NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions week ending 28th February, 2020

Update on new abortion regulations

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| AQO 218/17-22 | Miss Rachel Woods*(GPNI - North Down)* | **To ask the Minister of Health for an update on the implementation of the new regulations on abortion due to come into effect by 31st March 2020.**Section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019 provided for the repeal, on 22 October 2019, of sections 58 and 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act. These were the main provisions prohibiting abortion in Northern Ireland.The Act requires the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, by 31 March 2020, to make whatever changes to the law are necessary to give effect to the recommendations of the March 2018 Report by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.A consultation on the abortion proposals ended on 16 December 2019 and the UK Government is currently working on draft Regulations.The exact content of the Regulations is a matter for the Secretary of State. |

Update on funding for cross-border shared education projects

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| AQO 207/17-22 | Ms Jemma Dolan*(SF - Fermanagh and South Tyrone)* | **To ask the Minister of Education what assurance he can give that the level of funding available for cross-border shared education projects will be maintained.**The Peace IV Programme currently provides funding for Shared Education partnerships within Northern Ireland, within the border counties of Ireland, and cross-border. This funding will continue until the end of the 2021-22 academic year, i.e. June 2022.The Special EU Programmes Body is currently leading on development of the cross-border PEACE Plus Programme, for the 2021-2027 period,with input from Government Departments (North and South) and other stakeholders. A proposal for Shared Education is under consideration for inclusion in the programme. |

Update on provision of mental health services in schools

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| AQO 204/17-22 | Mr Daniel McCrossan*(SDLP - West Tyrone)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to outline the action he is taking to increase the provision of mental health services in schools.**My Department is working collaboratively with the Department of Health, the Public Health Agency, the Health and Social Care Board and the Education Authority, to develop an Emotional 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. |

Update on review of Pre-school provision admissions criteria

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| AQO 203/17-22 | Ms Joanne Bunting*(DUP - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education whether he will review the Pre-School provision admissions criteria, with the view to helping working parents.**I appreciate the pressures which working parents face, particularly those on lower incomes and I am keen to do all that I can to support them.Pre-school education, whilst non-compulsory, is an important phase of early education, and as such, my Department makes a funded pre-school education place available for every child in their pre-school year whose parents want it.All admissions criteria are set by pre-school providers, taking into account guidance provided by the Department however legislation requires that the top criterion for each provider prioritises children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. |

Update on the Childcare Strategy

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| AQO 202/17-22 | Ms Paula Bradley*(DUP - North Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education for an update on the Childcare Strategy.**The Childcare Strategy aims to promote parental employment and improve child development. The range of actions necessary to deliver these dual aims requires Executive approval.I plan to bring an updated Childcare Strategy to my Executive colleagues for consideration in due course. The revised Strategy will take account of the responses to the consultation undertaken in 2015, advances in childcare across other jurisdictions and the policy priorities for supporting families reaffirmed in ‘New Decade, New Approach’. This includes developing arrangements to deliver, extended, affordable, responsive and high quality early education and care provision for families with children aged 3-4.There are some key policy and resourcing decisions needed before the Strategy can be published. I will be considering the proposed scope of an extended offer, including potential options for implementing a combination of funded pre-school education and childcare hours. I will also be considering any eligibility requirements as well as assessing the level of additional investment required.In addition to an extended offer for 3-4 year olds, the Strategy has wider aspirations for childcare services for children aged 0-14. I plan to meet with a range of early education and childcare stakeholders in relation to progressing this important issue. I want to stress however, that progressing to publication of the Strategy, to include an extended offer, is predicated on securing the resources required.I hope to be in a position to set out a definitive timescale for publication following the Executive’s consideration of the budget and resources available to deliver all the actions. |

Update on progress of schools transforming to integrated status

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| AQO 201/17-22 | Mr Trevor Lunn*(APNI - Lagan Valley)* | **To ask the Minister of Education for his assessment of the progress made by schools that have transformed or are in the process of transformation to integrated status.**There are currently 65 integrated schools in Northern Ireland.  To date 25 schools have, in accordance with the relevant legislation, successfully transformed to integrated status.  A further 9 schools have begun the legal process to transform to an integrated school, which requires a ballot of parents to determine the level of support for transformation.  Of those 9 schools, 7 have held a successful Parental Ballot in favour of transformation to integrated status and the remaining 2 are in the process of arranging a Parental Ballot.All 25 schools that have transformed have legally transformed to acquire Controlled Integrated status. |

