are available on the ETI website at:
<http://www.etini.gov.uk/international-fund-for-irelands-sharing-in-education-programme/a-final-evaluation-of-the-international-fund-for-irelands-sharing-in-education-programme.pdf>

<http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/surveys-evaluations/surveys-evaluations-primary/surveys-evaluations-primary-2015/an-evaluation-of-the-impact-of-the-cred-policy-in-schools-and-youth-organisations.pdf>

The core team of inspectors are supported by associate assessors who have undertaken training and professional updating in relation to evaluating shared education. **(21st April)**

[Back to Top](#)

Free School Transport

Mr Danny Kinahan (UUP – South Antrim) - To ask the Minister of Education whether he will guarantee that parents from the Lurgan area sending their children to selective grammar schools outside Lurgan will be eligible for free school transport, now that St Ronan's College has been re-designated as a voluntary non-selective grammar school.

Mr J O'Dowd (Minister of Education): The use of the term 'free school transport' is misleading as the considerable cost of the service is borne by the Education budget at an average cost per child of approximately £830 per year. No pupil can be guaranteed assistance with school transport unless they meet the eligibility criteria set out in the Home to School Transport policy. The two eligibility criteria are 'distance' and 'suitable' school' in terms of management category of school. The management categories are Catholic Maintained, Controlled and Other Voluntary, Integrated, Irish Medium, and Denominational Grammar and Non-Denominational Grammar, and parents may select a category for their child. With respect to grammar schools, the management category does not depend upon selection tests, therefore these are excluded from consideration by the policy.

For a post-primary pupil to be eligible for assistance with transport, either: the chosen school must be more than three miles from their home and there must be no other school in the same category within three miles of their home; or, where there are other schools in the same category within three miles of their home then the parent(s) must have applied for a place in each such school and been refused a place in all. **(21st April)**

[Back to Top](#)

Delivering Social Change Signature Projects

Mr Steven Agnew (GPNI – North Down) - To ask the Minister of Education, whether two integrated schools sharing would meet the criteria for the Delivering Social Change Signature Projects, particularly that partnerships must include schools from different sectors and also schools from different community backgrounds.

Mr J O'Dowd (Minister of Education): Two integrated schools sharing are unlikely to meet the criteria of schools from different sectors, but each application will be judged on its merits. Such an application would have to demonstrate what the additional educational and reconciliation benefits would be to both of the partnering schools. **(21st April)**

[Back to Top](#)

Free School Meals

Mr Seán Rogers (SDLP – South Down) - To ask the Minister of Education how many children were entitled to free school meals in each Education and Library Board area in the last three years. **[Priority Written]**

Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education): The tables below shows the number of pupils entitled to free school meals split by the former Education and Library Board areas. The total number of pupils has also been supplied for the purposes of providing context.

Pupils entitled to free school meals by Education and Library Board area, 2014/15

Primary schools

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	12,217	11,748	9,794	9,434	12,333	55,526
Total enrolment	26,217	29,966	38,599	37,491	42,769	175,042

Post-primary schools

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	8,641	8,654	6,363	5,247	8,331	37,236
Total enrolment	29,099	25,100	31,284	24,398	32,672	142,553

Nursery schools

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	871	281	262	375	307	2,096
Total enrolment	1,518	741	1,405	1,028	1,190	5,882

Voluntary and private pre-schools

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	145	207	244	171	212	979
Total enrolment	760	1,410	2,225	1,946	2,280	8,621

Total

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	21,874	20,890	16,663	15,227	21,183	95,837
Total enrolment	57,594	57,217	73,513	64,863	78,911	332,098

Pupils entitled to free school meals by Education and Library Board area, 2013/14

Primary schools

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	11,792	11,193	9,422	8,994	11,796	53,197
Total enrolment	25,543	29,626	38,296	36,529	41,554	171,548

Post-primary schools

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	6,104	6,110	4,716	3,862	5,860	26,652
Total enrolment	29,271	25,508	31,532	24,766	32,896	143,973

