

# Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

**Friday 26 October 2012**

**Volume 78, No WA4**



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

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Kelly, Mrs Dolores (Upper Bann)  
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Kennedy, Danny (Newry and Armagh)  
Kinahan, Danny (South Antrim)  
Lo, Ms Anna (South Belfast)  
Lunn, Trevor (Lagan Valley)  
Lynch, Seán (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)  
Lyttle, Chris (East Belfast)  
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McCallister, John (South Down)  
McCann, Fra (West Belfast)  
McCann, Ms Jennifer (West Belfast)  
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McCartney, Raymond (Foyle)  
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Overend, Mrs Sandra (Mid Ulster)  
Poots, Edwin (Lagan Valley)  
Ramsey, Pat (Foyle)  
Ramsey, Ms Sue (West Belfast)  
Robinson, George (East Londonderry)  
Robinson, Peter (East Belfast)  
Rogers, Sean (South Down)  
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Sheehan, Pat (West Belfast)  
Spratt, Jimmy (South Belfast)  
Storey, Mervyn (North Antrim)  
Swann, Robin (North Antrim)  
Weir, Peter (North Down)  
Wells, Jim (South Down)  
Wilson, Sammy (East Antrim)

# Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 26 October 2012

## Written Answers to Questions

### Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

#### Cases of Abuse from Children

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what options are being explored, or will be put in place, to hear and investigate the cases of abuse from children in foster care and non-state run residential children's homes.

**(AQW 14930/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister):** Any institutions here that fall within the definition set out in the Terms of Reference will be within the scope of the Inquiry into historical institutional abuse, that is: "any body, society or organisation with responsibility for the care, health or welfare of children in Northern Ireland, other than a school (but including a training school or borstal) which, during the relevant period, provided residential accommodation and took decisions about and made provision for the day to day care of children".

The issue of child abuse outside the institutional setting is no less important or emotive than that which will be investigated by the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry. As such, the Executive will have to give careful consideration as to how it should be dealt with following the Inquiry.

#### Lay Members to the NI Judicial Appointments Commission

**Mr Allister** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) who sat on the selection panel giving rise to the recent appointment of lay members to the NI Judicial Appointments Commission; (ii) how many applications were received; (iii) how many applicants were interviewed; and (iv) how many names forwarded for consideration by the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

**(AQW 15133/11-15)**

#### **Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:**

- (i) The selection panel for the competition to appoint lay members to the NI Judicial Appointments Commission comprised a Chair and three panel members. Frank Duffy the Director of Arms Length Bodies and Financial Governance in OFMDFM chaired the panel. The members of the panel were Gareth Johnston the Head of Criminal Justice Policy and Legislation Division of the Department of Justice, Edward Gorrige the Chief Executive of NIJAC, and Orla Moore an independent assessor.
- (ii) Eighty-seven applications were received.
- (iii) Nine candidates were invited to interview and eight candidates attended.
- (iv) Four names were put forward for consideration by the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

#### Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry

**Mr Clarke** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether any consideration has been given to widening the scope of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry.

**(AQO 2569/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** We have agreed to amend the starting parameter for the Inquiry from 1945 to 1922. However, we are content that the current scope, as outlined in the Terms of Reference definition of “institution”, remains the same.

### **Apprentices Employed Through Departmental Contracts**

**Mr McKay** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many apprentices have been employed through departmental contracts in this financial year; and what percentage this number represents of the total posts allocated.

**(AQW 15256/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** No apprentices have been employed in our department through departmental contracts this financial year.

### **Social Investment Fund**

**Mrs Dobson** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail any money which has been allocated from the Social Investment Fund to date.

**(AQW 15293/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** Monies to date have been allocated to taking forward the necessary work to finalise the policy proposals and to establish the Steering Groups in the Social Investment Zones.

Further funding has recently been allocated to appoint consultants to support the Steering Groups to develop the strategic area plans. This spend will be incurred over the area planning stage, with a view to having plans submitted to the Department by February 2013.

### **Associated Costs of the Former Ministry of Defence Lands**

**Mr Campbell** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the approximate annual maintenance, security and other associated costs of the former Ministry of Defence lands that are currently under their Department's ownership.

**(AQW 15452/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** The approximate annual maintenance, security and other associated costs of the former Ministry of Defence lands that are currently under the Department's ownership are as follows:

	<b>Maintenance (£)</b>	<b>Security (£)</b>	<b>Other Associated costs (£)</b>
Maze/Long Kesh	22,706	144,478	3,106
Crumlin Road Gaol	91,212	78,686*	40,692
Ebrington	58,675	135,946	40,491
St Lucia, Omagh	8,920	42,304	4,348
St Patrick's, Ballymena	37,671	223,945	8,980
Shackleton, Ballykelly	174,592	262,995	48,695

\* Security costs for the Crumlin Road Gaol and Girdwood site are shared equally between OFMDFM and DSD. OFMDFM pays the security costs for the first 6 months and DSD the security costs for the last 6 months.

## Departmental Staff: Ban on Issuing Press Releases

**Mr Beggs** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they will issue a directive to their staff to ensure that the ban from the Department of Finance and Personnel on the issuing of press releases to the Press Association is lifted immediately and that the Executive Information Service will ensure that a free press is respected.

**(AQW 15468/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** There is no ban from the Department of Finance and Personnel on the issuing of press releases to the Press Association.

## Social Investment Fund

**Ms P Bradley** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the implementation of the Social Investment Fund.

**(AQO 2644/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** Following Executive agreement to the final operation of the Social Investment Fund, political and community steering group membership has been finalised and appointed.

A two-day workshop was held in Crumlin Road Gaol on 17 and 18 October. We have set aside a four-month period for the area planning process; we expect to have completed plans, supported by economic appraisals, for proposed projects, with the Department by February 2013.

We are also driving change through our announcement on 10 October in relation to 6 signature projects to immediately begin addressing some of our most intractable social and economic issues.

## Items Disposed of at Auctions

**Mr McNarry** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the items which their Department has disposed of at auctions in (i) 2010/11; and (ii) 2011/12, including the auction value of each item.

**(AQW 15621/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** The Department has not disposed of any items at auctions in either 2010/2011 or 2011/2012.

## Social Investment Fund

**Mr Lunn** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether any money will be returned from the Social Investment Fund as part of the October Monitoring Round.

**(AQO 2646/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** As an Executive fund, the Social Investment Fund monies do not sit within the OFMDFM Budget line but are held centrally by DFP. The issue of return of funding is therefore not relevant to Executive funds.

## Older People Strategy

**Mr McElduff** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Older People Strategy.

**(AQO 2649/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** Officials have been working closely with the Ageing Strategy Advisory Group, which includes representatives of many of the organisations that work with older people here and is chaired by Claire Keatinge, the Commissioner for Older People.

Officials have benefitted enormously from the regular meetings with the Advisory Group in recent months and its expertise and advice has led to the draft Strategy being extensively reworked to reflect best practice. Junior Ministers have also met with Claire Keatinge and discussed the development of the Strategy and are currently arranging to meet with representatives from the Age Sector on this issue and related matters.

Accordingly, the content of the Strategy has been informed by people who work closely with older people and also by older people who are active in the voluntary and community sector.

We have also benefitted greatly from the advice of Alan Walker, Professor of Social Policy and Social Gerontology at the University of Sheffield and we would like to thank Professor Walker for his input to the development of the Strategy, particularly on the importance of the Active Ageing agenda.

The focus now in our work with the Advisory Group is on the proposed draft plan to implement the Strategy. We are currently developing draft work programmes to enable this strategy to be implemented through the Delivering Social Change framework.

This new framework aims to deliver a sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues across all ages, thus breaking the long-term cycle of multi-generational problems.

We are taking a radical new approach with this delivery framework. It has clearly defined governance structures, and is designed to pursue a smaller number of additional key objectives in order to add real value.

Officials met the Advisory Group on 16 October to discuss the work programme proposals and the implementation timeline. Following public consultation in the coming months on both the strategy and the work programmes, our intention is that the final Strategy will be published in 2013. This will include consultee views on the priority work programmes and will initiate high-level strategic projects to address the key issues facing older people. These projects will be additional to ongoing work in departments. They will adopt a joined-up approach to the issues and have project targets and deadlines.

## **Gender Awareness**

**Ms Brown** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps their Department has taken to increase gender awareness.

**(AQO 2652/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** Our Department leads the implementation of the Executive's Gender Equality Strategy. The Strategy provides a framework for addressing identified gender inequalities across all policy areas and is being taken forward by departments via Gender Equality Action Plans. We liaise with departments on the content and delivery of these Action Plans.

We will shortly be initiating a review of the Gender Equality Strategy, including the Action Plans.

## **Executive Meeting to Discuss the Economy**

**Mr Weir** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what plans they have to convene a special Executive meeting to discuss the economy.

**(AQO 2655/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** An Executive meeting dedicated to the economy will be held at the end of this month.

## **Childcare Strategy**

**Mr Lyttle** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the Childcare Strategy will be published.

**(AQO 2656/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** Work on a consultation document is at an advanced stage and will be published shortly. The Strategy will be published following consideration of the consultation responses, and Executive agreement.

## Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

### Departmental Headquarters: Ballykelly

**Mr McQuillan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an estimate of the expected savings that will be made from moving the departmental headquarters to Ballykelly, rather than relocating it to a green field site.

**(AQW 14682/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development):** The estimated cost of providing modern office accommodation for headquarters staff is £26m. It follows that by using the Executive-owned site, and utilising the buildings on the site, there is potential to reduce the cost of relocation significantly.

I have asked my officials to produce a business case detailing the options available at Ballykelly. The final cost of the project will be dependent upon the agreed configuration.

### Animal Cruelty Offences

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many people have received the new maximum sentence for animal cruelty offences since its introduction.

**(AQW 14974/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The new penalties for animal welfare offences were introduced in the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 and became fully operational on 2 April 2012.

My Department does not hold the information you ask for. However I have sought input from the Department of Justice who inform me that given the recency of the introduction of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011, figures in relation to the new maximum sentence for animal cruelty offences have not yet fed through onto their convictions database, which records verified information.

However, the Department of Justice has advised me that it appears from provisional management information that the maximum penalty has not yet been imposed in any case.

### Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many formal appeals have been received by her Department under the Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme in each of the last four years.

**(AQW 15090/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The start date for the first agreements for the NICMS was 1 January 2009 and the first claims for NICMS were made in May 2009. At 11 October 2012, the number of appeals received by DARD in each of the last four years is shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 1: THE NUMBERS OF NICMS APPEALS RECEIVED BY DARD**

Claim year	Appeals
2009	0
2010	0
2011	24

Claim year	Appeals
2012	34
Total	58

### Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the process to lodge a formal complaint under the Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme.

**(AQW 15091/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Participants in the NI Countryside Management Scheme may appeal against a penalty applied their payment. The appeals procedure is included in Annex A (placed in library).

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has a formal complaints procedure which is included in Annex B (placed in library).

### Supporting the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what work her Department is undertaking to support the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

**(AQW 15125/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I am pleased to announce that my Department will co-fund a research project with the Rainbow Project to identify issues impacting on the LGBT sector in rural areas. This research will identify barriers to accessing services for the LGBT community as well as detailing experiences around homophobia and community safety.

All DARD staff undergo "Diversity Now" training to raise awareness of their responsibility to treat co-workers with respect. However, should an individual believe they have been treated unfairly because of their sexual orientation staff may use the NICS Dignity at work policy to address any workplace issues. Harassment Contact Officers offer advice and support on an informal basis and Equal Opportunities Section in addition to advice and support offer mediation services.

DARD's Equality Branch Intranet site has dedicated pages on Sexual Orientation and Transgender issues. These pages provide useful information for our staff and policy makers such as latest Equality Commission publications, information about civil partnerships, research material and statistical information; links to recent reports such as the Yogyakarta Principles, and contact details of LGBT organisations. The information available is regularly updated with new publications and circulated to business areas for their information.

A specially developed programme, Building a Culture of Respect, is being rolled out to Customer Service Improvement Branch (CSIB) staff in local DARD Direct offices. This supports good staff interactions internally, but also positively enhances awareness amongst staff of the need to deal fairly and inclusively with everyone. To date it has been rolled out in the majority of DARD Direct offices and plans are in place to continue with this until all staff across the network have been provided with an opportunity to participate. DARD Direct offices also provide a facility for local charities and not-for-profit organisations to make leaflets available to callers to the office, including those from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities.

The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) provides its students with contact points for organisations who will provide appropriate support in relation to sexual identity. The College has a student support officer who can advise students in relation to specific concerns, a 24 hour confidential helpline and a free counselling service. The College has policies on sexual identity, equality and harassment and these are published on Blackboard, the student Virtual Learning Environment.

## Illegal Eggs

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many illegal eggs have been seized in the last 12 months.

**(AQW 15211/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** My Department has seized no illegal or non compliant eggs during the past 12 months.

EU Egg Marketing Regulations require all Class A hen eggs placed on the market to be labelled with their method of production and to comply with certain quality, weight and labelling provisions. My Department's inspectors take enforcement action to control the marketing of any batches of eggs found to be in breach of these provisions.

In the last 12 months, Egg Marketing enforcement action has been taken to prevent eggs which failed to meet minimum quality criteria from being placed on the Class A market. These eggs may be used for processing or disposed of as Animal By-product.

During the past 12 months a small number of consignments of eggs from other Member States have been encountered. Origin details of these consignments were checked against Member States' lists of compliant premises or details confirmed directly with the Member State's Competent Authority. All eggs were found to be compliant with production method criteria. One consignment failed to meet minimum quality standards and were prevented from being placed on the Class A market.

## Relocation of DARD Headquarters

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the scores allocated to each of the twenty three potential locations for DARD headquarters; and (ii) whether the proximity to other DARD services, such as the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, were taken into consideration when ranking the locations.

**(AQW 15215/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Score of the 23 Potential Locations

Location	Score	Location	Score
Antrim	30	Down	53
Ards	50	Dungannon	49
Armagh	44	Fermanagh	41
Ballymena	35	Larne	45
Banbridge	57	Limavady	59
Belfast	34	Lisburn	24
Carrickfergus	17	Newry & Mourne	56
Castlereagh	20	Newtownabbey	21
Coleraine	37	North Down	23
Cookstown	53	Omagh	42
Craigavon	49	Strabane	73
Derry	51		

With the availability of modern information and communication technology, the proximity to other DARD services was not considered as a factor which should influence the decision on the location of the new Headquarters.

### Fishing Vessel Decommissioning Scheme

**Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she intends to proceed with the recently announced Fishing Vessel Decommissioning Scheme.

**(AQW 15237/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I would refer you to the reply I gave the Member for Strangford on 11 October 2012 in response to AQW 13173/11-15.

### Fishing Vessel Decommissioning Scheme

**Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether the £4 million allocated for the Fishing Vessel Decommissioning Scheme will be made available for other projects, if she does not proceed with the scheme.

**(AQW 15239/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I would refer you to the reply I gave the Member for Strangford on 11 October 2012 in response to AQW 13174/11-15

### Apprentices Employed Through Departmental Contracts

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many apprentices have been employed through departmental contracts in this financial year; and what percentage this number represents of the total posts allocated.

**(AQW 15257/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** No apprentices have been employed within DARD through Departmental contracts in this financial year.

### Ballykelly Forest: Maintenance

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much has been spent on maintenance and improvement work at the Ballykelly Forest in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 15287/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The direct costs associated with maintenance and improvement work carried out at Ballykelly Forest in each of the last 3 years is as follows:-

2009/2010	£2,794
2010/2011	£1,248
2011/2012	£1,753

### Rural Development Programme: Axis 3

**Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why the operating rules of Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme prevent groups of residents, who are opposed to a funding application from, meeting the board of a Rural Area Partnership to express their concerns.

**(AQW 15302/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** All eligible applications to Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme are considered objectively by an assessment panel and are scored, based solely on evidence, in an open competitive process. An economic appraisal is one of the key documents presented to the panel and provides the evidence for decision making, covering a range of issues including project sustainability and information from key informants. Neither the applicant or any person outside the Local Action Group assessment panel members can participate in the selection panel. Only those projects meeting a specific threshold are funded. It is important to make sure that this process is consistent across the local action groups and transparent.

## Loughs Agency: Boat Patrols

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many boat patrols the Lough Agency's patrol staff have carried out off the Co Antrim coast in each of last 12 months.

**(AQW 15303/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** As the waters off the Co. Antrim coast are within the DCAL jurisdiction and DCAL has not requested Loughs Agency within the last 12 months to assist with or provide boat patrols for this area, the Agency has not carried out any patrols in this area. DCAL enforcement staff have had meetings with Loughs Agency staff to discuss enforcement issues, share intelligence and assist each other in relation to investigations into illegal fishing activity. DARD Sea Fisheries inspectorate staff and equipment have been used to carry out enforcement duties in the DCAL area. Intelligence on illegal fishing activity is shared between both Departments and joint sea patrols have routinely been carried out in the past.

## Rural Development Programme: Voluntary Modulation Money

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what percentage of voluntary modulation monies are assigned to each Axis of the Rural Development Programme.

**(AQW 15355/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The percentage of voluntary modulation monies assigned to each Axis of the Rural Development Programme 2007 – 13 is shown below.

	% of VM Allocation Assigned to each Axis
Axis 1	22.8
Axis 2	50.2
Axis 3	0
Axis 4	23.8
Axis 5	3.2

## Rural Development Programme: Voluntary Modulation Money

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the amount of voluntary modulation monies allocated in each of the last four years.

**(AQW 15356/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The amount of voluntary modulation monies allocated to the NIRD in each of the last four years are as follows:

2009	€21,697,224
2010	€19,724,801
2011	€20,602,256
2012	€21,496,137

These amounts are deducted from Pillar 1 Direct Payments in the previous scheme year. For example, the 2012 amount of €21,496,137 was deducted from the 2011 SFP.

## Rural Development Programme

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what measures are covered under each Axis of the Rural Development Programme.

**(AQW 15357/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The NI Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) 2007-2013 is designed to bring together a wide range of support for the farming, forestry and primary processing sectors; rural enterprise and business development; diversification; and rural tourism. There are four Axes under the Programme:

- Axis 1 Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector.
- Axis 2 Improving the environment and the countryside
- Axis 3 Delivery of the LEADER approach
- Axis 4 Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy

I have attached a table detailing the Measures and schemes under each Axis.

#### ANNEX

Axis		Measure	Schemes
1	1.1	Vocational Training and Information Actions	Benchmarking Farm Family Options Focus Farms
	1.2	Adding Value to Agricultural and Forestry Products and Improving Marketing Capability	The Agricultural and Forestry Processing and Marketing Grant (PMG) Scheme
	1.3	Modernisation of Agricultural Holdings	Farm modernisation programme (FMP) Short Rotation Coppice Programme (SRC) Manure Efficiency Technology Scheme (METS)
	1.4	Supply Chain Development Programme	
2	2.1	Less Favoured Areas Compensatory Allowances Scheme	
	2.2	Agri-Environment Programme	Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme (NICMS) The Organic Farming Scheme (OFS)
	2.3	First Afforestation (forest expansion)	The Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) The Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS)
	2.4	Forest Environments	
3	3.1	Diversification into non-agricultural activities	
	3.2	Business creation and development	
	3.3	Encouragement of tourism activities	
	3.4	Basic Services for the economy and rural population	
	3.5	Village renewal and development	
	3.6	Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage	

Axis		Measure	Schemes
4	4.1	Implementation of Local Development Strategies	
	4.2	Inter-territorial and Transnational Co-operation	
	4.3	Running costs, Acquisition of skills and Animation	

### Forest Service: Jobs

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the location of Forest Service jobs in each constituency.

**(AQW 15363/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The location of Forest Service jobs in each constituency are as follows:

Dundonald House	Belfast East
Castlewellan Forest Park Office	South Down
Tollymore Forest Park	South Down
Rostrevor Forest	South Down
Enniskillen Forest Office	Fermanagh & South Tyrone
Mallaghfad Forest	Fermanagh & South Tyrone
Kesh Forest	Fermanagh & South Tyrone
Lough Navar Forest	Fermanagh & South Tyrone
Florence Court Forest Park	Fermanagh & South Tyrone
Pubble Workshop	Fermanagh & South Tyrone
Garvagh Forest Office	East Derry
Somerset Workshop	East Derry
Springwell Forest	East Derry
Gosford Forest Park	Newry & Armagh
Hillsborough Workshop	Lagan Valley
Belvoir Park Forest	Belfast South
Glenariff Forest Park	East Antrim
Parkanaur Forest Park	Mid Ulster
Portglenone Forest	North Antrim
Pomeroy Forest	Mid Ulster
Drum Manor Forest Park	Mid Ulster
Derrynoid Forest	Mid Ulster
Lough Braden Forest	West Tyrone

Castledearg Forest	West Tyrone
Gortin Glen Forest Park	West Tyrone

### Countryside Management Schemes

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the number of Countryside Management Schemes for 2011 which remain unpaid; (ii) the total value of unpaid cases; and (iii) the date by which they will be paid in full.

**(AQW 15398/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** My Department received 903 claims for the NI Countryside Management Scheme (NICMS). Payment processing began in September 2012. (i) At 8 October 2012, 106 payments have been processed and 797 payments have yet to be paid. (ii) Each claim that is currently being processed must be validated before a payment can be made. The value of claims cannot be quantified until the validation and payment process is complete, however I can confirm that at 8 October 2012 over £315,000 had been paid to claimants. (iii) On-going payment of claims will continue into November, and the timescale for completion of payments may be affected by the requirement to complete additional inspections. Claims cannot be paid until my Department is satisfied that all work claimed has been completed to the required standard.

### Departmental Staff: Ban on Issuing Press Releases

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether there is a ban in place on the issuing of press releases by staff in her Department, or its arm's-length bodies, to the Press Association.

**(AQW 15402/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** There is no ban in place on the issuing of press releases by staff in my Department, or its arm's-length bodies, to the Press Association.

### Lough Neagh Consultation

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to list the individuals or organisations who were included in the recent Lough Neagh consultation.

**(AQW 15418/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The Lough Neagh Working Group comprises representation from 5 NICS Departments - DARD, DCAL, DOE, DRD and DETI. In addition to the research and work being undertaken by the individual Departments involved in the Working Group, an informal consultation was launched with a wide range of groups and organisations that were identified by officials from each of the Departments as key stakeholders. The purpose of the informal consultation is to obtain their high-level views on the proposal regarding public ownership. Fifty-seven key stakeholders have been asked for comment. A list of the consultees is attached for information.

#### List of Consultees for Lough Neagh Working Group

- Invest NI
- Geological Survey NI (DETI)
- Tourist Board
- NI Water
- The Utility Regulator
- Consumer Council
- Cookstown DC
- Magherafelt DC
- Craigavon DC
- Antrim BC
- Dungannon and South Tyrone DC
- Armagh DC
- Lisburn City Council
- Ballymena BC

- ECOS Centre
- Monaghan County Council
- Quarry Product Association NI
- WWF
- Woodland Trust
- Ballinderry Fish Hatchery
- Six Mile Water Trust
- Ulster Angling Association
- The Honourable Irish Society
- Waterways Ireland
- Ulster Coarse Fishing Federation
- Lough Neagh Sand Traders Association (NI) Ltd
- AMK Association
- Rural Development Council
- Constructed Wetlands for NI
- Rural Community Network
- Ulster Farmers Union
- Portadown Boat Club
- Cullybackey and District Game and Sea Angling Society
- Rectory Lodge Trout Fishery
- Ballysaggart Lough Environmental Group
- NI Pike Society
- Ballyronan Marina
- Friends of the Earth NI
- Council for Nature Conservation and Countryside
- RSPB NI
- Norman Emerson Group
- Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
- Lough Neagh Partnership
- Lough Neagh Fishermans Co Op
- Outdoor Recreation NI
- Lagan Canal Trust
- Inland Waterways Association Ireland
- River Bann and Lough Neagh Association
- Kinnego Marina
- Lough Neagh Rescue
- Rams Island Management
- The Blackwater Regional (Tourism in Ireland)
- Countryside Alliance of Ireland (CAI)
- British Association for Shooting Conservation
- Scottish Association of Country Sports
- Sports NI
- National Trust

### Single Farm Payments

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the percentage of (i) land; and (ii) landowners, who were eligible to establish entitlements for Single Farm Payments in 2005, that did so; and for her assessment of this figure.

**(AQW 15448/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** In 2005, approximately 1,010,000ha of agricultural land was used to establish Single Farm Payment entitlements. This represents around 97% of all agricultural land.

My Department does not hold information on the legal ownership of land.

### Pathway Between Castlewellan Forest Park and Slievenaslatt

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she is aware of the views of users of the pathway between Castlewellan Forest Park and Slievenaslatt that this pathway should be returned to the status of a maintained walking trail; and to explain the rationale behind the decision, taken in 2006, to no longer maintain this trail.

**(AQW 15507/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Access from the car park at Castlewellan Forest Park to the viewpoint within the forest at Slievenaslatt is provided by a 7.6 km way-marked trail and there are no plans to cease maintaining a walking trail to this important and well-used viewpoint.

## Field Boundary Restoration

**Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) how many Field Boundary Restoration payments have been incorrectly paid by her Department and attributed to computer error, in each of the last five years; and (ii) what action her Department has taken to correct the process and ensure that this does not happen again.

**(AQW 15508/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:**

- (i) I am aware of one such instance in the last 5 years. There was an issue in respect of Field Boundary Restoration (FBR), where the claim form issued to applicants continued to show FBR payment details. The IT solution intended to prevent FBR works being automatically included in year 6 applications for Countryside Management (CSM) and New Environmentally Sensitive Areas (NESA) Schemes failed to be applied across all Agreements. The Department noticed this error on 22/6/2011.

While the Department regrets when forms are incorrectly pre-populated and have taken steps to address the cause of this, the form states clearly that it must be checked by the claimant.

The total number of cases that were paid incorrectly during the last five years was:  
32 (28 CSM and 4 NESA)

- (ii) By 27/6/2011 the Department had rectified the IT issue and introduced additional administrative procedures to ensure that all subsequent claims and payments for Field Boundary Restoration were appropriate.

Where an overpayment situation had already occurred the Department initiated recovery procedures.

## Lough Neagh

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the rationale for the consultation on Lough Neagh.

**(AQW 15521/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** As part of the scoping exercise being undertaken by the cross-departmental Lough Neagh Working Group to examine the potential for bringing Lough Neagh into Public ownership, it was recognised that there is a large number of stakeholders/organisations with a wealth of knowledge about the Lough, its features and the current management arrangements. It was on this basis that the Working Group undertook a short informal consultation as a means of gathering useful information and evidence to help inform its work.

## NI Red Squirrel Forum

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the membership of the NI Red Squirrel Forum; and (ii) what engagement she and her Department have had with this forum.

**(AQW 15531/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The NI Squirrel Forum is chaired by the NI Environment Agency (NIEA) and is comprised of representatives of the following organisations: -

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ■ DARD Forest Service                        | ■ Abercorn Estates Ltd   |
| ■ DARD Countryside Management Branch         | ■ Shanes Castle Estate Company Ltd                             |
| ■ Biodiversity Officers employed by Councils | ■ Scottish Woodlands Ltd                                       |
| ■ The National Trust                         | ■ The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) |
| ■ The Ulster Wildlife Trust                  | ■ Local Red Squirrel Volunteer Groups                          |
| ■ Belfast Zoo                                |  |
| ■ Queens University Belfast                  |  |

DARD is represented on the NI Squirrel Forum by Forest Service and Countryside Management Branch.

### British Red Squirrel Forum

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the membership of the British Red Squirrel Forum ; and (ii) what engagement she and her Department have had with this forum.

**(AQW 15532/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The Red Squirrel Group is comprised of representatives of the following organisations: -

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| ■ NI Squirrel Forum                                  | ■ Countryside Council for Wales |
| ■ England Squirrel Forum                             | ■ Scottish Natural Heritage     |
| ■ Wales Squirrel Forum                               | ■ DARD Forest Service           |
| ■ Scottish Squirrel Group                            | ■ Forestry Commission Wales     |
| ■ NI Environment Agency                              | ■ Forestry Commission England   |
| ■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs | ■ Forestry Commission Scotland  |
| ■ Natural England                                    | ■ Forest Research               |
|  | ■ The Wildlife Trusts           |

DARD is represented on the Red Squirrel Group by Forest Service.

### Diseases Detrimental to the Red Squirrel Population

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans there are to halt the spread of adenovirus and poxvirus and other diseases that would be detrimental to the red squirrel population.

**(AQW 15533/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Forest Service will continue to work closely with the NI Environment Agency and organisations represented on the NI Squirrel Forum to ensure best practice is followed to limit the impacts of poxvirus and adenovirus on red squirrels in its forests.

### Field Boundary Restoration

**Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to the errors in Field Boundary Restoration payments and as the errors occurred within her Department, if she can confirm that (i) no interest will be charged on any overpayment; and (ii) consideration will be given to writing off or part-writing off the debts.

**(AQW 15557/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** (i) Where a farmer claims and is paid for Field Boundary Restoration work that they have not completed, my Department must recover the money in line with Sections 14 & 15 of the Countryside Management Regulations (NI) 2008. In addition, Article 5 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 65/2011 requires that interest must be paid if undue payment is made by DARD.

These conditions apply whether or not the form was populated correctly by the Department, because the form states clearly that it must be checked by the claimant. The Department regrets when forms are incorrectly pre-populated and have taken steps to address the cause of this.

(ii) With regard to writing off debts, in principle, my Department should always pursue recovery of overpayments, irrespective of how they came to be made. This is accepted practice throughout Government.

## **Cogry Manor and Bridge Road, Burnside**

**Mr Girvan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of the recommendations outlined within her Department's feasibility study of 2010 carried out after flooding incidents in 2008, for an update on the improvements works for Cogry Manor and Bridge Road, Burnside.

**(AQW 15846/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I can confirm that the viable works at Cogry Manor and Bridge Road, Burnside, identified as a result of the feasibility study, will be considered for inclusion in the work programme within the next financial year.

## **Ban on Ash Tree Imports**

**Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she is planning to ban importing ash tree plants due to the threat posed by Chalara dieback disease.

**(AQW 15877/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Ash is one of the commonest native species on this island so we must do all we can to minimise the risk of Chalara Dieback of Ash (*Chalara fraxinea*) becoming established here. My Department is currently carrying out monitoring of ash plants at nursery and retail premises and at sites of recent planting in both amenity and woodland areas for any signs of this damaging disease, and so far we have not found any evidence of the disease.

Meanwhile, I have sent out a very clear message to the forest and forest nursery industry of my intention to introduce emergency legislation banning the movement of such plants from areas where the disease may be present. I am also concerned that untreated ash wood may be a possible pathway for disease to enter Ireland, and I am minded to extend the ban to cover that also, although I acknowledge that the movement in plants presents the greatest risk. I will work closely with Minister Simon Coveney, as we need to make sure that we have a consistent fortress-Ireland approach.

## **Sentinel Fishery**

**Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) when the data obtained from the Sentinel Fishery will be made available to the fishing industry; and (ii) whether the report will be used as evidence to increase the cod total allowable catch in the Irish Sea during this year's negotiations in Brussels.

**(AQW 15925/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The length and catch rate data has already been made available to the industry, but not the age data. One of the main objectives of the fishery was to investigate the age structure of the catches as this is an area where more data is required. Fish ageing is a time consuming process and the results will not be available until late November.

The final results will be presented to ICES for use in the 2013 assessment, but there is no mechanism for an updated assessment this year.

# **Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**

## **Illegal Fishing**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she has considered introducing a memorandum of understanding between her Department's bailiffs and Loughs Agency bailiffs so that they can provide support to each other when cracking down on illegal fishing and related activities.

**(AQW 15127/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure):** The Department has a Service Level Agreement with the Loughs Agency, which provides the basis for the provision of bailiffing services by

staff of the Loughs Agency for the protection of fisheries in the Public Angling Estate owned or leased by DCAL located within the jurisdiction of the Loughs Agency. The Agreement specifies the functions to be carried out by the Service Provider under the Foyle Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1952 and clarifies the obligations on both parties to ensure the effectiveness of the Agreement.

At this time a Memorandum of Understanding is not considered necessary as both DCAL and Loughs Agency staff currently share intelligence information on alleged illegal fishing activity if the incidents occur in the other jurisdiction. Parallel enforcement is also carried out if required and regular meetings take place to discuss enforcement related issues.

DCAL also works closely other Government bodies and enforcement agencies such as DARD Sea Fisheries Inspectorate, the PSNI and Private Water Bailiffs attached to angling clubs to combat illegal fishing activity.

This response has been prepared by DCAL with input from DARD and the Loughs Agency. The response is in answer to AQW 15127 1/11-15 and AQW 15128 1/11-15 on behalf of both the DCAL and DARD Ministers.

## Department of Education

### Schools: Admissions Numbers

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education to list the schools in each Education and Library Board which asked for an increase in their admissions number, in each of the last three years; and whether the increase was granted.

**(AQW 15270/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education):** Before the 2012/13 school year, the Department of Education did not electronically record statistics regarding the total numbers of schools requesting temporary increases to their admissions numbers, and of these, which requests were approved. This means that some of the data requested is unavailable. However, officials have manually extracted as much information as possible from school records and this is reported below.

The total number of post-primary schools that have sought permission to have temporary variations in their admissions numbers in each of the last three years is as follows:

School Year	Number of Requests	Requests Granted
2009/10	51	39
2010/11	35	20
2011/12	30	19

The total number of primary schools that have sought permission to have temporary variations in their admissions numbers in each of the last three years is not held in the format requested and can only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

The schools that were granted permission to have temporary variations in their admissions numbers in each of the last three years are detailed below.

BELB Schools	School Name
<b>2009/10</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	Ligoniel PS

	<b>Post-Primary Schools:</b>
	Methodist College
	RBAI
	Belfast Royal Academy
	St Dominic's HS
	St Malachy's College
<b>2010/11</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	St Therese of Lisieux PS
	St Michael's PS
	Holy Family PS
	Forge Integrated PS
	<b>Post-Primary Schools:</b>
	St Malachy's College
	Victoria College
<b>2011/12</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	Ligoniel PS
	Holy Family PS
	Forge Integrated PS
	Post-Primary Schools
	Belfast Boys Model School
	Methodist College
	Strathearn School
	Victoria College
<b>WELB Schools</b>	<b>School Name</b>
<b>2009/10</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	St Patrick's PS Enniskillen
	Broadbridge PS
	St Patrick's PS Castleberg
	St Patrick's PS Omagh
	Omagh Integrated PS
	Roervalley Integrated PS
	<b>Post-Primary Schools:</b>
	St Fanchea's College Enniskillen
	St Michael's College Enniskillen
	Thornhill College Londonderry

<b>2010/11</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	St Patrick's PS, Mullanaskea
	St Mary's PS, Mullymesker
	Drumlish PS Omagh
	St Dympna's PS Dromore
	Gaelscoil Na Gcrann
	Roevalley Intgrated PS
	<b>Post-Primary Schools:</b>
	Oakgrove Integrated College
<b>2011/12</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	Ballougry PS Londonderry
	Strabane Controlled PS
	Greenhaw PS Londonderry
	St Patrick's PS Enniskillen
	Drumlish PS Omagh
	St Lawrence's PS Omagh
	St Columbkille's PS Omagh
	St Dympna's PS Dromore
	Chapel Road PS Londonderry
	Gaelscoil Na Gcrann
	<b>Post-Primary Schools:</b>
	St Fanchea's College Enniskillen
<b>NEELB Schools</b>	<b>School Name</b>
<b>2009/10</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	Woodburn PS Carrickfergus
	Loanends PS Crumlin
	Fourtowns PS Ballymena
	Broughshane PS
	Millquarter PS Antrim
	New Row PS Magherafelt
	St Trea's PS Magherafelt
	Gaelscoil Na Speirini
	<b>Post-Primary Schools:</b>
	Ballyclare Secondary School
	St Colm's HS, Draperstown

	St Paul's College, Kilrea
	St Pius X College Magherafelt
	St Patrick's College, Maghera
	Slemish College Ballymena
	Sperrin Integrated College Magherafelt
	Ballyclare HS
	Coleraine HS
	Antrim GS
	Cambridge House GS Ballymena
	Dalriada School Ballymoney
	Loreto College Coleraine
	Rainey Endowed School Magherafelt
	Belfast HS
	St MacNissi's College
<b>2010/11</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	Clough PS Ballymena
	Toreagh PS Larne
	New Row PS Magherafelt
	St Brigid's PS Magherafelt
	St Mary's PS Ballymena
	Gaelscoil Eanna
	Ballycastle Integrated PS
	St Columba's PS Coleraine
	<b>Post-Primary Schools:</b>
	Dunclug College Ballymena
	St Pius X College Magherafelt
	Coleraine Academical Institution
	Loreto College Coleraine
<b>2011/12</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	Parkgate PS Ballyclare
	The Diamond PS Ballymena
	Clough PS Ballymena
	Damhead PS Coleraine
	Broughshane PS
	Carniny PS Ballymena

	Creggan PS Antrim
	Mount St Michael's PS Antrim
	New Row PS
	St Trea's PS Magherafelt
	St Columba's PS Magherafelt
	St Eoghan's PS Magherafelt
	St Brigid's PS Magherafelt
	St Macnissi's PS Newtownabbey
	St MacNissi's PS Larne
	Gaelscoil Eanna
	<b>Post-Primary Schools:</b>
	St Colm's High School Draperstown
	St Pius X College Magherafelt
	St Killian's College Ballymena
	Sperrin Integrated College Magherafelt
	Antrim GS
	St Mary's GS Magherafelt
<b>SEELB</b>	<b>School Name</b>
<b>2009/10</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	Victoria PS Ballyhalbert
	Londonderry PS Newtownards
	St Francis PS Castlewellan
	St Mary's PS Newtownards
	St Mary's PS Ardglass
	Bangor Central Integrated PS
	Rowendale Integrated PS
	<b>Post-Primary Schools:</b>
	Priory College Holywood
	Friends School Lisburn
	Wallace HS Lisburn
<b>2010/11</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	Greyabbey PS
	Portavogie PS
	Bangor Central Integrated PS
	Rowendale Integrated PS

	Post-Primary Schools:
	St Columbanus College Bangor
	Priory College Holywood
	Our Lady and St Patrick's College Knock
<b>2011/12</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	Greybbey PS
	Harmony Hill PS
	Londonderry PS Newtownards
	Rathmore PS Bangor
	Maghaberry PS
	Cumran PS Downpatrick
	St Malachy's PS Downpatrick
	St Patrick's PS Downpatrick
	St Francis PS Castlewellan
	St Mary's PS Ardglass
	St Ita's PS Belfast
	Our Lady & St Patrick's PS Downpatrick
	Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche
	All Children's Integrated PS
	Drumlins Integrated PS
	Rowendale Integrated PS
	Post-Primary Schools:
	St Columbanus College Bangor
	Strangford Integrated College
	Sullivan Upper School
<b>SELB</b>	<b>School Name</b>
<b>2009/10</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	Dromore Central PS
	Bocombra PS Portadown
	Markethill PS
	Killyman PS Dungannon
	St Patrick's PS Newry
	St Mary's PS Armagh
	Ballyholland PS Newry
	St Mary's PS, Barr

	Roan St Patrick's PS
	St Patrick's PS, Donaghmore
	St Patrick's PS, Magherafelt
	St Mary's PS, Newry
	St Patrick's PS, Dungannon
	St Colman's PS, Newry
	Seagoe PS Portadown
	Phoenix Integrated PS
	<b>Post-Primary Schools:</b>
	Newtownhamilton HS
	Markethill HS
	Fivemiletown HS
	Craigavon Senior HS
	St Paul's HS Bessbrook
	St Catherine's College Armagh
	Holy Trinity College Cookstown
	Banbridge Academy
	St Louis GS Kilkeel
	Abbey GS Newry
	St Colman's College Newry
	St Patrick's GS, Armagh
<b>2010/11</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	Clare PS Tandragee
	Dromore Road PS Warrenpoint
	Donacloney PS Craigavon
	Fair Hill PS Dromore
	Christian Brothers' PS Armagh
	St Malachy's PS Armagh
	St Patrick's PS Newry
	St Brigid's PS Newry
	Ballyholland PS Newry
	Holy Cross PS Newry
	St Mary's PS, Barr
	Roan St Patrick's PS
	St Patrick's PS, Hilltown

	St Mary's PS Mullaghbawn
	St Francis' PS Aghderg
	Seagoe PS Portadown
	<b>Post-Primary Schools:</b>
	Dromore HS
	Fivemiletown HS
	St Ciaran's HS, Ballygawley
	St Paul's HS, Bessbrook
	St Catherine's College Armagh
	Holy Trinity College Cookstown
	Banbridge Academy
	St Joseph's GS, Donaghmore
	Sacred Heart GS Newry
	St Patrick's GS Armagh
<b>2011/12</b>	<b>Primary Schools:</b>
	Dromore Road PS Warrenpoint
	Carntall PS Clogher
	Fivemiletown PS
	Bronte PS Banbridge
	St Brigid's PS Newry
	St Mary's PS Armagh
	Holy Cross Primary School Newry
	St Mary's PS, Barr
	Edendork PS Dungannon
	Roan St Patrick's PS
	St Mary's PS, Mullaghbawn
	St Patrick's PS, Cullyhanna
	St Jarlath's PS Dungannon
	St Mary's PS, Aughnacloy
	St Francis' PS Aghderg
	St Joseph's & St James' PS Newry
	Seagoe PS Portadown
	Gaelscoil Ui Neill

	<b>Post-Primary Schools:</b>
	Dromore High School
	Craigavon Senior High School
	St Catherine's College Armagh
	Our Lady's GS, Newry
	St Joseph's GS, Donaghmore

## School Inspections

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education what is the maximum amount of time between full school inspections in the (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary sectors.

