NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions week ending 31st January, 2020

Update on the Strule Education Campus in Omagh

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| AQW 194/17-22  | Mr Daniel McCrossan*(SDLP - West Tyrone)* | **To ask the Minister of Education in relation to the Strule Education Campus in Omagh, to detail the expected (i) start date; and (ii) completion date**The Strule Programme is a pioneering project and a massive capital investment in the delivery of education in the region. It is a longstanding Executive priority.The Department continues to work closely with the six school principals and their teams to build on the culture of sharing in Omagh through a wide range of shared education initiatives.  These innovative programmes are being developed and led by the schools themselves to ensure today’s students have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of sharing, and play an important role in shaping future education delivery both locally and regionally.The next stage of construction has been delayed due to tendering issues. The Department has completed a fundamental review of the construction programme and I will be giving consideration to the issues raised.In light of this delay the go live date has been revised. Provisional opening of the Campus is planned for September 2024 at the earliest. This is dependent on works commencing on site by May 2021 at the latest.In the meantime all other work on the Programme, including construction and non-construction projects, is continuing uninterrupted. The site preparation works are substantially complete and Strathroy Link Road was completed in November 2019. |

Update on suicide and general mental health in communities

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| AQW 185/17-22 | Mr David Hilditch(DUP - East Antrim) | **To ask the Minister of Health to detail his plans to address (i) the current epidemic of suicide; and (ii) general mental health in communities.**With regard to suicide, the Protect Life 2 Strategy was published on 10 September 2019 and sets out a clear action plan for addressing suicide. This includes new initiatives which have commenced such as the Multi Agency Triage Team, Regional Towards Zero Suicide Mental Health Collaborative Programme and Crisis De-escalation initiatives. Further funding is required to ensure full implementation of the Strategy.A wide range of emotional health and wellbeing programmes are also included within Protect Life 2, including initiatives through art, culture, libraries and sport; workplaces; schools; colleges and universities.Furthermore, the Public Health Agency’s Small Grants Programme promotes mental and emotional health and wellbeing and reduces inequalities in communities.Within communities, the GP is often the first point of call for mental health issues. Developments such as primary care multi-disciplinary teams will help provide better services at this point of first interaction, providing mental health practitioners based in GP practices.To further strengthen and develop mental health services I intend to publish a Mental Health Action Plan within the next two months. This will set out a range of actions which will contribute to promoting mental health in communities. |

Update on fuel poverty

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| AQW 247/17-22 | Mr Andy Allen*(UUP - East Belfast)* | To ask the Minister for Communities to detail (i) how many homes are in severe fuel poverty; and (ii) when they will no longer be in this position.1. The Northern Ireland House Condition Survey (2016) estimated that approximately 160,000 or 22% of homes were in fuel poverty. Of those homes in fuel poverty approximately 44,000 or 6% were estimated to be in ‘severe’ fuel poverty. Severe fuel poverty is defined as needing to spend more than 15% of income, including benefits, to maintain a satisfactory level of heating (21ºC in the living room and 18ºC in other occupied rooms).

My Department and our delivery partners in the Housing Executive and local Councils remain committed to delivering the Affordable Warmth Scheme to target and assist those homes most at risk of fuel poverty. Since its introduction in 2015 the Scheme has invested more than £73 million to improve the energy efficiency of almost 17,500 homes.(ii) Three factors influence fuel poverty (fuel prices, household energy use and income). Given that two of these are outside my Department’s control it is not possible to predict when households currently in fuel poverty will no longer be in that position. However, the Department and its delivery partners remain committed to delivering the Affordable Warmth Scheme to reduce fuel poverty. |

Update on review on external and independent root and branch review of Education

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| AQW 230/17-22 | Mr Chris Lyttle*(APNI - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to outline (i) how; and (ii) when an external and independent root and branch review of Education will be established.**I will give consideration to the design and delivery of the Independent Review of Education Provision as articulated in New Decade, New Approach. It would, thereafter, be my intention to bring forward proposals to the Executive on the scope of the review, the expected timescales, the potential costs and the approach for discussion and endorsement and to ensure that the appropriate resources and budget are made available to allow the Department of Education to commence the work. |