Nursery schools

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	842	230	233	372	300	1,977
Total enrolment	1,513	737	1,400	1,018	1,184	5,852

Voluntary and private pre-schools

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	128	155	242	179	230	934
Total enrolment	702	1,317	2,157	1,878	2,306	8,360

Total

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	18,866	17,688	14,613	13,407	18,186	82,760
Total enrolment	57,029	57,188	73,385	64,191	77,940	329,733

Pupils entitled to free school meals by Education and Library Board area, 2012/13

Primary schools

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	11,184	10,640	8,571	8,748	11,032	50,175
Total enrolment	25,043	29,256	37,700	35,701	40,334	168,034

Post-primary schools

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	6,540	6,295	4,819	3,991	6,056	27,701
Total enrolment	29,527	25,871	32,045	25,226	32,989	145,658

Nursery schools

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	841	267	224	337	265	1,934
Total enrolment	1,514	790	1,401	1,017	1,188	5,910

Voluntary and private pre-schools

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	109	190	222	119	211	851
Total enrolment	669	1,398	2,104	1,872	2,367	8,410

Total

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
Free school meal entitled	18,674	17,392	13,836	13,195	17,564	80,661
Total enrolment	56,753	57,315	73,250	63,816	76,878	328,012

Source: NI school census

Notes:

- Education and Library Board area refers to the ELB in which the school is located rather than pupil residence.
- Figures for pupils in nursery schools/units and pre-schools include parents who are in receipt of Income Support (IM) and income-based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA). These are two of the benefits which determine eligibility for free school meals.
- Figures for primary include nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes.
- Figures include funded pupils only.

(22nd April)

[Back to Top](#)

Department of the Environment

Child Protection Measures

Mr Jimmy Spratt (DUP – South Belfast) - To ask the Minister of the Environment what child protection measures have been put in place by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency at country parks following the conviction of a senior member of staff for sex offences against children.

Mr M Durkan (Minister of the Environment): I would first of all refer the member to my written response (COR/1103/2015) to your letter of 23 February 2015 in relation to the question tabled.

This reply sets out the arrangements that my Department has in place, including child protection measures to meet the Safe Guarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007, as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, which provides the legislative framework for individuals who are unsuitable from working (in a paid or volunteer capacity) with vulnerable groups, including children, to be barred from such work.

I should point out in this case the conviction referred to was of a historical nature and the individual was not employed by the Department of the Environment at the time of the events.

I would confirm that all individuals offered a post through an open recruitment competition in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS), including my Department must have an AccessNI check undertaken before any formal offer is made. These checks would identify any criminal convictions an individual has at the time at which the request for clearance is made and meets our statutory obligation.

I can assure you that the recent case which you raise has been dealt within in accordance with the appropriate procedures. Due to data protection provisions individual cases cannot be discussed, however, I would again confirm that the individual you referred to is no longer employed in my Department.

In addition I have asked that NIEA review the current measures in place to identify any additional guidance and training required for staff in relation to their role in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults at NIEA managed sites.

My Department takes its responsibilities in this matter seriously and is committed to protect all vulnerable groups who visit our sites. **(20th April)**

[Back to Top](#)

Department of Finance and Personnel

Welfare Reform Bill

Mr Stewart Dickson (APNI – East Antrim) - To ask the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the impact of delays, and any potential additional cost, caused by the failure to agree the Final Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill.

Mr S Hamilton (Minister of Finance and Personnel): Should the Welfare Reform Bill fail to pass through the NI Assembly, the £114 million reduction set out by Her Majesty's Treasury will apply in full to the Northern Ireland Executive's Budget in 2015-16.

HM Treasury have not indicated the level of reductions beyond 2015-16 however Social Security Agency (SSA) estimates of the foregone UK Exchequer savings of not implementing welfare reform in Northern Ireland are significant and will increase in the coming years reaching £366 million in 2018-19.

