

NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions week ending 11 September, 2015

Minister's assessment of impact of changes to working tax credits

<p>AQO 8601/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Alex Attwood (<i>SDLP - West Belfast</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the impact locally of the working tax credit changes announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8 July 2015.</p> <p>In the Summer Budget 2015 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that he intended to achieve annual savings of £12 billion on welfare expenditure by 2019/2020. This included savings from changes to working tax credits. Tax credits are a reserved matter and therefore changes to payment rates or eligibility criteria do not require Executive agreement. These measures will therefore be introduced by HM Revenue and Customs following the legislative passage of the Welfare Reform and Work Bill 2015 in Great Britain. The savings will be achieved at a UK level regardless of the positions adopted by any devolved administration.</p> <p>Since the budget statement DSD officials have been working to better understand both the detail and financial implications of the welfare measures in the budget and the impact on Northern Ireland.</p> <p>An assessment of the impacts of the Summer Budget to include the changes to working tax credits will be available at the end of September.</p>
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Progress by Council for Integrated Education on Deloitte reviewing findings

<p>AQW 48565/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (<i>DUP - North Down</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education what progress the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education has made to meet the requirements, in the findings in the review by Deloitte.</p> <p>NICIE has developed and is implementing an action plan in response to the Deloitte Review of Organisational and Governance Structures. My officials are monitoring progress regularly and working with NICIE to ensure full implementation of the Deloitte recommendations.</p>
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Number of secondary school children entitled and claiming free school meals

AQW
48555/11-
16

Mr Gary
Middleton
(DUP -
Foyle)

To ask the Minister of Education to detail the number of secondary school children (i) entitled to; and (ii) claiming free school meals, broken down by constituency.

The following table details the number of post-primary pupils (i) entitled to free school meals; and (ii) uptaking of free school meals broken down by constituency.

Table 1. Entitlement and uptake of free school meals by constituency, 2014/15.

Constituency	Entitled to Free School Meals	Uptake of Free School Meals
Belfast East	870	662
Belfast North	3,702	2,682
Belfast South	1,671	1,282
Belfast West	3,993	2,996
East Antrim	1,217	898
East Derry	1,958	1,558
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	2,363	1,972
Foyle	3,651	2,945
Lagan Valley	975	611
Mid Ulster	2,044	1,704
Newry and Armagh	2,984	2,379
North Antrim	1,890	1,505
North Down	950	686
South Antrim	654	459
South Down	2,136	1,693
Strangford	1,404	1,021

		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Upper Bann</td> <td>2,121</td> <td>1,749</td> </tr> <tr> <td>West Tyrone</td> <td>2,653</td> <td>2,168</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>37,236</td> <td>28,970</td> </tr> </table> <p>Entitlement source: School census, 2014/15. Uptake source: School meals census, 2014/15.</p>	Upper Bann	2,121	1,749	West Tyrone	2,653	2,168	Total	37,236	28,970
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Department guidance on intake to integrated schools

AQW 48526/11- 16	Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)	<p>To ask the Minister of Education what guidance or requirements his Department gives to schools with Integrated status on the mix of community background in relation to pupil intake.</p> <p>Schools transforming to integrated status are expected to demonstrate the ability to achieve a minimum of ten per cent of their intake from the minority tradition within the school's enrolment, working towards achieving a minimum of thirty per cent in the longer term.</p> <p>A new grant-aided integrated school should aim to attract thirty percent of its pupils from the minority community in the area where the school is situated.</p>
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'Inescapable' budget pressures face by Department of Education