Update on future of schools in West Tyrone

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| AQW 221/17-22 | Mr Daniel McCrossan*(SDLP - West Tyrone)* | **To ask the Minister of Education for an update on the future of each (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school in West Tyrone.**The Education Authority’s Annual Action Plan for Primary, Post-Primary and Special Schools April 2019-March 2021 (the Action Plan) sets out the work programme of the planning and managing authorities to address specific issues at local level.There are currently 11 primary schools in West Tyrone named in the Action Plan, however, Development Proposals for Gillygooley Primary School (PS), Dunmullan PS and St Eugene’s PS, Lislap are also being taken forward and are currently at pre-publication consultation stage.The 11 primary schools are named as follows:-Edwards Primary School - Managing authority to consult on increase in admissions and enrolment numbers by January 2020Queen Elizabeth II Primary School - Managing authorities to consult on options for future provision at Dromore PS and Queen Elizabeth II PS by June 2020Dromore Primary School - Managing authorities to consult on options for future provision at Dromore PS and Queen Elizabeth II PS by June 2020Tummery Primary School - Managing authority to consult on options for future provision at Drumlish PS, Tummery PS and St Dympna’s PS by June 2020Drumduff Primary School - Managing authority to consult on options for future provision at Drumduff PS by March 2020St Brigid’s Primary School - Managing authority to consult on options for future provision of St Brigid’s PS and St Peter’s PS by March 2020Drumlish Primary School - Managing authority to consult on options for future provision at Drumlish PS, Tummery PS and St Dympna’s PS by June 2020St Eugene’s Primary School - Managing authority to consult on options for future provision of St Eugene’s PS by March 2020St Peter’s Primary School - Managing authority to consult on options for future provision of St Brigid’s PS and St Peter’s PS by March 2020St Dympna’s Primary School - Managing authority to consult on options for future provision at Drumlish PS, Tummery PS and St Dympna’s PS by June 2020Omagh Integrated Primary School - Board of Governors to consult on options for the future pre-school provision at Omagh IPS by January 2021There are no post-primary schools in West Tyrone named in the Action Plan.The Action Plan can be accessed via the following weblink:-<https://www.eani.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-06/Annual%20Action%20Plan%202019-21.pdf>  |

Numbers of children who missed school due to election (schools used as polling stations)

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| AQW 212/17-22 | Mr Alex Easton*(DUP - North Down)* | **To ask the Minister of Education, during the recent Westminster election, how many children were unable to attend school because their school building was being used as a polling station.**According to 2018/19 school enrolment figures, approximately 109,478 children were unable to attend school because their school building was being used as a polling station or was adjacent to premises used as a polling station.A total of 425 establishments formally applied to the Department for an ‘Exceptional Closure Day’ for the purposes of use as a polling station or had to close for health and safety or access reasons due to the premises being adjacent to a school used as a polling station. |

Consulting on licensing laws which make it an offence for young people to be on licensed premises after 9 pm

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| AQW 330/17-22 | Mr John Dallat*(SDLP - East Londonderry)* | **To ask the Minister for Communities whether her Department will consult on amending licensing laws which makes it an offence for young people to be on licensed premises after 9.00pm; and what steps she is taking to create a safe, alcohol-free environment for young people.**A public consultation on the current liquor licensing laws closed on 6 December 2019.It included questions on the adequacy of the current law in relation to children and young people on licensed premises after 9pm, for private family functions and underage functions such as formals. Any relaxation of licensing law, particularly in relation to children and young people, must be balanced with the appropriate safeguards.Responses to the consultation are currently being analysed and an outcome report will be ready for my consideration in the very near future. |

Update on Welfare mitigations

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| AQW 326/17-22 | Mr Andy Allen*(UUP - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister for Communities to outline (i) when she expects to bring forward legislation to extend Welfare Supplementary Payments (mitigations); and (ii) the process she intends to undertake to ensure full consideration is given to what further mitigations are required.**(i) My Department is taking all necessary steps to ensure appropriate legislation to extend the existing welfare mitigation schemes will be in place by 31 March 2020. A date for the introduction of draft legislation to the Assembly is under consideration.(ii) Officials are currently developing proposals for a review of the welfare mitigation measures as detailed in the New Decade, New approach Deal. I can provide an assurance that as part of the review officials will be engaging with key stakeholders in the independent advice sector. Any proposals for further mitigations will also give due consideration to my Department’s equality and human rights responsibilities. The outcome of the review will be presented to the Executive in due course. |

