

NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions week ending 3 July, 2015

Update on Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry

<p>AQO 8119/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Mike Nesbitt (UUP - Strangford)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry.</p> <p>The remit of the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse is to examine if there were systemic failings by the state or institutions in their duties towards children under 18 in their residential care between 1922 and 1995. The Inquiry started its work on 1 October 2012 and was originally expected to report in January 2016.</p> <p>However, a one-year extension to the Inquiry means that the Inquiry is now expected to report in January 2017. The Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse (Amendment of Terms of Reference) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 was made on 10 February 2015 and came into effect on 11 February 2015. The Order amends the Inquiry's terms of reference, extending the Inquiry by one year.</p> <p>The statutory element of the Inquiry began its work on 13 January 2014 in the former Banbridge Courthouse with Opening Statements by the Inquiry Chairman, Sir Anthony Hart and Senior Counsel, Christine Smith QC. The Inquiry has just completed Module 4 of its schedule, investigating two former institutions in Belfast, Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge, run by the Sisters of Nazareth, having previously investigated the Sisters of Nazareth Homes in Derry/Londonderry, the Child Migrant Programme and De La Salle Boys' Home – Rubane House.</p> <p>The HIA Inquiry has been given an enhanced role in conducting a full investigation into any and all aspects pertaining to abuse at Kincora Boys' Home. The Inquiry Chairperson is satisfied that the assurances from the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State will enable him to investigate the full range of issues including those outside this jurisdiction.</p> <p>A total of 16 institutions in Northern Ireland are now scheduled to be investigated by the Inquiry in relation to allegations of historical institutional abuse and/or neglect. Module 2 of the Oral Hearings also investigated the operation of the Child Migrant Programme. Separately, issues arising from the actions of Fr Brendan Smyth in a number of homes in Northern Ireland will also be addressed. In due course, the Inquiry may decide to investigate other institutions.</p>
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Equality Commission budget

<p>AQO 8116/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Trevor Clarke (DUP - South Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister what action their Department can take to prevent the Equality Commission increasing the threshold of spend to fight the legal case against Ashers Bakery.</p> <p>The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is an executive non departmental public body, sponsored by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.</p> <p>As the Equality Commission is independent from Government and Ministers in respect of its operation, there is no departmental authority to interfere on operational decisions of the Commission, including the allocation of funding to support individual legal cases.</p>
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Draft PFG publication

<p>AQW 47031/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Chris Lyttle (APNI - East Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the draft Programme for Government for 2015-16 will be published.</p> <p>Work on an extension to the current Programme for Government, to include the 2015/16 year, is currently underway.</p> <p>We intend to bring forward an Executive Paper on this subject in the coming weeks, and following Executive approval and Committee notification, the revised Programme for Government will be published.</p>
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Update on draft Adoption and Children Bill

<p>AQW 47019/11-15</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 46309/11-15 and given the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety issued a paper on 6 March 2015 seeking agreement to proceed to public consultation on the draft Adoption and Children Bill, to detail why this has not been tabled for consideration and when this is likely to happen.</p> <p>Executive business and all aspects of the Executive decision making process are confidential.</p>
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Keeping children and young people safe online

<p>AQW 46963/11-15</p>	<p>Mrs Sandra Overend (UUP - Mid Ulster)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister what actions their Department is taking to keep children and young people safe online in the absence of a cross-departmental internet safety strategy.</p> <p>The Department works on a cross-departmental basis with other relevant departments and agencies which have a remit for policing, regulating and raising public awareness around internet use in order to protect children and young people online.</p> <p>The specific actions taken by the Department include working with the UK Safer Internet Centre to raise awareness of safer internet issues through participating in Safer Internet Day held on 10 February this year; undertaking additional Ministerial visits to local schools to promote e-safety matters; liaising with DHSSPS on arrangements for the development of a cross-departmental internet safety strategy including the allocation of a financial contribution to this exercise.</p> <p>The Department is also funding a research project to study the link between young people's levels of access to and usage of ICT and how this relates to educational attainment. The findings may provide a valuable evidence base on access to the internet; usage; skill levels and the impact of video gaming on young people.</p>
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		<p>The Department actively participates in the meetings of the Ministerial Coordination Group on Suicide Prevention where the issue of internet safety is considered.</p>
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Monitoring the impact of budgetary reduction on working age families