Update on expansion of Irish medium post primary education

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| AQO 200/17-22 | Mr Gerry Carroll*(PBPA - West Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education whether he plans to expand the capacity at Coláiste Feirste, to address increasing demand for Irish-medium post-primary education.**On 23 January 2020 the Education Authority published Development Proposal 590 on behalf of the Board of Governors of Coláiste Feirste. This proposes an increase in the school’s approved admissions and enrolment numbers in order to meet assessed demand for post-primary Irish-medium education. DP 590 is supported by a Case for Change, published on the Department’s website.Expressions of support or opposition to this DP may be sent to the Department until 23 March 2020. Thereafter officials within my Department will collate all pertinent evidence to inform my decision. Until I see that evidence I will not be expressing a view on whether the DP should be approved. |

Update on people with SEN accessing higher education

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| AQO 173/17-22 | Mr Robbie Butler*(UUP - Lagan Valley)* | **To ask the Minister for the Economy how her Department is ensuring that there are no barriers to people with Special Educational Needs in accessing higher education.**Under the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 a school is required to identify the needs of children and young people. After children and young people leave compulsory education they must self-declare their needs or disabilities to higher education institutions.My Department has identified disability as an under-represented group in Higher Education. Higher education institutions wishing to charge more than the basic tuition fee for any course must set targets for the enrolment of disabled students. They must spend a minimum of 10% of the additional fee income per annum on widening participation activities and programmes, including financial support, targeted at under-represented groups, including disabled. The Department also pays the higher education institutions a widening participation premium for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and a widening access premium for students with disabilities.Higher education institutions have flexibility to determine what measures to introduce but a number of providers have bursaries available for disabled students and have a number of non-financial support measures in place.Students who require assistance with their educational needs or disabilities can also use the Disabled Students’ Allowance to pay for specialist equipment and non-medical helpers to offer support such as note taking, proofreading and specialist one to one study skills support. Students who qualify for the allowance can also claim for travel costs based on the difference between public transport costs from their residence to place of study and return, and the costs of the alternative arrangements. |

Update on funding per pupil in the integrated sector

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| AQW 2448/17-22 | Mr Jim Allister*(TUV - North Antrim)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to detail the level of funding per pupil in the integrated sector. *[Priority Written]***The level of funding per pupil in 2019-20, distributed through the Common Funding Formula (CFF) in the integrated sector, is reflected in the table below.

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| **Sector** | **2019-20 Per Pupil Funding through the CFF\*****£** |
| Grant-maintained integrated (GMI)\*\* | 4,152 |
| Controlled integrated | 3,669 |

*\* Data source: CFF 2019-20, which* *included funding to mitigate the increase in Teachers’ Employer’s Superannuation costs effective from 1 April 2019.**\*\* Funding provided to GMI schools through the CFF will be higher than that for Controlled Integrated schools, as the former includes funding for Administration Costs and Landlord Maintenance, the costs of which are met by the Education Authority for all controlled schools.*The Department is unable to disaggregate all funding (i.e. funding outside of the CFF) on a per pupil basis |

Update on building handbook for special schools

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| AQW 2356/17-22 | Mr Chris Lyttle*(APNI - East Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education why there is no buildings handbook for special schools.**While there is not a specific Building Handbook for Special Schools in Northern Ireland, the Department uses the UK Department of Education Building Bulletin 102 – “*Designing for Disabled Children and Children with Special Educational Needs (Guidance for mainstream and special schools)*” in planning and designing accommodation.This bulletin serves as the briefing document for planning building projects for children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and disabilities in mainstream schools; resourced provision and designated units within mainstream schools; special schools; as well as outreach, support and training accommodation.The design of special schools requires consideration of a range of sometimes complex accommodation requirements which is not best served by an overly prescriptive schedule of accommodation. In practice special schools are bespoke designs which are arrived at following full stakeholder involvement.Although consideration had been given by DE to developing a DE Special Educational Needs Handbook it was concluded that, given the relatively small number of special schools and the wide range of differing needs of this group of children, it was not the best use of resources to invest in producing a Handbook that would be unlikely to better the content of Building Bulletin 102. |