Universal Credit for new claimants review

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| AQW 325/17-22 | Mr Andy Allen*(UUP - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister for Communities whether she will initiate a review of the implementation of Universal Credit for new claimants.**Universal Credit was introduced for new claims, on a phased geographical basis between September 2017 and December 2018. This incremental approach over 14 months enabled the Department for Communities to continuously review implementation and ensure that the delivery arrangements were working effectively. The Universal Credit service is working as expected with around 95% of people receiving a first payment on time.My Department will continue to review, evaluate and make improvements to the delivery arrangements on an ongoing basis, and I am committed to working with external stakeholders to consolidate progress. I am also committed to ensuring the broadest range of protection is available to support the most vulnerable. |

Update on decisions not made in DfC during last 3 years

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| AQW 324/17-22 | Mr Andy Allen*(UUP - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister for Communities to detail all departmental decisions that were not taken in the absence of a Minister during the period January 2017 to January 2020.**The following departmental decisions were not taken in the absence of a Minister during the period January 2017 to January 2020:A Review of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995.Establishment of a Regional Disability Forum.Regulation 4 of the Sex Discrimination Order 1976 (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 - requires a gender based review of the regulatory system for insurance services to be conducted.Section 19 of the Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 – The Gender Pay Gap – both thetransfer of legislative responsibility from the Executive Office to Department for Communities and subsequent implementation of S19.Development of an Anti-Poverty (Social) Strategy to tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation based on objective need.Development of a Child Poverty Strategy.Re-appointment of Sport NI Board members.Appointment of Northern Ireland (NI) Representative to the Board of Horse Sport Ireland.Chair of Sport NI being appointment to the Board of UK Sport.Delivery of Sub Regional Soccer Stadia Programme.Review of People & Place: A Strategy for Neighbourhood renewal and associated tackling deprivation programmes including Small Pockets of Deprivation and Areas at Risk.Decision on way forward for Sign Language following consultation in 2016.The North South Co-Operation (Implementation Bodies) (N Ireland) Order 1999 requires the Corporate and Business Plans of the North South Language Body to be formally approved by the North South Ministerial Council.Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Act 2017. As part of the Legislative Consent Motion which was passed in the NI Assembly in October 2016 and in line with the rest of the UK, a Minister is required to grant permission for certain bodies and individuals to use the protection emblem in Northern Ireland and is also required to publish NI Guidance.Appointment of W5 Education Board member.Appointments to National Museums NI Board.Appointment of Chair of NI Museums Council.Libraries Public Lending Right (PLR) Rate per Loan scheme - Legislative Consent Motion required to be brought through the NI Assembly to ensure parity between e-books and physical/audio books.Signing off the Arts Council NI 5-Year Strategy.Appointments to the Arts Council NI Board.Appointments for a chair and members for the Historic Buildings Council.The Local Government Regulations Rates Support Grant (RSG) Regulations (under Section 27 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011).Primary Legislation on De-Rating Grant (DRG) (under Section 26 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011).Decisions on the reform of liquor licensing and gambling regulation.Review of monetary limits for gaming machines and associated social responsibility issues.Decisions on the review of the entertainment licensing regime.Approval of the Departmental response on the revised Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors.Decision on the way forward for the protection of Minority Interests in Councils’ decision making and the draft Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (Northern Ireland).Approval of the Departmental response on the Draft Local Government (Consequential Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland).Transfer of Functions Order 2017 - transfer of The Appeals Service from Department for Communities to Department of Justice.Legislation to reverse the Office of National Statistics reclassification of Registered Housing Associations to the private sector to act on an Executive decision of September 2016.Consideration of the requested NIHE rent increase for 2018/19.A review of social housing allocations.Decision on how to meet the Housing Executive investment challenge.Review of eligibility for the Affordable Warmth SchemeReview of the Private Rented Sector.Review of the Empty Homes Strategy. |

Update on Education Minister’s plan to help young people build mental health resilience

