



Northern Ireland
Assembly

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard) and JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS

Volume 122

(3 December 2016 to 19 December 2016)

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Agnew, Steven (North Down)	Little Pengelly, Mrs Emma (South Belfast)
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Allister, Jim (North Antrim)	Long, Mrs Naomi (East Belfast)
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Beggs, Roy (East Antrim)	McCann, Ms Jennifer (West Belfast) (<i>until 6 December 2016</i>)
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Minister of Education.....	Mr Peter Weir
Minister of Finance	Mr Máirtín Ó Muilleoir
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Official Report (Hansard)

Assembly Sittings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 5 December 2016

The Assembly met at 12.00 noon (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Committee Membership

Mr Speaker: Members, I wish to inform the House that I have received the resignation of Ms Linda Dillon as Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. I have also received the resignation of Ms Caoimhe Archibald as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. The nominating officer of Sinn Féin, Mr Pat Doherty, has nominated Ms Caoimhe Archibald to fill the vacancy of Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and Mr Oliver McMullan to fill the vacancy of Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, both with effect from 2 December 2016.

Mr Attwood: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Clearly, a ruling has been made by the Principal Deputy Speaker on amendments that were submitted in respect of a motion in the Order Paper tomorrow. As the Speaker is aware, the social investment fund has given rise to a lot of public comment and concern. It is a matter that has preoccupied the Assembly and your office, and it now transpires that, when three amendments were submitted that reflect the thinking of four parties in the Chamber, even on a matter as contentious as the social investment fund, none of those amendments was accepted. I am not challenging the ruling by any means but, given the context of the matter and the range of views by way of amendments from four parties, I am seeking a further explanation of why, on this occasion, no amendments were accepted.

Mr Speaker: Thank you, Mr Attwood. It is reasonable for me to acknowledge that the House has designated one Deputy Speaker as the Principal Deputy Speaker. When the position was created, a practice developed whereby the Principal Deputy Speaker could expect to take a greater share of the duties than the other two Deputy Speakers.

That said, there will be occasions when I delegate to different Deputy Speakers at different times and, indeed, delegate different duties. In this case, there is also merit in maintaining consistency.

I want to stress that Members should not focus so much on who makes a decision, as consideration by the Speaker's team is done on a procedural basis and is not based on party political factors. Members know — I have said it in the House — that I consider myself fortunate to have such an experienced team of Deputy Speakers. Indeed, issues such as the one that you are talking about will be for us to consider during recess. When the Deputy

Speakers or I are taking such decisions, we do so based only on procedural matters. Judging the political content of a motion from a political party perspective is not a consideration. Members might wish to give equal focus to the range of amendments that have been accepted from all parties over the past few months rather than raising issues only when they are personally disappointed.

Mr Attwood: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker, I would like to confirm that the issue is not who makes any one decision. I welcome the fact that you are delegating responsibility to the Principal Deputy Speaker or Deputy Speakers. Indeed, I acknowledge that you have shown useful latitude in accepting amendments to motions; it has been noted and observed by parties that you show latitude. When it comes to the motion tomorrow, no latitude was shown in interpreting the procedure, and I am surprised by that in that three amendments were submitted representing four of the main political parties in the Assembly. I was seeking some explanation on that and only that.

Mr Speaker: I really think that I have answered the question. I indicated to you that, during recess, we will meet to consider a range of issues. I do not think that I can add anything to that, so let us move on.

Mr Dickson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. It has been widely rumoured amongst Members and officials in the Assembly that the Assembly is to be recalled during the week of 19 December to deal with a Budget statement. If that is so, why would it be so? Surely a Budget statement should be brought to the House either today or tomorrow.

Mr Speaker: Mr Dickson, Standing Orders make provision for Ministers to make statements relating to their official responsibilities at any time. Like you, I have heard rumours. That is all that I have heard. It is for Ministers to consider whether it is appropriate to make an oral statement or a written statement, having regard to other things as to when the Assembly will next sit. It is for the Business Committee to make arrangements for the business of the Assembly, and the Order Papers for today and tomorrow have been agreed. I have received no notification from the Executive that an earlier meeting of the Assembly will be required after it adjourns tomorrow.

Mr Attwood: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. It is on an entirely different matter. This morning, Members received a written statement from the Minister of Finance, as required under the relevant section of the Fresh Start legislation that was passed in Westminster last year. That means that, when there has been a Chancellor's statement in Westminster, the Minister of Finance is obliged to table a statement in the House arising from the budgetary position

that applies in Northern Ireland. I acknowledge that it is for the Minister of Finance to decide whether that should be a written or oral statement, but, given that this is new legislation and a new legislative requirement, I submit, Mr Speaker, that it sets a bad precedent that, on the very first time that this new mechanism is to be deployed, it is deployed by way of a written statement and not by way of an oral statement that is subject to questions by Members.

Mr Speaker: I was informed on Friday that the Minister would make a statement relating to the Budget at 12.00 noon today. A copy of the statement was provided to the Speaker's Office before 9.30 am, as is required under Standing Order 18B. The Minister has met his requirements under Standing Order 18B.

Business Committee Membership

Mr Speaker: As with similar motions, this will be treated as a business motion, and there will be no debate.

Resolved:

That Mr Steven Agnew be appointed as a member of the Business Committee. — [Mr Swann.]

Executive Committee Business

Water Meters Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

Mr Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure): I beg to move

That the draft Water Meters Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

The regulations that I am bringing forward today remove the requirement on NI Water to install water meters at domestic properties connecting for the first time to the public water supply. The practice of installing meters currently costs the public purse around £200,000 a year, and, given that they are not used, it is a nugatory expense, and one that cannot be sustained in the current financial climate. The Assembly will be aware of the commitment of the Executive not to bring in water charging. It is the intention of the Executive to continue to bear the cost of water charges, on behalf of domestic customers, for the next five years. In addition to the regulations, I have instructed my officials to prepare the necessary legislation to extend my Department's powers to pay the subsidy to NI Water up until March 2022. It therefore makes sense to cease wasting valuable resources by installing water meters. The motion demonstrates the Executive's commitment to protecting people's personal finances and to reducing the financial burden on NI Water. I commend the motion to the Assembly and ask that it approve the regulations.

Mr Humphrey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Infrastructure): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Water Meters Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016.

The Committee considered the proposal for the statutory rule at its meeting on 21 September 2016 and raised no issues. On 26 October, the Committee was briefed by representatives of Northern Ireland Water on its annual report and accounts and took the opportunity to inquire about the arrangements surrounding the installation of water meters. The Committee asked Northern Ireland Water to provide the amount of money — resource and capital — spent on installing water meters until the Minister told it to stop. It has yet to receive that information. The Committee asked Northern Ireland Water for clarity on when water meters stopped being introduced to domestic homes, and it was explained that the legislation instructed that meters continue to be installed until the changes in the legislation had taken effect and that Northern Ireland Water was bound by that legislation.

The statutory rule is the outworking of that. It suspends the requirement to install water meters for all new domestic water connections requested after the regulations have been made and where a connection notice has been served but no meter yet installed at the commencement date of the regulations. The requirement to install water meters for future connections may be reinstated, if required, at a later date. It is for that reason that, at its meeting on 16 November 2016, the Committee considered and offered no objections to the statutory rule. The Committee for Infrastructure is content with the rule.

12.15 pm

Mr McCrossan: I welcome the regulation brought to the House today by the Minister. I thank him for his expediency in bringing forward the regulation to end the installation

of water meters in domestic properties. It is a welcome development in what has been somewhat of a scandal in recent years in the North; over 40,000 water meters have been installed in domestic properties, which has cost the taxpayer here in excess of £13 million. The revelations have made for uncomfortable reading, especially for the underprivileged families in our society who are struggling to survive, pay bills and make ends meet; they were worried about that train coming down the track and the uncertainty around whether water charges would be applied.

The SDLP has always been and will continue to be completely opposed to water charges for domestic properties. The regional rate includes such water charges. We do not need any additional charges for families at this time. However, Sinn Féin will be most uncomfortable of all due to the fact that a total of 26,510 meters were installed in family homes on former Minister Conor Murphy's watch. We have seen the highest level of hypocrisy; Sinn Féin continued to oppose water charges in the South — it even protested on the issue very strongly publicly — while, all along, behind the back door, Conor Murphy was installing meters. Why he allowed such proliferation of water meter installments during his stewardship of the Department for Regional Development will remain a question from our party.

When we consider the significant financial challenges facing the Department, we see that we cannot continue to preside over wastage on this scale. For that reason, I welcome fully the Minister's statement today. It brings some clarity to this long-standing issue. I am glad that today's regulation has come forward and that Sinn Féin has finally listened to the SDLP and others who have highlighted the debacle for some time. I welcome today's announcement.

Ms Armstrong: It will come as no surprise that I am against the motion, as is my party. When the issue was debated almost exactly a year ago, the then DUP Regional Development Minister stated:

"subsequent subordinate legislation required to enact the power to cease the installation of water meters will be subject to draft affirmative resolution, and a full consultation will take place." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 110, p179, col 2].

As has been outlined, there was only statutory consultation, and there were three respondents. The motion does not allow people to have a clear understanding of the impact that this will have. We have heard that water meters will no longer be installed in new domestic properties at a saving of about £140,000 a year to Northern Ireland Water and that that will come out of its budget. However, Northern Ireland Water said that the only reason it is installing meters is to use them to identify leakages in the system in domestic properties. Has that stopped? Are there no more leakages? How much money are we putting down the drains because of leakages? That is not being considered.

All of us in the House have talked about the lack of money available for hospital waiting lists, for life-extending drugs for people with cancer, and for children with special educational needs, which means that those children cannot access services through schools. The money that is being spent out of our block grant from Westminster on water is the very money that we should be using to pay for those essential services.

I heard Mr McCrossan talking about underprivileged families being scared of water charges. That was brought up a year ago; the then Regional Development Minister said:

“the public will be further assured on the position in respect of water charging, should the installation of water meters cease.” — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 110, p179, col 2].

That gave the green light to say, “Well, there’ll be no discussion; there’ll be nothing there on water charging”. We are protecting the rich while the most vulnerable suffer from a lack of access to services. It ensures that the most wealthy in society are protected from paying water charges, even though they can afford to, while the most vulnerable face a more difficult future. I believe that those who can afford to pay should. Every single person in the House can afford to pay, but we are protecting them by not bringing forward an open and transparent debate on water charging. Taking away water meters means that we are not even going to measure leakages in the system.

This is a poorly considered motion. It is populist and short-sighted. The fact that we have already heard that Northern Ireland Water will be paid to the end of this mandate means that there will be no changes on this, and we will still continue to have cuts in services while we flush water and money down the toilet.

Mr Hazzard: I thank the Members who have commented on this motion. Some points have been made on general and specific issues, and I will turn to them now. I want to thank the Chair of the Committee, not just for his constructive comments today but for the way in which the Committee has approached this issue from the start. I welcome that.

Mr McCrossan made a number of points, the first of which was that there was wastage of some £13 million. The actual figure is £1.3 million, Daniel, so you might want to look at your figures again a bit more closely. He said that Sinn Féin is now, somehow, following the SDLP’s example and finally doing the right thing. It was your party that walked away from the Executive, Daniel. It could have been you standing here today and not me doing this, but the SDLP decided to do otherwise.

Just for clarity again, no meters have been installed in domestic properties since 6 July, and that has saved £100,000. Ms Armstrong wants to talk about wasting public money, but this is public money that we have actually saved. Again, straying from the points raised here today, the Alliance Party goes back to its fervour for introducing water charges. Water charges have been rejected by the people, as we saw in Alliance’s recent performance at the last election. The people do not want water charges, and that is something that this Executive will stand up for.

Finally, I believe that these regulations will reinforce the Executive’s commitment not to bring in water charges for households. I thank Members for their support today and ask the Assembly to approve the regulations.

Question put.

Mr Speaker: Do you want to divide the House on it?

Ms Armstrong: I do, actually, yes.

Question put a second time.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 79; Noes 9.

AYES

Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Ms Archibald, Mr Attwood, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Ms S Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mr Butler, Mrs Cameron, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Clarke, Ms Dillon, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Ms Gildernew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr McAleer, Mr E McCann, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Miss McIlveen, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Mr McQuillan, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Mullan, Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr O’Dowd, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Poots, Mr Ross, Ms Ruane, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Stalford, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McAleer and Mr F McCann.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Ms Armstrong, Ms Bailey, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Dickson, Mr Ford, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle.

Tellers for the Noes: Ms Bradshaw and Mr Dickson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Water Meters Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

*(Madam Principal Deputy Speaker
[Ms Ruane] in the Chair)*

Pensions (2015 Act) (Consequential Amendments) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Mr Givan (The Minister for Communities): I beg to move

That the Pensions (2015 Act) (Consequential Amendments) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

I should start by making it clear that the amendments are, essentially, technical in nature, rather than implementing substantive new policy measures. First, they ensure that existing administrative arrangements that are designed to facilitate the annual uprating exercise will continue to operate as they always have. Secondly, they give appeal rights to decisions about National Insurance credits that count for new state pension purposes.

Article 2 amends provisions of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 that deal with alterations in the payable amount of certain income-related benefits due to uprating. The relevant benefits are income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance, income-related employment and support allowance, universal credit and pension credit. The provisions allow an existing award to be adjusted automatically to take account of the uprating of another benefit in payment to the claimant or their partner without the need for a further decision. They also enable the decision maker to take account of the new rates from the uprating date when determining a new award that begins before the uprating order has come into force, rather than having to revisit the award to apply the new rates at a later date. These are long-standing administrative easements that will help to ensure the effective operation of the annual uprating exercise. The amendments made by article 2 simply ensure that business will continue as usual where a person's benefit income includes the new state pension.

Article 3 amends schedule 3 to the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, which lists decisions that carry the right of appeal. National Insurance credits that count for new state pension purposes are provided for under Part 8 of the State Pension Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015. The policy intention is that decisions made in relation to these credits should carry a right of appeal. That reflects the position with credits awarded under the Social Security (Credits) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1975 for the purposes of the old state pension. Article 3 ensures that decisions relating to credits for the purposes of the new state pension will be appealable to an independent appeal tribunal. Although the number of appeals is expected to be low, I am sure that Members will agree that it is, nevertheless, an important principle that there should be a statutory right of appeal in those circumstances.

I invite the House to support the motion and endorse the Pensions order.

Ms Gildernew (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Communities): The Committee for Communities considered the SL1 relating to the proposed order at its meeting on 15 September 2016 and was content with the proposals. Subsequently, the proposed order was brought before the Committee on 27 October 2016, and the Committee recommended that it be confirmed by the Assembly.

As the Department previously informed the Committee in its proposals in September, the order will make minor consequential amendments to primary legislation to extend the existing administrative framework for social security and pensions to include the new state pension.

The Committee noted that the most substantive amendments are made to provisions in the Social Security Administration Act 1992, and those relate to the uprating process, whereby income-related benefits are adjusted automatically when another income-related benefit is uprated — in this case, the state pension.

In addition, the Committee is content that the proposed order will amend the Social Security Order to provide for the inclusion of the right of appeal against decisions about certain National Insurance credits that count for new state pension purposes.

Finally, the Committee also noted that the order makes a consequential amendment to the Welfare Reform Order 2015. The Committee for Communities, therefore, recommends that the Pensions (2015 Act) (Consequential Amendments) Order be approved by the Assembly.

Mr Givan: I thank the Deputy Chair, Ms Gildernew, for relaying the Committee's position.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Pensions (2015 Act) (Consequential Amendments) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Private Members' Business

International Human Rights Day

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. As two amendments have been selected and are published on the Marshalled List, an additional 15 minutes has been added to the total time. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech.

The proposer of each amendment will have 10 minutes to propose and five minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes. Before we begin, the House should note that the amendments are mutually exclusive so, if amendment No 1 is made, the Question will not be put on amendment No 2.

Mr Lynch: I beg to move

That this Assembly acknowledges international Human Rights Day; notes the United Nations' comments that more should be done to raise awareness of human rights and the need to improve education about human rights; and calls on all Government Departments and public bodies to introduce human rights action plans.

We are pleased to have secured the debate today in the week that recognises international Human Rights Day, which falls on 10 December. It commemorates the day on which in 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The General Assembly also passed a resolution inviting all interested organisations to observe 10 December each year as Human Rights Day, and that is what we are doing here today.

The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights marked a milestone in the history of human rights. For the first time, it laid out fundamental rights for all to be universally protected. Today, 68 years later, the declaration remains as relevant as ever. However, the omens for the present day are hardly promising. The economic crisis, with its potential for generating political instability, seems to be spiralling further and further out of control. In this environment, the vulnerable are more exposed, and minority interests struggle to express themselves. The temptation is to be inward-looking and defensive for states as well as individuals. Human rights issues slip further and further down the agenda as choices are made and funds become scarcer.

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lynch: No. In this climate, we must remember that human rights are not a luxury. Our motion calls for more to be done to raise awareness of human rights and the need to improve education about human rights. As recently as 2011, the United Nations adopted the Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training and acknowledged the fundamental importance of human rights education and training in contributing to the promotion, protection and effective realisation of all human rights.

This year's Human Rights Day campaign states:

"Stand up for someone's rights today ... everywhere and at all times ... Take a stand. Defend someone's rights. Human rights belong equally to each of us ... Each one of us can make a difference."

It is important that we debate human rights in this week when we commemorate international Human Rights Day. The Assembly has a primary responsibility to realise the human rights of all people living in the North of Ireland.

I pay tribute to all the leading human rights organisations — the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ); the Equality Commission; the Human Rights Commission; the Human Rights Consortium; and Amnesty International — for all their excellent work in this field.

While the North of Ireland has an array of equality and human rights protections, we should look to build on them. It is often said that human rights are universal, and that is true. We have a Human Rights Act, an Equality Commission and a Human Rights Commission, and legislation has to be equality- and human rights-proofed by organisations such as the CAJ and the Human Rights Consortium. All of that is reflected in the Good Friday Agreement. Nevertheless, we must always look at how we can be much better. It is always good practice to assess, review and evaluate where we are at with a rights-based approach and how we make it more effective and go further. It is important to think about human rights as being relevant to our everyday lives, and that includes public services and Departments. Eleanor Roosevelt said:

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home — so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he"

— or she —

"lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works."

12.45 pm

The motion demonstrates the Assembly's commitment to enriching and embedding a human rights culture in the North of Ireland. Human rights must be defended to protect our privacy, our freedom of speech and our right to protest. It is interesting to note that three recent UN reports — namely, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) report, the report on economic, social and cultural rights and the report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) — recommended:

"the State party expedite the process of adopting the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, and ensure that it is in line with the provisions of the Convention and other international human rights standards."

A bill of rights was a key part of the Good Friday Agreement. It was to build on the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and to be legislated for at Westminster. Sinn Féin calls on the British Government to legislate for a bill of rights. Many human rights recommendations have been made by the United Nations on a range of issues. Sinn Féin believes that adhering to the highest standards of human rights and best practice is important —

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lynch: I will not.

That is important for the prevention of human rights abuses.

The Scottish Government have stated that they want to go beyond defending human rights; they believe that the protections offered by human rights legislation should represent a floor rather than a ceiling. The Scottish Government have taken on the challenge to find ways in which to embed human rights responsibilities across different policy areas by producing Scotland's national action plan. The plan has several outcomes, including empowering every individual to understand and embrace the value of human rights, implementing Scotland's international human rights obligations and reducing inequality of opportunity and outcomes. That approach ensures that people's rights are at the centre of policymaking. Perth and Kinross Council ran a pilot project bringing together local people and public bodies to discuss the potential impact of human rights on individuals and local public services. One of the proposals that came from the meeting relates to education and raising awareness. It was viewed that people who might benefit most from human rights are often the people who are least aware of them. The forum also provided the opportunity for people to see human rights as part of their daily work, as opposed to seeing them only in certain circumstances. Bringing people together to think about their rights and their public services is potentially a hugely valuable approach.

The Human Rights Act 1998 is an important part of the debate. We cannot ignore the direction of travel in which the UK is going regarding the repeal of the Human Rights Act. It is something that Sinn Féin opposes. The Human Rights Act plays a central role in our peace process. International human rights have always been very important for the people of the North, as they are truly objective and stand with what is right and wrong. The recent UN report about collusion in the North is another example of that objectivity, fairness and justice in practice, in addition to providing practical examples. Every year, the Human Rights Commission produces an annual statement on human rights. I look forward to attending the event launching that report this week in this Building. The Assembly should take note of that annual statement and examine the areas indicated with a view to flagging them in the Programme for Government.

Mar Ghaeilgeoir, ba chóir Acht Gaeilge a chur ar siúl. As a Gaelic speaker, I think that the Irish Language Act should be implemented immediately.

