NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions week ending 7th February, 2020

Update on rural proofing anti-poverty strategy

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| AQO 37/17-22 | Mr Declan McAleer*(SF - West Tyrone)* | **To ask the Minister for Communities whether rural proofing will be included in any future anti-poverty strategy.**The “New Decade, New Approach” document has detailed support for a new Programme for Government underpinned by key supporting strategies including the Anti-Poverty Strategy.The Rural Needs Act (NI) introduced by the deputy First Minister in 2016 when she was Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, provides a statutory duty on all public authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services. Indeed this is now a standard element in all policy development.By adopting a co-design, co-production approach my officials will work to develop an Anti-Poverty Strategy for consideration by the Executive and in doing so will have due regard to the social and economic needs of persons in rural areas during both its development and its implementation. |

Update on new PFG

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| AQO 11/17-22 | Mr Paul Givan*(DUP - Lagan Valley)* | **To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on when the Programme for Government will be published.**We are committed to bringing forward an outcomes based Programme for Government (PfG) that delivers real and positive change in people’s lives. Determining a way forward will be a key early priority for the Executive and we expect soon to publish details of the Executive’s agreed approach to bringing forward a new and ambitious Programme. |

Update on funding for youth work and youth centres

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| AQW 1418/17-22 | Ms Paula Bradshaw*(APNI - South Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education what proposals his Department has for a more sustainable funding system for youth work and youth centres.**The Education Authority has been developing a new funding scheme in line with the Priorities for Youth (PfY) policy commitment to replace legacy funding arrangement from the former Education & Library Boards and the Youth Council for Northern Ireland.The Education Authority (EA) is planning to launch the new funding scheme on 3 March 2020 following extensive engagement with youth sector organisations and other stakeholders. Further details are available at www.eanifunding.org.uk |

Reform of transfer tests

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| AQW 1417/17-22 | Ms Paula Bradshaw*(APNI - South Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education what actions he will take to reform the current arrangements for transfer tests.**Whilst my Department has no role in the operation or administration of the current transfer tests, I would of course wish to see a transfer test process that is as accessible and straightforward as possible for children and parents. It clearly makes sense to try to avoid pupils being put through two systems, leading to five individual exams. I understand that our selective schools are working together to examine options for a single system and this is a matter I hope to pursue further over the coming months. |

Update on provision of free sanitary products in schools

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| AQW 1405/17-22 | Mr Chris Lyttle*(APNI - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 689/17-22, (i) whether reliance on charitable donation alone for the provision of free sanitary products in schools is acceptable; and (ii) by what date will his Department have considered options for the provision of free sanitary products in all schools.**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. Given the very significant financial pressures faced by the NI Block and by the education sector in particular, I believe there is merit in keeping all options open.I expect to receive advice on potential options in respect of the provision of free sanitary products in schools by the end of March 2020. |

Update on Barnardo’s Forward Steps programme funding

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| AQW 1334/17-22 | Ms Joanne Bunting*(DUP - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Health why funding for the Barnardo's Forward Steps programme will end in April 2020; and what action he plans to take to help the families affected. *[Priority Written]***The Barnardo’s Forward Steps programme is a post-diagnostic, home based intervention programme aimed at supporting families of children with an autism diagnosis. SEHSCT previously funded this programme, and BHSCT currently has a contract with Barnardo’s but received notice on 20th September 2019 that the programme was closing. Trusts work in partnership with a range of organisations to provide services to families and children with autism, in line with existing public procurement policy. BHSCT is actively exploring alternative provision to provide support to families affected. |