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| AQW 311/17-22 | Mr Mark Durkan*(SDLP - Foyle)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to outline schools’ (i) current; and (ii) future plans to help young people build resilience to protect their mental health.**I recognise the importance of helping to build resilience in our children and young people. It is an essential life skill.Many schools are providing excellent support for pupils in this and mental health and wellbeing more widely, through the preventative curriculum and tailored pastoral care programmes. They are however emphasising the daily challenges faced in supporting and addressing the needs of their pupils in this area, who they confirm are presenting with increasingly complex issues.Providing support in tackling these challenges is therefore a key priority for my Department and we are working collaboratively with the Department of Health, the Public Health Agency and the Education Authority to develop a Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework that aims to enhance support for children and young people, with an emphasis on promotion, prevention and early intervention, including how services can be effectively delivered to support both schools and their pupils. |

Update from Education Minister on making mental health provisions mandatory in schools

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| AQW 310/17-22 | Mr Mark Durkan*(SDLP - Foyle)* | To ask the Minister of Education whether he intends to make mental health and wellbeing provisions mandatory within schools.The legal minimum content to be taught by schools in Northern Ireland is set out in The Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order (NI) 2007 as high level areas of learning. The mandatory Learning for Life and Work Curriculum at post-primary includes mental health and wellbeing. As a legal minimum, pupils are expected to have opportunities to understand the importance of recognising and managing factors that may influence emotional and mental health throughout life and to develop an understanding of how to maximise and sustain their own health and wellbeing.My Department is also working collaboratively with the Department of Health, Public Health Agency and Education Authority to ensure that schools are supported to promote Mental Health and Wellbeing within their settings. |

Update from Education Minister on Education Committee’s recommendations in the ETI

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| AQW 306/17-22 | Mr Chris Lyttle*(APNI - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to detail what progress has been made by his Department on each of the sixteen recommendations of the Committee for Education Report on the Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process from May 2014.**As outlined in the table below, of the sixteen recommendations made by the Education Committee in June 2014, five were addressed to DE and ten to ETI and one with joint ownership. Ten have been addressed, one partially addressed, and three kept under review. Two have not been addressed which require legislative change.Recommendation 1 (DE) – Kept under review, DE recognises that schools may require support. DE with ETI and the managing authorities continue to support improvement across all schools and keep the provision under review.Recommendation 2 (DE) - Not addressed. This would require legislative change.Recommendation 3 – (ETI) - Addressed and kept under review: Through pre-inspection visits, guidance materials, presentations, dissemination events, use of Associate Assessors and use of Twitter, ETI communicates expectations clearly. Draft inspection reports have never been, and are not, shared with DE prior to publication.Recommendation 4 – (ETI) - Partially addressed: The ETI complaints procedure allows organisations inspected to challenge inspection findings.When industrial action ends, ETI is ready to add an additional independent element to the process.Recommendation 5 – (ETI) – Addressed: ETI cooperated with the GTCNI.To ensure rigour, post-inspection evaluations are conducted independently by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.Recommendation 6 – (ETI) – Addressed: ETI has never used, and does not use, anonymous questionnaires.Recommendation 7 – (ETI) - Addressed and kept under review: ETI conforms to the principle of openness and transparency in reporting findings. A separate high-level, summative report as the only report available to parents, carers and the general public would fail the tests of openness, transparency and accountability. ETI has introduced the involvement of a senior leader from the organisation in meetings, including the moderation meeting, in addition to the oral report back at the end of the inspection.Recommendation 8 – (ETI) – Addressed: New descriptors were implemented from September 2015 following consultation.Recommendation 9 – (ETI) – Addressed: ETI utilises the role of the district inspector (DI) through allocated ring-fenced days. The DI is usually the deputy reporting inspector on inspections and leads on follow-on work in their district schools.Recommendation 10 – (ETI)- Addressed and kept under review: ETI employs Irish-speaking inspectors well versed in immersion education and is recruiting a further Irish-medium education (IME) inspector. There are inspectorate exchanges with IME inspectors from the Department of Education and Skills in Dublin.Recommendation 11 (DE) - Kept under review: A specific review of assessment is being taken forward as part of the DE transformation programme.Recommendation 12 – (ETI) – addressed: ETI has produced a revised range of materials and guidance to promote self-evaluation within schools including the new Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework. DE and the managing authorities promote a culture of self-evaluation through their ongoing work.Recommendation 13 – (ETI) – Addressed: ETI implemented from September 2016 a number of new inspection models which place the District Inspector centrally and regularly in engagement with the organisation on their continued improvement.Recommendation 14 – (DE/ETI) – addressed: Both DE and ETI engage regularly with Parentkind (formerly National Association of Parent-Teacher Associations). DE promotes on-going parental engagement through the campaign “Give your child a helping hand”.Recommendation 15 – (DE) – kept under review: DE will continue to keep in mind the Committee’s view, however, there are currently no plans to change the name of ETI.Recommendation 16 – (DE) – not addressed: For ETI to be statutorily independent would require legislative change. |