Ms Bailey: I beg to move amendment No 1:

Leave out all after the third "rights;" and insert

"calls on the Executive to move immediately to ensure compliance with all minimum human rights standards; and further calls on all Government Departments and public bodies to introduce human rights action plans."

We in the Green Party are really glad to see the debate brought to the House and are supportive of the original motion. We have proposed a very slight amendment and hope that it is taken as a friendly amendment, as it is aimed at reflecting the legal obligations of the Assembly's commitments to human rights, as well as the Westminster Government's.

In the pack made available for the debate, there is a quotation from the United Nations, already mentioned by Mr Lynch, that outlines the background for reasons to introduce an international Human Rights Day:

"In 1948, the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights marked a milestone in the history of human rights. For the first time, it laid out fundamental human rights for all, to be universally protected. Today, 68 years later, the Declaration remains as relevant as ever."

It is hard for us to disagree with that statement. As a state signatory to the declaration, Westminster is, to all intents and purposes, the accountable Government, at both the international and domestic level, for ensuring that those universal rights are afforded to every UK citizen.

On 22 May 1998, people across this island overwhelmingly supported the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, which was a legally binding democratic referendum. As amendment No 2, from the SDLP, states, that agreement included:

"the incorporation into Northern Ireland law of the European Convention on Human Rights and the subsequent passage of the Human Rights Act ... 1998".

The European Convention on Human Rights is really worth spelling out and having a look at as we debate this. We, in the Northern Ireland Assembly, should have been writing it into our laws since 1998. It states some pretty straightforward things, such as the right to marry; prohibition of discrimination; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; right to respect for private and family life; and the prohibition of abuse of rights. Under section 2 of the convention, a further series of articles sets out the operation and accountability of the European Court of Human Rights. It includes the appointment of judges and the decisions taken.

A series of protocols have been added at various points since, including protocol 2, which furthers basic rights such as the protection of property, the right to education and the right to free elections. In 1963, protocol 4 introduced the prohibition of imprisonment for debt; freedom of movement; and the prohibition of expulsion of all nationals. Further protocols brought us all universal rights, such as compensation for wrongful conviction; equality between spouses; and the right of appeal in criminal matters. The Human Rights Act has been UK law since 1998. That means that you, as an individual human, can defend your universal rights in a UK court and that public organisations — including the Government, the police and local councils — must treat everyone equally, with fairness, dignity and respect.

It is regrettable that, here in Northern Ireland, so many cases have made their way into our courts to test those protocols.

This was the same year that saw the introduction of the Northern Ireland Act, which sets out the legislative competence of the Assembly and prevents us from legislating in conflict with the European Convention on Human Rights. I think it is important that the House reaffirms its commitment to that, because, over several years, observations of Northern Ireland from many international treaty bodies have repeatedly identified approximately 12 reoccurring human rights issues within the Assembly. They are: a single equality Bill; a bill of rights; termination of pregnancy; Irish language protection; promotion of Ulster Scots; issues for Irish Travellers, including educational attainment and housing; lack of involvement by the Northern Ireland Executive; poverty; conflict and legacy issues; the age of criminal responsibility;

historical institutional abuse; and structures for participation. Access to many other human rights has been challenged in our courts, some of which I have mentioned and others that are currently being considered by our courts. It is for those reasons that I feel it is important that we need to be held accountable for what we do in our roles as public legislators. That is why I feel it important that this amendment receives support from all Members.

During a Westminster debate on international Human Rights Day, last year, Jim Shannon MP stated:

"The Foreign and Commonwealth Office publishes an annual report on human rights, as well as quarterly updates. May I suggest that we consider having an annual debate in Government time in the main Chamber of this House to coincide with the release of the annual report, giving the House as a whole an opportunity to respond to it?"

Principal Deputy Speaker, I believe that to be an excellent suggestion. May I suggest that we perhaps do the same in this Chamber? We have strategies and reports, and they are one thing, but accountability and scrutiny are very much another. Again, I reaffirm that we in the Green Party want to take this opportunity to confirm our commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights as universal rights for all.

Mr Attwood: I beg to move amendment No 2:

Insert after the third "rights;"

"notes the requirement in the Good Friday Agreement of the incorporation into Northern Ireland law of the European Convention on Human Rights and the subsequent passage of the Human Rights Act; believes that the Human Rights Act 1998 is important for the protection of the rights of the people in Northern Ireland and an obligation further to the Good Friday Agreement;"

The last time this sort of issue around human rights protections was debated in the Chamber, I recalled something that had struck me very firmly about 10 or 15 years ago when a book was published in Dublin. It said that the future of the island would be defined less by the bloodlines of ethnicity and more by the lifelines of human rights. That is the perspective that the SDLP takes in relation to this debate and human rights generally. The future of our island — we believe, the future of the wider world — should be defined by the lifelines of human rights and less by the bloodlines of ethnicity. That point, given the turbulence in many parts of the world at the moment where ethnicity or other sectional identity seems to be holding sway, should be the perspective that we have on this issue.

It is worth commenting, however, that that perspective has, in our view, been taken forward more by the people in the rest of Ireland than by the Government in Northern Ireland. Look at the citizens' assembly that has recently convened in Dublin; look at the vote of the people of Ireland in relation to equal marriage. They seem to have embraced the argument around the lifelines of human rights. Whilst we differ on some issues about what that should look like, that should be what we embrace too in going forward.

Our amendment refers to the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement and the incorporation into domestic law of the Human Rights Act.

This is critical, not least given the Supreme Court challenge that started at 11.00 am today. Whilst the Human Rights Act is outwith the European institutions, it is not outwith the Brexit debate and the future shape of our politics. We want to remind the British and Irish Governments on record that there is a binding international treaty between the British and Irish Governments and that the outworking of that binding international treaty is the incorporation into domestic law of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act in particular.

1.00 pm

Mr Stalford: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. One of the most fundamental human rights is freedom of speech and the freedom to express non-violent political thought. Does the Member agree with me that it is absolutely wrong that people from outside the United Kingdom can come here to preach hate and incite violence on our streets and that, because of the Human Rights Act, we are absolutely powerless? Due to the fundamental right of those people to a family life, the Government were hamstrung in their efforts to put them out of this country.

Mr Attwood: That was litigated upon and, if I remember rightly, went all the way to the European authorities. The right decisions were made on where people who preach hate should go. We also have to recognise that the Human Rights Act and international provisions generally have lifted the threshold of human rights protection that we are the beneficiaries of. Whilst there will be cases that excite public concern — in some places, the media agitate public concern — that does not take away from the fact that we live in a better world because of the international provisions provided in Europe, through the UN, and in other ways. If you are making an argument like that, you should step back from it and see the benefit that has come to you and every citizen of Northern Ireland because of the provisions that we have embraced.

We are putting on the record our view that when the Brexit turbulence begins to escalate the British Government will barter votes in Westminster for the Human Rights Act. Let them understand that the Human Rights Act is off limits, is binding in international law and is an essential element of the new political dispensation in Northern Ireland.

I might have misheard Mr Lynch — if I have, I will stand corrected — but I think he said that the motion was the agreed Executive position in relation to human rights. I might be wrong about that. Whether it is or is not, I am worried about the Executive's position on human rights, and I am worried for the following reasons. First, in its submission to the Programme for Government (PFG) consultation, the SDLP outlined, as a starter, 50 Bills that would define this mandate as being different to any other mandate of the Northern Ireland Assembly or the old Stormont Parliament and that would see a paradigm shift when it came to the legislative ambition and outcomes of this Assembly. As a consequence, 20 of our election proposals were about legislation. So, whilst human rights action plans, if they apply across the lives of all Government Departments — I am sure the DUP will tell us shortly whether they will be — we need new legislation to build into the architecture of these institutions the human rights standards that we require.

I welcome that Clare Bailey went through a lot of the thinking of the SDLP, which is also the thinking of the

Green Party, in areas like marriage equality, early education and care, homelessness, financial redress for victims of clerical abuse, legislation to address age discrimination, legislation for a bill of rights and an all-Ireland charter of rights and so on and so forth. If there is to be a paradigm shift when it comes to a rights-based approach in this mandate, it will not come from a fairly moderate intervention like the roll-out of human rights action plans, welcome though they are. The paradigm shift will be defined by new legislation across the range of rights requirements that say that we are embedding all that is needed in the life of our politics and the life of our society.

The second reason why I think that what is being proposed is moderate is this: what does it mean when it comes to critical areas of Government policy?

Let me give you just one example because I will not have time for more. The PFG is limited and silent not only on what new legislation might be forthcoming on human rights provisions such as Clare Bailey and I have referred to, but what is worrying is how it goes about the issues of equality and anti-poverty. Mr Lynch was right when he indicated that, in developing policy and legal architecture around equality and rights, Northern Ireland, over many decades and through the work of many people who pursued democratic practice when others pursued state violence and terror, created new thresholds. However, too many of those requirements are missing from the PFG.

Let me give you one example. The PFG must include a child rights indicator framework grounded in UN standards as recommended to the Executive, yet the PFG is silent on that. Worse, when only a matter of weeks ago the Assembly debated child poverty, the DUP motion, supported by Sinn Féin, left out critical words of Seamus Treacy in the judicial review of July of last year when he said that objective need had to be informed by neutral criteria irrespective of affiliation or background and that funding should be based on those neutral criteria.

Somehow, the PFG is silent in respect of that critical phrasing, as was the amendment proposed by the DUP and Sinn Féin. So, not only is the PFG lacking in legislative ambition, it is lacking in protecting those hard-won equality and human rights gains of the last 20 or 30 years.

In my view, we are not far short of what might well be a lot more turbulence when it comes to the issue of human rights. The reason I say that is that, at the end of February of next year, Mr Justice Colton, the presiding judge in the inquest into the Ballymurphy massacre, will convene the parties. At that stage, he may or may not indicate whether he can move towards an inquest. That inquest is informed by international human rights principles, yet the court may be obstructed from pursuing it because of a lack of money.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Attwood: I will. If it transpires that there is a lack of money come February for that inquest, we will be in denial of our international human rights obligations, the court will be denied its opportunity to pursue the inquest, and victims and survivors will be denied the right to truth.

Mr Logan: I welcome the opportunity to discuss human rights. I believe in human rights; I think that we all in this Chamber believe in human rights. I, for one, am thankful

for what we have been afforded in this part of the United Kingdom.

I have had the opportunity over the years to travel to many countries through mission teams to see at first hand where people are not afforded the same basic human rights that we have been. One memory that sticks out was in Mexico City. I travelled there with the One Mission Society (OMS) and remember people sleeping beside water pipes just to survive the night. I remember one young girl whom I met in a park. She slept in the park, and she had a child. She had no shoes and had glass in her foot, but, because of the healthcare system there, she had absolutely no opportunity to get it seen to. I still think about that girl and that child and the start that that child had in life. Not a very good start at all.

I believe that everyone should have a safe place to sleep and that everyone should have access to clean water and food. As a result, I agree with a portion of the motion, and that is to acknowledge Human Rights Day. Quite a few things have been set out already with regard to human rights. A day set aside to remember those who —

Mr Stalford: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Several Members talked about how the Assembly lags behind in human rights, but one area where the Northern Ireland Assembly led was in the introduction of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Act. Slavery is a growing problem in human rights violations. It is to this House's credit that it took a lead in tackling modern slavery.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Logan: That is right, and I commend Lord Morrow for his work on that. We are leading the way in human rights on that and a lot of different issues. I welcome the Member's contribution to that. I agree with the portion of the motion on remembering people who have not been afforded the same rights as us.

Some of us in the Chamber also have a job to do on human rights. There are some in the Chamber who appear to champion human rights on one hand, but, on the other hand, are quite happy to deny the right of life to a child. Let me put on record that this party and I will never be found wanting in standing up for the unborn child. What I find particularly unpalatable today is that here we have Sinn Féin tabling a motion on human rights when some in that party have denied the very right of life to many over the years. I spoke just last week with a man, a former bus driver, who was targeted by the IRA. That man has lived in fear for many years, and his family, to this day, are massively affected by what happened to him years ago. I often think of families robbed of a loved one at the hands of terrorism here in Northern Ireland. What an absolute violation of their human rights and those victims' right to life.

I oppose the motion. It calls for Departments and public bodies to introduce action plans. Yes, of course, that is the answer: more bureaucracy. No, this international Human Rights Day, I ask the people of Northern Ireland and the House to remember those who are not afforded the same human rights as we are.

Ms Dillon: Will the Member take an intervention?

Mr Logan: I am going to finish up. I do not ask those in power in those countries to simply talk about human rights;

I call them to action so that future generations can have a better start in life.

Mr Beattie: I look at the motion in its most general terms and see it as something to celebrate. We should celebrate the fact that we have human rights in this country and further afield because, if we had not signed the treaty in 1948, we might not. We need to remember why we had to sign a treaty in 1948 after the Second World War and the genocide that happened then. The motion is something to celebrate, but I know that there is much conflict in it and an awful lot more to do. I also look at the two amendments and ask what there is not to support. All of us, as good, decent human beings, must want human rights for fellow human beings. To be perfectly honest, I cannot see anything there that I want to oppose.

The United Nations asks us to show courage and stand up for people's human rights on 10 December.

"Speak out/up when another's rights are at risk or under attack ... If you see someone being harassed, bullied or ridiculed ... Combat myths with facts ... Speak up for tolerance and against prejudice."

These are all good things; not bad things. I do not know how anybody can oppose things like that. The declaration in 1948 was a milestone. Article 1 states:

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

We all know — we could get into a slagging match across the Floor — that our recent chequered past has not lived up to article 1. Neither have we lived up to article 3, the right to life. However, I see no point in trading insults around the place. I go back to the fact that this is something that we should be celebrating.

We talk about courage. We all know about Rosa Parks, who refused to give up her seat to a white man on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama and sparked a civil rights movement in the United States. A little known fact that I found out is that she was not actually the first. That was a woman called Claudette Colvin, but she was not used as the poster girl because she was a teenager who was pregnant to a married man. It showed courage to say, "No, my human rights allow me to have this seat."

Of course, our human rights have been added to by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the European Court of Human Rights. It is interesting that, today, in the European Court of Human Rights, the trial of Ratko Mladic for the Srebrenica massacre in 1995, the last of those war crimes, is finishing.

1.15 pm

As things have progressed, human rights have become slightly more complicated. Article 18 of the declaration states:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion",

and article 19 states:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression".

I absolutely support those words, but nobody could have envisaged that those rights would be afforded to the likes of ISIS, al-Qaeda or the Taliban, whose expression of religious freedom of opinion is in part a provocation to violence and repression, particularly against minorities and women. Who can forget the 'Charlie Hebdo' attack or the Bataclan massacre? I have my experiences from Afghanistan. I will not get into the rationale of that, but, when you see a woman go in to vote, dip her finger in ink and then, when she comes out, see the Taliban standing outside cut off her inked finger, you suddenly realise how many human rights we have here compared with so many others. Those people preach hate, violence and anarchy. I cannot believe that, when we wrote the human rights declarations in 1948, 1953 or 1998, we ever intended them to support people like them.

Human rights have given us the right to peaceful protest and assembly, the right to paid holidays, the rights to privacy and a family life, but we also have to remember that 21 million people —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Beattie: — are still victims of forced labour, and 121 million people have never had the chance of an education. There are 300,000 child soldiers, of whom I was one. I support the motion and the amendments —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Beattie: — and I hope that they pass.

Mr Dickson: While I appreciate that the irony of a motion on human rights being tabled by Sinn Féin may not be lost on some in the Chamber, I nevertheless thank that party for bringing it forward in recognition of the journey that it and others in the Chamber have taken on human rights in Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and around the world. The Alliance Party also intends to support the Green Party and SDLP amendments.

The European Court of Human Rights, the Human Rights Act and the Good Friday Agreement — yes, our Good Friday Agreement — all underpin the pillars of the democratic positions that we find ourselves in today: the right of Members to speak in the Chamber and the rights of our citizens across Northern Ireland. While Europe and all its institutions are greatly confusing for many, the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights are not part of the European Union; they are, of course, as others have mentioned, part of the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe is the custodian of the convention, which we entered into in 1953. Indeed, in large part, the United Kingdom was the fundamental author of the convention — I for one am proud of that — which, through the Council of Europe, represents not 28 states in the EU but 47 states of the Council of Europe. While the United Kingdom may be contemplating leaving the European Union, we are not leaving the Council of Europe, as the Prime Minister has made clear. Our withdrawal from the EU will not and must not have any effect on our international convention requirements, whether they are those in respect of human rights or of the many other international conventions to which the United Kingdom is a signatory.

At this stage, I should declare an interest because I play a small part in the Council of Europe as I represent the Assembly in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. We too have a solemn duty to uphold that convention.

In 1998, the Human Rights Act brought into domestic law all the rights, freedoms and protections of the European Convention on Human Rights for citizens in the United Kingdom. Whatever the views of the House on a party that I may have some connection with — the Liberal Democrats — one of its achievements in the last Government was to defend the Human Rights Act from the then Home Secretary, Theresa May, and her attacks on the Act in favour of a British bill of rights. It is, today, for the Executive to commit to an action plan to ensure compliance with our obligations under human rights standards and to protect the Human Rights Act.

Ms Armstrong: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dickson: Yes.

Ms Armstrong: Does the Member hope, like me, that, in protecting the Human Rights Act, the First Minister will raise the issue of human rights in China during her visit there this week?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Dickson: Thank you. I sincerely hope and trust that, when Ministers or representatives of the Assembly have such an opportunity when they visit states that perhaps do not fully subscribe to international standards on human rights — we know that China does not — they take it. Indeed, we should ask our First Minister whether she has taken the opportunity to raise the issue of human rights.

Mr Stalford: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. He mentioned his connection to the Council of Europe. He will be aware that Human Rights Watch criticised the Council of Europe in 2014 for standing by while the regime in Azerbaijan cracked down on dissidents and opposition politicians. I assume that he took the opportunity, through the Council of Europe, to condemn that indecision.

Mr Dickson: I was not a member at that time. I wholly understand the flaws of all international bodies, and, where they are found wanting, we need to speak out. The Member is right to do so.

We in Northern Ireland have had our human rights enshrined in law, and Northern Ireland and Scotland have a particular interest in any change to the United Kingdom Human Rights Act. Others, such as Mr Attwood, have referred to the relationship between human rights and the Good Friday Agreement and the international agreements that underpin all of that. We have all felt what it is to be in a minority at one point or another in our life. We can also and should also understand how the Act protects our right to freedom of expression, our right to a fair trial and our right to freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment.

I do not want a United Kingdom Government from the right or the left to cherry-pick our rights. I firmly believe that the rights hard fought for through world wars and enshrined in the convention since 1953 are so important and so right. Through the processes of the Good Friday Agreement, they have been given to the citizens, and we must always protect them from attack. They must never be undermined

or watered down. The removal of the Human Rights Act in the United Kingdom would send out the wrong message internationally. As a country with a historic past and connection to our Commonwealth, we must make sure that we set the standard and try to educate and encourage others to meet those standards.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Dickson: Yes. How could we encourage those other states if we were to remove or water down —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Dickson: — the rights of our own citizens?

Mr Stalford: I thank all Members thus far for their contribution to the debate, which has been measured and reasonable.

I am proud of the role that our country has played in shaping the world's understanding of human rights, going back all the way to Magna Carta, where the power of the executive over the citizen was checked for the very first time, even before the concept of a citizen existed, all the way to the Bill of Rights of 1689, when the power of the monarch was curtailed. We all know the background to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European conventions and so on. The victorious allies in the Second World War had the opportunity to put the powers that were responsible for so much human suffering on trial to give account of their actions and the rights that they removed from other people. Arising from that was an understanding of what I will call "fundamental rights". It is not necessary to have action plans for all parties to allow those fundamental rights to inform, guide and direct the things that they do.

What are those fundamental rights? The first fundamental right that I believe in is the right to life. Unlike some colleagues in my party and, I suspect, around the Chamber, I am consistently pro-life. I am opposed to the death penalty and to the introduction of anything like the Abortion Act 1967 to Northern Ireland. I carry my pro-life ethic with me, and it informs, guides and directs the things that I believe in. Freedom from torture is also a fundamental right, and we must always guard against the power of the state over the citizen to impose inhuman constrictions or torture on them.

I mentioned earlier in the debate one thing of which I am very proud. I was a back-room boy in DUP headquarters at the time, but I had a role in helping the Lord Morrow with the human trafficking Bill. We can be proud of that legislation, which is designed to tackle modern slavery — one of the most fundamental rights violations that goes on throughout the world. It is ironic that one of the parties proposing an amendment to this motion was opposed to it, and another party that champions itself as a guardian of people's rights was also against it.