**(AQW 15327/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Until September 2010, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) aimed to inspect each school at least once every seven years with more frequent inspection of a school being undertaken where it was deemed necessary.

In September 2010, ETI introduced a more proportionate and risk-based inspection strategy whereby the need for an inspection is identified by information from school performance indicators, risk factors including the length of time since the last formal inspection and from ongoing monitoring of schools by inspectors at local level.

## Computer-Based Assessments in Literacy and Numeracy

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Education what steps have been taken, and will be taken, to address the widespread complaints from schools on the functioning and value of the computer-based assessments in literacy and numeracy.

**(AQW 15347/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** While some schools have reported problems with the operation of the new computer based assessment programmes, many others have successfully completed the assessments.

However, it is not acceptable to me that any school should be facing avoidable difficulties in operating the assessments.

I have already written to primary schools to assure them that they can stop the assessment process until CCEA has identified the source or sources of the current technical problems and put in place solutions.

I have met with senior officials from CCEA and the Western Education and Library Board which is responsible for the C2k service which hosts the assessments and have made clear to them my expectation that solutions will be put in place as a matter of urgency. I have also met with the private companies which provided the literacy and numeracy assessments and with the company contracted to deliver the C2k managed service to schools to seek their assistance in identifying and fixing the current problems.

I will be keeping this issue under review until I am satisfied that the difficulties some schools have encountered have been addressed.

As regards the value of the assessments, it is important to note that these are not "tests" and their outcomes are not collected centrally. They are designed to help teachers diagnose and respond to pupils' learning needs in the core areas of literacy and numeracy and to help teachers engage with parents early in the new school year. Their value is linked to how effectively teachers use their professional judgement to interpret their outcomes and to tailor their lessons to build on pupils' strengths and address any areas for improvement.

My Education and Training Inspectorate is already planning a survey to determine how effectively schools make use of this assessment information and I look forward to receiving its report and findings later in this school year.

### **Computer-Based Assessments in Literacy and Numeracy**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Education why the computer-based assessments in literacy and numeracy were introduced without being adequately trialed and proven fit for purpose.

**(AQW 15349/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I can assure the member that the assessments were trialed extensively.

Over 30% of all primary schools took part in the trialling during the period January to May 2012. In addition, a programme of training and support was put in place to help schools prepare and implement the new computer-based assessments.

The purpose of these trials was to ensure that the assessments were fit for purpose; that they were compatible with the C2K network and schools' systems; and that any issues could be identified and addressed and lessons learnt. The outcomes of the trial were evaluated by CCEA and changes made to address concerns.

CCEA has also assured me that teachers were consulted at an early stage - before the specification for the assessments was finalised on what they would like to see in a future diagnostic assessment for primary pupils.

It is a matter of concern to me that, despite the trialling and training that has taken place, some schools are experiencing difficulties. I have made clear to CCEA my expectation that the source or sources of these problems will be identified as a matter of urgency and solutions put in place so that schools can complete these assessments during the current term.

### **Children's Strategy**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education what correspondence his Department has had with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister in relation to the Children's Strategy.

**(AQW 15409/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Department has a key role to play in the delivery of the Children and Young People's Strategy and has had ongoing correspondence with the Office of the First and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) in the development of the Strategy, the associated Action Plans and the overarching Delivering Social Change (DSC) Framework. Regular updates to OFMDFM on progress against relevant actions within the Action Plan (2008-11) were provided. It is planned that future action will be taken forward through the DSC Framework and the Department is represented, at official level, on the DSC Programme Board. The Department continues to correspond with the Office of the First Minister on the DSC Framework and the implementation of the Children and Young People's Strategy as necessary.

### **Barriers to Teacher Mobility**

**Mr McAleer** asked the Minister of Education to detail the work undertaken by his Department to remove obstacles to teachers' mobility across the island of Ireland.

**(AQW 15444/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I have raised the issue of teacher mobility at a number of recent meetings as part of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC). One of the greatest challenges faced by teachers in one jurisdiction is having their qualifications and accreditation recognised in the other jurisdiction – particularly in respect of teachers from the north.

At the NSMC meeting on 15 June 2012, Minister Quinn and I requested an update on the work undertaken to increase teacher mobility across the island. The work undertaken to date has identified a number of legislative and policy obstacles which need to be overcome before we can achieve the

desired level of teacher mobility. However, a number of positive recommendations have been made including:

- consideration of a fee waiver for assessing teaching qualifications from the north of Ireland which have already been accredited by GTCNI. It is expected that this will be implemented by 30 June 2013;
- consideration of the introduction of a form of provisional registration with TCI for teachers from the north; and
- simplifying the application process for candidates who qualify in the north of Ireland and who wish to register with the Teacher Council of Ireland (TCI).

Also ongoing discussions between Marino College of Education and the University of Ulster (UU) regarding delivery of the Irish language qualification requirement An Scrúdú le hAghaidh Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge (SCG) are at an advanced stage. The UU is currently assessing the level of interest from its 2012/2013 Diploma in Irish intake. St Marys University College are also exploring the possibility of delivering the qualification and have recently approached Marino College of Education and the Teaching Council Ireland. If and when implemented the proposals will be of considerable benefit to teachers from the north.

Under the auspices of the NSMC, there has been co-operation between Department for Education and Skills in the south and Department of Finance and Personnel on the issue of the transfer of teachers' pension entitlements between north and south. A Pensions Working Group was set up to consider this issue and identified the transfer of the value of accrued pension entitlements as the only realistic option going forward. Information for teachers on the transfer of pension entitlements between the north and the south of Ireland has been published on the websites of the respective Education Departments, the Border People website and in the publications and websites of the teachers' unions.

### **Barriers to Teacher Mobility**

**Ms Fearon** asked the Minister of Education to outline his Department's efforts to remove barriers to teacher mobility across the island of Ireland.

**(AQO 2707/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I have raised the issue of teacher mobility at a number of recent meetings as part of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC). One of the greatest challenges faced by teachers in one jurisdiction is having their qualifications and accreditation recognised in the other jurisdiction – particularly in respect of teachers from the north.

At the NSMC meeting on 15 June 2012, Minister Quinn and I requested an update on the work undertaken to increase teacher mobility across the island. The work undertaken to date has identified a number of legislative and policy obstacles which need to be overcome before we can achieve the desired level of teacher mobility. However, a number of positive recommendations have been made including:

- consideration of a fee waiver for assessing teaching qualifications from the north of Ireland which have already been accredited by GTCNI. It is expected that this will be implemented by 30 June 2013;
- consideration of the introduction of a form of provisional registration with TCI for teachers from the north; and
- simplifying the application process for candidates who qualify in the north of Ireland and who wish to register with the Teacher Council of Ireland (TCI).

Also ongoing discussions between Marino College of Education and the University of Ulster (UU) regarding delivery of the Irish language qualification requirement An Scrúdú le hAghaidh Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge (SCG) are at an advanced stage. The UU is currently assessing the level of interest from its 2012/2013 Diploma in Irish intake. St Marys University College are also exploring the possibility of delivering the qualification and have recently approached Marino College of Education and the Teaching

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Under the auspices of the NSMC, there has been co-operation between Department for Education and Skills in the south and Department of Finance and Personnel on the issue of the transfer of teachers' pension entitlements between north and south. A Pensions Working Group was set up to consider this issue and identified the transfer of the value of accrued pension entitlements as the only realistic option going forward. Information for teachers on the transfer of pension entitlements between the north and the south of Ireland has been published on the websites of the respective Education Departments, the Border People website and in the publications and websites of the teachers' unions.

### **Improving Literacy and Numeracy**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Education to outline the proposed timescales associated with the recently announced scheme for improving literacy and numeracy.

**(AQW 15543/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I warmly welcome the announcement by the First and deputy First Ministers of investment in the employment of 230 recently qualified teachers, on a two year contract, to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of our young people. Not only does this provide employment opportunities for recently qualified teachers who are without permanent employment but it should have a positive impact on my raising standards agenda by improving the educational outcomes of pupils who are most at risk of under achieving.

Work is currently being undertaken to establish arrangements for the development of the project including timescales for its implementation.

### **Support for Pupils of Closed Schools**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Education what support his Department provides to pupils when a school is closed down, particularly in relation to their travel needs.

**(AQW 15635/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** When a school is closed, the Education and Library Boards, and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools where appropriate, are responsible for supporting the affected families both in terms of ensuring that they secure an alternative school placement in the area and in terms of ensuring that any additional educational needs that those pupils have are also met in their new school.

If there is a need to provide additional places, due to pressure in the area caused by the school closure, the Department will intervene to provide a temporary variation to school numbers to ensure all pupils are placed in a suitable school within a reasonable travelling distance of their home address.

In relation to transport, the Boards have informed me that when the intention to close a school is known, and prior to approval of the Development Proposal, the Boards' Transport Departments are involved in discussion in respect of possible transport services and the position is made known to School Principals and Board of Governors as to what is possible within the Transport Policy.

### **Education and Skills Authority**

**Mr Lunn** asked the Minister of Education whether, under the draft legislation to establish the Education and Skills Authority, controlled integrated schools will be represented by the controlled sectoral body rather than by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education.

**(AQW 15646/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Provisions relating to the definition of Sectoral Support Bodies (SSBs) are at Section 63 of the Education Bill. These do not specify which sectors or schools are to be represented by which support bodies. Rather they provide that a sectoral body is a body "recognised by the Department as

representing the interests of grant-aided schools of a particular description"; and otherwise is a body funded by the Department under certain provisions.

The SSBs for Controlled schools should, when created, be capable of providing support and representation for all controlled schools. The same should apply to the SSBs in their representation of Irish-medium and Integrated schools.

Moreover, it will be important for SSBs to work together in fulfilling their role. DE has recently provided to the relevant sectoral interests a paper entitled Sectoral Support Post RPA – September 2012 (a copy is in the Assembly library). This paper broadly defines the role and nature of sectoral support.

One of the roles expected of an SSB is to build co-operation and engage with other sectors in matters of mutual interest, including promotion of tolerance and understanding, respect for diversity.

### **Proposed New Controlled Sectoral Body**

**Mr Lunn** asked the Minister of Education whether the proposed new controlled sectoral body will have representatives from Irish Medium and Integrated schools.

**(AQW 15647/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** One of the many challenges the Sectoral Support Body for Controlled schools will face will be the representation of a very large and diverse sector. It should, when created, be capable of providing support and representation for all controlled schools including Irish medium and Integrated schools.

It should also be capable of working with other sectoral bodies as it does this. DE has recently provided to the relevant sectoral interests a paper entitled Sectoral Support Post RPA – September 2012 (a copy is in the Assembly library). This paper broadly defines the role and nature of sectoral support – not least so that DE may provide funding for sectoral support on a consistent and clear basis. This paper gives the following as one of the key functions of all sectoral support bodies: "Building co-operation and engaging with other sectors in matters of mutual interest, including promotion of tolerance and understanding, respect for diversity and the aims of A Shared Future".

Key to fulfilling this objective will be how the Sectoral Support Body for controlled schools works with the two Sectoral Support Bodies that will represent Irish Medium and Integrated Schools respectively.

### **Proposed New Controlled Sectoral Body**

**Mr Lunn** asked the Minister of Education whether the proposed new controlled sectoral body will have a statutory or an advisory role.

**(AQW 15649/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Sectoral Support Bodies (SSBs) will not have a statutory role. The Education Bill will define them (Section 63) and otherwise it will give them specific consultative roles in relation to the appointment of Governors and development proposals (Section 39 - 2 (2) (a) or 3 (2) (a) and Section 28) Otherwise, funding for SSBs will be in respect of a representational and advocacy role. This will include advice and support to schools in responding to consultation exercises in respect of education policies, initiatives and schemes, and in regard to relationships with the Department, the ESA and other Departments.

### **Schools: Integrated Status**

**Mr Lunn** asked the Minister of Education what role the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education will have in the consideration of a proposal for a school to transform to integrated status, if it is not a recognised sectoral body.

**(AQW 15650/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** My Department has already engaged NICIE to work with them on becoming the Sectoral Support Body for Integrated schools. I expect this work to progress successfully so they can fulfil a support role for the integrated sector.

### School Transport

**Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Education how many (i) primary; (ii) post-primary; and (iii) special needs school pupils were transported to school by private hire bus in each Education and Library Board area in 2010/11; and what is the unit cost of transporting pupils to each of these school types.

**(AQW 15682/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I am advised by the Education and Library Boards that the number of (i) primary; (ii) post-primary; and (iii) special needs school pupils transported to school by private hire bus in each Education and Library Board area in the 2010/11 financial year; and the unit cost of transporting these pupils to each of these school types is:

Education and Library Board	Primary	Post-Primary	Special Primary	Special Post-Primary	Special School
Belfast	23	0	16	0	330
North Eastern	515	84	13	21	216
South Eastern	14	1	36	15	114
Southern	1,179	2,022	3	7	22
Western	595	1,256	12	43	34
Total no. of pupils	2,326	3,363	80	86	716
Cost	£1,811,100	£1,811,046	£155,460	£90,720	£1,158,532
Unit Cost per pupil	£779	£539	£1,943	£1,055	£1,618

### Crawfordsburn Primary School: School Transport

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education why Crawfordsburn Primary School has informed parents living in the Holywood area that it will no longer provide school transport.

**(AQW 15712/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I am advised by the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) that the transport service provided by Translink for Crawfordsburn Primary School was a private arrangement between the company and the school. Such private arrangements lie outwith the school transport service provided under the Department of Education's transport policy.

I have been advised by the school, however, that the service was no longer financially viable and the school's Board of Governors took the decision to remove it. Parents were advised of the decision by letter.

### Education and Skills Authority

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Education to detail the current levels of pay variation, for similar grades, in each of the eight existing organisations that will be amalgamated into the Education and Skills Authority.

**(AQW 15717/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Staff in the majority of the Department's Arms Length Bodies, which will form the Education and Skills Authority, are subject to National Joint Council terms and conditions and pay levels. Details of the grade structures and pay ranges are as follows:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Salary Range</b>
Clerical Officer	£12,448 - £15,444
Senior Clerical Officer	£15,726 - £16,830
Executive Officer	£17,161 - £21,519
Senior Executive Officer	£22,261 - £27,052
Administrative Officer	£27,849 - £30,851
Senior Admin Officer	£31,753 - £34,549
Assistant Principal Officer	£35,430 - £38,042
Principal Officer	£38,961 - £41,616
Senior Principal Officer (1)	£41,616 - £44,216
Senior Principal Officer (2)	£44,216 - £46,697
Education Officer	£49,288 - £51,866
Assistant Senior Education Officer	£54,438 - £57,083

Staff in one of the bodies which will form part of the Education and Skills Authority are subject to local Civil Service terms and conditions and pay levels. Details of the grade structures and pay ranges are as follows:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Salary Range*</b>
Administrative Assistant	£15,849 - £17,533
Administrative Officer	£18,298 - £22,180
Executive Officer II	£23,124 - £23,999
Executive Officer I	£25,438 - £26,638
Staff Officer	£27,835 - £30,825
Deputy Principal	£34,847 - £39,282
Grade 7	£45,694 - £51,034
Grade 6	£53,407 - £62,407

**Note:**

\*With effect from 1 September 2012

It is not possible to detail the levels of pay variation across the Arms Length Bodies for similar grades as individual salary points are determined in numerous ways dependent on the job, level, and profession.

### **Properties and Land Currently in Use by Catholic Maintained Schools**

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Education to detail the current ownership of all properties and land currently in use by Catholic Maintained Schools, broken down by school.

**(AQW 15718/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** There are currently 491 Catholic Maintained Schools in the North of Ireland. All of these schools are in the ownership of the School Trustees.

## Education and Skills Authority

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Education to expand on the proposed commercial role of the Education and Skills Authority, as intimated in the draft Education Bill.

**(AQW 15719/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** There is no specific commercial role proposed at this time. Provisions of this type are often included when establishing non Departmental public bodies, and it is prudent to do so in the Education Bill, so that the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) may avail of any commercial opportunities that arise. Any commercial activities will require the approval of my Department, and must not be at odds with, or detract, from ESA's functions under the Education Orders.

## School Absenteeism in the North Down Area

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Education to detail the level of absenteeism in the North Down area in (i) controlled; (ii) maintained; and (iii) integrated schools at (a) primary; and (b) post-primary level.

**(AQW 15748/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:**

### ABSENCE RATES FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH DOWN AREA BY MANAGEMENT TYPE OF SCHOOL, 2010/11

Management Type	Overall absence rate (% of total half days absent)
Controlled (not including integrated)	4.5
Controlled integrated	4.9
Maintained	4.5
Grant Maintained Integrated	N/A
Voluntary	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.5</b>

### ABSENCE RATES FOR POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH DOWN AREA BY MANAGEMENT TYPE OF SCHOOL, 2010/11

Management Type	Overall absence rate (% of total half days absent)
Controlled (not including integrated)	9.0
Controlled integrated	11.5
Maintained	9.0
Grant Maintained Integrated	N/A
Voluntary	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.5</b>

#### Notes:

- Maintained includes Catholic and other maintained schools.
- Figures for primary schools include Years 1-7 and for post-primary schools include Years 8-12.
- The figures are based on 23 primary schools and 6 post-primary schools in the North Down parliamentary constituency.

- 4 Attendance is recorded for every pupil in half day sessions – morning and afternoon.
- 5 N/A = Not applicable. There are no schools of this management type in the North Down parliamentary constituency.

### **Dean Maguirc College, Carrickmore**

**Mr McAleer** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the new build for Dean Maguirc College, Carrickmore.

**(AQW 15767/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** A major capital works project for Dean Maguirc College is one of a large number of proposals currently with the Department. There are a number of site and planning issues still to be resolved around the plans for a new build for the school.

The new build for Dean Maguirc will be considered within the on-going area planning process. However I recognise that area plans for schools will require scrutiny and public consultation. In the interim I will continue to examine the case for capital investment and expect to make a further announcement before the end of the calendar year.

Proposals for Dean Maguirc College will be considered together with other new build propositions as part of any future announcement.

### **Mobile Classrooms at Arvelee Special School**

**Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Education whether planning permission has been granted and all the necessary approvals from the Department of Finance and Personnel have been acquired for the mobile classrooms at Arvelee Special School; and when he expects work to begin.

**(AQW 15841/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Western Education & Library Board has and is working in close collaboration with other statutory bodies to expedite the relocation of the pupils of Arvelee School and Resource Centre back to their original site at the earliest opportunity. A Planning Application has been lodged and a business case for the replacement accommodation is under urgent consideration by my Department.

It is expected that work on the replacement accommodation can progress shortly.

### **Children with Special Educational Needs**

**Mrs Hale** asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of statemented children with Special Educational Needs in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 15880/11-15)**

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

#### **PUPILS WITH A STATEMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED IN SCHOOLS AND IN FUNDED PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION, 2007/08 – 2011/12**

<b>School type</b>	<b>2007/ 08</b>	<b>2008/ 09</b>	<b>2009/ 10</b>	<b>2010/ 11</b>	<b>2011/ 12</b>
Voluntary and private preschool centres	21	18	16	8	17
Nursery schools	50	50	62	64	71
Primary schools	4,545	4,537	4,546	4,508	4,470
Post-primary schools	4,163	4,446	4,785	5,090	5,264
Special schools	4,195	4,220	4,165	4,228	4,268
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,974</b>	<b>13,271</b>	<b>13,574</b>	<b>13,898</b>	<b>14,090</b>

**Source:** School census

**Note:**

- 1 Figures for primary schools include pupils in nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.
- 2 Children with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) are those children at Stage 5 of the SEN Code of practice.

### **Knockavoe Special School**

**Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Education why Knockavoe Special School is excluded from using all of the buildings located on its site.

**(AQW 15889/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Knockavoe site also contains the WELB managed Resource Centre which was built as an independent stand-alone provision for the specific use of Children and Young People's Services to meet the needs of all pupils within the WELB area. The services located in the Resource Centre provide a wide range of provision to pupils from early years, behavioural support and education other than at school.

The Knockavoe Education Resource Centre is being used in a temporary capacity by Arvalee School. These facilities are not, and have never been, part of Knockavoe Special School.

Once vacated, the facilities will return to normal use by Children and Young People's services to support children and schools in the Western Board Area.

The accommodation is utilised by children and young people as well as officers of the Western Board.

### **Knockavoe Special School**

**Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Education (i) whether he is aware that the facilities of Knockavoe Special School are being used by Arvalee Special School; (ii) whether, when the facilities are vacated, they will be allocated in full to the Principal of Knockavoe Special School for the use of the students; and (iii) if not, why the facility, which was built with rooms specifically designed for use by pupils with special needs, would be used as offices.

**(AQW 15890/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Knockavoe site also contains the WELB managed Resource Centre which was built as an independent stand-alone provision for the specific use of Children and Young People's Services to meet the needs of all pupils within the WELB area. The services located in the Resource Centre provide a wide range of provision to pupils from early years, behavioural support and education other than at school.

The Knockavoe Education Resource Centre is being used in a temporary capacity by Arvalee School. These facilities are not, and have never been, part of Knockavoe Special School.

Once vacated, the facilities will return to normal use by Children and Young People's services to support children and schools in the Western Board Area.

The accommodation is utilised by children and young people as well as officers of the Western Board.

### **Department Staff: Company Cars**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education whether any staff in his Department use 'company' cars.  
**(AQW 15942/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** No staff in my Department use 'company' cars. The Department owns a Ministerial car which is only used by me and by those officials who, on occasion, accompany me.

## Bonus Payments to Staff

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education whether any bonus payments have been made to departmental staff members over the last three years.

**(AQW 15943/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Special Bonus payments were paid to Department of Education staff in 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12 in accordance with the arrangements relating to the NICS Special Bonus Scheme set out in the NICS HR Handbook.

## Free School Meals

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education when he will review the criteria for free school meals and extend the working tax credit entitlements to pupils in the post-primary sector.

**(AQW 15960/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I have no plans at present to extend the free school meal Working Tax Credit criterion to post-primary pupils and the pupil's eligibility will therefore cease when he/she transfers to post-primary school.

The reason the criterion is not being extended to post-primary pupils is that by targeting younger children it is considered that the greatest impact will be achieved with the available budget. This is consistent with the wider strategy for child poverty that early intervention is more efficient at lifting children out of poverty. Early intervention also has more impact in encouraging healthy eating habits which are more likely to be carried on independently at post-primary school.

My Department is, however, reviewing the eligibility criteria at present in light of the introduction of Universal Credit in April 2014 as part of the welfare reform proposals. Under this a number of the existing benefits which are currently used to determine eligibility for free school meals and clothing allowances, including Working Tax Credit, will be replaced. It will be necessary, therefore, to amend the criteria to take account of this change.

## Department for Employment and Learning

### Graduate Orientated Employment Opportunities

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what reassurances he can give to university graduates on the availability of graduate orientated employment opportunities.

**(AQW 15110/11-15)**

**Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):** Evidence shows that those people with higher level skills are more likely to be employed than those with lower skills. While the proportion of leavers from Northern Ireland higher education institutions recorded as unemployed has risen from 4% in 2006/07 to 9% in 2010/11, for 2010/11 the unemployment rate of the total 18 to 24 year old Northern Ireland population stood at 18%.

We know from research, and existing trends, that an increasing number of people will require skills at Level 4 (Higher National Diploma or equivalent) and above to meet the needs of employers. This is supported by Invest NI which is informed by local ICT, financial services (again generally ICT for financial services industry) and digital media production entities that there continues to be a demand for appropriately skilled ICT graduates. However, the demand for higher level skills is not consistent across all subject areas.

Forecasts show that the degree subjects sought by employers are likely to continue to become more skewed towards the likes of physical sciences, mathematical and computer sciences, engineering and technology.

Acquiring the skills and qualifications that employers require at college and/or university is crucial if employment is to be secured. Making informed decisions on subject choice at each stage of the education system can be complex and may impact future career choice. My Department's Careers Service works in partnership with post primary schools to help young people articulate their aptitudes and aspirations, provide information on current and future job opportunities and help them evaluate their options.

Furthermore, my Department's first higher education strategy for Northern Ireland – 'Graduating to Success' - sets out the importance of ensuring that higher education learners not only undertake higher level courses in economically relevant subjects but also gain the skills, experiences and attributes needed to succeed within employment.

Both Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster have initiatives and programmes in place to help graduates gain both the academic and 'soft' employability skills employers require.

However, I appreciate that the current downturn has meant that many graduates have found it difficult to gain employment. For this reason, both my Department and the universities have taken forward a number of programmes aimed at helping unemployed graduates gain work experience and/or new skills in areas which are experiencing skills shortages.

These initiatives include the University of Ulster's Professional Experience Programme, Queen's University Belfast's Employability Framework, my Department's Graduate Acceleration Programme and the Youth Employment Scheme. These support existing schemes such as my Department's Graduate Entry to Management Programme which has been offered since 2007, operating under the INTRO brand.

### **Programme-Led Apprenticeships**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what assurances he can give to the electrical trade that Programme-Led Apprenticeships will not lead to a reduction in standards.

**(AQW 15463/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme aims to assist young school leavers who have been unable to find the requisite employed status to train as an apprentice through the Department's ApprenticeshipsNI programme during the economic downturn. They were put in place at the time as an exceptional response to the recession.

I believe that the social consequences of not doing so were unacceptable as my Department has a policy responsibility of a guaranteed training place to all eligible unemployed 16-17 year-olds. To deny that guarantee could mean that many more young people end up part of those in the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) statistics.

My Department's ApprenticeshipsNI programme which is employer-led must always be the preferred option. It is the Department's flagship training model and requires the continued support of employers. Apprenticeships work for both businesses and individuals, providing companies with a skilled workforce to help them grow, and giving people hands-on experience, guidance and qualifications, helping them to develop real skills in their chosen career. I would encourage employers to re-consider the value of apprenticeships and the benefits they can bring to their businesses. Their active engagement in creating apprenticeships is crucial in opening up opportunities for young people.

However, young people are still finding it particularly difficult to secure employment in the current economic climate. The significant numbers on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme underpin the need for such an intervention.

A programme-led apprenticeship does not mean a lesser or second-tier qualification nor is it a means to circumvent an agreed framework as it offers quality training and the same level of qualification as the employer-led route. It provides a young person with the opportunity to gain qualifications at Level 2 in a chosen skill area and to progress to a Level 3 apprenticeship on securing employment.

Some young people on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme are following a Level 2 Engineering Framework which allows for a range of possible career progressions including a Level 3 apprenticeship in electrical installation through the ApprenticeshipsNI programme on securing employment. Participants on the programme are aware that they are undertaking qualifications at Level 2.

My Department has an arrangement with the Electrical Training Trust to assist where appropriate those learners who have undertaken training through a programme-led apprenticeship with an opportunity to advance to Level 3 Electrotechnical training.

### **Programme-Led Apprenticeships**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for how long Programme-Led Apprenticeships will be available.

**(AQW 15464/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme aims to assist young school leavers who have been unable to find the requisite employed status to train as an apprentice through the Department's ApprenticeshipsNI programme during the economic downturn. The programme provides an opportunity for its participants to work towards a Level 2 apprenticeship and was put in place at the time as an exceptional response to the recession with the aim of facilitating experienced and qualified young people who will be ready to meet the needs of employers when the eventual upturn in the economy comes.

I believe that the social consequences of not having such an intervention are unacceptable as I have a policy responsibility to provide a guaranteed training place to all eligible unemployed 16- 17-year-olds. To deny that guarantee could mean that many more young people end up part of those in the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) statistics.

Current Occupancy at 15 October 2012 shows 5,089 young people following Programme-Led Apprenticeships. Such significant numbers on programme underpin the need for such an intervention.

It is my intention to re-structure the Level 2 provision for the young unemployed through my Department's Training for Success programme. However, the introduction of a re-structured provision has been significantly delayed due to an ongoing legal challenge tied to the award of new contracts.

### **Programme-Led Apprenticeships**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether applicants for Programme-Led Apprenticeships in the electrical industry are informed that they will not have the requisite NVQ Level 3 qualification, to become an electrician, at the end of their course

**(AQW 15465/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme aims to assist young school leavers who have been unable to find the requisite employed status to train as an apprentice through the Department's ApprenticeshipsNI programme during the economic downturn. They were put in place at the time as an exceptional response to the recession.

I believe that the social consequences of not doing so were unacceptable as my Department has a policy responsibility of a guaranteed training place to all eligible unemployed 16-17 year-olds. To deny that guarantee could mean that many more young people end up part of those in the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) statistics.

My Department's ApprenticeshipsNI programme which is employer-led must always be the preferred option. It is the Department's flagship training model and requires the continued support of employers. Apprenticeships work for both businesses and individuals, providing companies with a skilled workforce to help them grow, and giving people hands-on experience, guidance and qualifications, helping them to develop real skills in their chosen career. I would encourage employers to re-consider the value of apprenticeships and the benefits they can bring to their businesses. Their active engagement in creating apprenticeships is crucial in opening up opportunities for young people.

However, young people are still finding it particularly difficult to secure employment in the current economic climate. The significant numbers on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme underpin the need for such an intervention.

A programme-led apprenticeship does not mean a lesser or second-tier qualification nor is it a means to circumvent an agreed framework as it offers quality training and the same level of qualification as the employer-led route. It provides a young person with the opportunity to gain qualifications at Level 2 in a chosen skill area and to progress to a Level 3 apprenticeship on securing employment.

Some young people on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme are following a Level 2 Engineering Framework which allows for a range of possible career progressions including a Level 3 apprenticeship in electrical installation through the ApprenticeshipsNI programme on securing employment. Participants on the programme are aware that they are undertaking qualifications at Level 2.

My Department has an arrangement with the Electrical Training Trust to assist where appropriate those learners who have undertaken training through a programme-led apprenticeship with an opportunity to advance to Level 3 Electrotechnical training.

### **Programme-Led Apprenticeships**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people are currently in Programme-Led Apprenticeships, broken down by the provider of each apprenticeship.

**(AQW 15466/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Current occupancy at the 15th October 2012 shows there are 5,089 participants on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme.

I have placed the information you have requested in the Assembly Library. This table outlines the number of participants and the apprenticeship frameworks being followed across the Training Suppliers delivering the programme.

### **Programme-Led Apprenticeships**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what safeguards are in place to stop Programme-Led Apprenticeships being used as a device to circumvent the agreed framework for electrical installation.

**(AQW 15467/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme aims to assist young school leavers who have been unable to find the requisite employed status to train as an apprentice through the Department's ApprenticeshipsNI programme during the economic downturn. They were put in place at the time as an exceptional response to the recession.

I believe that the social consequences of not doing so were unacceptable as my Department has a policy responsibility of a guaranteed training place to all eligible unemployed 16-17 year-olds. To deny that guarantee could mean that many more young people end up part of those in the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) statistics.

My Department's ApprenticeshipsNI programme which is employer-led must always be the preferred option. It is the Department's flagship training model and requires the continued support of employers. Apprenticeships work for both businesses and individuals, providing companies with a skilled workforce to help them grow, and giving people hands-on experience, guidance and qualifications, helping them to develop real skills in their chosen career. I would encourage employers to re-consider the value of apprenticeships and the benefits they can bring to their businesses. Their active engagement in creating apprenticeships is crucial in opening up opportunities for young people.

However, young people are still finding it particularly difficult to secure employment in the current economic climate. The significant numbers on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme underpin the need for such an intervention.

A programme-led apprenticeship does not mean a lesser or second-tier qualification nor is it a means to circumvent an agreed framework as it offers quality training and the same level of qualification as the employer-led route. It provides a young person with the opportunity to gain qualifications at Level 2 in a chosen skill area and to progress to a Level 3 apprenticeship on securing employment.

Some young people on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme are following a Level 2 Engineering Framework which allows for a range of possible career progressions including a Level 3 apprenticeship in electrical installation through the ApprenticeshipsNI programme on securing employment. Participants on the programme are aware that they are undertaking qualifications at Level 2.

My Department has an arrangement with the Electrical Training Trust to assist where appropriate those learners who have undertaken training through a programme-led apprenticeship with an opportunity to advance to Level 3 Electrotechnical training.

## Programme-Led Apprenticeships

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) how much funding has been allocated to Programme-Led Apprenticeships since its introduction; and (ii) for an estimate of the average spend per apprentice.

**(AQW 15500/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme aims to assist young school leavers who have been unable to find the requisite employed status to train as an apprentice through the Department's ApprenticeshipsNI programme during the economic downturn. They were put in place at the time as an exceptional response to the recession.

My Department has a policy responsibility of a guaranteed training place to all eligible unemployed 16-17 year-olds. To deny that guarantee could mean that many more young people end up part of those in the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) statistics. Young people are still finding it particularly difficult to secure employment in the current economic climate. The significant numbers of programme-led apprenticeships underpin the need for such a demand led intervention.

Since its introduction in September 2009 expenditure is as follows:

Year 1	September 2009 - March 2010	£8,148,879.31
Year 2	April 2010 - March 2011	£24,042,554.23
Year 3	April 2011 – March 2012	£33,077,840.06
Year 4	March 2012 – September 2012	£16,355,140.67

The funding available ranges from £8,320 up to £10,770 depending on which apprenticeship framework the participant is following.

Elements of Programme Led Apprenticeships attract part funding from the European Social Fund.

## Subjects and Careers which Offer the Best Prospects of Employment

**Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 14714/11-15, how often his Department liaises with the Sector Skills Councils on maintaining and updating employment opportunities and trends.

**(AQW 15591/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department has a very close working relationship with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) in Northern Ireland, reviewing their annual action plans, sitting on relevant Employer Boards and providing funding support for Northern Ireland specific projects. This work includes, for example, careers attractiveness projects such as E-skills UK 'Bring IT On Campaign' for the IT sector. Such work helps inform young people of the jobs available in the sector and the qualifications required to find employment.

In conjunction with the SSCs, my Department develops and maintains information on employment opportunities and trends. This is presented in industry factsheets which are available online at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers). The factsheets are refreshed every two years. They were last updated in 2011 and are due for a further refresh in 2013.

In addition, there is ongoing liaison between my Department's Careers Service and the SSCs to ensure that the careers advisers keep up to date with employment opportunities and trends. The SSCs issue regular briefings via email and this is supplemented by a Careers Service monthly newsletter.

Sector Skills Councils also attend professional development days for Careers Service staff. For example, in May and June 2011, SSC speed networking events were organised to update careers advisers on key employment issues. Fifteen Sector Skills Councils attended.

## Careers Advisors

**Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what checks are in place to ensure that careers advisers have the most up-to-date training and knowledge.

**(AQW 15593/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department's careers advisers are professionally qualified and are members of the Institute of Careers Guidance. A requirement of this membership is adherence to the Institute's code of ethics which includes a commitment to continuous professional development and accountability for their actions and advice to the public.

Further to their professional qualification, the Department provides each careers adviser with at least 20 hours professional development activities per year to ensure that their knowledge and skills are fully up-to-date. These activities include information sessions on current and future employment opportunities, priority and emerging skills requirements, social inclusion policies and principles, graduate development opportunities, and new initiatives within the Department for Employment and Learning - Youth Employment Scheme, NEETs Strategy, Higher Education strategy.

The Careers Service and the Department's Analytical Services team, in conjunction with the Sector Skills Councils, develop and maintain appropriate Labour Market Information which is used by careers advisers to ensure that young people receive the most up-to-date careers advice.

To date twenty five industry factsheets have been developed. They provide information on job prospects, relevant skills and entry requirements as well as highlighting opportunities.

