

Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

Friday 25 May 2012

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to arrive not later than two weeks after publication of this report.

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Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 25 May 2012

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Commission for Victims and Survivors

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) whether the serving Commissioners of the Commission for Victims and Survivors will be offered a four year extension, which is an option within their current contracts; and (ii) if not, what is the future of the Commission. [R]

(AQW 8984/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): The term of the current Commissioners comes to an end on 1 June 2012. A recruitment process is underway to appoint a new Commissioner(s). We are committed to there being an effective independent voice for Victims and Survivors.

Governance Review into Procurement

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) who was awarded the contract, around 2010, with the Community Relations Council (CRC) to conduct the governance review into procurement; and (ii) whether any staff member from the CRC declared an interest prior to the contract being awarded.

(AQW 10635/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: In 2009/10, the Community Relations Council (CRC) undertook a governance review of Funded Groups, including their procurement arrangements. The contract was awarded to FGS McClure Watters. During the evaluation of tenders, a CRC staff member declared a conflict of interest and was not involved in scoring or making a decision on the bid.

Opening Ceremony of the Peace Bridge in Derry

Mr P Ramsey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many companies tendered for services for the opening ceremony of the Peace Bridge in Derry, including the name of the companies and the costs quoted.

(AQW 10896/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Peace Bridge was officially opened on 25 June 2011 and to mark this historic occasion, a weekend of events was organised to celebrate this new amenity. A business case was developed by Ilex and the preferred option identified was to engage a specialist event management team to produce and manage the opening event.

Nine companies were invited to tender for the event management contract. Two companies tendered. As a result of the tender process, the contract to manage the opening event was awarded to Eventor. The costs quoted were £28,368. Eventor also managed procurement and tenders for the event.

Four invitations to tender were sent for the position of Master of Ceremonies. Three tenders were received. As a result of the tender process, the contracts were awarded to Teresa Craig and Wendy Austin. The costs quoted were £500 and Nil, respectively.

Four invitations to tender were sent for choir and musicians for the opening event. Four tenders were subsequently received. As a result of the tender process, the contract was awarded to City of Derry Civic Choirs/Donal Doherty. The costs quoted were £6,000.

Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre at the Maze/Long Kesh Site

Mr Elliott asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister who will develop and decide on the description of history to be used in relation to the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre at the Maze/Long Kesh site.

(AQW 11055/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Plans for the work strands of the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre have not yet been determined. However, we can confirm that there will be extensive engagement with stakeholder groups to ensure that the work and content of the centre is approached sensitively.

The Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre will be a unique facility promoting international exchange, house research study and academic activities. It will also include the development of a modern archiving facility and a shared space for visitor access, performance events and exhibitions.

We will ensure that the Centre will be used solely for the purposes intended.

Cost of Visit to the Middle East and India

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide a breakdown of the cost of their recent official visit to the Middle East and India.

(AQW 11122/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We are not yet in a position to provide all the information requested as we have still to receive some of the invoices associated with our visit to Abu Dhabi and India.

North West Gateway Initiative

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the (i) the financial commitments; and (ii) the financial contributions made to date by the NI Executive and the Republic of Ireland to the North West Gateway Initiative.

(AQW 11158/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The North West Gateway Initiative (NWGI) has no dedicated funding.

Child Poverty

Mrs Overend asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) whether they intend to introduce Northern Ireland specific targets in relation to child poverty; and (ii) whether such targets would be set at a lower percentage than the targets contained in the Child Poverty Act.

(AQW 11379/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: There are currently no plans to introduce Northern Ireland specific targets or to lower our targets.

Consultation Responses Received on the Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) how many consultation responses their Department received on the draft Programme for Government 2011-2015, broken down by the recurrent themes and concerns that emerged in the responses; and (ii) how the high levels of public support for specific recommendations, and concerns raised that there was no commitment to a NI Climate Change Act, Marine Bill or an expansion of funding for agri-environment schemes, were considered for inclusion in the final Programme for Government 2011-2015.

(AQW 11387/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We received 432 written responses to the 2011-15 Programme for Government consultation exercise, many of which were extremely detailed and wide-ranging. The consideration of all responses was set against the five Programme for Government Priorities established by the Executive.

The inclusion, and delivery, of particular thematic outcomes – including commitments to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions and halting biodiversity loss – are clearly supported by a wide range of policies, plans and legislation which effectively form the building blocks upon which the Programme for Government commitments are constructed. Examples of these include: the Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies; the Strategic Energy Framework; Salmon and Eel Management Plans; Greenhouse Gas Emissions Action Plan; Climate Change Adaptation Programme; the Air Quality Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy.

The Executive has stated that Programme for Government will be supported by a legislative programme that complements its delivery objectives. The responsibility for doing so lies with individual departments.

People with a Disability on Work Placements

Lord Morrow asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they will introduce legislation to ensure that people with a disability, who are working on a placement for no salary, are not discriminated against by an employer when salaried posts become available, particularly those people who have been on placement for more than six months.

(AQW 11468/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We are currently considering the options for legislative reform. However, we continue to legislate to meet our commitments under Programme for Government, EU obligations, case law requirements and emerging issues.

As part of our consultation on a new disability strategy, we have invited consultees to give us their views on the need for further legislation to address the needs of disabled people. Consultation will close on 15 August 2012 and the Executive will consider responses after the summer recess.

OFMDFM: Legislation

Mr Gardiner asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what legislation they intend to bring before the Assembly prior to the summer recess.

(AQO 1929/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We intend to introduce legislation before the Summer recess to confer statutory powers on the Inquiry and Investigation into Historical Institutional Abuse. This will give the investigation and inquiry panel the necessary powers to compel both people and documents.

Following the debate on the DEL Committee's Report, on Tuesday 15 May, we will be in a position to make final decisions on the redistribution of DEL's functions. We also propose, therefore, to introduce the necessary legislation for the dissolution of DEL before the recess.

To assist the Assembly in its forward planning, we also intend to advise the Assembly of all legislative proposals which Executive Ministers intend to bring forward in the 2012-13 session.

Report from the New Policy Institute on Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Northern Ireland

Mr Lunn asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the recent report from the New Policy Institute on Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Northern Ireland.

(AQO 1930/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We welcome the publication of the recent research report by the New Policy Institute, commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), entitled “Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion Northern Ireland”.

Junior Minister Anderson and Junior Minister Bell attended and spoke at the launch of the report on Wednesday 2 May in Belfast.

Very shortly, the Executive will publish its own report on the first year of our work to eradicate child poverty here, informed by the Executive’s Child Poverty Strategy. That report will also point to the enormous amount of work that we have been doing in the Executive to begin to tackle these issues. Our report, together with the important work that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation carries out, provides us with important updated information.

Set in the context of Delivering Social Change – the Executive’s new delivery framework for social policy – our approach to reducing poverty and tackling social exclusion will bring together short and long-term measures to improve the opportunities for young people.

Delivering Social Change aims to deliver a sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues across all ages; and an improvement in children’s and young people’s health, wellbeing and life opportunities.

We are committed to driving forward new actions that reflect more collaborative and more integrated delivery of services. Through the Delivering Social Change programme board, we are working to deliver new cross-departmental cross-disciplinary approaches in which the services we prioritise for children will be those which deliver the greatest impact in promoting their lifetime opportunities throughout their lives.

Former Military and Security Sites

Mr Swann asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much finance is required to decontaminate all former military and security sites which have been transferred to the Executive.

(AQO 1935/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The amount of finance required to decontaminate the six sites gifted to the Executive under the 2002 Reform and Regeneration Initiative is £ 5.8m.

The amount of finance required to decontaminate the four sites gifted under the 2010 Hillsborough Agreement is yet to be determined.

The investment we are making now will increase the future regeneration and/or disposal potential of each site. We are committed to maximising the economic potential of each site particularly given the current economic climate.

Domestic and Sexual Violence

Ms P Bradley asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what plans they have to enhance gender equality and guard against domestic and sexual violence.

(AQO 1939/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Eliminating gender-based violence is a key objective of the Gender Equality Strategy. In addition, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety shares the lead with the Department of Justice in tackling domestic and sexual violence. The “Tackling Violence at Home” and “Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse” strategies respond to the needs of

all victims of domestic and sexual violence and abuse, irrespective of age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, cultural, social or ethnic background.

The suite of strategies referred to above sets out the commitment of the Executive and all partner agencies to adopt a consistent and long-term approach to the prevention of domestic and sexual violence.

Junior Ministers are part of the Inter Ministerial group on Domestic and Sexual Violence, which oversees and guides the multi-agency implementation of these Strategies and the supporting Action Plans to prevent and address sexual and domestic violence.

In 2012-13, OFMDFM will undertake a mid-term Review of the Gender Equality Strategy, which provides a policy framework for embedding gender equality across government departments. Alongside this, OFMDFM will work with Departments to review and roll forward the cross-departmental Gender Equality Action Plans.

Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse

Mr McGlone asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they will publish, for consultation, the draft Terms of Reference for the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse.

(AQO 1941/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Terms of Reference for the Inquiry will be published when they have been discussed with victims and survivors and agreed with the Inquiry Chairperson.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Deregulation of the Agricultural Sector

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 9251/11-15, to detail the targets she has put in place to reduce the overall administrative burden; and how many of these targets have been achieved.

(AQW 11178/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): My Department has committed to reduce the administrative burden on the agri-food sector by 25% by 2013 – with an interim target of 15% by 2011.

A re-measurement exercise, using the Standard Cost Methodology that was used to measure the original baseline, was undertaken in 2011 to assess progress towards the interim reduction figure of 15%. That process is currently being validated in partnership with industry representatives however as my officials informed the Agriculture Committee in December 2011 the reduction is likely to be in the order of 4.3%. This figure relates to those regulatory areas within the NI Better Regulation and Simplification Review. It does not, however, reflect any additional simplification measures taken by the Department outside the scope of the Review. Nevertheless, it is a disappointing measure of progress so far but an indicator of the difficulties and the challenging nature of trying to reduce the administrative burden while ensuring that the appropriate level of safeguards and control remain in place for the protection of the industry and the safety of the general public and also the fact that the majority of our regulations are driven by National and EU legislation.

I remain committed to the drive for better and simpler regulation wherever possible.

Programme for Government's Rural Youth Employability Programme

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to the Programme for Government's Rural Youth Employability Programme which her Department is delivering in conjunction with the Department of Employment and Learning (i) which areas will be targeted; (ii) how these areas will be targeted; (iii) what age group will be targeted; (iv) what is the Programme's budget; (v) what the

time frame is for its implementation; (vi) whether the Programme will be in addition to services which are already available; and (vii) what will be innovative about the Programme.

(AQW 11179/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Rural Youth Employability Programme, now rebranded as BOOST, will target unemployed young people in rural areas throughout the north. Advantage Foundation Ltd is delivering the Programme which includes a marketing and promotion campaign in rural areas through which they will engage with over 350 partner agencies such as the job centre networks, libraries, the Rural Development Council, the Rural Support Networks, Local Action Groups, Local Councils, Local Enterprise Agencies, Rural Colleges and sports centres, in order to target eligible participants. Registration and promotion materials will be disseminated throughout the rural network and in public access points and Advantage also propose to create awareness among the target rural audience in the media.

To be eligible for the programme the unemployed young people must be in the 16-24 age range. The overall budget for the BOOST programme is £665,000, of which £166,000 is funded by Department for Employment and Learning, £266,000 is funded by European Social Fund, £30,000 is a contribution from Advantage, and the remaining £203,000 is public match funding from DARD through the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework. The project commenced in December 2011 and is due to continue until 31 March 2014.

The 'BOOST' programme will complement and support other youth employability projects in the marketplace such as Steps to Work, Essential Skills and Bridge to Employment, without creating duplication or causing displacement.

BOOST is an innovative programme designed to increase the employability of unemployed rural young people through the provision of a number of innovative tools including an Employability Toolkit, a Youth Specific Employment Support Platform and a Network of Employment Mentors. The level and quality of employability information offered and the interactive methods used to reach the target participants, make BOOST unique within the marketplace.

Programme for Government's Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Programme

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to the Programme for Government's Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Programme which her Department is delivering in conjunction with the Rural Development Council and the Special EU Programmes Body (i) which areas will be targeted; (ii) how these areas will be targeted; (iii) what age group will be targeted; (iv) what is the Programme's budget; (v) what the time frame is for its implementation; (vi) whether the Programme will be in addition to services which are already available; and (vii) what will be innovative about the Programme.

(AQW 11180/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Programme will target young people who live in deprived rural areas throughout the north. These areas will be identified by the Rural Development Council using multiple deprivation criteria and propose to recruit 600 vulnerable young people onto the Programme by undertaking various outreach events and workshops in the areas identified.

To be eligible under the Programme, the young people must be in the 16-30 age range. The overall budget for the Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Programme in the north is £450,796, of which 60% is funded by the Northern Periphery Programme (NPP) and 40% is public match funded under DARD's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework. The Programme commenced in December 2011 and is due to continue until 31 March 2014.

The Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Programme concept emanated from a Young Entrepreneurs Programme which was an Invest NI Programme that provided support for young people in the north to stimulate economic growth but which had a low uptake in rural areas. The Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Programme is building on this previous provision.

The Programme is being delivered through an innovative partnership of organisations within the Northern Periphery of Europe (Faroe Islands, Greenland, Finland) and aims to contribute to local,

regional, national and transnational rural economic development by stimulating latent entrepreneurial abilities among rural young people in the participating partner countries.

Tendering for Wood from the Northern Ireland Forest Service

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to list the companies which have been successful in tendering for wood from the Northern Ireland Forest Service in the last five years. **(AQW 11406/11-15)**

Mrs O'Neill: There are 22 companies who have successfully tendered for timber from Forest Service between 2007/08 and 2011/12. Details of the companies are as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ■ Balcas Timber Ltd | ■ John McHale Timber |
| ■ Banagher Sawmills | ■ Murray Timber Products |
| ■ A Diamond & Son Timber Ltd | ■ M&H Tree Services |
| ■ Drenagh Sawmills | ■ Mountbellew Timber Products |
| ■ Eco Energy Sawmills | ■ Newforge Enterprises |
| ■ Eamon Flaherty Timber | ■ PM Processing |
| ■ Farm Woodlands Ltd | ■ S&J Contracts |
| ■ Glennon Bros | ■ A&R Taggart |
| ■ Haslett Timber Products | ■ Rea Sawmills |
| ■ JF Irvine Sawmills | ■ Farm Woodlands Ltd |
| ■ Leitrim Sawmills | ■ West Timber |

In addition to the companies listed, a number of others were also successful in tendering for timber during the period. The contractual documents in these cases are issued to individuals, therefore their details held by Forest Service, cannot be released for data protection reasons.

Forests

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to list the forests in each Council area which are under the ownership of her Department or its arm's-length bodies. **(AQW 11407/11-15)**

Mrs O'Neill: The Department or its arm's-length bodies own all or part of the forests listed below by Council area. Some forests are located in more than one Council area and the forest name appears more than once. The list includes both Forest Service and College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise managed woodland.

- **Antrim Borough Council** - Muckamore, Randalstown, Tardree, Greenmount Campus
- **Ards Borough Council** - Ballysallagh
- **Armagh City and District Council** - Carnagh, Drumbanagher, Gosford, Loughgall, The Fews
- **Ballymena Borough Council** – Ballyboley, Bann Woods South, Capanagh, Cleggan, Portglenone, Slieveanorra, Tardree, Glenwherry Hill Farm
- **Ballymoney Borough Council** - Bann Woods North, Bann Woods South, Breen, Clare, Craigs, Garry, Slieveanorra
- **Banbridge District Council** – Castlewellan, Drumkeeragh
- **Carrickfergus Borough Council** - Woodburn
- **Coleraine Borough Council** – Aghadowey, Bann Woods North, Bann Woods South, Cam, Downhill, Garry, Garvagh, Gortnamoyagh, Grange Park, Somerset, Springwell

- **Cookstown District Council** – Cookstown, Creggan, Davagh, Drum, Pomeroy, Loughry Campus
- **Derry City Council** – Learmount, Loughermore, Muff Glen
- **Down District Council** – Bohill, Castlewellan, Drumkeeragh, Hollymount, Tollymore
- **Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council** – Altmore, Caledon, Clabby, Cookstown, Crocknagrally, Dunmoyle, Fardross, Favor Royal, Knockmany, Mullaghfad, Parkanaur
- **Fermanagh District Council** – Ballintempo, Belmore, Big Dog, Carnmore, Carrigan, Castle Archdale, Castlecaldwell, Clabby, Conagher, Crocknagrally, Derrylin & Naan Island, Doon, Ely Lodge, Florence Court, Garrison, Grogey, Jenkin, Kesh, Knocks, Lack, Lough Bradan, Lough Navar, Marlbank, Mullaghfad, Necarne, Pubble, Riversdale, Sillees, Spring Grove, Tully, Tullychurry, Enniskillen Campus
- **Larne Borough Council** – Ballyboley, Capanagh, Cleggan
- **Limavady Borough Council** – Ballykelly, Banagher, Binevenagh, Cam, Glenshane, Gortnamoyagh, Grange Park, Loughermore, Moydamlaght, Springwell
- **Lisburn City Council** – Hillsborough
- **Magherafelt District Council** – Banagher, Bann Woods South, Davagh, Derrynoyd, Glenshane, Goles, Iniscarn, Moydamlaght, Moyola, Portglenone
- **Moyle District Council** – Ballycastle, Ballypatrick, Breen, Clare, Glenariff, Slieveanorra
- **Newry and Mourne Council** – Annalong, Camlough, Cold Brae, Drumbanagher, Fathom, Mourne, Rostrevor, Slieve Gullion, The Fewes
- **Newtownabbey Borough Council** – Woodburn
- **North Down Borough Council** – Ballysallagh
- **Omagh District Council** – Altmore, Creggan, Davagh, Dunmoyle, Goles, Gortin Glen, Kesh, Killens, Knockmany, Lack, Lough Bradan, Pigeon Top, Pubble, Seskinore, Trillick
- **Strabane District Council** – Aghyaran, Banagher, Bradkeel, Carrickaholten, Castlederg, Glenderg, Goles, Ligfordrum, Lough Bradan, Moneygal, Slievedoo

Forest Service Land for Wind Farm Developments

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the approach taken in Wales and Scotland where it is ensured that, where publically owned land is opened up to wind farm developments, substantial community benefits are an integral part of the development plans; and what steps she will take to ensure that the proposed commercialisation of Forest Service land for wind farm developments incorporates appropriate community benefits.

(AQW 11418/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware of the approach in Wales and Scotland to deliver community benefits from wind farm developments on public land. The recent report by Fermanagh Trust “Maximising Community Outcomes from Wind Energy Developments” helpfully presents good practice models in place in these jurisdictions.

I am in favour of models such as these, through which communities derive benefits from wind farm projects in their locality. I intend to develop policy to provide for community benefits in my consideration of the business options for windfarms on Forest Service land, taking account of existing models and the Executive’s intentions for community involvement in public procurement as outlined in the Programme for Government.

Rural Development Programme

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development which sports clubs in the Upper Bann area have received funding through the Rural Development Programme in each of the last three years; and how much was allocated to each club in each year.

(AQW 11565/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Rural Development Programme does not provide core funding to sports clubs. However, where such an organisation wishes to promote a project that benefits the wider rural community and where it is separate from their primary activity, this may be considered for funding.

In the last three years no such projects were funded in the Upper Bann area.

Rural Childcare Programme

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of the Programme for Government commitment to implement a strategy for integrated and affordable childcare, what discussions she has had with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on rural specific childcare; and how much of her budget will be dedicated to reopening the Rural Childcare Programme, which was introduced by her predecessor, or implementing an equivalent programme.

(AQW 11575/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As you know, DARD does not hold primary responsibility for childcare service provision. The Rural Childcare Programme was an innovative pilot run as part of the Department's wider anti poverty and social inclusion budget. The aim of this was to enhance the rural evidence base for development of future policies and priorities in childcare. An evaluation of this programme is being finalised and will, as I previously advised you, be provided to OFMDFM once approved.

At present my Department has no plans to reopen the Rural Childcare Programme, however, DARD is represented on a cross departmental working group led by OFMDFM which aims to bring forward a childcare strategy for all citizens in the north, including those living in rural areas. I recently met with Junior Ministers Bell and Anderson to discuss a range of issues including rural childcare and I will ensure that the childcare strategy takes into account the specific needs of those living in rural areas.

While there are no plans to reopen the Rural Childcare Programme, there are ongoing opportunities under Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 for childcare project infrastructure expansion or piloting of new initiatives.

Report by Consumer Focus Scotland 'Reaping the Benefits of Renewables'

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the report by Consumer Focus Scotland 'Reaping the Benefits of Renewables - The role of community benefit funds in tackling fuel poverty and energy efficiency', including what lessons her Department might learn from this report.

(AQW 11608/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department welcomes the findings of the report, 'Reaping the Benefits of Renewables' by Consumer Focus Scotland. Similar to the situation in Scotland, fuel poverty is more pronounced in rural areas of the North as there is less access to alternate fuels, such as piped gas. Community benefit funds may have a role to play in addressing this issue.

Under the Rural Development Programme my Department supports Social Economy Enterprises and Community Groups seeking to introduce renewable technologies, 75% of eligible costs may be funded up to a maximum of £170,000. A feasibility study may also be supported through technical assistance up to a maximum grant rate of £5,000.

The issues raised in this report cut across the responsibility of the Department of Finance and Personnel, the Department of Social Development and the Department of the Environment and I shall

raise these important issues with my Executive colleagues from these Departments to ensure a better deal for rural dwellers.

Rural Development Programme: Sports Clubs in the North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to list the sports clubs in the North Down constituency which have received funding under the Rural Development Programme, in each of the last five years; and to detail the amount received by each club in each year.

(AQW 11651/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Rural Development Programme does not provide core funding to sports clubs. However, where such an organisation wishes to promote a project that benefits the wider rural community and where it is separate from their primary activity, this may be considered for funding.

In the last five years, no such projects were funded in the North Down constituency area.

Rural Development Programme's Budget

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the percentage of the Rural Development Programme's budget that was spent on (i) programme administration; and (ii) project administration in the last twelve months; and how this compares with the recommended limits of funding for administration in each category.

(AQW 11669/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The NI Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) 2007-2013 is part financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Under Council regulations (EC) No 1698/2005 and No 1974/2006 there is no distinction between programme administration and project administration costs. Therefore I can only refer to total administration costs, where expenditure on administration in the 2011-12 financial year was equivalent to about 20% of the total funding allocated towards administering the 2007-13 Programme.

Mistreatment of Animals

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 10755/11-15, whether there are any recorded incidents of similar mistreatment of any animals which were unwell or unfit for sale in Northern Ireland; and if so, whether she can give an assurance that future incidents will be dealt with appropriately.

(AQW 11675/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I would refer the Member to my earlier answers and in particular to AQW 10755/11-15, in which I stated that to date my officers have not found any evidence to suggest such mistreatment occurs in the north of Ireland.

My Department affords high priority to the welfare of animals and operates a vigorous enforcement policy to ensure full compliance of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011. Any breaches are investigated thoroughly and offenders prosecuted as necessary. I would point out that the fines and penalties for breaches of animal welfare legislation here are the most robust on these Islands.

I would take this opportunity to reassure the Member that the Department's Veterinary Service will respond to any report of poor animal welfare on farms here and will commence legal proceedings where breaches of welfare legislation are found.

I would also advise the Member that officials work closely with the Humane Slaughter Association. The Association is a registered charity which provides detailed guidance for farmers and livestock owners on how to humanely slaughter animals on farms.

Farmers or Handlers Banned from Owning Livestock

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers or handlers have been banned from owning livestock, because of cruel practices, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 11710/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The following table lists the bans arising from DARD convictions:

Year	Number of people banned from keeping animals
2002	1
2003	1
2004	0
2005	0
2006	0
2007	0
2008	3
2009	0
2010	3
2011	0
2012	0
Total	8

Testing for Bovine TB

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 10920/11-15, to detail the difference between a Temporary Veterinary Officer and a Veterinary Officer Testing.

(AQW 11804/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Temporary Veterinary Officer (TVO) and Veterinary Officer Testing (VOT) groups are both Veterinary surgeons employed by DARD primarily to TB test cattle.

While TVOs and VOTs carry out the same testing duties, they are retained under different pay and conditions.

TVO duties exclusively relate to TB testing. However, VOTs can be allocated alternative duties on non testing days and a different daily rate is payable on these days. Also, VOTs are eligible for occupational sick pay, for public holidays and to join the NICS pension scheme.

All new entrants into this category of staff are employed as VOTs, and existing TVOs do have the option to convert to the VOT contract should they so wish.

Village Street Regeneration Schemes

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much her Department has spent on village street regeneration schemes in each of the last five years; and to list the relevant villages.

(AQW 11812/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I can advise that under Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme there is a budget of £12m available for Village Renewal and Development. I am happy to report that to date 26 projects have been completed, with spend of £309,000, and a further 52 are under way across a range

of types. In the main these are providing support for engagement of local people and groups and development of village plans. This is in line with the three-phased approach to village renewal adopted by my Department to ensure the best and most sustainable outcomes for villages.

Streetscape Scheme for Saintfield

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what consideration her Department has given to developing a streetscape scheme for Saintfield.

(AQW 11813/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department does not have a specific budget for streetscape schemes. However I can advise that under Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme there is a budget of £12m available for Village Renewal and Development. This funding, in the main, is to provide support for the engagement of local people and groups in the development of village plans and the subsequent funding of such plans.

The RDP, as you will be aware, is being delivered on behalf of my Department by Council clusters who have formed into Joint Council Committees and Local Action Groups.

The Joint Council Committee that covers the Saintfield area is the Down Rural Area Partnership (DRAP).

I am advised that Saintfield Town Regeneration Committee have been issued a Letter of Offer, by DRAP for funding to develop a village plan. DRAP intend to open a call for applications to the Village Renewal Measure later this year. Dependent on the completion of the village plan, this will provide Saintfield Town Regeneration Committee with the opportunity to apply for relevant project funding

Disallowances Imposed by the European Commission

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 5468/11-15, what specific issues the European Commission raised in relation to entitlements that were established on an area less than the overall area declared; what reasons the Commission gave for its concerns and what were the outcomes.

(AQW 11826/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In 2005, some farmers decided not to enter all their agricultural land into the Single Farm Payment (SFP) Scheme. This meant that they did not establish entitlements on all of their agricultural land.

The Department considered that, under the regional model of decoupling introduced in the north, the EU Regulations allowed farmers to decide how many entitlements they wished to receive in 2005. However, the Commission view was that all agricultural land declared on the Single Application Form in 2005 should have been considered when allocating SFP entitlements and not just the land that the farmer entered into the SFP scheme. The Commission considered that, by declaring less land to establish SFP entitlements than they actually had on their holding, these farmers were artificially creating conditions to obtain subsidy.

The Department did not accept this and argued that the allocation of entitlements to these farmers was in accordance with the EU Regulations. The Commission did not accept the arguments and applied disallowance.

EU Regulations deem all entitlements allocated to farmers before 1 January 2009 as legal and regular from 1 January 2010 except in cases of farmer error. Therefore, since 1 January 2010 it has not been possible for the Department in any event, to take any action on this issue in relation to entitlements allocated in 2005.

The Commission applied a financial correction of £307,215 in 2005 and €1 346,503 for 2006 and 2007 for this and other related issues. The Commission view was that entitlements had issued to the wrong beneficiary (landowners) and some land used to establish entitlements was not in agricultural use.

The Commission has also proposed a correction for 2008 and 2009. A clause in EU regulations deems all entitlements allocated to farmers before 1 January 2009, legal and regular from 1 January 2010, except in cases of farmer error. This precludes DARD from taking any further action on this issue.

Value of the Equine Industry to the Economy

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the value of the equine industry to the economy, in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 11834/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The equine industry here makes a significant contribution to our economy. However, there is limited, independently verifiable, data which precludes an annual assessment over the last three financial years.

The latest study, by BDO Stoy Hayward in 2005, which was used in producing the 'Strategy for the Equine Industry in NI', estimated the value of spend by the equine industry on the main services and products at £110 million, creating around 5,660 full-time job equivalents with a labour value in the order of £54 million. Sales revenue generated from the sale of horses and ponies has been estimated at £6 million per annum.

The two racecourses, at Down Royal and Downpatrick, generate sales revenue of approximately £1.7 million per annum.

Funding for New Rural Childcare Initiatives

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she has any plans to provide funding for new rural childcare initiatives; and, if so, how she plans to do so and the amount and source of the funding available.

(AQW 11839/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As you know, DARD does not hold primary responsibility for childcare service provision. The Rural Childcare Programme was an innovative pilot run as part of the Department's wider anti poverty and social inclusion budget. The aim of this was to enhance the rural evidence base for development of future policies and priorities in childcare.

At present my Department has no plans to provide further funding for new rural childcare initiatives, however, DARD is represented on a cross departmental working group led by OFMDFM which aims to bring forward a childcare strategy for all citizens in the North, including those living in rural areas. I will share the evaluation of the Rural Childcare Programme with OFMDFM once approved in order to ensure that this strategy takes into account the specific needs of those living in rural areas.

I recently met with Junior Ministers Bell and Anderson to discuss a range of issues, including rural childcare. While there are no plans to reopen the Rural Childcare Programme, there are ongoing opportunities under Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 for childcare project infrastructure expansion or piloting of new initiatives.

Penalties for Farmers and Financial Corrections for the Northern Ireland Paying Agency

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to the 'differences of interpretation' of legislation between the European Commission and her Department which resulted in penalties for farmers and financial corrections for the Northern Ireland Paying Agency (i) to detail the differences involved; and (ii) for her assessment of how the differences arose.

(AQW 11853/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The following significant differences of interpretation of EU legislation arose during EU Commission audits:

- 1 The method used to calculate the scaleback to be applied to Single Farm Payment (SFP) entitlements in order to create the National Reserve was different.
- 2 The allocation of SFP entitlements to landowners was different.
- 3 The Commission disagreed that farmers should have been allowed to establish SFP entitlements on less area than that declared by the farmer.