The right to a fair trial in a free society is, of course, fundamental, and then there is freedom of speech; freedom of conscience, thought and religion; and freedom of movement within the state in which you reside, in order to guard against the establishment of a Gulag system such as operated in Russia. Those are fundamental rights, and a belief in them is shared by a huge majority of Members throughout the House.

Reference was made to the Bill of Rights Forum. I served on it some time ago when it was producing its report, and the entire process was farcical. It was farcical because special interest groups were using the bill of rights process as a Trojan Horse to make fundamental rights out of things that are not fundamental rights. Some people were advocating that a bill of rights should be used as a means of reversing the trade union reforms that went through in the 1980s, for example. Well, I am sorry, but there is no fundamental human right to secondary picketing. An attempt was made to push through the Bill of Rights Forum a fundamental human right to a home of your choice. Now, we obviously have a fundamental responsibility to ensure that any citizen who needs to be housed is housed, but this is where we are in danger of going down a perilous path.

We have to stick to the fundamentals and understand what the fundamentals are. I want to finish with a quote from the academic Philip Alston:

"If every possible human rights element is deemed to be essential or necessary, then nothing will be treated as though it is truly important."

We must always guard against that.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Stalford: I am glad to do so, Madam Principal Deputy Speaker.

Ms Archibald: I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate on this important motion tabled by my party colleagues. We are also happy with the amendments being proposed and welcome the support that the motion has received from other parties.

In international human rights week, we in the Assembly can make a real difference. We can explore the implementation and incorporation of the key international human rights treaties — for example, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Human Rights Day calls on everyone to stand up for someone's rights. The Assembly can explore how we, as MLAs and legislators, can embed human rights principles into everything that we do. Human rights treaties cannot be ignored. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights agreed by the United Nations in 1948 set out a list of 30 universal human rights, and the UN has agreed a number of legally binding core human rights instruments. States that have ratified those instruments have specific obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the rights contained in them. The ratification of an instrument legally obliges a state to participate in a monitoring cycle and report to the UN oversight committee every five years. Sinn Féin supports participation in the UN human rights monitoring mechanism. The recommendations from these are about everyday issues in small places close to home — for example, childcare, poverty, housing, education and Irish language. They are the world of the individual person.

A lot of issues have been raised by the treaty monitoring bodies. There are a number of recommendations specific to the North of Ireland in each of the three recent treaty reports, namely the report from the Committee on the

Elimination of Racial Discrimination; the UN report on economic, social and cultural rights; and the UN report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

1.30 pm

The lack of engagement with the UN reporting processes by the Executive has been raised, in particular by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. To quote:

"The Committee regrets that the absence of representatives of the government of Northern Ireland did not enable it to make a full assessment of the enjoyment of Covenant rights in Northern Ireland."

Les Allamby from the Human Rights Commission recently said:

"Turning up to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, for example, means that the fact that we have a racial equality strategy is acknowledged and given a positive recommendation."

It is important that the Executive are represented at these UN Committees to tell the good-news stories where they exist.

The Human Rights Commission, in evidence to the Executive Office Committee, suggested a coordinating role for the Executive Department for scrutiny of the concerns and recommendations identified in UN reports that cut across all Departments, be it Justice, Education, Communities, Health or others. The Equality Commission, too, has mentioned a scrutinising role for the Assembly Committees and said that, for example, recommendations on childcare should be fully scrutinised by the Department for Communities. The Assembly needs to take an active interest in all this.

The Human Rights Commission's response to the Programme for Government consultation sets out a variety of international treaty obligations and outlines where they fit in terms of law, policy and practice of the European Convention. It is important to note that, in the three most recent UN reports, there are concerns and recommendations regarding three important areas: the equality Act, the bill of rights and the repeal of the Human Rights Act. Let us stand up for somebody's rights today. Take a stand and defend someone's rights, because each one of us can make a difference.

Mr Kennedy: I am pleased to contribute to this important debate. As with others, the irony is not lost on me that Sinn Féin proposed the motion. It is sometimes difficult to take lectures from Sinn Féin on the issue of human rights, given its background. One hopes that that is in the past, but it is important that those issues are not forgotten.

International Human Rights Day gives us the opportunity to reflect on what we have achieved since the universal declaration was first adopted 68 years ago; what work needs to be done, both here in the United Kingdom and on an international scale; and how we can use our influence to improve the lives of people living in countries that still have appalling records when it comes to the human rights of their own citizens.

It is important to remember the context in which the United Nations general assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Europe, we

remember, had been torn apart by war and by the genocide of millions at the hands of Hitler's Nazi regime, which had demonstrated the brutality that humans could visit upon fellow men and women, and the declaration gave the universal protection of the rights of all for the very first time. When you consider how, just a few years before, elements of humanity had demonstrated how little value they gave to the lives and dignity of their fellow human beings, you get a sense of the enormity of that moment.

One such person who cared deeply about human rights was Austin Hunter, who very tragically died over the weekend. It is right that we refer to him. Austin Hunter was one of the outstanding broadcasters and journalists of his generation, but he was also a man of great humanity and compassion who, through his professional career, covered some of the worst atrocities of the Troubles. He did so with care and respect to those most deeply affected and with great courtesy, and I know that the House will join me in extending our sympathy to his wife, Jean, and to his family at this time.

The theme of this year's international Human Rights Day is to stand up for someone's rights today. In the past 12 months alone, we have seen the importance of defending the human rights of others as we have witnessed that there are still groups and individuals out there who hold little regard for human life. The rise of ISIS and the ongoing conflict across the Middle East, not least in Syria, have provided striking reminders of the importance of the universal declaration and the need for democratic nations to continue to uphold its ideals. The images of beheadings, torture, slavery and genocide that have emerged from the region are a chilling reminder of the evil that can take hold when a nation does not embrace human rights.

Of course, 24-hour media has now allowed us an insight into the conditions in which people live in regions such as Syria and Iraq, but we must also be mindful of the more secretive nations and regimes and their failure to adhere to human rights requirements. It is important that the Executive, when building relationships with other nations, give consideration to the adherence to human rights requirements and make that an important factor when assessing whether to progress the relationship.

I urge those, particularly from the party proposing the main motion today — Sinn Féin, which recently rushed to pay tribute to Fidel Castro and Cuba — to consider how it might have tempered its words with a bit more condemnation of his appalling record on human rights. The liberal establishment nearly fell over itself to laud the achievements of a leader who had scant regard for human rights and those who opposed his regime —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Kennedy: Broadly speaking, we are content with the motion and the amendments and will give our support where needed.

Mr McPhillips: I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate and I rise in support of the SDLP's amendment.

Like Mr Dickson, I welcome the fact that Sinn Féin proposed the motion. That is progress, as its history has been anything but great and glorious in terms of human rights. We have only to —

Ms Dillon: Will the Member give way?

Mr McPhillips: Shortly.

We have only to look at the history of the Troubles and at how Sinn Féin's military wing gave little respect to the most basic of human rights, the right to life. We recall the disappeared and the abused. Families such as the McVeighs in Donaghmore, just outside Dungannon, still await the return of their loved ones, and individuals such as Mairia Cahill still seek the human right to justice. There was also the unlawful killing of Paul Quinn in south Armagh. These, along with many more abuses, on both sides of the conflict, need to be addressed now. They are critical human rights issues.

The SDLP, a party formed out of the civil rights movement here, would like to join with other parties in the Assembly in supporting international Human Rights Day. We welcome the United Nations slogan:

"Stand up for someone's rights today".

It has been 68 years since the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was signed by most Governments in the world but it remains concerning that abuses and breaches of the most fundamental rights continue to grow. Freedom of speech and other human rights are taken for granted in the UK but, over recent years and months, human rights have deteriorated on the international stage.

In the Islamic world, women lack equality, religious dissenters are persecuted and political freedoms are curtailed. In China, there is political and economic repression. States such as Russia, Turkey and Hungary have authoritarian leaders with little respect for even the most basic of human rights. The LGBT community in places such as Russia and Nigeria has faced oppression. Meanwhile the US, which is meant to be the pillar of western civilisation, has failed to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate groups when targeting terrorist groups such as ISIS and others in the Middle East. Xenophobia and racism are also growing across Europe.

The protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is therefore as relevant today as it has ever been. It is concerning that in Northern Ireland, over the past 18 months, the Executive Office has failed to send any departmental officials to reporting committees for three major international treaties, one on the rights of the disabled.

The SDLP brought forward the amendment because we have genuine concerns over the future realisation of human rights in the North of this island. The European Convention on Human Rights, which is enshrined in the Human Rights Act, has played, and continues to play, an important role in the delivery of peace here by ensuring that the state does not act ultra vires and that it is held accountable for the gross violations such as those committed during the Troubles.

I will take that intervention now.

Ms Dillon: Thank you very much for taking the intervention. I have heard enough from across the Chamber, and particularly from you, Mr McPhillips, trying to say that somebody on these Benches is guilty of violating human rights. If you have any evidence that I have violated anybody's human rights, I think that the good people of Mid Ulster would like to know about it, given that they elected me. People across the Chamber have

used this issue to cause insult to Members sitting on these Benches. There is no call for it.

Mr McPhillips: I thank you for your intervention.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McPhillips: I will leave it to others to decide on what I have said. I did not mean anything personal to any individual in the House.

Those rights are now under threat from the Tory agenda to quell all things European, including the right to a fair trial, the right to liberty, and the right to have the death of a loved one properly investigated.

Mr Stalford: I appreciate the Member giving way. You talked about being against anything European. Those rights existed long before we were in the European Union; there is no logic in saying that they will not exist after we leave the European Union.

Mr McPhillips: Thank you to the champion for Europe. *[Laughter.]* We have seen much progress in the realisation of those rights in the North, but that progress is now at risk due to the debate over sovereignty. The people of the North will lose out the most. My worry is that, if the Tories get their way, we will witness a massive chilling effect on human rights law in the UK. People's freedoms could be at risk. If there is to be a British bill of rights, there would be limited means for redress. The European Court provides the last court of appeal against the state. We would simply be handing back control to the English judiciary, which has mistreated people from the North for years.

I welcome today's motion on Human Rights Day; it is an important day for many suppressed peoples across the world. However, more locally, I have serious concerns over the future of the Human Rights Act and that of the Good Friday Agreement. I urge support for the amendment.

Mr Allister: There are many fundamental human rights, but there is the absolute human right of the right to life; it is written in the universal declaration at article 3. Some have referred to the irony of the source of the motion; I refer to the hypocrisy of the source of the motion today. It comes from a party that has gone out of its way over many years to justify and stand over the denial of that absolute human right: the right to life. Take the proposer of the motion, Mr Lynch: an unrepentant convicted terrorist. He was caught by the SAS in April 1986 while seeking to plant a landmine with murder in his heart to kill soldiers on the road to Rosslea, for which he got 25 years but, sadly, served only half of that.

Only in Stormont could someone have the audacity to stand unrepentant about their own attempts to deny human rights while proposing a motion on human rights and clutching to themselves the clothing of human rights when they stand convicted of possessing explosives and a rifle with intent to endanger life. If he had had his way that day, he would have delivered murder to a passing patrol of soldiers.

Of course, it is interesting to reflect that, on international Human Rights Day — 10 December — the same IRA robbed many individuals of that most absolute human right, for which we hear no apology today.

1.45 pm

On 10 December 1971, two UDR soldiers, a Protestant and a Catholic, Kenneth Smyth and Daniel McCormick, were murdered by the IRA on international Human Rights Day at Claudy. The very next year, on 10 December 1972, Stewart Middlemass, a soldier, was murdered by an IRA booby trap at Fort Monagh barracks. The very next year, on international Human Rights Day, James Hesketh, a 21-year-old soldier, was shot by an IRA sniper in Leeson Street. In 1980, on international Human Rights Day, 10 December, Colin Quinn was shot by the IRA when leaving his work.

Yet some, who, to this day, have no apology to make for their actions or the actions of their comrades in delivering murder and denying the fundamental right to life, have the audacity to come to the House and cloak themselves in the language of human rights and talk about defending international Human Rights Day. Where were the human rights of Kenneth Smyth, Daniel McCormick, Joseph Parker, Stewart Middlemass and James Hesketh on international Human Rights Day? They were denied them, primarily by the IRA, and, in April 1986, the proposer of the motion would have denied the same human right had he not been stopped in his tracks by the SAS.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member please bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Allister: For the very reason of the stench of hypocrisy that arises from the source of this motion, I will vote against it.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Nichola Mallon to make her winding-up speech on amendment No 2. She will have five minutes.

Ms Mallon: This week, we have international Human Rights Day. There was universality across the Chamber in recognising the importance of marking this day and taking the time, particularly during this period, to pause and reflect on the harrowing experiences of those right across the world who live an existence in which they are denied their human rights. Mr Logan and Mr Beattie shared some very personal memories, having witnessed what that existence means and, in particular, the pain and suffering that is endured by children and women across the world.

There was also agreement across the Chamber on the importance of reflecting on how far we have come as a society in our compliance with human rights standards and the Human Rights Act. Sadly, however, that is where agreement ended, and, as Mr Logan informed us, the DUP will oppose the motion and the amendments.

Yes, we have come far, but as many Members have highlighted, there are several areas where we still fall short. I add my voice to those of Members from other parties who welcomed the efforts to bring a motion on this issue to the House. It is also important to acknowledge and recognise the views that Members have expressed about the hypocrisy of the proposers. It would be foolish and unrealistic not to acknowledge that, but I accept that it has caused considerable discomfort and unease across the Benches.

I welcome the fact that there is support for the motion and for our amendment, as indicated by all parties except the DUP. It is important, given that the European Convention on Human Rights is a requirement of the Good Friday Agreement and a fundamental part of our hard-won

architecture here, that both are explicitly referenced in the final motion. I would argue that this is more important, given the hostility of the current Tory Government, and in particular the Prime Minister, to the Human Rights Act and the turbulence and stirring of hostilities as a result of Brexit.

Mr Attwood made the point that life on these islands and across the world is increasingly being shaped by the lifeline of human rights and less by the bloodline of ethnicity. It is an important development, but its progress requires effort. It requires, as many Members pointed out, education, awareness raising and campaigning. I echo the praise articulated by several Members about recognising the efforts of the many organisations and agencies working tirelessly to promote and protect human rights here and abroad.

A number of times, we heard the slogan — stand up for someone's rights today — and about the framework within which we are to view this year's international Human Rights Day, and yet not a single Minister in the Executive felt it worth their time to make the very short journey from their offices into the Chamber to stand and respond to the debate. For me, that is the most disappointing aspect of the debate. Regardless of the contributions we have all made, for the citizens in Northern Ireland and anyone with an interest in human rights, to look in here today and see that the Executive did not deem it worthy or important enough —

Mr Stalford: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Does she agree that, if the issue were being taken so seriously, the leader of her party would be here instead of posing for a photo opportunity in London? Yes, I know that you were going to tell me where he is instead of posing for a photo opportunity in London.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute. Tá nóiméad breise ag an Chomhalta.

Ms Mallon: I thank Mr Stalford for his intervention. If he had listened to the debate, he would have heard quite clearly — he prides himself on understanding the history and politics of this part of the island — that the Good Friday Agreement, its links to the Human Rights Act and its convergence with our membership of the European Union are all inextricably linked. In showing leadership today, my party leader is in London at the Supreme Court trying to protect and stand up for that right and for the democratically expressed consent and wishes of the people of Northern Ireland.

As I said, it is bitterly disappointing that not a single Minister made the effort to come down today to respond to the debate. It also shows that, on an issue of such fundamental importance — human rights and how we manage our society and protect our most vulnerable — the DUP and Sinn Féin are completely and utterly split. It is very telling and is another very disappointing outcome and realisation from the debate.

Mr Agnew: Since the whole debate about the EU and, indeed, the Conservative policy of repealing the UK Human Rights Act, we have felt the need in debates to talk about the threat from the UK Government to human rights in this part of the world. As today's debate shows, the threat is here and is much more local. Despite the Human Rights Act and our responsibilities in it, we are not meeting minimum human rights standards in many areas. My colleague Clare Bailey highlighted those in her opening remarks. Mr Dickson rightly raised the issue of human

rights in China, and our First Minister should be raising challenges on very significant abuses of human rights in China, which are extreme in many cases. To give ourselves the credibility to lecture and admonish others, we need to ensure that, in Northern Ireland, we uphold the human rights standards that we are signed up to through the Good Friday Agreement and the UK Human Rights Act.

We are well aware of the Human Rights Commission challenge on reproductive rights in Northern Ireland and the court ruling that we are not meeting minimum standards; indeed, we had the opportunity to correct that in the Assembly, but, unfortunately, that opportunity was not taken.

The right of same-sex couples to marry is being tested in our courts. Again, we have the possibility of legislating for that; indeed, a cross-party group of MLAs is seeking to bring forward a private Member's Bill to do just that. We know from each debate that we have had to date that there has been a rejection by some of the extension of marriage rights to same-sex couples and, indeed, that the DUP blocked a majority vote in favour of it.

In 1998, with the Good Friday Agreement and the protections that went with that, Northern Ireland became the exemplar of rights. We led the game by enshrining in law the protections set out in section 75. That led the way for others in the UK to follow. Unfortunately, we have done little since then to build on that foundation, and we are now behind the rest of the UK and, indeed, Ireland. Our failure to bring forward or even to discuss seriously and consult on a single equality Act has meant that the updating of rights legislation across other parts of the UK and Ireland has left us lagging behind. Indeed, access to those rights, which a single equality Act could simplify, has again been denied to our citizens. Of course, others rightly spoke about the legacy issues that remain outstanding in Northern Ireland and the rights that are denied to the victims of our conflict here.

Human rights are for all. The Human Rights Act is for every citizen of the UK. It is something that we should not only uphold but embrace and be proud of. We should promote human rights to other parts of the world and act as an exemplar. Our amendment calls for minimum human rights standards for Northern Ireland. That is the least that we can ask for. It is not enough. It is not all-embracing. It is not making us a champion for human rights —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Agnew: — but we believe that the Assembly should at least commit today to that modest outcome.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Question Time begins at 2.00 pm, so I suggest that the House take its ease until then. The debate will continue after Question Time, when the next Member to speak will be Cathal Boylan, who will wind on the motion.

The debate stood suspended.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Mr Speaker: We will start with listed questions. I call Ms Sinead Bradley. Ms Bradley is not in the Chamber.

Zero-waste Strategy

2. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline any plans her Department has regarding the implementation of a zero-waste strategy. (AQO 817/16-21)

Miss McIlveen (The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs): My Department's waste management strategy sets out a framework of policies and actions that contribute towards dealing with waste as effectively as possible by minimising the amount of waste we produce, for example through the carrier bag levy, increasing the amount of waste we reuse and recycle and, where that is not possible, promoting recovery ahead of the managed disposal of waste. As well as achieving substantial increases in recycling, we have reduced the amount of waste going to landfill over the past decade so that it has now fallen to its lowest ever level. Since 2004-05, the proportion of household waste that is landfilled has more than halved, down from 81.8% to 39.7% in 2015-16. The household waste recycling rate has more than quadrupled, from 10% in 2002 to 42.2% last year.

Key elements of the strategy have already been implemented, including the publication of the waste prevention programme in September 2014 and the introduction of the Food Waste Regulations in April 2015. Food waste makes up around a quarter of councils' municipal waste and, on average, costs every household in Northern Ireland almost £500 per year. The separate collection of food waste has the potential to significantly drive up recycling rates, as well as generating greater value from that resource. I am continuing to support efforts to improve waste management by providing £2.5 million to councils through the Rethink Waste capital fund for waste prevention, reuse and recycling projects this year. Five of the proposals received from councils to date relate to food waste recycling projects.

Mr Boylan: I thank the Minister for her answer. Minister, given that it seems that recycling levels have plateaued, how do you intend to reach the 50% target by 2020?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. Obviously, while we would like to get to a zero-waste economy, zero waste is where we produce absolutely no waste, so we need to look at other ways of getting to the stage where we reduce our landfill.

Waste prevention can be achieved by reducing the quantity of material that is used in certain products and by increasing the efficiency with which those products, once created, are used. It encompasses various actions that

can be undertaken when a product reaches the end of its life. You will also be aware that we are working closely with councils on the Food Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015. Working with them, we plan to reduce our household waste quite considerably in the amount of foodstuffs that are wasted every year. Councils are and will be obligated to improve the provision of food waste collection schemes to comply with the new regulations by April 2017. That will significantly decrease the amount of waste that goes to landfill and will go towards assisting with reaching our targets. Alongside that, we are working with various companies on having a circular economy and reusing their waste. A lot of that will be done in partnership and will mean working closely with those partners to achieve our targets.