In addition to the Resource DEL reductions applied by HM Treasury non-implementation will also lead to significant capital costs associated with developing a bespoke IT system for Northern Ireland.

Failure to proceed with the Welfare Reform Bill will also put at risk the other aspects of the financial package agreed under the Stormont House Agreement. **(20th April)**

[Back to Top](#)

Unemployment Figures

Mr Basil McCrea (NI21 – Lagan Valley) - To ask the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) how many people under the age 25 years are unemployed; and (ii) how many of these people have a university degree, broken down by constituency.

Mr S Hamilton (Minister of Finance and Personnel): Official estimates of unemployment are sourced to the Labour Force Survey. Over the period December 2014 to February 2015 it is estimated there were 23,000 people aged under 25 who were unemployed.

Further breakdowns of the number of unemployed people aged under 25 by constituency who have a university degree cannot be provided due to the wide survey margins of error for these smaller sub-groups. **(22nd April)** [Back to Top](#)

Local Annual Income

Ms Michaela Boyle (Sinn Féin – West Tyrone) - To ask the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail what proportion of adults earn below the average local annual income.

Mr S Hamilton (Minister of Finance and Personnel): Annual earnings estimates are sourced from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE). In total, 58% of employee jobs are paid less than the arithmetic average gross annual earnings of all employee jobs (full-time and part-time), which was £21,616 in April 2014. **(22nd April)**

[Back to Top](#)

Department of Health

Meningitis B Vaccine, Bexero

Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson (UUP – Upper Bann) - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the first child in Northern Ireland will receive the new Meningitis B vaccine, Bexsero. **[Priority Written]**

Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): It is our intention to add the Men B vaccine to the routine childhood vaccination schedule from September 2015, subject to the vaccine manufacturer being able to deliver adequate supplies of the vaccine into the UK to facilitate a sustainable programme. **(21st April)** [Back to Top](#)

Female Genital Mutilation

Mr Gregory Campbell (DUP – East Londonderry) - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an estimate of the extent of the practice of Female Genital Mutilation in Northern Ireland in the last five years.

Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): While I am aware that there are women living in Northern Ireland who were victims of FGM before coming here, I have no evidence that FGM is practiced here. There have been no referrals related to FGM, including into adult services, into any of the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts in Northern Ireland in the last five years. I acknowledge that the practice can be difficult to detect, as it often only becomes evident when a woman presents to health services with a condition unrelated to FGM.

I fully acknowledge that there are populations living here for whom FGM is, for whatever reason, a cultural norm in their country of origin. It is for that reason that my Department worked with the Department of Finance and Personnel to produce and publish multi-agency guidance on FGM. Also, the three Chief Professional Officers in my Department have written to health and social care professionals advising that they familiarise themselves with the guidance and the actions they need to take when they have reason to believe that a girl or woman has undergone, or is at risk of, FGM.

My Department will continue to engage with other agencies to prevent this horrific crime from being inflicted on women and girls resident in Northern Ireland. **(21st April)**

[Back to Top](#)

Department of Justice

Legal Age for Shotgun Licence

Mr Robin Swann (UUP – North Antrim) - To ask the Minister of Justice for an update on the change to legislation to reduce the legal age to hold a shotgun licence.

Mr D Ford (Minister of Justice): Proposals were presented to the Justice Committee on 4 March following a meeting with stakeholders. Three stakeholder groups represented at that meeting (and a fourth in writing) supported the proposals around the lowering of the age; however, three groups did not attend and remain opposed to the age of 12.

My proposal is that a young person from the age of 12 can use (but not licence) a shotgun under supervision in a police approved clay target club. **(21st April)**

[Back to Top](#)

Statutory Time Limits – Youth Justice Cases

Mr Mickey Brady (Sinn Féin – Newry and Armagh) - To ask the Minister of Justice for an update on his Department's work on statutory time limits in youth justice cases.