- 4 The Commission disagreed that different farmers should normally be allowed to claim different schemes on the same agricultural land parcel.
- 5 The method used to calculate penalties when entitlements are retrospectively revised due to land used to establish entitlements in 2005 being subsequently found to be ineligible was not acceptable to the Commission

None of these differences in interpretation resulted in additional penalties being applied to individual farmer payments. However, as in the Commission's view, these differences created a risk to EU Funds they were taken into account in the application of financial corrections. However

The issue highlighted at point 5 has a very significant impact on the level of financial correction being applied for inaccuracies in the DARD field mapping system and associated controls. It is central to the subsequent challenge taken by DARD to the EU Court of Justice.

The differences arose for two reasons. Firstly, Commission clarification on their view of the regulations was received only after an audit was carried out, at which stage, implementation had already taken place. Secondly, the view expressed by the Commission was, in the opinion of DARD, either not supported by the EU legislative provisions or resulted from a lack of clarity in the provisions. Attempts are being made to achieve legislative clarity during the current CAP Reform negotiations.

Staff at Greenmount College, Antrim

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 10882/11-15, to detail the religious breakdown of the members of staff who are on long-term sick leave.
(AQW 11872/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Community background information is collected to enable the NI Civil Service to fulfil its obligations under the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998, which are to submit an annual monitoring return to the Equality Commission and to carry out regular reviews of the workforce composition and employment practices. Community background data is also used to monitor the effectiveness of NICS' policies on equality of opportunity. The examination of sick absence levels by community background is not relevant to the management of sickness absence and is not carried out.

European Commission

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what instructions her Department received from the European Commission regarding the eligibility of agricultural land, prior to the establishment of entitlements, under the Single Farm Payment scheme in 2005; and what amendments to these instructions were received in each year from 2006 to 2010.

(AQW 11903/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The EU legislation that introduced the Single Farm Payment (SFP) Scheme in 2005, and subsequent legislation has been consistent in specifying that only land which is used for agricultural activities is eligible for SFP.

My Department worked to this principle and has issued guidance each year emphasising the need for ineligible features (such as buildings, and farmyards) and vegetative ineligible features (such as scrub) to be deducted from the areas declared for payment.

EU Commission audits carried out from 2006 – 2009 re-enforced the need for ineligible features, particularly scrub to be deducted from farmer's claims. In light of these audits, the Department refined the guidance on land eligibility that is issued to farmers.

In 2011, to provide additional clarification for farmers, DARD issued comprehensive guidance on eligibility. Prior to issuing this, the Department clarified a number of eligibility issues including scrub, hedges and woodland with the Commission. In addition, through DEFRA, the Department confirmed its handling of heather with the Commission.

Department of Education

Nursery or Pre-School Places

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Education, for each of the last five years, to detail (i) how many children were eligible to apply for a nursery or pre-school place; and (ii) how many children applied for a (a) statutory nursery school place; and (b) pre-school place, broken down by Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 10567/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The tables below detail the number of children in the pre-school cohort for each year based on the relevant live birth statistics compiled by NISRA. Newcomer children in their final pre-school year would be additional to this figure.

2007/08

	No. of children born between 1 July '03 and 30 June '04	No. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children to statutory nursery settings	No. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children to voluntary/private providers	Total no. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children
BELB	3,479	2,626	399	3,025
WELB	3,744	2,276	1,188	3,464
NEELB	5,027	3,351	1,577	4,928
SEELB	4,744	2,734	1,369	4,103
SELB	5,024	*	*	*

* These figures are not available due to a change in IT system

2008/09

	No. of children born between 1 July '04 and 30 June '05	No. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children to statutory nursery settings	No. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children to voluntary/private providers	Total no. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children
BELB	3,339	2,588	408	2,996
WELB	3,777	2,371	1,178	3,549
NEELB	5,225	3,401	1,692	5,093
SEELB	4,745	2,743	1,419	4,162
SELB	5,350	2,690	1,803	4,493

2009/10

	No. of children born between 1 July '05 and 30 June '06	No. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children to statutory nursery settings	No. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children to voluntary/private providers	Total no. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children
BELB	3,363	2,659	425	3,084
WELB	3,997	2,387	1,261	3,648
NEELB	5,111	3,428	1,726	5,154
SEELB	4,803	2,972	1,308	4,280
SELB	5,411	2,909	1,810	4,719

2010/11

	No. of children born between 1 July '06 and 30 June '07	No. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children to statutory nursery settings	No. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children to voluntary/private providers	Total no. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children
BELB	3,516	2,845	481	3,326
WELB	4,025	2,526	1,232	3,758
NEELB	5,403	3,597	1,750	5,347
SEELB	5,169	3,151	1,434	4,585
SELB	5,710	3,008	1,916	4,924

2011/12

	No. of children born between 1 July '07 and 30 June '08	No. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children to statutory nursery settings	No. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children to voluntary/private providers	Total no. of 1st preference applications for final pre-school age children
BELB	3,779	3,087	526	3,613
WELB	4,225	2,666	1,281	3,947
NEELB	5,699	3,067	2,008	5,075
SEELB	5,451	3,346	1,528	4,874
SELB	6,026	3,311	2,045	5,356

It should be noted that the movement of families and applications to settings outside the Board of residence can influence the number of applications in each Board area.

Preferred Pre-School Places

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Education how many children were unable to secure a place at their preferred pre-school provider in each of the last five years, broken down by Education and Library board area.

(AQW 10571/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The table below details the number of children unplaced at the end of the Pre-School Admission process in each of the last 5 years in 4 of the Education and Library Boards. The WELB continue to track unplaced children beyond this point and therefore their figures are the position as at the start of September each year

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
BELB	146	70	128	246	133
WELB	47*	83*	59*	47*	44*
NEELB	157	143	102	184	82
SEELB	215	234	243	308	185
SELB	364	298	294	299	213
Total	929	828	826	1084	816

* position at start September

It should be noted that when the Admissions Process concludes parents who may not have applied for a place during the process or those who have not secured a place will be given a list of settings by the ELB where places may still be available. Parents then make application directly to these settings. This can result in a significant number of additional children being placed before the start of the new school term in September.

Information on the exact number of children in funded pre-school places is collected as part of the Annual School Census in October.

As you are aware in recent years there has been significant additional investment in pre-school places both through the creation of new statutory nursery units and allocation of funding to support additional places in the voluntary/private sector. I will be keeping this under review in light of the work on the Programme for Government commitment and if further investment is necessary I will consider it.

Nursery and Pre-School Places

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education, for the 2012/13 academic year, to detail the number of (i) nursery and pre-school places available; and (ii) applications received, broken down by constituency.
(AQW 10760/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The number of statutory nursery places in each constituency is listed in the table below. As the information sought is in relation to the Pre-School Admissions Process for the 2012/13 academic year, and this is a 2 stage process which will not complete until 1 June 2012, final figures in relation to the number of places being funded in the voluntary/private sector cannot be given until after that time.

It should be noted also that whilst Stage 2 of the formal admissions process concludes on 1 June with the issue of letters to parents advising whether or not they have secured a place, children will continue to be placed between this time and the start of the school term in September as natural movement occurs in the system and any remaining places are allocated directly by individual settings.

The Pre-school Admissions Process is a preference based system with parents stating, in some cases 6 or more preferences on their application form. Assessing how many applications every setting received at each preference stage could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However you may

wish to note, as I indicated in the Assembly on 23 April, at the end of Stage 1 of the Process 94% of those who had made application had been offered a place at a setting stated as a preference on their application form.

Parliamentary Constituency	Number of statutory nursery places
Belfast East	806
Belfast North	1,196
Belfast South	858
Belfast West	1,300
East Antrim	754
East Derry	520
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	572
Foyle	1,274
Lagan Valley	728
Mid Ulster	494
Newry & Armagh	936
North Antrim	770
North Down	546
South Antrim	780
South Down	546
Strangford	520
Upper Bann	1,222
West Tyrone	754
Total	14,576

EU School Milk Scheme

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of nursery school children (i) who have benefited from; and (ii) who were eligible for, free milk through the EU School Milk Scheme in each of the last five years.

(AQW 11199/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested is as follows:

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
(i)	8,837	9,225	9,001	9,444	9,597
(ii)	13,953	14,095	14,151	14,408	14,580

Source: (i) Education and Library Boards; (ii) NI School Census 2007/08 – 2011/12

Figures for (i) relate to claims for subsidised milk made by nursery schools through the Education and Library Boards. The Department does not hold information in relation to claims made by nursery schools to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety through its Day Care Food Scheme.

Nursery Provision in the Banbridge Area

Mr S Anderson asked the Minister of Education for an update on the proposals to address the shortage of nursery provision in the Banbridge area.

(AQW 11257/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Pre-School Admissions Process is a 2 stage process which will not complete until 1 June 2012. However, the SELB have advised that at the end of Stage 1 of the process on 30 March 2012 there were 26 children who had applied to settings in the Banbridge area who did not secure a funded place.

The PEAG has allocated additional places to an existing setting and has brought a new provider into the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme in Banbridge. It is anticipated that these measures will address any shortfall in the area.

It should be noted also that whilst Stage 2 of the formal admissions process concludes on 1 June with the issue of letters to parents advising whether or not they have secured a place, children will continue to be placed between this time and the start of the school term in September as natural movement occurs in the system and any remaining places are allocated directly by individual settings.

Education Other Than At School Projects

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) how many children attending Education Other Than At School projects have been issued with notes instead of statements in each Education and Library Board area; and (ii) what legislation facilitates this process.

(AQW 11322/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I understand from the Education and Library Boards that 4 young people who attend Education Other Than At School in the Belfast Education and Library Board area have been issued with a Note-in-Lieu.

There is no specific legislation relating to the issue of a Note-In-Lieu. The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs, at paragraphs 4.12 to 4.15 provides guidance to the Education and Library Boards on the circumstances whereby a Board may issue a Note-In-Lieu.

Primary Schools in the North Down Area

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education which primary schools in the North Down area have (i) applied for; and (ii) been granted an upwards variation in their P1 intake in each of the last five years; and to detail the figures in each case.

(AQW 11429/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The schools in the North Down area which have applied for a temporary variation of their admissions number in each of the last 5 years, and the outcome of the applications, are as follows:-

2008/09

Bangor Central IPS (Increased from 79 to 81)

2009/10

Bangor Central IPS (Increased from 79 to 87)

2010/11

None

2011/12

Rathmore PS (Increased from 79 to 86)

Towerview PS (Not approved)

Ballyvester PS (Not approved)

2012/13

St Comgall's PS (Increased from 41 to 46)

Note: The above figures include all requests for temporary variations, including those which were made during the course of the school year to which they relate after the completion of the admissions process.

Surplus and Deficit Financial Position of School Budgets

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to detail the current surplus and deficit financial position of school budgets in each (i) primary school; and (ii) post- primary school, broken down by (a) Education and Library Board; and (b) sector.

(AQW 11453/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The latest full financial year for which this data is currently available is 2010-11 i.e. the year ending 31 March 2011. Information on every Education and Library Board; Voluntary Grammar and Grant-Maintained Integrated Primary and Post-Primary school may be found in the 2010/11 Outturn Statements which are deposited in the Assembly Library. Alternatively, the information may be found at the following links to the Education and Library Board websites and, in the case of Voluntary Grammar and Grant-Maintained Integrated Schools, on the Department of Education website.

BELB: http://www.belb.org.uk/Downloads/lms_ot_1011_p3.pdf

NEELB: <http://www.neelb.org.uk/about/finance/lms-outturn-statements/?assetdet124=13987>

SEELB: http://80.4.159.11/school_man_new/pdfs/outturn2011.pdf

SELB: http://www.selb.org/lms/Documents/2010/All_schools.pdf

WELB: <http://www.welbni.org/index.cfm/go/publications/key/3FE22D42-95F5-0080-95D05699CEC62E47:1>

Voluntary Grammar Schools

http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/schools_funding_pg/9_schoolfunding_localmanagementofschools_pg/9_schoolfunding_vgshomepage_pg/9_schoolfunding_outturnstatements_pg/9-voluntarygrammarschools201011outturnstatement-4.htm

Grant-Maintained Integrated Schools

http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/schools_funding_pg/9_schoolfunding_localmanagementofschools_pg/9_schoolfunding_gmihomepage_pg/9_schoolfunding_gmisoutturnstatements_pg/9-grantmaintainedintegratedschools201011outturnstatement-5.htm

Consultation to Ascertain the Views of Young People

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education what role the Education and Library Board youth services play in any formal consultation undertaken by his Department to ascertain the views of young people.

(AQW 11454/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards' youth services are one of a number of areas which have been involved in Departmental consultations with young people. Depending on the policy area under consideration, other areas have also been involved, such as schools, early years groups/ organisations and Education Other than at School settings, as well as other voluntary and community sector organisations that work with young people.

Through youth groups and participative forums in the statutory and voluntary youth sector, Boards have access to youth workers and peer educators who are skilled and trained in engaging with young people, for example, through the dissemination of consultation documents, facilitating direct engagements, organising focus groups, hosting consultation events and representing the views and interests of young people to the Department in both written and verbal reports.

The Department is committed to ensuring that the views of all key stakeholders, including young people, are taken into consideration throughout all relevant stages of the policy making process. Examples of recent DE consultations in which Boards' youth services have contributed include the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy, the Sustainable Schools Policy, pre-consultation on Priorities for Youth as well as the Network for Youth and consultations on a range of local issues such as the Shared Education Campus at Lisanelly.

Nursery School Places in the North Down Area

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) how many children in the North Down area have not received a nursery place for the 2012/13 academic year; and (ii) how many places are still available, broken down by electoral ward area.

(AQW 11461/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information sought relates to the admissions process for places in pre-school education for the 2012/13 academic year. This is a two stage process which is currently ongoing. Statistics will not be available until after the process is completed on 1 June 2012.

It should be noted that when the Admissions Process concludes parents who may not have applied for a place during the process or those who have not secured a place will be given a list of settings by the ELB where places may still be available. Parents then make application directly to these settings. This can result in a significant number of additional children being placed before the start of the new school term in September.

Information on the exact number of children in funded pre-school places is collected as part of the Annual School Census in October.

As you are aware in recent years there has been significant additional investment in pre-school places both through the creation of new statutory nursery units and allocation of funding to support additional places in the voluntary/private sector. I will be keeping this under review in light of the work on the Programme for Government commitment and if further investment is necessary I will consider it.

Education Other Than At School System

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the percentage attendance of pupils in the Education Other Than At School system in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area, in each of the last three years, broken down by site.

(AQW 11466/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department recognises that the most appropriate place for a child to be educated is in school. However for some young people this is difficult to sustain and placement at an Education Other Than At School centre must be provided to meet their educational needs.

The attendance figures for pupils in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area have been provided below and, as requested, are listed by site. However it must be noted that, because of the small numbers of pupils concerned, an individual pupil who has poor attendance will have a substantial negative impact on the overall figure.

YEAR 2011/12 TO DATE

Redburn	67%
Castlereagh	79%

Downpatrick	68%
Lagan Valley	80%

YEAR 2010/11

Redburn	64%
Castlereagh	74%
Downpatrick	67%
Lagan Valley	79%

YEAR 2009/10

Redburn	63%
Castlereagh	72%
Downpatrick	78%
Lagan Valley	81%

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education why Employment and Support Allowance is not considered a qualifying benefit, when determining priority status on the basis of social disadvantage, when allocating pre-school places.

(AQW 11478/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: When the criteria for the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme (PSEEP) was originally established it was based on the criteria for eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) as that was adjudged to be an appropriate method of targeting children from the most socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

At that time there were funded pre-school places available for approximately 45% of children in their final pre-school. It was, therefore, necessary to target the available provision towards those children most in need and to afford them priority in the admissions process, as research shows that children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds benefit most from a quality pre-school experience.

The original targeting process ensured that, in areas of shortfall, children from disadvantaged backgrounds were able to avail of the limited number of funded pre-school places available.

The Review of Pre-School Admissions Arrangements, published in January 2012, announced that it will examine the definition of children from 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' within the Pre-School Education in Schools (Admissions Criteria) Regulations (NI) 1999 with a view to mirroring the relevant economic elements of the definition of Free School Meal Entitlement.

Social Mobility

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what research his Department has carried out on social mobility.

(AQW 11577/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department has not undertaken any specific research on social mobility.

However, the annual statistics for the Qualifications and Destinations of School Leavers 2010/11 show that there are major inequities within our local education system. Disadvantaged pupils, as measured by free school meal entitlement (FSME), fare worse than their more advantaged peers.

In 2011, the benchmark of 5 or more GCSEs at A*- C (or equivalent) including GCSEs in English and Maths was achieved by 32% of FSME school leavers, compared to 65% of leavers who were not FSME. Also in 2011, the benchmark of 2 or more A levels at A*- E (or equivalent) was achieved by 28% of FSME school leavers, compared to 59% of leavers who were not FSME.

The statistics also show differences in access to higher education. In 2011, 18% of FSME school leavers entered higher education, compared to 46% of those who were not FSME.

I am determined to take action to break the link between social disadvantage and educational underachievement. I have in place a coherent set of policies designed to improve educational outcomes for young people and to address the root causes when pupils are not achieving to their full potential. In addition, the Programme for Government has a stretching target to raise the percentage of FSME pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and maths by 2015. It is imperative that we keep raising standards for all pupils, with an emphasis on how our policies contribute to raising standards for those pupils entitled to Free School Meals. The challenge now is to ensure the effective implementation of these policies by schools.

I also want to stress the value of education and work with local communities to ensure that young people receive positive messages about the importance of doing well at school and are encouraged to have high expectations.

Teachers on the Transferred Redundancy List

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) when he plans to (a) examine the list of teachers on the transferred redundancy list; and (b) implement the required redundancies; (ii) the criteria that will be applied; and (iii) whether there will be any provision for senior teachers who have indicated their willingness to accept redundancy.

(AQW 11602/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Teacher redundancies and the date of their implementation are a matter for teachers' employers.

The Employing Authorities operate a transferred redundancy scheme to allow teachers to volunteer for redundancy even if their own post is not being made redundant or there are no redundant posts within their school. This is intended to create potential redeployment opportunities for teachers who would otherwise be made redundant and thus keep compulsory redundancies to a minimum.

This year a central clearing house has also been established across all employing authorities, with the participation of the teacher unions, for those teachers who cannot be redeployed initially within each Employing Authority. A transferred redundancy list has been issued to all teachers facing redundancy and who are seeking redeployment.

Senior teachers other than principals or vice-principals may volunteer for transferred redundancy. A vice-principal may volunteer for transferred redundancy depending on whether the employing authority in question requires vice-principal posts to be publicly advertised. It is not possible to extend the transferred redundancy arrangements to principals, as the Teacher Appointment Schemes require these posts to be publicly advertised. Such posts can therefore be made redundant only in cases of amalgamation or school closure.

A teacher's employment may also be terminated in the interests of the efficient discharge of the employer's function and leadership staff have in the past been released under the Efficient Discharge scheme. Although such a scheme has not been operated in recent years on grounds of cost, I understand that the employing authorities are currently considering whether an Efficient Discharge scheme might be introduced in future.

Bullying Component of the C2k Programme

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education why the bullying component of the C2k Programme, that is used in schools, contains no reference to homophobic bullying, unlike schools in the rest of the UK. (AQW 11622/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The software available to schools through the C2K Programme facilitates the recording of incidents of bullying and specific details about each incident. The elements of the software that are used to record incidents of bullying are the same in the versions available to schools here and in England. There is the option, within the SIMS Behaviour Management Module, to select a category headed 'bullying - sexual orientation' and to record more details of the actual incident.

Schools are not required to record incidents of bullying. The decision to record incidents, how they might be categorised and to utilise the C2K software for this is a matter for each school.

Irish-Medium Education

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education whether his Department has considered how to measure the demand for Irish-medium education in areas where there is a lack of, or no, provision. (AQW 11666/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Historically, the Department has responded to demand when expressed through the publication of a statutory Development Proposal. However, in the move to area planning, demand for Irish-medium education will be identified through the area planning process.

Pending the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority, it is the responsibility of the Education and Library Boards, working in close conjunction with CCMS and actively engaging with the other school sectors, to develop collective strategic plans on an area basis. The Terms of Reference for area planning, available on the DE website, make clear that Board plans should take account of commitments outlined in the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent legislation in relation to Integrated and Irish medium provision.

Area-Based Planning

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education what rights sectoral bodies, such as the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, have under Area-Based Planning. (AQW 11667/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Area Planning process is being taken forward by the Education and Library Boards, working closely with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools. These are the bodies with legislative responsibility for such planning.

Although they have no equivalent statutory planning responsibility, other sectoral bodies, including the Council for Integrated Education and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, have a role to play. The Terms of Reference and the Guidance issued by the Department of Education require the Boards to engage extensively with the Integrated, Irish Medium and voluntary grammar sectors in developing their plans. The Boards will also consult widely on the proposals, so that the views of all sectors and interests have been accounted for before a final area plan is agreed.

The Terms of Reference and Guidance are available on DE's website at:

- <http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/area-planning/area-planning-terms-of-reference.htm> and
- http://www.deni.gov.uk/area_planning_guidance_-_issued_14_february_2012.pdf

Irish-Medium Schools

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 10780/11-15, how much Education and Library Boards have paid for the renting of premises for Irish-medium schools to date. (AQW 11685/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Based on the information my Department has gathered, I can advise that the Education and Library Boards have paid a total of £1,275,150.61 in the last 10 years for the renting of premises for Irish-medium schools.

Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) why he decided to stop the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment from generating income from the sale of examination papers to schools and bodies within the rest of the UK; (ii) the benefits which resulted from his decision; and (iii) what consultation took place prior to making his decision.

(AQW 11687/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is completely inaccurate to state that I had any influence on the decision that CCEA would cease offering its qualifications in England. No such instruction has been given either by me or any officials in the Department of Education. The decision was entirely within the remit of the awarding organisation side of CCEA, and was approved by the CCEA Council.

CCEA has a statutory obligation to deliver services in relation to the curriculum, assessment and examinations in the north of Ireland only. Beyond that, CCEA awarding organisation side, in its commercial capacity, is free to make its own decisions, based on economics, and any other factors which it deems appropriate.

School Improvement Policy – Every School a Good School

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 10784/11-15, why he decided to depart from his policy of developing a robust added value framework within the 'School Improvement Policy – Every School a Good School'; and (ii) what research and consultations were undertaken to provide an evidence base to allow him to consider the policy review.

(AQW 11688/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have not taken any decisions that alter the position set out in Every School a Good School, the school improvement policy.

My Department continues to consider the most appropriate arrangements for introducing robust measures of value-added to assess pupil progress and school performance. We have noted the problems associated with the development of contextual value-added (CVA) measures elsewhere. Of greatest concern is the risk that they can entrench low expectations for the most disadvantaged young people and mask underachievement. Whilst CVA appears attractive in promising to show the difference schools can make, in reality such measures are very complex and can be difficult to interpret.

It is important that the value-added measures we use avoid these potential pitfalls. We do not want them to be unnecessarily complex or burdensome to schools. Rather they should be both useful and meaningful for all parties, including schools and parents.

My response to AQW 10784/11-15 advised that the new assessment arrangements being introduced from 2012/13 for Communication and Using Maths and from 2013/14 for Using ICT provide a measure of value-added through capturing the progress made by pupils between each Key Stage. I also highlighted that school inspection reports provide a measure of value-added.

Directors of the Education and Skills Authority

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Education how many senior officers in the Education and Library Boards, who received redundancy or severance payments in the last five years, were employed or appointed as directors of the Education and Skills Authority, broken down by (i) posts held; (ii) annual salaries; and (iii) redundancy/severance payments.

(AQW 11691/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Following a recruitment process, Directors (Designate) for the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) were selected. As ESA has not yet been established, these staff remain employed by

their respective organisations. The ESA Director (Designate) of Operational Services decided to leave the education sector under the Voluntary Severance scheme 2011-12. My Department does not give details of individuals' salaries or other payments.

Shared Management School of Schools

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 11194/11-15, to list the name of each voluntary school, broken down by (i) Education and Library Board area; and (ii) sector.

(AQW 11722/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have arranged for the information requested to be placed in the Library.

Code of Practice to Identify a Child's Special Needs

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of children at each stage of the Code of Practice that is used to identify a child's special needs, in each of the last three years, broken down by Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 11724/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested is detailed in the table below.

PUPILS BY SEN STAGE AND ELB, 2009/10 – 2011/12

Year	SEN stage	ELB					Total
		BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	
2009/10	1	4,976	3,226	3,394	2,844	2,300	16,740
	2	5,108	4,192	3,603	4,115	4,012	21,030
	3	2,130	2,383	1,999	1,943	2,051	10,506
	4	318	233	168	279	259	1,257
	5	2,309	2,144	2,577	3,210	3,334	13,574
	Total		14,841	12,178	11,741	12,391	11,956
2010/11	1	4,892	3,228	3,546	3,035	2,313	17,014
	2	5,315	4,373	3,922	4,337	4,250	22,197
	3	2,106	2,397	2,013	2,012	2,065	10,593
	4	352	235	189	239	214	1,229
	5	2,479	2,217	2,634	3,260	3,308	13,898
	Total		15,144	12,450	12,304	12,883	12,150
2011/12	1	4,560	3,721	3,726	2,969	2,346	17,322
	2	5,367	4,590	4,443	4,587	4,445	23,432
	3	2,322	2,487	2,263	2,115	2,058	11,245
	4	313	259	192	245	246	1,255
	5	2,584	2,261	2,667	3,254	3,324	14,090
	Total		15,146	13,318	13,291	13,170	12,419

Source: NI school census

Notes:

- 1 Figures include funded children in voluntary and private preschool centres, nursery schools, primary, (including nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes) post primary and special schools.
- 2 Figures for pupils at SEN stages 1 and 2 are collected at an aggregated level in voluntary and private preschool centres and nursery schools. For the purpose of this analysis, pupils at Stages 1 and 2 for these sectors have been included in the Stage 1 column.

Beechlawn School, Hillsborough

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Education whether there are any plans to develop educational provision for children aged 16 and over at Beechlawn School, Hillsborough.

(AQW 11764/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There is no legislative requirement to provide post-16 education in moderate learning difficulty (MLD) schools and it is therefore for each education and library board to determine provision in their area. To date the majority of MLD pupils either leave school at 16 or move onto an appropriate vocational course in further education.

Draft area plans for stand alone special schools were submitted to my Department from each of the Education and Library Boards in February and are currently being considered. Once the area plans have been fully considered and endorsed by DE as compliant with DE Policies they will be issued for public consultation. Only after consultation are they considered for approval.

Until this work has been completed, I am not in a position to outline the way forward for projects such as that for Beechlawn Special School.

Applications for Pre-School Places

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of applications for pre-school places for the 2012/13 academic year, broken down by the applicant's postcode area; and (ii) how many of the applicants have obtained a place.

(AQW 11800/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information sought is in relation to the Pre-School Admissions Process for the 2012/13 academic year. This is a 2 stage process which will not complete until 1 June 2012 and therefore final figures in relation to the number of children in their final pre-school year offered a place at settings stated as a preference during the process will not be available until after that date.

However, as I indicated in the Assembly on 23 April, at the end of Stage 1 of the Process 94% of those who had made application had been offered a place at a setting stated as a preference on their application form.

It should be noted also that whilst Stage 2 of the formal admissions process concludes on 1 June with the issue of letters to parents advising whether or not they have secured a place, children will continue to be placed between this time and the start of the school term in September as natural movement occurs in the system and any remaining places are allocated directly by individual settings.

Department for Employment and Learning**Tuition Fees**

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what discussions his Department has had with the Scottish Government in relation to Northern Irish university students being exempt from tuition fees.

(AQW 11261/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): I am aware that under current student finance arrangements in Scotland, eligible Scottish domiciled students studying full-time undergraduate

courses in Scotland qualify for free tuition. I am also aware that, in accordance with European Union law, eligible European Union nationals studying in Scotland must also receive free tuition. It is my understanding that, in order to be eligible, the European Union national must have been ordinarily resident in a member state of the European Union or elsewhere in the European Economic Area and Switzerland for the three years immediately before the first day of the first academic year of the course.

Similarly, European Union nationals studying in Northern Ireland will qualify for tuition fee support provided they have been ordinarily resident in the territory comprising the European Economic Area and Switzerland throughout the three year period preceding the first day of the first academic year of the course.

My Department has been advised by colleagues in the Student Awards Agency for Scotland that Northern Ireland students who hold Irish passports can apply to Scottish Higher Education Institutions as European Union nationals and can apply to have their tuition fees paid provided they satisfy the eligibility requirements of the Student Awards Agency for Scotland.

As this is a matter for the relevant Scottish Authorities, Northern Ireland domiciled students who also hold non United Kingdom European Union nationality are advised to contact the Scottish Higher Education Institution where they intend to study and the Student Awards Agency for Scotland to clarify respectively their fee status and eligibility for tuition fee support.

Careers Fairs Outside Northern Ireland

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to list the careers fairs held outside Northern Ireland which were attended by representatives from Queen's University, Belfast and the University of Ulster in each of the last five years.

(AQW 11331/11-15)

Dr Farry: As the Department does not hold the information requested, my officials contacted Queen's University and the University of Ulster. The information is in Annex A which has been placed in Assembly Library and on the Department for Employment and Learning's website <http://www.delni.gov.uk/>.

Children with Special Educational Needs

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what pathways to work his Department offers children, with Special Educational Needs, who leave school without any qualifications.

(AQW 11389/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department offers a range of assistance to children with special educational needs to facilitate a pathway to work. These are outlined below.

My Department's Careers Service works in partnership with post primary schools, to support all children including those with special educational needs to make effective career choices and develop appropriate career plans.

In support of the career pathway planning process, Careers advisers attend transition planning meetings for children with a statement of special educational need at Year 10 and subsequent annual reviews. Careers advisers provide information, advice and guidance based on individual needs, abilities and aspirations which includes information on current labour market trends and future opportunities.

My Department's Training for Success (TfS) programme provides a guaranteed training opportunity for all eligible young people aged 16 and 17, generally school leavers, with extended eligibility for those with a disability and those from an in-care background of up to age 22 and up to age 24 respectively.

TfS aims to progress participants to higher level training, further education, or employment by addressing personal and social development needs, developing occupational skills and employability skills and, where necessary, providing Essential Skills in literacy, numeracy and information technology.

Where a young person with a statement of special educational needs indicates an interest in joining TfS, my Department provides a Pre-Entry Training Support assessment. This aims to ensure that support arrangements are put in place for the young person as soon as possible after commencing training.