Mr Butler: I welcome a zero-waste strategy. Does the Minister not feel that it would be better to first concentrate on tackling the waste that is dumped as a result of organised crime? Does she believe that the current environmental crime unit is up to the task?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. I believe that it is up to the task and is working hard to bring to task those who have been doing wrong. This year has been a busy year of work.

So far, in 2016, 20 prosecutions have been brought by the crime unit. It is something that I and the crime unit take seriously, and we will work together to increase the number of prosecutions that are brought to the courts.

Mr Agnew: In relation to the Mills report and the identification of illegal waste dumping across Northern Ireland, what progress has been made in achieving prosecutions, particularly in relation to the dump at Mobuoy?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. I cannot comment in relation to the case that is ongoing in Mobuoy, but the recommendations from the Mills report are certainly being worked through by my Department. You will recall from the previous answer that there have been 20 prosecutions this year to date. It is something that we are very focused on, and we want to ensure that it does not recur. I am very positive about the work that is being done.

Mr Speaker: Mr Conor Murphy is not in his place.

Birds of Prey: PAW UK Report

4. **Mrs Cameron** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment of the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime's 'Bird of Prey Persecution and Poisoning Report Northern Ireland 2014', published in November 2016. (AQO 819/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for asking the question and for raising the profile of this important issue. The Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime in Northern Ireland (PAW NI) is a multi-agency body comprising representatives and organisations involved in wildlife law enforcement. PAW NI partners include: key Departments, including four DAERA divisions; PSNI; NDPBs; NGOs; gamekeeping groups; and landowning interests. It affords opportunities for statutory and non-government organisations to work together to combat wildlife crime. PAW NI was established in April 2007.

I welcome the publication of the PAW NI raptor report, as it clearly highlights a number of problem areas in Northern

Ireland. Of course, the report only accounts for the known cases where the birds were found and tested. The report is a beneficial tool, aiding future enforcement and detection action. Rather worryingly, it indicates an ongoing disregard for public safety by a small number of people in our community who are placing highly toxic poisons where wildlife, livestock, pets and people could come into contact with them. Also, there are people misusing presumably legally owned firearms, either intentionally or recklessly, with a similar disregard for safety.

Enhancing biodiversity is a central objective of my Department. The loss of our top predators from our ecosystems by acts of persecution is extremely disturbing. These are keystone species, and their loss has a detrimental impact right the way down the food chain. I call on those responsible for these reckless acts to cease doing so, and I urge anyone who may have information about these crimes to contact the PSNI or Crimestoppers.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for her very comprehensive answer. It is quite disturbing to hear the detail of that. What is the Minister's Department doing to reduce wildlife crime throughout Northern Ireland?

Miss McIlveen: Again, I thank the Member for her question. While I welcome the report, it troubles me somewhat, in that it is caveated by saying that it is likely that the figures presented here represent only a fraction of the number of incidents. Many remain undetected and unreported because the crimes primarily take place in very remote areas.

As the Member will be aware, the enforcement of the Wildlife Order is generally carried out by the PSNI. My officials from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) assist the PSNI by provision of technical support and advice, and we work alongside others in trying to stop this. My officials from several remits across the Department also sit on the PAW NI group. The group works with a range of partners to reduce wildlife crime. The Department is keen to further develop its relationship with PAW NI partners, and, additionally, we are open to providing high-level support to the PAW NI group should it be requested.

Mr McNulty: What consideration has the Minister given to the benefit of a public information programme helping to reduce the number of attacks on birds of prey and their nests?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. Any public information that can go out to have people desist from this is obviously welcome. The Member may be aware that Operation Raptor was announced earlier this year. This is a public awareness programme to focus on the issue. I think that there is an onus on all of us, as elected representatives, to become involved in this, highlight the issue in our local press and get involved with local groups.

Mr McMullan: I thank the Minister for her answers so far. I agree with you on the protection of birds. You mentioned Operation Raptor. Can you give us an update on where we are with that?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. As he is aware, it was launched in March this year. It runs indefinitely, and I guess that we will probably not really understand the benefits of that until the next report is published. I reiterate what I said to the previous Member. I

encourage elected representatives to become involved in this campaign and to raise awareness. A poster campaign is associated with Operation Raptor and those who represent rural areas, in particular, may want to look at acquiring those pieces of information and posters for their offices.

Mr McKee: Minister, this has been a particular problem in the Mourne, with red kites being targeted. Can you provide an update on how many birds have been killed over recent years?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. While I do not have a total number, I am aware that the most recent report highlighted four red kites, four buzzards, two peregrines, one sparrowhawk and a raven. It is an issue that focuses not just on the south Down area but on other areas. I am quite happy to get the full range of final figures to the Member.

Planning Applications: NIEA Responses

5. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment of the time taken by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in responding to councils' consultations on planning applications. (AQO 820/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The interim figures for the NIEA's performance in 2016-17 show that 91% of statutory responses have been issued to councils within agreed time frames. The NIEA remains on track to meet its key business target of 90% this year and has an ongoing programme of initiatives that aims to continually improve its performance. Up to this point in the reporting year, the NIEA has received 2,055 consultations, of which 1,865 were responded to within the 21-day target or an agreed time frame. The average time for a response to a consultation is 12 days from NIEA. It is important that appropriate information is provided by applicants to enable the planning authority to make timely and positive decisions. The Department aims to contribute to this process by providing clear guidance and standing advice to help applicants and planning officials understand what information is required to facilitate timely planning.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for her answer. Does she agree that an efficient and effective NIEA is important for an effective planning process? Can she give us some more information on the performance of the NIEA so far this year for the different council areas?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. The NIEA has an important role to play in all of this. The Member will also be mindful of the fact that the ultimate decisions with regard to planning applications lie with local councils. The number of consultations that the NIEA will look at varies considerably across council areas and, where its response performance for a particular council is above average, this obviously could reflect a large number of straightforward applications, for example, for single dwellings or different development types where it has issued standing advice. Lower than average performance in response times may be due to a higher proportion of major or, perhaps, complex applications that have been received and which require the provision and assessment of large amounts of environmental information.

2.15 pm

I can provide the Member with a general overview of some of the councils. He will be pleased to note that, in our council area, Ards and North Down Borough Council, where 242 applications were received, 97% of the responses issued within 21 days and agreed extensions. On average, it took only 10 days to respond in that area. The area that has the lowest return is Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, where the average is around 17 days.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Minister for her answers thus far. Is she aware of the discrepancy in the times that it takes local councils to process agricultural planning applications? For instance, in Antrim and Newtownabbey, agriculture-related applications last year took an average of 18 weeks, compared to over a year in Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. Will the Minister investigate whether there are any issues for NIEA and with her ministerial colleagues?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. I will indeed refer that to colleagues in the NIEA. However, I reiterate that, since planning does not lie in my Department, it is, perhaps, something that needs to be taken up directly with local councils.

Ms Armstrong: Does the Minister agree that an independent, well-funded agency could respond in a more timely manner to such consultations?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for her question. I thought that I had outlined quite well that the NIEA responds in a timely manner. I have answered the question about an independent environment agency several times before, and it is not something that I am minded to look at.

Air Pollution: South Belfast

6. **Mr Stalford** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline her plans to address air pollution in South Belfast. (AQO 821/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I welcome the latest report on air quality in Northern Ireland, published by my Department on 22 November. The report clearly shows that air quality in Northern Ireland continues to improve, although we continue to have problems with emissions from road traffic at certain locations. The report notes that long-term roadside levels of pollutants in Belfast are mostly decreasing, albeit at a slower rate than I would like.

In addressing air quality in Belfast, and across Northern Ireland, my Department has commenced a review of air quality policy and legislation, with the intention of developing a dedicated Northern Ireland air quality strategy and revised local air quality management policy guidance. The review will consider new thinking on air quality policy across the UK and internationally, aimed at reducing emissions from all sources to protect public health, assist with climate change targets, and improve congestion. Those policies will be consulted on in due course.

In addition to the review, my Department provides funding support to councils, including Belfast City Council, to carry out their statutory local air quality management and action plan duties and has worked closely with Belfast City Council and the Department for Infrastructure to draw up an air quality action plan for the greater Belfast area. The air quality issues here are predominantly due to road traffic emissions.

Therefore, the plan focuses on introducing measures relating to sustainable transport, such as the forthcoming Belfast rapid transit scheme; the development of the Belfast transport hub; and park-and-ride, as well as strategies that promote public transport, walking and cycling.

Mr Stalford: I am grateful to the Minister for that very full answer. Does she agree with me that, in tackling congestion, any air quality strategy must have significant investment in infrastructure, including the York Street interchange?

Miss McIlveen: I totally agree with the Member. As a former Minister for Regional Development, I was very much involved in some of those projects and, in particular, the York Street interchange. As a former member of Belfast City Council, the Member will know that the council has declared the Westlink corridor, from York Street to the city boundary, as an air quality management area. That is an area that carries approximately 100,000 vehicles per day. The development of the York Street interchange project is one of the principal measures in reducing transport emissions along the Westlink corridor and is one of a range of measures that DFI has agreed, with the council, to include in its air quality action plan.

It is, therefore, vital that this project goes ahead. Obviously, it is not the only project in which there are air quality issues. The Dungiven bypass is another such project in Northern Ireland and one that I would like to see moving forward very quickly.

Ms Bradshaw: Given the increasing population in the Carryduff/Saintfield Road area, will the Minister agree that the introduction of a greenway from Carryduff to the city centre would be a very good proposal to include in her action plan?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for her question. I am very keen for such projects to move forward, as was the former Minister. As a user of the greenway in my constituency, I see its benefits and the benefits of cycling, but, given the increase in population in that area, I advise that members of the public use the park-and-ride facility and take advantage of the public transport system that is in place there.

Ms Bailey: Will the Minister acknowledge that four major cities have committed to banning diesel cars by 2025 due to air pollution levels? Will she let the House know whether she has any intention of doing the same?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for her question. I suppose that I have to declare an interest as the driver of a diesel car. At this stage, no, I do not have any intention to do so.

Ms Archibald: I thank the Minister for her responses so far. She may be aware that it was reported last week that one of the air quality monitors in Dungiven was not working, and has not been for some time. I understand that it is the council's responsibility to replace that. Was the Department aware that it was not working? Whose responsibility is it to request a replacement?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for her question. Yes, I am aware of that, as I was of the issue on the Ormeau Road. It is my understanding that it has been out of use since March this year and that the reason why it has not been replaced is an issue with replacement parts. The Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is in the

process of procuring a new monitor. I understand that it continues to be able to monitor pollution but is using a different method to do so.

Mr Speaker: Before I call Ms Mallon, I remind Members that, if they wish to ask a supplementary, they should rise continually in their place.

Ms Mallon: I thank the Minister for her answers to date and for her commitment to tackling air pollution. I seek assurances from the Minister that, in the event of Brexit, we will maintain the current levels of environmental protection for air quality.

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for her question. Obviously, Brexit will not have an impact on this. The Executive have given a commitment, and you will understand from our Programme for Government that we recognise the importance of air quality and have a target against the air quality indicators to reduce the levels of nitrogen dioxide recorded across all monitoring stations in Northern Ireland. We have a draft delivery plan, and an indicator is out for consultation. It contains the various measures that we are looking at. As a Department, generally, we are looking across the piece at how air pollution can be tackled, not only in transport but in the agriculture sector.

Lough Foyle/Carlingford Lough

7. **Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the current ownership of both Lough Foyle and Carlingford lough. (AQO 822/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Last week, responding to a parliamentary question about fishing rights in Lough Foyle and Carlingford lough after the UK leaves the EU, the Secretary of State restated the UK's position that the whole of Lough Foyle is within the UK. The issue of ownership of both loughs is not a matter within the competence of the Assembly. However, I know that the Irish Government, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Crown Estate have been talking about the issue for some time. I understand that the next meeting between the two Governments is scheduled for later this month in Dublin.

My immediate concern is that the ongoing dispute is impacting the ability of the Loughs Agency to effectively manage aquaculture activities, particularly licensing in Lough Foyle, and I am, therefore, anxious that it be resolved. For that reason, during my first North/South Ministerial Council meeting in September, there was a discussion on how the ongoing dispute is adversely affecting the operational activities of the Loughs Agency. The pressing priority for all those involved in the discussions should be to come to an arrangement that will allow the Loughs Agency to fulfil its role properly.

Lord Morrow: I thank the Minister for her answer. I listened to what she said, and she related that the situation is causing difficulties with aquaculture licensing. To what extent is she or her Department being kept abreast of what is happening? Surely the hiatus is causing problems for the sensible running of her Department in relation to what we are speaking about.

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. As he highlighted, this has been going on for quite some time. In fact, it dates back to 1662 and the charter of Charles II, in

which he granted the waters in the bed and the fisheries of Lough Foyle to the Irish Society and included them as part of County Londonderry. As you are aware, the lough is the responsibility of the Loughs Agency. There is a claim by the Irish Government by virtue of the fact that they have not accepted the position of the United Kingdom, which is obviously causing ongoing problems, not only with aquaculture licensing in Lough Foyle but with any future management that we would like to put in place, particularly for Lough Foyle and Carlingford lough. The situation is ongoing, and we want it resolved as soon as possible.

Mr Swann: Minister, for clarity: how many licences have been issued for aquaculture by the Loughs Agency for Lough Foyle? What work has been undertaken to ensure that there are no illegal beds being set down instead, or does she consider that to be an ecumenical matter?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. There is an issue with illegal fisheries in the Foyle. There has been a substantial increase in the number of unregulated oyster trestles — in excess of 400% on the Donegal side of Lough Foyle in recent times — which is causing a navigation issue, particularly hazard and risk, and a general health and safety hazard in the lough. It is not possible to issue licences because of what is happening.

Climate Change Bill

8. **Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether she will introduce a climate change Bill. (AQO 823/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Legislation to address climate change is already in place in the form of the UK-wide Climate Change Act, which establishes a long-term target of an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 against a 1990 baseline. Interim targets are, in effect, set by five-year carbon budgets, which are legislated on in advance by a statutory instrument that is laid in Westminster as a requirement of the Act.

The carbon budget for the whole of the UK targets a 34% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. I recently wrote to the Secretary of State supporting new legislation at Westminster for a UK carbon budget of a 57% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The latest greenhouse gas inventory, published in June 2016, shows a reduction of 17.4% from 1990 levels, whilst the most recent projections indicate that we are on target to achieve a 34.1% reduction by 2025.

The need to take action on climate change and its importance to the Executive is demonstrated through measures included in the draft delivery plan for indicator 29 of the draft Programme for Government. An annual progress report is submitted by the cross-departmental working group on climate change to the Executive, summarising progress made towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

I am satisfied that progress has been made on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Ireland. I am content with the plans that are in place and those that are being developed, which will reduce our emissions further. In those circumstances, I currently see no need to introduce a Northern Ireland climate change Bill.

2.30 pm

Mr Speaker: Sorry, Mr Lyttle, but we do not have time for a supplementary. That ends the period for listed questions. We now move on to 15 minutes of topical questions.

Arc21: Residual Waste Treatment

T1. **Mr Aiken** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs what discussions she has had with Arc21 about residual waste treatment. (AQT 596/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question, but, since coming into office as Minister, I have not had any discussions.

Mr Aiken: I am quite surprised by that, in view of the commitment that the Minister made to the chair of Arc21 in her letter dated 25 July, in which she stated she would recommend to the Northern Ireland Executive that she would consider the provision of financial support to Arc21. Can she, in view of the £1.8 billion cost of the renewable heat incentive scandal, state what discussions she has had with the Finance Minister on how that open-ended commitment to Arc21 can be met —

Mr Speaker: Mr Aiken, come to a question.

Mr Aiken: — and what advice she received? In the spirit of openness and transparency, can she tell us how much it is likely to cost?

Mr Speaker: Minister, it is for you to answer.

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. As he will be aware, the Arc21 scheme is with the Public Accounts Committee. The report will then go to the Department for Infrastructure for the Minister to consider. In the event of the project getting a green light, it will require a viable business case. At that stage, my Department will consider making a case to the Executive for financial support to ensure that ratepayers do not incur an unfair financial burden as a result of meeting a Northern Ireland-wide obligation. That is a position that is no different from that taken by Departments in the rest of the UK or, indeed, by the previous Department of the Environment.

As yet, I have not had a conversation with the Finance Minister on that. As I said, a business case still needs to be drawn up, but we are still some way off a decision being made.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

T2. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, in the light of her earlier comments about greenhouse gas emissions, what assessment has been made by her Department and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency of the adverse environmental impact of the wasteful burning of the renewable energy initiative. (AQT 597/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. At this stage, I have not received a report on that.

Mr Speaker: I call Mr Robbie Butler. Sorry, I call Mr Beggs for a supplementary. My apologies.

Mr Beggs: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Minister accept that it is damaging to our environment and increasing unnecessarily CO2 emissions? Worst of all, the

public are paying for all of this to happen. It is costing us in our pockets, yet we are damaging the environment. Why is public money being used to damage the environment?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question, but that is outside my remit.

Mobile Health Check Clinics

T3. **Mr Butler** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on the rural mobile health check clinics. (AQT 598/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. He will be aware that the scheme has been ongoing for some time. I had the privilege of welcoming the 12,000th recipient of the health checks to Saintfield mart the week before last.

Mr Butler: I am not sure that what happened in Saintfield is an overall update. That aside, the checks have provided an invaluable service in rural areas. Will the Minister commit to reviewing the clinics and work alongside the Public Health Agency to ensure that it is also adequately identifying and signposting poor mental health issues?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. I agree absolutely with everything that he said, having met people who benefited from the clinics and spoken to staff. I recommend that the Member, if he gets the chance, meet the staff who man the clinics, and do so during very unsociable hours, I have to say.

People have found the clinics beneficial, particularly farmers who live on their own, are isolated and who do not always look after, or are mindful of, their health. They are very much mindful of the welfare of their animals but often forget about themselves. This has been a fantastic service, and people have found the benefit of it.

Pork: China

T4. **Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, given that we all know that the First Minister is in China this week, to confirm that Chinese veterinary officials visited Northern Ireland in late October to discuss exporting pork products and to state where in Northern Ireland the officials visited and whether any progress was made during the visit or since. (AQT 599/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for her question. Obviously, they will have visited the pork plants in Northern Ireland. When I was in China myself just a few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to speak to a number of officials. Last week, I met Andrea Leadsom, who has since been in China. We are all getting very positive information back with regard to the export of our pork products to China. We are expecting hopefully good news in the not-so-distant future. This is very lucrative for our plants. There is an estimate that it could be worth somewhere in the region of £10 million to the Northern Ireland economy.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Minister for that information, but I am concerned. I believe that they did not make it to my constituency of Mid Ulster, specifically the Karro Food Group in Cookstown, and instead prioritised a visit to the Giant's Causeway from Dungannon, a route that actually goes through Cookstown. I may need to register an interest in this question because my husband supplies pigs

to Karro, but I really would like to hear an explanation from the Minister in that regard.

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for her comments. I will certainly come back to the Member with the detail. I was not aware of that.

DAERA HQ: Ballykelly Costs

T5. **Mrs Barton** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether taxpayers' money has been spent wisely through her Department paying £600,000 for half an acre of land for its new headquarters in Ballykelly. (AQT 600/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for her question. The Member will be aware that this was done before my time in office. She may want to take into consideration the fact that this is a development that will allow for 600 jobs in the north-west. There are economic benefits to that. My understanding is that, at the time, it was seen as value for money in order to ensure that this project went ahead.

Mrs Barton: Given that this project never had a full business case, that OFMDFM had to issue two ministerial directions in respect of it, and that other vacant buildings, such as in Coleraine, were deliberately overlooked, does the Minister accept that this project is increasingly becoming a drain on public resources?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for her question. I go back to the original question inasmuch that this was a decision that was taken in the last mandate and given Executive approval at that time. Construction has now commenced, and the building is scheduled to be completed and open by January 2018. It will then start the business that it is designed to do, which is to accommodate employees in the north-west of Northern Ireland.

Air Pollution

T6. **Ms Bailey** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to state her plans to raise public awareness on the serious and immediate danger to life from the alarming issue of air pollution, with approximately 500 deaths per year in Northern Ireland directly due to air quality, albeit that she stated that she is content for Northern Ireland to be the lowest performing region in the UK in meeting greenhouse gas emission targets. (AQT 601/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for her question. She may be alarmed by all of this, but I have to say that work is ongoing right across my Department. She will be aware that the Executive are taking this very seriously. We are out for consultation on key indicator 29 with regard to air pollution. There are a number of things being done right across all of our Departments. I am working in collaboration with Departments for a mitigation action plan.