Update on EA’s Languages for the Future strategy

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| AQW 1305/17-22 | Mr Doug Beattie MC*(UUP - Upper Bann)* | **To ask the Minister of Education, following the Education Authority's recommendations in Languages for the Future – Northern Ireland languages strategy, whether (i) other language teaching will be rolled out to Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2; and (ii) parents will no longer be asked to pay for languages, other than English, to be taught to their child.**The Northern Ireland Languages Strategy ‘Languages for the Future’ was published in 2012. It was developed by the Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies Northern Ireland Partnership, chaired by Professor John Gillespie at Ulster University. The strategy was not adopted for implementation by the Executive.Whilst language teaching is not compulsory at Key Stage 1 and 2, the Northern Ireland curriculum provides flexibility for primary schools to provide pupils with the opportunity to learn an additional language either during core teaching hours or as part of the school’s extracurricular provision.Many primary schools currently offer additional language opportunities. The recent British Council’s Language Trends in Northern Ireland Survey (2019) indicated that fifty-five per cent of responding primary schools offer language teaching.Publicly funded schools are not permitted to charge for education provided wholly or mainly during school hours, though schools may seek payment in relation to extracurricular activities.My Department currently provides funding in the region of £300,000 per annum specifically to support and enhance language teaching and learning in schools. This includes provision of the Confucius Institute Classroom Programme which provides Mandarin language and Chinese culture lessons to around 20,000 pupils in primary and post-primary schools across Northern Ireland; and funding for the Northern Ireland Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (NICILT) to promote languages to pupils and provide a range of professional development opportunities for teachers. |

Update on changes to the Dickson Plan

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| AQW 1304/17-22 | Mr Doug Beattie MC*(UUP - Upper Bann)* | **To ask the Minister of Education (i) whether he authorised changes to the Dickson Plan, which now has children in post-primary education completing 30% of their academic in-year testing in year 9, with the remaining 70% in-year testing in year 10, instead of the previous 100% in year 10; and (ii) will he instruct the Education Authority to revert back to the original premise of the Dickson plan, where 100% of in-year testing is conducted in year 10.**For any significant change to education provision there is a statutory process which must be followed, which involves the publication of a Development Proposal.There are currently no published proposals for changes to schools included in the Dickson Plan.Schools have the autonomy to introduce minor changes, therefore, my Department has no role in the tests administered by the junior high schools. |

Update on funding of RADAR centre

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| AQW 1294/17-22 | Mr Gordon Dunne*(DUP - North Down)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to outline any plans his Department has to support the re-establishment of the RADAR (Risk Avoidance Danger Awareness Resource) Centre.**My Department has no plans to support the re-establishment of the RADAR Centre. Given the difficult position of the education budget, I am not in a position to consider or commit funding at this time. |

Update on review of social disadvantage criteria for school admissions

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| AQW 1249/17-22 | Mr Mark Durkan*(SDLP - Foyle)* | **To ask the Minister of Education what consideration his Department has given to review the social disadvantaged criteria for school admissions, and, in particular, Universal Credit as it can unfairly penalise parents on legacy benefits such as Tax Credits.**I am aware that the socially disadvantaged criteria for pre-school admissions as currently defined in legislation needs to be revised in the context of the roll-out of Universal Credit.I am exploring the options for bringing forward amendments to the current legislation in advance of the next pre-school admissions process. |

Update on review of school types and Irish language sector

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| AQW 1183/17-22 | Mr Jim Allister*(TUV - North Antrim)* | **To ask the Minister of Education given that Appendix 2 of New Decade, New Approach notes the diversity of school types is not sustainable, will the independent fundamental review consider the ending of a separate Irish language sector. *[Priority Written]***I will give consideration to the design and delivery of the Independent Review of Education provision as articulated in New Decade, New Approach. I would intend to bring forward proposals to the Executive which would include detail on the scope of such a review and the proposed terms of reference.There is a statutory duty on my Department to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium education and that of integrated education. |

Update on the Youth Council and Priorities for Youth

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| AQW 1178/17-22 | Mr William Humphrey*(DUP - North Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education (i) for an update on the status of the Youth Council; and; (ii) an update on the progress made on implementing the Priorities for Youth.**The Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI) has not been operational since 1 April 2019 following expiry of the Term of Office of Board members and the inability to make new appointment in the absence of a Minister. I am currently considering the future role of the YCNI and intend to seek the views of the sector to inform my decision.Significant progress has been made in implementing the 2013 Priorities for Youth (PfY) policy against substantial restructuring within the youth sector, including the establishment of the Education Authority (EA). The last major policy commitment (replacement of historic legacy funding arrangements for local and regional programmes and organisations) is currently being rolled out. |