Specialist support providers such as Disability Action, Sensory Learning Support and the Cedar Foundation, are available to work in conjunction with training suppliers delivering TfS with the aim of providing additional assistance, where needed, for those with disabilities. My Department can provide specialist funding in respect of a participant with a disability to help the training supplier provide additional resources, equipment or support to allow the young person to maximise his or her training opportunity.

My Department also funds 10 training places annually at Parkanaur College through the Disability Employment Service for students over 18 with significant disabilities in areas such as business administration, horticulture, catering and upholstery.

My Department, in conjunction with the European Social Fund, provides financial support to enable approximately 20 local projects throughout Northern Ireland help young people with disabilities progress towards and move into employment. These projects provide services such as employability skills training, vocational qualifications and work placement opportunities.

Further Education colleges provide a number of courses and programmes with no formal entry requirements for students with learning difficulties and / or disabilities, aimed at acquiring a qualification, developing independent living, and preparing for work.

St Mary's University College, Belfast

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what protection or assurances his Department, including his predecessor, gave to St Mary's University College, Belfast, that it would not be subject to any merger with Stranmillis University College, Belfast or Queen's University, Belfast.

(AQW 11514/11-15)

Dr Farry: It is my understanding that no such assurances have ever been given to St. Mary's University College.

The Bytes Project

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, given that the Not in Education, Employment or Training Strategy is included in the Programme for Government, whether he intends to ensure that (i) the Bytes Project will retain its current level of funding from his Department; (ii) the project receives transitional support, at the current financial rate, if alternative funding streams are developed for the project; and (iii) the project is provided with the certainty and stability of funding in the interests of a more planned, strategic service.

(AQW 11567/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department, in conjunction with the Department of Education (DE), has been a contributory funder to the BYTES Project since April 2004. DE has transferred responsibility for organisations such as BYTES to the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNi) in 2010. YCNi provided funding of £220,000 to the project in financial year 2011/2012, which was matched by DEL.

The YCNi has advised that it has provided interim funding for the period April to June 2012 with a decision on further funding for the remainder of the financial year 2012/2013 being made following a review by YCNi of the project's operations.

My Department is also providing interim funding for the period April 2012 to June 2012 of up to a maximum of £55,000. Decisions on funding for the remainder of the financial year will be made following the outcome of the review being undertaken by YCNi.

In addition, the Northern Ireland European Social Fund has committed to provide funding to the BYTES Project of £33,999 with match funding from my Department of £21,249 in the financial year 2012-13.

I intend to present the NEET strategy to the Executive presently.

Legislation to Allow Mothers to Transfer Maternity Leave to their Partners

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether his Department plans to introduce a similar legislative programme to that recently announced in the Queen's speech, allowing mothers to transfer maternity leave to their partners.

(AQW 11580/11-15)

Dr Farry: Northern Ireland has traditionally operated on the basis of parity with Great Britain in relation to paid leave for working parents. That being so, there is already in place a right for mothers or primary adopters to return to work after having taken a period of paid leave, transferring the residual amount of leave and pay to their partner.

Although there has already been initial consultation in Great Britain on new arrangements for shared leave, the Queen's speech did not go into any detail about what is being proposed. I have asked my officials to liaise with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to get a better understanding of the UK Government's proposals.

Responsibility for the majority of policy on paid leave for working parents lies with my Department; however, the Department for Social Development has the policy lead in relation to Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance. Following initial discussions with DSD, I can confirm that, subject to Executive agreement, my Department will take the lead in consulting on the programme of change now being taken forward in Great Britain. If I am satisfied that the proposals are suitable and if there is a positive response to the consultation, I will seek to introduce corresponding measures here allowing working parents to take advantage of improved shared leave arrangements following the birth or adoption of a child.

Steps to Work and Step Ahead Programmes

Mr McCartney asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the future plans for the (i) Steps to Work; and (ii) Step Ahead programmes.

(AQW 11625/11-15)

Dr Farry: Currently, the Steps to Work programme is due to end on 31 March 2013. My Department is working on the development of a new employment programme which will replace Steps to Work during 2013.

At this time there are no plans to re-introduce the Step Ahead element of Steps to Work.

Step Ahead Programme

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, in relation to the Step Ahead Programme, delivered in conjunction with the Enagh Youth Forum and Rutledge Recruitment and Training in Derry, why the eight people who completed the programme on 16 March 2012 have not received their £100 bonus from Rutledge for the completion of a First Aid course, even though payment was due within 7 days; and why Rutledge has not issued P45s to these people, which has resulted in many of them paying emergency tax in their new employment.

(AQW 11692/11-15)

Dr Farry: I understand that the delay in paying the £100 bonus and in issuing the P45s was due to an administrative oversight. The eight people affected by this have now received their bonus payment and P45s. The issue has now been resolved.

St Mary's University College, Belfast

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he, or his Department, have received representations from the Catholic Church in Northern Ireland, including the clergy and the

hierarchy, opposing the inclusion of St Mary's University College, Belfast in any proposed merger with Stranmillis University College, Belfast and Queen's University, Belfast.

(AQW 11774/11-15)

Dr Farry: I have met with the Board of Governors of St Mary's University College, Belfast who have stated their opposition to inclusion in any merger with Queen's University, Belfast and Stranmillis University College, Belfast.

Employee Travelling and Subsistence Allowances Scheme

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, under the Employee Travelling and Subsistence Allowances Scheme, which was agreed by the College Employers' Forum, why part-time lecturers in further education colleges are not designated a base for the purposes of claiming travel allowances; and whether he plans to consider amending the scheme to allow part-time lecturers staff to be included in the scheme.

(AQW 11803/11-15)

Dr Farry: Terms and conditions of employment, including the award of travelling expenses, are a matter for each college Governing Body.

I have passed this query to the Chair of the College Employers' Forum, who will respond to the Member directly.

Civil Servants

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many civil servants currently employed in his Department have been re-employed after receiving a redundancy package from the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

(AQW 11810/11-15)

Dr Farry: As of 18 May 2012, there are no civil servants currently employed within the Department for Employment and Learning who have been re-employed after receiving a redundancy package from the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Encouraging Employers to Adopt Age-Positive Policies

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how his Department is encouraging employers to adopt age-positive policies.

(AQW 11814/11-15)

Dr Farry: Under Section 75(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, my Department is required in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability and persons without
- persons with dependants and persons without.

Through our Equality Scheme, which was approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) on 14th September 2011, we demonstrate how the section 75 legislation is applied to all these groups, including the category relating to age.

Specific statutory responsibility for promoting equality in employment rests with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Employment Prospects for Older People

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how his Department is improving employment prospects for older people.

(AQW 11824/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department offers a wide range of assistance to clients of every age to help them overcome barriers to work and to move towards and into work.

The main focus for this assistance is through the Department's Adviser Service located in each Jobs and Benefits Office and JobCentre.

Advisers provide help and guidance on a wide range of issues including job search activities and on the Department's main adult return to work programme 'Steps to Work' which helps people who are unemployed or economically inactive to find and sustain employment.

A range of help is available through this programme including advice and guidance on finding and applying for jobs, intensive employability skills training, short vocational training courses, work experience, opportunities to undertake job related qualifications and support to enter self employment. There is no upper age limit for participating on the programme.

'Bridge to Employment' is another pre employment training programme offered by the Department which also helps unemployed people (aged 18+) find work – whatever their experience.

The 'Pathways to Work' programme, is offered by specialist Advisers and helps people of all ages with health conditions and disabilities to consider their options for returning to work.

The Careers Service within my Department provides impartial, information, advice and guidance, not only for school-age students but also for adults throughout Northern Ireland, and delivered by professionally qualified careers advisers.

Finally, the Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS) provision (in Belfast, Londonderry, Strabane, Newry & Mourne, Moyle and Cookstown only) offers an impartial and confidential advice and support service to help people overcome their barriers and find a job that best suits their skills and abilities.

All of these programmes and services focus on improving the employment prospects for older people.

Arm's-Length Bodies: Invoices

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what percentage of invoices received by each of his Department's arm's-length bodies, in the last twelve months, were paid within 30 days of receipt.

(AQW 11827/11-15)

Dr Farry: The percentage of invoices received by each of this Department's arm's-length bodies, in the last twelve months, which were paid within 30 days of receipt was as follows:

Construction Industry Training Board	99.9%
Ulster Supported Employment Limited	100.0%
Labour Relations Agency	95.0%

As described in the annual accounts of the organisation, the performance for Ulster Supported Employment Limited is calculated by reference to Trade Payable days.

Deputy Principal Positions

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he has any plans to create Deputy Principal positions within his Department over the next three months which will be located in the North West area.

(AQW 11946/11-15)

Dr Farry: As of 21 May 2012, there are no plans to create any Deputy Principal positions within the Department for Employment and Learning over the next three months which will be located in the North West area.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Applications for Grant Assistance for Tourism Projects

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many applications for grant assistance for tourism projects submitted by each local council have been successful in the last two years.

(AQW 10850/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): The table below lists all successful applications for grant assistance for tourism projects submitted by each Local Council over the last 2 years.

The number of applications for financial assistance received from each Local Council within these financial years has also been included. It should be noted that there can be a significant length of time from the receipt of an application to the issue of a grant offer and therefore the successful applications column does not correlate directly with the applications received column.

* For example: Moyle District Council have received 6 offers over the past 2 financial years and have submitted 1 application during the same period. 5 of the 6 offers were in respect of applications received prior to 1 April 2010

	Successful applications 2010/11 and 2011/12	Applications received 2010/11 and 2011/12
Antrim	0	0
Ards	0	3
Armagh	7	15
Ballymena	2	2
Ballymoney	0	1
Banbridge	1	2
Belfast	4	9
Carrickfergus	0	0
Castlereagh	0	0
Coleraine	10	11
Cookstown	0	0
Craigavon	0	2
Londonderry	5	8
Down	14	21
Dungannon	0	3
Fermanagh	0	2
Larne	1	2

	Successful applications 2010/11 and 2011/12	Applications received 2010/11 and 2011/12
Limavady	1	1
Lisburn	2	3
Magherafelt	0	0
Moyle *	6	1
Newry and Mourne	6	14
Newtownabbey	0	0
North Down	4	7
Omagh	0	0
Strabane	0	2
Total	63	106

Correspondence with Organisations on Hydraulic Fracturing

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide copies of all the outgoing and incoming correspondence with organisations and/or individuals, which are not part of Government, that relate to the topic of hydraulic fracturing, since the start of 2012.

(AQW 11169/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I do not consider the Assembly Question system the appropriate vehicle to seek correspondence to and from my Department.

Electricity Generators

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why some electricity generators have profit margins of between 20 and 50 percent, when most of the top 100 companies are achieving margins of between 1 and 6 percent.

(AQW 11368/11-15)

Mrs Foster: It is not appropriate to compare the profit margins of electricity generators with those of other companies in radically different sectors, due to the different nature of the businesses and the associated capital investment required.

Investment in power plants is very capital intensive and returns are typically earned over a twenty year period. Over this period, year on year profit margins can be volatile, and it is therefore difficult to reach robust conclusions on profitability based on any single financial year.

The Single Electricity Market (SEM) Committee monitors the profitability of generators in the market to ensure that consumers are adequately protected and that investment can be attracted when necessary. In general, profit margins have reduced in the SEM due to increased competition, in particular with the entry of two new efficient gas fired generation plants in 2010. It is also worth noting that generator profitability is expected to fall further from 2013 with the ending of free carbon allowances, which were allocated to generators as part of the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme.

The Utility Regulator instructed cancellation of the two most unfavourable Generating Unit Agreements (GUAs) in November 2010 (their earliest cancellation date), and has also recently stated their intention to instruct cancellation of a further five smaller GUAs, with effect from November 2012. Therefore with generators increasingly exposed to market prices, this will further reduce profit margins for the companies and costs for consumers.

New Tourism Strategy

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the urgency of the need for a new Tourism Strategy, particularly given the recent surge in visitor numbers. **(AQW 11396/11-15)**

Mrs Foster: The consultation on a tourism strategy document enabled us to garner the views of the industry and ensured we set meaningful and challenging tourism targets and commitments within the Programme for Government and the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy.

Good progress is being made against the key objectives identified as part of the consultation as both industry and government have taken on board the priorities outlined in the high level Action Plan, which formed part of the public consultation document.

However, work has been ongoing to develop and update the high level Action Plan into key priorities for action linked to the PfG commitments and the Economic Strategy themes. This has also allowed us to reflect on our experience of developing new marketing strategies for ni2012 and visitor projections for major projects/events coming on stream in 2012 and 2013. We have also taken account of the impact of the downturn in global tourism, to revise key targets on visitor numbers and tourist revenue to 2014 in light of reducing baselines in some markets.

I intend to finalise a 'Priorities for Action' Plan for tourism to ensure that tourism commitments in the Programme for Government are delivered and I intend to take the Plan to the Executive for endorsement in due course.

New Tourism Strategy

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the benefits of the new Tourism Strategy. **(AQW 11397/11-15)**

Mrs Foster: The draft Tourism Strategy sets an ambitious target to grow tourism's contribution to the Northern Ireland economy to £1 billion by 2020 i.e. double the current contribution made by tourism to the economy and increase visitors from 3.2million to 4.5million.

It is anticipated that the increased tourism revenue has the potential to create the environment in which the tourism sector could grow by 10,000 jobs by 2020.

Interim targets to 2014 on tourism revenue and visitor numbers have been set under the Programme for Government (PfG) 2011-15. These targets are to increase visitor numbers to 4.2 million and tourist revenue to £676million by December 2014. Work has also been ongoing to develop the Strategy document's high level Action Plan into key priorities for action linked to PfG commitments and Economic Strategy themes. This has also allowed us to take into account the impact to date of ni2012 and visitor projections for major projects/events coming on stream in 2012 and 2013.

I intend to finalise a 'Priorities for Action' Plan to ensure that tourism commitments in the Programme for Government are delivered in order to maximize the contribution tourism makes to the Northern Ireland economy for the benefit of all.

New Tourism Strategy

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an estimate of the number of jobs that will be created as a result of the new Tourism Strategy. **(AQW 11398/11-15)**

Mrs Foster: The key performance indicators for tourism are measured in terms of increasing tourism revenue and visitor numbers. Challenging targets have been set to 2020, and interim targets are included in the Programme for Government for the period to 2014.

It is anticipated that the long term target to double tourism revenue to £1 billion per annum by 2020 has the potential to create the environment in which the number of jobs supported by tourism in Northern Ireland could grow by 10,000.

Businesses in the South Down Area

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many businesses in the South Down area have benefited from financial support from InvestNI in each of the last three years. **(AQW 11470/11-15)**

Mrs Foster: The table below details the number of businesses that received an offer of assistance from Invest NI in the South Down Parliamentary Constituency Area (PCA) for the 2009-10 and 2010-11 financial years.

NUMBER OF BUSINESSES OFFERED ASSISTANCE BY INVEST NI IN SOUTH DOWN PCA (2009-10 AND 2010-11)

Year	No of Businesses
2009-10	109
2010-11	86

Note

- 1 As figures relate to the number of businesses within each individual year, they should not be totalled over the two year period. This could result in a business being counted twice.

The question refers to information relating to a time period that includes the 2011-12 financial year. Information for 2011-12 is not yet available due to an ongoing data verification exercise by Invest NI following its financial year end. I have asked Invest NI to make this information available to the member once this process has been completed, which should not be later than the end of May 2012.

Promoting Northern Ireland as a Tourism Destination

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action she is taking to promote Northern Ireland as a tourism destination, specifically during the 2012 London Olympics. **(AQW 11495/11-15)**

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) is working closely with Tourism Ireland Ltd (TIL) and Visit Britain (VB), to ensure maximum exposure for Northern Ireland throughout Great Britain during the 2012 London Olympics.

NITB is supporting specific London 2012 Festival/Cultural Olympiad events through the ni2012 programme of events with TIL maximising publicity around these events and around the Olympic Torch Relay, which comes to Northern Ireland in June.

Key tourism benefits around the Games will come from contacts and media familiarisation trips with non-accredited press and both organisations are working to bring these to Northern Ireland before, during and after the games.

Tourism Ireland will shortly launch an advertising campaign to target those Londoners who want to 'escape' the Games. The campaign will include advertising in train stations and newspapers inviting Londoners to come to Northern Ireland this summer. In addition, NITB is working with Visit Britain under its Memorandum of Understanding to maximise a range of promotional and marketing opportunities with the London Olympics Media Centre during the Games period.

Grants Provided by InvestNI

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the number of grants provided by InvestNI to companies in which InvestNI board members, or their spouses, are employees, shareholders or board members, in each of the last five years; and (ii) the total value of the grants.
(AQW 11530/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Information on Invest NI Board Member interests and transactions involving Invest NI Board Members are published in the agency's Annual Report and Accounts.

Annual Reports covering the period 2002 – 2011 are available on the publications section of Invest NI's website at www.investni.com/index/publications

Grant Aid from InvestNI

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the fifteen companies which received the highest amount of grant aid from InvestNI since 2005; (ii) the amount of grant aid and the number of offers of assistance each company received; and (iii) how each company's grant total compares with the total InvestNI grant awarded in the same period.
(AQW 11531/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The question refers to information relating to a time period that includes the 2011-12 financial year. Information for 2011-12 is not yet available due to an ongoing data verification exercise by Invest NI following its financial year end. I have asked Invest NI to make this information available to the member once this process has been completed, which should not be later than the end of May.

InvestNI's Innovation Voucher Scheme

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the uptake of InvestNI's Innovation Voucher Scheme, broken down by constituency.
(AQW 11546/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Since the Innovation Voucher scheme was launched in June 2008, over 1600 applications have been received, resulting in the award of 874 vouchers to small enterprises across Northern Ireland. A breakdown of voucher distribution is included below.

Constituency	Total Vouchers Awarded
Belfast East	43
Belfast North	24
Belfast South	64
Belfast West	24
East Antrim	41
East Londonderry	34
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	51
Foyle	45
Lagan Valley	54
Mid Ulster	97
Newry & Armagh	67
North Antrim	42
North Down	38

Constituency	Total Vouchers Awarded
South Antrim	42
South Down	70
Strangford	40
Upper Bann	53
West Tyrone	45
	874

InvestNI's Access to Finance Strategy

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the uptake of each fund within InvestNI's Access to Finance Strategy; and (ii) the total funding allocated, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 11547/11-15)

Mrs Foster: There are three equity funds and two loan funds either operational or planned within Invest NI's Access to Finance Strategy. These are as follows:

- £10million NISPO Funds – equity and proof of concept grant operational since 2009.
- £16million Co-Fund NI – equity and operational since July 2011.
- £30million Development Fund – equity; manager raising funds.
- £50million Growth Loan Fund – debt and should be operational in June 2012.
- £5million Small Business Loan Fund – debt and procurement process imminent.

Details of the uptake of each operational fund and total funding allocated, including private sector leverage, by constituency is as follows:

PCA	NISPO £'000	Co-Fund NI £'000	Total £'000
Belfast East	607	1,175	1,782
Belfast North	498	0	498
Belfast South	1,740	0	1,740
Belfast West	149	0	149
East Antrim	237	0	237
East Londonderry	100	0	100
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	0	0	0
Foyle	172	0	172
Lagan Valley	630	544	1,174
Mid-Ulster	417	0	417
Newry & Armagh	117	0	117
North Antrim	43	0	43
North Down	392	0	392

PCA	NISPO £'000	Co-Fund NI £'000	Total £'000
South Antrim	120	0	120
South Down	200	0	200
Strangford	214	0	214
Upper Bann	150	0	150
West Tyrone	20	0	20
Total	5,806	1,719	7,525

- 1 The Development Fund, Growth Loan Fund and Small Business Loan Fund are not yet operational and as such, there has been no uptake on these funds.

Invest NI's Business Start-Up Advice

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the uptake of Invest NI's business start-up advice, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 11548/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Since October 2011 Invest NI has responded to 3941 enquiries, held 163 business clinics attended by 1091 individuals and met another 519 individuals which in turn resulted in 615 completed business plans. The breakdown by constituency is:

Constituency	Enquiries	1:1'S	Clinic Attendees	Business Plans
Belfast East	182	14	40	21
Belfast North	216	20	45	22
Belfast South	242	35	68	15
Belfast West	203	20	58	36
East Antrim	157	16	64	36
East Londonderry	220	29	68	38
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	210	32	76	40
Foyle	271	88	27	79
Lagan Valley	236	17	51	18
Mid Ulster	207	27	63	44
Newry And Mourne	243	29	75	39
North Antrim	208	21	57	44
North Down	217	25	48	24
South Antrim	185	24	60	19
South Down	231	31	69	32
Strangford	204	24	41	21
Upper Bann	271	24	79	37
West Tyrone	238	43	102	50
Northern Ireland Total	3941	519	1091	615

HMS Caroline

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action she is taking to ensure that HMS Caroline remains in Belfast.

(AQW 11550/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I have been working for some time now to find the best solution for HMS Caroline and have met with various stakeholders who are also keen to have HMS Caroline retained in Belfast.

An economic appraisal which considered the options around retaining the ship has been finalised and discussions with the Royal Navy are ongoing.

Grants for the Installation of Wood Burning Stoves

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department intends to introduce grants for the installation of wood burning stoves that are fuelled by wood pellets.

(AQW 11632/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department recently held a public consultation on the introduction of a Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI); details of the proposals are available on the DETI website. The purpose of the RHI is to encourage greater uptake of renewable heating systems in Northern Ireland.

In light of responses to the consultation, some further analysis has been undertaken to inform the final policy position. I hope to make an announcement shortly regarding the final scheme and this will include details of eligible technologies and the levels of support.

Fibre Broadband Roll-Out Programme

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she will grant leverage to allow the current fibre broadband roll-out programme to be extended further into the BT access network, thereby providing faster broadband speeds to rural customers.

(AQW 11709/11-15)

Mrs Foster: There is no scope for additional investment under this programme as the Next Generation Broadband Project is now completed and in its operational phase. Under this contract, fibre services are now available from 1,265 street cabinets across Northern Ireland. This government investment of £19.5m levered initially some £32m of private sector investment.

Prompted by the success of the project, BT has upgraded a further 783 cabinets across Northern Ireland under its own Next Generation Access programme. This is on top of the 110 cabinets upgraded across Londonderry as part of the City of Culture preparations and other upgrades completed prior to this project. This is estimated to be a private sector investment worth some £30-£35m. Once complete some 2480 of the 2900 cabinets will be fibre-enabled across Northern Ireland meaning that some 89% of telephone lines in Northern Ireland will be connected to an enabled cabinet.

The project has been delivered on time, on budget, and in line with DFP spend approvals.

Further investment in this or any other broadband project needs to be subject to a cost benefit analysis that indicates value for money for the public purse.

My Department is in the process of examining options to improve broadband speeds, to ensure how the objectives set out in DETI's Telecoms Action Plan 2011-2015 and by BDUK might best be achieved.

Extension of the Gas Network

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 11244/11-15, whether her Department has commissioned any other research on the extension of the gas network, and, if so, to provide details.

(AQW 11895/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Department recently appointed consultants to prepare a detailed Outline Business Case (OBC) in order to facilitate key decisions on extending the natural gas network, particularly in respect of funding options. The OBC, which is due to be completed in July 2012, represents a further economic appraisal which will review the costs and benefits of gas network extension in more detail than the 2010 high level technical and economic feasibility study.

Departmental Officials: Flights

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many flights in total her departmental officials have taken in each of the last two years.

(AQW 11942/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Departmental Officials took the following numbers of flights:

Financial Year	2010-2011	256 Flights
	2011-2012	262 Flights

Department of the Environment

Revised Proposals for a Future Exemptions Regime Under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993 and the Environmental Regulations 2011

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the impact of the engagement document 'Revised Proposals for a Future Exemptions Regime Under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993 and the Environmental Regulations 2011', and in particular its relevance for Northern Ireland.

(AQW 10298/11-15)

Mr Attwood (The Minister of the Environment): The document to which you refer was the subject of a UK wide stakeholder engagement in 2010 and followed an earlier consultation (in 2009) on proposals for a future exemption regime for radioactive substances. The revised proposals were broadly welcomed and have resulted in the introduction on 1 October 2011 of two pieces of legislation in Northern Ireland; namely the Radioactive Substances Act 1993 (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Radioactive Substances Exemption (Northern Ireland) Order 2011. The latter introduced a new single Exemption Order that replaced the previous 18.

Exemption Orders are a mechanism for providing a degree of control over minor uses of radioactive substances where there is a clear benefit from their use, whilst ensuring continued protection of the environment and the public. In Northern Ireland Exemption Orders apply mainly to hospitals, schools and local industry.

The impact of the new legislation is to clarify the definition of a radioactive substance and to simplify the exemption process and reduce regulatory burdens while maintaining safety standards.

Planning Application for a Single Wind Turbine

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment whether access sight lines are required for a planning application for a single wind turbine.

(AQW 11269/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Department recognises that good visibility is essential for the safety and convenience of all road users and will therefore seek the expert advice of Roads Service in relation to applications which involve a new access or alterations to an existing access.

In cases where a planning application for a single wind turbine involves the creation of a new access or alterations to an existing access, the Department would normally require visibility splays to be provided

in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 3: Access, Movement and Parking and DCAN 15: Vehicle Access Standards.

However, not all planning applications for single wind turbines involve the creation or alteration of an existing access. In such cases improved visibility splays may not be required.

Planning Policy Statement 21

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the ongoing performance in the operation of Planning Policy Statement 21 on sustainable development in the countryside.

(AQO 1992/11-15)

Mr Attwood: My assessment is that PPS21 is working effectively and has been well received although action has been required to improve the consistency of its application.

I intend to make a full statement to the Assembly in this regard as soon as practicable after a report on the review of the operation of PPS21 has been finalised.

Magherafelt District Council: E-mail Address

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the discussions his departmental officials have had with Magherafelt District Council regarding its proposal to remove '.gov.uk' from its email address.

(AQO 1994/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Magherafelt District Council officers have discussed that Council's decision to remove '.gov.uk' from its e-mail address with my officials and have been advised that the Cabinet Office in London controls the process for withdrawing the use of a '.gov.uk' domain name. The Council has been referred to the Cabinet Office for further advice on this process. Three other councils in Northern Ireland use other names. Independent of this issue, I very much support the use of townland names, in March I wrote to all council Chief Executives encouraging their use through the pointer system and from April requested all DOE correspondence include townland addresses.

Review of Public Administration

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the timetable for the implementation of the Review of Public Administration proposals.

(AQO 1995/11-15)

Mr Attwood: As the Minister responsible for the implementation of local government reform, I am managing the programme in line with the 2015 timetable proposed in the Executive's Programme for Government 2011-15.

I am taking forward two main pieces of legislation required to give effect to local government reorganisation, the first of which is the draft Local Government (Boundaries) Order (NI) 2012, which was laid before the Assembly on 24 April 2012. The Order is currently being examined by the Environment Committee.

The second is the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill which, subject to the Executive's agreement, I intend to introduce during the autumn session to give effect to the Executive's decisions on the future shape of local government.

The Bill will provide for the newly elected councils to operate in shadow form between the date of the next local government elections in 2014 until they take up their full powers and responsibilities in April 2015. The Shadow Councils will have a democratic mandate and will be given the statutory authority in the Reorganisation Bill to make decisions and work towards planning and developing the policies and practices that would shape the direction of the new councils before they become fully operational.

In addition to progressing the Bill through the Assembly, a programme of subordinate legislation and guidance will be taken forward to give effect to the Bill. This will include subordinate legislation on shadow arrangements, new governance arrangements, the new ethical standards regime and community planning.

I have also recently established a number of implementation structures to provide political and operational input that will manage and integrate the work required to bring about the delivery of the overall programme. Working groups have also been set up to undertake key areas of work on transferring functions, finance, HR, legislation, programme delivery and communications, with local Voluntary Transition Committees bringing about convergence of their constituent councils on the ground.

Single-use Carrier Bags

Mr Ross asked the Minister of the Environment when the levy on single use carrier bags will be fully introduced.

(AQO 1996/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I can confirm that I intend to adopt a 2-stage approach to the implementation of the carrier bag levy.

A levy on single use bags is to be introduced in April 2013. This will require subordinate legislation and I plan to bring this to the Assembly in the autumn.

Subject to Assembly approval, the levy will then be extended to certain types of reusable bags in April 2014 – and for this, primary legislation will be required. The Executive has given approval for the introduction of the necessary Bill to the Assembly. Work on that Bill is at its early stages, but will be progressed as soon as possible.

George Best Belfast City Airport

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the process that is under way to establish an improved outcome for local residents in relation to aircraft noise and late flights at George Best Belfast City Airport.

(AQO 1997/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Airport submitted their proposals for a noise management system on 23rd March 2012. The variation proposed by the Airport includes removal of the 'Seats for Sale' limit, the introduction of a noise contour control cap and other noise control measures. Their report includes detailed economic and environmental information to support their proposals, including 3 potential growth scenarios.

On 29th March I announced the next step in this public process, an 8 week public consultation period which is due to finish on 8th June. The consultation has been widely publicised and the local councils and other key consultees have been informed. My Department has developed a system for submitting representations online via the internet and any representations submitted are quickly available for public viewing.

A independent public inquiry or examination will be held in late summer or early Autumn to consider the proposals and the responses to them from the consultation process. After I have considered the independent report and recommendations of the Examination, I will decide what modifications should be included in the Planning Agreement. It is my intention that the process will be concluded by Christmas.

Ballyhornan Beach, County Down

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of the Environment what action his Department is taking to alleviate the environmental impact of raw sewage being pumped into the sea at Ballyhornan beach, Co. Down.

(AQO 1998/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD) requires discharges of sewage to coastal waters to have “appropriate treatment”. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has determined the appropriate treatment requirements for Ballyhornan to consist of a long sea outfall and fine screening.

NIEA has confirmed that fine screening is not currently in place at Ballyhornan and officials are working to resolve this. The Agency has taken enforcement action including the issue of warning letters in 2009 and 2010 and the issue of a postal caution in 2011 to Northern Ireland Water (NIW), in relation to Ballyhornan being non-compliant with the conditions of its Water Order Discharge Consent. NIW has had ongoing difficulties in securing the necessary land and a right of way agreement to facilitate the installation of fine screens. I am advised that these problems are still ongoing though agreement has been reached on the land purchase.