<p>AQW 45381/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Chris Lyttle (APNI - East Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister why the decision has been taken to not renew the Institute for Fiscal Studies' contract to monitor the impact of budgetary reductions on working age families; and for their assessment on how this will impact on the achievement of the Executive's child poverty targets.</p> <p>In June 2011 we agreed that various research strands within our Department should be co-ordinated and brought together in a single programme and advertised via an open call for research. The Institute for Fiscal Studies proposal received under this call was successful and the team were commissioned to carry out their proposed study into child and working age (non-parent) poverty in NI. This research provides an estimate of the impact of many factors, primarily economic, on poverty among children and working age adults over the coming years to 2020. This contract has now been fully completed. There was no expectation of a new contract.</p> <p>The Executive's Child Poverty Strategy sets out the work to be taken forward, across departments, to help reduce child poverty and tackle disadvantage. This work will contribute to the UK Government's targets for child poverty, in accordance with the Child Poverty Act 2010. Actual levels of poverty will continue to be monitored through data from the Family Resources Survey, provided by the Department for Social Development.</p>
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Awarding public appointment to young people

<p>AQW 47569/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr David McIlveen (DUP - North Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Employment and Learning what targets his Department has on awarding public appointments to young people.</p> <p>Public appointments in my Department are decided on the basis of a transparent, merit-based system, which complies with the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Code of Practice and aims to identify the best person for the job.</p> <p>Although my Department has not set specific targets in relation to appointing particular categories of candidate, such as young people, my officials have taken a number of steps to enhance diversity amongst applicants. These include using social media to publicise competitions, engaging with diversity bodies, and clarifying and streamlining the application process.</p> <p>My officials continue to liaise internally and with colleagues across other Departments with a view to increasing diversity and identifying new ways to broaden interest in public appointments.</p>
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EMA for young people in NEET

<p>AQW 47061/11- 15</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Employment and Learning whether his Department will continue to provide Pathways for Young People Education Maintenance Allowance for people who are not in education, employment or training; and to detail any discussions he has had with the Department of Education.</p> <p>Given the 2015/16 budget outcome, resources are not currently directly available in the budget allocated to my Department to extend the Pathways Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme into the new European Social Fund (ESF) Programme 2014-2020. Taking into account the low uptake of EMA in the previous round of projects and the significant funding from ESF, this should not provide an onerous burden to projects.</p> <p>Pathways EMA was introduced as one of a series of measures under the <i>Pathways to Success</i> strategy, supported by a ring-fenced and time-</p>
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limited budget secured under the Executive's Economy and Jobs fund in 2012. These programmes, and the associated budget, came to an end on 31 March 2015.

Organisations that were successful in the recent call for applications to the ESF Programme are free to utilise the overhead cost allocations they are receiving to cover expenditure such as allowances for participants. Examples were given of the type of additional costs which could be claimed in the revised simplified model, and it was made clear in the guidance, that was made available when the call for applications was launched, that any such expenses should be included in the 40% overhead costs. It is the expectation of my Department that EMA will be paid out of this 40% overhead costs allowance.

The following is an excerpt from the guidance which issued to organisations in late November 2014 prior to the closing date for receipt of applications on 6 January 2015.

It should be noted that the 40% ESF indirect Costs funding is to be used for all other costs associated with the delivery of your project and this should include participants' allowances, childcare, staff travel, rent, etc.

Therefore, projects were made aware in writing well in advance of the closing date that participant costs could be included and claimed for in the indirect costs allocation.