Update from Education Minister on the Home to School Transport review

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|  | AQW 304/17-22 | Mr Chris Lyttle*(APNI - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education for an update on the Home to School Transport review.**The current home to school transport policy is over 20 years old and a review of the policy was initiated as part of a wider Education Transformation Programme. The aim of the review is to ensure the policy is fit for purpose and sustainable over the long term.The Department undertook an initial process of engagement with key stakeholders, parents and children in 2019, the results of which will inform the development of a public consultation document.A wide range of potential policy options are being considered within the Review, and in light of the impact that home to school transport has on many other areas of government, it will be important to ensure a robust evidence base is in place to allow the full impact of any policy change to be taken into account. In this regard, officials will continue to engage with other relevant Departments and key stakeholders.It is anticipated that a full public consultation process will be undertaken later this year. |

Update from Education Minister on how it plans to resolve teacher’s industrial action

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| AQW 303/17-22 | Mr Chris Lyttle*(APNI - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to outline how he plans to resolve the teacher's trade unions' industrial action.**The Department of Education is not the employer of teachers. The Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) is the recognised negotiating machinery for teachers' terms and conditions, represented on the trade union side by the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council, which includes the five main teachers’ unions and on Management Side, by the main managing authorities, particularly the Education Authority, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, sectoral interests and the Department.Work is already well progressed to resolve this issue. I am pleased that, following extensive negotiations, agreement in principle has been reached. However, a formal offer cannot be made yet to teachers’ unions because of the requirement for Department of Finance approval and funding cover. A case for funding has already been made to the Department of Finance, which would cover initial funding as well as additional impact on baseline resources. I am urgently progressing this in order to resolve this industrial action. |

Update from Education Minister whether he plans to review funding of post-primary schools

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| AQW 295/17-22 | Ms Claire Sugden*(IND - East Londonderry)* | **To ask the Minister of Education whether he has any plans to review the funding model for post-primary schools.**The Education Transformation Programme includes a Review of the Common Funding Scheme (CFS) Project. The CFS covers all schools funded under Local Management of Schools arrangements, including post-primary schools.As agreed in *New Decade, New Approach*, it is proposed that there will be an Independent Review of Education Provision. Consideration is now being given to the design and delivery of such a review, including the extent to which the Independent Review may incorporate the work of the Review of the CFS Project undertaken to date. |

Education Minister’s view on impact of vocational subjects at sixth form

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| AQW 294/17-22 | Ms Claire Sugden*(IND - East Londonderry)* | To ask the Minister for the Economy to detail the impact on further education of post-primary schools offering more vocational subjects at sixth form.My Department is currently working with the Department of Education (DE) on the Transition of Young People into Careers Project which aims to develop a more strategic and joined up approach to education and training provision for 14 to 19 year olds. The development of a collaborative approach to post-16 education will provide an opportunity to clearly articulate the purpose of both Sixth Forms and FE colleges and to explore how they can complement each other in providing young people with the learning pathways which best meet their needs. Given the current budgetary pressures, I am keen to explore this unique opportunity to improve efficiency, quality, reduce duplication and improve outcomes for the learner.I recognise the importance of providing young people with the vocational skills needed to grow the Northern Ireland economy and my Department is currently investing £220 million in seven new capital projects across the further education sector to provide learners with access to modern industry-standard premises and state of the art facilities. |