Update on streamlining the statementing process

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| AQW 1129/17-22 | Ms Joanne Bunting*(DUP - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education what actions he intends to take to streamline the statementing process.**The Department is working towards the introduction of a new Special Educational Needs (SEN) Framework, a key aspect of which is to streamline and improve the statementing process.The new draft SEN Regulations propose significant changes to the timeframes for statutory assessment from 26 to 22 weeks and seek to introduce new timescales which will be new statutory duties for the Education Authority (EA). My Department intends to launch a formal consultation on these new SEN Regulations and an associated Code of Practice in Spring 2020 and I will be most interested to hear feedback on the proposals.The Department also led a joint project to identify improvements to streamline the seeking and sharing of advice between the EA and Health and Social Care Trusts regarding the statutory assessment of children with SEN. Improvements identified through this project and the legislative changes that the Department will be consulting on, specifically the Regulations, will make a significant contribution to streamlining the process and contributing to a reduction in the timeframes for statutory assessments. |

Update on additional SEN funding

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| AQW 1106/17-22 | Mr Mark Durkan*(SDLP - Foyle)* | **To ask the Minister of Education how his Department intends to spend the £10 million allocated for Special Educational Needs.**The £10 million additional funding will assist the Education Authority to address existing in-year demand pressures in the provision of Special Education Needs (SEN), and will be allocated to these pressures as follows: Special Schools (£1.4m), SEN in Mainstream Schools (£3.2m), Pupil Support (£1.5m) and SEN related transport (£3.9m). |

Update on Dickson plan

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| AQW 1090/17-22 | Mr Doug Beattie MC*(UUP - Upper Bann)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of children in the Dickson Plan area that receive statements for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), broken down by key stage; and (ii) any plans to extend nurture group funding into high schools in the Dickson Plan area and beyond.**Based on the Annual School Census data for 2018/19, the number of pupils attending Dickson Plan schools with a statement of Special education Needs (SEN) for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) is provided in the table.

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| Key Stage 3 | 18 |
| Key Stage 4 | 9 |
| Total | 27 |

My Department currently provides funding for 31 Nurture Groups in Primary Schools. 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 on guidance on school uniform and haircuts

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| AQW 1088/17-22 | Mr Doug Beattie MC*(UUP - Upper Bann)* | **To ask the Minister of Education whether he will (i) review the practise of stopping children from attending school due to individual school policies on haircuts or uniforms; and (ii) whether he will introduce a single policy that allows schools to take action short of denying educational classes for such breaches.**The wearing of a school uniform is not governed by legislation but falls to schools to determine. The day-to-day management of schools, including any rules regarding school uniform policy, is a matter for school Principals, subject to any directions that might be given by the Board of Governors. The Department of Education has drawn up guidance for schools in relation to their school uniform policies and this is contained in Circular 2011/04 – Guidance to Schools on School Uniform Policy, issued on 30 March 2011 (re-issued 5 June 2018). As school uniform polices are a matter for individual schools the guidance provides advice only |

Update on respite facility for young people with complex needs

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| AQW 1082/17-22 | Mr Justin McNulty*(SDLP - Newry and Armagh)* | **To ask the Minister of Health for an update on proposals to provide a regional short break and respite facility for young people with complex needs. *[Priority Written]***The development of potential additional regional facilities will require a detailed needs analysis, submission of business cases and further discussion with a range of stakeholders. This is a complex area but some work has been progressed within the review of regional facilities which has considered the development of a Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit. The Health and Social Care Board have established a regional Assistant Directors group to consider the need to modernise and reform service provision for short breaks and family support. |

Update on numbers of children traveling to England and Scotland for assessment

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| AQW 1071/17-22 | Mr Gerry Carroll*(PBPA - West Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education how many children have had to travel to England and Scotland to attend Assessment and Treatment Units since 2016.**The Education Authority has not facilitated the placement of any pupil in an Assessment and Treatment Unit in England or Scotland since 2016. |