Careers advisers receive regular briefing from the Sector Skills Councils via email and this is supplemented by a Careers Service monthly newsletter which highlights key information.

To ensure that practitioners' skills are kept up-to-date the University of Ulster has provided refresher seminars at the continuous professional development events on current developments and best practice in the provision of career guidance. The University of Ulster is an Approved Centre within the UK for the delivery of the Qualification in Careers Guidance. The University of Ulster and the Careers Service have a reciprocal agreement whereby the Careers Service provides student placements in return for professional development events.

In addition individual training and development needs are identified and addressed through the Department's performance management system.

## A Study of Obstacles to Cross-Border Undergraduate Education

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the work that the forum proposed in the Irish Business and Employers Confederation and the Confederation of British Industry Joint Business Council Report 'A Study of Obstacles to Cross-Border Undergraduate Education' would carry out.

**(AQW 15598/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department has been advised that the Irish Business and Employers' Confederation and the Confederation of British Industry (IBEC-CBI) Joint Business Council has changed its structure and is now focussing on core issues for its members. These issues include Energy Policy, Trade, Employment Relations, Banking, Research and Development and International Trade. As a result of this change in focus, the proposed forum was not, therefore, established and it was agreed that each organisation would continue to lobby on the key recommendations from the Undergraduate Mobility report in their respective jurisdictions.

However, I can advise that those recommendations from the report which fall to my Department will be taken forward through the implementation of the Higher Education Strategy, Graduating to Success.

### **Education Maintenance Allowance**

**Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people in the 2011/12 academic year claimed Education Maintenance Allowance.

**(AQW 15683/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** I can confirm that a total of 25,170 students received Education Maintenance Allowance in academic year 2011/2012.

### **Education Maintenance Allowance**

**Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he intends to increase the household income threshold for Education Maintenance Allowance to allow for more than one dependent.

**(AQW 15690/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Following a formal review of the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme, my Department and the Department of Education are currently publicly consulting on five options for the future structure of the scheme in order to better target it at the most disadvantaged learners. These options are structured around the existing scheme and look at the three weekly payment bands, the bonus payments and the household income thresholds.

None of these options include the introduction of a higher threshold for households with more than one dependent. I can advise, however, that following completion of the public consultation on 2 November, my Department and the Department of Education will carefully consider all responses received prior to making a joint decision on the future structure of the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme.

### **FG Wilson and First4Skills: Job Losses**

**Mr McGimpsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the actions his Department has taken following the announcement of job losses at FG Wilson and First4Skills.

**(AQO 2709/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Redundancy Advice Service has already started delivering a tailored package of support to staff across all three FG Wilson sites.

In addition, officials are working with the company's appointed out-placement provider, Lee Hecht Harrison, represented locally by Gilpin Executive Search and Development, to organise a job and a training and recruitment fair at each of the sites. These both commence this week.

On Friday, 14 companies were listed to participate in the jobs fairs, with a further 28 posts identified in the food processing sector, mainly with Moy Park. I am delighted at this response.

Should individuals need training to facilitate their move into these new roles my Department will arrange and fund this.

In addition, the organised training and recruitment fairs, will provide an opportunity for affected workers to find out more about relevant opportunities and pathways into a different career. Northern

Regional College, South Eastern Regional College and Belfast Metropolitan College have been invited to participate in these fairs, along with the relevant Sector Skills Councils and a number of private recruitment agencies.

In relation to First4Skills, my officials have written directly to each of the individual employees offering redundancy advice. The network of Jobs and Benefits offices and JobCentres has also been alerted to the situation to enable support and guidance to be offered.

My Department has agreed with the Administrator, Deloitte, that an assignment of the contract is a possibility. As a result, Deloitte has commenced a process of identifying a preferred bidder or bidders for the Department to consider and if appropriate award a contract to ensure an effective resolution to the situation currently faced by the apprentices, who were being trained by First4Skills. My primary concern is to ensure that they are able to continue with their training, so that they can complete their apprenticeships. I would like to stress that none of the apprentices has lost their jobs as a result of First4Skills going into administration.

### **Northern Regional College: Ballymoney Campus**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the future of the Ballymoney campus of the Northern Regional College.

**(AQO 2708/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Following the approval of a high level analysis of the estate's needs of the College the Northern Regional College is now preparing an Outline Business Case which will examine estates issues in detail across its entire region, including Ballymoney. It is expected that this will be submitted to my Department by December 2012, with assessment and approval expected to take a further three months.

### **Youth Employment Scheme**

**Mr B McCreagh** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the number of training places, coupled with additional sector based work experience, that are available for young people as part of the Youth Employment Scheme.

**(AQO 2710/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** With the available budget of £4 million this year, we expect to offer 1,000 short 2 to 8 week work experience placements, 400 longer 6 to 9 month skills development opportunities and subsidise 800 jobs by March 2013. By March 2015 these figures will rise to 3,000, 1,800 and 1,200 respectively. In total we will spend £31 million over 4 years on the Youth Employment Scheme and a further £10million on the NEET Strategy.

Since the beginning of July our efforts have concentrated on putting the infrastructure in place to support the Scheme. Following the successful promotional event on 26 September in the Titanic Building in Belfast, we have already placed the first participants on the scheme and I expect numbers to increase rapidly in the next few weeks as we begin to secure more agreements from employers.

Members should encourage businesses in their areas to support this Scheme and encourage their young unemployed constituents to avail of the opportunities it offers.

### **Programme-led Apprenticeships**

**Mr Newton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the number of students, over the past three years, enrolled in the programme led apprenticeship scheme.

**(AQO 2711/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The numbers enrolled in each in-take of the Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme since its introduction in September 2009 are as follows:

- 2009/10 – 3,397 participants
- 2010/11 – 3,519 participants

- 2011/12 – 3,588 participants

So far in this academic year (2012/13), a total of 2,654 participants have been enrolled on the programme.

## Employment Law Review

**Mr Molloy** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the timetable for his Department's Employment Law Review.

**(AQO 2714/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** I have given a commitment in the Executive's Economic Strategy to conduct a review of employment law, which will seek to stimulate business confidence whilst maintaining the rights of individual employees.

In May 2012, I launched a discussion paper, seeking views on a range of policy proposals under three themes: early resolution of disputes; efficient and effective tribunals; and Better Regulation.

I am currently holding a series of meetings with key stakeholders to inform the review process.

I plan to make a statement to the House on 13 November on how I propose to take forward the review of employment law.

This is a very substantial review that deals with every aspect of the current employment relations system here.

I plan to launch a public consultation in spring 2013 that will set out proposals for creating a modern, flexible employment relations system for Northern Ireland.

I would anticipate that any policy and legislative changes will take place over the period from the autumn of 2013 until the end of the current mandate.

## Skills Strategy

**Mr Lunn** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline progress on the delivery of the Skills Strategy.

**(AQO 2715/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department's work is joined by one theme - equipping people with the qualifications and skills that they need to achieve their full potential and support businesses to grow our economy. This is the vision articulated within the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland known as 'Success through Skills - Transforming Futures'.

Achieving the vision of the Skills Strategy is dependent on each of the main strategies of my Department, current and emerging, and their attendant policies, being implemented effectively. Only then will the strategic goals set out in Success through Skills - Transforming Futures be achieved.

I will shortly be making available a document, entitled 'Structured to deliver Success', which will clearly show how each of the Department's strategies contribute directly to the implementation of the Skills Strategy.

In the last few months, a number of important initiatives have been progressed which address the themes outlined in the Skills Strategy.

- To help productivity through addressing sectoral imbalances, I have indicated that the Department will have a more 'sectoral' approach to employment and skills issues. To this end, I have identified a number of sectors which will be the focus of the Department's provision. Working groups, focusing on the skills needs of these sectors, have already been established for ICT, Food and Drink Processing and Manufacturing and Advanced Manufacturing.

- To help tackle the skills barriers to employment, I have launched the Youth Employment Scheme which will assist our young people to gain valuable work experience and new skills to enter the labour market.
- To help productivity by increasing the skills of the current and future workforce, I launched my Higher Education Strategy 'Graduating to Success' in April 2012 which acknowledges the need to ensure that higher education provision reflects the skills needs of local businesses, now and in the future. This will necessitate rebalancing the current academic profile towards economic need and also increasing the number of learners undertaking an economically relevant degree course.

### **Employment: Over-25s**

**Mr Mitchel McLaughlin** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the programmes he intends to put in place to help over twenty-five year olds to get back to work.

**(AQO 2713/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department is currently developing a new adult return to work programme which will replace the current Steps to Work programme. The new programme, Steps to Success, will be available to all those over 18 years of age who are in receipt of a working age benefit. For those aged 25 and over it is intended to provide earlier access to the new programme than is currently available under Steps to Work.

## Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

### **Tourism Opportunities**

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what follow up tourism opportunities have arisen as a result of the success of films which were primarily made in Northern Ireland and distributed overseas.

**(AQW 15102/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment):** The Northern Ireland Screen Commission (NI Screen), Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and Tourism Ireland are engaged in a number of activities to develop marketing and press opportunities to boost the tourism potential of the success of films made in Northern Ireland.

NI Screen are currently in discussion with the Causeway Coast and Glens office who are interested in running a Game of Thrones bus tour and are working with NITB on the development of a web based marketing film centered on a Game of Thrones fan coming as a tourist to Northern Ireland.

NITB is currently developing a new web section on [discovernorthernireland.com](http://discovernorthernireland.com) which will showcase screen locations across the region and highlight the tourism offering surrounding screen tourism. More recently NITB hosted an international familiarisation trip based on Game of Thrones filming locations.

Tourism Ireland assisted Invest Northern Ireland and NI Screen to bring Indian production company Getaway Films to Belfast for an initial exploratory visit for a brand new Indian film called David. Filming took place in the city in September. Films such as this are a cost-effective way to reach mass audiences, particularly in emerging markets such as India, where raising awareness of Northern Ireland as a holiday destination is the first step in a longer-term campaign to attract more visitors.

### **Natural Gas Network**

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department will consider extending the natural gas network to Whitehead.

**(AQW 15228/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** My Department has been considering the issues associated with extending the natural gas network to new areas of Northern Ireland, and will continue to liaise with the Utility Regulator, and the gas industry on such matters, including consideration of extending the gas network to towns such as Whitehead.

### **Apprentices Employed Through Departmental Contracts**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many apprentices have been employed through departmental contracts in this financial year; and what percentage this number represents of the total posts allocated.

**(AQW 15260/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** My Department has not let any contracts in this financial year.

### **Northern Ireland Science Park**

**Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 14708/ 11-15, whether this level of funding will be provided in the future.

**(AQW 15301/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The vast majority of the funding already provided to the Northern Ireland Science Park (NISP) has been for its physical construction and to enable it to become financially self-sustaining. Other than existing commitments for the NISP Connect and Halo Programmes, there are no current plans to provide any further public funding to NISP. However, in line with a commitment in the Executive's Economic Strategy, my Department is currently working with NISP to examine whether it could evolve into an Open-Innovation Institute. Any public investment in such an institute would be subject to normal value for money tests.

### **InvestNI**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans InvestNI has to promote foreign direct investment after assistance is prohibited by the EU from 2013, given the criticisms of the Northern Ireland Audit Office report in March 2012.

**(AQW 15305/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report correctly highlighted Invest NI's successful track record in attracting high quality Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), particularly during the most recent Programme for Government period (2008-2011). The agency promoted over 7,500 new FDI jobs during this period against a target of 6,500, with 75% of jobs promoted attracting salaries in excess of the Northern Ireland Private Sector median.

The report also highlighted the role that Regional Aid, in the form of Selective Financial Assistance (SFA) to companies, has played in the rebuilding of the Northern Ireland economy and the risk to the economy of the proposed changes to Regional Aid.

While it is recognised that there may be changes to Regional Aid within Northern Ireland post 2013, particularly in terms of coverage, there is no indication that assistance will be prohibited. Discussions are still ongoing between the Commission and Member States on revisions to the Regional Aid Guidelines (RAG) and it is therefore too early to speculate the nature or extent of those changes at this stage. However my Department continues to make every effort to secure the best possible outcome for Northern Ireland in the RAG discussions, including direct engagement with the EC and at a UK Government level.

I recognise the importance of Regional Aid in continuing to help narrow the gap between the Northern Ireland economy and the rest of the UK but I am also aware that, for most companies that invest here, financial assistance is only part of the overall proposition. We also have a ready supply of skilled and talented people, excellent university/business linkages, an advanced telecommunications infrastructure and world class companies operating in key knowledge-based sectors. Operating costs

are highly competitive and can be significantly lower than many regions of the UK and Europe, including the Republic of Ireland.

Over the past few years, Invest NI has strategically been modifying the support offerings to take account of anticipated changes to Regional Aid. This has included enhancing our support under other financial instruments including R&D and Training and roll out of a suite of debt and equity instruments under our Access to Finance Strategy. In addition, Invest NI has developed a range of advisory services and capability workshops and provides a suite of business development services to existing and potential investors. Invest NI's support is designed to enable both indigenous and externally owned companies to grow their business, maximise efficiencies, develop their product and sell in overseas markets. The feedback that I have personally received from companies that have chosen to locate in Northern Ireland suggests that support from Invest NI is crucial, and often a major factor in the decision.

### **InvestNI: Jobs**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment when InvestNI will be able to detail the number of jobs actually created, rather than jobs promoted.

**(AQW 15306/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** For those projects supported through the 'Jobs Fund', Invest NI can and does report on the number of jobs that have been created. This is possible, because a management information system was developed which supports the collation and reporting of this data.

In relation to other types of interventions, a new Offers and Claims Management System (OaCMS) was introduced by Invest NI in May 2012. This new system will enable job creation to be reported for offers of Selective Financial Assistance issued by Invest NI from 1 April 2012 onwards. Data will therefore be available this year but as these offers typically have a three year life span, a detailed and meaningful analysis of this job creation data will not be possible until the end of each contract period.

The distinction between the two forms of assessing job creation should be noted. The project based approach, which is addressed by the first part of this answer will require at least three years before a sufficient time period has elapsed for the information to be meaningful. The other aspect to job creation is based on the overall change in business employment, reported through official government survey sources. Invest NI is currently involved in a research project which aims to provide an updated analysis by March 2013.

### **South American Tourism Market**

**Mr Hazzard** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given that the number of people from Brazil visiting the Tourism Ireland website more than doubled in 2012, what steps her Department has taken to harness the South American tourism market,

**(AQW 15312/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Tourism Ireland recently completed a review of potential new markets and, arising from this, it has developed a strategy to attract more high-spending visitors from Brazil. This involves working closely with airlines, tour operators in Brazil and UK inbound operators who specialise in South America, to encourage them to include Northern Ireland in their programmes and brochures.

Earlier this month, representatives from Tourism Ireland travelled to Brazil and other locations in South America. Workshops were held for key trade and media contacts.

Visits to Tourism Ireland's Brazil website have increased by 42% this year, when compared to the same period in 2011 - from 33,700 (Jan-Sept 2011) to 47,944 (Jan-Sept 2012). Tourism Ireland will launch a new website and market book targeting potential Brazilian holidaymakers later this year.

## Tourism Signs

**Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQO 2549/11-15, to outline the recommendations for amending the criteria for the erection of brown tourism signs.  
(AQW 15317/11-15)

**Mrs Foster:** The Northern Ireland Tourism Signage Policy is operated by Roads Service within the Department for Regional Development (DRD) with support from Local Councils and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB).

My Department has undertaken a review of the policy to ensure it reflects developments in tourism and is more flexible in its implementation, given the evolving nature of tourism product and experiences. I have subsequently written to Minister Kennedy (DRD) to present our recommendations regarding proposed amendments.

I do not wish to prejudice the outcome of the discussions with DRD, therefore I am not in a position to set out the full detail of my recommendations at the present time.

However, I can advise that recommendations relate to the update of definitions, eligibility criteria, tourist accommodation categories (reflecting new legislation) and general terminology (to reflect the increased use of technology to access information).

I have also recommended that consideration be given to a review of the policy's administration, standardisation in its application, the inclusion of additional service symbols on existing tourist attraction signage, and greater flexibility in signposting tourist accommodation from A and B class roads.

## Job Creation

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the number of new jobs created; and (ii) the level of financial investment for job creation, in each year between 1998 and 2007, broken down by constituency.  
(AQW 15318/11-15)

**Mrs Foster:** Invest NI reports employment related projects on the basis of jobs promoted and not jobs created as this is consistent with the targets set out in the Programme for Government. Invest NI does not hold historical information relating to the period prior to its establishment in April 2002.

Tables 1 to 6 detail the 23,256 jobs that Invest NI has promoted by Parliamentary Constituency Area (PCA) between 1st April 2002 and 31st March 2008. The tables also provide the amount of financial assistance offered by Invest NI to employment-related projects and the associated amount of investment planned by businesses.

Some projects aim to create both new jobs and safeguard existing jobs. In many cases the split between assistance to promote and safeguard jobs is not readily available, therefore the full amount of assistance offered to employment related projects has been included in the tables below. As a result, the tables will show some PCAs where there has been employment-related assistance offered, but no new job promotion figure.

Table 7 provides an analysis of an additional 11,149 jobs supported through business start-up programmes. This is presented separately because there are no investment figures associated with the programme.

**TABLE 1: INVEST NI SUPPORT OFFERED TO EMPLOYMENT-RELATED PROJECTS BY PCA (2002-03)**

PCA	New Jobs Promoted	Assistance Offered (£m)	Total Planned Investment (£m)
Belfast East	32	0.14	0.72

<b>PCA</b>	<b>New Jobs Promoted</b>	<b>Assistance Offered (£m)</b>	<b>Total Planned Investment (£m)</b>
Belfast South	147	1.59	8.23
Belfast West	87	1.06	6.46
East Antrim	100	1.56	5.39
East Londonderry	17	0.14	0.62
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	391	2.45	9.99
Foyle	73	10.40	92.13
Mid Ulster	122	0.69	8.88
Newry And Armagh	430	3.23	10.15
North Down	41	0.22	1.58
South Antrim	815	16.20	123.87
South Down	67	1.80	8.07
Upper Bann	133	12.68	60.33
West Tyrone	31	3.30	15.51
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,485</b>	<b>55.45</b>	<b>351.91</b>

**TABLE 2: INVEST NI SUPPORT OFFERED TO EMPLOYMENT-RELATED PROJECTS BY PCA (2003-04)**

<b>PCA</b>	<b>New Jobs Promoted</b>	<b>Assistance Offered (£m)</b>	<b>Total Planned Investment (£m)</b>
Belfast East		8.80	33.61
Belfast North	14	0.49	8.68
Belfast South	752	8.89	44.39
Belfast West	217	6.00	19.78
East Antrim	25	0.20	0.90
East Londonderry	24	0.17	1.13
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	202	1.44	3.94
Foyle	486	3.82	11.67
North Antrim		2.72	14.44
North Down	331	2.62	8.14
Strangford	5	0.01	0.01
Upper Bann	226	2.80	16.12
West Tyrone	175	5.13	26.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,457</b>	<b>43.09</b>	<b>189.60</b>

**TABLE 3: INVEST NI SUPPORT OFFERED TO EMPLOYMENT-RELATED PROJECTS BY PCA (2004-05)**

<b>PCA</b>	<b>New Jobs Promoted</b>	<b>Assistance Offered (£m)</b>	<b>Total Planned Investment (£m)</b>
Belfast East	429	8.36	11.33
Belfast North	5	0.07	0.38
Belfast South	1,320	8.53	33.21
Belfast West	784	6.56	22.28
East Antrim	149	1.61	10.14
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	10	1.69	11.78
Foyle	41	2.88	37.85
Lagan Valley	82	1.43	8.24
Mid Ulster	170	4.06	23.28
North Antrim	212	5.70	23.43
North Down	140	0.99	5.33
South Antrim	304	3.50	14.34
South Down	21	0.34	2.62
Upper Bann	158	13.08	49.84
West Tyrone	53	1.17	4.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,878</b>	<b>59.96</b>	<b>258.49</b>

**TABLE 4: INVEST NI SUPPORT OFFERED TO EMPLOYMENT-RELATED PROJECTS BY PCA (2005-06)**

<b>PCA</b>	<b>New Jobs Promoted</b>	<b>Assistance Offered (£m)</b>	<b>Total Planned Investment (£m)</b>
Belfast East	276	2.31	14.12
Belfast North	100	2.96	28.17
Belfast South	969	9.32	63.86
Belfast West	31	0.35	1.96
East Antrim	231	11.84	49.27
East Londonderry	51	0.49	7.63
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	129	1.12	8.31
Foyle	668	20.61	76.88
Lagan Valley	387	8.27	77.83
Mid Ulster	118	0.67	8.25
Newry And Armagh	633	3.08	12.37
North Antrim	98	0.39	3.38
North Down	56	0.22	0.53

<b>PCA</b>	<b>New Jobs Promoted</b>	<b>Assistance Offered (£m)</b>	<b>Total Planned Investment (£m)</b>
South Antrim	141	2.60	17.06
South Down	275	3.68	13.12
Strangford	120	1.84	9.49
Upper Bann	298	6.66	27.37
West Tyrone	124	0.97	12.32
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,705</b>	<b>77.39</b>	<b>431.93</b>

**TABLE 5: INVEST NI SUPPORT OFFERED TO EMPLOYMENT-RELATED PROJECTS BY PCA (2006-07)**

<b>PCA</b>	<b>New Jobs Promoted</b>	<b>Assistance Offered (£m)</b>	<b>Total Planned Investment (£m)</b>
Belfast East	678	10.11	36.57
Belfast North	91	1.96	20.75
Belfast South	966	9.02	53.58
Belfast West	58	0.12	0.68
East Antrim	67	0.42	3.14
East Londonderry	56	0.43	4.15
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	722	6.10	46.28
Foyle	875	6.93	30.76
Lagan Valley	131	1.30	11.79
Mid Ulster	270	1.21	12.64
Newry And Armagh	424	3.23	18.98
North Antrim	242	2.45	13.70
North Down	255	1.08	5.58
South Antrim	48	0.30	2.99
South Down	93	0.46	2.75
Strangford	86	1.09	11.01
Upper Bann	147	1.28	19.00
West Tyrone	116	0.79	7.60
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,325</b>	<b>48.27</b>	<b>301.96</b>

**TABLE 6: INVEST NI SUPPORT OFFERED TO EMPLOYMENT-RELATED PROJECTS BY PCA (2007-08)**

<b>PCA</b>	<b>New Jobs Promoted</b>	<b>Assistance Offered (£m)</b>	<b>Total Planned Investment (£m)</b>
Belfast East	299	13.03	96.04
Belfast North	51	0.41	4.25

<b>PCA</b>	<b>New Jobs Promoted</b>	<b>Assistance Offered (£m)</b>	<b>Total Planned Investment (£m)</b>
Belfast South	527	4.36	33.01
Belfast West	62	0.88	8.72
East Antrim	284	1.80	17.34
East Londonderry	389	3.06	9.72
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	250	7.33	71.37
Foyle	994	10.20	46.79
Lagan Valley	107	0.55	3.73
Mid Ulster	398	3.54	39.35
Newry And Armagh	425	5.18	118.97
North Antrim	95	3.44	17.59
North Down	37	0.30	1.96
South Antrim	65	0.69	3.87
South Down	61	0.81	3.39
Strangford	61	0.22	2.55
Upper Bann	102	1.18	12.00
West Tyrone	199	1.71	19.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,406</b>	<b>58.68</b>	<b>510.52</b>

**Notes to Tables 1 to 6:**

- 1 New Jobs Promoted represent the number of jobs expected to be created by the project.
- 2 Planned Investment includes Assistance Offered.
- 3 Invest NI revises performance data on a regular basis to ensure that it reflects implemented projects; therefore, the data above may differ to previously published information.

**TABLE 7: INVEST NI JOBS SUPPORTED THROUGH ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME BY PCA (2002-03 TO 2007-08)**

<b>PCA</b>	<b>2002-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>Total</b>
Belfast East	32	64	76	65	59	84	379
Belfast North	42	55	68	89	58	77	389
Belfast South	52	84	119	87	81	86	510
Belfast West	45	58	94	90	81	85	453
East Antrim	66	83	125	98	104	97	574
East Londonderry	66	88	163	132	120	149	719
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	89	130	207	179	184	202	990
Foyle	75	115	199	142	125	164	821

<b>PCA</b>	<b>2002-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>Total</b>
Lagan Valley	74	66	87	90	81	78	476
Mid Ulster	102	126	161	170	141	166	867
Newry & Armagh	91	109	172	139	112	136	760
North Antrim	65	63	118	106	122	142	615
North Down	55	95	96	89	69	56	460
South Antrim	58	78	96	88	80	76	476
South Down	98	128	186	175	102	132	821
Strangford	63	96	116	110	80	72	537
Upper Bann	84	103	144	140	85	108	664
West Tyrone	61	79	111	118	121	148	637
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,219</b>	<b>1,621</b>	<b>2,338</b>	<b>2,107</b>	<b>1,806</b>	<b>2,058</b>	<b>11,149</b>

**Note to Table 7:**

- 1 These figures are based on an estimate of jobs created by an individual EDP offer. This estimation process is derived from independent monitoring of the Enterprise Development Programme. As such, the totals in the table may not add due to rounding.

**Broadband Coverage in North Down**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the provision of broadband in the North Down constituency; and what steps are being taken to improve the provision. **(AQW 15361/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** My Department has taken forward a number of initiatives aimed at improving broadband access for businesses and consumers across Northern Ireland, including North Down. This includes the £51m Next Generation Broadband (NGB) project, which has facilitated the roll-out of the highest level of fibre-to-the-cabinet technology in the UK.

Through a combination of the NGB project and BT's own investment programme, a total of 122 street cabinets have been fibre enabled within the North Down Parliamentary Constituency, delivering access to broadband speeds of between 2 to 40 megabits per second (Mbps). Those interested in acquiring a service can use the two websites that have been created to check availability in their area - [www.fasterbroadbandni.com](http://www.fasterbroadbandni.com) and [www.nibroadband.com](http://www.nibroadband.com). However, as fibre-to-the-cabinet technology is distance related, not all premises will be able to access the fibred services.

Broadband services are nevertheless delivered via a mix of technologies including fixed-line, satellite, radio (wireless) and mobile. This is similar to many regions globally where there are geographic and topographic challenges to network development.

Constituents in North Down can access the satellite broadband service available under the Department's contract with Onwave Ltd. Onwave offers services with download speeds of 8, 12 and 18 Mbps. Details of Onwave's services can be found on the company's website at [www.onwave.co.uk/ni](http://www.onwave.co.uk/ni) or by contacting the company directly on 0845 43 43 500.

My Department also established the £1.9m Northern Ireland Broadband Fund, through which there has been significant deployment of fixed-wireless broadband networks across many parts of Northern Ireland. One of the companies supported under the Fund, North West Electronics (NWE), is currently delivering fixed-wireless broadband services in some areas across North Down. NWE offers services

with download speeds of between 10 Mbps and 100 Mbps. More information can be found on North West Electronic's website at [www.nwewn.com](http://www.nwewn.com) or by contacting them directly on 028 7135 1999.

Looking forward, my Department has secured £4.4m under the UK Coalition Government's Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) initiative, which together with its Budget allocations for 2011-2015, will be used to extend the delivery of higher speed services, into those areas of Northern Ireland where, despite previous investments, a minimum download speed of 2Mbps via fixed-line technology cannot currently be attained.

DETI officials are also in discussions with BDUK to source additional funds to deliver an innovative project, aimed at improving mobile broadband coverage across Northern Ireland. Work on scoping both projects is underway.

## **Domestic Energy Market**

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an estimate of the percentage share of the domestic energy market held by each company in (i) the Greater Belfast area; and (ii) the remainder of Northern Ireland.

**(AQW 15404/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:**

### **Natural Gas**

Information prepared by the Utility Regulator shows that, based on connection numbers at end of June 2012, Airtricity Gas Supply (formerly Phoenix Supply Ltd) had an 86% share, and firmus energy a 14% share, of the domestic gas supply market in the Greater Belfast and Larne gas licensed area.

In the '10 Towns' licensed area outside Greater Belfast, firmus energy has the exclusive right to supply gas to domestic properties until 1 April 2015.

### **Electricity**

During the period April-June 2012, information prepared by the Utility Regulator notes that Power NI supplied 85.3% of the domestic electricity market in Northern Ireland, Airtricity supplied 12.9%, Budget Energy supplied 1.7%, and Electric Ireland supplied around 0.05% of the domestic market. The Department does not routinely hold information which would provide a breakdown of the electricity supply market between the Greater Belfast area and the rest of Northern Ireland.

## **Staff Facing Criminal Charges or Investigations**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many people employed in his Department are (i) suspended from work pending criminal charges or investigations; and (ii) continuing in their duties whilst facing criminal charges or investigations.

**(AQW 15420/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** DETI has currently no staff (i) suspended from work pending criminal charges and (ii) is not aware of any staff facing criminal charges or investigations.

## **Bed and Breakfasts in North Down**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how her Department is promoting Bed and Breakfasts in the North Down area.

**(AQW 15427/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) does not promote and market individual businesses as this could create commercial advantage in a competitive marketplace. However NITB does provide platforms for the tourism industry through its marketing campaigns whereby providers are able to promote special offers via the NITB consumer website [discovernorthernireland.com](http://discovernorthernireland.com).

There are currently 15 Bed and Breakfasts certified in the North Down area all of which are advertised on the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's website [discovernorthernireland.com](http://discovernorthernireland.com). The website receives approximately 2.5 million visitors each year, with many of these visitors (375,000 approximately) sourcing information on accommodation.

Two of the Bed and Breakfasts in the North Down area currently participate in the voluntary NITB quality star rating scheme which is a useful source of business and marketing advice. The scheme offers a one to five star rating which the Bed and Breakfasts can use to promote their offering to potential guests.

## **Broadband Coverage in North Down**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on her Department's efforts to improve mobile phone and Broadband coverage in North Down.

**(AQW 15428/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:**

### **Mobile Phone Coverage**

Coverage targets for mobile services are set at a UK national level by telecoms regulator, Ofcom meaning that Mobile Network Operators can effectively meet their targets by providing coverage in the largest towns and cities in the UK.

The impact of this is that in many areas of the UK there is a limited commercial case for Mobile Network Operators to improve coverage and quality of service. This particularly impacts on Northern Ireland, having a high density of rural dwellers.

This deficiency is recognised by both my Department and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in Whitehall. DETI is currently scoping a project aimed at delivering improvements in 3rd Generation (voice, text and mobile broadband) services across Northern Ireland but including North Down while, at the same time, future-proofing networks for the delivery of 4th Generation (voice, text and high speed mobile broadband) services when commercial roll-out commences in 2013. The delivery of 4G services will be dependent on the auction of radio spectrum which is to be taken forward by Ofcom towards the end of 2012. In announcing its plans for the auction of 4G radio spectrum taking place this year, Ofcom stated that one of the licensees will be obligated to provide a mobile broadband service for indoor reception to at least 98% of the UK population by the end of 2017. That licensee will also be obligated to ensure that the same service is available to at least 95% of the population of each of the UK nations. This regional obligation is something for which I have been lobbying Ofcom over a number of years.

The DETI project will effectively build upon the DCMS-led Mobile Infrastructure project announced in October 2011. The aim of this £150m project is to improve access to mobile services (primarily voice services) across the UK, including parts of Northern Ireland. I cannot say at this stage if North Down will be included as the precise locations within Northern Ireland will not be known until the procurement process has been completed and a contract awarded in early 2013. My officials continue to engage with DCMS on this project.

### **Broadband Coverage**

I refer the member to my response to AQW 15361/11-15.

## **EU Funding**

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the EU funding that her Department currently receives and administers, including when the funding will end.

**(AQW 15491/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The Department is Managing Authority for the EU Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for Northern Ireland 2007–2013. The Programme aims to promote investment in research and

technology, enterprise and entrepreneurship, energy efficiency, renewable energy and telecoms infrastructure.

The Programme has an overall value of €613.667million of which 50% is funded from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

In addition, DETI acts as Northern Ireland Accountable Department for tourism, enterprise, energy and telecoms elements of the Interreg IVA which is managed and administered by the Special EU Programmes Body. The overall Interreg IVA Programme value is €256million of which 75% is funded from ERDF.

Once all projects across the Interreg IVA Programme are approved, the DETI element is forecast to be in the region of €40million - €45million (£37million approved to date based on October HMT euro rate of 1.2531).

Both Programmes run from 2007–2013 and require all funding to be contractually committed by 31 December 2013 and spent by 31 December 2015.

### **Job Losses at FG Wilson**

**Mr Nesbitt** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, between the time of the announcement of 160 job losses at FG Wilson in July 2012 and 760 job losses in September 2012, what contact she had with (i) Doug Oberhelman, Caterpillar's chairman and CEO; (ii) Bill Rohner, vice-president of Caterpillar's electric power division; and (iii) representatives of FG Wilson.

**(AQW 15528/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** I wrote to the CEO of Caterpillar and received a reply which confirmed the company's plan to continue to manufacture large gensets in Northern Ireland.

I had telephone calls with the Vice President of Caterpillar's global Electric Power Division. This was followed by a face-to-face meeting in the US on 23rd September 2012.

During the period between the two announcements, my team in Invest NI held four meetings with management in addition to various e-mail exchanges and telephone calls on this issue.

### **Job Losses at FG Wilson**

**Mr Nesbitt** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, between the time of the announcement of 160 job losses at FG Wilson in July 2012 and 760 job losses in September 2012, what contact InvestNI had with (i) representatives of Caterpillar; and (ii) representatives of FG Wilson.

**(AQW 15529/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Invest NI held four meetings with Caterpillar/F G Wilson over the period from July 2012 to the redundancy announcement in September. Of these, one meeting was with F G Wilson local representatives, another was with Caterpillar management while the remaining two involved discussions with both local and US management.

In addition, over this period Invest NI had two telephone calls with senior officials in the US as well numerous e-mail exchanges and telephone calls on a range of matters relating to this decision.

### **Meeting with Bill Rohner**

**Mr Nesbitt** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, following her visit to the United States where she met with Bill Rohner, what action points were agreed by both sides.

**(AQW 15530/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** I met with senior management of Caterpillar in the US as soon as possible after the redundancy announcement in order to discuss in more detail the company's decision and to identify any opportunities that could mitigate the job losses.

During the meeting Alastair Hamilton, CEO, Invest NI and I outlined the support available in a number of areas, including Research & Development and training. We discussed a number of potential opportunities, not only within Caterpillar's Electric Power Division where the local operation sits, but also in relation to other functions within the wider group that could be competitively serviced from Northern Ireland.

The key actions arising from the meeting relate to Invest NI following up on these potential areas for new business development and I can confirm that a number of constructive meetings have since been held here in Northern Ireland, with both local and US management. The opportunities being discussed are, in the main, at an early stage and are therefore commercially sensitive but I can assure the Member that every effort is being made to fully exploit these.

### **InvestNI: Funding**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the level of funding that InvestNI has allocated to the (i) Ballycastle; (ii) Ballymoney; and (iii) Ballymena areas, in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 15545/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Invest NI does not "allocate job creation investment" to specific constituency areas. All support is demand-led by businesses bringing forward viable projects to improve their competitiveness and gain a larger share of international markets.

For consistency, information is presented at the level of District Council Area. As such Ballycastle is included in Moyle DCA. The table below shows the amount of assistance, or funding, that Invest NI has offered to businesses in the relevant DCAs in each of the last five financial years.

### **INVEST NI ASSISTANCE OFFERED IN BALLYMENA, BALLYMONEY AND MOYLE DCAS (2007-08 TO 2011-12)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Ballymena £m</b>	<b>Ballymoney £m</b>	<b>Moyle £m</b>
2007-08	3.40	0.43	0.32
2008-09	1.85	0.18	0.56
2009-10	5.55	0.52	0.07
2010-11	5.90	0.17	0.10
2011-12	1.84	0.52	0.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.54</b>	<b>1.81</b>	<b>1.31</b>

**Note:** Invest NI revises performance data on a regular basis to ensure that it reflects implemented projects; therefore, the data above may differ to previously published information.

### **Broadband Provision in the Garvaghey/Ballygawley Areas of West Tyrone**

**Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) for her assessment of broadband provision in the Garvaghey/Ballygawley areas of West Tyrone; and (ii) to detail why the cabinet situated near Kelly's Inn, Garvaghey, has not been activated although there is a fibre optic connection to the box.

**(AQW 15558/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** My Department has taken forward a number of initiatives aimed at improving broadband access for consumers across Northern Ireland, particularly those located in rural areas such as Garvaghey and Ballygawley. This includes the Next Generation Broadband (NGB) project which has facilitated the roll-out of the highest level of fibre-to-the-cabinet technology in the UK.

Under this project, three of the four cabinets serving the Ballygawley exchange area, namely those at Sixmilecross Road, at the roundabout at Augher Road and at Dungannon Road, have been fibre enabled. The fourth cabinet near Kelly's Inn on the Omagh Road has not been fibre enabled. Any decision to upgrade further cabinets is an operational matter for BT and is subject to commercial considerations

Broadband services in Northern Ireland are delivered via a mix of technologies including fixed-line, satellite, radio (wireless) and mobile. This is similar to many regions globally where there are geographic and topographic challenges to network development.

It is important to recognise that fibre-to-the-cabinet technology is distance related and not all premises will be able to access this service. That is why under the NGB contract, arrangements have been made for businesses to use other Broadband technologies such as Broadband Enabling Technology (BET). Companies that wish to pursue this option should register their interest on the [www.fasterbroadbandni.com](http://www.fasterbroadbandni.com) website.

Customers in the Garvaghey and Ballygawley areas of West Tyrone are also able to access the satellite broadband services available under my Department's contract with Onwave Ltd. Onwave offers services with download speeds of 8, 12 and 18 Megabits per second, details of which can be found on their website at [www.onwave.co.uk/ni](http://www.onwave.co.uk/ni) or by contacting the company directly on 0845 43 43 500.

My Department has also supported the deployment of fixed-wireless broadband networks across many parts of Northern Ireland.

North West Electronics is currently delivering fixed-wireless broadband services, with download speeds up to 100 Mbps, which customers in the Garvaghey and Ballygawley areas may be able to access. More information can be found on North West Electronics' website at [www.nwevn.com](http://www.nwevn.com) or by contacting them directly on 028 7135 1999.

Looking forward, my Department has secured £4.4m under the UK Coalition Government's Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) initiative which, together with its Budget allocations for 2011-2015, will be used to extend the delivery of higher speed services into those areas of Northern Ireland where, despite previous investments, a minimum download speed of 2Mbps via fixed-line technology cannot currently be attained. Work on scoping this project is currently underway.