There are good achievements to date with regard to energy, with 25% of our total electricity consumption now generated from local renewable resources. We have the ongoing expansion of the natural gas network. We are working a lot with colleagues in transport for a new cycling infrastructure. There is additional electric-vehicle charging infrastructure. Obviously, agriculture is probably one of the trickiest to look at. We have the Efficient Farming Cuts Greenhouse Gases phase 1 initiative. I have also very recently received the independent report

that was commissioned on a sustainable agricultural land management strategy.

My Department is taking this really very seriously. I do believe that the work that is going forward will assist us in reaching our targets. As I have said, I have written very recently to the Secretary of State about working alongside her in order to increase the overall target to 57% by 2025.

Ms Bailey: I thank the Minister for that answer. That all sounds like good work being done, but I am still not sure as to how it raises public awareness. Can the Minister perhaps commit to not driving a diesel car throughout that as well, and encourage others to do the same?

Miss McIlveen: I am not sure that I can commit to that, because I do very much like my car. What I will do is work alongside colleagues in other Departments to ensure that they raise awareness of this because we are all in this together and there is a job of work for us to do to reach targets.

Basic Payment Scheme: Appeals

T7. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for some information in relation to the basic payment scheme, better known as the single farm payment scheme, and, given that a lot of her officials have been caught up in dealing with appeals, for an assessment of the overall progress of the appeals process. (AQT 602/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. Obviously the introduction of CAP reform area-based schemes has led to an unprecedented increase in the number of review-of-decision applications received by my Department. Review of decisions is an important part of the decision-making process that provides farmers and farm businesses with the opportunity to seek reconsideration where they believe that the Department did not reach the correct decision in respect of an area-based payment. Whilst the current process has been meeting objectives, I am nevertheless concerned about the time taken to issue final decisions. I have therefore asked my officials to review our current provision and put in place a process that better meets the needs of farmers for the 2017 scheme year going forward. This work will be taken forward in consultation with our stakeholders over the coming months. However, my immediate priority is to address the timelines of final decisions for those who are already awaiting reviews arising from the introduction of CAP reform area-based schemes. Therefore, my officials will shortly engage with stakeholders to determine a means by which review of decisions can be streamlined and made more efficient.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for her answer. Can she advise how many applications are delayed within the actual process and whether the necessary resources will be made available to try to resolve the issues?

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. I cannot give him an exact figure at the moment, but I am happy to provide that to him.

CAP Payments: Progress

T8. **Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on the progress being made with CAP payments. (AQT 603/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I thank the Member for his question. Obviously, the decision on CAP payments and what they will look like post-Brexit is something that we will look at in due course.

I am not actually quite sure what else he asked. I did not pick up on it, but I will pick it up in the supplementary.

Mr Frew: I am sorry that the Minister did not hear me. I asked her for progress on the issuing of CAP payments. Maybe she can also tell me what percentage of payments were cleared by 1 December, which was the first possible date to issue full payments.

Miss McIlveen: Apologies; you must have spoken into my deaf ear. As the Member will be aware, over 90% of eligible farmers received an advance payment from October, which equated to £158 million. The first day on which full payments could then be made was 1 December. On that day, we issued 21,372 payments — that is 91% of eligible farmers on day 1. That is 3,540 more payments than were made on day 1 last year. The target set is to pay 95% of eligible applicants by the end of December, and I am confident that we will meet that target.

2.45 pm

Communities

Women's Aid: Funding

1. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment of the tripartite arrangement for the funding of Women's Aid. (AQO 831/16-21)

Mr Givan (The Minister for Communities): With your indulgence Mr Speaker, as Minister with responsibility for broadcasting, I take this opportunity, at the start of my questions, to pass on my condolences to the family and friends of the late Austin Hunter, who so tragically died at the weekend. It is clear from the many tributes received from the political and media worlds that Austin was a man of great integrity and was highly respected by all who came into contact with him. I am sure that the whole House will join me in offering prayers and thoughts to the family at this time.

I turn now to the question. A tripartite funding arrangement exists for the 24-hour domestic and sexual violence helpline. This very valuable service is delivered by Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland and has been funded by a grant agreement attracting funding from the Department of Health, the Department of Justice and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The Housing Executive currently funds the helpline with £113,000 per annum, while the Department of Justice and the Department of Health contribute £110,000 each per annum. This coming together by the Departments to ensure that a valuable service survives in an economically challenging time is a model for future collaborative working.

Ms Boyle: I thank the Minister. On that first note, on behalf of my party, I, too, send sincere sympathies to the family of Austin Hunter.

Minister, you will be aware that a total of 738 women and 520 children were accommodated in refuges in 2015-16 and thousands more accessed community support.

However, 267 women could not be accommodated due to the lack of refuge space. Minister, what do you intend to do to support women who need refuge?

Mr Givan: The Member raises a very important point. I have met Women's Aid to talk about the issues that it is actively seeking to address and the ways in which government can work with it. We primarily support Women's Aid to address the issues that the Member highlighted through the Supporting People programme. This Executive have put £72 million into that programme. This year, recognising the pressures that exist for the providers of the scheme, of which Women's Aid is one, I found an additional £3 million to be spent on meeting those needs. The Housing Executive is working with the providers and will be contacting them soon as to how that £3 million should be allocated to them to help meet the types of need that the Member has raised.

Mrs Dobson: On behalf of my party, I concur with the Minister's sentiments. I was chatting to Austin just a few weeks ago, and my heart goes out to his family.

Can the Minister update the House on what work the Housing Executive is doing to address issues around domestic and sexual violence, especially when children are involved and new housing is urgently required?

Mr Givan: Obviously, the primary way in which the Housing Executive, through my Department, gives support is through the helpline, which is a vital instrument for people faced with this difficulty and through which they can get the support that they need. Obviously, the 24-hour helpline is very important, and that is why the three Departments have been actively engaged to ensure that it can continue. We are going through a budgetary process. I, in principle, have said that I want my Department's funding to continue and, obviously, that is subject to the necessary finance being made available.

It is important that, when people come forward, and that is often a difficult thing to do, they get the support that they need in the challenging circumstances that they face, and the Housing Executive will work with individuals to make sure that they get the accommodation and support that they will need; and Women's Aid plays a very important role in that.

Ms Lockhart: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. The Minister will be aware that a very successful white ribbon event was held last week in this Building, hosted by Women's Aid, and I am sure that he will demonstrate his commitment to it. How much funding from his Department goes to Women's Aid?

Mr Givan: Let me support the event that took place last week. Raising awareness of these issues is vital so that people know that there can be support and that they do not have to put up with domestic violence. It is also important that, when people step forward, they get the support that they need. The support that my Department provides to Women's Aid has funded, through the Supporting People programme, 13 Women's Aid refuges at a cost of £4,618,810 to provide housing support in 133 units of accommodation and nine floating support schemes to provide housing support to 1,163 women in their own home. That demonstrates the commitment that I have to supporting Women's Aid. I have met them, and I have also met Fermanagh Women's Aid on the provision that exists there and in Enniskillen. The First Minister asked me to join

her in meeting them, and we discussed a range of issues that they have to deal with in Fermanagh that we are now seeking to address. That work is being progressed by the Housing Executive.

Ms Armstrong: I thank the Minister for his recognition that these services require specialist expertise and knowledge from providers. What commitment can he give to repeat revenue support for these organisations rather than short-term, frustrating funding?

Mr Givan: There has been no frustrating of funding, so I am not sure where the Member gets that from; in fact, this year, I identified £3 million. The Supporting People programme was ring-fenced in previous years, and the fact that the budget was protected demonstrated the priority that the Executive give it. Whilst other parts of this Department's budget had a reduction, the Supporting People programme did not.

Having been in post only six months, I met senior officials and engaged with the providers, who told me that there were cost pressures, so, rather than frustrating funding, I allocated them an additional £3 million, which the Housing Executive will now allocate. There is a budgetary process, and I will make the case for this issue and others in my Department. Let me assure the House that I have already demonstrated that this is a priority for me and will continue to be so.

Ms Mallon: I thank the Minister for his clear commitment to tackling domestic and sexual violence. I also welcome the tripartite arrangement. Given that he is clear that it is a priority for him, what discussions has he had with his ministerial colleagues, particularly in Health and Justice, to ensure that they view this issue equally as a funding priority?

Mr Givan: Both the Department of Health and the Department of Justice have committed to ensuring that funding will be made available for the 24-hour helpline, which demonstrates the three Departments working together on this issue, as we do in tackling homelessness. We recognise that we need to work collectively, and that is a demonstration of how the Executive want to make sure that we all pull in the right direction and do not have Departments working independently of one another but Departments collaborating.

The Supporting People programme is something that we want to facilitate in order to encourage collaboration. The budget is under pressure, and there are challenges ahead in the financial environment that we exist in. Therefore, we want to ensure that vulnerable individuals who need support get it. Where there can be increased collaboration with the providers involved — if it means that efficiencies can be found in administration costs, for example, I very much encourage that so that the end user gets the support that they need — we will not have a plethora of providers using up administrative costs when money can be better spent on the front line. That is something that we are helping to facilitate with the providers.

Gender Equality Strategy

2. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the gender equality strategy. (AQO 832/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Member will be aware that, when I took office as Minister for Communities, I inherited a number of strategies covering a wide range of social inclusion issues, including gender equality. This is an important issue for

our society, and I have been clear from the outset that I want to consider how best to take forward this work in the context of the draft Programme for Government and the Executive's draft social strategy. The current consultation on the draft Programme for Government and the planned consultation on the draft social strategy present a valuable opportunity to hear what citizens think about the big issues that impact on our society and, importantly, to take their views on how they wish to see these issues addressed. I am committed to getting this right, and that takes time. This period of extensive consultation will help to inform how I move forward on gender equality.

Mr Boylan: I thank the Minister for his answer. Specifically, how will he ensure that the needs of the transgender community will be adequately met?

Mr Givan: In respect of gender issues, everyone will have an opportunity to engage in the consultation process. I encourage everybody who has an interest to engage in that. My Department has already been engaging with section 75 organisations as part of the development of the social strategy. Everyone needs to engage in the process so that we can collectively provide a framework in which all these issues can be dealt with in our society.

Mr Bell: Are there any plans for or developments in a new gender equality strategy?

Mr Givan: This year is the fortieth anniversary of the introduction of sex discrimination law in Northern Ireland. We have had an Executive gender equality strategy in place for the last 10 years, yet there are still stark examples of gender inequality in our society. There remains, for example, a gender pay gap in Northern Ireland. I have also noted from the Equality Commission's Expecting Equality investigation that 36% of women participating in the investigation believed that they had been treated unfairly or disadvantaged at work as a result of their pregnancy or having taken maternity leave. It also revealed that half of the women thought that their career opportunities were worse than they were before their pregnancy. On a slightly more positive note, 48% of survey respondents felt that they had been treated fairly. That is why I believe that fresh thinking is required and why I am keen to look at this cross-cutting issue in the context of the social strategy, which will go out for consultation in due course.

Mr Lyttle: How will the new strategy promote the new system of shared parental leave and flexible working introduced by the previous Minister for Employment and Learning?

Mr Givan: The Member will know that we are working through an Executive process before the substance of the draft social strategy becomes public. Once it is made available, we will be able to explore the issues further in the consultation process.

Mr Speaker: Question 3 has been withdrawn.

Community Halls Programme

4. **Mr Humphrey** asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the response to his recent announcement of the community halls programme. (AQO 834/16-21)

Mr Givan: The community halls capital grant scheme was launched on 19 October 2016 at Salterstown Orange hall, Ballyronan. My Department aims to distribute individual

grants of up to a maximum of £25,000 towards community halls minor works. There is £500,000 allocated to this pilot scheme in the current financial year. I can update the House and say that officials are in the process of assessing in excess of 800 applications.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for his answer so far. I join others in extending sympathy and condolences to Austin Hunter's widow, Jean, and their children, Simon and Rachael.

I commend the Minister's initiative on community halls and welcome the response; indeed, I encouraged many to apply for the scheme. Will the Minister take the opportunity to acknowledge the huge need for investment in our community halls throughout Northern Ireland?

Mr Givan: I thank the Member for his encouragement around the introduction of the scheme. The fact that well in excess of 800 applications have been received has demonstrated the need for investment in community halls. They support the hugely valuable work that is carried out across our community in Northern Ireland.

Many halls are dilapidated, and the pilot will reach only a small proportion of those that are in the worst condition. On the basis of the pilot scheme, the work merits future support in our capital programme over the years ahead. I intend to bring forward a future programme to allow us to continue to improve community halls and undertake larger projects to raise the standard of community hall facilities. As I indicated in my original response, half a million pounds of capital resource was identified in my Department to fund the pilot scheme. Given the huge response, that will come nowhere near meeting the need identified. However, I have tasked officials in my Department with identifying whether additional capital can be found to do more than initially envisaged. I have commissioned my officials to look at that.

Ms Bradshaw: What shared future arrangements are included in the application process for the grant?

Mr Givan: The grant was available to everybody, irrespective of class, creed or religion.

3.00 pm

Social Strategy

5. **Mr McKee** asked the Minister for Communities when he plans to bring the draft social strategy to the Executive. (AQO 835/16-21)

Mr Givan: I plan to bring a draft social strategy to the Executive and issue it for public consultation subject to Executive approval. The social strategy will promote opportunity and tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation based on objective need, as required by section 28E of the Northern Ireland Act.

The most recent figures tell us that 22% of the population in Northern Ireland is living in relative poverty before housing costs. It is worth noting that, over the last decade and despite significant investment, the overall number in poverty remains the same. We need to reduce poverty and its impact on people.

The social strategy will set out a new approach. It will identify, for example, those in poverty and outline specific interventions to support them. The strategy will address

issues in a more coordinated and structured way, mainstreaming this work into the new Programme for Government. Our focus is now firmly on delivering better outcomes for people, outcomes that matter most and can make a real difference.

The draft social strategy will be subject to public consultation. I welcome everyone's views during that important consultation period.

Mr McKee: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does the social strategy contain robust targets to tackle poverty? What resources will be available to achieve them?

Mr Givan: As I indicated to Mr Lyttle, the draft social strategy is going through a process to get Executive approval. It will then go out to public consultation. I assure Members that this is a very detailed plan to address the causation factors that can drive people into poverty. It will tailor specific programmes to meet the needs of individuals and areas when they are identified. This will be very different from how the Government has tackled poverty in the past and will make sure that those who most need help get it. The strategy will address the issues that drive people into poverty and all the issues that are then caused by those who have to live in poverty.

Mr Stalford: Who did the Minister consult during the development of the social strategy?

Mr Givan: A series of events was held to inform the work of the Department in supporting the new approach to the Programme for Government. Those events were well attended by representatives of local and central government, the voluntary and community sector, the business community and section 75 organisations. All this helped to inform the work that my Department is responsible for under the Programme for Government, including the development of a draft social strategy. The draft strategy will be subject to public consultation.

Ms S Bradley: I place on record my apologies for not being in place at the beginning of Question Time. I thank the Minister for using the opportunity to express his and the House's condolences to the family of Austin Hunter. The SDLP certainly associates itself with that.

Will the Minister explain the delay in bringing the social strategy to public consultation and provide a timeline for when we will see the strategy?

Mr Givan: Let me assure the House that there is no undue delay. The draft Programme for Government is out to consultation, but the economic investment strategy still has to go through the Executive. Parallel to that is the social strategy. We want to make sure that our economic strategy dovetails with and is tailored to the social strategy, which is about addressing poverty. It is important that we get that right. As soon as that process is completed, we will be able to move to a public consultation process.

Ms Gildernew: The Minister talked about going out to public consultation, and he said that he wants it to be a full consultation. How does he intend to consult with harder-to-reach rural communities?

Mr Givan: The Member raises an important point about rural poverty. We have been looking at that in the Department. Areas of deprivation are often difficult to identify. They can be masked by more affluent areas. There are cases in which — all Members will know about

this in their constituency — they do not naturally fit into deprived areas but are, in and of themselves, very much deprived. Tackling rural poverty is very important. It will be reflected in the social strategy. When we identify the needs in our rural communities and where poverty is in existence, it is important that we engage with those communities. That is something that we will do through the consultation process. It will be publicly available for individuals to respond to proactively. We will also engage with communities so that they are able to put forward their perspective on the issues.

Supporting People

6. Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment of the Supporting People programme. (AQO 836/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Supporting People programme has been in place since April 2003. It continues to provide quality services that help over 18,500 vulnerable people each year to live independently. Supporting People is a priority for my Department. I have seen at first hand the excellent work done by Supporting People providers and have met a number vulnerable people who have had their life turned around by Supporting People services.

The Department carried out a review of the Supporting People programme last year. The conclusion was that the programme had achieved its core aims of delivering significant quality-of-life benefits to those who have received and continue to receive services. The review, however, also identified a number of areas in which action is needed to improve further the impact of the programme, its economy and its efficiency. I have ensured that those recommendations are being actively addressed by my officials in partnership with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Department of Health and the voluntary and community sector. The work is being monitored by an implementation steering group led by my Department. The improvement programme is on track.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he expect the introduction of the living wage to have any impact on the Supporting People budget?

Mr Givan: It is an area that has been raised with me by providers. The increase in the living wage will create a cost pressure for some of the people who provide the service. That will present a further financial challenge. The needs of individuals are complex and increasing, so there is already pressure on the finances available, but, with increases in the national living wage, the providers are also highlighting the fact that that is creating a cost pressure. I have sought to try to meet some of the pressures this year by providing an additional £3 million. In cognisance of the pressures that are going to be in the Budget, a review has been carried out. We have identified where we believe that improvements can be made, but all of that has to be carried out in collaboration with the providers involved. They are actively involved in the process. It is for individual providers to identify how they can provide their service efficiently and effectively within the budgetary framework that I have. The Budget process is ongoing, so I will not know the outcome of that until it is completed by the Executive.

Mr Logan: Thanks to the Minister for his answer. Will the views of Supporting People providers, such as the Lighthouse in my constituency, be considered prior to the implementation of any review recommendations?

Mr Givan: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. The Department has established the implementation steering group, which I referred to in my original response, to drive the implementation of the 13 recommendations. That steering group includes representation from the committee that represents independent Supporting People providers. My Department has engaged extensively with the wider Supporting People sector throughout the compilation of this report and will continue to do so prior to and during implementation. That voice is critical.

I have met a number of providers; those organisations and the people in them. I can tell that many of those whom I have met have huge compassion and real drive and enthusiasm for trying to help people who are incredibly vulnerable. When I was with Depaul in Stella Maris or in the hostel in the Village area with Mr Stalford, I could see how the benefits of the Supporting People programme are being delivered. I was in Londonderry last week to open the North West Methodist Mission's new refurbished buildings, and I got speaking with some of the individuals who get that initial support. They are supported to move on into further independent living while still getting some support, and then, eventually, they are able to move on into the community.

I recognise the huge contribution that the organisations that get support from my Department through the Supporting People programme are making. They often go beyond the call of duty for individuals who need help and who have very complex needs, and they are achieving results. As we move forward, it is vital that the voice of those providers is very much part of the process, and it will be.

Mrs Palmer: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. What engagement has his Department had with the Health Minister and her officials to assess whether the Supporting People programme, as outlined in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's housing related support strategy, has met the Bamford review-related targets?

Mr Givan: I am happy to take up the individual area that the Member has highlighted. However, I want to reassure her that I met Minister O'Neill and Minister Sugden in the inter-ministerial group that exists to tackle homelessness. The three Departments are proactively engaged in seeking to address that. There will be a new homelessness strategy that the Housing Executive is responsible for and which I hope will be out for public consultation soon. There is a statutory requirement for a new homelessness strategy to be put in place in April next year, and, in preparation for that, my Department has been leading in having focused groups of officials come together from a range of Departments and organisations to ensure that, when the new strategy is put in place, everybody is very clear as to their responsibilities for implementing it, so that we can have a successful conclusion to that particular strategy.

This is Homelessness Awareness Week, and we have been raising awareness of this issue. The Executive are very much committed to making this a priority to deal with, because people who find themselves in these circumstances often have underlying needs, which, in

order to be met, require a range of organisations to work together to give support and help people to have their own home and live in it independently.

Ms Hanna: I thank the Minister for his answers. Supporting People has presented a very compelling case, which has been independently verified, for saying that its budget is effectively a preventative spend and that the problems that it tackles would cost public services a lot more if it did not make its intervention. In that context, and given the fact that demand for its intervention is rising, will the Minister assure us that that service will be protected and that it will be allowed to meet that demand?