AQW 48514/11- 16	Mr Samuel Gardiner MBE (UUP - Upper Bann)	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the scale of each of the 2015/16 inescapable budgetary pressures faced by his Department.</p> <p>The table below which was included in my Department's Draft Budget 2015-16 document, published on 26 November 2014, details the inescapable pressures faced by my Department in 2015-16.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>£m</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Annual increase in staff pay costs</td> <td>28.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>EA Block Grant: Special Education Needs pressures</td> <td>10.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Aggregated Schools Budget: Targeting Social Needs funding</td> <td>10.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non pay inflationary pressures</td> <td>7.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Furniture & equipment: New Major works</td> <td>4.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CCEA: Revision of GCSE specifications</td> <td>3.2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		£m	Annual increase in staff pay costs	28.0	EA Block Grant: Special Education Needs pressures	10.0	Aggregated Schools Budget: Targeting Social Needs funding	10.0	Non pay inflationary pressures	7.2	Furniture & equipment: New Major works	4.0	CCEA: Revision of GCSE specifications	3.2
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		Free School Meal Entitlement: post primary	2.0
		Special Education Needs : Roll out of Early Years	1.4
		Other	2.3
		Total	68.1

Number of children waiting for SEN statements

<p>AQW 48379/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Fearghal McKinney (<i>SDLP - South Belfast</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the number of children waiting on special educational needs (SEN) statutory statements, broken down by Education Authority region, in each of the last three years.</p> <p>The Education Authority (EA) has advised that the number of children waiting on a statutory statement of special educational needs (SEN), as at 1 September 2015, broken down by Education Authority region, is as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="587 1081 1396 1496"> <thead> <tr> <th>EA region</th> <th>Number *</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Belfast</td> <td>80</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North-east</td> <td>87</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South-east</td> <td>134</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Southern</td> <td>160</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Western</td> <td>49</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>* The number of children who have received a proposed statement of SEN but who, as at 1 September 2015, had not yet received their final statement of SEN. The EA has advised that it is not possible to provide this information for previous years.</p>	EA region	Number *	Belfast	80	North-east	87	South-east	134	Southern	160	Western	49
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Number of Exceptional Circumstances Body approvals in last three years

<p>AQW 48364/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Robin Swann (UUP - North Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education how many applications to the Exceptional Circumstances Body were approved in each of the last three years, including 2015 to date.</p> <p>The following table sets out the number of applications made to the Exceptional Circumstances Body in each of the last three reporting years, including the year to date, and the number of these applications which were upheld by the Body.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="534 694 1394 1182"> <thead> <tr> <th>Reporting Period*</th> <th>Applications received</th> <th>Applications upheld</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>25/05/13 to 31/05/14</td> <td>114</td> <td>29</td> </tr> <tr> <td>01/06/14 to 31/03/15</td> <td>104</td> <td>28</td> </tr> <tr> <td>01/04/15 to 03/09/15</td> <td>103</td> <td>29</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>321</td> <td>86</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>* Please note that, until 1 April 2015, the Body's reporting year did not align with the financial year as a result of the Body beginning to operate on 1 June 2010. Information on applications to the Exceptional Circumstances Body is published in the Body's Annual Reports which are available online at http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/admission-and-transport/6-transfer-procedure.htm</p>	Reporting Period*	Applications received	Applications upheld	25/05/13 to 31/05/14	114	29	01/06/14 to 31/03/15	104	28	01/04/15 to 03/09/15	103	29	Total	321	86
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VE staff exit timings

<p>AQW 48522/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Alex Easton (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in light of finances being released for a voluntary exit scheme for Civil Servants by the Secretary of State, when will those who have been accepted be allowed to leave.</p> <p>The first exit tranche of those who have accepted their conditional offer to leave the NICS is due to occur on 30th September and those who accepted their conditional offer to leave in the second tranche will exit at the end of November.</p> <p>Executive colleagues were advised of the position on 7 September and an update to all NICS staff was issued by the Head of the Civil Service also on 7 September.</p>
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Update on Hidden Crime, Secret Pain strategy