Update on health impacts of 5G

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| AQW 1017/17-22 | Mr Colin McGrath*(SDLP - South Down)* | **To ask the Minister of Health what consideration has been given, or sought, by government departments or developers to the potential impact on people’s health in relation to the roll out of 5G technology. *[Priority Written]***The Department of Health and the Public Health Agency have a memorandum of understanding with Public Health England (PHE) which includes arrangements for the provision of specialist technical advice on a range of matters, including radio frequency electro-magnetic fields (RF EMF). The PHE advice on 5G is publically available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/5g-technologies-radio-waves-and-health/5g-technologies-radio-waves-and-health and my Department will continue to rely upon this advice and to signpost interested parties to it. |

Update on DE support for schools in Foyle to improve mental health

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| AQW 981/17-22 | Mr Gary Middleton*(DUP - Foyle)* | **To ask the Minister of Education what support his Department is providing to schools in the Foyle constituency to improve mental health.**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 that will aim to enhance support for children and young people. The emphasis will be on promotion, prevention and early intervention, including how services can be augmented to support schools, and their pupils in all of our constituencies. |

Update on measure to ease pressures on Special Schools

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| AQW 962/17-22 | Mrs Dolores Kelly*(SDLP - Upper Bann)* | **To ask the Minister of Education (i) what actions his Department is taking to deal with pressures on Special Education Schools; and (ii) what support the Education Authority can provide to deal with these pressures.**What actions his Department is taking to deal with pressures on Special Education Schools.In 2019-20, my Department secured additional funding of £14.4m to address SEN related pressures in the June and September monitoring exercise, of which the Education Authority (EA) allocated £3m to Special Education Schools.A further £10m additional funding for SEN was secured through the January monitoring exercise, with £1.4m of that allocated to Special Schools.(ii) what support the Education Authority can provide to deal with these pressures.Since 2016, under the School Enhancement Programme, two special schools have had new builds; one school has a new build scheme on site and a further school is currently progressing through the design process. A further ten special schools are to advance in planning under the second call. The EA is currently working with a number of schools to identify and address accommodation pressures through the minor capital works programme.Special School enrolment figures are reviewed annually and officers from the EA work in partnership with Special School Principals and the Board of Governors, on an individual school basis, to agree the teaching and non-teaching staff requirements, in line with increasing pupil enrolment figures |

Update on welfare mitigations

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| AQW 901/17-22 | Miss Rachel Woods*(GPNI - North Down)* | **To ask the Minister for Communities what emerging mitigations she will consider as she reviews the welfare system; and whether the same annual amount, as is in the Fresh Start agreement, will continue to be allocated to Welfare Reform mitigation measures after 31 March 2020.**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.The Department has submitted bids to Department of Finance to secure the funding required to continue existing Mitigation payments beyond 31st March 2020. The bid submitted to the Department of Finance for 2020-21 differs from annual amounts in the Fresh Start agreement, as the bid is based on the latest projected caseloads and expenditure on the schemes to date. |

Update on number of children supported by Independent Guardians

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| AQW 887/17-22 | Ms Joanne Bunting*(DUP - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Health how many children have been supported by the Independent Guardians appointed under section 21 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Act, broken down by (i) age; (ii) sex; and (iii) nationality in each of the last three years.**The number of children who have been supported by the Independent Guardians appointed under section 21 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Act broken down by age, sex, and nationality is set out in Table 1 for the years 2018/19 and 2019/20. There was no Independent Guardian Service prior to 2018.**Table 1: Number of children, by age, sex, and nationality, who have been supported by the Independent Guardians appointed under section 21 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Act.**Source: HSCB; Quarterly Monitoring Return submitted by the Independent Guardian Service provider, Barnardos to the HSCB.Note: Data is based on the financial year.1 Some of the referrals were existing open, active cases to HSC Trusts prior to 2018/19.2 The information available for 2019/20 is up until 31 December 2019.3 The information for 2019/20 refers to new cases only. Some 41 ongoing cases from 2018/19 were carried over to 2019/20. |

Update on number of Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders issued

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| AQW 885/17-22 | Ms Joanne Bunting*(DUP - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Justice how many Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders have been granted under the section 11 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Act 2015.**There have been two Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders granted under section 11 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) Act 2015.**Number of Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders granted by court tier: 2015 to 2019**