Update on Children’s Welfare office vacancies

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| AQW 2203/17-22 | Ms Paula Bradshaw*(APNI - South Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education how many vacancies currently exist in the Children’s Welfare office.**There are currently 4.6 (full time equivalent) vacancies for Education Welfare Officers in the Education Welfare Service. |

Update on young carers in the education system

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| AQW 2047/17-22 | Ms Paula Bradshaw*(APNI - South Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education what proposals he will bring forward to recognise young carers in the education system.**The Children and Young People’s Strategy provides the strategic framework for all departments (within the remit of their functions) to improve the well-being of children and young people across eight outcomes. I hope to bring the strategy to the Executive for consideration and adoption shortly. Following the adoption of the strategy, a cross-departmental Delivery Plan will be developed which will set out the actions that departments will take to improve children’s well-being and deliver the outcomes in the strategy.Young carers were identified during consultation on the strategy as a particular group of young people who should be considered an area of greatest focus when departments are determining what actions they intend to take to deliver the strategy. The strategy identifies that children and young people with caring responsibilities may have limited opportunity to have a break from those responsibilities and may also need support to fully undertake their education.You may also wish to note that the Education Authority (EA), following its participation in the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership group on Young Carers, has developed a guide for schools entitled ‘Supporting Young Carers in School: An Introduction for Primary and Secondary School Staff’, which may be found on the EA website at https://www.eani.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/Supporting-Young-Carers-In-Schools-Booklet-Final.pdf |

Update on child survey results

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| AQW 1971/17-22 | Ms Paula Bradshaw*(APNI - South Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to detail (i) how child survey results carried out within schools are audited; (ii) what protection exists from later alteration; and (iii) what legislation currently applies to this**.Statisticians in the Department’s Analytical Survey Unit (ASU) are responsible for collecting, processing and validating a wide range of data from schools and publishing the results of these data collections in statistical bulletins. These statistics are designated as ‘Official Statistics’ or ‘National Statistics’ which means they are produced in compliance with the pillars, principles and practices set out in the UK Statistics Authority’s Code of Practice for Statistics. Compliance with the Code gives users of statistics and citizens confidence that published government statistics are of public value, are high quality and are produced by people and organisations that are worthy of trust.The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. The OSR provide independent regulation of all official statistics produced in the UK. They set the standards in the Code of Practice for Statistics that producers of government statistics must meet and they ensure that they uphold these standards by conducting assessments against the Code. Those which meet the standards are given National Statistics status, indicating that they meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value.As well as complying with the Code of Practice for Statistics, all of the Department’s Official and National Statistics are produced and published in accordance with specified Departmental statistical statements and policies. One of these is a Revisions policy which sets out the intention to be open and transparent about any revisions made to Official or National Statistics and to ensure that users of statistics have easy access to comprehensive information about those revisions. The Revisions policy is available athttps://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Revisions%20policy.pdfThe official authority of DE is contained in the legislation referenced below:The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 Article 37 provides that the Education Authority (EA) (formerly Education and Library Boards) and schools shall make such reports and returns and give such information to the Department as the Department may reasonably require for the purposes of its functions under any statutory provision.The statutory provisions providing the duties of the Department are contained in the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989. Article 3b places a duty on the Department to promote the education of the people of Northern Ireland and secure the effective execution by EA (former ELBs) and other bodies of the Department’s policy in relation to the provision of the education service.It shall be the duty of the Department -(a) to promote the education of the people of Northern Ireland;(b) to secure the effective execution by boards and other bodies on which or persons on whom powers are conferred or duties imposed under the Education Orders of the Department's policy in relation to the provision of the education service. |