### **Free WiFi in Town Centres**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how her Department intends to assist councils to help with developing free WiFi in town centres.

**(AQW 15586/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** My Department has no programme under which it can provide funding to councils to enable them to provide free WiFi in town centres.

However, DETI has supported a number of pilot projects to provide free WiFi in the centres of Antrim, Ballycastle, Enniskillen, Newcastle and Londonderry.

Full Post Project Evaluations (PPEs) were undertaken following completion of these pilots. My Department would be happy to share with the councils the learning that has been obtained from these pilot projects by making the evaluations available to them.

### **Benefits of Angling for Tourism**

Mr McAleer asked Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) for her assessment of the benefits of angling for tourism west of the Bann; and (ii) what level of support her Department provides to the Foyle Association of Salmon and Trout Anglers in recognition of their efforts to promote angling in the region.

**(AQW 15594/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** In terms of an assessment of benefits of angling for tourism west of the Bann, research shows that there is a downturn in estimated spend by direct Great Britain and overseas visitors who participated in angling during their stay in Northern Ireland, from £6.1m in 2010 to £2.9million in 2011, which is due to fewer people participating in angling.

The number of direct GB and overseas visitors who participated in angling in 2011 was 45% less compared with 2010. Those who participated in angling during their stay in 2011 also spent on average 11% or £49 less per trip compared with 2010.

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) is responsible for promoting Northern Ireland to the domestic and ROI market. Within these markets angling has not been designated as a priority. The majority of domestic anglers are members of angling clubs and do not require information from the Tourist Board.

Although demand has decreased, angling remains an important product and NITB is working closely with destinations in developing plans to optimise their tourism potential and many of these e.g. Fermanagh have identified that angling is a key component of their tourism offering.

NITB works closely with Tourism Ireland to host press trips for angling journalists and liaises with the many government agencies who have responsibility for angling, to ensure that the key links are available on [www.discovernorthernireland.com/angling](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com/angling) to provide the prospective angler with relevant accurate information.

To Date my department has had no direct dealings with Foyle Association of Salmon and Trout Anglers. NITB can offer support in promoting events and activities that are 'tourism focused' on [www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com)

## **Petroleum Licences**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the terms and conditions of each petroleum licence currently granted.

**(AQW 15606/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Each Petroleum Licence comprises its own terms and conditions.

These terms and conditions are governed by the Petroleum (Production) Act (Northern Ireland) 1964 and the associated Regulations made under that Act. The Model Clauses in Schedule 2 to the Petroleum Production Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987 [SR 1987 No 196] as amended by the Petroleum Production (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 [SR 2010 No 169] ("the Model Clauses") are incorporated in Petroleum Licences unless otherwise specified in individual licences.

Both the individual petroleum licence documents and the underpinning legislation can be accessed via the following link: [http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-energy-index/minerals-and-petroleum/petroleum\\_licensing\\_2.htm](http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-energy-index/minerals-and-petroleum/petroleum_licensing_2.htm)

## **Growth Loan Fund**

**Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 15072/11-15, to detail the procedure used to select Whiterock Capital Partners to manage the Growth Loan Fund.

**(AQW 15607/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The award of the management contract to Whiterock Capital Partners followed a competitive tendering process.

The tender was advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union. The Official Journal of the European Union is the central database for European public sector tender notices.

The contract was awarded on the basis of best practice procurement advice, as provided by Central Procurement Directorate.

Following assessment of all tenders submitted the Whiterock proposal was considered the most economically advantageous.

### **Items Disposed of at Auctions**

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the items which her Department has disposed of at auctions in (i) 2010/11; and (ii) 2011/12, including the auction value of each item.

**(AQW 15617/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment has not disposed of any items at auctions in the financial years 2010/11 and 2011/12.

### **National Trust**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) how many times, to date, correspondence was sent from her Department to the National Trust making reference to (a) creationism; and (b) a creationist exhibition being a condition of financial support.

**(AQW 15671/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** My Department has no record of any such correspondence having been sent to the National Trust.

The content of the visitor centre at the Giants Causeway was developed by the National Trust. At no time did my Department try to dictate or influence the content of the exhibition at the visitors centre or make the content a grant condition of financial support.

This has already been confirmed by the National Trust in a recent press release.

### **National Trust**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why an internal email within her Department referred to the 'National Trust's unwillingness to accept creationism to be included in the exhibition as a grant condition'.

**(AQW 15672/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** At no time did my Department try to dictate or influence the content of the exhibition at the visitors centre or make the content a condition of grant support. The letter of offer to the National Trust did not make the inclusion of creationism in the exhibition a grant condition.

The final decision as to the content of the interpretive solution was taken by the National Trust as project promoters. It was based on research into visitor expectation and need and involved consultation with a wide group of stakeholders.

### **UK National Ecosystem Assessment**

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) whether she is aware of the recommendations contained in the Northern Ireland chapter of the UK National Ecosystem Assessment; and (ii) how the findings in the document have been utilised by her Department.

**(AQW 15703/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** I am aware of the key recommendations set out in the Northern Ireland National Ecosystem Assessment. My Department's commitments are set out in the Programme for Government and the Sustainable Development Strategy.

## Growth Loan Fund

**Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 15072/11-15, to list the organisations that submitted bids for the tender to deliver the Growth Loan Fund, including the value of each tender.

**(AQW 15722/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The award of the management contract for the Growth Loan Fund to a consortium led by Braveheart Investment Group, which in turn set up Whiterock Capital Partners to deliver the contract, followed a competitive tendering process.

The contract was awarded on the basis of best practice procurement advice, as provided by Central Procurement Directorate.

Following assessment of all tenders submitted the Braveheart Consortium (subsequently Whiterock) proposal was considered the most economically advantageous.

Details of other bidders and the content within their submitted bids are considered to be commercially sensitive and cannot therefore be disclosed. Moreover, in addition to being commercially sensitive to those organisations involved in the tender, any disclosure of details and costs has the potential to impact on future tenders of this nature to the detriment of the public purse.

## Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department held discussions with the National Trust or the Northern Ireland Tourist Board on the potential for the reflection of creationism within the new Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre being a condition of the grant that the National Trust received from her Department.

**(AQW 15755/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The Department received a number of representations relating to the Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre about a range of issues including creationism. At no time did my Department try to dictate or influence the content of the exhibition at the visitors centre or make the content a condition of grant support. The letter of offer to the National Trust did not make the inclusion of creationism in the exhibition a grant condition.

The final decision as to the content of the interpretive solution was taken by the National Trust as project promoters. It was based on research into visitor expectation and need and involved consultation with a wide group of stakeholders.

## Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail any meetings that her Department has had with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board since 8 May 2007 in relation to the Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre.

**(AQW 15756/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** There have been a substantial number of meetings between the Department and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board in relation to the Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre since 8 May 2007.

## Freedom of Information Act

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department complies with the Freedom of Information Act in relation to the amount of redacted information that it releases in response to written requests.

**(AQW 15758/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** My Department makes use of redaction/blanking-out of information only in circumstances where such information is considered to be exempt from disclosure to members of the public under the

Freedom of Information Act, the Environmental Information Regulations, or the Data Protection Act. In such circumstances, the applicant is also referred to the relevant section of legislation under which the information is being withheld.

### **Tourism Development Scheme**

**Mr Douglas** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the likelihood of those on the reserve list for the Tourism Development Scheme receiving funding.

**(AQO 2718/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** A total of 65 applications were received under the Tourism Development Scheme 2011-13 open call for applications. Projects have been shortlisted based on the budget available to the scheme. Projects which receive offers must fully claim by 31 March 2013.

Should projects drop out from the shortlist, applications will be taken from the reserve list on an ability to deliver basis. That is, with all match funding and permissions in place to allow the project to spend by 31 March 2013 deadline.

However my Department is bidding to secure additional funding for 2012/13 and into 2013/14 to enable those projects on the reserve list to be supported.

### **Investment: Indigenous Businesses**

**Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given that over thirty percent of InvestNI funding to indigenous businesses went to two constituencies in 2011/12, can she detail what incentives she intends to provide to encourage the growth of home-grown businesses in other constituencies.

**(AQO 2724/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Invest NI provides a range of financial and non financial support to help locally-owned companies to accelerate their growth and increase profitability. During the last financial year, some 73% of Invest NI's total assistance was offered to locally owned companies, promoting over 1,700 new jobs.

Let me make it absolutely clear, as I have done so repeatedly in this house before, Invest NI does not direct its investment support to specific constituency areas nor does it have the tools to do so.

### **Economy: Productivity**

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what local action her Department has taken to address the issues of low productivity in manufacturing, retail, transport, financial services and agriculture identified in the NI Economic Strategy.

**(AQO 2725/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The NI Economic Strategy is clear that the key route to productivity growth is to support local companies to become more competitive in international markets through investment in innovation, R&D and skills.

The supporting Comprehensive Action Plan sets out the actions that all Departments are taking to support growth in exports, productivity and employment across all sectors of the economy.

### **Business Bank**

**Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what discussions have taken place with the Business Secretary regarding the recent announcement of a new business bank for small businesses and the potential it will have for local businesses.

**(AQO 2726/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The Business Secretary announced plans in September 2012 for a new government-backed business bank to address gaps in finance for SMEs, further details of which will be announced

later this year. While I have not had discussions with the Business Secretary about this new initiative to date, I welcome this development and both the Finance Minister and I will be pressing to ensure that it is open to, and will be of benefit to, Northern Ireland based businesses.

### **Investment: Job Creation**

**Mr D Bradley** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what criteria her Department and InvestNI use to decide how to allocate job creation investment to constituencies.

**(AQO 2727/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Invest NI does not allocate job creation investment to specific constituency areas.

### **FG Wilson and First4Skills: Job Losses**

**Mr Cree** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action her Department has taken to mitigate the impact of the multiple job losses at FG Wilson and First4Skills.

**(AQO 2728/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Invest NI is working with colleagues across government, including the Department for Employment and Learning, the Social Security Agency and HMRC to provide a redundancy advice service and other information about the options and support available.

Invest NI has a healthy pipeline of potential projects at various stages of negotiation. Should they all come to fruition, they could generate £500 million investment and the create 2,700 jobs.

Invest NI is working with a number of local and international companies which currently have specific employment enquiries, whilst the recently announced Regional Start Initiative will also enable those individuals who may wish to consider self-employment to access relevant support.

### **Telecommunications: 4G**

**Mr McDevitt** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what level of coverage is expected from the introduction of the 4G network.

**(AQO 2729/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** In announcing its plans for the auction of 4G radio spectrum taking place this year, Ofcom stated that one of the licensees will be obligated to provide a mobile broadband service for indoor reception to at least 98% of the UK population by the end of 2017. That licensee will also be obligated to ensure that the same service is available to at least 95% of the population of each of the UK nations. This regional obligation is something for which I have been lobbying Ofcom over a number of years. Furthermore, Everything Everywhere, having been given the go ahead to deliver 4G services ahead of the auction using existing spectrum, has committed to delivering services to 98% of the UK population by 2014.

## **Department of the Environment**

### **Biffa's Financial Problems**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of Biffa, which is the sole bidder for two out of three waste management projects, being in financial trouble and facing an uncertain future.

**(AQW 15189/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood (The Minister of the Environment):** Biffa is not a bidder for any of the waste infrastructure projects. It had been a participant in each of the Waste Management Groups' procurement competitions but subsequently withdrew, for different corporate reasons in each case. It currently provides some services to arc21 but these are not such as to impact on arc21's major waste infrastructure procurement.

## **Arc21, Southern Waste Management Partnership and North West Region Waste Management Group**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of the Environment how (i) Arc21; (ii) Southern Waste Management Partnership; and (iii) North West Region Waste Management Group plan to treat waste; and for his assessment of the proposed methods.

**(AQW 15190/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** District councils have legislative responsibility for establishing and implementing Waste Management Plans to collect, treat and dispose of waste in a manner that represents the best possible and practicable balance of social, economic and environmental impacts. The current infrastructure procurements being taken forward by the Waste Management Groups (WMGs) include provision for a proposed combination of technologies and have been formally endorsed by their constituent councils through their Joint Committees.

Each of the planned procurements by the WMGs includes provision for an energy from waste facility, specifically a gasifier in the North West region and an incinerator in the arc21 region. The specifics are:

Arc21 – plans a two stage process with up front Mechanical Biological Treatment of the Municipal Solid Waste to gain additional recycle and biologically treat the remaining material to produce a fuel for combustion in a second stage conventional Energy from Waste plant.

NWRWMG – plans up front Mechanical Biological Treatment to produce additional recycle and a fuel for combustion in a second stage gasification plant.

Following the recent decision by the SWaMP2008 Joint Committee to abandon its infrastructure procurement project the Committee will be initiating contingency planning for delivery of an alternative solution.

The allowable technologies within each procurement have been decided by the WMG constituent councils and will be taken forward in compliance with the NI Waste Management Strategy 2006-2020 and with the NI Best Practicable Environmental Option. All key infrastructure requirements will be subject to full planning and permitting assessments by the Department prior to construction.

## **Biffa's Financial Problems**

**Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of the Environment what impact Biffa's financial problems will have on its current waste management contracts.

**(AQW 15193/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** Biffa is not a bidder for any of the waste infrastructure projects. It had been a participant in each of the Waste Management Groups' procurement competitions but subsequently withdrew, for different corporate reasons in each case. It currently provides some services to arc21 but these are not such as to impact on arc21's major waste infrastructure procurement.

## **Student Logbooks Learner Drivers**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of the Environment what the proposed measure to introduce compulsory student logbooks for all learner drivers would entail in practice.

**(AQW 15273/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** The introduction of compulsory logbooks is one of a package of measures in the forthcoming Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill designed to reform driver training and testing and to change how new drivers gain experience once they have obtained their full licence.

A compulsory logbook system will reinforce to all learners that learning to drive is a progressive process and give accompanying drivers more ownership and involvement in the learning to drive process. It will also help Approved Driving Instructors and supervising drivers guide trainees' learning on different type of road, traffic environments and weather and lighting conditions.

Implementing this measure will involve making it a requirement for a learner driver to provide evidence, before taking the practical driving test, that they have completed a logbook recording their lessons (if any), practice and progress through a proposed new Learning to Drive syllabus.

The format and content of the logbook is being finalised as drafting of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, which will make changes to the driver training and testing regime, progresses.

It is intended that the logbook will have to be completed either by a DOE Approved Driving Instructor or by a supervising driver who must be aged 21 or over and have held a full driving licence for at least three years.

It is intended that it will be an offence for anyone to forge, or make a false statement in, a learner logbook. If logbook information is found to have been forged or to contain false statements any licence obtained on foot of that evidence of having completed the prescribed course of training will be revoked.

### **New Drivers: Passengers**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of the Environment how he plans to enforce the proposal that all young new drivers will not be allowed to carry passengers who are between the ages of fourteen and twenty four for the first six months of driving, unless they are close family relatives, or if the front seat passenger is over twenty-one years old and has held a full licence for three or more years.

**(AQW 15274/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** The passenger carrying restriction is one of the package of measures in the forthcoming Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill designed to reform driver training and testing and to change how new drivers gain experience once they have obtained their full licence. It is intended that the restriction will apply to young new drivers up to the age of 24 carrying young passengers (aged 14 to 20, except immediate family members) during the first six months post test. The restriction will not apply if there is a supervising driver (aged 21 or over who has held a full driving licence for at least three years) seated beside the new driver.

Enforcement of the passenger carrying restriction will involve new drivers, their parents, the police and insurance companies all of whom will have a role to play in ensuring compliance.

Driving laws are to a large degree self-enforcing and motorists are well aware of the penalties and other consequences they face for non-compliance. Some of the most effective enforcement of the passenger carrying restriction will therefore be by young drivers themselves. Many will comply with the restriction because it is the law and they want to avoid being penalised. Others will comply because they know it is the safe thing to do. It is also notable that noting the enforcement issue, the PSNI support the issue.

Parents will have a role given the age range of young drivers and because in many cases they will either be the owners or insurers of the vehicle involved. The parents' role will be to encourage them to comply with the restriction to enable them to gain experience in low risk conditions – without carrying young passengers – in the first six months after they have passed their test.

PSNI are working with the Department to ensure that police have the investigative powers they need to enforce the restriction.

Insurers also have a role in enforcing compliance with the passenger carrying restriction. If a young driver is found to have broken the law by breaching the restriction, an insurer could exercise a range of sanctions, which could potentially include refusing to pay out on a claim for vehicle damage or choosing to cancel the policy.

### **£1000 Compensation Payment for Flooding**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of the Environment how many households in each district council area have been awarded the £1000 compensation payment for flooding.

**(AQW 15353/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** The attached table states the number of households that have received a £1,000 payment under the Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme. This is provided by council area and covers the period from June 2012. The £1,000 payment is to provide practical assistance where householders have suffered severe inconvenience. It is not a compensation payment.

<b>Council</b>	<b>Number of Householder Claims as of 16/10/2012</b>
Antrim	4
Belfast	750
Castlereagh	329
Coleraine	4
Down	17
Lisburn	298
Moyle	12
Newtownabbey	3
North Down	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,425</b>

### **Planning Application Y/2008/0365/F at Carryduff**

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister of the Environment when a decision will be made on planning application Y/2008/0365/F at Carryduff.

**(AQW 15377/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** This is a contentious application, which has generated concern in relation to roads safety issues and the impact on the local character of the area and on residential amenity of existing residents. I am currently considering all of the issues before a final decision is issued.

### **MOT Test**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of the Environment how many cars have been through the MOT in each of the last two years.

**(AQW 15441/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** The numbers of cars that have been through an MOT test in each of the last two years are as follows.

<b>Test Type</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2011-12</b>
Full Test	641,320	677,078
Retest	135,301	144,769
Total	776,621	821,847

**Source:** Driver & Vehicle Agency, BSP Report, V4

The figures do not include those for customers who were given appointments but who failed to attend.

## **ARC21 Project**

**Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of the Environment, given Biffa's recent financial troubles, whether it is still in a solvent position to take the ARC21 project forward.

**(AQW 15449/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** Biffa is not a bidder for any of the waste infrastructure projects. It had been a participant in each of the Waste Management Groups' procurement competitions but subsequently withdrew, for different corporate reasons in each case. It currently provides some services to arc21 but these are not such as to impact on arc21's major waste infrastructure procurement.

## **ARC21 Residual Waste Treatment Bid**

**Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of the Environment whether the waste figures, upon which the original ARC21 Residual Waste Treatment bid is based, are still accurate; and whether this process will be reviewed, particularly the required waste capacity for an Energy from Waste plant.

**(AQW 15450/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** The impact of changes resulting from successful recycling initiatives, reduced waste arisings and reduced economic activity are documented in the updated Analysis of 2020 Residual Waste Infrastructure Requirements in Northern Ireland to meet EU Obligations which I oversaw earlier this year. The updated Analysis confirms that the quantum of new infrastructure required to provide assurance of compliance at NI level with those obligations to divert waste from landfill has reduced significantly.

Each of the Waste Management Groups has kept the proposed scale of their facilities under constant review since their procurements commenced, and reduced the scale of their proposals accordingly. In arc21's case this has led to its estimate of the most economically advantageous size of its proposed energy from waste plant reducing from up to 370,000 tonnes in 2008 to 210,000 tonnes.

## **DVA: Postal Correspondence**

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of the Environment on how many occasions, in each of the last three years, have complaints been made to the Driver and Vehicle Agency regarding postal correspondence being returned to an incorrectly named person.

**(AQW 15469/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** A search of the Driver & Vehicle Agency complaints database indicates that a total of 15 complaints have been received in the past three years regarding postal correspondence being returned to an incorrectly named person. The breakdown of this figure is as follows:

2009/10 – 3 complaints received  
2010/11 – 7 complaints received  
2011/12 – 4 complaints received  
2012/13 - year to date – 1 complaint received

## **Wind Turbines**

**Mr Clarke** asked the Minister of the Environment what action his Department is taking with consultees in relation to wind turbines.

**(AQO 2734/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** The Department recognises the contribution that renewable energy proposals make to the NI economy and to the reduction of carbon emissions. It also acknowledges the importance of processing these types of applications in a timely manner.

To improve the consultation process and ensure substantive responses are received in a timely basis I have instructed my staff to monitor the performance of the statutory bodies for which agreed Service

Level Agreements or Memorandums of Understanding are in place. Staff have been advised to be robust in this regard.

I have also asked senior officials to meet with all other interested parties to ensure the consultation process is operating effectively. For example, recently I met with a fixed link operator to discuss a way forward in relation to their consultation responses to avoid any unnecessary delays in processing wind turbine applications.

Planning staff are engaging with consultees in the planning process to ensure that any relevant information required in respect of renewable energy is submitted at the beginning of the process and that consultation is focused and timely. Planning staff have also been reminded that they should only consult in the correct circumstances to avoid unnecessary consultations. I have also met with NIEA officials to stress that their responses need to be timely and grounded in good process and proper grounds.

The Department has also introduced a new planning application form (Form P1W) which must accompany planning applications for single wind turbines and wind farm developments. The aim of this form is to assist consultees in establishing the exact dimensions and locations of proposed turbines which it is hoped will help inform their consultation responses.

Furthermore, the Department intends to introduce a Planning Bill to the Assembly shortly which will include a statutory duty for consultees to respond to consultation requests within a prescribed timeframe.

I have also established a sub group of the Planning Forum which focuses on renewable energy applications. This group is looking at a range of measures to improve decision making for renewable energy project applications.

I make a point of meeting with the renewable businesses. As arguably Ireland's biggest Economic opportunity and given the 2020 renewables target, there is a need to best manage the full range of renewable applications. It is worth noting, mindful of the significant grid connection issues, that clearly impact on what will happen, existing and consented windfarms have the potential to provide 28.79% of the 2020 target. There are 38 windfarm planning applications with the potential to provide a further 17.5% of the 2020 target of 40% from renewable sources. Separately there will be a contribution from wind turbines, anaerobic digestion, and potential solar farms.

## **Chauffeurs**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on proposals to exempt chauffeurs from taxi regulations which enforce vehicle signage.

**(AQO 2735/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** My Department will shortly be consulting on proposals for the licensing of "special occasion" type vehicles. A vehicle licensed in this way would not be required to display a roof sign or external plates. I anticipate that chauffeur driven vehicles would be included within this licensing regime.

## **Local Government: Capacity Building**

**Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of the Environment how much funding he has secured for capacity building for councillors and officials to date.

**(AQO 2736/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** I believe that there should be targeted central government assistance with local government reform, including the key capacity building workstream which embraces councillors, council staff and Northern Ireland Civil Service staff who are to transfer to local government in 2015. The scale of the new planning functions to go to Councils mean that transfer needs to be got right and that includes capacity building. That said, the Councils themselves need to do all they can to get RPA right, including capacity building.

However, when the Northern Ireland budget for 2011-15 was approved by the Assembly in March 2011 there was, at that time, no decision on local government reform and no budget cover for any financial

assistance. In any case, the last Executive had agreed that there would be no financial assistance with the upfront costs of reform. The present Executive endorsed that position last November.

I made a bid in the June Monitoring Round for £2.3 million to support local government reform in the current financial year. However, this bid was unsuccessful and I have made public my view at the outcome.

Moving forward, I immediately advised the Minister of Finance and Personnel that I would return to this issue before the October Monitoring Round and expand my bid for funding up to the formation of the new Councils. I have been pursuing this issue in discussions and correspondence with Minister Wilson and other Executive colleagues. I have made it clear that I:-

acknowledge that it is reasonable to expect local government to contribute to the cost of reform initiatives from which they will ultimately benefit;

consider, however, that there are key transition workstreams vital to successful delivery of reform which should be funded by the Executive – particularly those, such as capacity building, which are inescapable and have no cash releasing benefits for the sector;

have identified associated transition costs, in the order of tens of millions of pounds, over the 2012-13 to 2014-15 period; and

would be presenting a paper to the Executive on this issue.

I have prepared an Executive paper which seeks the provision of central government funding to support these transition workstreams, including capacity building. It is currently being considered by Ministers.

### **Local Government: d'Hondt System**

**Ms Fearon** asked the Minister of the Environment how D'Hondt will be used for future local government arrangements, following the implementation of the Review of Public Administration.

**(AQO 2737/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** I am committed to ensuring that the positions of responsibility on the new councils will be shared across all the political parties represented on them. D'Hondt will be one of the methods that will be available to the councils to achieve this, the others will be Saint Lague and the Single Transferrable Vote.

The practical operation of the d'Hondt process will be the same as that used by this Assembly for the determination of Ministers and chairs of committees. I want to ensure that opportunities exist for independents and political parties with lower levels of representation to hold positions of responsibility. Taking account of the historical provision that the chairs or mayors of councils and the other positions of responsibility change on an annual basis which will continue in the new councils, the d'Hondt process will be applied at the start of the council term to allocate all the positions of responsibility over the full term.

### **North/South Ministerial Council: Environment**

**Mr Lynch** asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the agenda items for the next meeting of the North South Ministerial Council when it meets in Environment Sectoral Format.

**(AQO 2738/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** The next NSMC Environmental Sectoral meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 31 October 2012 in NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh. At the meeting I intend to discuss a range of environmental matters of mutual interest including; waste management, cross border movements of waste, environmental protection, water quality, environmental reporting and research, repatriation of waste, the forthcoming Irish Presidency of the EU.

As you may be aware, a Joint Communiqué outlining the main discussion points of the meeting will be released following the meeting. I also intend to make an Oral Statement to the Assembly in mid-November updating Members on the outcomes from the meeting.

### **Planning: Rose Energy**

**Mr Moutray** asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on Rose Energy's planning application for an incinerator at Glenavy.

**(AQO 2741/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** The former Minister's announcement of August 2010 to proceed by way of a Notice of Opinion to approve was the subject of judicial review proceedings. Lord Justice McCloskey adjourned the judicial review proceedings on 2 March 2011 on the basis that the application process had not been completed.

Following the submission of further environmental information by the applicant the proposal is in the final stage of consideration. The Department will make a recommendation to me on whether to proceed by way of a Notice of Opinion to approve or refuse the applications or by way of a Public Inquiry. It raises a number of

complex issues and I will consider each of them and all representations received very carefully before making a balanced decision. This application raises environmental and economic issues, including compliance with European Directives, the potential impact on the local area, the needs of the agri-food sector, European views on best practice, etc

### **Article 31 Planning Applications**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of the Environment whether Article 31 planning applications are being processed in accordance with good practice guidelines.

**(AQO 2742/11-15)**

- Mr Attwood: I am satisfied that in exercising its development management function the Department employs good practice guidelines which seek to facilitate and manage development rather than merely controlling undesirable forms of development. This is particularly the case in major Article 31 planning applications which by their nature involve complex and varied issues. In recognition of this I have emphasised to my officials the importance of ensuring a consistency of approach and the appropriate expertise within the Strategic Planning Division to deal with Article 31 applications.
- My officials place significant emphasis on pre application discussion which seeks to establish planning policy issues and in liaison with key consultees seek to establish at an early stage the complete range of information required by the Department to determine the application. Management structures are in place within the strategic projects teams to ensure that projects can be assessed and discussed at an early stage with appropriate staff, officials actively engage with applicants and their agents as appropriate to facilitate the resolution were possible of issues and applications are regularly monitored.
- Officials are satisfied that the employment of good practice guidelines is contributing to improved performance, this year to date 18 Article 31 applications have been processed to a determination and I have recently announced my decision on a further 3.
- However, I am advised by officials that experience to date is that improved performance can not rely on good practice guidelines alone but can only be achieved through working inclusively with all key stakeholders in the overall planning system. This includes the submission of acceptable schemes at the outset. I would encourage applicants to engage with the local community and to enter into pre-application discussions with my Department prior to the submission of major planning applications.

- There will be times when decisions will be challenged. I support the scope offered by the courts for JR of public policy, though it has been argued that the threshold for leave being granted in our courts is generous.
- I believe strongly that article 31's need to proceed expeditiously consistent with evidence, law, planning law and practice.

### Planning Service: Staff

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of the Environment how can he ensure that the balance of experienced staff in the Planning Service can be retained through the Voluntary Retirement Scheme.

**(AQO 2743/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** The main purpose of the Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) scheme for P&T Planning Officers is to assist in the ongoing effort to reduce staffing numbers in Planning, and to facilitate the reintegration of c70 planners who are currently on loan and secondment, back into the Department ahead of the transfer of functions to local government in April 2015.

The Department has decided to use cost as the sole criterion to determine which staff will be permitted to leave under the terms of the scheme. This will help to ensure that the maximum number of staff are facilitated to leave within the limits of the funding made available.

It is inevitable that the Department will lose a number of experienced Planning Officers as a result of the VER scheme. However, the Department is satisfied that the final selection of Planning Officers leaving on cost grounds will involve a mix of grades and ages and include a number of staff who are already past the normal retirement age or would have retired in the next year or so on age grounds. The VER scheme will also provide a mechanism to ventilate the system and to create a number of promotion opportunities for the very able Planning Officers who will remain.

A further benefit of the VER scheme will be that there will be fewer senior P&T Planning Officers retiring between 2015-2018 when the planning function will have transferred to local government and when stability and continuity in terms of staffing will be a distinct advantage in terms of service delivery.

## Department of Finance and Personnel

### Catholics and Protestants at Senior Levels of the Civil Service

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how representation of Catholics and Protestants at senior levels of the Civil Service has changed over the last five years; and what he is doing to ensure that the senior levels of Civil Service is representative of the wider community.

**(AQW 15196/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson (The Minister of Finance and Personnel):** The table below shows the Protestant/Roman Catholic breakdown of staff in Grade 5 and above in the General Service discipline at 1 January 2007 and 1 January 2012.

Year	Protestant		Roman Catholic	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
2007	114	62.0%	70	38.0%
2012	105	59.0%	73	41.0%

In the interests of achieving the most efficient service possible, I will continue to ensure that recruitment and promotion procedures ensure that the most suitable person for the job is appointed.

## Social Clauses

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he would consider putting social clauses on a statutory basis for all Departments.

**(AQW 15226/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The Executive took the decision in 2002, when approving the Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy, that it was not necessary to enact legislation to implement new policies and practices. Instead it was decided that compliance should be achieved by means of administrative action. The Procurement Guidance Notes (PGN), as approved by the Procurement Board, represent that administrative action.

A PGN on integrating social consideration into contract is currently being developed but has not yet been approved by the Procurement Board. This new guidance will support the Procurement Board's guide on integrating equality and sustainable development (including social clauses) in public procurement which was endorsed by the Executive in 2008.

## Rate Charges for Orange Halls

**Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an estimate of the amount of money that the Loyal Orders have saved since the abolition of rate charges for Orange halls.

**(AQW 15233/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** Article 41A was inserted into the Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 from April 2006. Since that date it is estimated that £4.6 million has been saved through exemption under the terms of Article 41A by the Loyal Orders.

## Youth Unemployment

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what has been the change in the rate of youth unemployment in each district council area between 2006 and 2011.

**(AQW 15263/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The official measure of unemployment is sourced to the Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey (LFS). However, the LFS is a sample survey and the current rates of youth unemployment in each District Council Area are not sourced to the LFS because of the relatively large confidence intervals around the estimates. This is due to sample size constraints in the LFS.

The following table is sourced to the claimant count measure of unemployment. This shows the annual average number of persons aged 18-24 claiming unemployment related benefits in 2006 and 2011 and these figures as a percentage of the resident working age population of that age group (rate). The table also includes the total change in the number of claimants and the percentage point change of the rate, over the period.

**TABLE 1 – CHANGE IN YOUTH CLAIMANT COUNT BETWEEN 2006 AND 2011**

District Council Area	2006		2011		Total Change	% Points Change of Rate
	Total	Rate	Total	Rate		
Antrim	190	3.7	390	7.7	200	4.0
Ards	300	4.7	640	10.3	340	5.6
Armagh	165	3.0	580	9.9	415	6.9
Ballymena	230	4.1	495	9.0	265	4.9
Ballymoney	115	4.4	315	11.9	200	7.5
Banbridge	110	2.6	385	9.6	275	7.0

District Council Area	2006		2011		Total Change	% Points Change of Rate
	Total	Rate	Total	Rate		
Belfast	2,430	6.8	3,820	10.6	1,390	3.8
Carrickfergus	155	4.5	345	9.6	190	5.1
Castlereagh	180	3.6	430	7.8	250	4.2
Coleraine	265	4.7	530	10.0	265	5.3
Cookstown	125	3.3	305	8.0	180	4.7
Craigavon	385	4.5	965	10.4	580	5.9
Derry	1,190	9.5	1,775	15.7	585	6.2
Down	290	4.2	680	10.0	390	5.8
Dungannon	155	2.8	510	8.4	355	5.6
Fermanagh	190	3.2	475	8.7	285	5.5
Larne	125	4.6	270	10.0	145	5.4
Limavady	195	5.5	510	16.7	315	11.2
Lisburn	515	4.6	1,030	9.1	515	4.5
Magherafelt	110	2.5	350	8.1	240	5.6
Moyle	90	5.8	185	12.1	95	6.3
Newry and Mourne	335	3.4	1,070	10.4	735	7.0
Newtownabbey	345	4.4	675	8.5	330	4.1
North Down	265	3.9	525	8.1	260	4.2
Omagh	215	4.0	515	10.4	300	6.4
Strabane	340	8.7	495	13.3	155	4.6
Northern Ireland	9,010	5.0	18,265	10.2	9,255	5.2

## Youth Unemployment

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how the percentage of youth unemployment compares to the UK average; and to the percentage in (i) England; (ii) Scotland; and (iii) Wales.

**(AQW 15277/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** Official estimates of unemployment for Northern Ireland are sourced from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) which is conducted by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). The LFS uses internationally accepted definitions of labour market status in line with EU regulations.

The table overleaf provides youth unemployment data by UK regions.

	Unemployment rate of those aged 18-24 <sup>1</sup>	Proportion of all those aged 18-24, who are unemployed <sup>2</sup>
England	19.3%	14.1%
Scotland	22.6%	17.7%

	<b>Unemployment rate of those aged 18-24<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Proportion of all those aged 18-24, who are unemployed<sup>2</sup></b>
Wales	22.2%	15.8%
NI	23.5%	14.1%
UK	19.9%	14.5%

- 1 Relates to all those who are aged 18-24 and economically active.
- 2 Relates to all persons aged 18-24, i.e. includes students and all those economically inactive

**Source:** Labour Force Survey, May – July 2012

## Youth Unemployment

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what is the age range for the classification of youth unemployment.

**(AQW 15278/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** Official estimates of unemployment for Northern Ireland are sourced from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) which is conducted by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). The LFS uses internationally accepted definitions of labour market status in line with EU regulations.

Statistics on youth unemployment can incorporate all those aged 16-24. However, as a default measure, NISRA defines youth unemployment as those aged between 18 and 24. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, those who are aged 16 – 17 and live at home cannot claim Job Seekers Allowance and, secondly, the 16-17 age group also contains a high proportion of young people who remain in full-time education and are therefore economically inactive.

## Apprentices Employed Through Departmental Contracts

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many apprentices have been employed through departmental contracts in this financial year; and what percentage this number represents of the total posts allocated.

**(AQW 15333/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) includes, in construction contracts that it awards on behalf of departments, a requirement that 5% of the contractor's workforce and the workforce of its first tier subcontractors (with 20 or more employees) must be employed on formally recognised paid construction apprenticeships.

This requirement is based on a proportion of apprentices rather than new starts in order that main contractors and their supply chains will be discouraged from laying-off existing apprentices simply to recruit new ones for a particular contract. This approach also incentivises contractors who aim to work for Government on a regular basis to retain apprentices within their workforce beyond the contract period.

Compliance with this contract requirement is monitored monthly during the contract by the Project Manager. Given the nature of the requirement, data on the number of apprentices recruited in relation to specific contracts is not held.

Supplies and services contracts do not afford the same opportunities as are available over a fixed term construction contract. For supplies and services contracts 83% have a value less than 100K (2010/11). CPD works closely with Departments to identify opportunities to facilitate work experience or placements under the DEL schemes in appropriate contracts for supplies and services.

## Empty Retail Rate Concession

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, following the introduction of the empty retail rate concession for new occupants of long term empty premises in April 2012, how the uptake of

new retail tenants in the April-June quarter compares with corresponding figures for the same quarter in the preceding three years.

**(AQW 15399/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** Information on the uptake of new retail tenants in the April-June quarter in comparison with figures for the same quarter in the preceding three years is unavailable. LPS does not have information which would identify whether a retail tenant is new, is an existing tenant who is expanding their business or is an existing retailer who has decided to change location.

Bearing this in mind it is estimated that, in the period 1st April 2011 to 2nd October 2011, a total of 1,473 retail occupancies commenced. In a similar 6 month period from 1st April 2012 to 30th September 2012 it is estimated that 1,504 retail occupancies commenced. However, it should be borne in mind that the number of retail occupancies commenced has been broadly balanced by the number of occupancies ending.

### **Empty Retail Rate Concession**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether the impact of the empty retail rate concession to date will be assessed within or, in addition to, the in-year review of the Small Business Rate Relief scheme.

**(AQW 15400/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The one year rates concession was introduced in April 2012. The aim of the policy was to get long term empty shops and other retail premises back into business and to help rejuvenate town centres.

Over recent months I have personally visited businesses in a number of towns across Northern Ireland including Fermanagh, Larne, Lisburn and Londonderry who have benefitted from the new scheme and have been impressed by the impact it is having in giving businesses a helpful start and also in arresting the decline in some of our traditional shopping areas.

A couple of weeks ago the Scottish Government announced that they were going to emulate our policy and adopt a similar scheme there. So, this Assembly is leading the way in adopting policies that help rather than inhibit business growth. Within the next few weeks I will be considering the case for extending the scheme for a further period given its apparent early success.

To date there have been 32 successful applications to the new scheme with total relief awarded to date of £77,636.

### **Departmental Staff: Ban on Issuing Press Releases**

**Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he will issue a directive to his staff immediately lifting the ban of the issue of press releases to the Press Association.

**(AQW 15414/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The matter was resolved some time ago.

### **Suicide Rate in East Belfast**

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the suicide rate in the East Belfast constituency for each of the last three years, broken down by (i) council district; (ii) age; (iii) gender; and (iv) religious background.

**(AQW 15475/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The attached tables give the number and rate of deaths registered due to 'suicide and self-inflicted injury'<sup>1</sup> or 'undetermined injury whether accidentally or purposefully inflicted'<sup>2</sup> in East Belfast by the (i) councils within East Belfast (ii) age, (iii) gender.