As Ballyhornan WWTW continues to be non-compliant NIEA is currently in the process of preparing a Water Order Enforcement Notice. The Notice will require that all conditions of the Department's consent are complied with by March 2013. It is an offence for any person to fail to comply with the requirements imposed by an Enforcement Notice.

NIW has advised that it plans, in the longer term, to intercept screened flows and to pump the sewage to an upgraded Ardglass WWTW and will continue to maintain the existing sewerage system in the area until the outstanding issues are resolved.

Areas of Special Scientific Interest

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment when the programme for the designation of Areas of Special Scientific Interest will be completed.

(AQO 1999/11-15)

Mr Attwood: At the current rate of declaration, it is expected that the programme of ASSI declarations will be substantially completed by 2018. By that stage there should be around 440 ASSIs and all those sites on the Department's priority list will have been declared. The programme of declaration may, technically, not reach a conclusion, as science and understanding of the environment evolve. On an ongoing basis, other mechanisms are deployed to aid protection. The annual target of declarations has reduced by 10 from 25 to 15, a matter I will consider further.

Beaches

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the progress made in cleaning up beaches since the launch of his Good Beach Summit.

(AQO 2000/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I have now hosted four Good Beach Summits and progress has been encouraging. With good participation from government agencies, district councils, user groups, community groups, NGOs and other representative groups, there is real progress in delivering the multi-strand Action Plan and exploring new issues.

The Action Plan was agreed at the first summit under four headings:

- Improve water quality;
- Improve beach cleanliness, facilities, management & signage;
- Keep public & media better informed;
- Support the coastal economy.

There has been specific progress in the areas of:

- Sewerage infrastructure improvements;
- Pollution prevention actions, following catchment studies;

- A beach signage project – in line with revised Bathing Waters Directive;
- Anti-litter publicity in support of the new Clean Neighbourhoods legislation;
- Progress towards a Marine Litter Strategy.
- Review of bathing waters identification, under the EC Directive;
- Increased participation in beach awards schemes, including North South co-ordination;
- Development of a dedicated beaches web site – BeachNI.

Much of this will be further highlighted at the forthcoming beach awards ceremony on 24 May when I will present more International Blue Flag, Seaside and Green Coast awards than have ever been presented in Northern Ireland before. In part these awards reflect the excellent bathing water quality results in 2011 but they are primarily recognition of excellent management at our most popular bathing beaches and of improving standards.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Remuneration Packages for Public Servants

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, since coming into office, to detail (i) the proposals he has (a) received; and (b) approved for the restructuring of the remuneration packages for public servants; and (ii) which office holders benefitted.

(AQW 10940/11-15)

Mr Wilson (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): The information requested is not readily available and can only be compiled at disproportionate costs.

Applications for Rates Exemption

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of applications for rates exemption received by the Valuations Office since the introduction of rates on empty properties in October 2011, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 11310/11-15)

Mr Wilson: This answer assumes that the question seeks details of the number of applications received by Land & Property Services (LPS) from ratepayers to seek to remove properties from the valuation list, thereby obviating any rate liability, following the introduction of the Rating of Empty Homes in October 2011.

A ratepayer in Northern Ireland may lodge an application at any time with the District Valuer in LPS against the rateable valuation of a property. The District Valuer will register a case, inspect the property and issue a decision amending or retaining the rateable value. If dissatisfied with the District Valuer's decision a domestic ratepayer has a right of appeal to the Commissioner of Valuation with a further right of challenge to the Northern Ireland Valuation Tribunal.

All domestic applications, whether seeking removal of the property from the valuation list or seeking a reduction in the assessed value for any reason, are registered under a single case type. This information is held on a council by council basis and not on a constituency basis. It is therefore not possible to provide a breakdown by constituency showing only those applications seeking deletion from the valuation list.

The table below shows a breakdown on a council by council basis of all domestic applications received by LPS since 1 October 2011.

District	Count
Antrim	94

District	Count
Ards	227
Armagh	278
Ballymena	161
Ballymoney	103
Banbridge	133
Belfast	857
Carrickfergus	42
Castlereagh	65
Coleraine	197
Cookstown	200
Craigavon	299
Down	203
Dungannon & South Tyrone	285
Fermanagh	293
Larne	78
Limavady	97
Lisburn	191
Derry	140
Magherafelt	159
Moyle	81
Newry & Mourne	455
Newtownabbey	99
North Down	133
Omagh	259
Strabane	103
Total	5232

Pensions Across the Public Sector

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 10695/11-15, to confirm that all pensions across the entire public sector are now exclusively Consumer Price Indexed, including benefits earned by contributions before the change from Retail Price Index; and to specify any exceptions. **(AQW 11330/11-15)**

Mr Wilson: Pensions payable from the main unfunded schemes in respect of employments commonly referred to as 'public sector' in Northern Ireland are now Consumer Price Index linked. Schedule 2 of the Pension (Increase) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971 sets out the sectors which include; Civil Service; Health Service; Education sector and Fire & Rescue Service. My Department has the responsibility for introducing the legislative change to cover the uprating of benefits payable from these schemes. I can confirm that pensions payable in respect of Police and holders of judicial office are now also uprated in line with the Consumer Price Index.

I must point out as Minister of Finance and Personnel my area of responsibility for the specific sector rests with the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland). I can confirm that the change to the Consumer Price Index applies both for pensions in payment and preserved pension benefits attributable to contributions paid before the change from Retail Price Index for this scheme.

I also share responsibility with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in the Republic of Ireland for the North/South Pension Scheme. When responding to a previous AQ (AQW 10695/11-15) my officials had indicated that they were working on the change from the Retail Price Index to the Consumer Price Index for benefits payable to the Northern members of the North/South pension scheme. This has yet to be implemented; however, I do anticipate this change being introduced for this scheme also.

I do not have responsibility for all public sector pension schemes. There may therefore be exceptions in other areas that I may not be aware of where scheme rules may explicitly refer to Retail Price Index, in terms of benefits earned by contributions paid before the change from the Retail Price Index.

Businesses in the North Down Area: Rates Bills

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many businesses in the North Down area were unable to pay their rates bill in the 2011/12 financial year.

(AQW 11463/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Information is not available on the number of businesses that were unable to pay their rates bill. Information is available on the number of non-domestic properties in the North Down Borough Council Area for which a rates assessment raised in April 2011 has not been fully paid by the end of the year. Of the 2,010 rates assessments raised in April 2011 in respect of the Non-Domestic properties in the North Down Borough Council Area, as at 31st March 2012 some or all of the April 2011 debt was still outstanding for 315 properties. No payments were received in respect of assessments raised in April 2011 for 117 of these properties in 2011/12.

PEACE III Funding Allocated to Victims Groups

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much PEACE III funding has been allocated to victims groups.

(AQW 11475/11-15)

Mr Wilson: To date, PEACE III funding of £12,878,562 has been awarded to projects which include victim and survivor groups as project partners.

In addition, funding of £3,855,565 has been awarded to projects which include victims and survivors as a specific target group.

Performance Bonuses to Public Servants

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 10939/11-15, for what period the requested information could be supplied at a proportionate cost and whether such information will now be provided.

(AQW 11477/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The disproportionate cost in responding to AQW 10939/11-15 arises due to the scope of the question rather than the timeframe it refers to. Information relating to bonus payments to specific office holders is not recorded centrally and would entail writing to all public bodies in order to provide an answer.

If the Member has a specific interest in mind, it may be productive to present the question in a more direct manner.

Dormant Accounts Scheme

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) what progress has been made, since the Executive Paper of 6 November 2007, on reaching an agreement with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on how funds from the Dormant Account Scheme will be allocated; and (ii) when funding will be used to benefit constituents.

(AQW 11483/11-15)

Mr Wilson: During 2011-12, £47 million of funding was released by the Reclaim Fund to the UK Big Lottery Fund. I have no further information in relation to either the timing or quantum of future allocations as this is dependent on what the Reclaim Fund releases to the UK Big Lottery Fund.

The mechanism for distributing the NI share of this funding is still being developed. Proposals for the draft spending priorities have been submitted to the First Minister and deputy First Minister for comment. Any funding relating to 2011-12 can be carried forward into 2012-13 and will not be lost but it is my intention that the funds will be available for distribution in this financial year subject to Executive clearance.

Dormant Accounts Scheme

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the amount of funding that has been earmarked for distribution since the establishment of the Dormant Accounts Scheme; and (ii) how much of the funding will be allocated in the current financial year.

(AQW 11485/11-15)

Mr Wilson: During 2011-12, £47 million of funding was released by the Reclaim Fund to the UK Big Lottery Fund. I have no further information in relation to either the timing or quantum of future allocations as this is dependent on what the Reclaim Fund releases to the UK Big Lottery Fund.

The mechanism for distributing the NI share of this funding is still being developed. Proposals for the draft spending priorities have been submitted to the First Minister and deputy First Minister for comment. Any funding relating to 2011-12 can be carried forward into 2012-13 and will not be lost but it is my intention that the funds will be available for distribution in this financial year subject to Executive clearance.

Rates Revaluation in 2015

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, following the next rates revaluation in 2015, to detail (i) when the new adjusted rates levies will be applied; and (ii) what will be the legal basis for applying the adjusted levies.

(AQW 11500/11-15)

Mr Wilson: I assume that the Member is referring to the new rental values that will apply following the 2015 non-domestic general revaluation. These will be effective for billing purposes from 1 April 2015.

The legislative cover for this is contained in Article 45(1) and (2) of the Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977. These provide for the preparation, publication and coming into force of a new valuation list (containing a general revaluation of such properties as determined by the Department).

Capital and Revenue Savings

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the capital and revenue savings his Department has made in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11501/11-15)

Mr Wilson: In 2009-10 and 2010-11 my Department delivered revenue efficiencies of £11.3m and £15.8m respectively. In 2011-12 my Department made revenue savings of £5.8m

Capital budgets over the three-year period in question were zero based. Therefore, in common with other departments, my Department was not required to make capital savings in these three years.

Establishment of an Enterprise Zone

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the discussions he has had with HM Treasury to date on the establishment of an enterprise zone(s).

(AQW 11502/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Executive has not finalised its approach to Enterprise Zones in Northern Ireland. Looking at the English approach most of the policy levers available within the Government's Enterprise Zone initiative in terms of rating, planning and broadband delivery are already devolved and being applied across Northern Ireland as a whole. The only really new aspect of this is the potential to offer enhanced capital allowances in a limited number of such zones and I have previously written to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to indicate our interest in exploring how these might be applied in Northern Ireland.

However, what we do on this will naturally follow the work we are taking forward through the Joint Ministerial Working Group (JMWG) with the Government on Rebalancing the Northern Ireland Economy, where if we devolve Corporation Tax powers or get enhanced capital allowances, all of Northern Ireland could potentially benefit.

The final meeting of the JMWG is scheduled for 25th June 2012 and it is anticipated that it will produce its report in the summer. Following that, we expect a decision will be made by the Government on the further steps that might be taken to rebalance the Northern Ireland economy.

Funds Seized from Dormant Banks Accounts

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the level of funds seized from dormant banks accounts that was allocated to public service expenditure in each of the last two years; and (ii) to where it was allocated.

(AQW 11503/11-15)

Mr Wilson: During 2011-12, £47 million of funding was released by the Reclaim Fund to the UK Big Lottery Fund.

The mechanism for distributing the NI share of this funding is still being developed. Any funding relating to 2011-12 can be carried forward into 2012-13 and will not be lost but it is my intention that the funds will be available for distribution in this financial year subject to Executive clearance.

Duplication of Work in the Civil Service

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has identified any duplication of work in the Civil Service in each of the last three years; and what steps he has taken to remedy each situation.

(AQW 11504/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The last two Northern Ireland budgets contained a requirement for each department to produce a plan detailing how they would deliver necessary efficiencies and savings. The associated guidance issued by my department stated that these savings should be sought from reductions in administration and improvements in efficiency in the first instance.

It is ultimately up to individual Ministers and departments to detail how they are delivering their required savings. However, the cessation of unnecessary work would be fundamental to this process.

Small and Medium-Sized Businesses

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many small and medium-sized businesses have participated in the tendering process, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11586/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The numbers of small and medium-sized businesses participating in the tendering process is shown in the table below.

Year	Number downloading tender documents	Number submitting tenders
2009/2010	2,351	747
2010/2011	2,401	756
2011/2012	2,532	807

These numbers relate to all the tender competitions run by the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) on behalf of its customers. All DFP procurements valued at more than £30k must be channelled through CPD.

Government Work and Contracts

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what size businesses can tender for Government work and contracts.

(AQW 11588/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Any size of business can tender for Government contracts. Each tender competition will have its own set of selection criteria which will require tenderers to demonstrate that they have the capability and capacity to meet the size and scope of the contract requirements.

In 2010-2011 more than half (58%) of all contracts awarded by Centres of Procurement Expertise went to small and micro business employing 50 people or less. This clearly demonstrates the opportunities which exist for companies of all sizes to compete successfully for public sector contracts.

Use of Video-Conferencing by Departmental Staff

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the use of video-conferencing by departmental staff in each of the last two years; and (ii) the level of savings achieved as a result.

(AQW 11589/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Detailed records on the use of video-conferencing facilities by departmental staff are not held, so it is not possible to provide the information requested.

Zero-Based Budgeting

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether the process of zero-based budgeting has been applied to any aspect of the operation of the Civil Service or arm's-length bodies.

(AQW 11590/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Both Budget 2008-11 and Budget 2011-15 adopted a zero based approach to capital investment. This was appropriate due to the nature of capital expenditure where allocations could be determined based on the consideration of individual capital projects/programmes.

The nature of current expenditure means that it is more suited to an incremental approach. Particularly as a large percentage of the current expenditure budget consists of costs, such as pay, that are incremental in nature and cannot easily be avoided. However, the requirement for departments to deliver efficiencies /savings means that an evaluation of existing activities, one of the key advantages of zero based budgeting, can still be undertaken even with an incremental approach.

The ongoing review of budget allocations to departments will not require a zero-based approach as it will only be assessing whether marginal changes are needed to the original plans. A zero-based assessment is only appropriate where there is a fundamental alteration to the resources available to the Executive.

Income Projections Contained in the Budget

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to what extent income projections contained in the Budget have been met over the last three years.

(AQW 11591/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Only the first year of the 2011-15 Budget cycle has been completed. The Provisional Outturn data for that year, including income received, is currently being collected from departments.

Budget 2011-15 contained a range of assumptions on income generation. The biggest element was undoubtedly capital receipts, including asset disposals. Work on this is now so advanced that specific disposal receipts have now been included within individual departmental baselines for the remainder of the Budget period.

Work on delivering other sources of income is being progressed by the ministerial Budget Review Group on issues such as plastic bag levies, increased car parking etc.

Advertising Civil Service Jobs

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, with a view to maximising job applications from outside the Greater Belfast area, where most daily newspaper sales take place, whether he intends to review the current practice of Civil Service jobs not being advertised in weekly local newspapers.

(AQW 11597/11-15)

Mr Wilson: There is no Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) ban on advertising job vacancies in weekly newspapers. The NICS uses a wide range of media to market recruitment opportunities to ensure effective communication and value for money. This may include the use of local newspapers where a selection panel considers this appropriate.

In December 2011 the Northern Ireland Executive agreed to introduce tight controls on advertising expenditure, open classified advertising up to competition and change the legislation to allow greater use of online and

other media for classified advertising. Departments are currently reviewing the level of classified advertising within their own Departments.

Central Procurement Directorate Advertisements

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel why Central Procurement Directorate advertisements are not placed in weekly local newspapers; and for his assessment of whether this disadvantages rural areas where the reach of daily newspapers is less.

(AQW 11599/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Since May 2008, Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) has advertised all its tender opportunities on the eSourcingNI internet portal. This portal is now well established as the single source of all CPD's currently available procurements. Over 30,000 companies have already registered with the portal and, to maintain awareness, a monthly advert is placed in the three local regional newspapers - the Belfast Telegraph, the News Letter and the Irish News.

There are a large number of local weekly newspapers and to advertise in all would significantly increase CPD's advertising costs. The portal is a cost effective means of providing companies with details of all CPD's opportunities and those from other Centres of Procurement Expertise. It is fully accessible to everyone right across Northern Ireland and provides instant, simultaneous, access to each competition.

In addition, as tenders are also submitted electronically, the transaction costs for companies based in rural areas are also reduced.

Statutory Duty in Article 4(3) of The Marriages (NI) Order 2003

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel by what practice the statutory duty in Article 4(3) of The Marriages (NI) Order 2003 is currently fulfilled; and for his assessment of the adequacy by which this alerts the public in regard to identifying intended sham marriages.

(AQW 11640/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The statutory duty under Article 4(3) of The Marriages (NI) Order 2003 is fulfilled when the registrar places on public display a list containing the names and dates of each intended marriage for which the registrar has received a marriage notice. This list is displayed during council office opening hours. Any person may examine the list and, if he/she claims to have reason to do so, inspect the full entry relating to the marriage and make an objection in writing.

An objection on the grounds of a legal impediment as defined in Article 6 (6) of the Order will be investigated by the Registrar General.

The requirement to place notices on public display is not primarily to alert the public in regard to identifying sham marriages. Separate provisions exist for the express purpose of reporting suspected sham marriages under article 24 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and the Reporting of Suspicious Marriages (NI) Regulations 2000.

Publication of Forthcoming Marriages

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he is aware of a correlation between the discontinuance of the publication of forthcoming marriages, in audited weekly circulation newspapers, and the number of sham marriages.

(AQW 11662/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Family Law (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 abolished the requirement to publish certain forthcoming civil marriages in a local newspaper. There was never a requirement to publish forthcoming religious marriages.

Sham marriages were defined by the introduction of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. This legislation included provisions for reporting suspicious marriages to the Home Office.

Social Impact Tracker Software Designed and Owned by Cunamh

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) for his assessment of the security of the Social Impact Tracker software designed and owned by Cunamh, and endorsed by the Special EU Programmes Body and used by its project managers; and (ii) whether its hosts have received security clearance.

(AQW 11775/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Advice to the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) is that the Social Impact Tracker product is hosted on a secure server encrypted using 256 bit strong SSL encryption to maintain data privacy and integrity. The system is password protected and secure programming techniques are used to prevent unauthorised access. Data relating to the product is managed by a third party supplier located in a secure data centre, and access to the servers is strictly limited.

Cunamh ICT has also advised that it adheres to the Data Protection Act 1998 and is registered as a Data Controller with the Information Commissioner's Office.

SEUPB has never itself used the Social Impact Tracker software, and has no role in management or supervision of the software.

SEUPB advise that any endorsement previously provided did not relate to the current online software, but to the previous desktop based version of the product in which the software had to be installed on individual PCs and a central records database setup in-house within the project / client organisation. Additionally, any endorsement does not offer commentary on the adequacy of technical security or data management issues.

I believe that in this instance the issue of security clearance is not relevant.

Discretionary Housing Benefit Payments

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether there was a Barnett Consequential in the 2011/12 financial year for discretionary Housing Benefit payments; and to detail the amount.
(AQW 11815/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Housing Benefit is demand led and, as such, is included in the Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) budget. AME is funded by the Treasury on the basis of twice yearly forecasts submitted by DFP. In the case of Housing Benefit these forecasts are provided by the Department for Social Development.

For information purposes, the Treasury provide indicative Barnett Consequentials for AME programmes based on changes to the budgets of Whitehall departments. The Autumn Statement 2011 identified an indicative Barnett Consequential of £0.034 million in 2011-12 in respect of Housing Benefit. However, it must be remembered that these amounts are only indicative with the final AME budget for the year being based on forecasts of demand.

Corporation Tax

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the devolution of Corporation Tax powers.
(AQO 2009/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Executive continues to work with Government on the issues involved in devolving responsibility for corporation tax. Following two constructive meetings of the Joint Ministerial Working Group on Rebalancing the Northern Ireland Economy, our final meeting has been arranged for 25th June 2012.

Considerable progress has been made on the work programme agreed at the first two meetings but there are still a number of issues to be resolved over the next few months, particularly around the potential costs and practical implications of transferring corporation tax powers. That said, it is still anticipated that the Ministerial Working Group will produce a report in the summer and a decision will be taken by the Government on whether it will agree to the devolution of these powers following this.

Government: Disposal of Assets

Mr McLaughlin asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the objectivity and transparency of Land and Property Services' role in the disposal of property assets that are owned by Executive Departments.
(AQO 2006/11-15)

Mr Wilson: LPS has a team of Chartered Valuation Surveyors who provide independent professional advice to public bodies at all stages of the disposal process. LPS value surplus properties for transfer to other Departments, undertake direct negotiations with former owners, adjoining owners or sitting tenants, advise on the best means of disposal, appoint selling agents and approve selling prices.

The key role of the District Valuer is to ensure that disposing public sector bodies get best value when selling property assets. I am of the view that LPS is both objective and transparent in how it undertakes these disposals. LPS both applies and advises public bodies on the application of the published guidelines for Disposal of Public Sector Property in Northern Ireland. These guidelines ensure objectivity and transparency.

Furthermore all open market sales use private sector estate agents, appointed through a competitive tendering process. Details of all 67 current sales are available on the LPS website.

Small Business Rate Relief Scheme

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the number of newly eligible businesses that applied for Small Business Rate Relief, following the recent extension of the scheme.
(AQO 2007/11-15)

Mr Wilson: With effect from 1st April 2012, an additional band of 20% relief was added to the existing Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) scheme for properties with a Net Annual Value (NAV) between £5,001-£10,000.

Businesses do not have to apply for the relief. It is applied automatically by Land & Property Services (LPS).

At 1st April 2012, 8,214 'newly eligible' businesses fell within the new NAV range and were awarded 20% relief.

Special EU Programmes Body

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many funding applications are currently being considered by the Special EU Programmes Body.
(AQO 2008/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Special EU Programmes Body has advised that there are currently four applications for PEACE III funding and twenty-six applications for INTERREG IVA funding under consideration.

Air Passenger Duty

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the devolution of Air Passenger Duty powers.
(AQO 2010/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Precise arrangements for the devolution of Air Passenger Duty (APD) powers are being finalised and discussions with Treasury and HMRC are ongoing in this regard.

The necessary legislative changes to devolve APD powers for direct long haul flights will be made in the 2012 Finance Bill and I would expect this to have Royal Assent by early autumn at the latest. A Legislative Consent Motion is required to seek Assembly agreement to this. The DFP Committee published their report in this regard on 17th May 2012 and I look forward to the Assembly debate on the Motion on 28th May 2012.

Following Royal Assent, an Assembly Bill will be required to enable the Executive to follow through on the commitment to reduce APD on direct

long haul flights to zero. Executive approval to a draft Bill will be sought during the summer and the Bill, once approved, is likely to be introduced to the Assembly in the early autumn.

Trade Unions: Industrial Action

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many union members took part in the strike on 10 May 2012.
(AQO 2011/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The provisional figures show that a total of 7754 civil servants took part in industrial action on 10 May 2012. It is not known how many of these are union members. The Department of Finance and Personnel does not hold information about the number of people outside the Northern Ireland Civil Service who took part in the strike action.

Empty Premises Relief Scheme: East Londonderry

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an estimate of the number of empty properties, in the East Londonderry area, which would qualify for rate relief under the Empty Premises Rate Relief scheme.

(AQO 2013/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Empty Premises Relief Scheme is available from 1st April 2012 for a period of 12 months. The scheme is application based and the property must meet certain eligibility criteria. To be eligible, a business ratepayer must move into premises which were previously used for retail purposes and have been unoccupied for 12 months or more. The applicant will be asked to provide detail of the previous use of the property and sign a declaration that it has been unoccupied for 12 months or more. Land & Property Services (LPS) will then check the details on the application and decide if an award should be made.

While it is not possible to accurately estimate how many properties would qualify for rate relief under the Empty Premises Rate Relief scheme, given the eligibility criteria, LPS records indicate that 643 properties were empty for 12 months or more prior to 1st April 2012, within the East Londonderry constituency.

Dormant Accounts Scheme

Mr Murphy asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the implementation of the Dormant Accounts Scheme.

(AQO 2014/11-15)

Mr Wilson: During 2011-12, £47million of funding was released by the Reclaim Fund to the UK Big Lottery Fund.

The mechanism for distributing the NI share of this funding is still being developed. Any funding relating to 2011-12 can be carried forward into 2012-13 and will not be lost.

Rates: Commercial Properties

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the timetable for the review of the Rating of Commercial Properties.

(AQO 2015/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Executive has agreed that the next revaluation will take place in April 2015, based on 2013 valuations.

LPS has already begun to prepare and plan. The exact date for publication of the new Valuation List cannot be decided until the valuation date is confirmed but it is expect to be ready before the end of 2014.

Key stages in the process include:

- data and systems improvement - 2012 and ongoing;
- forms of return (to gather rental evidence) issued to business ratepayers - late 2012, early 2013;
- market info analysis - 2013 and beyond;
- developing detailed valuation guidance and model development - late 2013 and beyond;
- running preliminary valuations - early 2014 and beyond;
- impact assessment - mid 2014 and beyond;
- finalising valuations - second half of 2014; and
- communication and consultation - throughout but increasing.

This revaluation will align Northern Ireland with the rest of the UK for the first time. The last general revaluation here took place in 2003.

In terms of the impact of the revaluation this will depend on how rental values have changed between 2001 and 2013, not simply the position over the last couple of years.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Patient and Client Council

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the effectiveness and value for money of the Patient and Client Council.

(AQW 11613/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The PCC have been set a challenging agenda in its first three years of operation. This agenda included objectives for the PCC establishing itself, for improving public representation and for promoting wider public involvement to take forward its statutory obligations. The Department regularly monitors performance against these objectives through its performance review process, and I can confirm that the PCC is making good progress in carrying out its statutory obligations. I continue to look at ways of maximizing the efficiency of the Council's operations and all other Arms Length Bodies.

Fluoride Added to Drinking Water

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he will ensure that all scientific and medical views are adequately heard prior to taking a decision on whether fluoride is added to drinking water.

(AQW 11664/11-15)

Mr Poots: I indicated on 25 April 2012 that it is appropriate I should give consideration to fluoridation of the water supplies. I will consult with my executive colleagues to seek their views on water fluoridation in the first instance.

Pending my assessment of the views of my executive colleagues, I would only make a decision to enter any fluoridation arrangements after my department has consulted, and ascertained public opinion, and considered the appropriate evidence from reputable scientific and medical sources.

Accident and Emergency Department at Craigavon Area Hospital

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average turnaround time between ambulances arriving at the Accident and Emergency Department at Craigavon Area Hospital and the admission of patients, from November 2011 to date.

(AQW 11668/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the length of time between ambulances arriving at the Craigavon Area Hospital emergency care department and the admission of patients is not available. Information is available however, on the turnaround time measured from when an ambulance arrives at the Craigavon Area Hospital emergency care department until it has 'cleared' the location. This includes the time taken for patient handover to relevant clinical personnel and ensuring the vehicle is ready for the next call.

With this in mind, between 1st November 2011 and 15th May 2012, the average ambulance turnaround time at Craigavon Area Hospital emergency care department was 28 minutes and 20 seconds.

Accident and Emergency Department at Craigavon Area Hospital

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the turnaround time between ambulances arriving at the Accident and Emergency Department at Craigavon Area Hospital and the admission of patients, from November 2011 to date.

(AQW 11679/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the length of time between ambulances arriving at the Craigavon Area Hospital emergency care department and the admission of patients is not available. Information is available however, on the turnaround time measured from when an ambulance arrives at the Craigavon Area Hospital emergency care department until it has 'cleared' the location. This includes the time taken for patient handover to relevant clinical personnel and ensuring the vehicle is ready for the next call.

Ambulance turnaround times at the Craigavon Area Hospital emergency care department between 1st November 2011 and 15th May 2012 are detailed in the table below:

Ambulance Turnaround Time	Total
Within 15 minutes	2,049
Between 15 and 30 minutes	4,781
Between 30 and 45 minutes	1,937
Between 45 and 60 minutes	605
Greater than 60 minutes	615
Total	9,987

Source: Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS)

Elderly People left on Trolleys in Hospitals

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to ensure that elderly people are not left on trolleys in hospitals for excessive periods of time.

(AQW 11694/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have set targets for the treatment of patients attending an emergency department. These targets apply to all patients regardless of their age.

I am aware of the poor performance at some emergency departments in recent months. That is why I announced the establishment of an Emergency Department Improvement Action Group to improve patient outcomes and the patient experience in emergency departments. This Group is tasked with driving down waiting times. The aim is to see an improvement in the 4 hour discharge target from emergency departments and breaches in the 12 hour waiting time target to be rare occurrences. The HSC Board and Public Health Agency are leading the Group, working in collaboration with HSC Trusts.

Consolidated Inner-South Belfast Primary Schools at the City Hospital Site

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on what date the offer to provide a new site for the consolidated Inner-South Belfast primary schools, at the City Hospital site, was withdrawn.

(AQW 11700/11-15)

Mr Poots: The potential use of part of the BCH site for the proposed new primary school remains subject to the Trust's future requirements on the site and the normal public sector processes for the disposal of land. The Belfast HSC Trust is not yet in a position to declare the site surplus and neither the Trust nor the DHSSPS have ruled out the potential to use the site for a school.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the rationale for the proposed changes to the out-of-hours social work service.

(AQW 11712/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSCB and five HSC Trusts established a Project Team to develop proposals for the introduction of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service. This initiative follows the recommendations contained within the Social Services Inspectorate Child Protection Inspection Report in 2006 and the Independent Review in 2008 by

Mr Henry Toner into the death of Mr McElhill and his family. In addition, the Agenda for Change: HSC On-Call Circular (HSC (JMF)(8) 2011) was introduced on 1 October 2011. This Circular had implications in relation to on-call payments, particularly for social workers, making the current out-of-hours arrangements untenable into the future. More recently, Out-of Hours Social Services was identified as a priority in the DHSSPS Social Work Strategy (2012) which recognises the need to design a model and produce regional standards for a dedicated out-of-hours service.

Capital and Revenue Savings

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the capital and revenue savings his Department has made in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11715/11-15)

Mr Poots: Over the CSR2007 period, my Department achieved cumulative revenue efficiencies of £118m/£223m/£343m in 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11 respectively. In 2011/12, further revenue efficiencies of £168m were achieved.

Although capital savings were not required to be made in each of the last three years, capital funding has been used in 2010/11 and 2011/12 for projects which will deliver either revenue savings or an income stream.