Education Minister’s plans for bringing teacher’s pay in line with GB

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| AQW 281/17-22 | Mr Jim Wells*(DUP - South Down)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to outline plans to bring teachers' pay into line with that currently received by their colleagues in Great Britain.**The Department of Education is not the employer of teachers. The Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) is the recognised negotiating machinery for teachers' terms and conditions, represented on the trade union side by the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council, which includes the five main teachers’ unions and on Management Side, by the main managing authorities, particularly the Education Authority, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, sectoral interests and the Department.Management and Trade Union Sides of the TNC reached an agreement in principle in June 2019 which has the potential to resolve the long running industrial dispute(s) on teachers’ pay and workload. The out-workings of this agreement will bring teachers’ salaries broadly in line with that of their GB colleagues at September 2018. A formal offer cannot be made yet to teachers’ unions because of the requirement for Department of Finance approval and funding cover. A case for funding has already been made to the Department of Finance, which covers initial funding as well as the additional impact on baselines. I am urgently progressing this in order to implement a teachers’ pay award for 2017-18 and 2018-19.Negotiations for a 2019 pay award will be taken forward separately.  |

Update from Education Minister on timescale for full implementation of Addressing Bullying in School Act

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| AQW 437/17-22 | Ms Karen Mullan*(SF - Foyle)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to outline the timescale for the full implementation of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act 2016.**Following concerns raised by the teaching unions, the Department agreed to a temporary pause in the planned implementation of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016 (‘the Act’) to facilitate further meaningful dialogue.While I am unable to confirm an exact date for implementation of the Act, I can assure you that the Department remains committed to bringing this Act into operation as soon as possible. |

Update from Education Minister on allegations of malpractice in EA’s SEN department

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| AQW 436/17-22 | Ms Karen Mullan*(SF - Foyle)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to outline what actions his Department intends to take following allegations in the broadcast media of malpractice within the Education Authority's Special Educational Needs department.**Following allegations on a media programme in September 2019, the Chief Executive of the Education Authority (EA) commissioned an audit of practice across special educational needs services within the EA.  This was a comprehensive audit of the current administrative practices associated with statutory assessment and statementing processes.  The audit focussed on Information Governance; compliance with timeframes and unnecessary or undue delays. The audit has now concluded and I am expecting a report from the EA shortly. |

Update from Education Minister following Assembly debate on PE in primary schools

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| AQW 391/17-22 | Mr Chris Lyttle*(APNI - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education, following debate in the Assembly on 11 October 2016, what action was taken to (i) improve the monitoring and reporting of physical education hours accessed by primary school pupils; and (ii) issue a public consultation on the introduction of a statutory obligation on schools to facilitate an appropriate minimum amount of physical education hours per week for primary school pupils.**My Department monitors and reports on the provision of Physical Education (PE) in schools through the School Omnibus Survey. The results of the 2018 survey can be found at www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-omnibus-survey-2018. The Education and Training Inspectorate also monitors the provision of PE in schools as part of its ongoing schedule of inspections.My Department continues to fund the Sports Programme in 2019/20, through which school leaders evaluate the impact of the programme on improving PE and sports provision within their school.The Northern Ireland curriculum recognises the importance of providing schools with the flexibility to plan their teaching to meet the needs of their pupils. I have no plans, therefore, at present to consult on a statutory minimum amount of PE hours per week for primary school pupils. |

Update from the Minister for Communities on ring-fencing welfare supplementary payment funding

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| AQW 517/17-22 | Mr Andy Allen*(UUP - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister for Communities what engagement her Department has had with the Minister of Finance or Executive colleagues to ring-fence funding for welfare supplementary payments. *[Priority Written]***Senior officials within the Department have been liaising with senior officials in the Department of Finance in relation to mitigations beyond March 2020. The Department has provided estimates the future funding required (£40.4m) for welfare supplementary payments as part of the Department of Finance commissioned budget exercises and also to inform costing of ‘New Decade, New Approach’. As Minister I will work with the Executive to extend existing mitigations measures beyond March 2020.Departmental officials continue to liaise with Department of Finance officials as we seek to secure this funding to continue to provide financial support for claimants who have been impacted by welfare reforms. |

Update from the Minister for Health on e-Safety Strategy

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| AQW 500/17-22 | Ms Paula Bradshaw*(APNI - South Belfast)* | To ask the Minister of Health for an update on the e-Safety strategy.A public consultation on a draft e-Safety strategy took place in 2019. The draft strategy, now known as an On-line Safety strategy, and accompanying action plan are being finalised and subject to necessary approvals, including Executive agreement, will be published later this year. |