Mr Givan: I agree with the Member. The prevention that the Supporting People programme provides can often help individuals not to require assistance that they would need if they had not got it through Supporting People. It is much more expensive to get those public services as opposed to getting the intervention that comes through the Supporting People programme. That is why I have identified this area of my budget as one that I certainly give a priority to. I am making the case in discussions with the Finance Minister for areas in my Department that I believe need to be protected, and this is one such area. It has been protected in the past because of the parallel that can be drawn with the Department of Health. I am certainly putting the case forward that it should get protection in next year's Budget. Obviously, it is something that will be subject to the Minister for Finance's consideration and that of the collective Executive whenever we come to agreeing on the Budget, but this is a priority for me.

3.15 pm

Mr Speaker: A brief question for Mr Lunn, and a brief response from the Minister.

Mr Lunn: The Minister mentioned a £3 million injection of funds this year. Prior to this, the Supporting People fund was frozen for nine years. What plans does he have to make sure this situation does not arise again, so that this very good scheme can continue and flourish?

Mr Speaker: Minister, a very brief response.

Mr Givan: Briefly, as indicated before, this was a protected budget, so while other areas of the Department's budget were reduced in line with reductions across the Department, this one was not because of the priority we attached to it. Obviously, there are financial challenges ahead, which is why collaboration is important. I addressed the providers at a conference and indicated that there needed to be more collaboration amongst them so that we can ensure the most effective and efficient systems are in place to help the people who need it, in the context of the financial difficulties and challenges that lie ahead.

Mr Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We now move to 15 minutes of topical questions.

Jobs and Benefits Office: Omagh

T1. **Mr McCrossan** asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the future of the jobs and benefits office and its staff in Omagh. (AQT 606/16-21)

Mr Givan: I will meet representatives from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council at 4.30 pm today. Obviously, I want to ensure we provide services right across

Northern Ireland; it is important that we do not have just a Belfast-centric approach to providing these services. For example, I have been able to make positive changes for Armagh, which was losing services. Additional jobs have been brought to Northern Ireland by the Department of Work and Pensions. I will meet the Minister of State at Westminster next Monday, to explore further opportunities for work that Northern Ireland can do.

Omagh is making the case that it is an area that needs to have services provided. I am very mindful of the case put forward by elected representatives.

Mr McCrossan: I thank the Minister for his answer. Can the Minister outline why the Omagh jobs and benefits office did not get the IPCC jobs, considering it has a telephony system already in place? Is the Minister concerned that a number of the current employees in Omagh failed to get jobs in other offices, which clearly shows that these staff have been disproportionately impacted the punitive welfare cuts and the rationalisation of the welfare state?

Mr Givan: Obviously, Omagh's telephony is an asset and places it well should there be opportunities in the future, and I am actively looking at that.

We have identified where the key hubs are going to be for welfare reform. Newry, Foyle and Dungannon are going to be major centres, and all of these places are outside of Belfast, because I am keen to make sure services are delivered across Northern Ireland.

Through any change process, there is going to be change. Even in the absence of the welfare reform agenda taking place, there is always a normal cycle of assessment about the caseloads that exist within these offices, and as that changes, the staff complement changes as well. I appreciate this is a time of change, but ultimately, it is important we respond to the changes that are coming and provide the most effective and efficient service possible.

From listening to other Ministers, I know they are facing pressures in the Department of Health and the Department of Education, and I have pressures upon my budget across a plethora of areas. I want to ensure the administration costs are at a minimum and we maximise what we can achieve on the front line. Services will be delivered using the best possible practice we have to maximise all of those things.

Mr Speaker: Question 2 has been withdrawn.

Regeneration Powers: NILGA Consultation

T3. **Mrs Palmer** asked the Minister for Communities what consultation he had with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) before he announced that he would not be devolving regeneration community development powers to local councils in this mandate. (AQT 608/16-21)

Mr Givan: I have met NILGA, the National Association of Councillors and representatives of the 11 councils through the partnership panel. In all those engagements, the issue of regeneration powers was raised and a decision was sought. I indicated to Members that I would consider regeneration powers in the context of my new Department, and I outlined in detail the rationale for the decision that was taken. Having now made that decision, I think that it is important that people apply themselves to maximising

the opportunities that exist for local government, which can very much be the driving force behind regeneration programmes in taking forward initiatives and work with my Department and the Executive to maximise the benefits for the people whom we represent.

Mrs Palmer: I thank the Minister for his responses so far. Will he confirm whether, in light of the Finance Minister's comments, the decision not to devolve the powers was an Executive decision or a solo run?

Mr Givan: I have been able to clarify that issue with the Minister of Finance. Obviously, like me, he is keen to make sure that we use the opportunities that we have to regenerate our towns and villages, so there is no disagreement on the issue. The Executive are clear that they want to have our towns and villages regenerated, as does local government. Collectively, we will be able to achieve that together. I know that some elected representatives have focused on the issue, but all the community organisations that I have met have said that they are delighted that the power is not going to local government and that they wanted it to stay within my Department's remit. People should move on now; the decision has been taken. We have the lifetime of this mandate to make sure that we work together. The public do not distinguish between what local government and central government do. What they want, though, is the job to be done, and, collectively, we can work together to achieve that.

HMO Legislation: Effectiveness

T4. Mrs Little Pengelly asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment of the effectiveness of the houses in multiple occupation (HMO) legislation in dealing with the ongoing challenges in the Holylands area of South Belfast, including repeated antisocial behaviour, noise and littering, particularly by those living in HMOs. (AQT 609/16-21)

Mr Givan: I know that the Member has raised concerns about the issue before. The new Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 provides for the regulation of HMOs but is not a way of reducing the number of existing premises. The Department is finalising a review of the private rented sector with a view to making changes that strike the best balance between the rights and responsibilities of tenants, landlords and letting agents.

Mrs Little Pengelly: I thank the Minister for that answer. I am sure he will understand the significant pressure that this puts on local residents who have to deal with it weekend in and weekend out, and many of them have repeatedly raised their concerns with me. Will the Minister consider including a review of the HMO Act as part of the review that his Department is doing? Although it is relatively recent legislation, there are clearly some issues with its enforcement against rogue landlords and those who will not take control of the situation.

Mr Givan: Certainly, the Department engages with council officials, from Belfast City Council for example, and there is opportunity there for that engagement. As the Department engages with the council and given what the Member has said, if gaps are identified in the legislation and in its effectiveness, I will want to know about them. Where corrective action can be taken, I will certainly be open to looking at that.

Sports Clubs: Historical Sexual Abuse

Ms Bradshaw: Before I ask my question, on behalf of the Alliance Party, I wish to extend our thoughts and prayers to the family of Austin Hunter as this very difficult time.

T5. Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister for Communities what discussions he has had with the IFA, the PSNI, the NSPCC and other stakeholder bodies to provide localised mechanisms through which historical sexual abuse can be reported in sports clubs. (AQT 610/16-21)

Mr Givan: I am obviously aware of the issue, which has been raised at a national level. It is important that, if people believe there are issues, they can report them, and I am happy to engage with stakeholders on that. To date, no one has come forward to indicate that there has been an issue at a local level; however, given the nature of what has happened at a national level, it is important that people are alert to that. It is something that has happened in other walks of life, and there has been a response from government to tackle those issues. That can be seen in the importance placed on child protection. That is something that we are alert to. As issues emerge, we will certainly respond.

Ms Bradshaw: Minister, do you have any plans to allocate additional funding to Sport NI to ensure that additional training in the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults can be delivered to coaches and volunteers in clubs across the region?

Mr Givan: If the issue emerges as one that requires resource, I will want to hear from the organisations involved. Given the issue that we are talking about, where support can be found, I would certainly be open to doing that.

Having met a huge number of sporting clubs involved in youth activities, I know that their volunteers do work that is vital and always with the best intentions. In any walk of life, it is important that protections are in place, because, where young people are involved, there will be individuals who will seek an opportunity to take advantage. It is important that organisations protect themselves in that respect. I have met organisations and youth organisations, and I know that there are robust processes in place that are being looked at. Should an issue emerge, I will certainly play my part in supporting those organisations.

Mr Speaker: Question 6 has been withdrawn.

Regeneration Powers: Local Councils

T7. Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Communities to outline the key reasons why he disagrees with the Belfast city growth strategy, which says that it is essential that regeneration powers that have been available to other UK cities for decades be devolved to Belfast City Council. (AQT 612/16-21)

Mr Givan: The reasons were laid out in great detail in a statement that was made to the House, after which Members had the opportunity to ask further questions. That decision has been taken.

I am keen to ensure that we maximise our regeneration powers. That will also be in the interests of councils, whose representatives I met recently. They recognise that the decision has been taken and want to work together. I am sure that that is also something that Belfast City Council will want to do.

Mr Lyttle: OK. One of Belfast City Council's growth strategy's key asks to drive economic growth, transform public services and address inequality is a single mechanism for regeneration and place-making powers. In the absence of the transfer of such regeneration powers, how will the Minister work with Belfast City Council to deliver that aim?

Mr Givan: I have a very positive relationship with Belfast City Council. I have met its chief executive and a delegation of councillors representative of all the political parties. We went in detail through areas where there was mutual interest in seeing development. The Belfast regeneration office engages with Belfast City Council. Where there are opportunities to work together, that will happen.

Of course, Belfast City Council received considerable public funding through the previous Department for Social Development, and I have engaged with the council on its Streets Ahead project. When Belfast City Council looks to what Stormont has provided, I do not believe that it will be able to point to any unfair treatment by any Department; indeed, it will continue to get support from the Executive to deliver services to the public. It is an issue on which we should move forward together to focus on getting the regeneration that the public want.

BBC Sports Personality of the Year

T8. **Mrs Cameron** asked the Minister for Communities whether he is concerned by the perceived lack of recognition by the BBC in its Sports Personality of the Year shortlisting. (AQT 613/16-21)

Mr Givan: Just this afternoon, before I came to Question Time, we recognised Jonathan Rea, who is a back-to-back world motorbike champion. That is a phenomenal success; only four individuals have achieved that. He is now working towards getting three in a row, which would be a first, yet someone of that calibre was not represented in the BBC's sports awards. In this Olympic year, which was part of the rationale for this, there are Paralympians on the list, but they did not include Bethany Firth, who happened to be the most decorated Paralympian and, indeed, UK Olympian. She did not make the list.

I entered into correspondence with the BBC head of sport and have just received a response. I will consider that response, which I do not believe has been helpful in determining the next steps that I will wish to take forward with the BBC. Ultimately, it is a decision for the BBC, but I do not believe that the process that it has in place is transparent or, indeed, fair in representing the people of Northern Ireland and the huge success of, not least, Carl Frampton, Jonathan Rea and Bethany Firth.

3.30 pm

Mr Speaker: There is time for a brief supplementary and a brief response from the Minister.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for his response. I will be brief. Bethany, Jonathan and Carl Frampton are examples of just the type of people whom we want to be recognised for their huge achievements for Northern Ireland. What can the Minister, in his capacity as the Minister for Communities, do to redress the balance?

Mr Givan: Today, we recognised Jonathan Rea. When the Northern Ireland football team came home from

the Euros, this Department hosted the homecoming event. I can inform the House that, in January, I intend to host a reception here at Parliament Buildings to give the recognition that is deserved to the success of the Olympians and Paralympians who represented our country. I will continue to do that in order to give them due reward for their success. Ultimately, the BBC needs to answer for itself. I am making the case with the BBC at the highest levels. This is a decision that it has taken and, at this stage, is standing over, but I will continue to give recognition to Northern Ireland sports stars for their huge success when representing our country.

Private Members' Business

International Human Rights Day

Debate resumed on amendments to motion:

That this Assembly acknowledges international Human Rights Day; notes the United Nations' comments that more should be done to raise awareness of human rights and the need to improve education about human rights; and calls on all Government Departments and public bodies to introduce human rights action plans.
— [Mr Lynch.]

Which amendments were:

Leave out all after the third "rights;" and insert

"calls on the Executive to move immediately to ensure compliance with all minimum human rights standards; and further calls on all Government Departments and public bodies to introduce human rights action plans."
— [Ms Bailey.]

Insert after the third "rights;"

"notes the requirement in the Good Friday Agreement of the incorporation into Northern Ireland law of the European Convention on Human Rights and the subsequent passage of the Human Rights Act; believes that the Human Rights Act 1998 is important for the protection of the rights of the people in Northern Ireland and an obligation further to the Good Friday Agreement;" — [Mr Attwood.]

Mr Boylan: Ba mhaith liom labhairt i bhfabhar an rúin agus ar son na leasuithe. I will speak in favour of the motion and both amendments. I welcome the motion. This is international Human Rights Week. It is unfortunate that, for us living in the North, human rights are still uncertain. We cannot celebrate international Human Rights Week without confronting the concerns about the potential repeal of the Human Rights Act.

The deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness, stated during Question Time:

"Any attempts to displace the European Convention on Human Rights and to repeal the Human Rights Act will have enormous implications, particularly for compliance with the Good Friday Agreement. Any lessening of human rights law, and specifically the repeal of the Human Rights Act, would be a grievous breach of the Good Friday Agreement and would mean that the institutional architecture of that agreement was seriously undermined, particularly in respect of policing and justice matters." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 105, p249, col 2].

This Assembly has the ability to pass legislation relating to equality and human rights. Equality and human rights legislation has been passed in Britain, Scotland and the Twenty-six Counties. How do we ensure that the people of the North of Ireland do not have lesser rights than people of other jurisdictions? There is a need to introduce equality legislation in the North of Ireland. The issue has been raised in three UN Committee reports. Equality protection includes issues of race, race discrimination and ethnic minorities. The Executive's desire is to make people's lives better and to deliver improved well-being to all citizens. The absence of an equality Act impacts those who are

most disadvantaged, on people with disabilities and on children and young people.

In the context of international Human Rights Week, it is important to highlight the Equality Commission's identification of disparities between the equality legislation in Great Britain and that in the North of Ireland. The disparities include the following: the Equality Act simplifies and harmonises legislation on discrimination across grounds; the definition of race in GB includes colour, nationality and ethnic origin; age discrimination extends beyond the workplace in GB; disability legislation is stronger in GB and includes, for example, discrimination arising from disability and the protection of people when accessing facilities, goods and services; equal pay provisions are stronger in GB, prohibiting employers to forbid employees from discussing pay in order to establish differences; positive action measures are permissible in GB across all equality grounds; and protection from discrimination by private clubs is extended to more equality grounds in GB.

The Equality Commission, in evidence to the Executive Office Committee, stated that, in GB, the Equality Act 2010 has been in force for six years and that each year, in some shape or form, we are falling behind in our equality protection. This is international Human Rights Week, and we have to ask ourselves, in the absence of an equality Act and a bill of rights and in light of the concerns raised by various UN reports and the deputy First Minister's comments on the repeal of the Human Rights Act, how the Assembly can enhance the protection of human rights and equality in the North of Ireland and ensure that we do not have any diminution of rights. This year's Human Rights Day slogan is: "Stand up for someone's rights today". In our Programme for Government framework, one of our outcomes is a more equal society. Let us take a stand, make a difference and maximise the opportunities to promote equality and human rights.

With your indulgence, Mr Speaker, I will turn to some Members' comments. I thought that it was quite a reasonable debate. With some contributions, I honestly think that there was unnecessary commentary. I pay tribute to the proposer of the motion, Seán Lynch, who has a mandate from the good people of Fermanagh and South Tyrone to stand here and represent them. Some people want us to go back to the past, and some comments were not very helpful at all.

I will start with the proposer of the motion. The biggest part of his contribution was on how human rights are slipping down the ladder. This is against a background of austerity and everything else. He made the key point, and there has been a good discussion today. We have to keep this on our agenda. The proposer of amendment No 1, Clare Bailey, made quite a good contribution. She mentioned the European Convention on Human Rights, the right to marriage and the right to respect for private and family life. I think that she also mentioned protocol 2 on protection of property. Her key point was on the annual report and putting it on the clár here for discussion in future years. That is quite a good suggestion.

Mr Attwood moved amendment No 2. To my recollection, most of his approach was about legislating in the Assembly. It was a good contribution, and he is right. He mentioned a charter of rights, homelessness and

everything else, and we have a responsibility for that. After all, we are a legislative Assembly.

Mr Phillip Logan, who is not in the Chamber, and Doug Beattie made very good, positive personal contributions on their experiences. Those contributions resonated with some of us. Doug Beattie mentioned the likes of Rosa Parks and her contribution, and I thank him for his positive speech.

Stewart Dickson talked about the Council of Europe, and he does not seem to think that we will have an issue. We have talked about this in the Executive Office Committee, and I think that there are genuine concerns because nobody knows what is coming. Nobody knows about Brexit or anything else, so nobody can look into the future and tell us exactly what is going to happen. We have not even invoked article 50, and everybody is saying that there will be nothing wrong. We have grave concerns.

Christopher Stalford talked about fundamental rights, including the right to life. He is opposed to the 1967 Act. It is a pity that the other parties across the Floor do not feel that they can support us at this time. Caoimhe Archibald used most of her contribution to talk about exploring the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. She also called for an equality Act and a bill of rights, as did many Members today.

I thank Mr Danny Kennedy for his contribution. He said that we have made some progress but recognised that there is more work to do. Mr McPhillips spoke next, followed by Mr Allister. What more can I say about Mr Allister's contribution? If I said any more about some of the contributions, it would make you cry. Mr Speaker, I conclude at that. I support the motion and both the amendments.

Mr Speaker: Before I put the Question on amendment No 1, I remind the House that, if it is made, I will not put the Question on amendment No 2.

Question put, That amendment No 1 be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 57; Noes 34.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Ms Archibald, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Ms Dillon, Mrs Dobson, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Gildernew, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr E McCann, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Mr McKee, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Mullan, Mr Murphy, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs Overend, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Agnew and Ms Bailey.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lyons, Mr McCausland, Miss McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr Robinson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 58; Noes 34.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Ms Archibald, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Ms Dillon, Mrs Dobson, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Gildernew, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr E McCann, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Mr McKee, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Mullan, Mr Murphy, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs Overend, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Boylan and Mr Lynch.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lyons, Mr McCausland, Miss McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr Robinson.

Main Question, as amended, accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly acknowledges international Human Rights Day; notes the United Nations' comments that more should be done to raise awareness of human rights and the need to improve education about human rights; calls on the Executive to move immediately to ensure compliance with all minimum human rights standards; and further calls on all Government Departments and public bodies to introduce human rights action plans.

Regulatory Reform and a Regionally Balanced Economy

The following motion stood in the Order Paper:

That this Assembly notes the draft Programme for Government's commitment to a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy; recognises the importance of regulatory reform in achieving this outcome; and calls on the Minister for the Economy to ensure that regulation for business in Northern Ireland is proportionate, effective and not unnecessarily burdensome on, or a hindrance to, economic growth and development. — [Mr Lyons.]

Motion not moved.

Adjourned at 4.06 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 6 December 2016

*The Assembly met at 10.30 am (Madam Principal Deputy Speaker
[Ms Ruane] in the Chair).*

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Executive Committee Business

Food Hygiene Rating (Fee and Fixed Penalty Amount) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Health): I beg to move

That the draft Food Hygiene Rating (Fee and Fixed Penalty Amount) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Subject to the Assembly's approval, the order will outline the amount of fixed penalty to be applied for relevant non-display offences as set out in section 10 of the Food Hygiene Rating Act 2016. The order will also specify the fee associated with the request for rerating inspections as set out in section 4 of the Food Hygiene Rating Act 2016.

The aim of the Act is to enable consumers to make an informed choice when deciding where to purchase and, therefore, ultimately to improve hygiene standards. The Act had a positive response and received Royal Assent on 29 January 2016.

In summary, the key provisions of the Act are that it requires all food businesses within scope to display a valid food hygiene rating sticker; requires relevant employees within a food business, on request, to orally inform the person making the request of the establishment's food hygiene rating; requires all food businesses with an online food ordering facility to display a valid rating on said platform; introduces offences in relation to the non-display of a valid rating and provision of information about the rating; allows for fixed penalty notices to be applied for the non-display of valid rating offences; allows for the charging of a fee in relation to conducting a requested rerating visit; and specifies timescales within which requirements under the Act must be completed.

The order for which I seek Members' endorsement specifies the amount of the fixed penalty and the fee in relation to conducting a requested rerating visit. The advantages of introducing fixed penalty notices are twofold. In the first instance, they provide authorised officers with an additional enforcement tool. Secondly, they reduce the burden on the North of Ireland Courts Service by reducing the number of prosecutions taken. It therefore follows that the amount of fixed penalty notices applied must be at a sufficient level to deter people from committing the offence, but not so high that they would encourage offenders to aim for a more favourable outcome from a court hearing.

Where enforcement officers feel that a stronger penalty is more suitable, they retain the option of prosecuting the

offender, who would then be liable to a fine of up to £1,000. A consultation on the draft order was carried out between March and June 2016, and the majority of respondents agreed with the amounts proposed.