Funding of EMA on 16-17 year olds

<p>AQW 46301/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Pat Ramsey (SDLP - Foyle)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Employment and Learning if training organisations funding Educational Maintenance Allowance payments will this have a detrimental effect on the recruitment of 16-17 year old eligible for such monies compared to those 18 year olds who are not entitled to the payments.</p> <p>The original focus of the Pathways for Young People Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was to remove barriers to participation for 16-17 year olds in the Not in Education Employment or Training category. In effect it mirrored the support already provided to participants on Training for Success which targeted the 16-17 year olds generally. The Pathways for Young People funding was restricted to a three year period ending in March 2015. To date my Department has been unable to source funding to extend it further but the new European Social Fund projects can, if they wish, pay young people's allowances, like EMAs, from their 40% indirect costs funding. Participant allowances paid by any project promoter under the European Social Fund programme 40% indirect costs funding are not age-related and so 18 year olds will be eligible.</p>
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Development of an arts and culture strategy

<p>AQW 47587/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Chris Lyttle (APNI - East Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the development of an arts and culture strategy.</p> <p>I am developing an Arts and Culture strategy to ensure recognition is given to the value that arts and culture has in enriching the lives of individuals, building the capacity of our communities, growing our economy and creating a more inclusive society.</p> <p>I believe that arts and culture deserve a central place in society given their importance in contributing to positive health and well being and developing skills and confidence on an individual level. Arts and culture are also an inspirational driver for the creative industries, artistic excellence and make a significant contribution to creating a cohesive society and promoting tourism. My vision for the strategy is that it is fully inclusive. It is vitally important that</p>
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		<p>all stakeholders including arts groups, communities and individuals play an active part in the creative development of the strategy.</p> <p>A Ministerial Arts Advisory Forum and Inter Departmental Steering Group have been set up to help inform the development of the Strategy and co-design events are taking place with stakeholders. The broad themes of the Strategy are being developed through this co-design phase leading to a public consultation starting in Summer 2015.</p>
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Steps to raise awareness of mental health issues in schools

<p>AQW 47740/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the steps being taken to raise awareness of mental health issues within schools.</p> <p>There are a number of ways in which awareness of mental health issues can be raised and supported within schools.</p> <p>The statutory curriculum clearly states that pupils should be taught about the importance of learning about mental health and well-being. It provides opportunities for young people to develop their knowledge on how to sustain their health and learn about a healthy lifestyle. This includes supporting pupils in better understanding mental health problems, including causes, prevention, and developing strategies to deal with any problems which they, or someone they know, may experience throughout their lives.</p> <p>At primary level, managing feelings and emotions is a compulsory element of Personal Development and Mutual Understanding and provides opportunities for pupils to better understand their own feelings and the feelings of others, as well as how to sustain their health, growth and well being.</p> <p>At post-primary level, the Personal Health strand of Learning for Life and Work provides opportunities for pupils to understand the importance of recognising and managing factors that may influence physical and emotional/mental health throughout life.</p>
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		<p>The 'iMatter' Programme aims to encourage the entire school community to be engaged in promoting resilient emotional health for all pupils. Under this programme a suite of homework diary inserts and posters on topics of concern to young people such as self esteem, substance abuse and coping with stress, worry and anxiety, are distributed to schools. The diary inserts are also available on the Department of Education website at www.deni.gov.uk and can be downloaded directly by young people.</p> <p>Also, an 'i-matter' message of the month issues to schools for dissemination to pupils – the message for May 2015 for example was on the subject of exam stress and contains links to organisations offering further advice and support.</p> <p>There is considerable evidential and research information to confirm the position that counselling in schools supports the emotional health and wellbeing of young people. Pupils experiencing stress or emotional problems find it difficult to reach their potential. This is why the Department funds the Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS). Pupils can self-refer to the Counsellor within their school, who is there to provide a 'listening ear' and who works as an integral part of the schools pastoral care system.</p>
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Funding for schools with below average free school meal entitlement

<p>AQW 47720/11- 15</p>	<p>Mrs Jo- Anne Dobson (UUP - Upper Bann)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education for his assessment of the concerns being raised by school principals in regards to the reduced funding going to schools with below average free school meal entitlement.</p> <p>Over the last 5 years the Westminster Government has reduced the Executive's Budget by £1.5bn, which has greatly impacted on the availability of funds for education and other vital services. My main priority in the 2015/16 budget discussion was to protect frontline services as far as possible.</p> <p>Therefore funding to schools with below average free school meal entitlement has not been reduced. Within the finite resources available for all education services, funding distributed to schools under the Common Funding Scheme arrangements in 2015/16 (£1,146.8 million) is marginally</p>
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		<p>higher than in 2014-15 (£1,144.6 million). I recognise that whilst this mitigates funding pressures on schools in the current year, the reality is that in real terms schools still face financial challenges.</p> <p>As the banded cash values under the TSN factors within the formula are unchanged, schools with below average numbers of pupils with registered entitlements for Free School Meals receive exactly the same level of funding, under the social deprivation element of the funding formula, as last year.</p>
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Awareness on drugs, alcohol and solvent abuse in schools