Mr D Ford (Minister of Justice): I plan to introduce statutory time limits in the youth court in October. I wrote to the Justice Committee on 18 March to set out next steps and the timetable for their introduction. I have placed a copy of the timetable in the Library.

My officials have engaged with stakeholder organisations to agree a phased approach to the introduction of the scheme and briefed the Justice Committee on 25 March.

The time limit will initially run from the point a young person is charged with an offence, or in summons cases, from the date the Public Prosecution Service makes a complaint to the court. It will end at the point the first person gives evidence to the court as part of the trial or when a guilty plea is entered.

My officials are currently working with the criminal justice agencies to complete the operational details and finalise draft regulations for the scheme.

This is only the first step towards developing a more rigorous and comprehensive time limit. I believe the end to end time limit envisaged by the Youth Justice Review team

should be our ultimate aim and that the criminal justice system should be taking steps to prepare for a time limit with an extended scope and a shorter duration. As this will require new legislation, my officials will be discussing options with stakeholders over the Summer and will publish a consultation paper in the Autumn.

In the interim, and in order to give greater attention to delay at the early stage of proceedings, I have decided to augment the statutory scheme with an administrative time limit that will cover the early stages of a case. The administrative time limit will be introduced in October with the statutory time limit and will operate until the new legislation needed to deliver a more expansive scheme can be introduced.

I have asked the Criminal Justice Board to monitor closely performance against the statutory and administrative time limits and arrangements will be put in place to track the progress and overall duration of cases.

I also intend to review the operation of the statutory scheme after twelve months to see if the duration of the time limit can be shortened. That will also provide an opportunity to review the range of offences to which the time limit applies together with the use of extensions and the need for exclusions. (21st April)

[Back to Top](#)

Human Trafficking

Mr Paul Givan (DUP – Lagan Valley) - To ask the Minister of Justice what criteria are used to determine membership of the Engagement Group on Human Trafficking.

Mr D Ford (Minister of Justice): As the response to AQW/41153/11-15 explained, the Engagement Group was established in December 2012. The purpose of the group was, and is, to formalise and improve the engagement between the Department of Justice, police, and relevant statutory and non-governmental organisations on the issue of human trafficking; and to inform the development of human trafficking policy and programmes.

Membership of the group is subject to my approval. A process is in place for reviewing the current membership and considering new requests to join which has been agreed by the Engagement Group. This involves the completion of an application form by any new applicant. These forms are then considered by the Group.

The application form seeks information on:

- the main purpose of each organisation applying;
- the organisation's specific interest in human trafficking and how its current activities contribute to the strategic aims set out in the current Human Trafficking and Exploitation Action Plan;
- what added value the organisation would bring to the Engagement Group;
- the organisation's activities, including any campaigns or initiatives it has been involved in relevant to human trafficking; whether it has any direct contact with victims of human trafficking; what training the organisation has had in relation to human trafficking; and whether it currently provides any training or awareness on the issue.

Support for the strategic aims of the OCTF on human trafficking, and the related action plan, which take account of the legislation is, therefore, a central consideration.

(21st April)

[Back to Top](#)

Department for Regional Development

Enforceable 20mph Speed Limits Scheme

Mr Paul Frew (DUP – North Antrim) - To ask the Minister for Regional Development whether the part-time enforceable 20mph speed limits scheme during starting and finishing times at schools will be rolled out to schools in North Antrim.

Mr D Kennedy (Minister for Regional Development): The Member will be aware that my Department is committed to providing safer roads for the vulnerable road user and, in conjunction with the Department of the Environment and the Police Service for Northern Ireland, has developed the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy to 2020.

This strategy gives a commitment that, following the successful installation of pilot schemes at three primary schools and, subject to available funding, TransportNI will develop a programme of part-time 20mph speed limits at rural schools on roads where the national speed limit applies. This programme will include schools in North Antrim.

Regrettably, due to the significant budget pressures my Department is currently facing, I am unable to provide a definitive timescale for the roll out of this programme. **(23rd April)**

[Back to Top](#)