Figures by Religious Background are not available as religious denomination of the deceased is not collected as part of the death registration process.

(i) <sup>1</sup> International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision codes X60-X84, Y87.0

(ii) <sup>2</sup> International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision codes Y10-Y34, Y87.2

**TABLE 1: REGISTERED DEATHS DUE TO 'SUICIDE AND SELF-INFLICTED INJURY' OR 'UNDETERMINED INJURY WHETHER ACCIDENTALLY OR PURPOSEFULLY INFLICTED', 2009-2011<sup>1</sup>.**

	2009	2010	2011 <sup>P</sup>	2009-2011
<b>Belfast East</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>54</b>
Under 25	3	6	4	13
25-34	3	3	4	10
35-44	5	5	2	12
45+	6	9	4	19
Male	15	17	9	41
Female	2	6	5	13
Within Belfast LGD2	9	14	12	35
Within Castlereagh LGD2	8	9	2	19

1 In the UK, in considering suicide events it is conventional to include cases where the cause of death is classified as either 'Suicide and self-inflicted injury' or 'Undetermined injury'.

2 Figures relate only to the parts of Belfast LGD and Castlereagh LGD which fall within Belfast East

P Data for 2011 remains provisional until the publication of the Annual Report of the Registrar General which is due to be published in November 2012.

**Note:** Vital Statistics are based on the year of registration of the event rather than the year of occurrence. Events such as suicide are likely to be referred to the coroner. This can take some time, therefore deaths registered in any year may have occurred in previous years.

**TABLE 2: DEATH RATES DUE TO 'SUICIDE AND SELF-INFLICTED INJURY' OR 'UNDETERMINED INJURY WHETHER ACCIDENTALLY OR PURPOSEFULLY INFLICTED', 2009-2011 PER 100,000 POPULATION <sup>1,3</sup>.**

	2009	2010	2011 <sup>4</sup>	2009-2011
<b>Belfast East</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>
Under 25	11	21	14	15
25-34	24	24	32	27
35-44	37	38	15	30
45+	17	25	11	18
Male	35	39	39	32
Female	4	13	13	9
Within Belfast LGD <sup>2</sup>	16	24	21	20
Within Castlereagh LGD <sup>2</sup>	25	28	6	20

1 In the UK, in considering suicide events it is conventional to include cases where the cause of death is classified as either 'Suicide and self-inflicted injury' or 'Undetermined injury'.

- 2 Figures relate only to the parts of Belfast LGD and Castlereagh LGD which fall within Belfast East
- 3 Rate per 100,000 population
- 4 Rates for 2011 are based on 2010 population estimates

**Notes:** Vital Statistics are based on the year of registration of the event rather than the year of occurrence. Events such as suicide are likely to be referred to the coroner. This can take some time, therefore deaths registered in any year may have occurred in previous years.

### **Consultation on Implementing Directive 2011/7/EU**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether his Department has responded to the consultation on implementing Directive 2011/7/EU on Combating Late Payment in Commercial Transactions.

**(AQW 15504/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** My Department worked closely with the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) in advance of this consultation exercise and provided contact details of key local industry and other interest groups to BIS to ensure that they received immediate notification of the consultation. This approach, rather than a single response from DFP, is aimed at maximising the input of the NI business community and will also allow sector specific concerns to be highlighted. My department has also promoted the consultation heavily on our procurement portals such as e-Source and Account NI.

### **Payment of Invoices**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what progress has been made by arm's-length bodies in fulfilling the December 2008 Ministerial commitment on paying invoices from suppliers within 10 days.

**(AQW 15506/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** DFP has issued guidance to all departments on the importance of prompt payment and has asked accounting officers to ensure that all guidance is brought to the attention of all arms' length bodies (ALBs). In addition, I have separately written to Ministerial colleagues seeking their support on this matter. My Department does not gather statistics on the prompt payment performance of ALBs, which would be a matter for individual departments.

I understand that the Comptroller and Auditor General has been considering prompt payment performance across the public sector and intends to include a report on the matter in his annual report, due for publication in early November.

### **Small Business Rate Relief Scheme**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in light of the extension of the Small Business Rate Relief scheme in April 2012 to include properties with a Net Annual Value (NAV) between £5,001-£10,000, how many properties with an NAV between £5,001-£10,000 have ceased trading in the period since April 2012 compared with the figures for the same period in the preceding three years.

**(AQW 15525/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** Land & Property Services (LPS) does not hold information on how many properties with a NAV between £5,001-£10,000 have ceased trading. LPS holds information on the number of properties in the Valuation List which are occupied or vacant at any point in time. The following table shows the number of properties with NAV £5,001-£10,000 which were Occupied or Vacant as at 31st March 2010, 31st March 2011, 2nd October 2011, 31st March 2012 and 30th September 2012. As can be observed, both the number of occupied properties with a NAV between £5,001-£10,000 and the occupancy rates have remained stable over the last 2½ years.

**PROPERTIES WITH AN NAV BETWEEN £5,001-£10,000**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Occupied Properties</b>	<b>Vacant Properties</b>	<b>Total Properties</b>	<b>Occupancy Rate</b>
31st March 2010	12,019	1,927	13,946	86.2%
31st March 2011	11,970	2,013	13,983	85.6%
2nd October 2011	11,895	1,930	13,825	86.0%
31st March 2012	11,994	1,967	13,961	85.9%
30th September 2012	12,048	1,967	14,015	86.0%

**Small Business Rate Relief Scheme**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, of all the properties eligible for the Small Business Rate Relief scheme, how many in total have ceased trading since its initial introduction in April 2010, in comparison to correspondingly-rated properties that ceased trading in each of the previous tax years from 2008-2010.

**(AQW 15526/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** Land & Property Services (LPS) does not hold information on how many properties, eligible for Small Business Rate Relief, have ceased trading. The Small Business Rate Relief Scheme (SBRR) commenced in April 2010 with the intention to support and sustain small businesses within Northern Ireland by providing small businesses with rate relief. The conditions of eligibility for SBRR have changed since the scheme was introduced. For instance, from April 2010 to March 2012 there was a 50% relief level for eligible properties with a Net Annual Value (NAV) of £2,000 or less and a 25% relief level for eligible properties with a NAV of more than £2,000 and not more than £5,000. A new 20% relief level was introduced from 1st April 2012 for eligible properties with a NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £10,000. Further, from 1st April 2012 the SBRR has been modified so that ratepayers who occupy four or more properties are no longer eligible. This change has led to some properties, which were eligible for SBRR from April 2010 to March 2012, being ineligible from April 2012.

Over the last 2½ years the number of occupied properties within the SBRR NAV ranges have remained stable in spite of the challenging economic climate.

**PROPERTIES WITH AN NAV OF £2,000 OR LESS**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Occupied Properties</b>	<b>Vacant Properties</b>	<b>Total Properties</b>	<b>Occupancy Rate</b>
31st March 2010	10,295	5,862	16,157	63.7%
31st March 2011	10,425	5,972	16,397	63.6%
2nd October 2011	10,486	6,951	17,437	60.1%
31st March 2012	10,632	7,084	17,716	60.0%
30th September 2012	10,527	7,237	17,764	59.3%

**PROPERTIES WITH AN NAV MORE THAN £2,000 BUT NOT MORE THAN £5,000**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Occupied Properties</b>	<b>Vacant Properties</b>	<b>Total Properties</b>	<b>Occupancy Rate</b>
31st March 2010	14,423	3,081	17,504	82.4%

Date	Occupied Properties	Vacant Properties	Total Properties	Occupancy Rate
31st March 2011	14,408	3,151	17,559	82.1%
2nd October 2011	14,455	3,311	17,766	81.4%
31st March 2012	14,519	3,099	17,618	82.4%
30th September 2012	14,615	3,068	17,683	82.7%

#### PROPERTIES WITH AN NAV BETWEEN £5,001-£10,000

Date	Occupied Properties	Vacant Properties	Total Properties	Occupancy Rate
31st March 2010	12,019	1,927	13,946	86.2%
31st March 2011	11,970	2,013	13,983	85.6%
2nd October 2011	11,895	1,930	13,825	86.0%
31st March 2012	11,994	1,967	13,961	85.9%
30th September 2012	12,048	1,967	14,015	86.0%

#### Civil Service Priority Pool for Transfer

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many (i) males; and (ii) females were listed on the Civil Service Priority Pool for transfer to the Foyle constituency in each of the last 3 years. **(AQW 15527/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The table below shows the male / female breakdown of staff currently listed on the Civil Service Priority Pools for transfer to the Foyle constituency.

Male	Female
4	4

Historical data over the last 3 years is not available as once an employee is placed, the relevant data is removed from HRConnect pool's records meaning that historical reports cannot be reproduced.

#### Land and Property Services

**Ms Lo** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) what flexibility Land and Property Services (LPS) has in agreeing repayments of rates arrears for people who request an instalment plan or alternative payment plan; and (ii) for his assessment of such voluntary payment plans and their use in avoiding unnecessary hardship, enabling LPS to recoup arrears and preventing costly legal action. **(AQW 15592/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** In respect of rate arrears for previous year's liability, LPS has a payment arrangement policy in place. This policy enables LPS to offer extended payment arrangements for rating debt, over a number of years. Arrangements will cover 100% of the current year's liability plus a proportion of any previous years' arrears. For in-year rate liability, LPS may offer additional flexibility in certain circumstances, to extend the number of monthly payments from the standard 10 to 12 payments in that year. If the ratepayer does not pay the full liability for the current year, the ratepayer's debt will only continue to grow.

LPS will normally offer to extend a payment arrangement over the number of years the arrears relate to. For example, if the arrears relate to 2 years rates, an arrangement for payment over 2 years would normally be offered.

Payment arrangements are a useful tool to try and secure payment from customers who are facing large arrears, without undue hardship to the ratepayer and the cost of legal action. However, they do increase the levels of end year rating debt. Payment arrangements only work where ratepayers continue to make payments to clear their debt. When arrangements are persistently broken, LPS has no choice but to pursue legal action to secure the debt.

## Centenary of the Ulster Covenant

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many people were in the grounds of the Stormont Estate for the Ulster Covenant event on 29 September 2012.

**(AQW 15636/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** As this was a non-ticketed event, it is not possible to accurately determine how many people were in the grounds of the Stormont Estate on 29 September. Figures released by the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland suggest that in the region of 20,000 people participated in the parade through Belfast to the Stormont Estate. People Deemed Out of Work, Unemployed and Economically Inactive

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total number of people deemed (i) out of work; (ii) unemployed; and (iii) economically inactive, in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 15660/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** Official estimates of unemployment for Northern Ireland are sourced from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) which is conducted by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). The LFS uses internationally accepted definitions of labour market status in line with EU regulations.

Table 1 provides LFS estimates of the total number of persons aged 16 and over who were (i) not working (ii) unemployed and (iii) economically inactive, in each of the last five years.

**TABLE 1 – NI LABOUR FORCE SURVEY ESTIMATES OF LABOUR MARKET STATUS OF THOSE AGED 16 AND OVER <sup>1,2</sup>.**

Period	Not in employment	Unemployed	Economically Inactive
2007	568,000	34,000	535,000
2008	584,000	32,000	551,000
2009	622,000	54,000	568,000
2010	623,000	59,000	564,000
2011	612,000	62,000	550,000
June – August 2012	623,000	72,000	551,000

1 Data are not seasonally adjusted.

2 Data are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

3 Totals of unemployed and economically inactive may not sum to those not in employment due to rounding.

## Suicide Rate

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the change in the suicide rate between 2001 and 2011.

**(AQW 15775/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The number of deaths registered and the death rate due to 'suicide and self-inflicted injury'<sup>1</sup> or 'undetermined injury whether accidentally or purposefully inflicted'<sup>2</sup> has increased from nine

per 100,000 population (158 deaths) to 16 per 100,000 population (289 deaths) from 2001 to 2011 – Table 1.

1 International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision codes X60-X84, Y87.0

2 International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision codes Y10-Y34, Y87.2

Table 1: Registered deaths due to ‘suicide and self-inflicted injury’<sup>1</sup> or ‘undetermined injury whether accidentally or purposefully inflicted’ and rate per 100,000 population, 2001-2011.

Registration Year	Deaths Registered as Suicide <sup>1</sup>	Suicide Rate per 100,000 Population
2001	158	9.4
2002	183	10.8
2003	144	8.5
2004	146	8.5
2005	213	12.4
2006	291	16.7
2007	242	13.8
2008	282	15.9
2009	260	14.5
2010	313	17.4
2011 <sup>P2</sup>	289	16.0

1 In the UK, in considering suicide events it is conventional to include cases where the cause of death is classified as either ‘Suicide and self-inflicted injury’ or ‘Undetermined injury’.

2 Rates for 2011 are based on 2010 population estimates.

P Data for 2011 remains provisional until the publication of the Annual Report of the Registrar General which is due to be published in November 2012.

**Note:** Vital Statistics are based on the year of registration of the event rather than the year of occurrence. Events such as suicide are likely to be referred to the coroner. This can take some time, therefore deaths registered in any year may have occurred in previous years.

## Financial Accountability

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQO 2688/11-15, to outline the requirements, in terms of financial accountability, to his Department and the collective obligations of all Departments, including Education.

### (AQW 15783/11-15)

**Mr Wilson:** During the course of the Budget 2011-15 process, the Executive agreed that Savings Delivery Plans should be developed to provide both transparency to the public about how departments were dealing with the constrained financial position and reassurance that the impact on frontline public services was minimal.

The precise details of the content of each Savings Delivery Plan are a matter for individual Ministers as they are charged with delivering the savings within their respective departments.

As stated above the Savings Delivery Plans are intended to provide some degree of reassurance to Northern Ireland citizens that Ministers are doing all within their power to manage the impact of the economic downturn without merely targeting elements of frontline service delivery.

As Finance Minister I have tried to bring transparency to the delivery of Savings Delivery Plans by examining the underlying detail – something which is not readily available in many of the published plans – and by providing six monthly reports on performance to the Executive and Finance Committee.

There is no de facto obligation for the Education Minister to provide the information requested, although by opting out of the monitoring process it will be more difficult for the wider public to be reassured that the Education Minister is doing everything possible to minimise the impact that constrained budgets inevitably have on the delivery of educational services.

### **Government: Tax Revenue**

**Mr Lynch** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline all tax revenue generated for the year in which the most recent data is available.

**(AQO 2750/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** While HMRC does not publish regional tax revenue figures, my department produces its own estimates in this regard as part of its annual Net Fiscal Balance report. The latest published report estimates that Northern Ireland revenues totalled some £12.8 billion in 2008-09.

The Member may also wish to note that this year's Net Fiscal Balance report is being prepared for publication later this month and will provide tax revenue estimates for both 2009-10 and 2010-11.

### **Civil Law Reform**

**Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the proposed Civil Law Reform.

**(AQO 2751/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The Department continues its work on a number of projects in the area of civil law reform: most recently officials of the Department briefed the Departmental Committee on a consultation paper on the law of damages which explored the issues of claims for damages for wrongful death, bereavement damages; and damages for gratuitous care. Other projects include reform to land law and vulnerable witnesses in civil proceedings.

### **Executive: Borrowing Powers**

**Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the out-workings of all borrowing powers which are available to the Executive, including their relationship to the Block Grant.

**(AQO 2752/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The only borrowing power currently available to the Executive is the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative. This allows the Executive to borrow up to £200 million per annum. This limit remains subject to HM Treasury approval.

Since these borrowing powers were granted in 2003-04 the Executive has borrowed some £1.3 billion in total. The cost of servicing this debt has been increasing steadily with interest payments totalling some £40 million in 2011-12. Servicing this debt is a direct cost to the Northern Ireland Block.

Exceptionally HM Treasury allowed the Executive to borrow an additional £175 million in 2011-12, which provided the Executive with additional resources to provide assistance in relation to the Presbyterian Mutual Society.

### **Government: Non-tax Revenue**

**Mr G Kelly** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the sources of non-tax revenue generated in the last 12 months.

**(AQO 2753/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** I assume that the Member is interested in receipts scoring within the Northern Ireland departmental DEL budgets since these translate into additional spending power for the Executive. These receipts amounted to £927 million of resource income and £165 million of capital income in the 2011-12 year.

The resource income is generated from a wide variety of revenue streams arising from the services provided by departments, whilst the capital income stems mainly from the sale of surplus assets and repayment of loans to public corporations. Income from the EU is also included in both the resource and capital income numbers.

Excluded from these figures are the income from regional rates and the RRI £200 million loan facility.

### **DFP: Savings Delivery Plan**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on his Department's compliance in the recent Savings Delivery Plan monitoring exercise.

**(AQO 2754/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** My Department has fully complied with the Savings Delivery Plan monitoring exercise and all updates can be found on the DFP website.

### **Narrow Water Bridge**

**Ms Ruane** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the progress made in plans to build a bridge linking North Louth and South Down at Narrow Water, using EU funds.

**(AQO 2755/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The Narrow Water Bridge project application is currently progressing through the INTERREG IVA assessment process. The Special EU Programmes Body anticipates this project will be brought before the Programme Steering Committee for decision later this month.

### **Government: Procurement**

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how he can ensure best value from tri-nations procurement tenders.

**(AQO 2756/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy encourages increased collaboration both locally and with other jurisdictions. Before such arrangements are put in place consideration is given to the impact on the local market to ensure there is a balance between supporting the local economy and achieving the best value for money.

### **Civil Service: Equality**

**Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the latest report on Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

**(AQO 2757/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The report from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency "Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service" provides an overview of equality and diversity in the Northern Ireland Civil Service workforce at 1 January 2012 and how the composition has altered over time since 2000. The report shows that the NICS has now a lower proportion of males and a higher proportion of females when compared to the economically active population. Female representation has grown substantially over time, particularly at more senior levels and greater proportions of both male and female staff are now working on a part-time basis.

In overall terms, the community background balance of the NICS workforce is similar to that of the NI economically active population. Changes over time in the community background composition are broadly similar in scale to those in the public sector as a whole. The proportion of staff who declared

a disability is broadly in line with the wider NI population. The proportion of older workers aged over 50 has increased and younger workers aged under 24 has decreased over the time period and in comparison to the economically active population in these age groups.

In relation to the recruitment exercises that closed in 2011, the report found overall no inequalities in outcomes in respect to gender and community background. In the large volume Executive Officer II competition there were some differences in candidates' performances by gender and community background at different stages in the selection process with males having a higher success rate than females at the test stage while females had a higher success rate at interview.

Officials in my department will consider the key data and findings in this latest Equality statistics report, together with the most recent Article 55 and Gender reviews, with a view to taking appropriate lawful affirmative action to address any identified lack of fair participation. As is clear from the last Article 55 and Gender Reviews, this approach has had some successes with Protestants and Roman Catholics enjoying fair participation at senior grades and a significant improvement in the proportion of females at these grades.

## Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

### **Bone-Protecting Treatment**

**Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to increase the percentage of people who are prescribed bone-protecting treatment following a fragility fracture.

**(AQW 15145/11-15)**

**Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety):** The Quality and Outcomes Framework is a system to remunerate general practices for providing good quality care to their patients, and to help fund work to further improve the quality of health care delivered. It is a fundamental part of the General Medical Services (GMS) Contract, introduced on 1st April 2004. The core philosophy underpinning the framework is that incentives are the best method of resourcing work, driving up standards, and recognising practices' achievements.

Osteoporosis indicators are included in the framework from 2012/13 and include the percentage of patients aged 50-74 with fragility fracture in whom Osteoporosis is confirmed on DXA scan, who are currently treated with an appropriate bone-sparing agent and the percentage of patients aged 75+ with fragility fracture who are currently treated with an appropriate bone sparing agent. The inclusion of osteoporosis indicators in the framework replaces the previous Osteoporosis Clinical Priority for GPs, which also promoted the use of bone sparing agents for people with fragility fractures.

### **Regional Fertility Centre**

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority has any remit for Health Service or private practice at the Regional Fertility Centre.

**(AQW 15168/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Regional Fertility Centre which is based at the Royal Victoria Hospital, providing both health service and private treatment is not subject to regulation (registration and inspection) by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA).

However, RQIA has the power to conduct reviews of particular types of health and social care services for which statutory bodies or service providers have responsibility. Such reviews could include the management, provision, quality, access to or availability of those services.

## Craigavon Area Hospital

**Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to list the changes that were made at Craigavon Area Hospital to improve Accident and Emergency services; (ii) which of these changes have been implemented at Antrim Area Hospital; and (iii) why all the changes have not been implemented at Antrim Area Hospital.

**(AQW 15222/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** There is no standard set of changes which will improve emergency care performance across all hospitals. Each hospital has different challenges and strengths, and improvements in emergency care will depend on changes to whole systems, not just emergency departments. HSC Trusts engage with each other on an ongoing basis to ensure learning across the HSC family. The Emergency Care Improvement Action Group which was established in April 2012 to help improve emergency department performance held a shared learning event in June focusing on actions which have proved effective in different Trusts.

The Southern Trust has made a concerted effort to improve patient flows from 2005. Specific changes introduced in 2012 in the emergency departments in Craigavon Area Hospital and Daisy Hill Hospital are:

- the recruitment of five additional emergency department consultants;
- improving senior decision resource in the emergency department;
- recruitment of two additional Emergency Nurse Practitioners (ENPs);
- implementation of improved Northern Ireland Regional Accident & Emergency System (an ED information system);
- relocation of Orthopaedic Fracture Clinics from Craigavon Area Hospital emergency department to Outpatients.

The Northern Trust has advised that since April 2012 the emergency department at Antrim Area Hospital has been engaged in a 12-month Emergency Department Quality Improvement plan. Improvements that have been established to date include:

- review of the floor plan/layout of the current emergency department. Changes in the flow of patients through the department have been implemented;
- NI Ambulance Service handover area has been established to facilitate timely, confidential handover of patients from NIAS within a 15 minute timeframe;
- update training on all time-dependent conditions and audit data to review practice;
- revision to Physiological Early Warning Score to reflect more the emergency department timeframes;
- medical handover for all doctors twice daily;
- GP Out of Hours Service support from 6-10pm weekdays and 10am to 10pm weekends/bank holidays for non emergency department patients attending emergency department at these times;
- quarterly patient satisfaction surveys since March 2012 with action plans developed to monitor improvements;
- communication with GPs regarding patients who frequently re-attend;
- direct GP admission to a medical ward 11am-4pm Monday to Friday for assessment and treatment plan;
- consultant vetting and sign off of junior medical staff decisions.

Work is currently under way at Antrim Area Hospital on a new emergency department and new ward accommodation which are due to open next year.

## Regional Fertility Centre

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many times the Regional Fertility Centre has had to close temporarily in the last five years; and for what reasons.

**(AQW 15230/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Belfast Health and Social Care has advised that the Regional Fertility Centre has not closed at any time during the last five years.

From 6 December 2011 until 23 January 2012, refurbishment took place at the Regional Fertility Centre. Although it was not possible to deliver treatment cycles during this time, the service was reprofiled to deliver new and review outpatient clinics.

## Health and Social Care Centre in Derry

**Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he intends to reactivate plans to build a new Health and Social Care Centre in Derry.

**(AQW 15307/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Under the plans for the implementation of “Transforming Your Care” which is currently the subject of public consultation, there is a proposal to continue with the development of a “hub and spoke” model for health and care centres across the region. At present, primary care services are delivered through a range of facilities such as GP practices and health and care centres which deliver varying levels of service depending on local needs. The consultation document includes an illustrative model of the proposed hubs and spokes, which includes two health and care centres in Derry – Waterside and Cityside.

Due to capital budgetary constraints, the funding of all of these centres through capital funding is not included in the current ISNI period (up to 2021). I have, therefore, set up a Health Infrastructure Board to explore alternative funding models through a private financing model. Depending on the outcome of this work and the outcome of the consultation, it may be possible to progress the plans for a new HCC in Derry sooner than would be possible under capital funding.

## Intensity Modulated Radiotherapy

**Mr McDevitt** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the Prime Minister’s announcement of a £15 million investment in Intensity Modulated Radiotherapy, whether he has any plans to introduce the treatment here; and whether this investment will have an impact in Northern Ireland.

**(AQW 15309/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Regional Cancer Centre in the Belfast Trust has advised that Intensity Modulated Radiotherapy (IMRT) is already available in Northern Ireland. The technique is complex and it is being gradually phased in for different cancer sites. At present, suitable prostate, pelvic node, head and neck tumour patients are treated with IMRT.

The Belfast Trust has advised that in 2008 14 patients benefitted from IMRT. In the year to date 143 patients have already benefitted from the therapy.

## Apprentices Employed Through Departmental Contracts

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many apprentices have been employed through departmental contracts in this financial year; and what percentage this number represents of the total posts allocated.

**(AQW 15334/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The current departmental policy with regard to capital construction contracts in the health and social care and public safety sectors requires the inclusion of a range of social clauses, including a condition that 5% of the contractor’s workforce and the workforce of the its first tier subcontractors

(with twenty or more employees) must be employed on formally recognised paid construction apprenticeships.

Since the contractual requirement is expressed as a percentage, data on the actual number of apprentices recruited in relation to specific contracts is not held by the Department.

### **Staff Facing Criminal Charges or Investigations**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people employed in his Department are (i) suspended from work pending criminal charges or investigations; and (ii) continuing in their duties whilst facing criminal charges or investigations.

**(AQW 15336/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:**

- (i) No staff are currently suspended from work pending criminal charges or investigations.
- (ii) My Department is not aware of any staff who are currently continuing in their duties whilst facing criminal charges or investigations.

### **Implementation of Transforming Your Care**

**Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what impact the implementation of Transforming Your Care will have on the delivery of services at the new South West Acute Hospital.

**(AQW 15338/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** On 9 October 2012 I launched a three-month consultation “Transforming Your Care: From Vision to Action” which outlines my proposals for change in Health and Social Care services in response to the report “Transforming Your Care: A Review of Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland” (published December 2011). With regard to the South West Acute Hospital, the consultation document’s key proposals are that the hospital will reflect the needs of its population areas including the dispersed rural population and provide all general hospital services. The hospital would network strongly with both Altnagelvin Area Hospital and Craigavon Area Hospital.

No decisions have been taken yet on the proposals in the consultation document. The Health and Social Care Board is carrying out the consultation on my behalf. The consultation document, together with the Draft local Population Plans and Strategic Implementation Plan, are available on the HSCB’s website at [www.tyconconsultation.hscni.net](http://www.tyconconsultation.hscni.net); an information leaflet will be issued to every household in Northern Ireland; and there will be a series of public and stakeholder meetings. The consultation will run until 15 January 2013 and I would encourage everyone to make their views known as part of that process.

There will also be further consultation on significant service changes which will provide the opportunity in the future for service users and the wider public to have their say on more specific service changes as they emerge over time.

### **Cardiology Services at Altnagelvin Hospital**

**Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the proposed enhanced cardiology services at Altnagelvin Hospital will lead to a reduction in cardiology services at the new South West Acute Hospital.

**(AQW 15339/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Transforming Your Care proposes the introduction of a new 24 hour emergency primary Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI) service at Altnagelvin Hospital. Hence it is not a reduction in the service in South West Acute Hospital (SWAH) I. It will mean improved care pathways with cardiologists in SWAH able to bring their patients to Altnagelvin; provide PCI; and support their return to SWAH and home.

## Dental Treatment

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how long is the waiting list for adults with a disability to receive dental treatment, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust. **(AQW 15340/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Waiting list figures for dental treatment for adults are not broken down in relation to disability.

## Parking Charges for Staff at the Causeway and Antrim Area Hospitals

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration the Northern Health and Social Care Trust gave to (i) the travel to work area and; (ii) the availability of public transport in its proposal to introduce car parking charges for staff at the Causeway and Antrim Area Hospitals.

**(AQW 15362/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Trust has advised that it carried out a staff survey in relation to Antrim Hospital, gathering information on staff travel to work areas. In subsequent negotiations with Translink, the fact that the largest number of staff travel from the Ballymena area was one of the reasons they were prepared to include a stop at the front of Antrim Hospital for the Ballymena to Belfast Goldline Express Service which has been operating since summer 2012.

The Antrim Ulsterbus Town Service (321e) also stops at the hospital to facilitate staff living in the Antrim area.

It is intended to complete a similar survey for the Causeway Hospital in the coming weeks, although the Coleraine Goldline Express service and the Ulsterbus Town service currently provide a service to the Hospital.

## Marie Stopes Clinic in Belfast

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he can give an assurance that the operation of the proposed Marie Stopes clinic in Belfast will be closely monitored to ensure there are no infringements of the law on abortion in Northern Ireland.

**(AQW 15421/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Abortion is governed by the Criminal law. Investigation of potential criminal offences is a matter for the police and, if a prosecution is taken, ultimately for the courts.

The onus is on doctors, and the establishments that employ them, to ensure that they are practicing in compliance with the law. As I informed the Assembly on 15 October 2012, it is my intention to put in place a robust system to record all terminations of pregnancy carried out in Northern Ireland, in any establishment. That system cannot give absolute assurance that the law is being complied with, but it will provide useful information about the reasons for terminations of pregnancy.

In the meantime, as a matter of urgency my officials have been considering additional safeguards including those that may be obtained by bringing the Marie Stopes facility within the remit of the Health and Personal Social Services (Quality Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

Marie Stopes has confirmed that they intend to fully comply with all laws and regulatory systems in Northern Ireland.

## Causeway Hospital

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in the event of the Causeway Hospital being aligned with Altnagevlin Hospital, what proportion and range of accident and emergency services will be retained in Coleraine.

**(AQW 15424/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** On 9 October 2012 I launched a three-month consultation “Transforming Your Care: From Vision to Action” which outlines my proposals for change in Health and Social Care services in response to the report “Transforming Your Care: A Review of Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland” (published December 2011). With regard to the Causeway Hospital, the consultation document sets out three options for the future development of the hospital’s formal networking arrangements and indicates that an appraisal of the implications of each option should be undertaken. The document also indicates that there would be access to 24/7 emergency/urgent care on both Antrim and Causeway Hospital sites, which would be doctor led.

No decisions have been taken yet on the proposals and it would be premature to comment on the future of accident and emergency services in advance of the outcome of the public consultation. The document invites people to indicate if they agree with the proposals or whether there better alternatives. The Health and Social Care Board is carrying out the consultation on my behalf. The consultation document, together with the Draft local Population Plans and Strategic Implementation Plan, are available on the HSCB’s website at [www.tyconconsultation.hscni.net](http://www.tyconconsultation.hscni.net); an information leaflet will be issued to every household in Northern Ireland; and there will be a series of public and stakeholder meetings. The consultation will run until 15 January 2013 and I would encourage everyone to make their views known as part of that process.

There will also be further consultation on significant service changes which will provide the opportunity in the future for service users and the wider public to have their say on more specific service changes as they emerge over time.

## **Chronic Pain**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to his statement made during the Pain Summit on May 15th, in which he stated that chronic pain should be included within the Policy Framework ‘Living with Long Term Conditions’, how will he ensure that services for patients suffering from chronic pain receive the same prominence as other long term conditions such as diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

**(AQW 15436/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** My Department is committed to improving health and wellbeing and quality of life for all of the population of Northern Ireland, irrespective of their specific medical conditions.

To this end, I launched the Long Term Conditions Policy Framework in April 2012, which focuses on six key areas of care including supporting self management, medicines management and improving care and services. The policy framework is designed to be relevant across a wide range of long term conditions and is inclusive of pain management.

Implementation of the Policy Framework will be taken forward by a Regional Implementation Steering Group which will be established by my Department shortly. The Steering Group will develop an Action Plan identifying how the good practice outlined in the six development areas in the policy framework can be implemented and extended regionally and at a local level, working in partnership with the voluntary, community and independent sectors. The Action Plan will be in place and approved by the Department within 6 months of the Steering Group being established.

The Terms of Reference for the Steering Group will include arrangements for reporting to my Department on progress against the Action Plan.

## **‘Living with Long Term Conditions’ Policy Document**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what processes will be used to monitor the progress of the implementation of the ‘Living with Long Term Conditions’ policy document, to ensure that care for patients with chronic pain is included in Health and Social Care Trust planning.

**(AQW 15437/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** My Department is committed to improving health and wellbeing and quality of life for all of the population of Northern Ireland, irrespective of their specific medical conditions.

To this end, I launched the Long Term Conditions Policy Framework in April 2012, which focuses on six key areas of care including supporting self management, medicines management and improving care and services. The policy framework is designed to be relevant across a wide range of long term conditions and is inclusive of pain management.

Implementation of the Policy Framework will be taken forward by a Regional Implementation Steering Group which will be established by my Department shortly. The Steering Group will develop an Action Plan identifying how the good practice outlined in the six development areas in the policy framework can be implemented and extended regionally and at a local level, working in partnership with the voluntary, community and independent sectors. The Action Plan will be in place and approved by the Department within 6 months of the Steering Group being established.

The Terms of Reference for the Steering Group will include arrangements for reporting to my Department on progress against the Action Plan.

### **Pain Management: Population Plan**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is the only Trust to include pain management within their Population Plan, how he will ensure that the remaining Trusts consider chronic pain within their plans.

**(AQW 15438/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Transforming Your Care sets out a series of proposals for improving services for people with long term conditions and pain management is one aspect of long term conditions management. All five Health and Social Care Trust draft Population Plans include reference to long term conditions management which is based on needs established in each Local Commissioning Group area.

### **Chronic Pain Management**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what level of post-graduate training, including continuous professional development, is provided for health care professionals on chronic pain management, within the framework of his Department.

**(AQW 15473/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** My Department invests heavily in continuous professional development for healthcare professionals. Training in chronic pain management is an integral as well as a standalone component of many post graduate education and training programmes including emergency, palliative, cancer and joint care. The training provided is subject to regular review and updated as necessary in line with emerging technologies.

### **Chronic Pain Management**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what processes will be put in place to ensure that best practice in chronic pain management will be shared.

**(AQW 15474/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** My Department has endorsed a number of NICE technology appraisals and clinical guidelines, relating to chronic pain management, as applicable for implementation in Northern Ireland. As any new or updated Technology Appraisals or Clinical Guidelines relating to chronic pain management are published by NICE in the future, these will be locally reviewed and, where appropriate, endorsed by my Department for implementation within health and social care in Northern Ireland.

Chronic pain management requires multidisciplinary approaches and includes a range of interventions for example, pharmacological, non pharmacological, physical and psychological techniques. It is part of integrated care pathways approaches for certain conditions.

Chronic pain requires effective treatment and communication across the primary, community, voluntary and hospital sectors where appropriate. Reform and modernisation of the health services, including the development of Integrated Care Partnerships, and networked approaches will facilitate closer working relationships and the sharing of information and best practice.

## Suicide Rates

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the work being carried out to tackle suicide rates.

**(AQW 15477/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** A wide range of activity has been supported under the Protect Life Strategy to address suicide in Northern Ireland. This includes counselling, bereavement support, awareness training, training, crisis intervention, follow up for those presenting at A&E in emotional distress, enhanced surveillance to identify potential emerging suicide clusters, and establishment of multi-agency plans to respond promptly to suicide clusters. Independent evaluation of Protect Life will be published later this month.

These actions are in line with international evidence about what works in suicide prevention. However, despite this, the Northern Ireland suicide rate has not declined since 2005. Whilst it is not possible to calculate how many lives have been saved through suicide prevention actions to date, the personal testimony of service users indicates that people are alive today because of these services.

It is widely acknowledged that suicide is a societal issue and that a reduction in suicide rates requires actions across Government Departments and across sectors to reduce risk factors such as unemployment, community fragmentation, adverse childhood experiences, family breakup, domestic violence, crime, debt, substance misuse, and low educational attainment. The Ministerial Co-ordination Group on Suicide Prevention was established to ensure suicide prevention is a priority across Government.

## Suicide Rates

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the work that has been carried out during his Ministerial term to combat suicide rates, particularly in East Belfast.

**(AQW 15479/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The following work has been carried out to combat suicide during my term as Health Minister:

- Community-led programmes and initiatives.
- Public information campaigning to: encourage help-seeking; raise awareness of suicide and positive mental health; and reduce stigma associated with suicide and mental health.
- Lifeline 24/7 helpline and associated support services.
- Extension of the Deliberate Self Harm Registry to all A&E Units and operation of the Card Before You Leave (CBYL) protocol at A&E sites.
- Local research into suicide and self harm.
- Training on suicide/mental health awareness.
- Development of community emergency response plans to respond to potential suicide clusters.
- Programmes targeted at vulnerable young men.
- Updated media reporting guidelines.

These services are supported by annual investment of £6.7m under the Protect Life Strategy.

In addition, I commissioned independent evaluation of Protect Life and approved publication of the Refreshed Protect Life Strategy. Furthermore, I hosted a major suicide prevention conference for community and voluntary organisations, and I have engaged with Executive colleagues to ensure that suicide prevention is a priority for all relevant Government Departments. As a result of this, there is now joint working between DHSSPS, DCAL, and DARD on the development of a suicide prevention

initiative involving sporting, cultural and rural bodies. My department is also working with Education on the development of a pupil's emotional health and wellbeing programme.

In relation to East Belfast, the Public Health Agency and Belfast Trust work with, and help fund, a number of organisations to deliver suicide and self harm prevention services. These organisations, some of which are based in East Belfast and some of which have city-wide coverage, include Contact NI, East Belfast Community Development Agency, East Belfast Independent Advice Centre, Suicide Awareness Support Group, Rainbow, New Life Counselling, Charter for NI, Barnardos, and FASA.

Services provided include crisis response and counselling for a range of high risk groups such as families affected by suicide, ex-prisoners, people who self harm, people with substance misuse problems, and men living with HIV.

### **Drug Ipilimumab Marketed as YERVOY**

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to explain the current status of the drug ipilimumab, which is marketed as YERVOY, in Northern Ireland.

**(AQW 15481/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Yervoy is not routinely commissioned in Northern Ireland, however the drug can be accessed by way of the Individual Funding Request mechanism, as referred to in my previous response to AQW 14076/11-15.

This drug is currently undergoing NICE appraisal for previously treated unresectable stage III or IV malignant melanoma. NICE has also been consulting on the draft scope for guidance on Yervoy in combination with dacarbazine for previously untreated unresectable stage III or IV malignant melanoma. As soon as NICE publishes final guidance, my Department will locally review it for applicability to Northern Ireland and, where appropriate, endorse it for implementation in health and social care.

### **Mental Health Care**

**Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for his assessment of the impact on the staff, staffing numbers and mental health provision at the Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital, Omagh from the proposed in-patient acute mental health unit at Altnagelvin and Enniskillen Hospitals; and (ii) to outline any long-term plans for the future provision of mental health care which were not included in the Review of Health and Social Care.