<p>AQW 47658/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education what steps are being taken to raise awareness on drugs, alcohol and solvent abuse within the school system.</p> <p>All schools are required to have in place a drugs education policy and the statutory curriculum, which is taught in all our grant-aided schools, provides opportunities for pupils to develop the knowledge and skills to deal with issues such as drug and alcohol abuse. As with all aspects of the curriculum the specifics of what is taught and how it is taught is a matter for each school. The Department also provides schools with guidance in relation to drugs. The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has been commissioned to review and update current guidance. The new guidance, which will cover issues such as alcohol/solvent abuse and smoking etc., will also provide advice on how to manage suspected drugs and/or alcohol related incidents. It will be published on the CCEA website at the end of August and will also be made available via the C2k ICT Managed Service and the DE website.</p>
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Youth led organisations reflecting the viewing of young people from a range of backgrounds

<p>AQW 47635/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr David McIlveen (DUP - North Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to outline what strategy his Department has in place to ensure that publically funded youth led organisations reflect the views of young people from a wide range of community backgrounds.</p> <p>The Department's youth policy, Priorities for Youth, states that the active participation of young people from a variety of backgrounds should be enabled and supported across all youth settings. A number of actions, relating to increasing and strengthening youth participation are being taken forward by inter-sectoral working groups, which include young people, as part of the 2015/16 Regional Youth Development Plan- Interim Framework and Action Plan, such as:-</p> <p>the development of a model for a "Network for Youth"; the further development of stakeholder engagement through Local Advisory Groups; and the development of a small grants programme by young people for young people.</p> <p>The 2015/16 Regional Youth Development Plan, produced by the Education Authority and the Youth Council for NI, was developed and informed by stakeholder engagement through the Regional Advisory Group which included young people.</p>
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Funding of Voluntary Exit Scheme

<p>AQO 8545/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Basil McCrea (NI21 - Lagan Valley)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Finance and Personnel how the Voluntary Exit Scheme will be funded in the absence of the implementation of the Stormont House Agreement.</p> <p>The flexibility, negotiated in the Stormont House Agreement, to use borrowing under the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative to fund a Voluntary Exit Scheme is central to the affordability of the scheme.</p> <p>I believe that it would be impossible for the Executive to set aside £700 million from within its Resource DEL budget over the next four years to fund the scheme.</p>
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Impact of delay in implementing Welfare Reform

<p>AQO 8537/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Mike Nesbitt (UUP - Strangford)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Finance and Personnel how the delay in implementing Welfare Reform has impacted on the allocation of resources as part of the June monitoring round.</p> <p>The delay in implementing Welfare Reform is already placing additional constraints upon the resources available to the Executive. Continued non implementation of Welfare Reform will jeopardise the financial package agreed at Stormont House increasing these constraints. This cannot fail to have a significant detrimental impact on the ability of departments to deliver public services.</p> <p>The costs of not implementing Welfare Reform are forecast to escalate significantly in the years ahead, potentially placing further pressure on key public services.</p> <p>Now is the time for either the Parties around the Chamber to live up to the Stormont House Agreement or for Westminster to step in and deal with the Welfare issue. Doing nothing is simply not an option.</p>
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Steps to reduce waiting times for autism assessment for children

<p>AQO 8558/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Ian Milne (SF - Mid Ulster)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to reduce the waiting times for autism assessment for children.</p> <p>The Health and Social Care Board is working to reduce the number and length of time children and young people have to wait for an autism assessment. However, this has proved challenging due to progressive increases in referrals to the autism service.</p> <p>Referrals for services have risen from approximately 1,500 children and young people in 2010 to 2,936 at the end of March 2015. Based on current service capacity, autism services have been unable to keep pace with this demand. This position is further compounded by the current fiscal constraints and the obligation to live within budget.</p> <p>I can however assure you that we are working to seek to find new ways of reducing the impact of long waits for assessment.</p>
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Health checks for 0-3 year olds