Update on Dickson plan

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| AQW 1948/17-22 | Mr Doug Beattie MC*(UUP - Upper Bann)* | **To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 1089/17-22, whether (i) he believes that allowing academic in-year testing at the age of 13 is in keeping with the Dickson Plan; and (ii) does he believe this constitutes a significant change to the Dickson plan, where academic selection is postponed to the age of 14 and over.**The Dickson Plan system sees children transferring to Junior High Schools at Year 8 without the use of academic selection. Children transfer again at Year 11 and at this stage some children are selected for admission by means of academic selection.Were a school to cease the use of academic selection, or conversely to commence its use, this would constitute a significant change and would require the publication of a Development Proposal to that effect.As the system of transfer is unregulated, however, the means and timing of testing administered by the Junior High Schools is a matter for individual Boards of Governors and not one in which my Department can intervene.I do however want to assure people locally of my continued support and assurance of the continuation of the Dickson Plan system. |

Update on programmes to improve pupils mental health and resilience

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| AQW 1945/17-22 | Mr Justin McNulty*(SDLP - Newry and Armagh)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to detail how his Department assesses and measures the success of programmes being delivered in (i) primary schools; and (ii) post-primary schools that seek to improve the mental health and resilience of pupils.**There are many programmes being accessed by our schools related to mental health and resilience though given the delegation of budgets schools often engage organisations directly to support the mental health and resilience of their pupils.From a Departmental perspective I can confirming the following relevant programmes to illustrate the support provided:**iMatter ‘Optimising Achievement Coaching Model for Principals’** – this is being delivered in both primary and post primary and includes both pre and post programme evaluations to identify measurable change in behaviours, practices, knowledge of the Principal and more widespread collaborative, reflective practice evident throughout the school.Many schools in the **Extended Schools programme** are using this funding to provide emotional health and wellbeing support, including counselling. Such schools assess the impact of the programme in their school, and report the outcome to the Education Authority in the form of an annual report.In addition to the work in schools, the EA Youth Service, in partnership with the Public Health Agency, has developed the **Facilitating Life and Resilience Education (FLARE) programme**. The aim is to support young people to build internal reserves of confidence, resilience and positive aspirations to promote mental health and wellbeing. FLARE is measured using the Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (CORE) tool. CORE 10 is a young person specific adaptation and not only serves to measure change in risk indicators across participation but also can be used as a risk assessment to indicate risks that may require immediate and professional support.**Curriculum Sports Programme –**the Irish Football Association (IFA) and Ulster Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) deliver this in primary schools.  In 2019/20, the Sports Programme will provide support, information, advice and resources to schools in promoting young people’s mental health and wellbeing by providing 3,000 sessions that educate pupils about sustaining health, growth and wellbeing. It is monitored on an ongoing basis with our delivery partners to ensure it meets its targets within budget and delivers value for money. |

Update on any new programmes to improve pupil mental health

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| AQW 1943/17-22 | Mr Justin McNulty*(SDLP - Newry and Armagh)* | **To ask the Minister of Education to detail any new programmes or initiatives being considered for (i) primary schools; and (ii) post-primary schools that will seek to improve the mental health and resilience of pupils.**My Department is working collaboratively with the Department of Health, the Public Health Agency, the Health and Social Care Board and the Education Authority to develop an Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework that will aim to enhance support for children and young people in primary and post-primary schools. The emphasis will be on promotion, prevention and early intervention, including how services can be augmented to support schools, and their pupils.The Framework is still under development and the timeframe for implementation including new programmes or initiatives will be subject to additional resources being made available. |

Update on staff involved in statutory assessments

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| AQW 1928/17-22 | Mr Paul Givan*(DUP - Lagan Valley)* | **To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 1289/17-22, how many Education Authority staff are required during the course of an individual statutory assessment.**The number of Education Authority (EA) staff required during the course of an individual statutory assessment varies depending on the individual child’s special educational needs.Within the EA, there are a team of staff who support the statutory assessment process, including Educational Psychologists and staff from the EA’s Support Services, e.g. Behaviour Support Team, Autism Advisory and Intervention Service, Literacy Support Service, Sensory Support Service, and Early Years Service.In addition, staff within EA’s Special Education Statutory Operations are responsible for overseeing the completion of the statutory assessment process from receipt of referral to finalisation of a Statement of Special Educational Needs where appropriate |

Update on number of children waiting beyond 26 weeks

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| AQW 1927/17-22 | Mr Paul Givan*(DUP - Lagan Valley)* | **To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 1289/17-22, how many children have been waiting beyond 26 weeks for a statutory assessment.**Of the 2,108 children who are currently undergoing statutory assessment, 944 (44.8%) are waiting in excess of 26 weeks. Of the 944 children, 445 (47.1%) have a valid exception recorded against them. |