Update from the Minister of Education on plans to standardise RSE

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| AQW 632/17-22 | Mr Gerry Carroll*(PBPA - West Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education whether his Department has any plans to standardise comprehensive and inclusive relationships and sex education (RSE).**RSE is currently covered within the statutory Northern Ireland curriculum under the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (primary) and the Learning for Life and Work (post-primary) Areas of Learning. This provides a standardised statutory minimum entitlement, which all children *must* legally receive.Beyond the statutory minimum content, schools and teachers have the flexibility to decide the topics and approaches that best suit their pupils. Providing detailed lists of compulsory subject content within a curriculum does not in any way guarantee that a subject will be well or appropriately taught. Further, in an area such as RSE, prescribed content may rapidly become out of date or new issues may emerge. I do not, therefore, intend to introduce greater legal prescription and standardisation in the RSE Curriculum at present.Rather during the past number of years, my Department has provided earmarked funding of to CCEA to support the production of RSE resources and guidance materials, particularly on a range of sensitive topics. In June 2019, CCEA launched a new online RSE Hub to facilitate easy access to these resources. This approach is aimed at enhancing the teaching of RSE in schools through providing teachers with resources and support to increase their competence and confidence in this area. The focus in 2019/20 is the development of a Curricular Progression Framework which will clearly set out for schools key issues to be considered at each Key Stage. Further funding to support this work will be provided in 2020/21. |

Update from the Minister for Communities on her department’s priorities

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| AQW 620/17-22 | Mr Andy Allen*(UUP - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister for Communities to outline her Departmental priorities for (i) 2020/21; and (ii) 2021/22.**My Departmental priorities for (i) 2020/21; and (ii) 2021/22 will be informed by ongoing discussions with Executive colleagues, senior Departmental officials and other stakeholders. I’m committed to protecting the most vulnerable in our society including children and young people, those with disabilities and low income families. I want to ensure the targeting of resources based on objective need, a focus on community engagement and embedding a human rights based approach in our policies and services.The key priorities for my Department are outlined within the New Decade, New Approach Agreement and these include:Welfare Reform Mitigation Schemes;Housing agenda including Office of National Statistics (ONS) Reclassification;Delivery of Regional and Sub Regional Stadia Programmes;Language, Culture and Arts commitments;Development of key strategies including an Anti-Poverty Strategy; andReform of liquor licensing laws and regulation of gambling. |

Update from the Minister of Education on disclosure of children’s personal data

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| AQW 607/17-22 | Mr Colin McGrath*(SDLP - South Down)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of children who have had their details passed to a third party in the United Kingdom by the Department for Education's Learning Record Service; and (ii) the types of information that has been passed to gambling companies.**It is the Department’s understanding that no actual student data has been passed to any third party by the Learning Record Service (LRS) in England other than to confirm or deny whether there is a student record for an individual on the database.A training organisation in England which had legitimate access to the LRS database used this access to facilitate the verification of details of individuals provided to them by a third party. This was in breach of their agreement and the contract with that provider has now been terminated. |

Update from the Minister of Education on the 14 to 19 policy review

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|  AQW 600/17-22 | Mr Chris Lyttle*(APNI - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education for an update on the 14 to 19 policy review.**The “*Transition of Young People into Careers (14-19) Project”* was established in January 2019 as a jointly led and funded Department of Education and Department for the Economy project.The Project has identified a number of work streams and is currently working to establish the baseline position, build an evidence base and identify the key challenges associated with the 14-19 landscape.A range of stakeholder engagement activities with the purpose of identifying challenges and building an evidence base to support the development of a draft 14-19 Strategy are underway with a range of stakeholder groups.I look forward to working with the Minister for the Economy in progressing the development of a draft 14-19 strategy in the coming months. |

Update from the Minister of Education on funding for nurture groups

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| AQW 737/17-22 | Mr Trevor Clarke*(DUP - South Antrim)* | To ask the Minister of Education whether he has plans to extend funding for nurture group provision.My Department currently provides funding for 31 Nurture Groups. In my previous tenure as Education Minister, I gave a commitment that the Department would continue to fund these particular groups until a decision on a new Nurture Programme was made. This remains the position and I will be considering this matter in due course, including the option of extending provision. |