Nurses Employed by the Health Service

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many nurses were employed by the Health Service on (i) 1 April 2011; and (ii) 1 April 2012.

(AQW 11733/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is published (as at 31st March) within the Key Facts Workforce Bulletin on the DHSSPS website and can be found at:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/key_facts_bulletin_march_2012.pdf

Nursing Vacancies Within the Health Service

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many nursing vacancies existed within the Health Service (i) 1 April 2011; and (ii) 1 April 2012.

(AQW 11734/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of workforce vacancies within Northern Ireland Health and Social Care is collected by means of a survey (bi-annually as at 31st March and 30th September) and is published within the NI HSC Vacancy Survey Report on the DHSSPS website. The report can be found at:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/workforce-statistics/stats-hsc.htm

The latest published information available is as at 30th September 2011. The vacancy survey is a large-scale exercise for NI HSC Trusts and Organisations to complete. The March 2012 survey has been issued to all NI HSC Trusts and Organisations and is due to be published by August 2012.

Accident and Emergency Department at the Belfast City Hospital

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the temporary closure of the Accident and Emergency Department at the Belfast City Hospital will be reversed.

(AQW 11736/11-15)

Mr Poots: As I said in the Assembly on 13 September last year, there will be a full and open process of consultation and engagement on the long term configuration of A&E services in the Belfast Trust area including with the public, their elected representatives and trade unions.

The Health and Social Care Board, in collaboration with the Belfast Trust, has been asked to develop consultation options for the permanent provision of A&E services across the greater Belfast Area.

I expect to make a final decision on the reconfiguration of A&E services by the end of the year.

Nursing Vacancies Within the Health Service

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many nursing vacancies in the Health Service were reduced without being filled between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012.

(AQW 11737/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not collated centrally and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost. The whole time equivalent (WTE) qualified nursing workforce increased by 1.3% in the period 1 April 11 to 31 March 12.

Nursing Vacancies

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether any nursing vacancies were suppressed between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012.

(AQW 11738/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not collated centrally and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost. The whole time equivalent (WTE) qualified nursing workforce increased by 1.3% in the period 1 April 11 to 31 March 12.

Funding for Thalidomide Sufferers

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when a decision on long-term funding for the remaining thalidomide sufferers in Northern Ireland will be announced.

(AQW 11739/11-15)

Mr Poots: Officials from each of the UK Administrations are engaged in discussions about the future funding for thalidomide survivors across the UK. I will announce my decision on the future funding for thalidomide sufferers in Northern Ireland following the outcome of these discussions.

Health Service Waiting List for In-Patient Treatment

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, for each of the last three years, to detail how many people, on a Health Service waiting list for in-patient treatment, have been offered treatment at a private clinic in order to meet waiting time targets, broken down by type of treatment.

(AQW 11740/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of Health and Social Care patients transferred to an Independent Sector provider for inpatient treatment, by speciality of treatment, in each of the last three years, is outlined in the table below.

Specialty	Financial Year		
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
General Surgery	2,996	415	2,937
Urology	2,059	318	97
Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgery	3,953	3,126	6,062
ENT	633	15	99
Ophthalmology	2,861	355	1,567
Oral Surgery	975	174	159
Restorative Dentistry	0	0	24
Paediatric Dentistry	29	0	1
Neurosurgery	10	0	0
Plastic Surgery	1,524	350	223
Cardiac Surgery	295	203	199
Paediatric Surgery	73	0	17
Thoracic Surgery	14	1	0
Pain Management	766	151	343
General Medicine	1,608	384	1,359
Gastroenterology	1,569	216	2,497
Dental Medicine Specialties	0	0	12
Cardiology	5	1	0
Obstetrics	0	0	96
Dermatology	553	1,125	0
Neurology	58	1	0
Rheumatology	11	51	0
Gynaecology	1,412	297	213
Total	21,404	7,183	15,905

Source: Health and Social Care Board

In-Patient Treatment at a Private Clinic

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why a patient who was offered in-patient treatment at a private clinic in order to reduce waiting times and who, after an initial visit, did not have confidence in the treatment offered, was then informed that their Health Service date for treatment would be reset or that they would be moved to the bottom of the waiting list.

(AQW 11741/11-15)

Mr Poots: Where a patient has agreed to have their treatment provided by the independent sector and subsequently declines further treatment after an initial assessment, the current policy is that the waiting time is re-set. Policies on reasonable offers have been put in place to ensure that those patients, who have opted to wait for assessment and treatment by an NHS provider, are not unfairly delayed by those who refuse reasonable offers of assessment/treatment.

Information on the reasons why patients have declined treatment is not collected to the level of detail requested.

Patients must be given a minimum of three weeks' notice of the date of their assessment and/or treatment; and at least one offer must be within Northern Ireland, except for a small number of regional specialties where there are no alternative providers in Northern Ireland. If a reasonable offer for treatment is made to a patient, which is then refused, the waiting time will be recalculated from the date of the refused admission.

In-Patient Treatment at a Private Clinic

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people, who have been offered in-patient treatment at a private clinic in order to meet waiting times, and who have declined the treatment due to a preference for Health Service treatment or a lack of confidence in the private alternative, have consequently had their date for Health Service treatment reset or have been moved to the bottom of the waiting list in each of the last 12 months.

(AQW 11742/11-15)

Mr Poots: Where a patient has agreed to have their treatment provided by the independent sector and subsequently declines further treatment after an initial assessment, the current policy is that the waiting time is re-set. Policies on reasonable offers have been put in place to ensure that those patients, who have opted to wait for assessment and treatment by an NHS provider, are not unfairly delayed by those who refuse reasonable offers of assessment/treatment.

Information on the reasons why patients have declined treatment is not collected to the level of detail requested.

Patients must be given a minimum of three weeks' notice of the date of their assessment and/or treatment; and at least one offer must be within Northern Ireland, except for a small number of regional specialties where there are no alternative providers in Northern Ireland. If a reasonable offer for treatment is made to a patient, which is then refused, the waiting time will be recalculated from the date of the refused admission.

Waiting List for In-Patient Treatment

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether a patient on a Health Service waiting list for in-patient treatment who declined treatment offered at a private clinic due to a preference for Health Service treatment or lack of confidence in the private care offered, and consequently had their date for treatment reset, will have their date reset again if they decline treatment at a private clinic on a further occasion,

(AQW 11743/11-15)

Mr Poots: Where a patient has agreed to have their treatment provided by the independent sector and subsequently declines further treatment after an initial assessment, the current policy is that the waiting time is re-set. Policies on reasonable offers have been put in place to ensure that those patients, who have opted to wait for assessment and treatment by an NHS provider, are not unfairly delayed by those who refuse reasonable offers of assessment/treatment.

Information on the reasons why patients have declined treatment is not collected to the level of detail requested.

Patients must be given a minimum of three weeks' notice of the date of their assessment and/or treatment; and at least one offer must be within Northern Ireland, except for a small number of

regional specialties where there are no alternative providers in Northern Ireland. If a reasonable offer for treatment is made to a patient, which is then refused, the waiting time will be recalculated from the date of the refused admission.

Waiting List for Health Service In-Patient Treatment

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of a situation whereby a patient who is on a waiting list for Health Service in-patient treatment for over a year, and who declines treatment at a private clinic due to lack of confidence in the private care offered, will not receive Health Service treatment until after other patients, who joined the waiting list at a later date, receive their treatment.

(AQW 11744/11-15)

Mr Poots: Where a patient has agreed to have their treatment provided by the independent sector and subsequently declines further treatment after an initial assessment, the current policy is that the waiting time is re-set. Policies on reasonable offers have been put in place to ensure that those patients, who have opted to wait for assessment and treatment by an NHS provider, are not unfairly delayed by those who refuse reasonable offers of assessment/treatment.

Information on the reasons why patients have declined treatment is not collected to the level of detail requested.

Patients must be given a minimum of three weeks' notice of the date of their assessment and/or treatment; and at least one offer must be within Northern Ireland, except for a small number of regional specialties where there are no alternative providers in Northern Ireland. If a reasonable offer for treatment is made to a patient, which is then refused, the waiting time will be recalculated from the date of the refused admission.

Chief Executive Officer of the Health Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety who is the Chief Executive Officer of the Health Service; and which office is ultimately responsible for all Health Service staff.

(AQW 11746/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Permanent Secretary of my Department is the Chief Executive of Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland. My Department has overall responsibility for terms and conditions of employment for HSC staff but individual employees are the responsibility of their HSC employer.

Accountability Between the Department and the Health Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide an organisational chart showing lines of accountability between the Department and the Health Service, including the Health and Social Care Board, the Health and Social Care Trusts and the Health Service.

(AQW 11749/11-15)

Mr Poots: The assurance and accountability arrangements between the Department and the Health and Social Care Bodies are set out in the HSC Framework Document. This includes a diagram, shown at section 2.1 of the framework, depicting the relationship between the Department and the various HSC bodies.

The Framework Document is published on the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety's website and can be accessed by using the following link:

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/framework_document_september_2011.pdf.

Health Partnerships

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of Health Partnerships; (ii) when they were established; (iii) the purpose of the Partnerships; and (iv)

the agendas and resulting forward work programmes of each meeting which took place in the last 12 months.

(AQW 11752/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) My Department has three main Health Partnerships that meet on a quarterly basis.
- (ii) The Regional Partnership Forum was established in 2005; the Joint Negotiating Forum was established in 2006, and the British Medical Association Joint Forum was established in July 2009.
- (iii) The aim of the Partnership Forum is to provide the opportunity for me and my Department's officials to engage with Trade Unions and HSC Employers on strategic discussion about the delivery of health and social care; e.g. health inequalities remain a central focus. The aim of the Joint Negotiating Forum is to oversee the local application of the national pay and conditions of employment for non medical staff. Members negotiate on matters arising from reorganisation of services and their possible impact on terms and conditions of employment. The British Medical Association Joint Forum enables regional negotiation and consultation on local policies relating to terms and conditions of service of doctors employed in the HSC; including salaried GPs working in HSC organisations.
- (iv) The request for the agendas and work programmes of each meeting in the last 12 months amounts to a considerable volume of information. I have therefore placed the material in the Assembly library.

Firefighters Taking Part in the Wholetime Recruitment Exercise

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given recent events such as the irregular overtime and expenses claims submitted by firefighters taking part in the wholetime recruitment exercise, whether he will carry out an immediate investigation into the present management of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service,

(AQW 11772/11-15)

Mr Poots: I do not consider that such an investigation would be helpful. There have been two reviews in recent years, conducted by Delivery and Innovation Division of the Department of Finance and Personnel and by the Audit Commission, on behalf of the Northern Ireland Audit Office. The recommendations from these reports are currently being implemented. In addition, as a result of issues relating to overtime and expenses claims submitted by fire-fighters, an independent review of the whole-time recruitment exercise has been commissioned

Memory Clinic at Craigavon Area Hospital

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Memory Clinic at Craigavon Area Hospital only takes referrals for patients aged over 65 and why this is the case.

(AQW 11777/11-15)

Mr Poots: Southern HSC Trust has advised that there are three Memory Clinics currently operating in the Southern Trust within the community; however, there is none in Craigavon Area Hospital.

The criteria for referral to these memory services are:

- Must reside within the Southern Trust area;
- Presenting with memory difficulties; and
- Age – 65+ years.

As the service is resourced within the Older People Directorate, the baseline remit is for those aged over 65 years. Users receive the service of the Consultant Psychiatrist for Old Age; Social Work; Mental Health Nurses; AHP and domiciliary provision.

Those under 65 years are currently managed through general psychiatry, and thereby access the same range of services as those managed through the Memory Service for those over 65 years.

Alzheimer's Disease or Dementia

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people aged under 65 are currently diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

(AQW 11778/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information is not available. Although a dementia disease register (which will include recording of Alzheimer's disease) is maintained under the Quality and Outcomes Framework of the GMS Contract; this does not contain patient-specific information and therefore an age breakdown is not available.

Treatment for Alzheimer's Disease or Dementia

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what strategy is in place for referring people aged under 65 for treatment for Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

(AQW 11779/11-15)

Mr Poots: Dementia is a particularly difficult diagnosis for younger people to accept, as they will often be in employment, have a family to support and have financial commitments. Moreover, many of the services available for older people with dementia are inappropriate to people with early onset dementia.

You will recall that I launched the document entitled Improving Dementia Services in Northern Ireland – A Regional Strategy, on 8 November 2011. The strategy states that a specific care pathway for younger people with dementia should be developed on a regional basis, in view of their particular needs. Where appropriate to do so, this should link in to a regional tertiary service, where referral for assessment of more complex conditions and second opinion can be obtained.

Work is ongoing to develop the regional care pathway for younger people with dementia and the tertiary service for diagnosis of more complex cases.

Consultant Psychiatrists at Craigavon Area Hospital

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of consultant psychiatrists currently working at Craigavon Area Hospital, and how this compares with other hospitals.

(AQW 11780/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are 5 (5.00 WTE) Consultant Psychiatrists employed at Craigavon Area Hospital.

Information on the number of Consultant Psychiatrists employed at hospitals within Northern Ireland Health and Social Care is given in the table below. These figures have been supplied by the Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trusts and have not been validated by the Department.

Consultant Psychiatrists employed within Northern Ireland Health and Social Care by Hospital as at May 2012

Trust	Hospital	Headcount	WTE
Belfast	Belfast City Hospital (Windsor House)	25	22.90
	Knockbracken Healthcare Park	10	8.03
	Muckamore Abbey Hospital	7	6.20
	Mater Hospital	3	3.00

Trust	Hospital	Headcount	WTE
Belfast	Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children	5	3.02
	Forster Green Hospital	1	1.00
	College Gardens	1	1.00
Northern	Causeway Hospital	2	1.80
	Holywell Hospital	17	15.40
South Eastern	Ards Hospital	10	9.90
	Downshire Hospital	6	5.70
	Lagan Valley Hospital	4	3.20
	Maghaberry Prison	2	2.00
Southern	Craigavon Area Hospital	5	5.00
	Daisy Hill Hospital	4	4.00
	South Tyrone Hospital	2	1.40
	St. Luke's Hospital	9	8.00
	Trustwide / Area Service	2	2.00
Western	Lakeview Hospital	2	2.00
	Gransha Hospital	2	2.00
	Tyrone & Fermanagh	2	2.00

Source: Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trusts

Notes:

- 1 WTE = Whole-time equivalent.
- 2 A further 11 (9.45 WTE) consultants within the Northern Trust are community-based.
- 3 Western Trust also employ a number of consultants who are dedicated to community and specialist services and are not based in a hospital setting, e.g. Primary Care Liaison, Forensics and Addiction Services.
- 4 A number of the staff listed above also provide community-based services.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Health and Social Care Trusts and other bodies, including the PSNI, out-of-hours GPs, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and councils have been consulted on the proposed changes to the out-of-hours social work service

(AQW 11787/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board issued a commissioning specification on Proposed New Arrangements to Support Regional Emergency Social Work Services on 15 May 2012 for consultation. My Department has been assured that all of the relevant internal and external stakeholders will be invited to comment on the proposals during the consultation period, which closes on 12 June 2012.

Vacancies in the Cardiology Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of vacancies in the Cardiology Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, broken down by post.

(AQW 11798/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of staff vacancies within the Cardiology Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast is given in the table below. These figures have been supplied by the Belfast Trust and have not been validated by the Department.

STAFF VACANCIES IN THE CARDIOLOGY DEPARTMENT AT THE ROYAL VICTORIA HOSPITAL, BELFAST AS AT MAY 2012

Grade	WTE
Admin & Clerical	3.80
Qualified Nursing Staff	2.80
Nurse Support Staff	0.75

Source: Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Notes:

- 5 WTE = Whole-time equivalent.
- 6 The cardiology department of the Royal Victoria Hospital comprises an Outpatients department, diagnostic, interventional, day procedure, Inpatients, Coronary Care Unit, technical, research, data management and administrative facilities.

Cardiology Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are employed in the Cardiology Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, broken down by post. **(AQW 11799/11-15)**

Mr Poots: Information on the number of staff employed within the Cardiology Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast is given in the table below. These figures have been supplied by the Belfast Trust and have not been validated by the Department.

Staff employed in the Cardiology Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast as at May 2012

Grade	Headcount	WTE
Admin & Clerical	35	29.37
Qualified Nursing Staff	111	101.87
Nurse Support Staff	16	15.43
Radiographer	8	7.60
Medical Technical Officer / Assistant Technical Officer	39	37.25
Consultant	14	14.00
Staff Grade / Associate Specialist	4	3.60
Specialty Registrar	15	15.00
Foundation House Officer	11	10.50
Total	253	234.62

Source: Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Notes:

- 7 Figures exclude staff with a whole-time equivalent of 0.03 or less.

- 8 The cardiology department of the Royal Victoria Hospital comprises an Outpatients department, diagnostic, interventional, day procedure, Inpatients, Coronary Care Unit, technical, research, data management and administrative facilities.
- 9 A number of the staff included in the above table are based in the Royal Victoria Hospital but also provide support across Cardiology within the Belfast Trust.

Patient Client Council

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that the Patient Client Council has estimated that 56 percent of young people get their information on health and social care from the internet, (i) for his assessment of whether enough information is provided by his Department on the internet; (ii) what action his Department is taking to ensure that young people do not receive harmful health advice from the internet; and (iii) what engagement has his Department had with schools and young people's groups on this issue.

(AQW 11821/11-15)

Mr Poots: In line with Executive policy all citizen-facing information relating to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) is published on the www.nidirect.gov.uk website.

DHSSPS manage the 'Health and well being' and 'Caring for someone' themes.

The nidirect website also has a dedicated Young People section which covers a range of issues, including health, and has recorded 51,291 page views and 30,790 visits between 1 May 2011 and 30th April 2012.

The nidirect website also provides valuable information about the dangers of buying medicines over the internet. It also advises on how best to use health and social care services in Northern Ireland.

The Public Health Agency has a number of health topic websites with information specifically for children and young people. These are www.enjoyhealthyeating.info (nutrition), www.mindingyourhead.info (mental health), www.helpprotectyourself.info (HPV vaccine information) and www.getalifegetactive.com (physical activity).

PHA topics with publications aimed at children and young people include physical activity, nutrition, mental health, childhood immunisations, substance misuse and sexual health.

The Department has been involved in promoting the Click Clever, Click Safe, a UK-wide campaign which provides useful information and advice for young people and parents about the safe use of the internet: www.nidirect.gov.uk/click-clever-click-safe

Listed Properties

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the listed properties that are owned by his Department.

(AQW 11822/11-15)

Mr Poots: The following listed buildings are owned by the Department:

	Facility Name
1	The Clarendon Committee, 63 Clarendon Street, Londonderry, BT48 7ER
2	Fort James, Ardmore Road, Londonderry, BT47 8QP
3	Pathways, 24 Pump street, Londonderry, BT48 6JG
4	The Beeches, 23 Hampton Park, Belfast BT7 3EN

Belfast Mental Health Rights Group Report

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the Belfast Mental Health Rights Group report on the treatment, support and follow-up given to people presenting with self-harm and suicidal thoughts at Accident and Emergency departments.

(AQW 11825/11-15)

Mr Poots: 'The report 'Services at Breaking Point: Fighting to Have Our Voices Heard' was recently submitted to my Department by the Belfast Mental Health Rights Group. The report contains the findings of the experiences of 58 people who attended Accident and Emergency Departments in Belfast in the past year due to mental health problems.

I welcome the views of people who use our health services. Their views help service commissioners and service providers to make those services more responsive to the needs of patients and their carers.

Civil Servants

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many civil servants currently employed in his Department have been re-employed after receiving a redundancy package from the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

(AQW 11848/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department is not aware of any staff currently employed who have been re-employed after receiving a redundancy package from the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the proposed changes to the out-of-hours social work service will create a new service model or will it be an extension of the current Belfast scheme which is primarily urban.

(AQW 11852/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board issued a commissioning specification on Proposed New Arrangements to Support Regional Emergency Social Work Services on 15 May 2012 for consultation. The proposed changes to Emergency Social Work Services build upon much of the work already undertaken within all of the Trusts to enhance the delivery of high quality Out-of-Hours Social Work Services to the public. The model proposes a regional service, in line with the strategic direction set out in the Social work Strategy for NI, published by my Department in April 2012.

Any decisions regarding the configuration of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service will be taken after consultation has period has ended on 12 June 2012.

Medication for Prisoners

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 11606/11-15, to detail what procedures have been put in place as a result of the incident when a patient did not receive their medication; and (ii) who is in charge of implementing the new procedures.

(AQW 11870/11-15)

Mr Poots: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust is responsible for the delivery of prison healthcare services. The Trust has advised that following the incident in April when a patient did not receive their medication, it has put in place arrangements to ensure that at the end of each shift, nursing staff check and record that this patient has received his "supervised" medication. In addition, it has been explained to the patient that, if for some exceptional reason, a nurse does not ask him to attend the Treatment Room at the scheduled time for his "supervised" medication, he should inform landing staff who will contact healthcare immediately. The Trust has also confirmed that additional stocks of his regular medications would be kept in the prison pharmacy so that they could be dispensed promptly when needed.

The Trust has advised that the patient in question is familiar with, and understands the medicines management regime in relation to his conditions. The Trust has stressed with the patient the importance of working with healthcare staff in order to effectively manage his conditions.

The Trust is continuously reviewing its policies, procedures and guidelines in order to reflect patient need and to promote the delivery of evidence based care. In addition, individual patient assessments may well result in unique care plans being compiled and implemented. These care plans are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis to assess efficacy.

Stereotactic Body Radiotherapy Treatment Equipment

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to purchase Stereotactic Body Radiotherapy Treatment equipment to treat suitable cancers.

(AQW 11876/11-15)

Mr Poots: New equipment planned as part of the expansion of radiotherapy capacity at the Cancer Centre NI Cancer Centre (Belfast) will have the technical capabilities to deliver this treatment.

A business case is being prepared to allow for the recruitment of additional staff and the purchase of new software required for stereotactic radiotherapy. It is hoped that the new equipment will be in place by 2014.

Recommended Contact Between a Health Visitor and a Baby

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the recommended contact a health visitor should have with a baby from birth to school age; and (ii) the percentage of cases, in each of the last three years, where this contact fell below the recommended levels.

(AQW 11887/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (1) An updated Child Health Programme has been on offer to all families with new babies since 1st October 2010. Recommended contacts are:
 - New birth review visit (10 – 14 days)
 - 6 – 8 weeks Health Review
 - 14 – 16 weeks Health Review
 - 7 – 9 month contact by the Visiting Team Member
 - 12 months Health Review
 - 24 months Health Review
- (2) It is not possible to provide this specific data at the present time. Whilst IT software is already in place to record aspects of the child health promotion programme, new software is currently being developed and introduced which will provide data regarding contact details in the future.

Ratio of Administrative Staff to Front-Line Medical Staff

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the ratio of administrative staff to front-line medical staff in each Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 11894/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is not appropriate to compare the ratio of administrative staff to front-line medical staff (i.e. doctors). The proportion of staff employed for administrative roles against total staff is similar across all Trusts, however, Belfast Trust provide many regional medical services and hence have the highest percentage of medical staff against total staff. Not all Trusts are hospital oriented, and those Trusts with a higher emphasis on community services tend to have a lower percentage of medical staff against total staff. Those Trusts will therefore have a higher ratio of administrative staff to medical

staff, and Trusts with a greater emphasis on hospital services will have a lower ratio of administrative staff to medical staff.

To show this the ratios of administrative staff to medical staff, alongside the proportions of total staff who are employed as administrative and medical staff, are provided in the table below.

HSC Trust	Ratio of Administrative staff to Medical staff	Proportion of Total Staff employed as Administrative staff	Proportion of Total Staff employed as Medical staff
Belfast	2.0	18.0%	8.9%
Northern	3.3	17.3%	5.3%
South Eastern	2.8	17.7%	6.3%
Southern	2.6	17.6%	6.7%
Western	3.1	17.8%	5.7%

Source: Human Resource Management System as at 31st March 2012

- 1 Figures exclude bank staff, staff with a whole-time equivalent less than or equal to 0.03 and staff on career breaks.
- 2 These figures will include individuals who are not employees of the Trust but who are on the system for payment purposes only.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the proposed changes to the out-of-hours social work service, whether there will be any job losses as a result.

(AQW 11902/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department has received an assurance from the HSCB which is responsible for the review of Out-of-Hours Social Work Services that there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of any new staffing arrangements pursuant to the review and the introduction of a regional out-of-hours service.

Board Members of Public Bodies

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how many former civil and public servants are employed as (a) paid; and (b) unpaid board members of public bodies sponsored by his Department; and (ii) what is this figure as a proportion of the total number of board members.

(AQW 11912/11-15)

Mr Poots: My department does not hold the requested information as the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (paragraph 3.21) requires departments to 'ask only what is truly required', therefore, my department does not ask applicants for their full employment history as this plays no part in the selection process. The full list of appointees by my department and remuneration received can be found in the OFMDFM Annual Report <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/making-government-work/public-appointments.htm> (pages 168 - 193 refer to my department).

In my capacity as Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety I have responsibility for making 159 appointments to HSC agencies, trusts and boards with 17 Chairs and 138 Members appointable. In addition, a Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland is to be established in 2012 and a Chair 'Designate' and three Lay Members have been appointed.

Prisoners: Medication

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) why some prisoners in Maghaberry Prison are having to wait a number of days for important medication; (ii) why stocks are continually running out; and (iii) what mechanisms he intends to put in place to ensure that prisoners receive their medication at the time required.

(AQW 11925/11-15)

Mr Poots: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust provides healthcare services at HMP Maghaberry. Since assuming responsibility for this service, the Trust has improved the services delivered in all prison establishments. It has audited its current service provision against national standards for the delivery of prison healthcare, and benchmarked the results against similar prison establishments in GB.

During the month of April, there was one reported incident where the prisoner did not receive his prescribed medication. The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has advised that this was managed appropriately as per SE Trust Policies and procedures and the patient came to no harm. Additional checking procedures have been implemented as a result of this incident.

Occupational Therapists

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of occupational therapists, per head of population, in the Fermanagh area; and how this figure compares with other areas.

(AQW 11962/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of Occupational Therapists employed per head of population within Northern Ireland Health and Social Care is not available at County level. However, information on the number of Occupational Therapists per head of population is provided at Trust level in the table below.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS EMPLOYED WITHIN NORTHERN IRELAND HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PER 100,000 POPULATION BY TRUST AS AT MARCH 2012

Trust Area	Staff in post WTE	WTE Per 100,000 Population
Belfast	210.97	62.8
Northern	186.99	40.8
South Eastern	115.78	33.4
Southern	152.78	42.6
Western	107.82	36.0
Overall	774.34	43.0

Source: Occupational Therapists – Human Resource Management System

Population – Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

Notes:

- 1 WTE = Whole-time equivalent
- 2 Figures exclude bank staff, staff on career break and staff with a whole-time equivalent of 0.03 or less.
- 3 The latest population figures relate to the mid-year population estimate for 2010.

Publication of the Protect Life Strategy

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the publication of the Protect Life Strategy.

(AQW 11973/11-15)

Mr Poots: Executive approval has been sought for publication of the refreshed Protect Life Strategy. Subject to that approval, it is intended to publish the refreshed strategy at the start of June.

Prospective Foster Carers

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 11073/11-15, for his assessment of (i) the average waiting time for prospective foster carers to be assessed; and (ii) how waiting times sit with the current Health and Social Care Board advertising campaign, which highlights that foster carers are required urgently.

(AQW 11985/11-15)

Mr Poots: As indicated in response to AQW 11073/11-15 waiting times for the assessment of prospective foster carers varies across Health and Social Care Trusts and are directly linked to the placement needs of each Trust. If the need is for placements for older children/teenagers, siblings groups or children with complex needs then potential carers will be assessed ahead of those who may be available for other types of care. As a consequence, assessment priorities routinely change in line with identified placement requirements.

The advertising campaign is being taken forward by the Regional Fostering and Adoption Service (RAFS) which works across all HSC Trusts. This is a more generalised recruitment campaign based on regional need and is intended to identify potential foster carers, who will be initially screened to determine which category of foster placement they might be suited to and whether they can or are willing to meet urgent need.

Health Service Dentists

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) number of Health Service dentists; and (ii) how the changes to funding introduced in April 2012 will impact on the number of Health Service dentists.

(AQW 11995/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board have confirmed that there are currently 1049 dentists on the dental list available to provide health service dentistry in Northern Ireland.

The General Dental Services budget is expected to be under significant pressure in the next few years. My Department and the Health and Social Care Board have developed several savings proposals to help address the pressures whilst maintaining a core of services under the health service to protect and maintain the oral health of the population here. A consultation process will commence shortly and any changes made will be subject to the outcome of this consultation.

My Department also continues to work with the Health and Social Care Board and the BDA to put in place new dental contracts which should provide a sustainable service to patients; a predictable remuneration package for the dental profession; and a more controlled method of managing the General Dental Services budget.

Therefore, I do not anticipate any significant impact on the number of health service dentists as a result of the proposed changes to the general dental services.

Review of Public Administration

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what powers or functions he plans to devolve to local councils under the Review of Public Administration; and whether this represents a change to his previous commitments.

(AQW 12064/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety does not have any plans to devolve powers or functions to local councils and this does not represent a change to previous commitments.

The collaborative working arrangements that are already in place between the Public Health Agency and local councils should support the proposed community planning and well-being role envisaged for local government.

Department of Justice

Badger Baiting

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice how many people were (i) charged; and (ii) convicted for badger baiting in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11274/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The Police Service for Northern Ireland has recorded no specific charges for badger baiting in each of the last three years (2008-2011). Four people have however been charged with interfering with a badger sett arising out of incidents in 2012.

Court conviction information in respect of animal protection and cruelty does not routinely record the animal involved. Badger baiting – for example - may be prosecuted under a number of offences under Article 10 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 or under section 4 of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

In terms of more general convictions for animal protection and cruelty there have been 79 convictions in total between 2004 and 2008 (the latest year for which conviction statistics are available): three for damaging or destroying the shelter of a wild animal and 76 for a range of more general animal cruelty offences.

Alternatives to Full Body Searches in HM Prisons

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) what is the estimated total cost for the implementation of the alternatives to full body searches in HM prisons, including staff training, equipment and licensing; and (ii) to provide a breakdown of the equipment that has already been purchased.