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| **Court Tier** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** |
| **Magistrates Court** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Crown Court** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **2** | **0** |

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Update on criteria for children to qualify for Education Other Than at School

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| AQW 859/17-22 | Mrs Rosemary Barton*(UUP - Fermanagh and South Tyrone)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to outline the required criteria for children to qualify for Education Other Than at School.**I have been advised by the Education Authority (EA), that the required criteria for consideration of a placement in Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) are:Pupil requires a period of intensive support beyond the level of EA Support Services intervention already accessed;Risk of pupil’s school placement breaking down;Supporting a pupil to re-integrate to their registered school placement; andPupil has been expelled.When making a referral to the EA, schools are requested to identify which criteria is relevant to the needs of the pupil, outline what intervention and support strategies have been implemented and their outcomes, and detail all reasonable and purposeful measures implemented to date.All referrals must evidence parental consent to the referral for consideration of EOTAS placement and pupil consent to accessing additional support. |

Update on lessons learned from LGBT School Experiences Report

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| AQW 854/17-22 | Mr John Stewart*(UUP - East Antrim)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to outline (i) the lessons learned by his Department from the research report Post Primary School Experiences of 16-21 year old people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and/or Transgender (LGBT); and (ii) any actions he intends to improve the experience of LGBT young people in education.**The research identified issues relating to bullying as a result of sexual orientation or gender identity; concerns regarding sexual health education delivered in Post-primary schools; and low levels of recognition of LGB&T issues and the associated impact on young people’s emotional well-being.The Department and its statutory partners continue to take forward a number of actions and programmes to address bullying in schools; to promote positive behaviours; and to provide guidance and support to pupils on relationships and sexuality education, including:The iMatter Programme;The Independent Counselling Service for Schools;Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour;Funding the Northern Ireland Anti Bullying Forum;The requirement for all grant-aided schools to develop their own policy on how they will address Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) within the curriculum;The publication by the Education Authority of its guidance on Supporting Transgender Young People; andAll grant-aided schools to comply with the requirements of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016.The Children’s Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015 requires all government departments and other named public bodies, including the Education Authority, to co-operate to improve the well-being of all children and young people. This requirement has been translated into outcomes in a Children and Young People’s Strategy which I intend to bring to the Executive for consideration in the near future. The outcomes in the Strategy include respect for rights, including those of children and young people who are LGB&T.I will continue to engage with relevant stakeholders to consider the needs of LGB&T young people within the education sector, and where appropriate, more broadly. |

Update on schools guidance to enable them to support LGBT pupils

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| AQW 853/17-22 | Mr John Stewart*(UUP - East Antrim)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to outline the guidance provided to schools to enable them to support LGBT pupils.**Circular 2017/04 ‘Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools – a Guide for Schools’, is the Department’s main guidance in respect of safeguarding and child protection responsibilities in schools and contains specific information relating to gender identity issues and sexual orientation.The Department’s ‘iMatter’ Programme aims to support the entire school community to be engaged in promoting resilient emotional health for all pupils. It is delivered through a range of support services, including the Independent Counselling Service for Schools (for post primary age pupils) and also offers a suite of resources for children and young people which provide advice on coping with a range of emotional issues, including sexual identity.In October 2019 the Education Authority published Guidance for Schools, EOTAS Centres and the Youth Service on Supporting Transgender Young People. The Guidance aims to support schools and other educational settings to develop and sustain effective pastoral care systems which can accommodate and develop the social, emotional, educational, physical and spiritual needs of all pupils within the school ethos.Within the Curriculum, for a number of years, my Department has provided earmarked funding to the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment to support the production of Relationships and Sexuality Education guidance materials on teaching a range of sensitive topics, including guidance around LGBT issues. |

Update on guidelines on restraint and seclusion

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| AQW 229/17-22 | Mr Chris Lyttle*(APNI - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to outline (i) how; and (ii) when he will introduce legislative guidelines to ensure therapeutic support, rather than restraint and seclusion, for children and young people**I have asked my officials to consider the issues of restraint and seclusion for children and young people with relevant partners and to report back in due course. |