Update on suicide prevention and mental health services

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| QW 1846/17-22 | Miss Rachel Woods*(GPNI - North Down)* | **To ask the Minister of Health, following his statement on 6 February 2020 on suicide prevention and mental health services, (i) for an update on the work of the Multi Agency Triage Team (MATT); (ii) how many referrals have been received by MATT, broken down by (a) age; and (b) postcode; and (iii) whether he intends to (a) roll out the pilot scheme across Northern Ireland; and (b) extend access to the pilot scheme for those under 18 years old.**The Multi Agency Triage Team (MATT) is a collaborative project which involves two Police Officers, a Community Mental Health Practitioner and a Paramedic working together to respond to people with mental health problems, aged 18 and over, who have accessed the 999 system.MATT has been operational in the South Eastern HSC Trust area from July 2018. The pilot was expanded into Belfast HSC Trust area from August 2019. The service is operational between the hours of 7pm to 7am on a Friday and Saturday.There have been 388 referrals to MATT between July 2018 and December 2019. Due to GDPR requirements, age and postcode data is not able to be provided.A project evaluation is currently being developed and a business case being prepared which will contain a number of options on the future format of MATT. Options including the potential rollout across Northern Ireland and the implications of extending this service to under 18s will also be explored within this paper. |

Update on funding to youth mental health services

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| AQW 1845/17-22 | Miss Rachel Woods*(GPNI - North Down)* | **To ask the Minister of Health what proportion of his Department’s budget is allocated to youth mental health services; and for a breakdown of how funding allocated to youth mental health services is spent.**In 2019/20, my Department allocated £22,008m of its opening budget to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. This is approximately broken down as follows:

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| **Indicative investment in CAMHS 2019/20** | **Regional Total** |
| **Step- 2 – Early Intervention** | **£1.560m** |
| **Step- 3 – Core CAMHS** | **£8.940m** |
| **Crisis and Home Treatment Teams** | **£2.795m** |
| **Eating Disorders Teams** | **£0.640m** |
| **Addiction Services** | **£0.370m** |
| **Regional Inpatient Unit** | **£6.560m** |
| **Family Trauma Centre** | **£0.560m** |
| **Gender Identity** | **£0.120m** |
| **Forensic CAMHS Services** | **£0.195m** |
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| **Regional recurrent investment for CAMHS training in psychological therapies** | **£0.050m** |
| **Demography and Inescapable Pressures (from the Confidence and Supply £10m Mental Health funding)** | **£0.352m** |
| **Non-recurrent investment under Transformation funding for CAMHS** | **£0.666m** |
| **Total Indicative Investment in CAMHS 2019/20** | **£22.808** |
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This table does not include investments made by the Public Health Agency in a wide range of children’s services, such as family support services, safeguarding and primary care services. |

Update on Child Death Overview Panel

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| AQW 1836/17-22 | Ms Paula Bradshaw*(APNI - South Belfast)* | **To ask the Minister of Health for an update on the development of a Child Death Overview Panel, following on from Recommendation 88 of the Inquiry into Hyponatraemia-related Deaths.**Work to develop proposals for child death review arrangements and the establishment of a Child Death Overview Panel in Northern Ireland has been undertaken. That work took account of the relevant recommendations from the independent review of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland in 2016, and Recommendation 88 of the Independent Inquiry into Hyponatraemia-related Deaths. It also took account of developments in other parts of the UK, where child death review arrangements have been subject to review and revision in recent years. Further work is necessary to ensure that an arrangement is implemented which maximises the learning from children’s deaths in Northern Ireland and builds on the strength of existing review processes. |

Update on funding to reduce waiting times

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| AQW 1815/17-22 | Mr Daniel McCrossan*(SDLP - West Tyrone)* | **To ask the Minister of Health to detail the (i) total amount of additional funding for reducing waiting times; and (ii) planned spend in each Health and Social Care Trust.**Additional funding to tackle waiting lists has not yet been confirmed. The amount of investment for each Trust will be agreed based on the funding envelope and capacity available at a local leve |