<p>AQO 8576/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Megan Fearon (SF - Newry and Armagh)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Justice for an update on the Hidden Crime, Secret Pain strategy on tackling sexual violence and abuse.</p> <p>There have been significant achievements since the publication of the ‘<i>Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse</i>’ strategy in 2008. A key success has been the establishment of ‘The Rowan’ Sexual Assault Referral Centre in May 2013. The centre offers a range of services and support to victims of sexual violence. I have no doubt the excellent work of the centre has contributed to an increase in reported sexual crimes.</p> <p>Since the publication of the strategy, there has been a public campaign to generate awareness, and an anti-rape campaign in universities and colleges. A handbook of information, help and support has also been published for adult victims of rape and sexual assault. These campaigns are widely recognised to increase the reporting of these crimes.</p> <p>In September 2013 the domestic violence helpline was expanded to respond to the needs of victims of sexual violence and abuse.</p> <p>Public Protection Arrangements have also been introduced in Northern Ireland, to enhance the management of risk posed by certain sexual and violent offenders. This will be strengthened further by added protections emerging from the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2015, such as, the arrangements for Child Protection Disclosure and Violent Offences Prevention Orders.</p> <p>A new victim of crime information leaflet and a Victim Charter have been published. The Charter will be put on a statutory footing in November. In addition, the <i>Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse</i> strategy, which is now finalised, sets out what the two departments and our partners aim to do to tackle domestic and sexual violence in the future. As the Member will appreciate, significant consideration continues to be given to how we can maximise and prioritise the limited resources we have to deliver against the strategy.</p>
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Waiting times for enhanced Access NI clearance

<p>AQW 48402/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Jim Allister (TUV - North Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Justice what is the average waiting time for enhanced clearance through Access NI; and what steps are being taken to address any delays.</p> <p>In July 2015, the average time taken to issue certificates for enhanced checks was six days.</p> <p>At present, where an application for an enhanced check is received on-line and the individual has no criminal record, or police have no information about that individual, these certificates are being issued on the day after receipt of the application. However, approximately 28% of enhanced applications must, under the legislation, be forwarded to PSNI (or other police services as appropriate) for consideration. These cases take longer to process. Even with this added process, over 96% of the enhanced applications received by AccessNI in July were returned within 28 calendar days. This exceeded the published target of returning 90% of cases within 28 days.</p> <p>There is, however, a backlog of applications under consideration by the PSNI. At present, 590 cases have been with the PSNI for a period of 60 days or more, a reduction from 798 two months earlier, as a result of measures put in place to reduce this backlog. My officials continue to work with PSNI at senior levels to ensure this improvement is sustained.</p>
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Progress on improving community safety by tackling anti-social behaviour

<p>AQW 48330/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Neil Somerville (UUP - Fermanagh and South Tyrone)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Justice what progress has been made to meet the Programme for Government 11-15 commitment to improve community safety by tackling anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>An update on the progress made by my Department in relation to Programme for Government commitment 56 (to improve community safety by tackling anti-social behaviour) is available online: http://www.northernireland.gov.uk</p> <p>Click on Work Of The Executive, and then click on Programme for Government, Budget and Economic Strategy. Click on Programme for Government, then under the heading Programme for Government 2011 – 2015 click on the Programme for Government 2011-15 – Strategic Online Report. Finally, click on Priority 3: Protecting Our People, the Environment and Creating Safer Communities.</p> <p>This Programme for Government commitment is being delivered through the Community Safety Strategy. Annual progress reports on the delivery of</p>
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		<p>the Strategy are made available to the Justice Committee and a copy of the relevant progress report is available on the Department of Justice website at the following address:</p> <p>http://www.dojni.gov.uk</p> <p>On the right hand side click on Publications. Under Categories click on Policing & Community Safety, then click on Community Safety. Click on Reviews, Strategies, Action Plans. Click on Community Safety Strategy Progress Report February 2015. Click on the Anti-Social Behaviour – Report for Justice Committee – February 2015 PDF.</p>
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Communicating change in child car seats law