Update on childcare strategy funding

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| AQW 228/17-22 | Mr Chris Lyttle*(APNI - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to outline (i) how an appropriately funded childcare strategy will be delivered; and (ii) what provisions it will make for extended access to quality, affordable childcare**.I plan to bring an updated Childcare Strategy to my Executive colleagues for consideration and approval in due course. The Strategy will take account of the responses to the consultation undertaken in 2015, the policy priorities set by the Executive and the extended early education and care services available in other jurisdictions.A number of key policy and resourcing decisions are required to finalise the Strategy and its associated actions, not least the scope of and funding available to develop extended, affordable, responsive and high quality early education and care provision for families with children aged 3 to 4.I am not in a position to outline how the Strategy will be delivered in advance of the Executive’s consideration of the budget and resources available to deliver all the actions. |

Update on SEN statements waiting times

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| AQW 725/17-22 | Mr Christopher Stalford*(DUP - South Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education what actions his Department is taking to improve the time it takes the Education Authority to deliver statements of Special Educational Needs; and to outline the average waiting time for these statements for each of the last five years.**The Department is introducing a new Special Educational Needs (SEN) Framework, key aspects of which are to reduce the timescales associated with the statementing process and to improve co-operation between the Education Authority (EA) and Health Trusts.I intend to launch a formal consultation on the Framework in Spring 2020.The average waiting time for completion of the statutory assessment and statementing process for each of the last four\* years, as provided by the EA, is as follows:

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| **Average Waiting Time (Case Open Date to Final Statement Issued)** |
|  | **2015-16** | **2016-17** | **2017-18** | **2018-19** |
| **Weeks** | 43 | 42 | 44 | 40 |

\* 2014-15 data for the five legacy Education and Library Boards is not readily available from the EA. |

Update on provision of temporary housing accommodation

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| QW 720/17-22 | Mr George Robinson MBE*(DUP - East Londonderry)* | **To ask the Minister for Communities what plans she has to increase the provision of temporary accommodation in Limavady for people in urgent need of housing.**The NIHE has advised me that temporary accommodation information is available by local area only. Limavady is part of the Causeway local area. In the current financial year the Housing Executive have added five ‘single let’ properties in the Causeway area. ‘Single lets’ are private sector properties which are made available by the NIHE to homeless households.The Housing Executive continues to review its temporary accommodation provision requirements in Causeway and will add suitable properties to its portfolio as they become available for people in urgent need. |

Update on impact of Universal Credit two child limit

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| AQW 712/17-22 | Mr Andy Allen*(UUP - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister for Communities what assessment her Department has undertaken to examine the impact of the Universal Credit two child limit. *[Priority Written]***From 6 April 2017 the British Government introduced a limit on support for a maximum of two children. Families are not able to claim a child element for a third or subsequent child born on or after 6 April 2017for whom a person is responsible. There are a number of exceptions to the two child limit, which are the same across the UK.As part of the Summer Budget 2015 (https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dsd/nisra-summer-budget-2015.pdf ) my Department forecast the potential impact on families from limiting the per child element of both Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit to two children (for new births from 6 April 2017) to be £62m by 2019/20. Please note, subsequent to these forecasts, Universal Credit was delayed and was not fully rolled out in all offices in NI until the end of December 2018.In the coming weeks, I will be considering this matter as part of the Welfare Reform Composite Evaluation Framework to measure the impact of the implementation of Welfare Reform across NI society. |

Update on Welfare Reform working group

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| AQW 709/17-22 | Mr Andy Allen*(UUP - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister for Communities whether she intends to convene a new welfare reform working group to examine how any welfare mitigation package can be strengthened.**I am fully committed to delivering the review of the welfare mitigation measures as set out in the New Decade, New Approach Deal.Since becoming Minister for Communities one of my priorities has been to engage with a number of key stakeholders on the future of the welfare mitigations. I have already met with the NI Human Rights Commission and I will shortly be meeting with representatives of the Cliff Edge NI coalition, Professor Eileen Evason and Kevin Higgins (AdviceNI). This programme of engagement will be invaluable in informing how the review of the welfare mitigation measures should be best taken forward. |