<p>AQO 8554/11-15</p>	<p>Mrs Judith Cochrane (APNI - East Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the main role and purpose of health visitor checks of the 0-3 year age group.</p> <p>In line with 'Healthy Child, Healthy Future', Health Visitors have a key role in delivering this child health promotion programme to all families with pre-school children. The purpose of this programme is to improve child and family health outcomes through early intervention.</p> <p>Specific to the 0-3 year age group, Health Visitors in partnership with parents, undertake eight health reviews during this period.</p> <p>The core purpose of these reviews are to assess growth and development; detect abnormalities; give parents the opportunity to discuss their concerns and aspirations; assess family strengths, needs, risks, protective and resilience factors; and to review the uptake of screening programmes and inform parents of results as appropriate.</p>
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Children diagnosed with bowel disease

<p>AQO 8551/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Cathal Ó hOisín (SF - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children under 18 years have been diagnosed with Crohn's disease, colitis and inflammatory bowel disease since 2010.</p> <p>This information is not currently routinely captured by Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland. However, information is available on the number of hospital admissions where a diagnosis of Crohn's Disease, Colitis or Inflammatory Bowel Disease has been recorded.</p> <p>Since 2010 there have been 371 admissions to hospital for children under 18 with a primary diagnosis of Crohn's disease, 4494 with Colitis and 3009 with Inflammatory Bowel Disease.</p> <p>The British Association of Gastroenterology is currently exploring the establishment of a national IBD registry and Northern Ireland clinicians have expressed an interest in contributing to this. A regional group has been established to consider the governance, technical, procurement and financial implications.</p>
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Teeth and eye care for young people with a disability

<p>AQW 47356/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Jim Allister (TUV - North Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why pupils with severe learning disabilities who remain in full time education until they are nineteen are not automatically entitled to free dental and optical care.</p> <p>For all individuals aged 19 or over, entitlement to any exemption from or help with the costs of NHS high street dental or optical services is based on the principle that those who can afford to contribute should do so, while those who are likely to have difficulty in paying should be protected.</p> <p>Exemption from NHS charges, or help with meeting the costs of these charges, is established by a person's entitlement to income related benefit. In the case of a person with severe learning disabilities it would be hoped that they are supported by an appropriate social care package and that they have</p>
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		<p>accessed their full benefits entitlement and are consequently in receipt of an appropriate level of support in relation to NHS dental and optical charges. Further advice on entitlement to benefits can be sought from local Social Security/Job and Benefits offices.</p>
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Funding for hospice and palliative care for children and young people

<p>AQW 47277/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Fearghal McKinney (SDLP - South Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he plans to fund hospice and palliative care for children and young people from April 2016.</p> <p>At present, hospice and palliative care and support services are commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board, and I would expect those services to continue from April 2016, subject to available funding. My Department is also finalising its <i>Strategy for Children's Palliative and End-of-Life Care</i>, which will include commitments to further improve hospice and palliative care for children in Northern Ireland over the next ten years. The implementation of the Strategy will be dependent upon available funding to invest in these services given the difficult budget position facing my Department.</p>
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Publication of Children's Palliative and End-of-Life Care Strategy

<p>AQW 47276/11-15</p>	<p>Mr Fearghal McKinney (SDLP - South Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 41933/11-15, when his Department will publish the Strategy for Children's Palliative and End-of-Life Care.</p> <p>The Health and Social Care Board is currently finalising an implementation plan which will be published with the final <i>Children's Palliative and End-of-Life Care Strategy</i>, subject to my approval. I hope to be in a position to publish the Strategy later this year</p>
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Tribunals dealing with special education needs