(AQW 11294/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) Discussions are ongoing with the suppliers of Millimetre Wave Body Scanners. As such it is not possible at this stage to provide information on the likely costs for this pilot.

Estimated costs have been provided to the Northern Ireland Prison Service by one of the suppliers of X-ray Transmission equipment, but the provision of this information may provide a competitive advantage to another supplier which has yet to provide an estimate of costs. For this reason it is not possible to provide the information requested or to provide an accurate assessment of the associated costs of training or licensing.

- (ii) No full body imaging scanners have been purchased for use in the prisons in Northern Ireland. However, my previous answer on this subject in relation to AQW 4437 confirmed that six items of specialist detection equipment were purchased at a cost of £54,593.

Report into the Closure of the Prisoner Assessment Unit

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) whether he has received the report into the closure of the Prisoner Assessment Unit; (ii) on what date it will be published; and (iii) why there has been a delay in the publication of the report.

(AQW 11378/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) The investigation into the Prisoner Assessment Unit (PAU) was completed on 15 July 2011 and the report submitted to the Deputy Governor of Maghaberry Prison.
- (ii) As stated in my answers to AQW/6107/11-15 and AQW/7062/11-15, no date has yet been fixed for the publication of the report.
- (iii) NIPS officials are currently working through a number of final issues regarding disclosure of some sensitive personal information, but I can confirm that I have now instructed NIPS to place a redacted version of the report on the NIPS website no later than the end of June.

Investigation or the Disciplining of Staff Following the Death of Colin Bell

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many (i) senior staff, including Headquarter staff; and (ii) basic grade officers, broken down by grade, who were involved in the investigation or the disciplining of staff following the death of Colin Bell, were involved in a similar capacity following the death in custody of John Deery.

(AQW 11411/11-15)

Mr Ford: A Prison Governor and a Grade 7 Civil Servant, who were involved in the investigation and/or disciplining of staff following the death in custody of Colin Bell, were also involved in a similar capacity following the death of John Deery.

Alleged Payment of Prisoner Drug Debts

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice if he will order an investigation into the alleged payment of prisoner drug debts by Prison Service staff, to determine whether the allegations were accurate; and if so, (i) how much was paid to alleviate the prisoners' debts; (ii) for how many prisoners was this practice approved; (iii) why this practice was approved; and (iv) for how long has it been permitted.

(AQW 11412/11-15)

Mr Ford: A full investigation into the operation of the Prisoner Assessment Unit has been satisfactorily completed by the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS). During this investigation the issue of a single prisoner with a £300 drugs debt emerged and has been addressed. NIPS does not consider it necessary to carry out any further investigation into this issue.

The practice of prisoners using their prisoner earnings to pay off drug debts is not and has never been an approved NIPS practice.

Suspension of Two Prison Governors

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice in relation to the suspension of two prison governors over the payment of prisoners' drug debts, what disciplinary measures were recommended and subsequently (i) rejected; and (ii) implemented.

(AQW 11414/11-15)

Mr Ford: Following the disciplinary hearing the adjudicating Governor considered the full range of disciplinary measures available under the Code of Conduct and Discipline before awarding both governors a written warning.

Prison Service Staff

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice how many Prison Service staff, broken down by grade, have had security improvements made to their properties in each of the last three years because of terrorist threats. **(AQW 11442/11-15)**

Mr Ford: In 2010, 53 prison staff had improvements fitted to their properties under the Prison Service Protection Scheme (PSPS) and a further 11 staff had existing measures reviewed. In 2011 43 staff had measures fitted and 12 had measures reviewed. So far in 2012, nine staff have had measures fitted and one has had measures reviewed. It is not possible to break down the figures by grade.

The separate 'Limited Home Protection Scheme' (LHPS), formerly known as the 'Key Persons Protection Scheme' (KPPS), is administered by the Northern Ireland Office. My Department does not have access to figures in relation to this scheme.

Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings Scheme

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice how many Prison Service staff, broken down by grade, have moved house under the Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings Scheme in each of the last three years due to terrorist threats. **(AQW 11443/11-15)**

Mr Ford: In 2010 one member of the Prison Service moved house under the Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings (SPED) scheme. In 2011 the total was two members of staff and the figure for 2012 is one.

Prison Service Staff who were Disciplined for Paying a Prisoner's Drug Debt

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether the two Prison Service staff members, who were disciplined for paying a prisoner's drug debt, have been involved in disciplinary investigations or actions against any other member of the Prison Service staff prior to, or since, they were disciplined. **(AQW 11464/11-15)**

Mr Ford: The two prison staff referred to have both been employees of the Northern Ireland Prison Service for a significant number of years. Whilst records of such matters are not retained covering the entire period it is likely that both may have been involved with carrying out disciplinary procedures in the past.

I can confirm that neither have since been involved in any way with the NIPS disciplinary process.

Ackah and Deane Report

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in light of the Ackah and Deane report which highlighted concerns over the actions of Prison Service senior staff in the investigation of the death of Colin Bell, what changes were made during the investigation and disciplinary process in the case of the death of John Deery in custody. **(AQW 11467/11-15)**

Mr Ford: The investigation and disciplinary process into the death in custody of John Deery had commenced prior to the completion of the Ackah and Deane report. The investigation and disciplinary processes were carried out under the provisions of the current Code of Conduct and Discipline (COCD).

The Prison Service is currently developing a new Professional Code of Conduct for operational staff.

Annual Cost per Prisoner

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice what was the average annual cost per prisoner being held in 2011 in (i) Maghaberry; (ii) Magilligan; and (iii) Hydebank. **(AQW 11469/11-15)**

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) does not hold the average cost per prisoner by Establishment. However each year NIPS sets out the overall average Cost Per Prisoner Place in its Annual Report and Accounts. The amount for the most recently audited financial year (2010/11) was £73,762.

The Annual Report and Accounts for 2011/12 is currently being audited by the Northern Ireland Audit Office. Once this process has been completed the latest Cost Per Prisoner Place will be available.

Referral Fees in Personal Injury Claims

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Justice what action he will take on the regulation of referral fees in personal injury claims.

(AQW 11491/11-15)

Mr Ford: At present, solicitors in Northern Ireland are prohibited from paying or receiving referral fees.

It is a matter for the Department of Finance and Personnel whether any further regulation of the solicitors' profession is appropriate.

Jurisdiction of the County Court

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the proposals to increase the jurisdiction of the County Court from £15,000 to £30,000.

(AQW 11493/11-15)

Mr Ford: The increase in the jurisdiction of the County Court is dependent on amendments being made to the County Court (Northern Ireland) Rules. The necessary amendments are a matter for the County Court Rules Committee. The Committee consulted on the required rule changes in March and July 2011 and have now submitted their proposals to me for my approval. Before giving my approval for the proposed changes I will wish to consult the Lord Chief Justice. I would hope that the agreed changes to the Rules can be made to come into force later this year.

High Court Decision in Simpson

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice what steps his Department is taking, following the High Court decision in Simpson (21/2/2012), in which the court concluded that the relevant guidance contained in Home Office Circular 46/200, on the review of injury pensions once officers reach 65, was unlawful.

(AQW 11497/11-15)

Mr Ford: In 'Simpson' the judge ruled that specific sections of the Home Office guidance regarding those aged over 65 is inconsistent with the regulations and therefore unlawful. There is no justification for adopting a different approach to the regulations in respect of a former officer who reaches the age of 65 than in the case of a review for former officers of a younger age. The Department has in the past issued equivalent guidance in Northern Ireland.

The Department is therefore considering the legal implications of 'Simpson' for Northern Ireland and updated guidance will be issued as appropriate.

Payment of Prisoners' Drug Debts

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 5315/11-15, whether cash from any sources within the Northern Ireland Prison Service, other than prisoners' weekly earnings, was used to discharge prisoners' drug debts in the same period.

(AQW 11515/11-15)

Mr Ford: No cash, from any source, within the Northern Ireland Prison Service other than the Prisoner's Earnings Scheme was used to discharge any prisoner's drug debts.

Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the criteria applied which permitted the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission to continue to distribute Legal Aid over a number of years when it repeatedly failed to file accounts; and (ii) why this was allowed to go unnoticed for so long.

(AQW 11516/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission (NILSC) assumed responsibility for the administration of legal aid in November 2003. The NILSC was established as a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) under the Access to Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

The Legal Aid scheme is a statutory scheme and as such the NILSC had statutory responsibilities to discharge despite problems encountered in filing its accounts.

Prior to devolution, the Lord Chancellor was responsible for legal aid in Northern Ireland and he was aware of the delay on the part of the NILSC in producing its Annual Accounts. The reason for this backlog was primarily due to difficulties in preparing estimates of legal aid liabilities (known as provisions). To address this, a handling programme was agreed with both the National Audit Office (NAO) and the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO), which was appointed auditor of the NILSC's Accounts on behalf of the NAO. As part of the handling programme, the Northern Ireland Court Service intervened in November 2006, appointing a head of finance and other supporting financial staff in order to drive forward preparation of the accounts.

Since 2008, the NILSC has completed nine sets of Annual Accounts. The 2010/11 Accounts were laid in May 2012. This was the first set of Accounts to be laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly. The 2011/12 draft accounts have recently been submitted in accordance with the Department of Justice timetable.

The Accounts of the NILSC are now up to date.

Recommendation 13.5 in the Ackah and Deane Report

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to Recommendation 13.5 in the Ackah and Deane report that there should be on-going training in the operation of disciplinary and grievance procedures, with particular attention to the conduct of disciplinary investigations and hearings for all levels of officers involved, including Prison Officers Association representatives, what training the Northern Ireland Prison Service has provided to prison officers from December 2009 to date.

(AQW 11517/11-15)

Mr Ford: It has not been possible to provide ongoing training in terms of the conduct of disciplinary investigations due to other pressures on NIPS. Training will however be provided in line with the introduction of the new Professional Standards Unit and in this respect NIPS has been in discussion with the PSNI as a possible training provider.

Payment of Prisoners' Drug Debts

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether the two members of staff, suspended and disciplined for their part in repaying a prisoners' drug debt, have been suspended or disciplined at any other time during their employment.

(AQW 11518/11-15)

Mr Ford: Under the Data Protection Act the rights of both officers must be maintained. Disclosure of their personal data would not in this case be fair or lawful and would thereby breach the first data protection principle.

Proposed Closure of Courthouses

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the projected (i) savings; and (ii) additional costs of the proposed closure of five courthouses.

(AQW 11520/11-15)

Mr Ford: As noted in the consultation document, it is estimated that the NI Courts and Tribunals Service will save approximately £402,000 in annual operating costs through the proposed closure of the five courthouses. These are net savings and take account of the estimated cost of maintaining the buildings prior to disposal. These estimated maintenance costs were set out in my reply to AQW/6191/11-15.

A decision has not yet been taken on the future of hearing centres. The consultee response report is being prepared for my consideration. Any proposed closures would not take effect before 1 April 2013.

Proposed Closure of Bangor Courthouse

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice whether there will be any redundancies or reduced hours of work for employees, as a result of the proposed closure of Bangor Courthouse.

(AQW 11522/11-15)

Mr Ford: Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service staff working at Bangor Hearing Centre are already based at Newtownards Courthouse. There will be no redundancies or reduced working hours for employees as a result of the proposed closure of Bangor Courthouse.

There has been no final decision taken to close Bangor Courthouse.

Bangor Courthouse

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice whether a final decision to close Bangor Courthouse has been taken.

(AQW 11523/11-15)

Mr Ford: Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service staff working at Bangor Hearing Centre are already based at Newtownards Courthouse. There will be no redundancies or reduced working hours for employees as a result of the proposed closure of Bangor Courthouse.

There has been no final decision taken to close Bangor Courthouse.

Delays in Forensic Science Results

Mr Molloy asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the number of cases being delayed as a result of delays in forensic science results; and (ii) the proposed timescale for the addressing the delays.

(AQW 11524/11-15)

Mr Ford: At 19 April 2012, two Forensic Science Northern Ireland (FSNI) reports were required by the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) to progress prosecutions.

One of the forensic reports is due to issue in the week commencing 28 May 2012. The other outstanding report is a drugs case in which a new "designer drug" has been detected. Preparation of that report has been delayed as a UK standard needs to be developed against which the drug can be compared. I am unable to advise when the case will be concluded.

The PSNI also submits samples directly to laboratories outside Northern Ireland for forensic science analysis. It is not possible to identify if any cases are delayed as a result of delays in the return of forensic science results from those laboratories.

Forensic Examination of Evidence Material

Mr Molloy asked the Minister of Justice which jurisdictions are currently carrying out work on the forensic examination of evidence material relating to cases from this jurisdiction.

(AQW 11526/11-15)

Mr Ford: At 15 May 2012, forensic examinations of evidence material relating to cases from this jurisdiction were being carried out by forensic science providers in England & Wales and France.

Evidence Held by the PSNI or Forensic Science NI

Mr Molloy asked the Minister of Justice whether evidence currently being held by the PSNI or Forensic Science NI can be released once tests have been completed.

(AQW 11528/11-15)

Mr Ford: The current policy adopted by Forensic Science Northern Ireland (FSNI) is that exhibits submitted for examination are returned to the submitting authority.

The PSNI treats each exhibit on a case by case basis. The officer in charge of the investigation reviews all exhibits held regularly and will authorise their retention, destruction or return depending on the circumstances of the case. Factors which will be considered include whether criminal proceedings are pending or likely, including the potential for appeals and the potential for future advances in forensic science.

Criminal Cases

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline the legislation or guidelines which determine whether, in criminal cases (i) the PSNI can lay charges directly and have a defendant appear at court; and (ii) the circumstances in which the file is passed to the Public Prosecution Service for a determination on whether to prosecute.

(AQW 11587/11-15)

Mr Ford: A case may be brought to court by either charge or summons depending on factors such as the complexity of the case, the seriousness of the case and whether a remand in custody is sought. A person may only be charged for an arrestable offence where an arrest has occurred. PSNI does not require the permission of the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) to charge a person but may seek advice from the PPS before doing so. In summons cases, the PSNI will make a recommendation to the PPS for prosecution. The PPS will then review the file and decide how the case should proceed and what, if any prosecution should be brought. Again the PSNI may seek PPS advice before referring a case for summons.

Section 31(1) of the Justice (NI) Act 2002 provides that “the Director of Public Prosecutions must take over the conduct of all criminal proceedings which are instituted in Northern Ireland on behalf of any police force”. Therefore when police charge or refer a case for summons in relation to any crime, the PPS must take that case over and make the decision as to prosecution in relation to it.

This means that no criminal complaint is made to the court to commence the prosecution process by charge or summons until the case is reviewed by a prosecutor in the PPS. Proceedings will only begin if the PPS is satisfied that the Test for Prosecution is met or, if the investigation is not complete, that there is a reasonable prospect that the test will be met when the investigation is concluded.

Case Against Four Republicans in Relation to an Illegal Rally

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice for a breakdown of (i) the cost to date; and the (ii) total estimated cost of the case which was dismissed at Londonderry Magistrates Court on 10 May 2012 against four republicans in relation to an illegal rally.

(AQW 11604/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below sets out the estimated costs associated with the case heard at Londonderry Magistrates' Court on 10 May 2012. The case was not dismissed, the court refused to return the defendants for trial to the Crown Court.

Cost Type	Estimated Cost
PSNI	Not Available ¹
PPS Prosecution	Not Available ²
Defence (Legal Aid Costs) ³	£5,234.00
Court (Judiciary and Staff Costs)	£2,758.50
Facilities (e.g. Courtroom Accommodation)	£455.00
Total	£8,447.50

- 1 PSNI have advised that to compile an estimate could not be done with any accuracy and would incur a disproportionate cost.
- 2 No fees paid to prosecuting counsel have been incurred in relation to this case at present. All other ongoing costs fall within the operational costs of the PPS.
- 3 Fees of £234 have been paid to date in respect of legal fees for work completed early in the case. The final claims have not yet been submitted but are estimated to be in the region of £5,000.

Cases Relating to Republican Terrorist Rallies or Illegal Parades

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many cases relating to (i) republican terrorist rallies; and (ii) participation in, or organisation of, an illegal parade have been brought to court in each of the last five years; and how many convictions were secured in each court division.

(AQW 11605/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) There was one case in 2011 relating to a rally for a proscribed republican organisation in the County Court Division of Fermanagh & Tyrone. The defendant was acquitted.
There were two further cases in Belfast in 2010 and one in Belfast in 2011 where the nature of the rally was not specified in the charge details. All of the defendants in these cases were acquitted.
- (ii) The table below sets out the relevant details in respect of all defendants dealt with who were charged with offences associated with taking part in or organising an illegal parade in the last five years.

Year	County Court Division	Number of Defendants	Number of Defendants convicted on at least one charge
2007	Londonderry	19 ¹	1
2007	Antrim	1	1
2011	Fermanagh & Tyrone	1	1
2011	Craigavon	3	2
Total		24	5

- 1 Relates to one case with nineteen defendants.

Note: All data in relation to 2011 is provisional.

Contingency Prison Accommodation

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice when he will decide on the location of contingency prison accommodation.

(AQW 11617/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Outline Estate Strategy, which was shared with the Justice Committee in April, proposes exploring the potential for contingency accommodation to meet the continued growth in the adult male population.

I intend to launch a full public consultation on the Outline Estate Strategy in early June and no decisions will be taken on any of the proposals that are subject to consultation until that exercise has been completed. A site search and options appraisal will also be conducted.

Contingency Prison Accommodation

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice when he will appoint someone to take forward the selection process for the location of contingency prison accommodation.

(AQW 11619/11-15)

Mr Ford: I intend to launch a full public consultation on the Outline Estate Strategy in early June and no decisions will be taken on any of the proposals that are subject to consultation until that exercise has been completed.

There are no plans to appoint anyone specifically to take forward the selection process for contingency accommodation in addition to the staffing resources already available. This matter will be decided upon based on the outcome of the Options Appraisal on Contingency Accommodation.

Consumer Council's Briefing 'Legal and Justice Issues Relating to Car Insurance'

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice what consideration his Department has given to the Consumer Council's briefing 'Legal and Justice Issues Relating to Car Insurance'; and what action he will take in relation to the recommendations.

(AQW 11629/11-15)

Mr Ford: I welcome the work of the Consumer Council in this area which led to the Examination by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) into the cost of car insurance. During the recent Assembly debate arising from the OFT report, members acknowledged that this is the responsibility of a number of departments.

I intend to increase the general jurisdictional limit of the County Court from £15,000 to £30,000. The County Court Rules Committee is planning to introduce Pre-action Protocols to the County Court. These will encourage early resolution of disputes by requiring information to be shared by parties prior to the issue of proceedings.

I also met recently met with the Minister of the Environment to discuss the action our respective departments are taking to address the concerns raised by the OFT report.

Case of Four Republicans on Terrorist Charges

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice, in light of the recent judgement by Judge McElholm in the case of four republicans on terrorist charges following a dissident republican rally in Londonderry, for his assessment of a reasonable timeframe for defendants to receive a fair trial.

(AQW 11635/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are a range of factors which may impact on what is considered a reasonable time for defendants to receive a fair trial, including the complexity of the investigation, the number and availability of witnesses and the volume of evidence.

However, the assessment of a reasonable timeframe is a matter for the judiciary to determine in individual cases taking into account all the facts and circumstances of the case and not something on which I can comment.

Dismissal of Charges Against Four Republicans

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice whether he can confirm that the dismissal of charges against four republicans, by Judge Barney McElholm at Londonderry District Court on 10 May 2012, were not dismissals on the merits, and that the Public Prosecution Service can re-issue the proceedings.

(AQW 11639/11-15)

Mr Ford: The charges against the four defendants in the case at Londonderry Magistrates' Court on 10 May 2012 were not dismissed. The District Judge (Magistrates' Court) refused to return the defendants for trial to the Crown Court on the grounds of delay.

It is a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions whether to challenge this decision or to re-commence the proceedings.

Legal Aid Budget

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Justice to detail the total amount paid from the legal aid budget to each of the top thirty recipient firms of solicitors, including the names of the firms, in each of the last five financial years.

(AQW 11644/11-15)

Mr Ford: The attached tables detail the total amounts paid in legal aid, to the top thirty earning firms of solicitors, over the last five years. The figures provided include details of disbursements and payments made to counsel as these are paid via the solicitors' firm.

NORTHERN IRELAND LEGAL SERVICES COMMISSION PAYMENTS MADE TO SOLICITORS 2010/11

	Name	Solicitor Fees	VAT On Solicitor Fees	Counsel Fees	VAT On Counsel Fees	Disbursements	Total
1	Kevin Winters & Co	1,825,309	310,935	130,597	14,530	368,365	2,649,736
2	Mckenna Sweeney Mckeown	1,259,669	244,708	141,228	22,289	136,452	1,804,346
3	Madden & Finucane	1,000,897	192,195	175,749	21,819	207,578	1,598,238
4	Trevor Smyth & Co	1,059,961	196,968	139,273	15,272	87,728	1,499,202
5	Mconnell Kelly & Co	790,772	144,872	101,969	10,362	115,634	1,163,609
6	Mccann & Mccann	766,589	143,279	132,152	13,614	94,164	1,149,798
7	Macelhatton & Co	727,240	133,156	105,013	12,826	97,013	1,075,248
8	G R Ingram & Co Solicitors	772,643	147,298	74,992	3,395	71,962	1,070,290
9	Patrick Fahy	704,187	129,955	72,196	5,052	59,125	970,515
10	Sheridan & Leonard	600,824	110,869	120,678	15,852	118,413	966,636
11	Quigley Grant & Kyle	735,319	132,150	23,383	3,615	34,257	928,724

	Name	Solicitor Fees	VAT On Solicitor Fees	Counsel Fees	VAT On Counsel Fees	Disbursements	Total
12	Donnelly & Wall	596,007	114,453	111,864	12,980	92,518	927,822
13	Hilary Carmichael	378,243	75,847	259,246	41,954	142,022	897,312
14	Macdermott, Mcgurk & Partners	661,543	121,513	53,809	5,704	43,438	886,007
15	Mcivor Farrell	575,944	112,440	105,014	9,081	62,154	864,633
16	Higgins Hollywood Deazley	449,520	84,396	150,483	25,664	141,873	851,936
17	John Fahy & Co	543,461	96,383	34,346	1,239	114,828	790,257
18	Joe Mulholland & Co	551,641	101,373	57,843	3,809	28,381	743,047
19	Harte Coyle Collins	360,773	68,920	184,812	26,330	68,742	709,577
20	Morgan & Murphy	483,195	91,191	53,290	8,533	51,291	687,500
21	Fahy Corrigan	488,423	87,114	28,787	2,353	69,763	676,440
22	Mccallion Keown	471,944	84,889	14,210	2,028	56,104	629,175
23	John J Rice & Co	438,193	82,588	49,631	7,139	49,673	627,224
24	Bernard Campbell & Co	339,207	66,954	114,205	13,849	88,996	623,211
25	H L Mo & Co.	233,635	40,968	23,682	3,179	294,215	595,679
26	Hunt & Company	342,299	62,474	85,138	10,117	74,449	574,477
27	Breen, Rankin, Lenzi	384,233	72,135	50,231	1,785	60,158	568,542
28	The Elliott Trainor Partnership	334,643	66,087	69,580	8,430	85,323	564,063
29	John Ross & Son	364,869	69,364	51,739	7,695	64,574	558,241
30	Harrison & Hardstaff	252,097	44,117	0	0	257,207	553,421

**NORTHERN IRELAND LEGAL SERVICES COMMISSION
PAYMENTS MADE TO SOLICITORS 2009/10**

	Name	Solicitor Fees	VAT On Solicitor Fees	Counsel Fees	VAT On Counsel Fees	Disbursements	Total
1	Kevin Winters & Co	2,391,522	378,324	143,488	13,081	53,593	2,980,008
2	Madden & Finucane	1,076,789	169,996	327,612	48,585	191,939	1,814,920
3	Trevor Smyth & Co	1,212,528	189,241	112,664	12,052	113,037	1,639,522
4	Mcconnell Kelly & Co	951,047	148,934	122,344	16,382	144,373	1,383,081

	Name	Solicitor Fees	VAT On Solicitor Fees	Counsel Fees	VAT On Counsel Fees	Disbursements	Total
5	Mckenna Sweeney Mckeown	1,050,674	163,010	39,093	5,681	54,891	1,313,348
6	Mccann & Mccann	728,625	112,998	246,063	35,673	119,545	1,242,904
7	Patrick Fahy	660,974	102,306	139,379	16,018	89,824	1,008,501
8	G R Ingram & Co	665,426	104,910	54,336	4,282	107,870	936,823
9	John J Rice & Co	586,033	90,408	38,224	5,228	128,644	848,536
10	Sheridan & Leonard	590,138	91,276	24,344	2,978	126,464	835,200
11	Donnelly & Wall	557,165	87,185	76,318	6,353	82,931	809,952
12	Harte Coyle Collins	511,721	81,247	43,903	6,336	85,812	729,018
13	Hilary Carmichael	346,548	52,893	167,985	17,367	132,588	717,381
14	The Elliott Trainor Partnership	358,293	55,259	120,672	17,571	127,369	679,163
15	Macelhatton & Co	483,947	75,362	44,781	4,793	68,729	677,612
16	John Fahy & Co	467,741	73,136	42,437	3,232	90,608	677,155
17	Flynn & Mcgettrick	398,753	62,482	72,650	8,708	89,893	632,486
18	Joe Mulholland & Co	495,129	76,693	15,683	1,169	42,689	631,363
19	Morgan & Murphy	459,477	70,460	41,072	5,034	43,827	619,869
20	John J McNally & Co	264,708	40,755	135,603	15,894	115,802	572,763
21	Bernard Campbell & Co	322,686	50,727	101,924	11,264	82,748	569,350
22	Gus Campbell	375,854	59,663	51,427	8,222	67,846	563,012
23	H L Mo & Co	340,114	51,691	40,708	6,182	123,024	561,718
24	Caldwell & Robinson	291,710	44,807	120,280	17,706	84,649	559,152
25	Macdermott, Mcgurk & Partners	411,048	63,212	30,536	1,376	39,395	545,568
26	Archer, Heaney & Magee	369,603	56,833	37,724	5,321	63,438	532,918
27	Higgins Hollywood Deazley	327,320	49,916	82,773	12,969	59,379	532,357
28	Mccallion Keown	334,625	50,479	38,859	4,844	94,921	523,728
29	Robert Murtagh & Co	379,281	56,387	47,267	7,023	33,248	523,206
30	Donard King & Co	352,582	54,490	38,463	4,485	70,497	520,517

NORTHERN IRELAND LEGAL SERVICES COMMISSION**PAYMENTS MADE TO SOLICITORS 2008/09**

	Name	Solicitor Fees	VAT On Solicitor Fees	Counsel Fees	VAT On Counsel Fees	Disbursements	Total
1	Kevin Winters & Co	3,138,540	542,666	145,626	15,883	-540,087	3,302,628
2	Madden & Finucane	1,137,573	196,566	163,303	23,800	193,179	1,714,421
3	Trevor Smyth & Co	1,163,072	199,474	133,691	19,174	153,900	1,669,311
4	H2o	454,322	78,890	414,847	72,562	256,572	1,277,194
5	Mcconnell Kelly & Co	924,409	159,605	55,180	6,214	120,429	1,265,837
6	Higgins Hollywood Deazley	548,560	90,803	366,513	30,964	187,853	1,224,692
7	Mccann & Mccann	760,502	129,454	63,481	8,048	71,418	1,032,904
8	Mckenna Sweeney Mckeown	705,444	119,753	40,757	6,468	105,714	978,136
9	Patrick Fahy	704,879	122,049	43,299	3,183	75,382	948,792
10	Macelhatton & Co	655,067	110,496	56,731	7,910	89,287	919,491
11	Gibson & Quigley	583,055	99,838	14,428	1,818	61,359	760,497
12	G R Ingram & Co	541,869	92,809	43,674	1,855	73,045	753,252
13	Joe Mulholland & Co	598,133	102,546	6,113	797	40,464	748,053
14	Harte Coyle Collins	519,864	90,132	44,938	6,538	86,402	747,875
15	Donnelly & Wall	468,739	80,131	63,148	5,777	70,160	687,956
16	Sheridan & Leonard	440,384	76,086	41,268	5,589	88,432	651,759
17	John J Rice & Co	433,061	74,389	62,640	8,843	61,640	640,572
18	Hilary Carmichael	365,887	63,513	82,223	8,569	114,061	634,252
19	Macdermott, Mcgurk & Partners	441,728	75,306	33,462	4,800	43,772	599,068
20	Fahy Corrigan	439,837	73,137	18,035	2,026	59,823	592,858
21	Bernard Campbell & Co	324,345	56,122	90,967	12,450	89,322	573,207
22	Donard King & Co	371,832	63,837	34,140	5,511	95,735	571,056
23	John Fahy & Co	412,101	70,772	18,216	692	56,008	557,788
24	John Ross & Son	370,332	64,079	48,365	7,747	56,298	546,822
25	The Elliott Trainor Partnership	318,064	54,399	77,748	13,061	74,530	537,802
26	Archer, Heaney & Magee	396,850	67,965	15,541	2,282	54,654	537,292

	Name	Solicitor Fees	VAT On Solicitor Fees	Counsel Fees	VAT On Counsel Fees	Disbursements	Total
27	Flynn & Mcgettrick	298,338	51,178	79,750	13,205	80,680	523,151
28	Caldwell & Robinson	259,426	45,171	96,977	15,652	83,884	501,111
29	Tiernans	408,754	71,217	3,874	382	9,721	493,948
30	H.L. Mo & Co	329,327	55,150	9,813	1,616	49,779	445,686