Furthermore, at its meeting on 27 October 2016, the Health Committee agreed that it was content for my Department to make the proposed order, and it is with its support, Madam Principal Deputy Speaker, that I bring this draft order before you today. Subject to affirmative resolution, the order will become effective forthwith. I commend the draft order to the House.

Ms P Bradley (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health): On behalf of the Committee for Health, I am pleased to speak very briefly on this order, which sets out certain fees and penalties under the Food Hygiene Rating Act, as the Minister outlined.

When considering the Food Hygiene Rating Bill back in 2014-15, the previous Health Committee supported the overarching aim of the Bill to reduce the incidence of food-borne illness through the introduction of a mandatory food hygiene rating scheme. It was accepted that this would not only help businesses to achieve and maintain compliance with food hygiene law but allow consumers to make informed choices about where they wish to eat or shop for food.

The current Committee considered the policy proposal for this statutory rule at its meeting on 15 September and considered the statutory rule itself more recently at the meeting on 27 October. When considering the statutory rule before the Assembly today, the Committee noted the important safeguards for businesses in the Act to allow businesses to request a rerating of their premises and accepted that the fee of £150 set out in these regulations reflected the costs that would be incurred by district councils in conducting a rerating inspection. The Committee also noted, and had no objection to, the fixed penalty amount of £200 that would be payable by businesses when a fixed penalty notice is served.

The Committee further noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules confirmed in her report, which was issued on 21 October 2016, that she has no issues to raise with regard to the technical aspect of the rule. At its meeting on 27 October 2016, the Committee agreed to recommend that the statutory rule be affirmed by the Assembly and therefore supports the motion today.

Ms Seeley: I thank the Minister for her comments. I welcome this order, which, as the Minister alluded to, enables consumers to make more informed choices. A recent survey demonstrated that 90% of consumers look

at the rating of the premises compared with the 22% who look online. I also welcome the fact that this will allow for an authorised officer of a district council to issue a fixed penalty notice for offences relating to non-display of a valid food hygiene rating, as this will undoubtedly succeed in reducing the number of offences that have to be dealt with through the courts.

I also note the largely positive consultation responses. One concern noted was about the rerating fee following improvements. However, I believe that the positives far outweigh this, as the onus to openly display the rating and the opportunity for an upgraded rating will undoubtedly encourage businesses to make the necessary improvements. I also believe that it is beneficial that staff will be fully aware of their employer's rating, and having to verbally communicate this will also add to the desire to ensure a high rating. That is, of course, to the benefit of all our consumers. I ask the Minister to comment in her concluding remarks on the benefits of paying the fine early.

Mrs O'Neill: I thank the Members for their comments on the Act. It will lead to benefits for the public and for consumers. As we enter the festive period, it is estimated that 4.3 million meals will be eaten out. I encourage the public to make the most of the new transparency measures.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Food Hygiene Rating (Fee and Fixed Penalty Amount) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Private Members' Business

Abortion (Fatal Foetal Abnormality) Bill: First Stage

Mr Ford: I beg to introduce the Abortion (Fatal Foetal Abnormality) Bill [NIA 03/16-21], which is a Bill to make provision to decriminalise medical termination of a pregnancy in those circumstances where the foetus is diagnosed with a fatal abnormality.

Bill passed First Stage and ordered to be printed.

Social Investment Fund

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to wind up. All others will have five minutes.

Mr Dickson: I beg to move

That this Assembly recognises the deep public concern regarding the formation, implementation and operation of the social investment fund; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to commission an independent review of the operation of the entire social investment fund process, taking particular account of the role of lead partners in this process and the impact that this role has had on good governance.

Quite rightly, a lot of points have been made over the past number of weeks about the situation at Charter NI and its chief executive, Dee Stitt. However, the issues and concerns with the social investment fund (SIF) go much deeper and wider. The overarching question is whether the stated objectives of the social investment fund, worthy as they may be, could be more efficiently and effectively achieved through other means, and therefore whether the social investment fund is a worthwhile use of public money.

The implementation and operation of the social investment fund has been characterised by secrecy and cronyism. Indeed, in at least one respect, the ongoing association of DUP representatives, including the First Minister, with a current paramilitary who is chief executive of Charter NI has undermined the credibility of the Executive's commitment to tackling paramilitarism. It has quite simply been a disaster for the principle of good governance. The Assembly should take very seriously the comments of the former commissioner of standards, Sir Alistair Graham, who said that the social investment fund is "flawed" and requires root-and-branch reform.

The motion calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to review the social investment fund with a view to both learning lessons and determining whether the approach should continue. This review needs to be independent. There are very legitimate concerns that the flawed approach of the social investment fund could be replicated in other funding streams, notably that of the so-called Executive action plan on paramilitarism, which has an agenda of buying off paramilitaries rather than standing up for the principles of the rule of law and promoting a culture of lawfulness. Furthermore, while it is not the role of the Assembly to direct the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO), it is reasonable to anticipate that the operation of the social investment fund will be subject to a full and rigorous investigation.

Listening to comments from some of the advocates of the social investment fund, you would think that the Government's interventions to deal issues of employability, childcare, public health and deprivation were not being dealt with elsewhere. Indeed, the point applies equally to Government interventions that are deployed through the community and voluntary sector. This has regularly been viewed as an efficient way of delivering money quickly and distributing it to the grass roots, effective in producing

outcomes and fair in funding decisions based on objective criteria in open and merit-based competitions.

A number of good examples can be cited from the Department for Employment and Learning. The Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS) was a community-based employment intervention which gave assistance to marginalised and hard-to-reach unemployed people, beyond what was provided by the employment service through jobs and benefits offices. Take Pathways to Success, the Executive strategy for addressing people not in education, employment and training (NEET). One of its programmes was the collaboration and innovation fund (CIF). This placed £9 million in the hands of 18 different community-based projects to assist marginalised young people. These programmes were successful and popular; they even received endorsement from the London-based Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion. Money was distributed in a timely and effective manner. However, these programmes had to be discontinued in 2015 due to excessive Executive cuts to the DEL budget. The NEETs strategy is now delivered only through the European social fund (ESF). Similarly, a much reduced LEMIS programme is being delivered geographically to eligible partners and through ESF.

Here is the irony. Through all this, the social investment fund has been protected by the Executive, despite all the cuts to, and underfunding of, the public sector, including cuts that were passed on to the community and voluntary sector. The very organisations that have been delivering quality programmes have been cut back, but not SIF.

The genesis of the social investment fund goes back to 2011.

The public rationale was about innovative approaches by placing decision-making power in the hands of local communities. The real rationale seems to be to concentrate power in the hands of certain local groups favoured by the two dominant political parties, namely, the DUP and Sinn Féin. To achieve this, political membership was locked into steering groups and was distributed by the proportional system of d'Hondt, which, of course, was skewed towards the larger parties. Some of the so-called independent members also have clear links to the two leading parties. Mr Stitt, for example, is also a member of the south-eastern group.

10.45 am

The most disturbing aspect of the process is that only groups represented on the steering groups can become lead partners. This is, ultimately, a closed shop and is clearly a conflict of interest. While we then see a competitive process in the organisations that will deliver the services on the ground, many of those groups, if not all, previously could have, or indeed have, been funded through conventional approaches and directly by responsible Departments. In east Belfast, GEMS, which is the larger and more-experienced organisation in delivering community-based employability programmes for government, including some of the schemes that I have mentioned, is managed by Charter, which is the smaller and less-experienced organisation. That begs the question: what precisely is the benefit of that extra layer of bureaucracy in lead partners and associated management fees? Is it about channelling resources into the hands of the preferred and favoured organisations of the DUP

and Sinn Féin? If so, why? There is a growing sense of frustration — I am sure that other Members will echo this — across wide swathes of the community and voluntary sector about resources being steered to certain favoured groups at the expense of others without open and merit-based competition. Without that, we, quite simply, do not have fair play. We may miss out on even better solutions that other organisations might offer. There is a growing sense of grievance.

Even more disturbingly, groups feel disempowered from speaking out lest they lose scarce resources. That is unhealthy and undemocratic. Groups that I have met have expressed those concerns to me. Some may argue that it takes local lead partners to source local client groups for schemes and that that is added value. Frankly, even that is disturbing; it reinforces the belief that there are local gatekeepers in too many communities and that the delivery partners are incapable of doing that directly themselves.

That brings us back to the issue of Charter NI. Let us be clear: the DUP has had a clear agenda of trying to direct funding to Charter over the last number of years. Sometimes Charter has been successful in winning competitive bids but, at other times, the DUP has increased the amount of cunning schemes to try to get it funds outside the normal process. That, in itself, is of significant concern, but the interface between Charter and the UDA should ring alarm bells. Alliance welcomes people with a paramilitary past playing a positive and constructive role in society. However, when people with a paramilitary present are doing so and, indeed, are managing public funds that have been awarded through a closed system, there is clearly a problem. The issue with Mr Stitt is more than the use of abusive language in a 'Guardian' video and more than the reference to his band providing homeland security; it is the reference to working-class areas being jungles, with the inevitability of local hard men. That is the culture that I came here to break down. It is the culture that the Assembly should be breaking down. It goes to the very heart of any credible Executive action plan to tackle paramilitarism. The First Minister allowing herself to be associated with a current UDA leader and then describing the natural concerns expressed across the community as a "distraction" sends out a terrible message to wider society. If it is a distraction, it is a distraction from only the even deeper flaws of the entire social investment fund.

Mr Stalford: I was sent here to represent all the people of South Belfast but I draw a particular level of support from the type of community that Mr Dickson talked about in his contribution. I think of communities like Sandy Row, Taughmonagh and the Village, where his colleague Ms Bradshaw worked for many years in the community and voluntary sector.

Any dispassionate or reasonable observer looking at communities such as that would come to the conclusion that, for too long, they were sidelined, ignored and left behind. I accept that some of the responsibility for that falls on the shoulders of unionism and on government in general. The fact is that we are talking about communities where the development of capacity and community infrastructure was held back for many years because of the perverse circumstances of life in Northern Ireland.

I was sent here to represent those people, and I am firmly of the view that, for too long, they have been left behind. It is my responsibility, as someone who was born in

Annadale and who comes from a working-class Protestant background, to ensure that aspiration is promoted, that education is developed, and that opportunities are opened up that otherwise would not have been there.

I mentioned south Belfast. In reference to the party that tabled the motion, I served on Belfast City Council for 11 years alongside Alderman Tom Ekin of the Alliance Party. Tom not only played a role in the development of Weaver's Court and in the creation of jobs for local people, but he was prepared to put his money where his mouth is to encourage people down a better path and to promote a better path with a higher level of understanding, education and aspiration for the young people in those areas. He and I disagreed on many things, although I probably agreed with him more than any other member of the Alliance Party I have ever met. We agreed on a lot of things because we could see that it was not right that communities such as that should be held back and their development retarded.

The social investment fund was born out of a desire to reflect the fact that local people and local communities know best what suits their needs, what their problems and challenges are, and that they should have a direct and meaningful way of tackling those problems. I am proud that I recently opened my constituency office in Sandy Row; it is situated in a building that is part of a social investment fund project. I revealed that in the Executive Office Committee not so long ago, and it is not a mystery to anyone. The reason why it took so long to get the office open is because the finance office would not allow me to pay rent to an Ulster Unionist councillor who was the previous person to own the building, rather than a community group.

I am proud of community groups such as Belfast South Community Resources, which are committed to peaceful, democratic means and which are determined to drive positive change —

Ms Armstrong: Will the Member give way?

Mr Stalford: Yes, I will.

Ms Armstrong: Does the Member agree that the community and voluntary sector signed up to the concordat agreement with government for sustainable and constant funding, not one-off pots that give the communities that you are talking about small glimmers of hope that are taken away when the funding disappears?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Stalford: The funding that you are talking about and the project that I was talking about are for the provision of a training and employment centre. It will not give a glimmer of hope; it will be a lifeline for many people from the community that I have referenced.

It is important, when people criticise the processes, to note that in the south Belfast area, Jeffrey Dudgeon replaced Bob Stoker, who in turn replaced Michael McGimpsey, on that steering group, so most of the Ulster Unionists in south Belfast went through it. Paula Bradshaw sat on that working group. In east Belfast, Chris Lyttle MLA sat on that SIF working group. Councillors Anne Donnelly and Marion Quinn of the SDLP sat on the Londonderry one. In the southern area, the general secretary of the Ulster Unionist Party, Mr Colin McCusker, sat on that area working group.

Councillor Thomas O'Hanlon of the SDLP sat on that area working group. In the south-eastern — *[Interruption.]*

A Member: I'm watching you.

Mr Stalford: Keep watching, you might learn something. In the —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask Members not to make points from sedentary positions.

Mr Stalford: In the south-eastern area, Councillor Philip Sif — sorry, Philip Smith — sat on the area working group. *[Laughter.]* In the northern area, the Chief Whip Robin Swann MLA, sat on that area working group. Councillor Derek Hussey sat on the western area working group. Of course, the same people —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Stalford: The same people, of course, who criticised the scrutiny of this process had a direct hand in it. Therefore, when they come now feigning concern, they had years to do this.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up. Will the —

Mr Stalford: People will see this for what it is, which is nothing more than rank, political opportunism.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member please take his seat? The Member's time is up.

Mr Lynch: I declare an interest as a member of the western group. The last Member did not read my name out, but I was on it. I welcome the opportunity to speak about my experience of the steering group and the delivery of the SIF funding.

The group consisted of a wide range and selection of people from the community and voluntary sectors, and it was not a closed shop as the mover of the motion has said. As well as members of most political parties being on it, as outlined by the last speaker, we consulted widely across the region, seeking interest from as many groups and organisations as possible that might be eligible for the funding.

The steering group was guided by OFMDFM officials and involved strict criteria. Our focus was on increasing employability opportunities and tackling the issues of mental and physical health, and deprivation. During those initial periods, there was no criticism from the Opposition parties, only that the money was not being distributed quickly enough.

We were inundated with applications. Indeed, we could have spent most of the SIF money just within our area. However, after much discussion, guidance and consensus, we decided on approximately 10 projects. Unfortunately, not all of the projects could be funded.

The lead partners helped to ensure continual ownership of the projects by those who had organised them. The lead partners were chosen by a consensual process. For example, to demonstrate the value of some of the projects decided upon, a £920,000 new-build project at Fermanagh House was opened when the First Minister and the junior Minister came to Enniskillen. This project will provide much-needed support to local groups and charities.

Two years ago, an SDLP Member, Mr Attwood, suggested the SIF was a "slush fund" for paramilitaries. As a result, a member of the trustees of Fermanagh House, which is made up of a cross-section of people, was forced to pen a letter to the local press to defend the integrity and value of the group and say that Fermanagh Trust was not a political hostage to any political party or group.

At that successful launch, a couple of weeks ago, SDLP and Ulster Unionist Members were in attendance to share in the success of the project.

Today's motion focuses on lead partners and good governance. The Central Procurement Directorate was involved in Fermanagh House from the beginning until the end.

I want to mention a number of other projects that we decided upon, and they are listed in the research pack. Work Ready is a revenue project which seeks to provide employment and opportunities for 120 participants. At the launch, a young woman said:

"I had been out of work for some time. I found it difficult to get back to employment. The SIF Work Ready West programme enables me to return to full-time employment. It has opened doors to other opportunities to allow me to develop my skills, knowledge and further my educational outcomes. It has given me back my self-worth as a person and allowed me to contribute to society."

A director of Women's Aid at the launch in Enniskillen, which I attended, said they had availed themselves of a young woman from the programme. She is now doing good work on their increasing workload tackling domestic violence. This project is hardly a "slush fund" for paramilitaries.

11.00 am

In conclusion, there was extensive voluntary input to the consultation and engagement on and delivery of the SIF programme. The model represented a unique and innovative joined-up approach to tackling disadvantage and enhancing prosperity. There were robust departmental governance and financial checks in place to manage public funds and deliver agreed outcomes effectively. The Opposition parties criticised that the money was not being distributed quickly enough. Now they are criticising that it is going out to good causes. That is a case of opposition for opposition's sake. We oppose the motion.

Mr Beggs: I support the motion, which calls for an independent review of the social investment fund and, in particular, scrutiny of the role of the lead partners.

I want to look at the timeline of the social investment fund. It was first announced in March 2011, shortly before an election. I have to be cynical about the timing of that. Was that to try to affect a political process? Right from the outset, it was not a good start. Between 2011-12 and 2014-15, the plan was to spend £40 million in resource and £40 million in capital expenditure to improve deprived communities by addressing poverty, unemployment and physical deterioration — all very laudable objectives.

At that time, however, the former Department for Social Development had responsibility for the neighbourhood renewal programme — indeed, the Department for Communities continues to provide that — helping many

of the disadvantaged areas that we are talking about. Of course, the programme's remit could have been widened and new criteria could have been set down so that it could have administered such a fund, but, perhaps for political reasons, Sinn Féin and the DUP did not want to give that responsibility and funding to an SDLP Minister, who was the person in charge of the Department at that time. That should not be the reason that public money is directed one way or the other. Rather, it should be used in a way that is based on probity and models of good practice.

Of course, there was also the peace process model, through which we had local strategic partnerships between councils and the community and voluntary sector. Expertise had been built up in that area, and processes that had been built up were rigorous. Why was that model not considered?

The reform of local government was also starting to take place. Such a fund could easily have been passed to the existing councils, empowering councillors moving forward. Why therefore were some of the existing processes and expertise not used instead of the scheme that we are discussing today? That is a big question that has to be answered.

Two years later, in 2013, some £389,000 had been spent, largely on administration, but no schemes had been delivered. It was revealed by 'The Detail' that that was because there was a dispute between the DUP and Sinn Féin. Another year later, in October 2014, the then OFMDFM Committee was advised that, three and a half years after the fund's inception, £34.4 million had finally been allocated, but the expenditure had to be re-profiled from the initial period up to 2015 to a new period from 2014 to 2018. That means that there was at least a three-year delay, and, in that period, disadvantaged communities were not assisted. That needs to be reviewed. What was going wrong? That is worthy of a review in itself.

Commenting on the themes of poverty, unemployment and physical deterioration, my party, in its response to the consultation, said:

"Whilst these themes are commendable, they should mainly be dealt with through the administration of routine government practices."

If that advice had been followed, we would not be in the mess that we are in today.

There are really good schemes in the middle of this. In particular, I pick up on the capital improvements to Sure Start programmes. I am involved in Sure Start, and I know that the money will be very well spent in improving the lot of young children. Therefore, there are many laudable schemes. The trouble is that there are flawed processes. The fund could have been even better.

Sir Alistair Graham, the former chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, stated that the social investment fund:

"doesn't stand up to the principles that are generally held to be appropriate for the awarding of public contracts."

Others have spotted that there is something wrong here. Where is the value —

Mr Dickson: I thank the Member for giving way. Both of us represent East Antrim. Mr Beggs, you referred to Sure Start. Do you agree that there is a growing frustration among long-standing community and voluntary organisations, which have taken government funds and funds from local authorities over long periods and have programmes that are well tried and tested, that they are faced with so-called pop-up community organisations?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member will have an extra minute.

Mr Beggs: I agree entirely with the Member. When there are short-term schemes, there is a danger of not leaving an ongoing legacy behind.

There have been training and employment schemes in most areas. I am certainly aware of the scheme in the east Antrim area and have heard positive news from individuals who have been involved in it. In the training and employment project in east Belfast, £1.7 million was allocated to the lead party, Charter NI, but OFMDFM said that only £1.5 million is handed on to deliver the service. What I have not heard is what happens to the £200,000 that is creamed off by Charter NI. How does it justify the £200,000 expenditure that it receives? It would be much better if that £200,000 was spent directly on providing additional training and services for communities in need.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Beggs: That whole process is flawed, which is why we need an independent review. At the very least, the Audit Office should look at it and learn lessons so that it never happens again.

Ms Mallon: I support the motion.

"[A] 'network-closure', with some favoured organisations being hand-picked by politicians to plan and implement some of the fund's work."

That is a description of the social investment fund. It is not the words of the SDLP but is as reported in the final research report on the independence of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in Northern Ireland by the Building Change Trust and Ulster University, which was published just a fortnight ago. That same academic report, which was based on interviews with government officials, CEOs and a range of individuals in the sector, identified as a major concern the:

"overly close relationship between politicians and some voluntary and community sector organisations."

Ms S Bradley: Will the Member give way?

Ms Mallon: Yes.

Ms S Bradley: Does the Member accept that there are some very good organisations receiving SIF money? So far, those who have spoken in defence of the process have completely ignored the point and tried to ride on the good reputational position that those organisations hold in the community.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member will have an extra minute. Beidh nóiméad breise ag an Chomhalta.