<p>AQW 47344/1 1-15</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Justice to detail the number of cases referred to tribunals dealing with special education needs in each region of the Education Authority, in each of the last five years.</p> <p>The number of cases referred to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for each former Education and Library Board, in each of the last five financial years is detailed within the table below.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="440 757 1444 1608"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2010/20</th> <th>2011/20</th> <th>2012/20</th> <th>2013/20</th> <th>2014/20</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Belfast</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Western</td> <td>10</td> <td>19</td> <td>18</td> <td>13</td> <td>16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North Eastern</td> <td>22</td> <td>29</td> <td>33</td> <td>54</td> <td>37</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South Eastern</td> <td>24</td> <td>20</td> <td>30</td> <td>33</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Southern</td> <td>7</td> <td>10</td> <td>16</td> <td>15</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOTAL</td> <td>66</td> <td>81</td> <td>102</td> <td>121</td> <td>121</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2010/20	2011/20	2012/20	2013/20	2014/20	Belfast	3	3	5	6	17	Western	10	19	18	13	16	North Eastern	22	29	33	54	37	South Eastern	24	20	30	33	40	Southern	7	10	16	15	11	TOTAL	66	81	102	121	121
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Statutory Guidance for operation of Community Planning for use by councils

<p>AQO 8529/11- 15</p>	<p>Ms Michaela Boyle (<i>SF - West Tyrone</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of the Environment when the Statutory Guidance for the Operation of Community Planning will be ready for use by councils.</p> <p>I propose to issue statutory guidance to assist councils and their community planning partners in the operation of their new duty shortly. Throughout 2014 and during 2015, my officials have been engaging with other government departments and agencies on the implications of the introduction of community planning and local government reform, and how it will influence the new central-government relationship. The learning from this activity, councils ongoing preparations and pre-consultation with a range of stakeholders, has informed the development of this guidance.</p> <p>As you will know my Department issued the draft Statutory Guidance for the Operation of Community Planning for consultation on 16 December 2014 for a period of 12 weeks. Sixty-eight responses were received to the consultation on the draft guidance with the majority of these emanating from community and voluntary groups, representative groups, councils, local government organisations and public bodies. My officials provided a briefing on the consultation and guidance to the Environment Committee at its meeting on 18 June 2015.</p> <p>In light of the question and concerns raised by the Committee, I am currently still considering my Department's response to this consultation and the final version of the Guidance and the statutory guidance will issue shortly. Officials from my Department continue to liaise with all of the new councils and with other government departments and agencies, to support the establishment of Community Planning Partnerships. I am aware and have been greatly encouraged to note that councils have already been making use of the draft guidance and that councils have found this useful in the processes necessary to establishing their Community Planning Partnerships and developing community plans for their districts.</p>
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Impact of road traffic awareness advertising on young drivers

<p>AQW 47339/11- 15</p>	<p>Lord Morrow of Clogher Valley (DUP - <i>Fermanagh and South Tyrone</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of road traffic awareness advertising that is (i) printed; (ii) broadcast and detail any feedback on the impact the advertising is having on communities and young drivers, in each of the last two years.</p> <p>My Department has a statutory responsibility to promote road safety and to raise public awareness of the nature and scale of the road safety problem here. All of our work is shaped by evidence and follows thorough research of the road safety problem, road users' attitude to that problem, and analysis of how best to change poor road user behaviours.</p> <p>It is difficult to measure the sole or unique contribution that any specific area of road safety makes towards reducing casualties. Changing road user attitudes and behaviours is ongoing, constant and repetitive work, but many factors (such as education, PR, enforcement and engineering), working together, clearly have supported reductions in road casualties, with serious injuries at an all-time low last year, and fatalities having been below 100 a year each year since 2009. We have made progress towards zero road deaths, but still have work to do. The approach to DOE Road Safety media planning has always adopted a media neutral, data-led approach. This means that media channels which can reach the largest numbers of target audiences (such as young adults) have always been prioritised. This data-led approach has always informed the media choices for campaigns, which have always adopted a multi-media approach. This approach has included TV, Radio, Press, Digital including social media, Cinema and Outdoor activity.</p> <p>The campaigns are regularly assessed by the NISRA Road Safety Monitor, which has consistently reported that TV advertising is the most important factor in creating awareness of road safety (2007-2014). We have extensive evidence that people watch, are aware of and are influenced by our road safety campaigns.</p>
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The most recent research shows that DOE road safety campaigns tracked over the last two-year period have achieved levels of influence ranging between 83% and 93% with the 17-24 year old audience, indicating that our work has been very influential in improving young road user/driver attitudes and in producing positive change in behaviours. The industry norm for achieving levels of 'fairly influenced' is 30%.