Update from the Minister of Education on addressing period poverty

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| AQW 735/17-22 | Ms Karen Mullan*(SF - Foyle)* | **To ask the Minister of Education whether he will address the issue of period poverty amongst students by making sanitary products freely available in schools.**The Department of Education (DE) is the policy lead in this area in respect of schools however “period-poverty” is a cross-cutting issue therefore decisions regarding funding are for the NI Executive to consider.I am aware of developments in England, Wales and Scotland to provide sanitary products free of charge through a range of bodies and approaches.  Provision for all schools in Northern Ireland would be dependent on funding and my officials are considering options in this regard.  The Department has also been seeking the views of officials in the Department for Communities, Department of Health, Department for the Economy and Department of Justice on this matter.Over the past year, my Department has been working with the Education Authority to put in place a small pilot in North Belfast involving eight schools. With help from the charity Red Box, free sanitary products have been provided, to each participating school, with replenishment dependent on donations. |

Update from the Minister of Finance on a review of ALBs

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| AQW 727/17-22 | Mr Christopher Stalford*(DUP - South Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Finance to outline the process and timeframe by which his Department will undertake a review of quangos and arm's-length bodies, as contained in New Decade, New Approach.**Proposals for the implementation of the commitments and actions in the New Decade, New Approach Agreement will be brought forward by relevant Ministers in due course. |

Update from the Minister of Education on school entrance deferment

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|  | AQW 686/17-22 | Mr Chris Lyttle*(APNI - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education whether he plans to bring forward legislation to allow parents to defer their child's date of admission to compulsory education, following the outcome of the public consultation of 2014/15.**It is clear that a number parents, particularly those of summer born children or those born prematurely, feel strongly that it would be in their child’s best interests not to start school at four years of age. However, I have not come to a view on whether legislative change is the most appropriate approach. Whilst a significant amount of research has been carried out on the issue of whether a later start for summer born or premature children contributes to improved outcomes for children, there is no clear academic consensus and evidence is available on both sides of the debate. |

Update from the Minister of Education on his plans to address mental health issues in schools

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| QW 674/17-22 | Mr Doug Beattie MC*(UUP - Upper Bann)* | **To ask the Minister of Education what plans his Department has in place to address mental health issues in primary and post-primary schools.**My Department is working collaboratively with the Department of Health, the Public Health Agency and the Education Authority, to develop a Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework through a model of promotion, prevention and early intervention. |

Update from the Minister of Education on GCSE attainment

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| AQW 813/17-22 | Ms Karen Mullan*(SF - Foyle)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to detail the latest GCSE attainment level figures, broken down by (i) community background; and (ii) gender.**Information on the attainment of school leavers in 2018/19 will be available in May 2020.Tables 1 and 2 below detail the number and percentage of school leavers in 2017/18 achieving; At least 5 GCSEs at A\*-C; At least 5 GCSEs at A\*-C including English and maths; At least 5 GCSEs at A\*-G; and No GCSEs, broken down by; (i) community background; and (ii) gender.You [can see the tables here](http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/questions/writtenresults.aspx?&fd=22/01/2020&f=1&s=22&m=01/01/2020%2000:00:00) |

Update from the Minister of Education on criteria for exception teaching arrangements

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| AQW 858/17-22 | Mrs Rosemary Barton*(UUP - Fermanagh and South Tyrone)* | To ask the Minister of Education to outline the required criteria for children to qualify for Exceptional Teaching Arrangements.I have been advised by the Education Authority (EA) that a pupil may access Exceptional Teaching Arrangements (ETA) when they are clinically assessed as unwell and are likely to be absent from school for a period of no less than 20 days. The application for ETA must follow one of the pathways listed below:You [can see the table here](http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/questions/writtenresults.aspx?&fd=23/01/2020&f=1&s=22&m=01/01/2020%2000:00:00) |

Update from the Minister of Education on future of RADAR

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| AQW 841/17-22 | Miss Michelle McIlveen*(DUP - Strangford)* | **To ask the Minister of Education what steps can he take to provide support to ensure the future of the Risk Avoidance and Danger Awareness Resource Centre (Radar). *[Priority Written]***I acknowledge the value of RADAR but, given the difficult position of the education budget, I am not in a position to consider or commit funding at this time. |