<p>AQW 48279/11- 16</p>	<p>Mrs Judith Cochrane (APNI - East Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of the Environment, following the change in the law regarding child car seats, whether there is a communication strategy in place to ensure parents are aware of the changes and how it will affect them.</p> <p>On 20 April 2015, Northern Ireland domestic legislation was changed to recognise a new 'i-Size' safety standard for child restraints. A key feature of the new standard is that seats are secured into anchorage points that have been fitted by the manufacturer into the structure of the vehicle.</p> <p>In order to raise awareness of the new 'i-Size' standard, my Department issued a press release which announced the new legislation and alerted parents to related question and answer material published on the NI Direct website. The Department also highlighted the new standard on its road safety social media page, Share the Road to Zero.</p> <p>It is important to state that not all cars are fitted with i-Size anchorage points – although it is now mandatory for new cars. For this reason other car seats, which are secured using the adult seat belt, remain perfectly legal. Retailers will continue to stock a range of car seats and will be able to advise parents as to which seats are suitable – taking account of both their vehicle and the height and weight of their child.</p> <p>Current road safety social media focuses on 'Back to School' and highlights child safety. An important part of these communications will be ensuring that children are properly protected as they travel in cars. The Department's road safety officers remain available to answer queries from parents should the need arise.</p> <p>Officials will continue to monitor social media regarding this issue. Where appropriate, social media users will be directed to the relevant page on NI</p>
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		<p>Direct. Through NI Direct, parents can access a number of websites which provide a range of very useful information on the purchase and use of child seats.</p> <p>Finally, it is important to remember that every car seat must be properly fitted and used if it is to be effective. Our overall priority is to improve not only the use of child restraint systems but also the quality of that use. My Department will continue to make the necessary information available to parents and other users of child restraint systems.</p>
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Update on review into Enhancing Healthcare Services

<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the implementation of recommendations from his Department’s review into Enhancing Healthcare Services for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland from Birth to 18 Years, since 2014.</p> <p>As a result of the Review, the Department has drafted <i>A Strategy for Paediatric Healthcare Services Provided in Hospitals and in the Community in Northern Ireland (2015-25)</i>. The Health and Social Care Board is currently finalising an implementation plan, which will be published with the final Strategy document, subject to my approval. I hope to be in a position to publish the Strategy later this year.</p>
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Future of Paediatric Gastroenterology at Altnagelvin hospital

<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) any decisions that have been made on the future of Paediatric Gastroenterology services at Altnagelvin Hospital; and (ii) when these decisions were made.</p> <p>Currently, paediatric gastroenterology is a tertiary service provided by the Belfast Trust at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. At the 23rd June 2015, there were 41 children waiting for an outpatient appointment and 215 children waiting for an endoscopy inpatient procedure within the paediatric gastroenterology service.</p> <p>In 2014/15, Belfast Trust took clinical responsibility for Western Trust area patients and established a centralised single waiting list for all children in Northern Ireland to ensure chronological management and equity of waiting times for children, irrespective of where they live. In September 2014, Belfast Trust commenced a bi-monthly outreach service to Altnagelvin Hospital to help support local access to outpatient services. A local paediatric gastroenterology network group was established in 2012, with a remit to standardise care, policies and procedures through NI and to improve communication links between the HSC Trusts.</p>
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	<p>There have been significant staff sick leave issues over the last 18 months which have increased the pressure on the service. The HSC Board and Public Health Agency remain actively engaged and committed to working to resolve these issues in as short a timescale as possible and the HSCB has offered to support any additional capacity that the Belfast Trust can secure, either locally or nationally, to reduce waiting lists. The local paediatric gastroenterology network group is also carrying out work with the HSCB and the Public Health Agency on staffing levels for paediatric gastroenterology in NI compared to other regions in the UK.</p>
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Funding for referral organisations

<p>Mrs Judith Cochrane (APNI - East Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQT 2638/11-15, to detail (i) the timeframe for his review of core funding; and (ii) to give a commitment that funding for referral organisations such as NI Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD-NI) will be maintained going forward.</p> <p>I intend to consult publicly on proposals for a new grant scheme, which will be open to all voluntary and community sector organisations. The scheme will seek to help us deliver key health and social care aims and will have innovation at its heart. It will replace my Department's existing core grant scheme, which will come to an end in March 2018. To minimise the impact on organisations core grant funding will be withdrawn over a three year period. Subject to satisfactory applications being received, all organisations will receive their full allocations in this financial year. However, reductions will be applied in each of the following two years through to the closure of the scheme.</p>
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