**NORTHERN IRELAND LEGAL SERVICES COMMISSION
PAYMENTS MADE TO SOLICITORS 2007/08**

	Name	Solicitor Fees	VAT On Solicitor Fees	Counsel Fees	VAT On Counsel Fees	Disbursements	Total
1	Kevin Winters & Co	1,463,175	256,299	165,759	21,297	1,251,664	3,158,195
2	Trevor Smyth & Co	1,200,175	210,304	100,812	11,986	138,704	1,661,981
3	G R Ingram & Co	939,406	164,558	28,892	2,778	97,496	1,233,131
4	Madden & Finucane	705,735	123,664	195,081	29,641	118,259	1,172,380
5	Patrick Fahy	714,112	125,009	107,153	11,157	131,323	1,088,755
6	Mcconnell, Kelly & Co	682,360	119,724	65,884	8,916	189,108	1,065,993
7	Mckenna Sweeney Mckeown	850,889	149,057	11,166	1,129	49,082	1,061,324
8	Mccann & Mccann	743,392	130,244	86,980	13,257	58,939	1,032,811
9	Tiernans	761,442	133,252	0	0	13,847	908,541
10	Harte Coyle Collins	669,904	117,249	9,475	1,299	104,100	902,028
11	Hilary Carmichael	410,431	72,201	198,416	28,142	102,430	811,619
12	Mcevoy Sheridan	267,258	46,800	282,637	48,018	107,495	752,208
13	Flynn & Mcgettrick	367,318	64,412	169,372	26,995	79,535	707,631
14	John J Rice & Co	481,965	84,391	37,545	5,231	47,994	657,125
15	Donnelly & Wall	462,359	81,121	42,723	4,163	39,464	629,829
16	Sheridan & Leonard	406,430	71,321	53,092	8,050	75,596	614,489
17	Macelhatton & Co	464,566	81,374	6,683	476	51,581	604,680
18	John Fahy & Co	428,825	74,972	37,934	2,155	49,001	592,886
19	Bernard Campbell & Co	334,736	58,831	86,262	13,615	88,058	581,503
20	Archer, Heaney & Magee	416,372	72,852	26,853	3,613	54,731	574,421

	Name	Solicitor Fees	VAT On Solicitor Fees	Counsel Fees	VAT On Counsel Fees	Disbursements	Total
21	Macdermott, Mcgurk & Partners	382,978	67,078	28,844	3,032	35,552	517,483
22	The Elliott Trainor Partnership	291,142	51,085	79,172	12,000	58,968	492,366
23	Higgins Hollywood Deazley	293,268	51,458	37,554	5,486	79,647	467,413
24	John Ross & Son	305,090	53,574	26,059	3,760	76,656	465,139
25	Morgan & Murphy	344,331	60,331	12,863	1,843	38,010	457,378
26	Mcgrady Scullion	213,485	37,441	114,842	18,974	61,422	446,163
27	Joe Mulholland & Co	366,923	66,540	798	12	6,480	440,754
28	Donard King & Co	306,246	53,691	29,269	4,775	39,662	433,644
29	Caldwell & Robinson	208,340	36,540	101,655	15,690	44,537	406,762
30	Mccallion Keown	279,984	49,007	6,333	933	60,498	396,755

**NORTHERN IRELAND LEGAL SERVICES COMMISSION
PAYMENTS MADE TO SOLICITORS 2006/07**

	Name	Solicitor Fees	VAT On Solicitor Fees	Counsel Fees	VAT On Counsel Fees	Disbursements	Total
1	Kevin R Winters & Co	1,594,260	279,237	85,905	4,905	524,499	2,488,806
2	Trevor Smyth & Co	1,313,694	230,166	186,852	25,679	191,261	1,947,652
3	Mconnell Kelly & Co	822,541	144,154	48,232	4,599	146,848	1,166,375
4	Madden & Finucane	668,838	117,359	191,849	27,026	115,233	1,120,304
5	John J Rice & Co	566,888	99,263	35,026	3,927	87,384	792,488
6	Mccann & Mccann	570,206	100,068	40,016	3,961	54,711	768,962
7	Hilary Carmichael	317,997	56,009	124,883	12,165	109,268	620,322
8	John Fahy & Co	427,370	74,884	33,339	2,389	71,899	609,881
9	Bogue & McNulty	369,884	64,763	5,920	576	136,770	577,912
10	Donnelly & Wall	399,820	70,040	56,110	4,279	43,071	573,319
11	Patrick Fahy	410,969	72,007	23,138	2,170	64,430	572,714
12	Mckenna Sweeney Mckeown	425,505	74,617	16,561	1,443	43,707	561,833
13	Sheridan & Leonard	334,210	58,700	53,351	8,085	81,843	536,189

	Name	Solicitor Fees	VAT On Solicitor Fees	Counsel Fees	VAT On Counsel Fees	Disbursements	Total
14	Archer, Heaney & Magee	375,004	65,659	26,895	1,418	47,496	516,472
15	Flynn & Mcgettrick	260,290	45,679	92,572	14,503	50,755	463,799
16	John Ross & Son	271,664	47,778	65,106	7,339	64,986	456,874
17	Bernard Campbell & Co	248,928	43,767	80,288	11,439	61,591	446,012
18	Caldwell & Robinson	236,527	41,555	82,747	13,132	65,619	439,579
19	The Elliott Trainor Partnership	263,343	46,199	62,429	6,373	60,350	438,694
20	Murtagh Breen & Co	296,978	52,170	52,523	6,580	29,265	437,516
21	Mcgrady Collins	202,016	35,445	121,564	15,585	54,809	429,419
22	Morgan & Murphy	296,122	51,848	31,086	4,999	43,915	427,969
23	Macelhatton & Co	313,954	54,960	26,297	3,478	28,309	426,997
24	Gus Campbell	238,722	41,857	81,718	12,539	49,678	424,515
25	Desmond J Doherty	171,647	30,038	11,334	1,782	196,778	411,579
26	Richard Monteith	314,590	55,074	881	412	20,665	391,623
27	Higgins Hollywood Deazley	238,344	41,924	42,515	5,070	57,904	385,756
28	Macdermott, Mcgurk & Partners	261,544	45,867	41,530	4,275	31,374	384,591
29	G R Ingram & Co	282,087	49,591	11,664	1,138	25,371	369,851
30	Gibson & Quigley	283,405	49,688	10,861	1,084	12,140	357,178

Cancellation of Prison Visits

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice how many security related incidents necessitating the cancellation of prison visits have occurred at (i) Maghaberry; and (ii) Magilligan prisons in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11654/11-15)

Mr Ford: During 2010 visits were partially cancelled at Maghaberry Prison on two occasions. In 2011 visits at Maghaberry were cancelled on one occasion for two consecutive days and partially cancelled on another occasion. There have been no visits cancelled due to security incidents during 2012. Magilligan Prison has not been affected by visits closure due to security incidents in the past three years.

Vehicles Clamped on Private Land

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice, given that Northern Ireland is now the only place in the UK where vehicles can still be clamped on private land, whether he plans to reconsider the introduction of legislation preventing such clamping.

(AQW 11673/11-15)

Mr Ford: I launched a consultation on the future regulation of the private security industry in Northern Ireland on 17 May 2012. It is available on the consultations section of the DOJ website. One of the issues in the consultation document concerns the practice of vehicle immobilisation (which includes wheel clamping) on private land. I will want to analyse the outcome of the consultation before deciding whether to bring forward proposals to ban the practice here.

Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to outline the timescale for the transfer of the remaining four under 18 year old prisoners to the Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre.

(AQW 11747/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are no plans to transfer the small number of juveniles currently in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre to Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre. All are either due for release or will attain the age of 18 very shortly or are otherwise settled on a long-term basis in Hydebank Wood. I will be announcing, in the context of the Youth Justice Review, how custodial arrangements will operate in future for this age group.

Juvenile Justice Centres

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice whether his Department has any plans to change legislation to ensure that offenders, who are under 18 years old, are placed in juvenile justice centres rather than young offenders centres.

(AQW 11750/11-15)

Mr Ford: I will be announcing, in the context of the Youth Justice Review, how custodial arrangements will operate in future for this age group and will be considering legislative requirements as part of this process.

Compensation for Criminal Injuries

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how much has been paid in compensation for criminal injuries that were sustained by victims of crime, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 11935/11-15)

Mr Ford: The figures below are from the Compensation Agency's Annual Report and Accounts. The 2011/12 Annual Report and Accounts have still to be verified.

Financial Year	Criminal Injuries 1988 Order	Tariff Scheme (introduced 2002)	Total
2007/08	£11.5m	£15m	£26.5m
2008/09	£7.7m	£13m	£20.7m
2009/10	£8.8m	£13.2m	£22m
2010/11	£8m	£12.3m	£20.3m
2011/12	£4.2m	£11.9m	£16.1m

Police Support Groups

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Justice what funding is available for Police Support Groups.

(AQO 2031/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department funds four organisations that provide support to serving and former police officers. The budget for these organisations for 2012/13 is as follows:

	2012/13 Budget £
RUC GC Foundation	152,000
Police Fund	1,712,000
Police Rehabilitation & Retraining Trust	2,156,000
RUC GC Widows	38,000
Total	4,058,000

The NI Police Fund in turn funds the Disabled Police Officers Association, RUC GC Parents Association, the Northern Ireland Retired Police Officers Association, the RUC/PSNI Benevolent Fund, Forgotten Families and the Carers Association.

Multiagency Risk Assessment Conferences

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Justice when an Information Sharing Agreement will be in place in relation to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences.

(AQO 2037/11-15)

Mr Ford: In the MARAC process a wide range of organisations share highly personal and sensitive information relating to vulnerable victims and I acknowledge the importance and need for an Information Sharing Agreement, aimed at facilitating the legitimate and secure disclosure of such information, between all those involved in the MARAC process.

It is important to ensure that the Information Sharing Agreement is fit for purpose and work to finalise it has been ongoing. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is considering the most recent draft of the Information Sharing Agreement and recently met with the MARAC Operational Group to discuss it. Following receipt of final comments from the Information Commissioner's Office, it is the aim of the MARAC Operational Group to get it signed by all parties at the next MARAC Operational Group meeting which has been scheduled for 18 June.

DOJ: Legislation

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Justice to outline his Department's plans for legislation during this Assembly term.

(AQO 2038/11-15)

Mr Ford: Subject to Executive approval I plan to introduce three Department of Justice Bills during the current Assembly term: a Criminal Justice Bill on the retention of DNA material and fingerprints, sex offender notification requirements and strengthening measures for introduction before the 2012 summer recess; a Justice Bill to provide for a faster, fairer and more efficient justice system including jurisdictional reform, changes to committal proceedings and the reform of fine enforcement for introduction at the start of next year; and a Bail Bill which is currently being prepared by the Northern Ireland Law Commission on which I will be consulting.

I am also working closely with the Minister for Health and his Department in the development of new Mental Capacity legislation which will also apply to the justice system. The Bill will be introduced in December 2013 by the Minister for Health.

Criminal Justice: Processing of Cases

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice what discussions have taken place with the Judiciary to address avoidable delay and the most efficient and effective processing of criminal cases.

(AQO 2043/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are regular meetings at various levels with the Lord Chief Justice and his representatives to discuss issues of mutual interest, including the programme of work to speed up justice. I know the Judiciary take this issue very seriously and share my commitment to speeding up justice.

Over the last twelve months, I have had three discussions with the Lord Chief Justice and I will be meeting with him again next month, to discuss my plans for the introduction of statutory time limits and other issues related to delay. Since September, the Director of Access to Justice has had eight business meetings with the Lord Chief Justice; the work to tackle delay is a regular part of these discussions.

The Lord Chief Justice is also represented by his senior officials at the Criminal Justice Board and on the Speeding up Justice Programme Executive. In addition, the Judiciary meet with the representatives from the criminal justice agencies and the voluntary and community sector at the Criminal Justice Issues Group, which has considered specific proposals for speeding up justice such as the reform of committals. The Criminal Justice Issues Group is chaired by a senior member of the Judiciary - Lord Justice Higgins.

Whilst the Judiciary do not comment on policy matters, they are always willing to give early views and advice on the operational implications of our proposals. Indeed, the Lord Chief Justice has recently contributed to consultations on both measures to encourage earlier guilty pleas and the reform of committals.

The Judiciary is independent of government, however, this clearly does not mean that we cannot work together to make the justice system more effective and efficient.

High Court: Adjourned Cases

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Justice to outline the number and overall cost of High Court cases which have been adjourned in the past 3 years due to the defendant not being available.

(AQO 2044/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am advised by the Courts and Tribunals Service that the question cannot be answered. While the courts make a record of adjournments and who requested them – the prosecution, the defence or the court – the record would not show that the case was adjourned specifically because the defendant did not appear. Therefore, the necessary data cannot be extracted from the adjournment record.

Northern Ireland Police Fund

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Justice whether the Northern Ireland Police Fund has been reviewed recently, with particular emphasis on the provision of longer term funding for organisations.

(AQO 2045/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Police Fund was reviewed in 2009 by an external reviewer who recommended the continued existence of the Fund as presently constituted to the continued provision of core service. The Fund is due to be reviewed again in 2014/15 in line with good practice. Adequate funding has been provided over the Spending Review period and longer term funding cannot be considered beyond this period.

Department for Regional Development

Homes in Co. Fermanagh Not Connected to the NI Water Mains Supply

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development how many homes in Co. Fermanagh are not connected to the NI Water mains supply.

(AQW 11170/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): Northern Ireland Water maintains records of its customers i.e. those who are connected to the mains network. However, it estimates that around three hundred domestic properties in the Fermanagh Co area are not connected to the water mains network.

A consultation carried out by my Department as part of the Review of Financial Assistance For Domestic Properties Not Served By A Water Main identified around 60 properties in County Fermanagh that are not served by a water main. Properties that are 'not served' are those that do not have a water main in the public road nearest to the property (or within 100m of the nearest access point) as opposed to those who are not connected to the mains supply as a matter of choice.

On 9 May 2012, I announced the launch of the Rural Borewell Scheme, which will provide a grant to households in isolated rural areas for a private borewell where the cost of a water mains requisition is prohibitively high. This innovative cross-departmental scheme will help provide affordable access to a wholesome water supply for households who are outside the reach of the public network. The scheme will come into operation this summer and will run for four years subject to demand.

Adopted Roads

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail how Roads Service notifies district councils when a road is adopted.

(AQW 11259/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: When my Department's Roads Service adopts a new road, it forwards a copy of the Adoption Certificate, along with an appropriate plan showing the newly adopted road, to the relevant council.

Future Governance of NI Water

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development when he will bring forward his proposals on the future governance of NI Water.

(AQW 11260/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Executive's PfG commitment not to introduce additional household charges for water means that, during the current Assembly mandate, NIW will continue to be subject to full public expenditure controls.

As decisions on water funding are cross-cutting, because of their significant public expenditure implications, it remains my intention to bring a paper to the Executive in the coming months.

Effectiveness of Speed Humps and Traffic Calming Measures

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what process is in place to monitor the effectiveness of speed humps and traffic calming measures.

(AQW 11262/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service gives careful consideration to the design and placement of speed humps. It also undertakes extensive consultation with local residents and stakeholders, prior to commencing works on traffic calming schemes. This process helps to ensure that the most appropriate traffic calming measures are implemented.

Roads Service reviews traffic calming schemes that have been in place and operational for at least six months to ensure the intended objectives have been fully met. In addition, analysis of road traffic

collisions at each location is undertaken by comparing the three year periods prior to and after implementation of each scheme. Changes in traffic speeds can also be measured as part of the monitoring process.

Speed Humps

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many times speed humps have been removed or reduced in areas in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11263/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service takes considerable care in the design and placement of road humps. It undertakes extensive consultation with local residents and stakeholders before any traffic calming measures are implemented, to ensure that speed humps are sited at the most appropriate locations.

Roads Service has advised that it has no records of road humps being removed in the last three years. However, two speed humps have been altered after installation to accommodate drainage problems.

Sewage Pollution at Kinnegar Lagoons, Holywood

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the proposed timeline for implementation of a solution by NI Water to address on-going sewage pollution at Kinnegar Lagoons, Holywood.

(AQW 11275/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it is currently developing a project to resolve the sewage pollution at Kinnegar Lagoons, Holywood. Detailed consultations are on-going with relevant stakeholders and a tender package will be finalised subject to the completion of all statutory processes and the availability of funding. NIW anticipates that construction will commence at the end of this financial year and work will take 12 months to complete.

Sewage Pollution at Kinnegar Lagoons, Holywood

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total funding awarded to NI Water to enable the implementation of a solution to address on-going sewage pollution at Kinnegar Lagoons, Holywood.

(AQW 11277/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that a project to resolve the sewage pollution at Kinnegar Lagoons, with a capital value of £3.5 million, is included in NIW's PC13 Business Plan submission. The Business Plan is subject to detailed review by the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation for delivery by January 2015.

Parking in a Designated Turning Point in a Residential Area

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps he is taking to ensure that residents refrain from parking in an area that is a designated turning point in a residential area.

(AQW 11309/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the 'hammerhead', which is often provided in residential cul-de-sac areas, is intended to facilitate vehicle turning. However, there is no general prohibition from parking in these areas.

Roads Service officials further advise that a Traffic Attendant can issue a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) to a vehicle which is parked in contravention of parking restrictions e.g. on yellow lines, at any location where restrictions are in place.

Department-Owned Public Space in Portadown Town Plaza

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the average bond, per house in a new housing development, required by the Roads Service to cover sewerage and roads infrastructure in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11326/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it does not maintain a quantitative record of houses related to road bonds in new housing developments, as the number of houses served is not a factor in the calculation of bond values.

Roads Service officials further advise that they calculate the value of a road bond based on the length, width and type of road, along with any special features, such as culverts or retaining walls. By using rates from typical contemporary contracts, Roads Service estimates the construction costs of the road, and the bond value is determined accordingly.

I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the calculation of a sewer bond is based on the cost of installing sewers within new developments, using a schedule of rates prepared by the Company. The bond security is set at 40% of the estimated installation cost.

It is not possible to determine average bond per house data because installation costs can include a number of variables, such as the diameter and material of the sewer pipes and the depth of the excavation required. However, Northern Ireland Water estimates that in a small development, the average value of the bond security for each house would be in the region of £1,500. Where a wastewater pumping station is also required, it is estimated that the average cost of the bond security would be approximately £4,000.

Traffic Calming Measures in the South Belfast Constituency

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on traffic calming measures in the South Belfast constituency in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11335/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service maintains details of traffic calming measures by council area rather than on a parliamentary constituency basis.

Details of expenditure on traffic calming measures in the Belfast and Castlereagh Council areas, are provided in the table below:

Year	Spend on traffic calming in Belfast and Castlereagh Councils
2009/10	£278,785
2010/11	£126,006
2011/12	£236,031

Disabled Parking Bays

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of applications received for disabled parking bays outside peoples' homes which have been rejected in each of the last three years in the South Belfast constituency.

(AQW 11336/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service maintains details of applications for disabled parking bays by council area rather than on a constituency basis. Details of the number of applications for disabled parking bays outside applicants' homes in the Belfast and Castlereagh Council areas, which have been rejected by Roads Service in each of the last three financial years, are provided in the table below:

	Number of Rejected Applications for Disabled Parking Bays		
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Castlereagh	9	13	3
Belfast	49	30	40*

* One application for a disabled parking bay in the Belfast City Council area remains pending.

Road Bonds Required for New Housing Developments

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development how the average cost of bonds, per house, that are required for new housing developments in Northern Ireland, compares with the cost of road and water bonds that are required in other parts of the United Kingdom; and to outline the reasons for any differences.

(AQW 11348/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to my response to his Assembly Question, AQW 11326/11-15.

I can also advise that my Department's Roads Service and Northern Ireland Water do not maintain details of the cost of road and water bonds in other regions of the United Kingdom.

Road Traffic Accidents

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of road traffic accidents that have occurred at Marine Parade, Shore Road, A2 Bangor to Belfast Road Junction, Holywood, in each of the last five financial years.

(AQW 11362/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I should explain that any information on road traffic collisions, involving personal injuries, is provided to my Department's Roads Service by the PSNI.

During the last five financial years, from April 2006 to March 2011, there have been two traffic collisions, involving personal injury, at this junction. Both these accidents occurred in the 2008/09 financial year.

Junction Improvements at Holywood

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Regional Development whether any junction improvements are planned at Marine Parade, Shore Road, A2 Bangor to Belfast Road Junction, Holywood, to improve road safety as a result of the limited passage provided by traffic signals for Marine Parade and Shore Road traffic.

(AQW 11364/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Given the volume of traffic passing through this junction on the A2 at Marine Parade, and that information supplied to my Department's Roads Service by the PSNI indicates that two road traffic collisions, involving personal injury, have occurred at this junction in the last 5 years, Roads Service considers this junction has a good safety record.

In these circumstances and given the current financial constraints arising from reductions in its budget, it currently does not have any proposals to carry out any works to the junction. The situation will, however, be kept under review.

Two M1 Roads on the Island of Ireland

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how many complaints his Department has received about two roads being named M1 on the island of Ireland, both leading to Belfast; and (ii)

whether he would consider raising this matter with his counterpart in the Dublin Government, with an aim to reducing the level of confusion amongst motorists, particularly overseas visitors.

(AQW 11365/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it has not received any complaints about the two roads being named M1. However, my Department recently received correspondence from Mr Leo Varadkar TD, Irish Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, regarding the direction signs to Dublin from the M1 for south-bound traffic. I explained that the signing regime in place complies with the national guidance for motorways, but I can advise that Roads Service has plans to make the final direction sign on the M1 more prominent, to further assist drivers travelling south-bound. This work is programmed for completion within the current financial year.

In view of the above, I do not consider it necessary at this stage to raise the matter with my counterpart in the Irish Government.

Road Bonds Required for New Housing Developments

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development how the average cost of a road bond, per house, in a new housing development compares with the cost of road bonds that are required in other parts of the UK; and to outline the reasons for any differences.

(AQW 11369/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to my response to his Assembly Question, AQW 11326/11-15.

I can also advise that my Department's Roads Service does not maintain details of the cost of road bonds in other regions of the United Kingdom.

Funding Allocated to Routine Road Maintenance

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the funding allocated to routine road maintenance in each Roads Service division for each year since 2007/08.

(AQW 11401/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of my Department's Roads Service initial allocation to each of its four Divisions for routine maintenance, in each financial year since 2007/08, are set out in the table below:

Roads Service Division	Initial Routine Road Maintenance Allocation					
	2007/08 £k	2008/09 £k	2009/10 £k	2010/11 £k	2011/12 £k	2012/13 £k
Northern	3,547	3,968	3,968	3,897	4,060	3,997
Southern	3,214	3,330	3,576	3,608	3,580	3,122
Eastern	4,640	4,798	4,865	4,677	4,157	4,002
Western	3,773	3,863	4,008	4,175	3,762	3,414
Total	15,174	15,959	16,417	16,357	15,559	14,535

Routine road maintenance covers such functions as grass cutting, weed control, verge maintenance and gully emptying.

Translink's Fuel Subsidy for School Buses

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the reduction in Translink's fuel subsidy for school buses in each of the (i) last; and (ii) next two years.

(AQW 11421/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Fuel Duty Rebate (FDR) is paid by the Department to operators of bus services towards defraying customs or excise duty charged on eligible fuel used in operating a bus service.

Rebate on the duty paid on fuel is a key support for road operators to help them maintain affordable accessible public transport services.

All operators who possess a valid Road Service Operators License to run stage carriage services are eligible to apply to join the Fuel Duty Rebate scheme. Translink stage carriage services are used to some extent for school services.

The current rate of rebate, which has been in place since December 2008, is 43.21p per litre. There are currently no plans to reduce this rate.

Translink's Passenger Numbers

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail Translink's passenger numbers in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11422/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below provides details of Translink's passenger journey numbers for the last three years.

	2009/10 '000	2010/11 '000	2011/12 '000
No. of passengers	78,203	76,972	77,249

Bus Fares

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department is aware of any further plans by Translink to increase bus fares.

(AQW 11423/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Each year, Translink produces a three-year corporate plan which is discussed with my Department and has to focus on the year ahead. Although I have endorsed the position for the current year, I have not done so for the following two years as there is more work to be done. I recognise that the funding position for Translink in 2013-14 and 2014-15 is constrained and this combined with cost pressures on fuel and existing wage agreements means that a financial deficit is projected by Translink at this stage. I expect Translink to draw up plans which take account of their legal obligations under the Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 and the Companies Act 2006 to consider going-concern issues and to break even year on year, in addition to consideration of their funding costs, fare income and levels of service. I am also asking my officials to look at funding.

It is important to recognise that any planned reviews of budgets or future in-year monitoring rounds will also impact here. It will take some time to develop these plans and they will continue to be subject to change.

Landscape Architects

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister for Regional Development how many landscape architects were employed for road scheme developments in the last three years.

(AQW 11473/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that landscape architects are generally only employed on major road works schemes. Due to their scale, these projects are developed with the assistance of Consulting Engineers, procured through a framework contract.

Technical input on landscape works is sourced directly from staff within the contracted organisation at the appropriate points as a scheme develops. Details are, therefore, not readily available as to the number of occasions when landscape architects were engaged on these projects.

Landscape architects are generally not required on minor works and none have been employed directly by Roads Service in the last 3 years.

Translink Incident Monitoring System

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development how many reports have been filed by staff with the Railway Control Office, for inclusion on the Translink Incident Monitoring System, expressing concern about safety and supervision issues on the North-West line since staffing and related changes were made in February 2012; and whether he will inspect all these reports with a view to evaluating the impact of the changes.

(AQW 11476/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that during the period 3 to 25 February 2012 a total of 5 incidents were recorded. These ranged from minor damage to locomotives which were located in the siding at Londonderry to staff expressing concerns for safety. Three of these incidents, which occurred between 15-16 February, are inter related in that the PSNI advised of a potential threat to throw paint bombs at trains or at railway station premises and additional security measures were put in place at the time to deal with this situation. No relevant incidents have been recorded after this 'cluster', which occurred in the period immediately following the implementation of revised working arrangements in the Londonderry station.

The safety of staff is of course a priority and Translink will continue to monitor the situation. The nature of the particular incidents recorded above do not require further investigation by the Department.

Wastewater Treatment Plant in Newcastle

Mrs McKevitt asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the upgrade of the wastewater treatment plant in Newcastle.

(AQW 11536/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I recently visited Newcastle to view progress on the first phase of a £7 million contract for the upgrading of the wastewater treatment works. I was impressed with the ongoing work and the benefits it will bring to Newcastle. These will include the provision of enhanced level of treatment, improved effluent quality and the provision of effluent storage prior to treatment for storm conditions.

Northern Ireland Water anticipates that the upgraded Works will be operational by May 2013 with the completion of work on site by the end of Summer 2013.

Listed Properties

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail listed properties that are owned by his Department.

(AQW 11554/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise the Member that my Department's Roads Service's Section Office at 6 Tullybroom Road, Clogher, Co Tyrone is a listed property.

In addition, Roads Service owns Craigowen Lodge, 208 Bangor Road, Holywood, a property that is also listed. This property was purchased to accommodate the completion of a road scheme, but is now deemed surplus to requirements and is expected to be disposed off during the current financial year.

Translink Bus Services

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he intends to reduce the number of Translink (i) bus services; and (ii) bus drivers in and out of the Derry City Council area.

(AQW 11578/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In respect of the current financial year Translink has not indicated to my Department any intention to reduce bus services in the Derry City Council area. Translink will be working to clarify its plans for 2013/14 and 2014/15 which, based on current projections, suggest that measures to get closer to a financial balance will be required. It is not clear at this point if these measures will impact on the Derry City Council area.

Translink Bus Services

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department intends to introduce saving measures to prevent cuts to Translink bus services.

(AQW 11579/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink faces a combination of cost pressures together with constrained funding over the next few years. I expect my Department to ensure Translink maximise efficiencies and savings to help relieve pressures across the whole of our public transport side. Clearly NITHC/Translink has the primary responsibility to develop effective remedial plans of action which minimise the risk of cuts to services. Each year Translink produces a 3 year Corporate Plan which is discussed with my Department. The focus of the plan is on the first year. Translink is obligated under the Transport and Company acts to consider going concern issues and must break even year on year. Plans are drawn up which take account of this obligation, funding, costs, fare income and levels of service.

I have endorsed the position for the current 2012/13 financial year. I have not done so for the later 2 years of the plan as there is more work to be done. Translink have projected a deficit for 2013/14 and 2014/15. I expect Translink to develop plans to address this and I have also asked my officials to look at funding options. Following two earlier efficiency reviews of Translink, as part of the programme for Reform of Public Transport; my Department is in the process of initiating a further efficiency review of Translink to inform this task.

Grant Offers to Rural Community Transport Organisations

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the formal grant offers to rural community transport organisations for the current financial year; and whether the delay in the release of funds caused Down Community Transport to stop the delivery of its services for a number of days.

(AQW 11620/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Each Rural Community Transport Partnership has now been advised of the level of funding they will receive for 2012/13. Formal letters of offer will issue soon. It is important that each of the Community Transport organisations is clear about the level of funding available for the year and understands and plans for this.

I am aware that the Board and manager of Down District Accessible Transport (DDAT) did decide to cease providing Dial-A-Lift services from 1 May 2012 to 3 May 2012 due to lack of cash. This is regrettable given that on the 24 April 2012 an interim payment to DDAT of £76,000 was approved. In addition an official spoke to the Chair of the Board of Directors on 30 April 2012 to explain the situation and again reassure the Board that an interim payment had been processed by my Department.

I am not in a position to comment on the actual level of cash resources available to Down Community Transport.

Residents' Parking Scheme in the Bogside Area of Derry

Mr McCartney asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the reasons for the delay in introducing legislation for the Residents' Parking Scheme in the Bogside area of Derry; and when the legislation will be implemented.

(AQW 11627/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Residents' Parking Scheme proposed for the Bogside area of Londonderry is one of a number of such schemes being developed in parallel by my Department's Roads Service. These proposed schemes are the first for Northern Ireland, and as such, it is important that all the issues relating to operation and enforcement are fully addressed and accurately provided for in the legislation before moving to implementation.

While the underlying aim for each scheme is the same i.e. parking being controlled for the benefit of residents, there will be slight differences in the operation of each scheme to reflect local circumstances and each will need to be legislated for separately.

There have also been a number of technological advancements since Residents' Parking was first considered by Roads Service, for example, the potential for the automation of permits and their enforcement will have an impact on how the schemes will operate and Roads Service is assessing the legislative implications arising from such developments.

Roads Service will continue to progress the Residents' Parking Schemes and the associated legislation as quickly as possible and anticipates that schemes will be delivered mid-late 2013.

Rural Transport Fund Grant Aid

Mr Rogers asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail, for the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012, (i) the amount of Rural Transport Fund grant aid awarded to each of the seven regions; and (ii) the number of Dial-a-Lift trips completed in each region.

(AQW 11643/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The information requested is detailed in the table below.