The other crucial influential factors that were rated "very influential" in the Road Safety Monitor include DOE's Radio, Press, Outdoor and Online Advertising; News Coverage; Police Enforcement; Penalties Imposed by Courts; Car Design and Features; Road Traffic Laws; Education in Schools; Road Engineering; and Changes to the Driving Test.

A study by Oxford Economics isolates the importance of the role of DOE advertising and calculates that, between 1995 and 2011, 21,977 men, women and children here have been saved from death and serious injury on our roads through the impact and influence of our campaigns. The study calculated that the economic payback on DOE's campaigns was £42 per £1 invested once human costs were included. My Department continues to enrich the use of communication channels, using material across channels to reach all road users with these lifesaving messages. We research and respond to changes in how people access information, including the changing options in digital and social media.

My Department also works with a very wide range of individuals and organisations, engaging as widely as possible with all those who want to make a difference. We welcome the continuing, passionate support for road safety from many, many organisations. We have a wide range of material to support this work, and continue to work it into different formats to work through different channels.

Organisational redesign of Assembly Commission

<p>AQO 8501/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Paul Girvan (DUP - South Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Assembly Commission, in light of budgetary pressures and organisational redesign, for an update on the progress made on reducing the size of the Assembly's senior management team.</p> <p>As the Commission's budget has been reducing year on year since 2010 (down from £44m in 2010/11 to £38.7m in 2015/16 – a real cut of almost 25%) all areas of expenditure, including senior management costs, have been under review with action being taken to meet the necessary budget cuts.</p> <p>The Assembly Commission included in its Corporate Strategy 2012/16 an objective to streamline its management structures and a review was completed in 2013. In response to proposals that would have resulted in a slimmer management structure, the Commission considered introducing a voluntary exit scheme but a viable business case could not be sustained at that time.</p> <p>The Commission's aim subsequently has been to reduce management costs on an incremental basis over time, as 'natural wastage' gave rise to opportunities. This approach has allowed some progress to be made with 1.4 Full Time Equivalent (out of 5 posts to be suppressed – 28%) posts being suppressed to date generating a saving on gross salaries of £99k per annum. As is generally the case across the wider public sector, the Commission's policy is to achieve change on a voluntary basis and not through compulsory exit.</p> <p>The Member will wish to note that the Commission is participating in the wider public sector Voluntary Exit programme which is currently ongoing. The Voluntary Exit Scheme for Commission staff, which will have concluded by September, includes criteria in respect of addressing senior management posts. The Commission will reassess progress and what further action may be required at that time.</p>
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Assembly Commission budget

<p>AQO 8499/11- 15</p>	<p>Mr Alban Maginness (<i>SDLP - North Belfast</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the current Assembly budget in relation to proposed staff reductions.</p> <p>The Assembly Commission’s budget covers a range of different expenditure categories including: Assembly Secretariat staffing costs; General administration costs; Payments to Parties under the Financial Assistance for Political Parties Scheme, and; Members’ salaries and allowances.</p> <p>The Commission’s total budget for 2015-16 was reduced by 5% equating to a cut of just over 2 million pounds. In order to deliver the required savings, a strategic planning programme commenced in December 2014 to include the implementation of the budget reductions.</p> <p>At its meeting on 10 March 2015, the Commission agreed that a cut of this scale could only be delivered through a planned package of savings that included:</p> <p>A change of childcare scheme to one more in line with what other public servants are entitled to avail of. A reduction in payments to political parties under the Financial Assistance for Political Parties Scheme; A reduction in staffing costs through a reduction in Secretariat staffing numbers – this includes participation in the public sector Voluntary Exit Scheme; A reduction in MLAs’ office consumables budget; and A wholesale reduction in administration costs. A determination by the Independent Financial Review Panel to further reduce Members’ Office Cost Expenditure (OCE), which is the money used by MLAs to provide a direct service to constituents, has also helped to balance cuts and the Commission’s budget.</p> <p>Between April 2015 and November 2015, it is anticipated that 32 Full Time Equivalent posts will be suppressed across the Assembly Secretariat. It is</p>
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