**(AQW 15494/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I would expect these matters to be considered in the business case for the second mental health acute inpatient unit to be provided in the Western Trust area. The new unit at Gransha is due to open shortly.

'Transforming Your Care' endorses the Bamford vision that people with a mental illness should be treated in the community thereby reducing demand for inpatient care.

### **Midwifery Led Maternity Unit for Omagh**

**Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether, during the Review of Health and Social Care, he considered a Midwifery Led Maternity Unit for Omagh; and whether he will release the report on this issue that was commissioned by the previous Western Health and Social Services Board.

**(AQW 15497/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The consultation on Transforming Your Care makes recommendations for the future of maternity care, which are in line with the recommendations in my Department's recently published document, A Strategy for Maternity Care in Northern Ireland 2012-2018.

The Maternity Strategy contains recommendations on the importance of Midwife Led Units (MLUs). These include a recommendation that each Trust should provide at least one consultant led unit, which

should have a MLU on the same site. In addition, there is a recommendation that freestanding MLUs should be established where there is an assessed need and the service contributes to sustainable maternity services.

The HSC Board and the Public Health Agency will lead on the Strategy's implementation, working in collaboration with Trusts and other organisations.

The feasibility study on the possible development of a MLU for the Omagh Area was developed by the former Western Health and Social Services Board and, as such, any requests to have sight of the study should be directed to the Health and Social Care Board.

### **Consultant Led Acute Medical Care**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the hospitals which meet and do not meet the level of consultant led acute medical care recommended by the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) and the Society of Acute Medicine (SAM); and what action he proposes to take to ensure that the RCP and SAM guidance is followed.

**(AQW 15514/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Department does not routinely measure staffing levels against norms set by various professional bodies but expects Trusts to take such normative figures into account in developing staffing profiles to ensure that the services they provide are safe and effective.

### **Former Downe Hospital Site in Downpatrick**

Mr Hazzard asked Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in the wake of the latest arson attack, what steps his Department will take to make the former Downe Hospital site in Downpatrick safe and manageable.

**(AQW 15535/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Health and Safety Executive visited St John's building, located within the old Downe Hospital site boundary following the recent arson attack; it has made a number of recommendations to the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (the Trust). These are to: remove the roof; compartmentalise the building; erect scaffolding; remove external and internal asbestos; and complete an environmental clean of the site. The Trust will be submitting a business case to the Department and seeking funding to complete these recommended works.

In an attempt to try to stop any further vandalism, Pound Lane and St John's buildings will be demolished. In the interim, the Trust is working closely with the PSNI to re-secure the site and NIEA to re-secure and protect the listed buildings on site.

Land and Property Services (LPS) has been instructed to commence marketing the site.

### **Marie Stopes Clinic in Belfast**

**Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what measures will be taken by his Department to ensure that any procedure carried out at the proposed Marie Stopes clinic in Belfast will conform to current legislation.

**(AQW 15538/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I refer to the answer I provided to AQW15421/11-15.

### **Marie Stopes Clinic in Belfast**

**Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when his Department was informed that a Marie Stopes Clinic would open in Belfast on 18 October 2012.

**(AQW 15539/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Department was notified on 9 October 2012 that the Marie Stopes clinic would open week commencing 15 October 2012.

### **Staff Facing Internal Investigations**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many members of staff in his Department are currently (i) suspended due to internal investigations; and (ii) not suspended whilst facing internal investigations.

**(AQW 15540/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:**

- (iii) No staff are currently suspended from work pending internal investigations;
- (iv) A total of seven staff are currently continuing in their duties while internal investigations are undertaken.

### **Independent Funding Request for Cancer Treatment**

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to explain the process for an independent funding request for cancer treatment, including the perceived timescale if such a request is made.

**(AQW 15541/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Health and Social Care Board has a process for considering those requests details of which may be found at the following link:

[http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/Protocol\\_ECR\\_and\\_IFR\\_arrangements.pdf](http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/Protocol_ECR_and_IFR_arrangements.pdf)

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has advised that its Internal Scrutiny Committee for Oncology and Haematology meets every week to review Individual Funding Requests (IFR) and forwards those it supports to the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) IFR Panel for consideration. The HSCB has advised that all individual funding requests, including those for cancer treatments, are responded to within one week of the Panel's weekly meeting.

### **Suicide**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what additional measures or strategies are being considered to combat suicide.

**(AQW 15544/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The refreshed Protect Life strategy published in June 2012 contains a number of new actions. These include: involving sporting organisations in delivering positive mental health and wellbeing messages; identifying specific arts interventions that improve mental health; and providing community-based "Health Checks" in rural areas. As part of the roll out of the All-Island Action Plan on suicide prevention a new Men's Health Forum pilot project has been launched "Young Men and Suicide" has delivered a valuable new interactive online programme called 'WorkOut'.

The Public Health Agency are taking forward a number of additional and enhanced services. This includes: additional self harm and family support services, self harm training in support of NICE guidelines, additional and enhanced services for vulnerable and marginalised groups including Travellers, prisoners and LGB&T; piloting of a community mental health education programme targeting vulnerable groups and disadvantaged areas within the Belfast HSC Trust area; and the development and the development of a new Public Information Campaign

### **Suicide Rates**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what measures are currently in place to help reduce the rate of suicide.

**(AQW 15549/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** A wide range of services and initiatives have been put in place to address suicide, including:

- Community-led programmes and initiatives.
- Comprehensive social marketing campaigns to: encourage help-seeking; raise awareness of suicide and positive mental health; and reduce stigma associated with suicide and mental health.
- Lifeline and associated support services.
- The Card Before You Leave (CBYL) protocol at A&E sites.
- Local research into suicide.
- Bereavement support services.
- Training on suicide/mental health awareness.
- Deliberate Self Harm Registry in A&E Units.
- Development of community emergency response plans.
- Programmes targeted at vulnerable young men.
- Reporting guidelines for the media and ongoing media monitoring.
- Enhanced mental health crisis intervention services.
- Suicide prevention procedures at psychiatric in-patient facilities.
- Counselling.

These services are supported by annual investment of £6.7m under the Protect Life Strategy and by funding from mainstream mental health services. In addition, under Ministerial Co-ordination Group on Suicide Prevention, work has been initiated to involve sporting, cultural, and rural bodies in suicide prevention. Efforts to reduce substance misuse, improve community safety and cohesion, enhance safer custody, improve educational attainment, incorporate emotional wellbeing into the school curriculum, reduce bullying (including cyber bullying) and domestic violence, and strengthen families also contribute to addressing suicide in our society.

### **Administration Building at Bangor Health Centre**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans there are to redevelop the administration building at Bangor Health Centre.

**(AQW 15552/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I am aware that the administration building to the rear of Bangor Health Centre is in particularly poor condition that falls well short of acceptable. It is neither practical nor cost-effective to upgrade the existing building to provide modern healthcare services.

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust is currently working on plans to demolish the existing building and relocate staff to other locations within the Bangor / Newtownards area.

### **Marie Stopes Clinic in Belfast**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority's remit is focused on the quality of services provided, for his assessment of its ability to monitor the operation of the Marie Stopes clinic in Belfast.

**(AQW 15555/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Department has been, and continues to be, in a process of seeking details through RQIA of the full range of services and medical professionals providing services at MSI, in order to determine whether this clinic would be regulated under the definition in the 2003 Order. The Department has sought legal advice based on the information received. Medical staff within the clinic are regulated through their own professional bodies. Abortion in Northern Ireland is regulated by criminal law.

## Marie Stopes Clinic in Belfast

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Marie Stopes Clinic in Belfast is required to be registered under Article 12 of The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003; and (i) whether it is registered; (ii) when it was registered; and (iii) whether there are any conditions attached to its registration.

**(AQW 15559/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Marie Stopes establishment is not currently registered. The Department has been, and continues to be, in a process of seeking details through RQIA of the full range of services and medical professionals providing services at MSI, in order to determine whether this clinic would be regulated under the definition in the 2003 Order. Based on the information received, The Department has sought legal advice.

## Marie Stopes Clinic in Belfast

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the management and control of the operations of the establishment of the Marie Stopes clinic, what regulations, pursuant to Article 23 of The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, apply to the clinic.

**(AQW 15560/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Department has been, and continues to be, in a process of seeking details through RQIA of the full range of services and medical professionals providing services at MSI, in order to determine whether this clinic would be regulated under the definition in the 2003 Order. On the basis of this information, The Department has sought legal advice.

## Items Disposed of at Auctions

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the items which his Department has disposed of at auctions in (i) 2010/11; and (ii) 2011/12, including the auction value of each item.

**(AQW 15573/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** My Department has not disposed of any items at auctions in 2010/11 and 2011/12.

## Suicide and Self Harm in East Belfast

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services and resources are in place to tackle suicide and self harm in east Belfast.

**(AQW 15577/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Residents and groups in East Belfast have access to suicide prevention services that are regionally available. These include: awareness raising and stigma reduction programmes; Lifeline; Deliberate Self Harm Registry services and the Card Before You Leave (CBYL) protocol; and training on suicide/mental health awareness.

In addition, the following services have been provided for East Belfast:

- Suicide Prevention Information Officer;
- Counselling and complementary therapies for individuals, families, children, and ex prisoners;
- Crisis response;
- Bereavement support;
- Mentoring for vulnerable young people;
- Mental health advocacy; and

- “Green Gym” conservation volunteering.

Organisations providing these services are either based in East Belfast or have city-wide coverage and include Contact NI, East Belfast Community Development Agency, East Belfast Independent Advice Centre, Suicide Awareness Support Group, Rainbow, New Life Counselling, Charter for NI, Barnardos, Mulholland Aftercare Services, and FASA.

### **Sudden Death Forms and the Card Before You Leave Scheme**

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline any problems or issues highlighted by the Health and Social Care Trusts in relation to the Sudden Death Forms and the Card Before You Leave scheme.

**(AQW 15580/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Public Health Agency and the Health Trusts have worked with the PSNI to establish a system for the use of Sudden Death Notification forms to notify relevant statutory agencies about a sudden death. This was piloted in the Western Area and introduced across Northern Ireland on 1 April 2012, and is, therefore, relatively new. This system of formally reporting a suspected suicide is unique to Northern Ireland.

There were, initially, some issues with regards to the timescales within which the forms were received by the Trusts and the Public Health Agency. This has been improving and most forms are now being received within one week of a sudden death. There is also the issue that someone who dies in hospital a number of days after a suspected suicide attempt is unlikely to be notified through this process.

The Health and Social Care Board has undertaken an evaluation of the operation and effectiveness of the Card Before You Leave scheme which is in operation at all accident and emergency departments. The report is expected to be completed by the end of the year. Any action arising from this review will be progressed by the Public Health Agency and the Health and Social Care Board. One of the initial concerns is the high volume of pre-arranged follow up appointments that are not attended.

### **Recent Spate of Suicides in Belfast**

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the recent spat of suicides in Belfast, what action his Department and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust have taken in the (i) north; (ii) south; (iii) east; and (iv) west of the city.

**(AQW 15582/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** There is no evidence, through the Sudden Death notification system, of a spike in suspected deaths by suicide in the Belfast area over recent weeks. From the end of July this year, fifteen suspected deaths by suicide in the Belfast area have been notified to the Public Health Agency. Sadly, this is reflective of trends experienced over the last five years and work, therefore, is ongoing to address the high levels of suicide in areas of Belfast. This includes awareness raising, promotion of help-seeking behaviour, bereavement support, training for “gatekeepers”, and provision of counselling and crisis support.

Details of activities in specific areas of Belfast are attached.

**PROTECT LIFE STRATEGY**

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Bridge of Hope: Suicide & Self Harm Therapeutic Support	Ashton Community Trust	This programme aims to assist the North Belfast community toward better mental health, with a particular emphasis on those who are suffering stress and trauma as a result of the political conflict. This programme aims to help people cope with the stress and trauma of living in an area dealing with 30 years of political conflict and significant social and economic deprivation.	Bridge of Hope will deliver 860 complementary therapies to 143 people during the year April 2012 to March 2013 through Suicide Prevention Funding. In addition the organisation will continue to work with existing and new partners to raise awareness about the issue and to reach out to those who currently do not engage with services. The organization will play an active part in suicide prevention work and actively support the 'moving on' of individuals from services.	North Belfast
Mood Matters & Mental Health First Aid	Aware Defeat Depression	This project aims to increase awareness of positive mental health, prevention of mental ill health, reduced stigma, self help, and coping skills to deal with stress, anxiety and depression.	<p>1 Mental Health First Aid programme – Belfast wide</p> <p>5 Mood Matters programmes targeting pregnant women – Belfast wide</p> <p>5 Mood Matters Programmes targeting Young People - N&amp;W Belfast</p> <p>4 Mood Matters Programmes targeting young people in S&amp;E Belfast</p> <p>2 Mood Matters Programmes targeting adults in S&amp;E Belfast</p>	Belfast wide

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Supporting Children & Young People Bereaved Through Suicide	Barnardo's	Barnardo's Child Bereavement Service aims to meet the needs of bereaved children and their families who have experienced complex and traumatic bereavement. This programme has developed an expertise in supporting children and young people bereaved through suicide.	30 packages of care 16 CYP receiving individual support 2 group event for 6 families 1 Christmas group event for 10 families 10 Training sessions to partner organisations including schools 2 Crisis Intervention Groups (if required)	Belfast wide
Pathways to Mental Health & Peace: Ex Prisoners & Families Support	Charter NI	Charter for NI & EPIC is key providers of services to ex prisoners have formed a partnership along with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, East Belfast Alternatives and East Belfast Mission. The programme will provide 284 professional confidential community based counselling sessions with a wraparound complementary service which comprises of 50 alternative therapies helping clients to enjoy better health and a more vital life, encouraging the client to feel comfortable and the motivation to utilize counselling services	284 counselling sessions 28 supervision sessions 50 alternative therapy sessions Hold a minimum of 4 information sessions in the target area Produce a report that will inform the steering group of progress Project running cost and overheads	East Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Green Gym (Protect Life)	Conservation Volunteers	This Green Gym project aims to create the opportunity for positive citizenship, improved physical and mental health, raised awareness of environmental issues and the development of new skills and training toward employment for participants.	3 x10 week Green Gym projects to be delivered in S&E Belfast 8 taster sessions	South & East Belfast
S&E Belfast Youth Counselling Services	Contact	The counselling support will ensure that local people within the area feel supported by services that will improve their mental health and wellbeing. They will know how to access help in future and will be familiar with the onward referral organizations and services. This information can be shared amongst families and communities.	1 volunteer co-ordinator counsellor 16hpw delivering 350 counselling sessions in South and East Belfast primarily focused on young people	South & East Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
SOS Family Support Programme	East Belfast Community Development Agency	<p>This project aims to provide support for people bereaved through suicide and provide information on suicide prevention in East Belfast.</p> <p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 To increase suicide prevention work through outreach and promotional work by the suicide prevention information officer</li> <li>2 To provide post-vention support, promoting hope, recovery and long term positive mental health for families bereaved by suicide</li> <li>3 Work to de-stigmatise suicide and self-harm through networking and outreach</li> <li>4 To develop governance standards, professional standards, and overall capacity of the SOS group.</li> <li>5 To ensure the SOS group's experiences are recognised and reflected in strategic development at policy level.</li> <li>6 To increase coordination and joined-up approach to addressing suicide in East Belfast, as well as Belfast and NI in general</li> </ol>	<p>1 Suicide Prevention Information Officer 25 hrs  Programme Costs to support SOS activities  100 Counselling Sessions  1x12 week Suicide Therapy Group Programme  Programme running costs and overheads</p>	East Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Mental Health Advocacy Project	East Belfast Independent Advice Centre	<p>EBIAC will deliver a Mental Health Advocacy Project that will minimise the impact of external issues such as poverty, unemployment, homelessness and debt on mental health and wellbeing and suicide rates by using an interagency and collaborative approach with three interconnected strands i.e. Prevention; Intervention and Strategic working. A dedicated advocacy worker will provide practical assistance with multiple issues such as debt, housing problems, welfare benefit applications and disputes including representation at benefit appeal tribunals.</p>	To provide part funding to employ 1 full time Mental Health Advocacy Worker	East Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Womens Counselling & Complementary Therapies	Falls Women's Centre	This project aims to deliver a holistic counselling and complementary health service to women and their families within the Greater West Belfast area. Women and their families will be supported within a holistic wraparound service including advice, advocacy, family support, training and childcare.art therapy, benefit analysis, debt management, housing, training & education, personal development, young people's project, ethnic minority project.	258 Counselling sessions 172 Holistic therapy sessions 1 stress management course	West Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
FASA: Family Support & Suicide Prevention Response Services	FASA	<p>This Protect Life service aims to provide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Services in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce the stigma of Suicide and Self Harm</li> <li>Raise awareness of help and support across Belfast, targeting N&amp;W Belfast</li> <li>Deliver a major campaign regarding suicide in association with major corporate company</li> <li>Promote positive mental health and wellbeing across individuals, families and communities</li> <li>Promote help seeking behaviour</li> <li>Support those who are in suicidal crisis</li> <li>Support those bereaved by suicide</li> <li>Ensure a Community Suicide Response plan in Greater Shankill</li> <li>Contribute to the aims and outcomes of the Protect Life Strategy for NI</li> </ul>	<p>Funding to employ the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Community Suicide Liaison Officer</li> <li>1 Crisis Response worker</li> <li>1 Crisis Intervention Worker</li> </ul> <p>Part funding 1 Crisis Intervention Team Leader – 30 hours Programme Costs</p>	North & West Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Crisis Response Support (Out of Hours Pilot)	FASA	To provide out of hours crisis support in S&E Belfast for 150 individuals between April 2012 and 31 December 2012. To provide support for Belfast Response Plan activation if required.	To provide out of hours crisis support in S&E Belfast for 150 individuals between April 2012 and 31 December 2012. To provide support for Belfast Response Plan activation if required.	South & East Belfast
Holy Trinity Counselling Service	Holy Trinity Centre	The Holy Trinity Protect Life Project aims to provide appropriate psychological support through counselling as a method of intervention to those most at risk from self harm and suicide and for those who have been bereaved through suicide.	2 part time counsellors – 15 hpw 1 part time administrator – 15 hpw Project running costs and overheads	West Belfast
Provision of Out of Hours Counselling Project	Holy Trinity Centre	To pilot an out of hours weekend suicide intervention service	To pilot an out of hours weekend suicide intervention service	West Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
LCP: Lenadoon Counselling Project	Lenadoon Community Forum	<p>The aim of Lenadoon Counselling Project (LCP) is to provide a professional, structured and confidential counselling service to individuals and families from an exceptionally wide client-base living in west Belfast and beyond, and offer a safe environment where individuals can be listened to, respected and given a sense of safety and value.</p> <p>The overall objectives of LCP are to offer client-centred counselling based on assessment of need, promote and introduce community based counselling services through partnership working across all relevant sectors, establish and build upon a network of referrals among all relevant sectors to complement more referral procedures and provide and facilitate training that will equip individuals with skills and knowledge to build capacity within the mental health field.</p>	1032 Counselling sessions 2 ASIST workshops	West Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Counselling project (Out of Hours Service)	Lenadoon Community Forum	To pilot an out of hours weekend suicide intervention service	To pilot an out of hours weekend suicide intervention service	West Belfast
Lighthouse: Family Support Services	Lighthouse	<p>Lighthouse aims to provide a beacon of hope and a path to recovery for those who have been affected by suicide and self harm. Lighthouse aims to -work for the assistance of persons who are suicidal, despairing or in distress and thus reduce the incidence of suicide and self harm</p> <p>-alleviating distress and offer assistance to people who have suffered loss through suicide and anguish through self harm</p> <p>-promoting the fostering of positive mental health to improve the emotional wellbeing of people residing in Belfast and its environs</p> <p>-advancing the education of the public into, and raise awareness of, the causes and effects of suicide and self harm and into matters relating to the nature of grieving, bereavement and the treatment and rehabilitation of individuals that self harm.</p>	<p>Part funding to employ 1 full time co-ordinator 37hpwull time</p> <p>1 part time family support worker – 20hpw</p> <p>1 part time counsellor/crisis worker 20hpw</p> <p>1 part time art &amp; personal development therapist 15hpw</p> <p>576 Sessional counselling sessions 12 pw</p> <p>624 Complementary therapies 12pw</p> <p>Administrative support</p> <p>Project Running Costs and overheads</p> <p>Staff supervision</p>	North Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Match of the Day: Mentoring Scheme for Vulnerable Young People	Mulholland Aftercare Services	<p>This project aims to reduce suicide ideation, self harm, loneliness and isolation in young males 16 – 25 who reside in economically deprived areas.</p> <p>The project will provide one to one mentoring with a volunteer for 25 young men, for the period of up to 1 year.</p> <p>group mentoring for 10 young males focusing on a series of 12 workshops over the year.</p> <p>group mentoring for 5 young males in MACS leaving and aftercare accommodation project, providing weekly group support from September 2011.</p> <p>-Promote and nurture positive self esteem. Safety and emotional well-being</p> <p>-Help empower young men to meet their full potential as active citizens within their communities</p>	<p>1 full time mentoring project worker 35hpw</p> <p>Contribution to volunteer match budget</p> <p>Project running costs and overheads – travel</p>	South & East Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Falls Counselling Project: HEART Programme	Maureen Sheehan Centre	<p>Heart Protect Life Project will add value to a mental health improvement service established at the Healthy Living Centre through the CALM (Combating Anxiety by Lifestyle Management) programme and aim to reduce the risk factors with regards to suicide and self harm such as the impact of poverty, poor relationships, alcohol/drug abuse and increase protective factors such as coping skills, raised self esteem and the development of environments which are supportive and enable individuals to overcome or cope more effectively. The project will provide counselling and complementary therapies that are additional to the CALM service targeted at people who have self harmed, attempted suicide, have suicidal thoughts or are the families and or friends of those bereaved by suicide.</p>	<p>200 hours of counselling 60 hours of complementary therapies Insurance cover for counsellors and therapists Supervision cost for counsellors</p>	West Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Suicide Prevention and Support Counselling	New Life Counselling	New Life Counselling aims to support individuals and families who have been affected by attempted suicide, suicidal ideation and self harming behaviours and those who have experienced bereavement as a result of suicide. This Protect Life funded project will provide counselling sessions for children and young people, adults and families affected by suicide.	2 FTE counsellors 1 part time administrative officer 800 counselling sessions for 200 CYP 1000 counselling sessions for 350 adults 10 counselling sessions for 3 families Programme costs – clinical supervision Project running costs & overheads	North & West Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Protect Life - Mentoring Support for Vulnerable Young People	Opportunity Youth	<p>Opportunity youth provide crisis mentoring support to young people and vulnerable adults, presenting with issues around suicide self harm, suicide prevention and emotional health and wellbeing concerns. The project will create opportunities for 72 young people Belfast Wide at risk and in crisis situations to access support, engage in appropriate action and support plans that address and reduce risk. Identifying risk and building protective factors, for young people and vulnerable adults so as they can and keep themselves safe in times of crisis.</p>	<p>1 mentor 30hpw 1mentor 22.5hpw Project running costs and overheads</p>	Belfast wide

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Co-cultural Counselling Services for Men	Rainbow	<p>The programme will provide co-cultural minority sexual orientation counselling to gay and bisexual men (and those unsure of their sexual orientation) within the Belfast Trust Area. A support group will be established dependent on the identified needs of those accessing counselling support. This may be gay fathers, men living with HIV or young men's group. There will be a campaign targeted at the LGBT community to raise awareness of the increased risk of suicide and self-harm among this group. The provision of training to counselling organisations, and guidance documents will enable mainstream service providers to respond appropriately to the needs of Gay and Bisexual men and those unsure of their orientation. Partnerships with key organisations working in suicide prevention and mental health promotion will be created, strengthened and nurtured as appropriate.</p>	1 part payment of salary for counsellor	Belfast wide

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
SASG Bereavement Support Service	Suicide Awareness Support Group	<p>The overall aim of the Suicide Awareness and Support Group is to improve the quality of life for those bereaved by suicide within the Greater West Belfast area.</p> <p>Bereavement services at the SA&amp;SG have been developed and designed to facilitate recovery and healing after a suicidal death.</p> <p>Identifying the individuality of need is established and individuals are supported within the delivery of our holistic services.</p>	<p>To employ 1 General Manager</p> <p>To employ 1 Development Worker</p> <p>To provide 343 counselling hours</p> <p>To provide 343 complementary therapies</p> <p>To deliver 3 ASIST training courses</p>	West Belfast
TATE Belfast - Counselling & Complementary Therapies	Windsor Womens Centre	<p>T.A.T.E. Belfast aims to offer a holistic approach to improving the health and emotional wellbeing of the community. The project delivers targeted counselling and complementary therapies to at risk groups in order to reduce health inequalities and raise the levels of health and emotional well-being.</p>	<p>200 counselling sessions</p> <p>350 complementary therapy sessions</p> <p>12 therapeutic art sessions</p> <p>4 music therapy group sessions</p> <p>12 craft class sessions</p> <p>3 stress clinics</p> <p>Project running costs &amp; overheads</p>	South & East Belfast

**MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION:**

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Mental Health Promotion Activity	Belfast HSCT	To develop a rehabilitation programme of activities for young people who have a diagnosis of severe mental illness to promote the development of social and interpersonal skills and learn competencies required for independent living.	The team frequently run a health and wellbeing group with patients and interactive work with the patients. The team also provides education, family support and individual work whilst with the individual and family.	Belfast wide

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Change Of Mind Community Of Interest	Belfast HSCT	<p>Change of Mind Community of Interest confirmed the following 2012-2013 priorities consistent with the priorities set out in the current Mental Health Promotion Strategy and Action Plan 2003-2008 and the anticipated Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy:-Early Years Interventions capable of building emotional resilience and self esteem.</p> <p>Promote the mental health of "at risk groups" such as those identified under Section 75. of NI Act 1998 and within the Mental Health Promotion Strategy and Action Plan 2003-08.</p> <p>Promote the mental health of ex-prisoners and their families.</p>	A range of MHP projects across N&W Belfast	N&W Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
		<p>Promote the mental health of isolated older people in the North and West Belfast locality.</p> <p>Participate in mental health promotion partnerships and collaborative working with other organisations to provide mental health promotion initiatives which have the potential to be mainstreamed by each organisation in subsequent years.</p> <p>Provide mental health promotion initiatives to reduce stigma and increase awareness for people with severe and enduring mental health needs and their carers within primary care settings.</p>		

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
IMAGO project	Oasis Caring in Action	The IMAGO project is a befriending service that delivers an early intervention programme targeting vulnerable and 'at risk' people who have minor to moderate mental health problems. The project provides individuals with support, friendship and practical help linking them to local community, educational, health and social activities.	To employ 1 manager; 1 supervisor; 6 part time befrienders plus associated programme costs.	East Belfast
Music Therapy for Adolescents	Belfast HSCT	To provide music therapy for adolescents	To provide music therapy for adolescents	Belfast wide
Mental Health Programme: Mood Matters & MHFA	Aware Defeat Depression	This project aims to increase awareness of positive mental health, prevention of mental ill health, reduced stigma, self help, and coping skills to deal with stress, anxiety and depression.	To deliver 2 MHFA in N&W Belfast To deliver 19 Mood Matters Programmes in N&W Belfast	North & West Belfast
Self Harm Zest Training	Belfast HSCT	To provide self harm training within the BHSCT	To provide self harm training within the BHSCT	Belfast wide
Unscheduled care Pilot	Belfast HSCT	To pilot a 'first responder' project between the BHSCT and FASA employing two support workers to work in partnership with the USC team in Belfast Trust	To pilot a 'first responder' project between the BHSCT and FASA employing two support workers to work in partnership with the USC team in Belfast Trust	Belfast wide

## Self Harm and Attempted Suicide

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have (i) self harmed; and (ii) attempted suicide in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust area over the last six months.

**(AQW 15583/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Information on the number of people who have (i) self harmed and (ii) attempted suicide in the last 6 months is not available.

However, information is available from the Northern Ireland Registry of Deliberate Self Harm on the number of people who have presented with deliberate self harm at emergency care departments in the Belfast HSC Trust for the first quarter of 2012/13. The criteria for recording on the registry is based on the World Health Organisations definition of deliberate self harm, which includes self harm and attempted suicide; although, it is not possible to determine the number attempting suicide.

During the quarter ending 30 June 2012, 467 people presented with deliberate self harm at emergency care departments in the Belfast HSC Trust.

## Departmental Property in Downpatrick

**Mr Hazzard** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, over the last five years, how many times the emergency services have been called out to departmental property in Downpatrick because of anti-social behaviour.

**(AQW 15613/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service has attended 19 fires which were suspected of having been started deliberately at Departmental property in Downpatrick between 1 January 2008 and 17 October 2012.

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service is unable to provide the information requested as it does not categorise mobilisations by anti-social behaviour.

## Suicide Rates in Mid-Ulster

**Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the work that has been carried out during his Ministerial term to combat suicide rates in Mid-Ulster.

**(AQW 15615/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** During my term as Health Minister a range of services has been provided regionally which are available to people from the Mid Ulster constituency. These include:

- Lifeline 24/7 helpline and associated, locally-based, support services;
- The Deliberate Self Harm Registry, which operates at all A&E Units, and operation of the Card Before You Leave (CBYL) protocol at A&E sites;
- Training on suicide/mental health awareness; and
- Public information campaigning to: encourage help-seeking; raise awareness of suicide and positive mental health; and reduce stigma associated with suicide and mental health.

In relation to Mid Ulster, the Public Health Agency and Northern and Southern Trusts work with, and help fund, a number of organisations to deliver suicide and self harm prevention services. These organisations, some of which are based in Mid Ulster and some of which have Trust-wide coverage, include Contact NI, Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network, Aware Defeat Depression, Dare to Stretch, ZEST, NEELB/SELB, Mid-Ulster CAB, CRUSE, Niamh Louise Foundation, Opportunity Youth, Action Mental Health, Rainbow and Youth Action.

Services provided include crisis response and counselling for high risk groups such as families affected by suicide, young men, people who self harm, and people with substance misuse problems. Personal

development programmes, and drama based awareness/education interventions have also been supported. In addition, community emergency response plans have been developed to respond to potential suicide clusters in the area.

### **Protect Life**

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust provides in (i) east; (ii) west; (iii) north; and (iv) south Belfast via Protect Life.

**(AQW 15616/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** There is no evidence, through the Sudden Death notification system, of a spike in suspected deaths by suicide in the Belfast area over recent weeks. From the end of July this year, fifteen suspected deaths by suicide in the Belfast area have been notified to the Public Health Agency. Sadly, this is reflective of trends experienced over the last five years and work, therefore, is ongoing to address the high levels of suicide in areas of Belfast. This includes awareness raising, promotion of help-seeking behaviour, bereavement support, training for “gatekeepers”, and provision of counselling and crisis support.

Details of activities in specific areas of Belfast are attached.

**PROTECT LIFE STRATEGY:**

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Bridge of Hope: Suicide & Self Harm Therapeutic Support	Ashton Community Trust	This programme aims to assist the North Belfast community toward better mental health, with a particular emphasis on those who are suffering stress and trauma as a result of the political conflict. This programme aims to help people cope with the stress and trauma of living in an area dealing with 30 years of political conflict and significant social and economic deprivation.	Bridge of Hope will deliver 860 complementary therapies to 143 people during the year April 2012 to March 2013 through Suicide Prevention Funding. In addition the organisation will continue to work with existing and new partners to raise awareness about the issue and to reach out to those who currently do not engage with services. The organization will play an active part in suicide prevention work and actively support the 'moving on' of individuals from services.	North Belfast
Mood Matters & Mental Health First Aid	Aware Defeat Depression	This project aims to increase awareness of positive mental health, prevention of mental ill health, reduced stigma, self help, and coping skills to deal with stress, anxiety and depression.	<p>1 Mental Health First Aid programme – Belfast wide</p> <p>5 Mood Matters programmes targeting pregnant women – Belfast wide</p> <p>5 Mood Matters Programmes targeting Young People - N&amp;W Belfast</p> <p>4 Mood Matters Programmes targeting young people in S&amp;E Belfast</p> <p>2 Mood Matters Programmes targeting adults in S&amp;E Belfast</p>	Belfast wide

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Supporting Children & Young People Bereaved Through Suicide	Barnardo's	Barnardo's Child Bereavement Service aims to meet the needs of bereaved children and their families who have experienced complex and traumatic bereavement. This programme has developed an expertise in supporting children and young people bereaved through suicide.	30 packages of care 16 CYP receiving individual support 2 group event for 6 families 1 Christmas group event for 10 families 10 Training sessions to partner organisations including schools 2 Crisis Intervention Groups (if required)	Belfast wide
Pathways to Mental Health & Peace: Ex Prisoners & Families Support	Charter NI	Charter for NI & EPIC is key providers of services to ex prisoners have formed a partnership along with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, East Belfast Alternatives and East Belfast Mission. The programme will provide 284 professional confidential community based counselling sessions with a wraparound complementary service which comprises of 50 alternative therapies helping clients to enjoy better health and a more vital life, encouraging the client to feel comfortable and the motivation to utilize counselling services	284 counselling sessions 28 supervision sessions 50 alternative therapy sessions Hold a minimum of 4 information sessions in the target area Produce a report that will inform the steering group of progress Project running cost and overheads	East Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Green Gym (Protect Life)	Conservation Volunteers	This Green Gym project aims to create the opportunity for positive citizenship, improved physical and mental health, raised awareness of environmental issues and the development of new skills and training toward employment for participants.	3 x10 week Green Gym projects to be delivered in S&E Belfast 8 taster sessions	South & East Belfast
S&E Belfast Youth Counselling Services	Contact	The counselling support will ensure that local people within the area feel supported by services that will improve their mental health and wellbeing. They will know how to access help in future and will be familiar with the onward referral organizations and services. This information can be shared amongst families and communities.	1 volunteer co-ordinator counsellor 16hpw delivering 350 counselling sessions in South and East Belfast primarily focused on young people	South & East Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
SOS Family Support Programme	East Belfast Community Development Agency	<p>This project aims to provide support for people bereaved through suicide and provide information on suicide prevention in East Belfast.</p> <p><b>OBJECTIVES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 To increase suicide prevention work through outreach and promotional work by the suicide prevention information officer</li> <li>2 To provide post-vention support, promoting hope, recovery and long term positive mental health for families bereaved by suicide</li> <li>3 Work to de-stigmatise suicide and self-harm through networking and outreach</li> <li>4 To develop governance standards, professional standards, and overall capacity of the SOS group.</li> <li>5 To ensure the SOS group's experiences are recognised and reflected in strategic development at policy level.</li> <li>6 To increase coordination and joined-up approach to addressing suicide in East Belfast, as well as Belfast and NI in general</li> </ol>	<p>1 Suicide Prevention Information Officer 25 hrs  Programme Costs to support SOS activities  100 Counselling Sessions  1x12 week Suicide Therapy Group Programme  Programme running costs and overheads</p>	East Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Mental Health Advocacy Project	East Belfast Independent Advice Centre	<p>EBIAC will deliver a Mental Health Advocacy Project that will minimise the impact of external issues such as poverty, unemployment, homelessness and debt on mental health and wellbeing and suicide rates by using an interagency and collaborative approach with three interconnected strands i.e. Prevention; Intervention and Strategic working. A dedicated advocacy worker will provide practical assistance with multiple issues such as debt, housing problems, welfare benefit applications and disputes including representation at benefit appeal tribunals.</p>	To provide part funding to employ 1 full time Mental Health Advocacy Worker	East Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Womens Counselling & Complementary Therapies	Falls Women's Centre	This project aims to deliver a holistic counselling and complementary health service to women and their families within the Greater West Belfast area. Women and their families will be supported within a holistic wraparound service including advice, advocacy, family support, training and childcare.art therapy, benefit analysis, debt management, housing, training & education, personal development, young people's project, ethnic minority project.	258 Counselling sessions 172 Holistic therapy sessions 1 stress management course	West Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
FASA: Family Support & Suicide Prevention Response Services	FASA	<p>This Protect Life service aims to provide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Services in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce the stigma of Suicide and Self Harm</li> <li>Raise awareness of help and support across Belfast, targeting N&amp;W Belfast</li> <li>Deliver a major campaign regarding suicide in association with major corporate company</li> <li>Promote positive mental health and wellbeing across individuals, families and communities</li> <li>Promote help seeking behaviour</li> <li>Support those who are in suicidal crisis</li> <li>Support those bereaved by suicide</li> <li>Ensure a Community Suicide Response plan in Greater Shankill</li> <li>Contribute to the aims and outcomes of the Protect Life Strategy for NI</li> </ul>	<p>Funding to employ the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Community Suicide Liaison Officer</li> <li>1 Crisis Response worker</li> <li>1 Crisis Intervention Worker</li> </ul> <p>Part funding 1 Crisis Intervention Team Leader – 30 hours Programme Costs</p>	North & West Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Crisis Response Support (Out of Hours Pilot)	FASA	To provide out of hours crisis support in S&E Belfast for 150 individuals between April 2012 and 31 December 2012. To provide support for Belfast Response Plan activation if required.	To provide out of hours crisis support in S&E Belfast for 150 individuals between April 2012 and 31 December 2012. To provide support for Belfast Response Plan activation if required.	South & East Belfast
Holy Trinity Counselling Service	Holy Trinity Centre	The Holy Trinity Protect Life Project aims to provide appropriate psychological support through counselling as a method of intervention to those most at risk from self harm and suicide and for those who have been bereaved through suicide.	2 part time counsellors – 15 hpw 1 part time administrator – 15 hpw Project running costs and overheads	West Belfast
Provision of Out of Hours Counselling Project	Holy Trinity Centre	To pilot an out of hours weekend suicide intervention service	To pilot an out of hours weekend suicide intervention service	West Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
LCP: Lenadoon Counselling Project	Lenadoon Community Forum	<p>The aim of Lenadoon Counselling Project (LCP) is to provide a professional, structured and confidential counselling service to individuals and families from an exceptionally wide client-base living in west Belfast and beyond, and offer a safe environment where individuals can be listened to, respected and given a sense of safety and value.</p> <p>The overall objectives of LCP are to offer client-centred counselling based on assessment of need, promote and introduce community based counselling services through partnership working across all relevant sectors, establish and build upon a network of referrals among all relevant sectors to complement more referral procedures and provide and facilitate training that will equip individuals with skills and knowledge to build capacity within the mental health field.</p>	1032 Counselling sessions 2 ASIST workshops	West Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Counselling project (Out of Hours Service)	Lenadoon Community Forum	To pilot an out of hours weekend suicide intervention service	To pilot an out of hours weekend suicide intervention service	West Belfast
Lighthouse: Family Support Services	Lighthouse	<p>Lighthouse aims to provide a beacon of hope and a path to recovery for those who have been affected by suicide and self harm. Lighthouse aims to -work for the assistance of persons who are suicidal, despairing or in distress and thus reduce the incidence of suicide and self harm</p> <p>-alleviating distress and offer assistance to people who have suffered loss through suicide and anguish through self harm</p> <p>-promoting the fostering of positive mental health to improve the emotional wellbeing of people residing in Belfast and its environs</p> <p>-advancing the education of the public into, and raise awareness of, the causes and effects of suicide and self harm and into matters relating to the nature of grieving, bereavement and the treatment and rehabilitation of individuals that self harm.</p>	<p>Part funding to employ 1 full time co-ordinator 37hpwull time</p> <p>1 part time family support worker – 20hpw</p> <p>1 part time counsellor/crisis worker 20hpw</p> <p>1 part time art &amp; personal development therapist 15hpw</p> <p>576 Sessional counselling sessions 12 pw</p> <p>624 Complementary therapies 12pw</p> <p>Administrative support</p> <p>Project Running Costs and overheads</p> <p>Staff supervision</p>	North Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Match of the Day: Mentoring Scheme for Vulnerable Young People	Mulholland Aftercare Services	<p>This project aims to reduce suicide ideation, self harm, loneliness and isolation in young males 16 – 25 who reside in economically deprived areas.</p> <p>The project will provide one to one mentoring with a volunteer for 25 young men, for the period of up to 1 year.</p> <p>group mentoring for 10 young males focusing on a series of 12 workshops over the year.</p> <p>group mentoring for 5 young males in MACS leaving and aftercare accommodation project, providing weekly group support from September 2011.</p> <p>-Promote and nurture positive self esteem. Safety and emotional well-being</p> <p>-Help empower young men to meet their full potential as active citizens within their communities</p>	<p>1 full time mentoring project worker 35hpw</p> <p>Contribution to volunteer match budget</p> <p>Project running costs and overheads – travel</p>	South & East Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Falls Counselling Project: HEART Programme	Maureen Sheehan Centre	<p>Heart Protect Life Project will add value to a mental health improvement service established at the Healthy Living Centre through the CALM (Combating Anxiety by Lifestyle Management) programme and aim to reduce the risk factors with regards to suicide and self harm such as the impact of poverty, poor relationships, alcohol/drug abuse and increase protective factors such as coping skills, raised self esteem and the development of environments which are supportive and enable individuals to overcome or cope more effectively. The project will provide counselling and complementary therapies that are additional to the CALM service targeted at people who have self harmed, attempted suicide, have suicidal thoughts or are the families and or friends of those bereaved by suicide.</p>	<p>200 hours of counselling 60 hours of complementary therapies Insurance cover for counsellors and therapists Supervision cost for counsellors</p>	West Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Suicide Prevention and Support Counselling	New Life Counselling	New Life Counselling aims to support individuals and families who have been affected by attempted suicide, suicidal ideation and self harming behaviours and those who have experienced bereavement as a result of suicide. This Protect Life funded project will provide counselling sessions for children and young people, adults and families affected by suicide.	2 FTE counsellors 1 part time administrative officer 800 counselling sessions for 200 CYP 1000 counselling sessions for 350 adults 10 counselling sessions for 3 families Programme costs – clinical supervision Project running costs & overheads	North & West Belfast