Update on impact of two-child limit

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| AQW 708/17-22 | Mr Andy Allen*(UUP - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister for Communities, in light of the joint HOC Work and Pensions and the NI Affairs Committees inquiry, which recommends halting the implementation of the two-child limit in Northern Ireland and to reimburse any families who have been affected thus far, pending a full investigation into its financial impact on families with children and the potential discrimination against those with larger families and poorer communities, what engagement her Department has had with HM Government about halting the two child limit.**From April 2017 the British Government introduced a limit on support for a maximum of two children. This was implemented in NI, in line with the principle of parity on social security and the Fresh Start Agreement.I am aware of the Joint House of Commons Work and Pensions and the NI Affairs Committee recommendation on this issue and will be considering the matter as part of my ongoing review of the impact of welfare reform here. I will be taking this forward over the coming weeks. |

Update on school buses safety for children and young people

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| AQW 679/17-22 | Mr Declan McAleer*(SF - West Tyrone)* | **To ask the Minister for Infrastructure whether he would consider introducing legislation to prohibit vehicles from passing stationary school buses when children are being collected and dropped off.**I understand the importance of protecting children using school buses and my Department promotes safety around school buses through messaging on its social media channels: Share the Road to Zero website, Facebook and Twitter accounts. These messages inform drivers how they should adapt their driving behaviours when in the vicinity of a school bus which is stopping, or has stopped, to let children on and off. They also inform children and young people about how they can help keep themselves safe when they are around school buses. Free road safety teaching resources are also provided to schools. These resources are designed to be used by teachers to teach and embed good behaviours with pupils both on and around school buses.In my first few weeks in office I will be reviewing the range of pressures that I have inherited and will be determining my approach based on my key priorities and will develop a legislative programme accordingly. Any new legislative measures, where appropriate, will be developed in consultation with the Minister for Education |

Update on actions to improve mental health

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| AQW 648/17-22 | Mr Gordon Dunne*(DUP - North Down)* | **To ask the Minister of Health what action has been taken to improve mental health; and what future plans are in place to improve mental health support services.**Much work has been undertaken in recent years to improve mental health services. For example, a new state-of-the-art Acute Mental Health Inpatient Unit on the Belfast City Hospital site opened in June 2019; initiatives such as the Multi Agency Triage Team, currently operating in the Belfast and South Eastern HSC Trust areas, ensures the most appropriate care possible is provided in the community when concerns about mental wellbeing are reported to PSNI and NIAS; and developments in the community, such as primary care multi-disciplinary teams, with mental health practitioners based in GP practices, will help provide better mental health services at this point of first interaction.The roll out of the multi-disciplinary team model will continue in 20/21 as per the commitment in ‘New Decade, New Approach’. This will see over a third of GP practices and their patient populations covered by the model.However, I fully recognise that much more needs to be done to improve mental health. That is why I have made mental health one of my top priorities for my tenure as Minister.As an Executive we have committed to publishing a Mental Health Action Plan within two months. This will provide the foundation for the development of a new Mental Health Strategy by the end of the year, which will set the strategic direction for service development and delivery for the next decade. |