REGION	Total Admin Costs	Total Dial-A-Lift Operational Support	Total Group Support	Total Annual Grant Funding	Total No. of Dial-A-lift Trips
CDM (Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt)	£224,166.31	£355,816.86	£20,000.00	£599,983.17	45,103
Down District Accessible Transport	£206,186.20	£284,432.66	£nil	£490,618.86	13,731
Easilink (Strabane, Foyle and Omagh)	£203,226.22	£326,228.46	£20,000.00	£549,454.68	41,891
Fermanagh	£178,527.24	£330,637.66	£20,000.00	£529,164.90	37,997
Loughside (Lagan Valley, South Antrim)	£171,762.00	£153,749.56	£nil	£325,511.56	18,991
NCCT (Roe Valley, Coleraine, Ballycastle, Ballymena)	£207,278.85	£361,330.03	£30,000.00	£598,608.88	36,230

REGION	Total Admin Costs	Total Dial-A-Lift Operational Support	Total Group Support	Total Annual Grant Funding	Total No. of Dial-A-lift Trips
Southern Area (Armagh, Newry & Mourne & Banbridge)	£202,777.75	£200,652.03	£20,000.00	£423,429.78	33,533
Overall Totals	£1,393,924.57	£2,012,847.26	£110,000.00	£3,516,771.83	227,476

The regions listed relate to combinations of Rural Transport Partnerships who have merged recently or who, it is hoped, are working towards formal merger. The statistic for Dial a Lift trips does not record length of journeys.

Instances in Which Buses Have Caught Fire

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development, in light of the number of instances in which buses have caught fire in recent years, what steps are being taken to ensure the safety of passengers, including school children.

(AQW 11646/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department can and does raise safety issues at regular accountability meetings with Translink officials and its Board has longstanding governance arrangements in place to monitor safety issues. Translink has advised that all such incidents are investigated and recommendations developed on the basis of that investigation are rigorously implemented.

Recent recommendations have included:

- Campaign modification/replacement of a component
- Revision of vehicle inspection instruction
- Re-training of employees on vehicle maintenance issues
- Continued market research in strategies and equipment to mitigate the risk and control of fire
- Withdrawal of buses for immediate checking

These recommendations are then used in the procurement of new vehicles, ensuring that:-

- There is close liaison with the manufactures in order to design out known causes of vehicle fires
- The vehicle specification is enhanced to improve the vehicle's performance in reducing the possibility of fire

Saltersbridge Housing Development, Magherafelt

Mr McLaughlin asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the Saltersbridge Housing Development, Magherafelt is included in the list of unfinished estates that are under consideration by his Department for the completion of roads, lighting and sewer facilities; and if so, when the work is expected to begin.

(AQW 11776/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service advises that the Saltersbridge Housing Development, also known locally as Sandy Braes, proposes the construction of 117 dwelling units, only 13 of which have been completed to date.

Access to the development is via a developer constructed bridge, for which, the developer has yet to submit to Roads Service the requisite design and checking certification. NI Water has also advised that the developer has not yet made an application for the adoption of the sewers. Consequently, the sewers remain the property and responsibility of the developer. Roads Service has also advised that there are difficulties in relation to the bonds/sureties relating to the development.

Given the absence of the requisite certifications and bond/sureties, Roads Service will not be taking enforcement action to complete the roads, lighting and sewer works associated with this development.

Department for Social Development

Welfare Reform

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development when he, or his predecessor, first met with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions as a consultee on Welfare Reform; and what subsequent meetings they have had on this matter.

(AQW 11041/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): I met with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on 13 March 2012 to discuss a range of matters including Welfare Reform. I understand that my predecessor met with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in September 2010.

Refurbishment of Flats at Rathgill Park, Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the refurbishment of flats at Rathgill Park, Bangor.

(AQW 11082/11-15)

Mr McCausland: A window replacement scheme is scheduled to go on site in July, a heating replacement scheme will follow later this financial year and a kitchen replacement scheme has been provisionally programmed for 2014/15.

Social Housing Units in the West Green area in Loughview Estate, Holywood

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the timescale for the new social housing units in the West Green area in Loughview Estate, Holywood.

(AQW 11159/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Clanmil Housing has already been appointed to take this scheme forward and expect construction to start on site before the end of this financial year.

Change to Benefit Levels

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the change to benefit levels by linking them to the Consumer Price Index rather than the Retail Price Index.

(AQW 11270/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Firstly I am sure the member will want to join me in welcoming the increase of 5.2% in benefits from April this year using the Consumer Prices Index especially at a time when inflation has fallen and is predicted to fall further. While I accept that, currently, the Retail Prices Index (RPI) is higher than the Consumer Prices Index (CPI), using the CPI to up-rate benefits will ensure they keep their value in relation to the headline measure of inflation used by the Bank of England.

In Northern Ireland, the Department has no power to vary the percentage rate by which benefits are increased from the rate used by the Secretary of State in respect of Great Britain. The percentage increase in benefit levels from April 2013 will be known when the 2013 up-rating figure is announced in the autumn fiscal statement which is normally made at the end of November.

Under-Occupied Homes

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development how many under-occupied homes are owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, broken down by district office.

(AQW 11351/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not have definitive data on the current occupancy of its total housing stock. This is because household composition can significantly change over time subsequent to the allocation of a tenancy. However, figures from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency suggest that approximately 65% of Housing Executive properties are under occupied on the bedroom standard.

Tendering Process for the Preparation of Village Designs

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development how many Northern Ireland based companies were successful in the tendering process for the preparation of Village Designs; and what is this figure as a percentage of the overall number of applicants.

(AQW 11419/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department is currently working with the Central Procurement Directorate to establish a framework contract for the appointment of consultants to undertake regeneration and planning work such as the preparation of masterplans.

At the first stage of the procurement process, interested firms were invited to submit pre-qualification questionnaires. 21 firms submitted valid pre-qualification questionnaires and of these, 3 were from Northern Ireland owned firms, 13 were from firms with headquarters in Great Britain and branch offices in Northern Ireland, 4 were from firms based in Great Britain with no Northern Ireland presence and 1 was from a firm based in the Republic of Ireland with no Northern Ireland presence. Firms which are either locally owned or have a Northern Ireland Office account for 76% of applicants.

12 firms have been short-listed to proceed to the second stage of the competition. Of these, 2 are Northern Ireland owned firms, 8 are UK firms with branch offices in Northern Ireland, 1 is from a UK firm with no Northern Ireland presence and 1 is from a Republic of Ireland firm with no Northern Ireland presence. Firms which are either locally owned or have a Northern Ireland Office account for 83% of those shortlisted.

The appointment of up to 5 firms to the contract will be confirmed in June. It is a condition of the contract that the appointed firms must either already have a Northern Ireland office or establish one before they are awarded any work from the framework.

Regional Infrastructure Support Programme

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the staff time and cost incurred by his Department in developing the new arrangements for the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme; (ii) the cost incurred by his Department in advertising for the generic provider of infrastructure support; (iii) the staff time and costs involved in assessing Expressions of Interest for the provision of generic infrastructure support; and (iv) the number of Expressions of Interest received for the provision of generic infrastructure support.

(AQW 11480/11-15)

Mr McCausland: It is not possible to provide a meaningful answer in respect of the staff time and cost incurred by my Department in developing the new Regional Infrastructure Support Programme because the review was conducted a part of normal business activity and specific records were not kept.

The cost incurred by my Department in advertising for the generic provider was £1,938.00. The staff time and costs involved in assessing the two Expressions of Interest received for generic infrastructure support were approximately 12 hours, amounting to approximately £318.00.

Generic Infrastructure Support to the Community and Voluntary Sector

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) which organisation or consortium has been selected by his Department to deliver generic infrastructure support to the community and

voluntary sector; and (ii) if a consortium has been selected, the level of funding allocated to each organisation within it.

(AQW 11481/11-15)

Mr McCausland: A consortium led by the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA), to include Chief Officers 3rd Sector (CO3), Rural Community Network (RCN), and Community Evaluation Northern Ireland (CENI), has been selected following receipt of expressions of interest.

The level of funding has not yet been determined and is subject to normal application, appraisal and decision making procedures.

Regional Infrastructure Support Programme

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development (i) what plans his Department has to evaluate independently the new Regional Infrastructure Support Programme; and (ii) for his assessment of the extent to which the programme meets the infrastructure support needs of the community and voluntary sector.

(AQW 11482/11-15)

Mr McCausland: A programme evaluation will be conducted by individuals not involved with the management or implementation of the programme, in accordance with Department of Finance and Personnel guidance.

My assessment is that the programme fully meets the infrastructure support needs of the voluntary and community sector as reflected in the responses to the consultation process.

Social Housing:Under-Occupancy

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development what percentage of social housing is currently considered to be under-occupied.

(AQW 11506/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency figures suggest that approximately 65% of Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties are under occupied on the bedroom standard. No comparable statistics are available for Housing Associations but research is underway to determine those figures.

Housing Executive Double-Glazing Scheme

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development, prior to his announcement in the Assembly about postponing the Housing Executive double-glazing scheme, whether he ensured that the companies involved were informed and did not order stock for the current Housing Executive specification which would be of huge cost to the companies concerned.

(AQW 11509/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I wrote to the Housing Executive's Chief Executive asking him to rigorously and urgently review the specification for double glazing. I made it clear in a Press release issued on 9 May that where current Egan Contractors had placed a contract with a window manufacturer for the delivery of frames and cancellation would lead to nugatory expenditure, these contracts can proceed. As part of the Housing Executive's review I have agreed what category groups and schemes should now proceed and I have asked the Housing Executive to urgently write to all contractors to confirm the position.

Specification to Contractors for Double-Glazing Installation

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development why he did not ensure that the Housing Executive's current specification to contractors for double-glazing installation was to his satisfaction before the scheme began.

(AQW 11513/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive initially advised me that the costs of the double glazing programme, originally estimated at 48,000 homes, would be around £120m. As a result I became concerned that the Housing Executive's specification for the supply and fitting of double glazing did not offer value for money and there may be potential for significant savings to be made. I asked my officials to research the specifications used as I was particularly concerned about the requirement to remove and replaster around frames, which necessitates the payment of redecoration grants and causes inconvenience to tenants and also the specification for hinges and handles, as these are much higher than industry standards for domestic properties. I therefore asked the Housing Executive to rigorously review the specification.

I can confirm that all homes will remain in the double glazing programme and no tenant who was promised double glazing will lose out. It is estimated that around 30,000 homes will be included in the double glazing programme and this will be completed in the current CSR period, by 2015, as set out in the Executive's Programme for Government.

Housing Executive Double-Glazing Scheme

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties affected by the double-glazing scheme being put on hold, broken down by constituency. **(AQW 11534/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: The information requested is not currently available. I wrote to the Housing Executive's Chief Executive asking him to rigorously and urgently review the specification for double glazing. This review will not have an impact on the Programme for Government target date of 2015 and, although there may be slight delays, all the estimated 30,000 homes will remain in the programme and no tenant who was promised double glazing will lose out. As part of the Housing Executive's review I have agreed what category groups and schemes should now proceed. I have asked the Housing Executive to urgently write to all contractors to confirm the position.

Double-Glazing to Housing Executive Properties

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development (i) why the fitting of double-glazing to Housing Executive properties has been suspended; (ii) how he came to this decision; and (iii) when the programme will recommence. **(AQW 11566/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive initially advised me that the costs of the double glazing programme, originally estimated at 48,000 homes, would be around £120m. As a result I became concerned that the Housing Executive's specification for the supply and fitting of double glazing did not offer value for money and there may be potential for significant savings to be made. I asked my officials to research the specifications used as I was particularly concerned about the requirement to remove and replaster around frames, which necessitates the payment of redecoration grants and causes inconvenience to tenants and also the specification for hinges and handles, as these are much higher than industry standards for domestic properties.

I subsequently wrote to the Housing Executive's Chief Executive asking him to rigorously and urgently review the specification for double glazing. This work will be completed before the Procurement Strategy is approved by the Housing Executive Board at the end of June. As part of the Housing Executive's review I have agreed what category groups and schemes should now proceed and I have asked the Housing Executive to urgently write to all contractors to confirm the position.

While it is estimated that around 30,000 homes will be included in the double glazing programme, and this will be completed in the current CSR period, any delay will be as short as possible while the Housing Executive carries out the review requested by me.

Assessments of Claimants for Employment and Support Allowance

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the level of (i) medical training; and (ii) qualifications required for staff who carry out assessments of claimants for Employment and Support Allowance; and how the staff ensure that a clinically informed decision on the full medical capability of the claimant is made, particularly in relation to the mental health descriptors.

(AQW 11571/11-15)

Mr McCausland:

- (i) Healthcare professionals carrying out Work Capability Assessments receive training that is tailored to their particular profession. The initial training for doctors is eight days and for nurses is twenty four days. Healthcare professionals are required to complete a paper based examination at the end of their classroom training. The standard to be achieved is a minimum pass mark of 85%. All Healthcare professionals are approved by the Social Security Agency's Health Assessment Advisor.
- (ii) All Health Care Professionals carrying out medical assessments on behalf of the Social Security Agency are required to be fully qualified Doctors or Nurses with a minimum of three years full time relevant post qualification experience and unconditional registration with the General Medical Council or the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

Health Care Professionals are subject to a 100% audit during initial training to ensure that they are making clinically informed decisions on the full medical capability of the customer, before their appointment is approved. Reports continue to be audited monthly using an agreed sample size to ensure quality and consistency.

Specific mental health training is provided to all Health Care Professionals and Mental Health Champions are in place to ensure correct choice of mental health descriptors.

Co-Ownership Housing Scheme

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the success of the additional funding allocated to the Co-Ownership Housing Scheme.

(AQW 11581/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In total the Northern Ireland Co-Ownership Housing Association has received £28.25 million of funding from my Department in the 2011/12 financial year.

In conjunction with private finance resources, such funding has allowed Co-Ownership to support the purchase of 643 affordable homes; helping to meet the aspirations of those seeking to be homeowners but who cannot do so without the assistance the Co-Ownership Scheme brings.

Review of the Double-Glazing Scheme Installation Specification

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development (i) for an estimate of the jobs that might be lost as a result of his review of the double-glazing scheme installation specification; and (ii) what value of stock purchased by companies will be unusable as a result.

(AQW 11593/11-15)

Mr McCausland: As part of the Housing Executive's review I have agreed what category groups and schemes should now proceed and I have asked the Housing Executive to urgently write to all contractors to confirm the position. I am therefore not prepared to speculate on job and financial losses to double glazing firms. I committed funding to this programme and I believe it will create jobs for NI companies over the next four years. It is estimated that around 30,000 homes will be included in the double glazing programme and this will be completed in the current CSR period, by 2015 as set out in the Executive's Programme for Government.

Housing Executive's Double-Glazing Scheme

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development when the review of the Housing Executive's double-glazing scheme will be completed.

(AQW 11594/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The review will be completed just as soon as the Housing Executive rigorously reviews its entire glazing specification, especially the requirement to remove and replaster around frames thus necessitating the payment of redecoration grants and their standards for reversible windows, hinges and handles. This work will be completed before the Procurement Strategy is approved by the Housing Executive Board at the end of June.

Report by Consumer Focus Scotland 'Reaping the Benefits of Renewables'

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the report by Consumer Focus Scotland 'Reaping the Benefits of Renewables - The role of community benefit funds in tackling fuel poverty and energy efficiency' including what lessons his Department might learn from this report.

(AQW 11610/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Improving the energy efficiency of fuel poor households is an important part of the new Fuel Poverty Strategy "Warmer Healthier Homes". Community benefit funds could have a role to play in tackling fuel poverty and reducing energy inefficiency. I welcome this report and will consider the recommendations along with other Executive colleagues as this issue cuts across the responsibilities of the Department of Finance and Personnel, the Department of the Environment and the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development.

Bungalows that Require Multi-Element Improvements in Bloomfield, Bangor

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development (i) for an update on the proposals to transfer the bungalows that require multi-element improvements in Bloomfield, Bangor, to a housing association; (ii) whether a preferred housing association has been appointed; and (iii) whether the nature of the proposal has been confirmed and communicated to residents.

(AQW 11633/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Following a public meeting held on the 29 March 2012, Oaklee Homes Group has been nominated to work with the Housing Executive and tenants on the stock transfer proposal for 71 bungalows in the Bloomfield Estate and have recently met with Bloomfield Community Association to introduce themselves.

Oaklee is now undertaking a feasibility study on the scheme and will prepare improvement proposals on which the tenants will be formally consulted in the coming months.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister for Social Development what measures he is considering, under the Warm Homes Scheme, to help people afford heating oil, given that its cost has risen dramatically.

(AQW 11695/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Over the last 3 months my Department, in conjunction with Carillion Energy Services and Kingspan Renewables, has been piloting a Pay as You Go for Oil scheme. The technology being used enables householders who use oil to heat their home to purchase oil as they need it, similar to the option available for gas and electricity customers. The pilot is coming to an end and will be fully evaluated however early indications are that the pilot has been successful. This technology will remove householders need to pay in advance for oil and their reliance on emergency drums which are significantly more expensive per litre than buying oil in larger quantities.

Once the pilot has been completed and I have received an evaluation I will assess the options available to include the technology in new or existing schemes delivered by my Department.

People in Fuel Poverty

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister for Social Development what assistance his Department offers to people in fuel poverty to change their heating systems from oil to gas.

(AQW 11696/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In June 2011 my Department launched a pilot Boiler Replacement Scheme offering assistance to older householders on low income who missed out on other Government energy efficiency improvement schemes to replace old inefficient boilers. The pilot scheme entitled eligible householders to a grant of up to £1,500 towards the cost of installing a new boiler. Householders could use the grant to replace oil boilers with new gas or oil boilers. The scheme was administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and has been very successful. The scheme closed on 31 March 2012 and has been subject to an evaluation. I am currently examining the evaluation and expect to be in a position to make an announcement about a new Boiler Replacement Scheme in the near future.

Capital and Revenue Savings

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the capital and revenue savings his Department has made in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11718/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There are no annual capital savings targets, as Departments are obliged to manage and live within the capital budgets set (from a zero base) in the course of the Budget Review process. The 2010 Budget Review set the budgets for 2011-12 to 2014-15. To put this in context, capital spend in 2011-12 was approximately £171.3 million, whereas the opening capital budget allocation for 2012-13 is only £120.4 million.

The revenue savings target and achievement figures for the Department over the last 3 years are as set out in the table below:

Year	Savings Target	Savings Achieved
2009-10	£38.10m	£39.77m
2010-11	£56.30m	£59.22m
2011-12	£25.53m	£26.09m

New Criteria for Personal Independence Payments

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development what consideration he has given to the recommendation of the UK Joint Committee on Human Rights on allowing 'some additional discretion to exempt disabled people facing exceptional hardship from the under-occupation provisions', as part of the new criteria for Personal Independence Payments.

(AQW 11761/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The introduction of Personal Independence Payment is intended to create a fairer, more transparent and sustainable system, which provides support to those people with a disability who face the greatest barriers to leading full, active and independent lives. The assessment for Personal Independence Payment will look at disabled people as individuals and does not label them by their health condition or impairment. It has been designed to consider an individual's personal circumstances and the impact their impairment has on their lives. It will consider a person's ability to perform a range of everyday tasks. This will include preparing food and drink, bathing and grooming, engaging socially, moving around and planning and following a journey. The assessment will also take into account whether such activities can be carried out safely or if support from another person, aids or appliances are needed. It will not, however, assess a person's housing needs or costs.

While arguments can be made for exempting certain categories from the size criteria restrictions to be introduced for new and existing working-age Housing Benefit claimants living in the social rented

sector, a blanket exemption for any group is not the most effective or affordable approach. Rather than creating exemptions for broad categories, Discretionary Housing Payments provide the right approach to supporting people in more vulnerable circumstances, as they offer flexibility and are based on local decisions which can be targeted as needed. While additional exemptions may seem attractive, their application may not be straight forward, making them difficult to administer. Discretionary Housing Payments funding has already been substantially increased to help with the impact of Housing Benefit reforms and further funding of £1.005m in each of the years from 2013-14 to 2016-17 will be available specifically to help people in significantly adapted accommodation (as well as foster carers). This is because it is accepted that there will be circumstances where it makes no sense for someone to move from a property which has already been significantly adapted to a different property which would require money to be spent on adaptations.

Housing Benefit: Foster Carers or Approved Kinship Carers

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for Social Development how many foster carers or approved kinship carers have been adversely affected by the changes to the Housing Benefit calculations that came into effect in April 2011.

(AQW 11855/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because the Housing Executive cannot identify Housing Benefit applicants who are foster carers or approved kinship carers in the Housing Benefit system as this is not a determining factor in the awarding of Housing Benefit.

Housing Benefit: Foster Carers or Approved Kinship Carers

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) how many foster carers or approved kinship carers have had their overall rate of Housing Benefit reduced since April 2011; and (ii) how many have been offered transitional protection or discretionary payments.

(AQW 11856/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because the Housing Executive cannot identify Housing Benefit applicants who are foster carers or approved kinship carers in the Housing Benefit system as this is not a determining factor in the awarding of Housing Benefit. However, if a foster carer or approved kinship carer has had their Housing Benefit entitlement affected due to the April 2011 legislative change, then transitional protection would have applied as with all other affected cases.

Discretionary Housing Benefit Payments

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for Social Development whether foster carers and approved kinship carers are a priority for discretionary Housing Benefit payments.

(AQW 11857/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Fostering arrangements do not warrant the award of priority under the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme. Fostering arrangements are not recognised under the Housing Benefit management system, as income derived from fostering is disregarded in the assessment of Housing Benefit entitlement.

Housing Executive: Double Glazing

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the review of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's double-glazing specification that he requested due to concerns over value for money.

(AQO 2019/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive initially advised me that the costs of the double glazing programme, originally estimated at 48,000 homes, would be around £120m. As a result I became concerned that the Housing Executive's specification for the supply and fitting of double glazing did not

offer value for money. I believe there are further significant savings to be made around the Housing Executive's specification and bespoke procurement process.

I subsequently wrote to the Housing Executive's Chief Executive asking him to rigorously and urgently review the specification for double glazing. The review will be completed urgently and will not have an impact on the target date of 2015, and although there may be slight delays while this is carried out, all homes will remain in the programme and no tenant who was promised double glazing will lose out. As part of the Housing Executive's review I have agreed what category groups and schemes should now proceed and I have asked the Housing Executive to urgently write to all contractors to confirm the position.

While it is estimated that around 30,000 homes will be included in the double glazing programme, and this will be completed in the current CSR period, by 2015 as set out in the Executive's Programme for Government any delay will be as short as possible while the Housing Executive carries out the review requested by me.

Housing Developments on the Girdwood Site

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Social Development whether the two housing developments that will be located on the Girdwood site will be one Common Landlord Area for people applying to live in the area.

(AQW 12070/11-15)

Mr McCausland: This will ultimately be an issue for the Housing Executive to consider once detailed plans for the residential aspect of the Girdwood Redevelopment proposals are finalised.

Public Realm Schemes: Bangor and Holywood

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Social Development what support his Department is proposing to give to North Down Borough Council for the proposed Public Realm Works in Bangor and Holywood town centres.

(AQO 2025/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In July last year I launched a masterplan for Bangor town centre. The masterplan proposes a range of public realm works to enrich the town centre and make Bangor a more attractive and appealing place to visit and spend time in. In December last year I also visited Holywood and saw at first hand that there is a need to overhaul the public realm to help Holywood to remain a vibrant and busy town centre.

My Department is working with North Down Borough Council to initiate the process to establish the scope, nature and initial design of the proposed public realm works in both towns. As part of this process, my Department will support Council the procurement, design and contract management process by bringing in project management expertise from the Central Procurement Directorate.

My Department has included indicative allocations of funding for both Bangor and Holywood in its Forward Work Programme for the public realm works. £2.5 million has been allocated for Bangor in the 2013/14 and 2014/2015 financial years and £1 million has been allocated for Holywood in the 2014/15 financial year. I would advise that both amounts are subject to the completion of a satisfactory business case, all necessary approvals being in place and sufficient funding being available in my Department's budget.

I understand that North Down Borough Council intends making a significant contribution to the public realm works in Bangor and Holywood and that this matter will come before Council next month. Council should be commended for making this commitment, as this joint investment will enable us create the ideal town centre setting for encouraging more visitors and shoppers to spend time in Bangor and Holywood town centres.

Co-Ownership Housing Association

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the impact of the additional funding provided for the Co-Ownership Housing Association.

(AQO 2026/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In total the Northern Ireland Co-Ownership Housing Association received £28.25 million of funding from my Department in the 2011/12 financial year. Initially they started the year with just £15m, however thanks to the intervention from Sammy Wilson and myself, we increased that funding with a further £13.5m and as a result we are now delivering more affordable homes than in previous years.

Alongside the private finance that Co-Ownership lever in, this total funding has allowed Co-Ownership to support the purchase of 643 affordable homes; helping to meet the aspirations of those seeking to be homeowners but who cannot do so without the assistance the Co-Ownership Scheme brings.

This represents a significant increase of up to 30% from previous years and underlines my commitment to promoting and more importantly supporting affordable home ownership. I am also pleased to see that local banks have honoured the commitments they made when Sammy Wilson and I met them last year to make the case that if we put more resources into the Co-Ownership scheme, they would have to match that with increased lending to those applicants. This is a good example of how the public and private sector can work together to deliver positive results for people, even in the midst of what are still very difficult economic times.

Child Maintenance

Mr McClarty asked the Minister for Social Development how he plans to address the increasing child maintenance debt of absent parents.

(AQO 2028/11-15)

Mr McCausland: It is a priority for my Department to promote and embed behavioural changes amongst parents so that they take financial responsibility for their children and pay regular child maintenance. Regular payments of child maintenance can make a significant difference to the wellbeing of children, particularly those living in poverty.

Parents are supported in making their own maintenance arrangements through the Child Maintenance Choices Service. This is a free, confidential helpline service to help parents decide the Child Maintenance arrangement that best suits their needs.

Child maintenance arrears is money owed by non-resident parents as a result of their failure to meet their financial responsibilities towards their children. Arrears have accumulated over 19 years of operating the statutory child maintenance schemes, therefore a significant amount of the arrears are historic and cannot be resolved at this point in time. My Department does not currently have the legislative power to write off child maintenance arrears. Responsibility for unpaid maintenance rests ultimately with non-resident parents and regrettably some parents go to great lengths to avoid their financial responsibility to their children.

My Department remains focussed on pursuing arrears of child maintenance and continues to robustly apply the full range of enforcement tools available. Tougher strategies have been introduced to recover arrears and additional enforcement powers allow for recovery of child maintenance from a non-resident parent's bank/building society account as well as recovery from deceased estates. Available powers also enable the Department to prevent non-resident parents disposing of their assets to avoid paying child maintenance and to reverse transactions where an asset has already been disposed of.

Housing Executive: Property Transfer to Housing Associations

Mr McCartney asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the basis on which his Department intends to transfer properties currently owned by the Housing Executive to Housing Associations.

(AQO 2029/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive's multi element improvement programme ended in 2008/09 because of a lack of funding caused by the collapse of the land and property market. There are however still 5,706 Housing Executive properties in need of this sort of multi element improvement work.

I have therefore asked the Housing Executive to prepare a programme that could see up to 2,000 homes transferred into Housing Association ownership over the next three years. This move would of course be subject to a successful tenant vote.

That programme has not been completed and sent to me yet. Once available, I will be happy to publish it outlining what schemes will be included and when. As part of the process, a business case for each individual scheme will be prepared and tenants will be fully consulted with details of the transfer set out in a series of public meetings that will culminate in a tenant vote on the proposals. Tenants will also have access to an Independent Tenant Advisor to guide them through the transfer process.

The stock transfer option would allow Housing Associations to use their own finance to undertake this work, thus delivering the improvements tenants need without the reliance on public resources, the lack of which has stalled this work for some years now.

Welfare Reform Bill

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development when he intends to introduce the Welfare Reform Bill in the Assembly.

(AQO 2030/11-15)

Mr McCausland: As the Member may know the Welfare Reform Act in GB received Royal Assent at Westminster on 8th March this year. In keeping with the principle of 'parity' in terms of Social Security matters, I will shortly be introducing my proposals for a Welfare Reform Bill for Northern Ireland to this Assembly. Parity dictates that an individual in Northern Ireland is paid the same benefits and subject to the same conditionality as an individual elsewhere in the UK.

I am of course aware of the concerns which are being raised in advance of Bill being introduced and as Minister responsible I take these very seriously. I have established an Executive Sub-Committee to consider issue arising from Welfare Reform and in particular to consider what, by way of mitigation we as an Executive need to consider to protect the most vulnerable in Northern Ireland.

I would also advise the member that my officials have been working closely with their counterparts in GB and that I have held a number of discussions with Ministerial colleagues at Westminster to inform the overall reform process for Northern Ireland and in particular to identify matters where circumstances differ significantly for Northern Ireland.

I have also commissioned work on assessing the impacts of some of the proposed reforms and my officials have developed a 'Policy Simulation Model' for Northern Ireland similar to that used by the Department for Work and pensions in GB.

I trust that this offers you some assurance as to how seriously I am considering the whole reform agenda and that the matter of Welfare Reform in particular is and will remain a priority for both myself and my Ministerial colleagues,

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Arrangements for Financial Assistance to Political Parties

Mr McNarry asked the Assembly Commission what financial allocations have been made under the arrangements for financial assistance to political parties, to each political party in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11425/11-15)

Mr Weir (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The amounts paid to each political party under the Financial Assistance for Political Parties Scheme 2007 in each of the last three years is detailed in Table 1 overleaf. While the amounts for the 2011/12 financial have still to be audited, it is not anticipated that the final figures will vary significantly from those shown.

TABLE 1: PAYMENTS MADE UNDER THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO POLITICAL PARTIES SCHEME 2007

	2011/12*	2010/11	2009/10
Alliance	£92,115	£83,606	£91,175
DUP	£207,892	£200,869	£189,888
Green	£26,375	£28,723	£25,213
Independent Health Coalition	£2,487	£29,636	£28,125
PUP	£0	£5,102	£28,134
SDLP	£128,194	£135,010	£128,166
Sinn Fein	£176,515	£169,650	£161,318
TUV	£22,894	£0	£0
UUP	£133,914	£134,042	£131,808
Total	£790,386	£786,638	£783,827

* Unaudited figures

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