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Protect Life - Mentoring Support for Vulnerable Young People	Opportunity Youth	<p>Opportunity youth provide crisis mentoring support to young people and vulnerable adults, presenting with issues around suicide self harm, suicide prevention and emotional health and wellbeing concerns. The project will create opportunities for 72 young people Belfast Wide at risk and in crisis situations to access support, engage in appropriate action and support plans that address and reduce risk. Identifying risk and building protective factors, for young people and vulnerable adults so as they can and keep themselves safe in times of crisis.</p>	<p>1 mentor 30hpw 1mentor 22.5hpw Project running costs and overheads</p>	Belfast wide

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Co-cultural Counselling Services for Men	Rainbow	<p>The programme will provide co-cultural minority sexual orientation counselling to gay and bisexual men (and those unsure of their sexual orientation) within the Belfast Trust Area. A support group will be established dependent on the identified needs of those accessing counselling support. This may be gay fathers, men living with HIV or young men's group. There will be a campaign targeted at the LGBT community to raise awareness of the increased risk of suicide and self-harm among this group. The provision of training to counselling organisations, and guidance documents will enable mainstream service providers to respond appropriately to the needs of Gay and Bisexual men and those unsure of their orientation. Partnerships with key organisations working in suicide prevention and mental health promotion will be created, strengthened and nurtured as appropriate.</p>	1 part payment of salary for counsellor	Belfast wide

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
SASG Bereavement Support Service	Suicide Awareness Support Group	<p>The overall aim of the Suicide Awareness and Support Group is to improve the quality of life for those bereaved by suicide within the Greater West Belfast area.</p> <p>Bereavement services at the SA&amp;SG have been developed and designed to facilitate recovery and healing after a suicidal death.</p> <p>Identifying the individuality of need is established and individuals are supported within the delivery of our holistic services.</p>	<p>To employ 1 General Manager</p> <p>To employ 1 Development Worker</p> <p>To provide 343 counselling hours</p> <p>To provide 343 complementary therapies</p> <p>To deliver 3 ASIST training courses</p>	West Belfast
TATE Belfast - Counselling & Complementary Therapies	Windsor Womens Centre	<p>T.A.T.E. Belfast aims to offer a holistic approach to improving the health and emotional wellbeing of the community. The project delivers targeted counselling and complementary therapies to at risk groups in order to reduce health inequalities and raise the levels of health and emotional well-being.</p>	<p>200 counselling sessions</p> <p>350 complementary therapy sessions</p> <p>12 therapeutic art sessions</p> <p>4 music therapy group sessions</p> <p>12 craft class sessions</p> <p>3 stress clinics</p> <p>Project running costs &amp; overheads</p>	South & East Belfast

**MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION:**

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Mental Health Promotion Activity	Belfast HSCT	To develop a rehabilitation programme of activities for young people who have a diagnosis of severe mental illness to promote the development of social and interpersonal skills and learn competencies required for independent living.	The team frequently run a health and wellbeing group with patients and interactive work with the patients. The team also provides education, family support and individual work whilst with the individual and family.	Belfast wide

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
Change Of Mind Community Of Interest	Belfast HSCT	<p>Change of Mind Community of Interest confirmed the following 2012-2013 priorities consistent with the priorities set out in the current Mental Health Promotion Strategy and Action Plan 2003-2008 and the anticipated Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy:-Early Years Interventions capable of building emotional resilience and self esteem.</p> <p>Promote the mental health of "at risk groups" such as those identified under Section 75. of NI Act 1998 and within the Mental Health Promotion Strategy and Action Plan 2003-08.</p> <p>Promote the mental health of ex-prisoners and their families.</p>	A range of MHP projects across N&W Belfast	N&W Belfast

Programme	Delivery Organisation	Programme Aim	Programme Detail:	Targeted area
		<p>Promote the mental health of isolated older people in the North and West Belfast locality.</p> <p>Participate in mental health promotion partnerships and collaborative working with other organisations to provide mental health promotion initiatives which have the potential to be mainstreamed by each organisation in subsequent years.</p> <p>Provide mental health promotion initiatives to reduce stigma and increase awareness for people with severe and enduring mental health needs and their carers within primary care settings.</p>		

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Delivery Organisation</b>	<b>Programme Aim</b>	<b>Programme Detail:</b>	<b>Targeted area</b>
IMAGO project	Oasis Caring in Action	The IMAGO project is a befriending service that delivers an early intervention programme targeting vulnerable and 'at risk' people who have minor to moderate mental health problems. The project provides individuals with support, friendship and practical help linking them to local community, educational, health and social activities.	To employ 1 manager; 1 supervisor; 6 part time befrienders plus associated programme costs.	East Belfast
Music Therapy for Adolescents	Belfast HSCT	To provide music therapy for adolescents	To provide music therapy for adolescents	Belfast wide
Mental Health Programme: Mood Matters & MHFA	Aware Defeat Depression	This project aims to increase awareness of positive mental health, prevention of mental ill health, reduced stigma, self help, and coping skills to deal with stress, anxiety and depression.	To deliver 2 MHFA in N&W Belfast To deliver 19 Mood Matters Programmes in N&W Belfast	North & West Belfast
Self Harm Zest Training	Belfast HSCT	To provide self harm training within the BHSCT	To provide self harm training within the BHSCT	Belfast wide
Unscheduled care Pilot	Belfast HSCT	To pilot a 'first responder' project between the BHSCT and FASA employing two support workers to work in partnership with the USC team in Belfast Trust	To pilot a 'first responder' project between the BHSCT and FASA employing two support workers to work in partnership with the USC team in Belfast Trust	Belfast wide

## Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Agency Staff

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many clerical and administration agency staff have been let go by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last two years, broken down by department; and whether these positions have been, or will be, filled by permanent staff.

**(AQW 15622/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Agency staff are used on a short-term basis by Trusts for a variety of reasons e.g. to cover sickness or maternity leave or to allow permanent staff to work on the development of new projects. In the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust the decision to appoint and terminate agency staff is a function delegated to managers throughout the Trust. While my Department requires the Trust to monitor the cost of Agency staff the level of detail requested is not held centrally or recorded locally.

## New Omagh Hospital

**Mr Byrne** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the time scale for the start and completion of the new Omagh Hospital.

**(AQW 15679/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Work to deliver the new Omagh hospital is well underway. The site enabling works are progressing to plan and include demolitions, road widening and the construction of a new outer link road. Further works are scheduled to commence on site in the coming weeks. It is planned that construction of the main hospital building will begin in summer 2013 and will be completed by the end of 2015. Following handover and a period of commissioning the hospital is expected to open in 2016.

## Family Support Hubs

**Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the family support hubs that are currently operating in each (i) district council; and (ii) constituency area.

**(AQW 15686/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** It is not possible to provide this information in the format that you have requested.

There are currently 17 Family Support Hubs located in the following locations:

Western Outcomes Area	Shantallow
	Waterside
	Creggan
	Dry Arch (Dungiven)
	Strabane
	Omagh
	Fermanagh
Northern Outcomes Area	Larne/Carrickfergus
	Ballymena
	Magherfelt/Cookstown
	Coleraine
Southern Outcomes Area	Newry
	Craigavon/Banbridge
	Armagh/Dungannon

<b>Western Outcomes Area</b>	<b>Shantallow</b>
South Eastern Outcomes Area	Lisburn
	Downpatrick
	Bangor
Belfast Outcomes Area	Currently under development

### **Differentials in Pay**

**Mr Dallat** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to remove the differentials in pay between the staff in different Health and Social Care Trusts who do the same jobs. **(AQW 15784/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Agenda for Change process, which was implemented in partnership by HSC employers with Trade Unions, sought to grade jobs depending on the skills and responsibilities of the job. The implementation process contained a number of checks to ensure consistency within individual HSC organisations and across a number of other HSC organisations.

In addition, where individual staff had evidence that the grading applied to their job was incorrect they could ask their employer to undertake a review of the grading. In this part of the process the grading was subject to a Regional Quality Assurance exercise in order to validate the grading. Following the merger of the HSC Trusts in 2007 Trusts found that the grading of some staff, who had not requested a review, were out of step with others in the new organisation that were doing an identical job. Negotiations with Trade Unions during the summer of 2011 resulted in a collective "Clustering Agreement" which in certain circumstances allowed these staff to move to the higher grade from 1 October 2008.

In October 2011 my Department wrote to HSC employers asking them to ensure that equal pay principles were adhered to following the Review of Public Administration Trust mergers. This required individual employers to revisit all of the Agenda for Change grading for their staff and to take corrective action where there were grading inconsistencies which could not be objectively justified.

### **Former Downe Hospital Site in Downpatrick**

**Mr Hazzard** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of another arson attack on departmental property in Downpatrick, what more can be done to make the area less susceptible to anti-social behaviour. **(AQW 15801/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Health and Safety Executive visited St John's building, located within the old Downe Hospital site boundary following the recent arson attack; it has made a number of recommendations to the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (the Trust). These are to: remove the roof; compartmentalise the building; erect scaffolding; remove external and internal asbestos; and complete an environmental clean of the site. The Trust will be submitting a business case to the Department and seeking funding to complete these recommended works.

In an attempt to try to stop any further vandalism, Pound Lane and St John's buildings will be demolished. In the interim, the Trust is working closely with the PSNI to re-secure the site and NIEA to re-secure and protect the listed buildings on site.

Land and Property Services (LPS) has been instructed to commence marketing the site.

## Suicides in East Belfast

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what actions are being taken to combat the recent epidemic of suicides in east Belfast.

**(AQW 15812/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** There is no evidence, through the Sudden Death notification system, of a sudden spike in suspected deaths by suicide in the East Belfast area over recent weeks. From March 2012, eight suspected deaths by suicide in the East Belfast area have been notified to the Public Health Agency. Sadly, this is reflective of trends experienced over the last five years. Work, therefore, is ongoing to tackle suicide in the area through the provision of services such as:

- A Suicide Prevention Information Officer;
- Counselling and complementary therapies for individuals, families, children, and ex-prisoners;
- Crisis response;
- Bereavement support;
- Mentoring for vulnerable young people;
- Mental health advocacy; and
- “Green Gym” conservation volunteering.

Residents and groups in East Belfast have access to suicide prevention services that are regionally available. These include: Lifeline; Deliberate Self Harm Registry services and the Card Before You Leave protocol; training on suicide/mental health awareness; and awareness raising and stigma reduction programmes;.

Within the past two weeks, senior officials from the Public Health Agency and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust have met with community groups involved in suicide prevention in East Belfast to explore how services can be enhanced.

## Self Harm and Suicide

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given the recently reported increases in self harm and suicide, what additional measures are being considered to raise awareness and to help those people affected.

**(AQW 15839/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The refreshed Protect Life strategy published in June 2012 contains a number of new actions to combat suicide and self harm. These include: involving sporting organisations in delivering positive mental health and wellbeing messages; identifying specific arts interventions that improve mental health; and providing community-based “Health Checks” in rural areas. As part of the roll out of the All-Island Action Plan on suicide prevention a new Men’s Health Forum pilot project has been launched “‘Young Men and Suicide” has delivered a valuable new interactive online programme called ‘WorkOut’.

The Public Health Agency is taking forward a number of additional and enhanced services. These include: additional self harm and family support services; self harm training in support of National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence guidelines; additional and enhanced services for vulnerable and marginalised groups and the development of a new public information campaign.

## Marie Stopes Clinic in Belfast

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps were taken to ensure adequate regulation was put in place since he became aware, in January 2012, of the intention to open a Marie Stopes clinic; and why was an unregulated context allowed to continue.

**(AQW 15902/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Medical staff within the clinic are regulated through their own professional bodies. Abortion in Northern Ireland is regulated by criminal law.

The Department has been, and continues to be, in a process of seeking details through RQIA of the full range of services and medical professionals providing services at MSI, in order to determine whether this clinic would be regulated under the definition in the The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. On the basis of this information, the Department has sought legal advice.

Marie Stopes has confirmed that they intend to fully comply with all laws and regulatory systems in Northern Ireland. All organisations delivering health and social care are expected to operate within the existing legal framework. I am currently exploring legislative options to help ensure public confidence.

Whilst aware MSI were showing interest in Northern Ireland, the Department was informed on 9 October of the proposed opening of a clinic in the week commencing 15 October.

### **High Court Ruling on Adoption**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on what evidence he has based his decision to challenge the High Court ruling on adoption.

**(AQW 15945/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I am deeply disappointed at the judgment of Treacy J. My officials are currently considering the judgment in consultation with the Department's legal advisers. They will also need to consider the order of the court once it is available. It would not therefore be appropriate to comment further at this stage.

## **Department of Justice**

### **Audits or Inspections Carried out by the Courts Estate**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the dates of audits or inspections carried out by the Courts Estate, in each of the last three years, to ensure that disabled car parking bays are not being abused by the public or staff at all facilities within his Department's remit; and (ii) whether he can offer an assurance that a zero tolerance policy is being enforced.

**(AQW 15154/11-15)**

**Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice ):** No specific audits or inspections have been carried out by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service on the use of disabled parking bays in the last three years. Courthouses with disabled parking bays are monitored by security staff.

### **Edward Connors**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice whether he has ordered a Serious Case Review into the handling of convicted rapist Edward Connors, or whether he will instigate a review as a matter of urgency.

**(AQW 15155/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The guidance to agencies on public protection arrangements (PPANI), issued under Article 49 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008, contains guidance on serious case reviews to be followed by the relevant criminal justice agencies. This guidance is available on the Department of Justice website.

The case referred to does not fall within the terms of the guidance.

## Legal Aid

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) whether Legal Aid has been granted in each of the following cases (a) 12/096040 (Bernadette McGeary); (b) 12/096040 (Stephen McGeary); and (c) 12/096040 (Catherine McGeary) at Dungannon Magistrates Court; (ii) how much, to date, has been paid to each defendant; and (iii) for an estimate of the final cost of Legal Aid for each defendant, including the proposed preliminary inquiry.

**(AQW 15156/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission has no record of the ICOS reference quoted in the question. A check on the defendants' names showed that a legal aid certificate for Solicitor only has been granted to all three defendants.

As the case is still ongoing no bills have been received to date.

The committal proceedings will determine whether the defendants will be returned for trial to the Crown Court. At present there is insufficient information available to provide an accurate estimate of the final cost of the case.

## Charges in Relation to the 12 July 2012 Disturbances

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) how many people, to date, have been charged in relation to the 12 July 2012 disturbances, broken down by court division; (ii) how many defendants received Legal Aid; (iii) how many legal firms have been instructed; (iv) how many certificates have been granted for counsel; and (v) how much Legal Aid has been paid to date.

**(AQW 15157/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** As of 9 October 2012 31 individuals have been charged in relation to the 12 July 2012 disturbances in the Ardoyne area of Belfast. One of the individuals charged has subsequently died.

Twenty seven defendants have been granted legal aid for a solicitor only to represent them in the Magistrates Court. Legal aid has been granted for two defendants to have representation by Junior Counsel in the Magistrates Court.

Nineteen firms are on record for thirty of those charged and one individual is unrepresented.

The total amount of Legal Aid paid in respect of proceedings in the Magistrates Court to date is £720.00 (including VAT of £120.00).

## Legal Aid Provided to Bernadette McGeary

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice how much Legal Aid, since 2008, has been provided to Bernadette McGeary to defend fraud charges at Dungannon Magistrates Court ; and why this case was eventually dismissed.

**(AQW 15204/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** £1,946.79 (including VAT of £259.79 & disbursements of £202.48) was paid to the defendant's solicitors in respect of this case.

The reason why the case was dismissed is a matter for the court. The judiciary operate independently from Government and I can not comment on judicial decisions.

## Staff Charged with Criminal Offences

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice (i) whether any departmental staff have been charged with criminal offences; and (ii) what is his Department's position regarding staff employment whilst court proceedings are pending.

**(AQW 15208/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Employment whilst court proceedings are pending is governed by the NICS Staff Handbook which states “the person exercising formal disciplinary powers may, if the circumstances warrant it, pursue formal disciplinary action without waiting on the outcome of any police investigation and disposal of any resulting criminal proceedings”. Careful consideration is given to appropriate action on a case by case basis.

As there are less than five members of staff within the Department of Justice who have criminal charges outstanding the actual number has been withheld. This is to protect the identity of the individuals concerned as disclosure would be contrary to the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **Edward Connors**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice to detail all convictions, including dates and disposals, in the case of Edward Connors, prior to his conviction for rape committed in 2008.

**(AQW 15209/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Edward Connors had no criminal convictions prior to his conviction for rape.

### **Offender Levy for Victims of Crime**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 14311/11-15, where the funds, and other funds accrued through the Offenders Levy, will be allocated.

**(AQW 15210/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Revenue collected from the Offender levy will be used to resource a dedicated Victims of Crime Fund. The Fund will pay for projects which support victims and witnesses in the justice process, as well as for local initiatives taken forward by groups working with victims in the community.

### **Defendants Addresses**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice whether it is acceptable for a defendant to provide a political party office as an address as opposed to the actual place of residence.

**(AQW 15280/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** While not prescribed by legislation, it is acceptable in practice for a defendant to provide a political party office as an address so long as the prosecuting authority is content that the address is suitable for summons service and, if required, the court is content that the address is suitable for bail purposes.

### **Preliminary Inquiries**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 14447/11-15, in how many of the 1467 cases Legal Aid was provided; and the total cost of the Legal Aid.

**(AQW 15282/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The information sought could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

### **Martin Corey**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice to detail the dates of any representations that Amnesty International has made to his Department in relation to Martin Corey.

**(AQW 15341/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Northern Ireland Prison Service has no record of any representations made from Amnesty International on behalf of Mr Martin Corey.

## Marian Price

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice whether Marian Price remains in the care of a general hospital or whether she has been returned to prison, including the date of return.

**(AQW 15345/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Mrs Marian McGlinchey remains under the care of the Belfast Trust.

## Protecting People from Stalking

**Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Justice whether he has any plans to strengthen the laws in relation to protecting people from stalking.

**(AQW 15348/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** My answer to AQW/15346/11-15 indicated that there is currently no specific offence of stalking in Northern Ireland, though I am aware that both England and Wales and Scotland have recently created specific offences and penalties in this area. At this stage I have no plans to create similar legislation. I will keep developments in Great Britain under review.

## People Charged with Criminal Offences providing the Office of a Political Party as an Address

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice how many people who have been charged with criminal offences, currently going through the Belfast Magistrates Court system, have provided the office of a political party as an address.

**(AQW 15416/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** One person currently before Belfast Magistrates' Court has provided an address that contains the name of a political party.

## Preliminary Investigations

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice how many preliminary Investigations have been held in each of the last three years, broken down by court division; and how many of these cases did not proceed to trial.

**(AQW 15417/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Table A below sets out the number of cases for which a preliminary investigation was held in 2009, 2010 and 2011. Table B sets out the number of cases for which a preliminary investigation was held but where the case was not committed for trial in the Crown Court. Both tables are broken down by County Court Division.

**TABLE A: NUMBER OF CASES FOR WHICH A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION WAS HELD**

County Court Division	Year		
	2009	2010	2011
Antrim	6	5	4
Ards	2	5	4
Armagh and South Down	6	11	4
Belfast	10	10	20
Craigavon	8	9	8
Fermanagh and Tyrone	11	4	11
Londonderry	1	0	2

County Court Division	Year		
	2009	2010	2011
Total Northern Ireland	44	44	53

**Source:** Integrated Court Operations System

**Note:** There may be more than one defendant in a case

**TABLE B: NUMBER OF PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION CASES NOT COMMITTED FOR TRIAL IN THE CROWN COURT**

County Court Division	Year		
	2009	2010	2011
Antrim	0	0	0
Ards	0	1	1
Armagh and South Down	0	2	0
Belfast	3	2	0
Craigavon	2	2	3
Fermanagh and Tyrone	3	1	5
Londonderry	0	0	2
Total Northern Ireland	8	8	11

**Source:** Integrated Court Operations System

### Marie Stopes Clinic in Belfast

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Justice whether he can give an assurance that the operation of the proposed Marie Stopes clinic in Belfast will be closely monitored to ensure there are no infringements of the law on abortion in Northern Ireland.

**(AQW 15422/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The first obligation to comply with the law on abortion in Northern Ireland rests with the Marie Stopes organisation and the individuals concerned. As I understand it, the future regulation and monitoring of the operation of the proposed clinic will be a matter for the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority under the authority of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. The Minister of Health is currently considering how that might be achieved. If there is evidence of a crime having been committed, the police and independent prosecuting authorities will investigate and prosecute as appropriate.

### Burglaries

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of (i) burglaries in each of the last three months in the Foyle constituency; and (ii) convictions in relation to these burglaries.

**(AQW 15470/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Information on the number of burglaries is collected by the Police Service of Northern Ireland. While information by constituency is available following an exercise at year end, in-year this information is only available broken down by police command area.

**NUMBER OF BURGLARIES IN FOYLE POLICE COMMAND AREA JUNE – AUGUST 2012**

	<b>June 2012</b>	<b>July 2012</b>	<b>August 2012</b>
Burglary in a dwelling	28	24	32
Burglary in a building other than a dwelling	18	15	13

Further information in relation to burglaries may be obtained by contacting PSNI directly.

Conviction statistics for 2012 are not yet available. Conviction datasets only contain information on the location of the offender and not on the location of the offence.

**Community Groups in the North Down Area**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Justice what work his Department is currently carrying out with community groups in the North Down area.

**(AQW 15509/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** My Department fully recognises the need to work in partnership with communities to identify their concerns about local criminal justice and community safety issues. In particular, the newly established North Down Policing and Community Safety Partnership will have a pivotal role in developing partnership working at a local level and in supporting communities in identifying problems and developing solutions to issues of local concern.

Similarly, the Youth Justice Agency and Probation Board for Northern Ireland deliver a range of services in partnership with community based organisations across North Down. The emphasis of this work is to help those in contact with the criminal justice system, address their offending behaviour, divert them from further crime, and, if necessary, reintegrate them into the community.

Further details of the work my Department is carrying out with community groups in the North Down area are given at Annex A. This list is not exhaustive, as the Department will engage with community groups on an ad-hoc basis as particular needs arise.

**ANNEX A****DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE WORK WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS IN NORTH DOWN**

<b>Sponsoring Body</b>	<b>Community Group/ Organisation</b>	<b>Activity</b>
North Down Policing and Community Safety Partnership	Ashbury Community Group Breezemount Community Association Bloomfield Community Association Clandeboyne Community Association Harbour Community Association Holywood RECON Holywood Family Trust Redburn Community Association Kilcooley Action Groups Bangor Alternatives Rathgill Community Association Whitehill Community Association	The Partnership works with the listed groups to deliver in these areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Priority Youth Engagement Programme to address Anti-Social behaviour;</li> <li>■ Good Morning Call Programme reducing fear of crime;</li> <li>■ Intergenerational programmes; and</li> <li>■ Safety of Seniors Crime Prevention Roadshows.</li> </ul>

<b>Sponsoring Body</b>	<b>Community Group/ Organisation</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Youth Justice Agency (YJA)	Salvation Army	Use of Premises and reparation.
	FASA	Mentoring, 1-2-3 Counselling and reparation.
	North Down Community Network	Use of premises.
	Conservation Volunteers	Reparation.
	North Down YMCA	Programmes for young people.
	Rathgill Community Association	Reparation.
	Assisi Animal Sanctuary	Reparation.
	NI Alternatives	Reparation.
	Clandeboyne Community Association	Programmes for young people and reparation
	Growing Connections	Reparation. (Horticultural).
	Rathgael Gymnasium	Reparation.
	Simon Community	Programmes and counselling.
	Kilcooley Primary School	Time to Read – Business in the Community scheme were staff give time to help children with reading recovery.
	Elim Church Bangor	Staff from Juvenile Justice Centre assist with fortnightly football.
Probation Board NI	Assisi Animal Sanctuary	Funded through the Community Development Grant scheme to provide programmes for adjudicated offenders.
	Minnowburn Riding for the Disabled	Funded through the Community Development Grant scheme to provide programmes for adjudicated offenders.
	Oxfam Ireland	Funded through the Community Development Grant scheme to provide programmes for adjudicated offenders.
	Conservation Volunteers	Funded by PBNI to work across wider areas but substantial work carried out in North Down area.

<b>Sponsoring Body</b>	<b>Community Group/ Organisation</b>	<b>Activity</b>
	FASA Drug and Alcohol Counselling	Funded by PBNI to work across wider areas but substantial work carried out in North Down area.
	FASA Community Development	Funded by PBNI to work across wider areas but substantial work carried out in North Down area.
	Dunlewey Advice Centre	Funded by PBNI to work across wider areas but substantial work carried out in North Down area.
	Relate	Funded by PBNI to work across wider areas but substantial work carried out in North Down area.

	<b>Kilcooley Women's Centre</b>	<b>Programme referrals.</b>
Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service (NICTS)	Ards Intercultural Forum	The Forum promotes and contributes to Good Relations. Staff from NICTS are involved in the Forum and assist in the sharing of information and raising awareness in the Ards, Bangor and Downpatrick Court Office. NICTS has also contributed to the development of the Ards Support Services Booklet for those new to the area.
The Appeals Service (TAS)	Citizens Advice Bureau and Independent Advice Sector	TAS arranges bi-annual liaison meetings with representatives from the Citizens Advice Bureau and Independent Advice Sector across Northern Ireland including North Down.

## **Illegal Fuel**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of (i) prosecutions; and (ii) convictions for the selling of illegal fuel in each of the last two years.

**(AQW 15511/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Court sentencing datasets do not distinguish illegal fuel selling from other oils related crime offences which would be prosecuted under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.

HM Revenue & Customs have confirmed that for 2010/2011 there were four prosecutions and convictions and for 2011/2012 there were six prosecutions and convictions for oils related crime offences.

## Anti-Social Behaviour

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice what additional measures are being considered to combat the problems of anti-social behaviour.

**(AQW 15581/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** In July I launched the new Community Safety Strategy 'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities' which sets the direction for reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime in Northern Ireland over the next five years. In this Strategy I said that my Department would be developing regional action plans to take forward the delivery of the different strands of the strategy, including anti-social behaviour.

Recognising that delivery of the Strategy will only be achieved through partnership working my Department has established Interagency Delivery Groups for each of the strands of the strategy.

The Anti-social Behaviour Delivery Group, which includes representatives from DOJ, PSNI, Housing Executive, Housing Associations, DSD, and PCSPs, is currently developing an action plan of measures to take forward the strategic objectives of the Strategy. The action plan will also incorporate measures to take forward the recommendations from the recent Criminal Justice Inspection report on the criminal justice system's approach to addressing anti-social behaviour.

My officials are scheduled to provide a written briefing on the action plans to the Justice Committee in January 2013.

At a local level, tackling anti-social behaviour is a strategic priority for the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and their local action plans include measures and initiatives to deal with locally identified problems of anti-social behaviour.

## Crime Statistics

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice what changes are being made to the monitoring of crime statistics to ensure that figures are available in a more timely fashion.

**(AQW 15664/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Data on convictions for 2007 and 2008 have been available for answering Assembly Questions since October 2011 and 2009 data since September 2012.

DOJ moved to a new platform for prosecution and conviction data from 2009 and work is currently progressing to process, quality assure and provide data from 2010 onwards. The immediate priority is to clear the backlog but, once this is done, our aim is that conviction and prosecution data will be processed, fully validated and be made available within six months after the year end.

## Marie Stopes Clinic in Belfast

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Justice what arrangements are in place, or will be put in place, to effectively monitor that there are no breaches of the criminal law in the operation of the Marie Stopes clinic, Belfast.

**(AQW 15777/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The first obligation to comply with the law on abortion in Northern Ireland rests with the Marie Stopes organisation and the individuals concerned. As I understand it, the future regulation and monitoring of the operation of the proposed clinic will be a matter for the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority under the authority of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. The Minister of Health is currently considering how that might be achieved. If there is evidence of a crime having been committed, the police and independent prosecuting authorities will investigate and prosecute as appropriate.

## Department for Regional Development

### Information Communicated to Commuters

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are plans to improve the way information is communicated to commuters in relation to road delays and blockages.

**(AQW 15292/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development):** My Department's Roads Service presently keeps road users informed by means of the Trafficwatchni.com website, email alerts, the traffic information telephone helpline and CCTV images on the internet. There is also a dedicated Emergency News page, updated on a 24/7 basis, reporting the occurrence of roads related incidents from across Northern Ireland. In addition, my Department will continue to let BBC Radio Ulster broadcast live and free of charge from the Traffic Information and Control Centre during the morning and evening peak periods.

In an effort to improve the facilities provided, Roads Service is currently considering implementing social media enhancements linked to the Trafficwatchni.com website.

### Pay and Display Car Parks

**Mr Moutray** asked the Minister for Regional Development how much additional revenue has been generated, since June 2012, from the new pay and display car parks in (i) Lurgan; (ii) Portadown; and (iii) Banbridge.

**(AQW 15294/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that details of the additional revenue which been generated, since June 2012, at the new pay and display car parks in Lurgan, Portadown and Banbridge are shown in the table below:

Car Park	From	To	P & D Revenue *
Waring St, Lurgan	4 Jul 2012	28 Sep 2012	£2097.00
Moore's Lane, Lurgan	4 Jul 2012	28 Sep 2012	£1525.00
Magowan Bldgs, Portadown	2 Jun 2012	28 Sep 2012	£61368.00
West St, Portadown	2 Jul 2012	28 Sep 2012	£2462.00
William St, Portadown	2 Jul 2012	28 Sep 2012	£4378.00
Bridge St. East, Banbridge	3 Jul 2012	28 Sep 2012	£2344.00
Townsend St, Banbridge	3 Jul 2012	28 Sep 2012	£1803.00
Downshire Pl, Banbridge	2 Jun 2012	28 Sep 2012	£13103.00

\* VAT is payable on these amounts.

I am also advised that sections of Magowan Buildings and Downshire Place were 'Pay on Foot' and 'Kiosk' car-parks, and have become Pay and Display since April 2012.

### Pay and Display Car Parks

**Mr Moutray** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many parking tickets have been issued since June 2012 at the new pay and display car parks in (i) Lurgan; (ii) Portadown; and (iii) Banbridge.

**(AQW 15295/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that details of the number of parking tickets that have been issued, since June 2012, at the new pay and display car parks in Lurgan, Portadown and Banbridge are shown in the table below:

<b>Car Park</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>PCNs Issued</b>
Waring St, Lurgan	4 Jul 2012	28 Sep 2012	159
Moore's Lane, Lurgan	4 Jul 2012	28 Sep 2012	149
Magowan Bldgs, Portadown	2 Jun 2012	28 Sep 2012	760
West St, Portadown	2 Jul 2012	28 Sep 2012	31
William St, Portadown	2 Jul 2012	28 Sep 2012	191
Bridge St. East, Banbridge	3 Jul 2012	28 Sep 2012	101
Townsend St, Banbridge	3 Jul 2012	28 Sep 2012	62
Downshire Pl, Banbridge	2 Jun 2012	28 Sep 2012	318

I am also advised that sections of Magowan Buildings and Downshire Place were 'Pay on Foot' and 'Kiosk' car-parks and have been converted to Pay and Display since April

### **Traffic Calming Measures**

**Mr Moutray** asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to allocate additional funding for traffic calming measures in the Roads Service Southern Division, given the needs and the support of the community for traffic calming measures to be implemented in Donaghcloney and Blackskull.

**(AQW 15297/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that traffic calming programmes across all Roads Service divisions are developed based on the availability of funding subject to other competing priorities. Given the volume of requests of this nature, within both the Banbridge District Council and Craigavon Borough Council areas, the prioritisation of all schemes progressed by Roads Service Southern Division must be dealt with in a fair and equitable manner.

Officials have further advised the assessments by Roads Service officials of both Blackskull and Donaghcloney for traffic calming measures returned a relatively high priority. However, it is unlikely either scheme will be taken forward based on current funding levels.

However, preliminary design work for both schemes has been completed that would allow schemes to be brought forward as early as possible subject to funding, competing priorities and the successful completion of the required statutory process. These plans will remain under consideration and compete with other sites for inclusion on a future works programme.

I would also advise the Member that community support and interest in improving road safety is always welcomed and is necessary to enable the delivery of any traffic calming schemes.

### **Street Lighting Schemes**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development what new street lighting schemes are planned for the Bangor West area of Bangor.

**(AQW 15319/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 14975/11-15.

## Footpath Resurfacing Schemes

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development what new footpath resurfacing schemes are planned for the Bangor West area of Bangor.

**(AQW 15320/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 14975/11-15.

## Dropped Kerb Schemes

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development what new dropped kerb schemes are planned for the Bangor West area of Bangor.

**(AQW 15321/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 14975/11-15.

## Call-Outs for Flooding in the North Down Area

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of call-outs for flooding over the last two years in the North Down area.

**(AQW 15322/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that, during the last two years, it has been called out 81 times during the normal working day to deal with flood related incidents within the North Down area.

Roads Service officials have further advised that they also respond to reported incidents outside normal working hours including those related to flooding. However, this information is not held in a format that can be readily interrogated to provide statistical analysis of call outs specifically related to flooding in North Down. I would advise the Member that, if he has a specific query in relation to this issue, Roads Service officials are willing to investigate the matter and provide further details.

In addition, I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that over the last two years it has received a total of 809 call-outs within the North Down area.

## Roads Service Policy and Procedure Guide

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 6176/11-15, for an update on Roads Service Policy and Procedure Guide.

**(AQW 15352/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that it is continuing to work on the development of a new Road Service Policy and Procedures Guide for Road Safety at Schools. This guide is aimed at improving Road Safety outside schools by introducing school safety zones, as well as part time 20mph speed limits, during school opening and closing times.

With the current financial restrictions, research is being carried out into how to most efficiently install part time 20mph speed limits at a low cost, whilst maintaining their effectiveness. This will ultimately mean that more schools can be treated within a shorter period of time.

This policy is due to be in place within the current financial year and will therefore allow work to be programmed to begin in the next financial year, subject to available funding.

## Street Lighting Schemes

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development what new street lighting schemes are planned for the Hollywood area.

**(AQW 15367/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 14975/11-15.

## Footpath Resurfacing Schemes

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development what new footpath resurfacing schemes are planned for the Holywood area.

**(AQW 15368/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 14975/11-15.

## Dropped Kerb Schemes

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development what new dropped kerb schemes are planned for the Holywood area.

**(AQW 15369/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 14975/11-15.

## Vesting Land

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on vesting land in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 15370/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that the expenditure on vesting land in each of the last three years is as follows:

Year	Expenditure (£)
2009/10	5,878,426.84
2010/11	7,392,109.99
2011/12	5,407,612.00

## Millennium Way, Lurgan

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the length of the Millennium Way, Lurgan, still to be constructed.

**(AQW 15381/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that 440 metres of the Millennium Way, from Malcolm Road to Gilford Road, still has to be constructed.

## Millennium Way, Lurgan

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an estimate of the cost of completing the final section of the Millennium Way, Lurgan.

**(AQW 15383/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that current estimates of the cost of extending the Millennium Way, from Malcolm Road to Gilford Road, are in the range £5m - £7.5m.

## Cost of all Current and Proposed Major Road Programmes

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an estimate of the cost of all current and proposed major road programmes in the 2011-15 budgetary period.

