

FROM THE MINISTER/ÓN AIRE



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Education
MÁNNYSTRIE O
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SUB 863/2013

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11 October 2013

A chara

During Topical Question time on Monday 7 October 2013, I inadvertently provided Mr Alex Easton MLA with incorrect information on looked after children in response to his Topical Question AQT 180/11-15 and subsequent supplementary.

Mr Easton asked what the education system is doing to help looked after children and if they all had Personal Education Plans (PEPs), which were required by 1 June 2013. In my response, I referenced support for looked after children under the current Common Funding Formula (CFF) and also indicated that not all looked after children may require a PEP.

The correct position is the current CFF does not include a factor that provides additional support to schools with pupils registered as looked after children. I am, however, consulting on the introduction of such a support factor as part of the reform of the Common Funding Scheme. This proposal, if accepted, would provide additional funding to schools who register looked after children in their school census return, via the CFF.

All looked after children do require PEPs. These are initiated by the child's social worker and schools complete them when asked to do so. The Health and Social Care Board's timetable for progressing PEPs indicated that all looked after children and young people would have a PEP in place by 1 June 2013. This has not been achieved. Department of Education (DE) officials are working with other partners to address this issue.

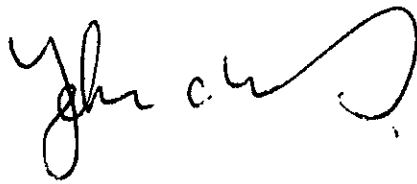


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I apologise for this misunderstanding and have written to Mr Easton correcting this error. A copy of my letter has also been placed in the Assembly Library.

While I believe Topical Questions have brought a fresh feel to question time it will not always be possible to have information on every issue to hand for a Department such as DE. Could I respectfully suggest that members listed for Topical Questions advise the relevant Department in advance of the topic of their question and not necessarily the detail. This will allow Ministers to provide members with more detail on the issue of concern rather than what will have to be a very broad answer lacking detail if a Minister does not have information at hand.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John O'Dowd', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

JOHN O'DOWD MLA
Minister for Education