Update on delivery of a youth assembly

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| AQW 602/17-22 | Mr Chris Lyttle*(APNI - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the delivery of a youth assembly.**I am aware that you asked a question about the development of a youth assembly in June 2015 (AQW 47650/11-15). In its response to your question the Commission’s responded that, due to financial constraints, the Assembly had been unable to proceed with plans to establish a Youth Assembly. Consequently, rather than rehearse the full history prior to 2015, I thought it might be most helpful to bring you up to date on more recent developments.Following the Assembly elections in 2017, the Assembly Commission’s immediate priorities were around issues arising from the wider political situation. However, the Commission did pursue a range of other activities to progress engagement with young people. For example, Speaker Newton presided over a Northern Ireland Youth Forum debate in the Chamber in February 2018. In 2019 Speaker Newton held a day-long event, including a debate in the Chamber, for young women aged between 16 and 18 to mark International Women’s Day.Following the Youth Forum event in February 2018, Speaker Newton asked that an item be placed on the agenda for the Commission’s next meeting to consider the potential for addressing the issue of a youth assembly. The Commission duly discussed the matter on 5 March 2018 and decided that officials should prepare an options paper in relation to a youth assembly.Officials duly undertook that work, which included discussions with more than 20 local stakeholder groups, as well as colleagues from other jurisdictions with experience of developing and operating representative youth bodies. In addition, considerable engagement was undertaken with the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Koulla Yiasouma, and all of those discussions helped inform and shape the options paper, which was presented to the Commission’s meeting on 24 June 2019.After consideration, the Commission’s preferred option was for a Commission-supported model of a youth assembly and that this should make clear the independence of the youth assembly in setting its own agenda. The Commission asked that a more detailed paper be produced to develop that option.Further discussions with stakeholder groups have been held and the Children’s Commissioner has again been central to informing that paper, which, I am advised, is nearing completion and I am hopeful that it will be ready for consideration at one of the new Commission’s early meetings. Further engagement with young people, the Commissioner and other key stakeholders will take place following this to create a final shape for the youth assembly model.I hope you find the above information helpful. |

Update on implementation of strategy to tackle paramilitarism

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| AQW 503/17-22 | Ms Paula Bradshaw*(APNI - South Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Justice to outline (i) what timescale they have for the implementation of a strategy to tackle all forms of paramilitarism and gangsterism; and (ii) how they will ensure victims of intimidation remain in their homes while the perpetrators are dealt with by the PSNI.**The Executive is currently implementing its Action Plan to Tackle Paramilitary Activity, Criminality, and Organised Crime. The Action Plan runs from 2016 to 2021 and includes commitments that are being delivered by government departments, statutory agencies and a wide range of delivery partners, including in the voluntary and community sector. The Action Plan has an associated funding allocation of £50m, which is jointly provided by HM Treasury and NI Executive funds.Many of the issues involved are long-term and complex in nature, and will take time to address in full. In the near future, the Executive will be considering how to refresh the Action Plan in light of the learning generated through implementing the existing commitments.My officials are also preparing a consultation on a draft Organised Crime Strategy for Northern Ireland with the overarching aim to protect individuals, communities and businesses from organised crime. The strategy will complement work under the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme.Decisions regarding the relocation of victims of intimidation are an operational matter for the PSNI and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. You may therefore wish to direct your question directly to those organisations |

Update on implementation of Gillian recommendations

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| AQW 481/17-22 | Mr Doug Beattie MC*(UUP - Upper Bann)* | **To ask the Minister of Justice to outline the timeframe for the implementation of the recommendations arising from Sir John Gillen's report into the law and procedures in serious sexual offences in Northern Ireland.**Implementation of the Gillen Review into the law and procedures in serious sexual offences is included in New Decade, New Approach and is a key priority for my Department.The Department has been working with partners to finalise an impactful and phased implementation plan for the current mandate and beyond, which focuses efforts around what has the greatest impact on complainants going through the system, including children. |

Update on plans for a single equality bill

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| AQW 264/17-22 | Mr Andrew Muir*(APNI - North Down)* | **To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the plans that are in place to bring forward a single equality bill in order to harmonise and simplify legislative equality protections whilst ensuring they are fit for purpose.**There has been no agreement on a single Equality Bill; however, a number of statutes have been enacted here over the last decades which provide protection against discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, race, religion and political opinion, sex and sexual orientation. |

Update on childcare strategy

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| AQW 228/17-22 | Mr Chris Lyttle*(APNI - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to outline (i) how an appropriately funded childcare strategy will be delivered; and (ii) what provisions it will make for extended access to quality, affordable childcare.**I plan to bring an updated Childcare Strategy to my Executive colleagues for consideration and approval in due course. The Strategy will take account of the responses to the consultation undertaken in 2015, the policy priorities set by the Executive and the extended early education and care services available in other jurisdictions.A number of key policy and resourcing decisions are required to finalise the Strategy and its associated actions, not least the scope of and funding available to develop extended, affordable, responsive and high quality early education and care provision for families with children aged 3 to 4.I am not in a position to outline how the Strategy will be delivered in advance of the Executive’s consideration of the budget and resources available to deliver all the actions. |