**(AQW 15384/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** The estimated costs of the various projects in the major works programme to be delivered by my Department's Roads Service in the 2011-15 budgetary period are as follows:

<b>Project</b>	<b>Project Estimate £m</b>
A2 Widening at Greenisland	£50 - 60
A5 - Londonderry to North of Strabane & South of Omagh - Ballygawley	£320 - 350
A8 Belfast to Larne Dual Carriageway	£110 - 120
A32 Cherrymount Link, Enniskillen	£12 - 16
A32 Shannaragh Realignment Scheme	£6 - 8

Roads Service is currently developing a range of other schemes for delivery in future budget periods.

### **Parking Charges in Lurgan, Portadown and Banbridge**

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister for Regional Development, for each of the next three years, to detail (i) the amount of revenue his Department intends to generate from parking charges in Lurgan, Portadown and Banbridge; and (ii) the administrative, and all other costs, associated with operating parking charges in Lurgan, Portadown and Banbridge.

**(AQW 15385/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Due to the unforeseeable nature of public demand for car parking services, my Department is unable to predict the amount of revenue which will be generated from parking charges in Lurgan, Portadown and Banbridge over the next three years.

Due to the nature of the contract for provision of parking enforcement and car park management services, it is also not possible to provide such costs separately by individual car park.

### **Traffic Management Schemes**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) how much Roads Service has allocated to developing traffic management schemes in the 2012/13 budget; and (ii) how much the average traffic management scheme cost to deliver in 2011-12.

**(AQW 15390/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service is committed to providing safer roads for all road users by utilising a variety of Traffic Management measures through the Local Transport and Safety Measures (LTSM) programme.

The primary aim of any Traffic Management scheme is to assist road users to move safely and efficiently, by making best use of existing road space.

I can advise that the LTSM budget for 2012/13 is £5.5m, of which £1.8m has been allocated to traffic management activities.

Roads Service officials have advised that the cost of traffic management schemes varies considerably depending on the nature of the engineering measure used, the extent of the scheme under considerations and tendered unit rates. As the traffic management function covers a wide range of activities, this can therefore distort outputs or average costs. However, based on output information relating to traffic calming, collisions remedial and pedestrian crossings, approximately £4.8m was spent in 2011/12, delivering 120 schemes of this nature, giving an average cost of £40k per scheme.

## Traffic Management Schemes

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) whether Roads Service's priority lists for traffic management schemes are compiled on a sectional or divisional basis; and (ii) the priority list for the eastern division.

**(AQW 15391/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service implements various Traffic Management measures to assist road users move safely and efficiently by making best use of the existing road space. Such measures include:

- Road Safety Engineering, for example, traffic calming;
- Pedestrian Crossings; and
- Traffic Signs and road markings.

Each measure is assessed against established criteria and prioritised on an overall Divisional wide basis.

Information on completed and proposed roads schemes for the current financial year can be found in Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following web address:

[http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/freedom\\_of\\_information/customer\\_information/cinformationtype-results.htm?signpost=Customer+information&informationType=Roads+Service+reports+to+councils](http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/freedom_of_information/customer_information/cinformationtype-results.htm?signpost=Customer+information&informationType=Roads+Service+reports+to+councils)

## Smartlink Discount Passes

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) for his assessment of the uptake of Smartlink discount passes by people from socially deprived areas; and (ii) what steps he is taking to encourage their uptake.

**(AQW 15392/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** In relation to your specific questions Translink have advised:

- (i) that customers can purchase a Translink Smartlink card without having to register their details. As a result Translink has no statistical information available as to whether or not card holders live in "socially deprived" areas. However, it is generally accepted that usage of bus services is greater among lower income groups.
- (ii) that they carry out a significant amount of advertising and promotion on Smartlink card products. This includes:
  - Bus filler ads to promote Smartlink on Metro and Ulsterbus are running on panels on a continuous basis as and when free space is available;
  - Drivers handing out small credit card sized info to passengers who get on paying cash;
  - Fresher Friends- Online Promotion (Sept- Nov 2012);
  - 5000 post cards printed and distributed across student areas in Belfast highlighting a promotional fare on Metro (online only). – Metro Friends ( Sept 2011);
  - Metro Smartlink ad in 500,000 Metro timetables;
  - Increased availability of topping up at now over 900 PayPoint Agents;
  - Coffee shop promotion with Cairnshill Park and Ride for free coffee in Forest Side- April 2012;
  - Smart Movers Initiative- targeting new housing developments along Metro routes; and
  - Recent activity carried out in Coopers Mill to promote Smartlink to every house in the estate – over half of the residents availed of this offer.

### **Flooding: Additional Drainage Work**

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether any additional drainage work been carried out in advance of the winter period to help ensure that public roadway areas most at risk from flooding are safeguarded.

**(AQW 15405/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised it has carried out a number of improvements to the road drainage system during this financial year and further improvements are planned as part of its ongoing structural maintenance programme. Officials have further advised that the value of the work carried out is approximately £1.4 million.

In addition, Northern Ireland Water (NIW) has advised that the value of the work it has carried out during the same period is approximately £6.4 million.

Should the Member have a specific query in relation to the location of these improvements, I would advise him to contact the relevant Roads Service Section Office directly.

### **Passenger Numbers between Coleraine and Londonderry**

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister for Regional Development for Translink's initial estimate of the weekly passenger numbers on the bus substitution service between Coleraine and Londonderry since the rail line was closed; and how does this figure compare to numbers of passengers on the rail line in the comparable time in 2011.

**(AQW 15406/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** In the period week commencing 01 August 2011 to week commencing 26 September 2011 there were 88,808 passenger journeys on this section of the rail network. In the comparable period in 2012, i.e. week commencing 30 July 2012 to 24 September 2012 there were 18,731 passenger journeys. However, the statistics for July to September 2012 are understated because of the flexible bus services available, not all of which are being recorded.

Concurrent with the above, Translink have recorded a significant increase in patronage of the Goldline 212 service between Derry~Londonderry and Belfast such that the total number of passengers travelling between Derry~Londonderry and Belfast using both bus and rail modes has increased slightly over last year's numbers. Translink attribute at least some of the increase to recent Goldline enhancement, such as new vehicles, wi-fi installation and additional Express services.

### **Contingency Plan: Winter Period**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development what action and contingency plans his Department is putting in place for the winter period.

**(AQW 15429/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has assured me that it is well prepared for the incoming winter season and will be able to provide a high standard of service delivery for the gritting of roads.

Prior to the start of each winter service period, Roads Service carries out a significant amount of planning to ensure a state of readiness for the coming season. In addition to a number of routine pre-season checks, planning includes ensuring that adequate staffing arrangements are in place, including training for new staff, where required, and ensuring all winter service equipment is in working order. Every night, from the end of October 2012 until the middle of April 2013, Roads Service will have over 300 people on standby ready to salt main roads, helping drivers across Northern Ireland cope with the wintry conditions.

All Roads Service salt barns are at full capacity with stocks in excess of 75,000 tonnes with additional salt stock resilience held at six strategic locations totalling 38,100 tonnes. The current Winter Service salt contract also provides for the supply of a further 15,000 tonnes per month from October 2012 to April 2013, if required.

Roads Service has also entered into agreements with 23 of the 26 councils in Northern Ireland, for the treatment of busy town and city centre footways during periods of prolonged snow or ice.

In addition, salt bins or grit piles may be provided for use by the public, on other routes adopted or maintained by Roads Service, which do not qualify for inclusion on the gritting schedule. Roads Service currently provides approximately 4,800 salt bins and almost 50,000 grit piles on public roads.

Northern Ireland Water (NIW) officials have advised me that they are also taking all practicable steps to prepare for severe winter weather.

NIW maintains a well-developed Major Incident Plan to provide a fully planned, reactive response to operational incidents. The Plan has been regularly activated and exercised in response to real-life emergency situations during the year. In addition, part of the NIW incident management planning regime involves the regular preparation of a Winter Contingency Plan and this is currently being revised and updated for full implementation ahead of December 2012. The Plan is generally considered to provide the primary mode of preparation for severe weather conditions during the winter months. It provides a comprehensive list of activities to be implemented in advance of the winter season, incorporating lessons learned from previous incidents. NIW will also be revising its operating strategy to respond to any potential freeze/thaw event in the 2012/13 winter season.

NIW officials have further advised that Interactive Voice Recognition capabilities were enhanced following the 2010/11 freeze/thaw incident and this has been used to good effect in several subsequent major incidents. Furthermore, the implementation of a High Volume Call Answering (HVCA) Service is underway and the system will be in place by Christmas 2012. The purpose of the HVCA system is to field incoming call traffic relating to fault reports, provide customers with interruption information and allow them to report specific issues.

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### **Residents Only Car Parking Areas**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to create residents only car parking areas in streets that have high levels of parking.

**(AQW 15443/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** As the Member may be aware, my Department's Roads Service first published its policy on the introduction of Residents' Parking Schemes in December 2007.

Such schemes are intended to resolve parking difficulties in residential areas, where parking generated by nearby businesses, sports facilities, hospitals, schools, universities, theatres and shopping areas, penetrates the residential streets and prevents residents from parking in reasonably close proximity to their homes. Parking surveys are used to gauge the extent of the parking difficulties and the extent to which they are caused by non-resident vehicles. Residents also have to be in favour of a scheme and, based on a minimum return rate of one-third of all households to a scheme questionnaire, two-thirds of those households surveyed must be in favour.

Roads Service has advised that Residents' Parking Schemes are currently being progressed in the Lower Malone and Stranmillis areas of Belfast and also in Londonderry and Antrim. Roads Service will continue to progress these schemes, together with the subordinate legislation required, as quickly as possible, with schemes likely to be delivered mid-late 2013.

Further schemes will be considered when additional funding becomes available.

### **Bridges**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many risk assessments his Department has carried out on bridges in each of the last three years, broken down by the type of bridge and the Roads Service division area.

**(AQW 15480/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of 5,850 bridges across Northern Ireland. These are subject to a regime of regular and detailed inspections, where the condition of the bridge is assessed and a general risk assessment carried out. In the past 3 years, approximately 8,700 general inspections and 2,290 principal inspections have taken place. In addition, risk assessments have been carried out on 17 half-joint bridges and specialist underwater inspections have been undertaken on 80 bridges.

As you will appreciate, given the numbers involved, it would be impractical to list all of these inspections by Division and bridge-type. However, the following table sets out the number of bridges by Divisional area that are routinely inspected as part of Roads Service's two-year cyclic inspection programme:

<b>Division</b>	<b>Masonry</b>	<b>Concrete</b>	<b>Steel</b>	<b>*Other</b>
North	883	123	30	338
South	793	162	46	314
East	308	70	101	186
West	1,390	251	59	796

\* Includes culverts, large pipes and composite bridges made of several construction types.

## **Bridges**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the work carried out on bridges following the 2003 study of all road over rail bridges, broken down by Roads Service division area.

**(AQW 15482/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that following the 2003 road-over-rail study, 10 bridges were identified as requiring mitigation measures to reduce the risk of vehicle incursion.

The table below sets out details of the bridges assessed, relevant Divisional area and remedial measures taken:

<b>Division</b>	<b>Bridge Name</b>	<b>Route</b>	<b>Remedial measure</b>
Eastern	Finaghy Road North	C2	Substantial parapet strengthening work and provision of safety barrier
Eastern	Ballinderry Road	B104	Provision of low level safety barrier
Eastern	Cultra Avenue	U132	Extension to the masonry parapets
Eastern	Old Quay Road	U132	Extension to the masonry parapets
Northern	Poguestown	A2	Provision of low level safety barrier
Northern	Coastguard	U4086	Provision of low level safety barrier
Northern	Carnduff	A2	Provision of high level safety barrier
Northern	Irish Hill	C47	Provision of low level safety barrier
Southern	Killeen Bridge.	A1	Provision of low level safety barrier
Southern	Pritchards	C152	Provision of low level safety barrier

## **Bridges**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister for Regional Development what works are still outstanding following the 2003 study of road over rail bridges, broken down by Roads Service division area.

**(AQW 15484/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that no works are outstanding following the 2003 study.

## **Bus Fares for Staff Members of Antrim Area Hospital**

**Ms Brown** asked the Minister for Regional Development what discussions his Department has had with Translink regarding a subsidy for bus fares for staff members of Antrim Area Hospital.

**(AQW 15515/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department has had no direct discussions with Translink regarding this issue. I am aware that Translink have been in discussion with the relevant employer about tax incentive schemes available to encourage bus usage and which financially benefits employees.

### **Goldline Express Service from Dublin to Belfast**

**Mr Wells** asked the Minister for Regional Development why the Goldline Express service from Dublin to Belfast does not pick up passengers at Newry Bus Centre.

**(AQW 15584/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Translink has advised me that the Goldline Service between Dublin and Belfast is licensed as an international (cross-border) service under EU Regulations. Under this arrangement passengers boarding in one member state (i.e. the Irish Republic) disembark within the other member state(s) (i.e. Northern Ireland) at scheduled stopping points agreed by the member states involved. The same is true, in reverse, for passengers boarding in Northern Ireland.

Passengers wishing to travel within their own member state(s) are catered for by services licensed under that State's own domestic regulations. In the case of Newry to Belfast (or major points along that route) Goldline Express Service 238 provides some 27 departures daily (Monday – Friday) supplemented by services 38 and 45 which are not express.

### **Door-2-Door Scheme**

**Mr McAleer** asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) what level of co-operation exists between rural transport providers, such as Easilift, and their urban counterparts in the Door-2-Door Scheme; and (ii) whether he intends to review the co-operation, particularly in rural towns and their surrounding areas.

**(AQW 15597/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:**

- (i) The Urban Door-2-Door Scheme and the Rural Transport Fund are different programmes, each with their own separate aims and objectives. Membership for the Door-2-Door scheme is set by this Department. Rural Community Transport Partnerships set their own criteria. There is a degree of ad-hoc co-operation.
- (ii) The Department has recently begun a consultation exercise in respect of the Urban Door-2-Door scheme and will look at all issues, including potentially that of co-operation with Rural Community Transport Partnerships in rural towns and their surrounding areas.

### **Derry-Coleraine Rail Link**

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to advertise the Derry-Coleraine rail link, after completion of the on-going work, to raise awareness and ensure passenger numbers return to pre-work levels.

**(AQW 15599/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Translink has confirmed that at the appropriate time, the re-opening of the line following completion of the track renewal project will be advertised and widely promoted.

Translink has further advised that they have run a series of successful awareness/promotion campaigns following re-opening of routes on completion of major engineering works on the Larne and Portrush Lines. Translink would anticipate carrying out similar-type activity in the case of the Londonderry-Coleraine Line but cannot be more specific at this early stage. Translink has agreed to consult with local stakeholders about its plans at the appropriate time.

### **West Belfast Taxi Association: Fuel Rebate**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has granted the West Belfast Taxi Association a fuel rebate, or similar assistance, at any time; and to provide details.

**(AQW 15674/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** As a holder of a Road Service Operators License for stage carriage routes West Belfast Taxi (Transport) Ltd also known as West Belfast Taxi Association has been a member of the Northern Ireland Fuel Duty Rebate scheme since April 2011. A pilot scheme operated from August 2010 and was subject to independent review against the terms and conditions of the scheme.

The current rate of rebate for scheme members is 43.21p per litre on eligible services.

### **West Belfast Taxi Association: Pensioner Concession Fares**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the West Belfast Taxi Association has been provided with, or sought, support from his Department in relation to pensioner concession fares; and to provide details of the assistance.

**(AQW 15677/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** West Belfast Taxi (Transport) Ltd also known as West Belfast Taxi Association is not a member of the Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares scheme nor is the Department in receipt of any formal application to join the scheme.

### **Traffic Lights on the Springtown Road, Derry**

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister for Regional Development when Roads Service intends to install traffic lights on the Springtown Road at the junction with Northland Road, Derry.

**(AQW 15786/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that due to uncertainty regarding the timescales for the proposed development on Springtown Road, it has investigated the merits of an improvement scheme at the junction of Springtown Road with Northland Road in Londonderry.

Officials have further advised that an initial assessment for the improvement scheme has met the criteria for progression to a more detailed appraisal. This proposal has been added to a list of similar schemes in the Derry City Council area that will be developed in accordance with current policy and procedures.

I can advise the Member that, subject to gaining approval at the various stages of the development process, a scheme proposal may then progress through for prioritisation within a future year's programme. Prioritisation will take account of future funding availability along with consideration of a number of other key issues, including the successful acquisition of any land required.

This scheme proposal is not included in the Derry City Council area programme for the 2012/13 financial year.

## **Department for Social Development**

### **Community Asset Transfer**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to the Community Asset Transfer, how he will ensure that groups which receive transferred assets have the capacity, business skills and entrepreneurship to cope and to maximise impact.

**(AQW 15264/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development):** The development of a policy framework for Community Asset Transfer is being led by my Department, supported by a cross-Departmental Steering

Group. The Steering Group will consider a range of issues including the development of safeguards to ensure that transferred assets are appropriate and sustainable and that the receiving organisation has the business skill and capacity to maximise impact.

The agreed policy framework will be brought to the Executive for endorsement. It is intended that once published, it will be used by public bodies to support Community Asset Transfer. It will be the responsibility of the transferring and receiving organisations to ensure that only groups that are able to demonstrate a sustainable business plan will be able to proceed with Community Asset Transfer.

### **Community Asset Transfer**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to the Community Asset Transfer, whether his Department, under his Programme for Government commitment to initiate a policy and legislation on the transfer of assets, will offer training and support to groups interested in receiving assets being transferred.

**(AQW 15265/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** My department is funding the Development Trusts Northern Ireland as a key partner to support the implementation of Community Asset Transfer policy. They will advise the Steering Group on the level of both monetary and non-monetary support required to facilitate successful Community Asset Transfer and will develop and deliver resources tailored to Northern Ireland circumstances. This will include awareness raising, practical advice, training and active support for a number of demonstration projects.

### **Community Asset Transfer**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister for Social Development how he proposes to bring Northern Ireland up to the level of legislative and policy progress in England and Scotland, where Community Asset Transfer is enshrined in law.

**(AQW 15266/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** I am aware that the legislative and policy framework to support Community Asset Transfer in England, Wales and Scotland is robust and that the practice has been actively promoted by central and local government for a number of years. There are important lessons to be learned from policy and practice elsewhere and my officials will ensure that the policy development process in Northern Ireland is informed by that experience.

A cross-Departmental Steering Group will consider a range of issues from the Northern Ireland perspective supported by research and analysis and early consultation with key stakeholders.

The Steering Group will make recommendations for policy options in Northern Ireland which may have implications for legislation. The ultimate decision on whether or not legislation is necessary will rest with the Executive.

### **Northern Ireland Civil Service Pensions Service in Londonderry**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development how many posts in the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pensions Service in Londonderry are currently vacant.

**(AQW 15354/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** On 17 October 2012 there were 18 vacant posts in the Northern Ireland Pension Centre in Londonderry.

## Implementation of Universal Credit

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Development whether the implementation of Universal Credit will result in job losses within (i) the Social Security Agency; and (ii) Housing Benefit offices; and for an estimate of the number of jobs that will be lost.

**(AQW 15365/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** At present the Department, with its partner organisations, including the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, are considering the implementation arrangements for Universal Credit which includes organisational and staffing issues.

Universal Credit will replace all legacy working age benefits and credits including Housing Benefit, and as such will have impacts on staffing across all of the current delivery organisations. However, whilst it is an issue that is being actively and carefully considered, no decisions have been taken at this time regarding the staffing pool for Universal Credit.

In addition, the Programme team is working closely with colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions in designing a resourcing model that will enable the Programme to better understand the implications for staffing numbers across all of the impacted government organisations as a result of the introduction of Universal Credit.

## European Social Fund

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Development how much money was allocated to the Social Fund in each of the last three financial years; and how much will be allocated to the replacement fund for the next financial year.

**(AQW 15373/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** Expenditure on social fund over the last three years is in the table below and includes regulated and discretionary elements. Payments from the Social Fund are currently deemed annually managed expenditure outside of the funding allocated to, and controlled by, the NI Executive. Discretionary social fund includes budgeting and crisis loans and community care grants. As discretionary fund is cash limited the amounts paid generally equal the funding allocated which includes money from HM Treasury and loan repayments.

	<b>2009-10</b> <b>£000s</b>	<b>2010-11</b> <b>£000s</b>	<b>2011-12</b> <b>£000s</b>
Regulated Scheme Expenditure	93,264	93,839	58,671
Discretionary Scheme Expenditure	73,503	80,080	77,774

From April 2013, devolved administration and local authorities have been tasked with developing new local provision to replace community care grants and crisis loans excluding alignment to benefit. The Budgeting Loans scheme will remain in place and will capture provision for crisis loans for alignment to benefit. Budgeting loans will be replaced as Universal Credit rolls out.

The Social Security Agency Social Fund Reform Project is developing the new Northern Ireland Discretionary Support Scheme. It is expected to include grant and loan awards to vulnerable customers in exceptional, extreme or crisis situations that meet the eligibility criteria and are on low incomes.

Funding for the new scheme will be based on the current amounts within annually managed expenditure which are expected to transfer across into Departmental Expenditure Limits controlled by the NI Executive. This includes funding for grants, loans and loan repayment.

The amount available to fund the new Discretionary Support Scheme will be finally agreed with the Department of Finance and Personnel and HM Treasury prior to the new scheme commencing.

## Universal Credit

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister for Social Development whether he is aware of any research which shows that the introduction of Universal Credit may have more impact on claimants on lower incomes. **(AQW 15378/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** My Department's Analytical Services Unit have been investigating the distribution of changes in entitlement by income decile under Universal Credit through the use of the recently developed Northern Ireland Policy Simulation Model and I have asked my officials to develop this work into a paper for future discussion at the Executive Sub-Committee on Welfare Reform.

Under the new arrangements for Universal Credit, transitional protection will be available to ensure that for those customers who move to Universal Credit they will not receive less as a result of their move, where their circumstances have remained the same.

## Welfare Reform Bill

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister for Social Development (i) to detail the regulations flowing from the Welfare Reform Bill that will be introduced by (a) affirmative; (b) confirmatory; and (c) negative resolution; (ii) why his Department is using the particular approach for each of the regulations; and (iii) the target date for receiving support from the Assembly for each set of regulations. **(AQW 15379/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The table attached at Appendix 1 sets out the Regulations which are currently known to be required<sup>1</sup>, the form of Assembly Control attached to them and the target date for operation.

In terms of why my Department is using the particular approach for each set of Regulations, I should explain that the controls attached to subordinate legislation is normally set out within the primary legislation, in this case within the Welfare Reform Bill.

The Assembly controls are the same as those afforded to the Westminster Parliament through the corresponding Welfare Reform Act 2012 (the Act). However, whereas the Act uses the affirmative procedure, we use the confirmatory procedure. The use of the confirmatory procedure is a longstanding convention to allow us to maintain, insofar as possible, parity of timing with the corresponding Great Britain regulations.

Generally, the first set of Regulations made following the introduction of primary legislation is made using the confirmatory approach; this approach is used because it gives the Assembly an opportunity to debate the policy detail which is not often outlined during the passage of the relevant Bill. Thereafter, any amending Regulations are made by negative resolution as the underpinning policy will have been considered to have been agreed by the Assembly.

## Social Security Payments

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the (i) number; and (ii) percentage of people who receive each social security payment (a) weekly; (b) fortnightly; and (c) monthly. **(AQW 15380/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The Department only holds this information for certain benefits. The available information is set out in the table below.

	Weekly		Fortnightly		Monthly	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Employment and Support Allowance	60	0.1	43,940	99.8	10	0.0

<sup>1</sup> This is the current list of regulations as identified by Department for Work and Pensions.

	Weekly		Fortnightly		Monthly	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Income Support	380	0.5	73,080	99.5	0	0.0
Jobseekers Allowance	40	0.1	59,800	99.9	0	0.0
Pension Credit	91,410	96.6	2,740	2.9	470	0.5

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

## Housing Benefit Recipients

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister for Social Development what proportion of housing benefit recipients (i) receive the payment themselves; or (ii) have it paid directly to their landlord.

**(AQW 15382/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** Housing Benefit is paid to 13% of claimants and the remaining 87% is paid directly to the landlord, over both the social and private rented sectors.

## Block Grant

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 15131/11-15, how much of the £207m reduction in the Block Grant, that would result from a failure to implement the Welfare Reform Bill, would be spent on direct payments to people on benefits in Northern Ireland through maintenance of the current benefit system.

**(AQW 15393/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** In line with the HMT Statement of Funding Policy which governs the funding arrangements between the UK and the Devolved Administrations, the level of any adjustment to the NI Block grant will be a matter for discussion with UK Ministers. The current funding arrangements ensure that Northern Ireland can draw down its actual social security spending needs where parity is maintained.

Of the £207 million referred to, an estimated £113million relates to welfare spending controls which would not be delivered. HMT would also withdraw from Northern Ireland the additional resources from Universal Credit which promote the policy intent that work pays.

Resources allocated to the Northern Ireland Executive as part of its Spending Review 2010 settlement for the implementation of welfare reform could be impacted. Northern Ireland would also have to meet higher IT and administration costs to deliver services to around 600,000 social security customers and this region would not benefit from the significant cost advantages that would accrue from using the same systems as Great Britain and administering the same benefits.

## Second Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Social Development, in light of his proposal that the second stage of the Welfare Reform Bill be agreed, (i) to detail the information in the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People report that he considered to be 'out of date'; (ii) how this information resulted in 'fundamental flaws' in the report; (iii) how up to date information would have changed this report; and (iv) whether he plans to publish a rebuttal.

**(AQW 15395/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** I met with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) on 12 June to discuss the report and where we considered the report to be based on misinformation. For example:-

- The information used to calculate the number of children affected by the Benefit Cap included families in receipt of the Child Tax Credits' disability premium. With a few exceptions, families in receipt of the Child Tax Credits' Disability Premium will also be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance and, as such, will be excluded from the Benefit Cap. Further, the NICCY report does not mention whether the numbers are based on customers who qualify for Housing Benefit.
- References to changes required to Tax systems – the Northern Ireland Executive has no legislative competence in this area, income tax is, and will remain, an excepted matter.
- The Report talks about “stretching parity” and confuses parity with operational flexibilities. My recent announcement in the Assembly highlighted the flexibilities that I have secured to the way Universal Credit can be paid to protect the most vulnerable in our society and reflect Northern Ireland's unique circumstances. I am on record as saying that breaking parity is not an option, as to do so will mean significant reductions in the block grant which means fewer resources for other Executive priorities such as schools and hospitals.
- The report recommends that the Executive should set up an expert group to look at the Work Capability Assessment (WCA). It takes no cognisance of the Expert Group chaired by Professor Harrington who report regularly on the WCA and who has already recommended changes to improve how mental health and cancer sufferers are assessed. My Department also reports to the Assembly on an annual basis. It is important people in Northern Ireland are assessed in the same way as the rest of the UK. Further, I chair an Executive Sub- Committee on Welfare Reform looking specifically at the issues around Welfare Reform and in particular how they will impact on the ground in Northern Ireland and what we as an Executive need to do to protect the vulnerable or those deemed most at risk.
- The Report makes no mention of measures such as:
  - oextension of entitlement to claim 70% of childcare expenses regardless of hours worked;
  - oremoval of significant barriers to people moving into work through the use of tapers and disregards;
  - otransitional protection arrangements;
  - odiscretionary housing payments and the increase in budget.
- The Report also makes a number of claims which have no supporting evidence to substantiate them. For example:
- “Welfare reform will have a devastating effect on children’s lives, on their ability to be healthy, happy, enjoy a good education and have a standard of living adequate for their full development”.
- “These changes mark the end of any serious attempt to tackle child poverty in the UK and to meet the targets of the Child Poverty Act”.
- “Many families with children will lose their owner occupied homes; others will fall into housing arrears until evicted by the private sector landlords while other families will ration food or buy less healthy food in order to meet shortfalls”.

Following my meeting with the Commissioner for Children and Young People, a further two meetings were held with officials to further discuss the implementation of welfare reform and operational flexibilities. I consider this matter to be closed and have no plans to issue a rebuttal. As I said during the debate on the Second Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill, my officials will review the information contained within the published Equality Impact Assessment and update it where appropriate and whenever information is available.

## Youth Employment and Support Allowance

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the need for the retention of the Youth Employment and Support Allowance.

**(AQW 15396/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** At present, special arrangements apply which allow certain young people to qualify for contributory Employment and Support Allowance without having to satisfy the National Insurance contribution conditions which apply to all other claimants.

No other age group can qualify for contributory Employment and Support Allowance without having paid, or being treated as paid National Insurance contributions. Nor does any other contributory benefit have similar arrangements, Abolishing this measure will bring young people claiming Employment and Support Allowance in line with other groups and is the fairest way to proceed.

Young people will still be able to claim income-related Employment and Support Allowance which will not be subject to a time limit. A far greater percentage of younger people qualify for income-related Employment and Support Allowance than any other age group.

Removing special rules will simplify the benefit system in advance of the introduction of Universal Credit.

### **Administration of Universal Credit**

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister for Social Development whether he envisages any changes to the location of staff who will be involved in the administration of Universal Credit.

**(AQW 15407/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The introduction of Universal Credit will replace existing in and out of work benefits including social security benefits, housing benefits and tax credits from October 2013 onwards.

At this stage the Castle Court Complex in Belfast has been identified as the launch site for Universal Credit, however no decisions have been taken regarding its staffing or staff selection arrangements.

As planning for the roll out of Universal Credit develops, more detailed consideration will be given to the organisational and staffing impacts which will include any potential changes to the work location of staff.

The Universal Credit Programme will however continue to engage with staff and their representative organisations as plans progress.

### **Housing Benefit: Over Occupancy**

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the current level of over occupancy in both (i) publicly; and (ii) privately owned houses which are in receipt of housing benefit.

**(AQW 15415/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not require this information to assess Housing Benefit in any tenure groups. However at the end of September 2012, the Waiting List indicated that there were 1,111 social housing tenants requesting a transfer who had been awarded points for overcrowding.

Rents are assessed in the private sector through rent levied by the landlord or the Local Housing Allowance rates, which relate directly to the size of the claimant's household and not the bedroom capacity of the property where they reside. Therefore, the Housing Executive does not hold reliable data on the number of bedrooms on private sector Housing Benefit claims.

### **Social Fund**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development how many applications have been made to the Social Fund over the last two financial years.

**(AQW 15439/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The information requested is set out in the table below.

**SOCIAL FUND APPLICATIONS**

	<b>2010-2011</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>
Sure Start Maternity Grants	14,219	9,535
Funeral Payments	3,620	3,329
Community Care Grants	47,823	47,066
Budgeting Loans	152,988	156,687
Crisis Loans	159,210	152,464
<b>Total</b>	<b>377,860</b>	<b>369,081</b>

**European Social Fund**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development how much money was paid out for applications to the Social Fund over the last two financial years.

**(AQW 15440/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The table below details expenditure from the Social Fund in the last two financial years:

<b>Year</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2011-12</b>
Total Expenditure (£000's)	173,919	136,445

This includes £82,085k in 2011-12 and £87,921k in 2010-11, paid for applications to the Social Fund for Crisis loans, Budgeting Loans, Community Care Grants, Sure Start Maternity Grants and Funeral Payments. £54,360k in 2011-12 and £85,998k in 2010-11 was paid to customers in receipt of benefit who qualified for Winter Fuel and Cold Weather Payments, payments are primarily automatic, with a small number via application.

**Royston House, Belfast**

**Mr Dunne** asked the Minister for Social Development whether he will investigate alternative, ground floor, accommodation to Royston House, Belfast for carrying out medical assessments for benefits entitlement, as existing emergency escape arrangements for the building are not suitable for persons with disabilities, and some applicants have to travel to alternative locations including Ballymena and Portadown.

**(AQW 15454/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The Social Security Agency is currently in discussions with the Medical Support Services service provider relating to the medical examination centre in Royston House.

**Apprentices Employed Through Departmental Contracts**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister for Social Development how many apprentices have been employed through departmental contracts in this financial year; and what percentage this number represents of the total posts allocated.

**(AQW 15502/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** Contracts awarded by my department are inclusive of social clauses where appropriate, including the use of apprenticeships. My officials are currently developing systems to monitor activity against social clause targets. Information on 2012/13 is not yet available.

## Housing Executive: Declarations of Unfitness

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Social Development how many declarations of unfitness have been issued by the Housing Executive in the (i) Ballymena district; and (ii) Ballymoney district; and what is the reason for the declaration in each case.

**(AQW 15503/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** When a social housing assessment is carried out by the Housing Executive and potential unfitness is identified the property in question is referred to Environmental Health for assessment. Since January 2012 there have been 22 cases referred to Environmental Health for assessment within the Housing Executive's Ballymena District office area. As a result ten properties were deemed to be unfit for human habitation. There have been no referrals to Environmental Health for the Housing Executive's Ballymoney District office area for the same period.

Of the ten properties mentioned above, seven were deemed unfit due to excessive dampness, two due to serious disrepair and one due to poor lighting, heating and ventilation. None of the properties in question are in the ownership of the Housing Executive.

## Community Asset Transfer

**Mr Douglas** asked the Minister for Social Development whether he plans to introduce legislation to strengthen his Community Asset Transfer policy.

**(AQW 15516/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** I am aware that legislation forms part of the enabling framework for Community Asset Transfer in the rest of the UK. The need for new legislation to support Community Asset Transfer in Northern Ireland will be considered by a cross-departmental Steering Group, supported by research and analysis and early consultation with key stakeholders.

The ultimate decision on whether or not legislation is necessary will rest with the Executive.

## Community Asset Transfer

**Mr Douglas** asked the Minister for Social Development when he will complete his review of the Programme for Government obligation to prepare a policy on Community Asset Transfer.

**(AQW 15517/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** My Department's commitment under the Programme for Government is to develop policy to support Community Asset Transfer and a cross-Departmental Steering Group has recently been established to govern this process. The Steering Group has broad representation and will consider a range of issues from the Northern Ireland perspective supported by research and analysis and early consultation with key stakeholders. I intend to bring policy recommendations to the Executive in March 2013.

## Community Asset Transfer

**Mr Douglas** asked the Minister for Social Development who has been, and will be, consulted on his Community Asset Transfer policy and legislation.

**(AQW 15518/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** My Department has invited all government departments to participate in the process of developing a policy framework for Community Asset Transfer. A Steering Group has recently been established which has very good representation from across departments and also includes a representative from the Strategic Investment Board's Asset Management Unit.

My officials have already engaged informally with a range of stakeholders from central and local government and the third sector and will run a number of policy development workshops to engage people more formally and support the Steering Group.

My department is also working with the Development Trusts Northern Ireland as a key partner to support the implementation of Community Asset Transfer policy. They will engage separately with stakeholders to inform recommendations to the steering group on aspects of implementation and will also deliver a programme of awareness raising and training on Community Asset Transfer beginning next year.

Formal public consultation on Community Asset Transfer policy will be subject to Executive approval.

### **Retail Workshops**

**Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the outcomes of the retail workshops that were held over the summer of 2012; and whether the findings will be published and implemented.

**(AQW 15536/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The Taskforce that I set up earlier this year to review the support which my Department provides for city and town centres across Northern Ireland has almost completed its review. My Officials are currently considering the evidence and their report will be with me shortly. I anticipate that the recommendations arising as a consequence of the review will require the consideration of Executive colleagues.

### **Housing Waiting List**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development what percentage of the housing waiting list is constituted of people who are seeking a single person dwelling; and what percentage of the current housing stock is suited to these people.

**(AQW 15542/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** There are currently 40,080 applicants registered on the social housing waiting list and 57% (22,695) of those applicants were assessed and registered on the waiting list as requiring one bedroom accommodation. Of the Housing Executive's current stock of 88,990 properties there are currently 12% (10,920) which are one bedroom dwellings. In relation to Housing Association's current stock of 34,447 there are currently 22% (7,817) which are single dwelling accommodation.

### **Bank Liaison Team Offices in Lisahally**

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister for Social Development why the Bank Liaison Team offices in Lisahally are being relocated to Belfast.

**(AQW 15887/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The Bank Liaison team is part of the Social Security Agency's Payment management services. This service is currently dispersed across two locations Londonderry and Belfast with the majority of the function based in Belfast.

As part of its modernisation programme, the Agency is continuing to introduce new systems and methods of payment for its customers. Consequently it is also necessary to review staffing levels and location of posts as part of the Agency's efficiency programme.

The Bank Liaison Section is part of a wider reorganisation of the finance function within the Agency and work is ongoing to redeploy the affected staff taking account of the individual circumstances and business need. Discussions are ongoing with local staff and their representatives.

# Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

## **Union Flag Flying from Parliament Buildings**

**Mr Allister** asked the Assembly Commission why the Union Flag was not flying from Parliament Buildings on the occasion marking the Ulster Covenant Centenary in the grounds of Stormont on 29 September 2012.

**(AQW 14890/11-15)**

**Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission):** The Assembly Commission's policy is to fly the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings on the dates specified within the Flags Regulations (NI) Order 2000. Those dates do not include the 29th September 2012.

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# Revised Written Answers

Friday 26 October 2012

**(AQW 14614/11-15)**

Prior to the start of each winter service season, my Department's Roads Service carries out a significant amount of planning to ensure a state of readiness for the coming winter. As well as a number of routine pre-season checks, planning includes ensuring that adequate staffing arrangements are in place, including training for new staff, where required, ensuring all winter service equipment is in working order and that there is an adequate stock of salt.

Salt barns, which are strategically placed in depots throughout Northern Ireland, are normally stocked to hold sufficient quantities of salt to provide the winter service programme for a full season without the need to restock. Following the severe weather experienced over recent years, Roads Service has reviewed these levels and has increased stocks significantly in order to be well prepared, in the event of a prolonged period of wintry weather. I can confirm that salt barns are filled to capacity at this time. Additionally, and if necessary, Roads Service also has arrangements in place to supplement stocks of salt during the winter period.

In addition, salt bins or grit piles may be provided for use by the public, on other routes adopted or maintained by Roads Service, which do not qualify for inclusion on the gritting schedule. Roads Service currently provides approximately 4,800 salt bins and almost 50,000 grit piles on public roads.

Every night, from the end of October 2012 until the middle of April 2013, Roads Service will have over 300 people on standby ready to salt main roads, helping drivers across Northern Ireland cope with the wintry conditions.

Officials have assured me that my Department's Roads Service is well prepared and will be able to provide a high standard of service delivery for the gritting of roads during the incoming winter season.

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