Ms Mallon: The Member is absolutely correct, and I will specifically address that issue in my contribution.

As I said, in that academic independent research report, the social investment fund is specifically singled out as a crystallised example of that cosy relationship. Its singling out should come as a surprise to no one. The social investment fund is a masterclass in how not to manage something politically. It was blighted by delay and is now mired in controversy.

The First Minister and deputy First Minister and their Back-Benchers are trying furiously to peddle the myth — we heard it again today — that the blame for the controversy lies with those of us in the House and outside it who have the audacity to ask legitimate and valid questions about the openness and transparency, or lack of it, of the social investment fund. Their second tactic is to try to distract everyone from the reality of that lack of openness and transparency by accusing all of us who ask those questions of deriding and demeaning all the community and voluntary organisations and projects involved in SIF. Let me unequivocally deal with both those failing tactics.

Time and again, my party colleagues and I have been on record recognising and acknowledging that there are good organisations with good individuals doing great work. We are supportive of those projects. Our issue is not with them; our issue is with the process. We have been on record as far back as 2011 raising concerns about the process, and the continual failure by the First Minister and deputy First Minister to address those concerns left our members, in all but one of the steering groups, with no option but to resign.

The social investment fund is mired in controversy. The public do not have any confidence or trust in its operation, not because of the Opposition but because of the approach of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, and the way in which they have handled this. It has been crystallised in their lack of courage in standing up to Dee Stitt, a self-confessed UDA boss and the CEO of an organisation that was handed £1.7 million of public money to administer and given half a million pounds for doing so. It is not the Opposition or the media who have called into question SIF and all associated with it; it is the silence from our First Minister and the weakness of our deputy First Minister in the face of Dee Stitt.

The First Minister cites employability legislation as the reason why she cannot get involved, but she is perfectly entitled as the First Minister to express her opinion on whether she believes that he is fit to hold office. She refuses to do so. Why? Almost two months on, the First Minister and deputy First Minister continue to refuse to answer a question that I posed, asking them to list all the organisations that applied to the social investment fund, the organisations that were successful and the funding awarded for each project. Why?

The First Minister and deputy First Minister have been asked to publish the minutes of the steering group meetings. They still have not done so. Why? They have been asked to publish the register of interests completed by all steering group members. They still have not done so. Why? They have been asked to outline clearly the value added by Charter NI to the employability project being delivered by GEMS, given the huge administration fee that it is receiving for it. They refuse to do so. Why?

The House is aware of the controversy and the difficulty that I have had in having my questions for urgent oral answer on this matter heard, and, in advance of today, our amendment calling for a review of the social investment fund process by the Audit Office, along with other amendments, was refused. Why? What is there to fear from an Audit Office review? If all is as the First Minister and deputy First Minister say, they shall be vindicated and its critics will be silenced, but they continue to run away. Let me reassure them that, for as long as they continue to run away, those of us who believe in openness and transparency will not go away. Of that, Mr McGuinness and Mrs Foster can rest assured.

Mr Irwin: I believe that the social investment fund is a very important funding stream for communities right across Northern Ireland, and that includes my constituency of Newry and Armagh. Many Members will be aware of the fantastic plans being processed for a new community hall and changing rooms at Kilcluney, which is on Mowhan Road in Markethill. In my view, as the town has not, historically, had the same investment in sports and facilities as other towns in the greater Armagh district, the forward thinking, perseverance and persistence of members of the Kilcluney hub committee have to be commended. The significant efforts of the hub members have ensured that the town not only has a state-of-the-art 3G playing surface with floodlights but will soon have a brand new sizeable community hall and changing rooms to service this fantastic full-size sports pitch, all within walking distance of the town. I refer to that project specifically because I am passionate about what SIF will ultimately deliver when the project is complete. Without SIF, this programme in Markethill would not have had the opportunity of this important investment.

I rather feel that the nature of the motion seeks to throw the baby out with the bathwater. It appears that the Opposition have latched on to one single matter relating to an individual in an organisation and are now moving to focus their indignation on the entire social investment fund programme. That is very unfortunate, and it is very unhelpful to the hundreds of people involved in managing SIF projects and targeting need in their communities.

When I was liaising with members of the public and speaking with groups about various matters relating to SIF, I certainly never got the sense that the process was in any way easy; rather, there was definitely a real sense that the funding process was rigorous and that it was designed to ensure that projects were meticulously planned and that all the necessary procedures and protocols were in place to ensure that projects would be managed to completion and operated to a high standard.

That is without doubt what groups were relaying to me on the ground.

11.15 am

The fact that the Alliance Party has called into question the very formation of this programme is such a shame, given the countless hours that have been exhausted by hard-working members of the public and steering groups right across the Province, targeting need and working tirelessly to ensure that projects of real and lasting value are processed. Mr Ford has said that there was never a need for this funding. What a ridiculous statement, and what an affront to the volunteers and groups across the

Province. Indeed, Alliance and the Ulster Unionist Party have called it a slush fund, yet I am very sure that we will have members of each party attend the various opening events when projects are completed. What hypocrisy. I will be interested to see in my constituency which members of other parties attend these opening events.

I say to the House that the House's combined community effort on the social investment fund must be supported. Any issues regarding particular individuals must, of course, be handled in an appropriate fashion with due regard to the law and process. That has already been made crystal clear by our First Minister. The social investment fund remains a valuable programme of support for communities, and, with important work ongoing, deadlines being set and contractors being appointed across many projects, there must not be any delay in this programme.

Mr McGuigan: I rise to oppose the motion, and I do so for a number of reasons. The first of these reasons is that, unlike my colleague to the left, I cannot agree with the assumption that there is deep public concern out there. That just does not stack up in my eyes. I know that I do not live in east Belfast, but I do speak to people, and, in the conversations that I have had with the public, with constituents and with friends, not once has the issue of the social investment fund been raised to me by them.

I do get that the Opposition have a role to fulfil and need to raise issues to make themselves relevant. They have valiantly tried to use this issue to do so. I have listened to them ask the questions, make their points and table their debates frenetically like a disorientated boxer swinging wildly for all his might and hoping to get lucky and land that knockout punch, but I also have listened to answers from Ministers and others who have responded to all of this with cold, hard facts. The facts say that SIF was consulted on five years ago. In fact, as the deputy First Minister said in answer to one of those questions in this House:

"It is one of the most consulted-on programmes that we have ever been involved in. The process has been open and transparent." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 121, p22, col 2].

The facts state that all the major parties in this Chamber took part in a process not just around the formation but, in the intervening five years, in the implementation and operation of SIF. As has already been mentioned, they have released the congratulatory press statements and stood in the congratulatory photographs.

SIF is different from other funds. Its delivery model represents a unique, innovative and joined-up approach to tackling disadvantage and enhancing prosperity. That approach of bottom-up engagement with stakeholders from across the community, statutory, business and political spectrums in the steering group demonstrates confidence in the collaborative approach to identifying and delivering what local communities want and need. I also accept that all organisations that benefit from SIF funding are subject to all the normal checks and balances of public funding constraints.

I do not want to ignore the fact that there is a difficulty around an individual in east Belfast, but I have to say that the social investment fund goes far beyond east Belfast. I do not want to — as others in the Chamber seem to want to do — let that individual distract from what the social

investment fund is all about, nor do I want to allow either that individual or Members of the House to put a halt to the good work of the social investment fund, which is helping people's lives right across the North. That is the second reason why I will oppose the motion. The social investment fund is not about an individual or an organisation in east Belfast. It is an investment fund that is designed and targeted to support some of our most disadvantaged communities by increasing employment opportunities, by tackling issues such as mental and physical health, by increasing and improving community services and facilities and by addressing dereliction to make areas more appealing for investment.

Mr Dickson: Will the Member give way?

Mr McGuigan: Go ahead.

Mr Dickson: The Member makes reference to the fact that the fund delivers employability, improvements and the other things that he has just mentioned, but does he not accept and understand that that is already being done and has been done successfully by bona fide and tried-and-tested methodologies? Does he not genuinely understand when he is opposing the motion, that on the motion and the subject that we are talking around, there is deep public concern? Clearly, he seems to be wishing to ignore that public concern.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute. I remind Members that, if an intervention is given, it should be brief.

Mr McGuigan: Go raibh maith agat. I have addressed the issue of "deep public concern", which, I think, is imaginary.

I should have thanked the research facility for putting together this information pack. It quite clearly demonstrates that the social investment fund is an additional fund, going beyond what has already been provided and married towards that, to give added impetus to socially deprived communities.

As I was saying, while the Opposition want to talk about something that was decided upon a number of years ago, I want to support the targeted £80 million of funding going to socially deprived communities: £44 million to improving 116 premises and £35 million to employment, education, early years intervention and the social economy, mental health provision, fuel poverty and community capacity. I look through the projects across the nine delivery zones of the social investment fund and wonder which of those projects the Opposition think should be halted or stopped. The social investment fund is a noble attempt to address years of underinvestment, and its delivery is making an impact. That is why I support it and wholeheartedly want it to continue.

Mrs Cameron: I welcome the opportunity to contribute as a member of the Committee for the Executive Office.

At the outset, I want to focus on the reference to "deep public concern" in the first line of the motion. Of course, I expect nothing less than such negative spin from the Alliance Party, which seeks to add further sensationalism and headline-grabbing to this already "Nolanised" and anti-Assembly BBC non-issue.

Much has been made, and will be made, of the role of Mr Stitt and Charter NI in the context of the social investment fund, but the reality is that it is such an insignificant part of

the matter that it could not be further from the melodramatic "deep public concern" referred to. I would like to move on from the pessimism that many Members seek to bring to the Floor and focus on the optimistic, constructive and successful social investment fund. I would also like to take this opportunity to remind the Alliance Members, naysayers and doom merchants that their members have been involved in the consultation process and continue to be involved on the steering groups.

Some £3.3 million has been invested into the West Belfast Works project, which has supported people from the Shankill and west Belfast into employment. We have had £1 million invested in the Bridges Family Practice in east Belfast, to regenerate that rundown facility and make provision for a modern family medical practice. We have had £920,000 to deliver an extension to Fermanagh House in Enniskillen, which will help to provide facilities for community groups and support education and social projects across the county. In my constituency, South Antrim, the £3.3 million invested in the Building Employment through Education project, the £0.8 million in the Access to Employment project, the £1 million in the community mental health and well-being project and the £1.8 million in the fuel poverty project are all delivering for and on behalf of my constituents.

Those examples of investment show clear and tangible results, based on outcomes, of how the social investment fund is working as an effective vehicle to deliver social change. To intimate that there is anything else or give a broad-brush-stroke painting of it as a cover for paramilitarism is, frankly, a slap in the face to those communities that have bought into the process.

Ms S Bradley: Will the Member give way?

Mrs Cameron: No, thank you.

Those 800 people who are now in paid work placements and training, the 1,300 children and families that have gained assistance and support and the 1,000 children being helped by education projects are clear evidence that the fund is providing the results that it set out to achieve. The community buy-in to the fund is central to its ongoing success. Without that commitment, the fund would have been managed in a top-down manner and, given that it aims to reach out to those in the most disadvantaged areas and who experience the greatest disengagement, I feel that that simply would not have worked. Through tackling educational underachievement and the physical regeneration and refurbishment of community facilities, and through dealing with issues such as substance abuse and poor mental health, the fund engages at grass roots and seeks to join up government services with community-based schemes.

I understand fully, and do not mean to sound in any way patronising, that, with Assembly business schedules, we can at times forget that there are swathes of people who are disenfranchised and overlooked. We cannot let those people fall between the cracks and must create effective engagement between the decisions we make in this place and how that filters through onto the ground.

Good governance is, of course, vital to the success of the project and I am satisfied that the organisations that are receiving funding are operating with the appropriate structures, processes and policies required by the social investment fund. I am further satisfied that the Department

is carrying out the correct checks and audits to ensure that funding is being administered in the proper manner.

In closing, I recognise that the social investment fund has had delays in getting up and running but is now successfully and effectively delivering real change to communities. My fear is that any review, at this point, would severely impact on these projects going forward. The limit on public finances has meant that we have had to look for innovative and inventive ways to get best value for money for the people of Northern Ireland. The social investment fund is providing community involvement and, simultaneously, tackling some of our greatest social problems. We must look beyond the headlines and see the bigger picture. Rather than pick holes and gripe, we must see the benefits that the social investment fund is delivering currently and will continue to bring in the future.

Mr Kennedy: It is important that we have the opportunity to debate this important issue before we break for the Christmas recess. I think that we have already heard that there are some in the House who would rather the issue was not on the agenda.

The social investment fund was intended to bring relief and hope to some of our most deprived communities. That, in itself, is a very noble thing and is supported by the majority of Members but I am afraid that it has descended into controversy and not a little farce. Whilst there are those who feel the need to try to muddy the waters today and portray valid scrutiny and criticism as an attack on those whom the fund was supposed to help, that is not the case, as those who are slinging that mud are well aware. It is at times like this that the Executive parties reveal how thin their skin is.

This issue at stake today is not the idea or concept that addressing areas of deprivation throughout our country is in any way wrong; rather it is the maximum control freakery with which the SIF was planned and prepared by the DUP and Sinn Féin. I am happy to acknowledge the very valuable projects that SIF has supported, including the project in my constituency that was referred to earlier. I have actively supported and encouraged such projects. I pay tribute to those involved in working at the Kilcluney hub at Markethill. I feel more than entitled to attend events at Kilcluney, whether opening events or other events, because I have supported that fully and will continue to do so. We are not criticising the efforts of those at local community level. *[Interruption.]* Sorry, we are saying that we have legitimate concerns around the control freakery exercised by the funding Department, OFMDFM, now called the Executive Office.

Ms Lockhart: Thank you. As someone who sat on the southern zone, will the Member agree that his colleague Colin McCusker sat on that board, scrutinised everything and was very, very content with the projects that went forward from the southern zone?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Kennedy: Clearly, the Member is in winter wonderland if she thinks that Colin McCusker or any representative from the Ulster Unionist Party would do otherwise, because, at community level, that is what supporting communities is about. We do not see anything wrong with, or strange about, people behaving in that fashion, but Colin McCusker — *[Interruption.]*

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to take his seat.

Mr Kennedy: — among others, was a minority voice.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask Members not to be making comments from sedentary positions.

Mr Wells: He is having his cake and eating it.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I also ask Members not to challenge the authority of the Chair.

Mr Kennedy: The Member is young and inexperienced. *[Laughter.]* We should be abundantly clear that the mess in this has been with the establishment of the process. The public have been let down, and I think the defensiveness of the DUP and Sinn Féin reveals that they themselves know that.

11.30 am

The social investment fund has come under intense scrutiny over the past number of months, particularly focusing on one individual. However, it is important to remember that concerns about the design and management of the process were raised as far back as 2011. In our response to the consultation on the proposed social investment fund in 2011, the Ulster Unionist Party raised concerns. We identified problems with the First Minister and the deputy First Minister being solely responsible for identifying groups and individuals to form the steering groups, which, even at that time, perpetuated the feeling that the social investment fund could be used as a slush fund by the DUP and Sinn Féin.

It became clear, prior to the Assembly election, that the then First Minister and deputy First Minister could not give the money away. In January of this year, when officials from the Department appeared before the Committee, they revealed that the actual spend had been only £4 million of an available £80 million. January 2016 was 10 months on from the original date on which the social investment fund was supposed to finish. Is that not embarrassing?

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kennedy: I will give way briefly.

Mr Beggs: In my constituency, there was to be a scheme to address fuel poverty. Is the Member surprised to learn that funding has only recently been allocated? I am unaware of how much money, if any, has been spent on upgrading properties.

Mr Kennedy: Nothing, frankly, surprises me about the management of this at the top political level. This is not a criticism of people on the ground who have spent their own time on effecting positive change in communities. I pay tribute to that work.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Kennedy: We are about getting a proper inquiry into the mess in the formulation of the process.

Mr Boylan: I will speak against the motion. I declare an interest as a member of the steering group in the southern zone. I want to pick up on some points that have been made. I agree with Carla Lockhart: Colin McCusker was part of the process from the very start and had the same input as anybody else.

Let me tell those who were not on any of the steering groups that all members had the same input. Many Members spoke about the good work that this money will do, yet still and all they attack the process.

I was going to speak positively at the start of my contribution about the social investment fund, because good work will be done and the money will be well spent. I can only speak about the work that we did on the southern steering group —

Ms S Bradley: Will the Member give way?

Mr Boylan: I want to make this point first; I will let you in in a minute.

The motion talks about public concern, but I have not heard any public concern. Far be it from me to pick on Belfast, but are we saying that we are going to look right across the North of this island and criticise all the groups because there is an issue that people have raised with a Belfast group? I am not going to speak any more about what has happened, because there has been enough talk about it.

I heard issues raised in some of the radio interviews from this morning and last week, and hopefully I will have time to pick up on them. Last year, the Alliance Party called for the money to be allocated in a hurry for other projects. There was a motion tabled by Chris Lyttle, Judith Cochrane and Stewart Dickson on the issue. The intervention by Roy Beggs in Stewart Dickson's speech was interesting. Stewart Dickson was saying that there are groups already doing this work and asking why should they not undertake it. The fund was to provide added value and be a strategic intervention to help groups that have not been supported.

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr Boylan: No, I have to let somebody else in in a minute.

That is what it was about. I represent people in my area who have not had money or interventions. What did Mr Beggs say? He started talking about lead partners. On the one hand, he said that giving work to certain lead partners would cream off the money, but, on the other hand, he asked why the money was not given to councils and other groups that had done such work. The southern steering group has given the lead to Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, which have the capacity to deliver these programmes. Mr Beggs, hold on a minute.

Ms S Bradley: I thank the Member for giving way. I hear quite firmly from the Executive spokespeople here today that there is such confidence in the process. Could you then explain the tremor that exists when an independent review is mentioned?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute. Beidh nóiméad breise ag an Chomhalta.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat. There is no tremor at all here. The thing about it is this: your colleague sat on a group with me and agreed the projects and, no doubt, will turn up for photographs when they are presented. There is no tremor —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to address his comments through the Chair.

Mr Boylan: Sorry, through you — *[Interruption.]*

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask Members not to be making comments from a sedentary position.

Mr Boylan: The Member is talking about an independent process, and her colleague talked about an audit. If you genuinely think that I am going to support a process to delay this, after spending four years with all those people bringing these projects forward, there is not a chance.

In answer to your question: no, it is not a fear of an independent process. We have now discussed this with these groups, and these groups are looking forward to this money being spent. Mr Beggs.

Mr Beggs: The Member indicated that, on some projects, local councils acted as lead bodies. Why has that process not been followed everywhere? How can you justify £200,000 being paid to one lead body, and the project that is actually delivering the funding and helping people on the ground has, I understand, an additional £300,000 of public funding for administration? Almost a third of the project funding went on administration, and fewer people were helped on the ground than should have been.

Mr Boylan: Through you, Madam Principal Deputy Speaker. Why did you not ask your colleagues or some of your representatives on those groups? That is the question. *[Interruption.]* It was interesting what the debate was over the last couple of days. Mr Ford was on last Friday, I think, and he talked about Mr Lyttle going on some of the groups. He was asked why he put him on the groups. I was thinking to myself, "Was Mr Lyttle on that group with eyes wide shut or was it for look-see or whatever?". He had the opportunity, as a steering group member, to ask questions. Paula Bradshaw was on this morning as well. Every one of us who went on the groups signed a memorandum. The rules state:

"a member must disclose any potential conflict of interest on joining the steering group and if they arise during the course of the membership, to disclose them at any point in time."

The other key point for members on a group states:

"a steering group shall be aware that the Department is required to adopt and implement policies and practices to safeguard itself against fraud and irregularity."

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Boylan: And:

"All cases of attempted, suspected or proven fraud shall be reported by the steering group to the Department or relevant authority as soon as they are discovered."

So, there was ample opportunity for people, if they thought there were issues, to raise them. I did not see any issues, so I will not be supporting the motion.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Poots: I do not stand here today to defend the social investment fund; I stand here today to commend it. I hope that the Executive Office has the will to do a SIF2 because SIF has been doing wonderful work out there.

It has been targeted by a small number of people who have gone after one individual, who made a stupid and flippant remark, which means that everybody who has benefited from SIF is now the target of individuals in this Chamber who are acting out of political interests and not in the public interest in this instance.

I note all that the Alliance Party have been saying. I note that in North Down council, for example, Alderman Wilson, who is an Alliance person, chaired a SIF meeting on 7 May 2013. In attendance were none other than David Stitt and Robert Scott, and those members were congratulated on the informative presentation on the progress of the Kilcooley Sports Forum project business plan.

That was a meeting chaired by the Alliance Party. Also in attendance was one Councillor Muir. He seemed to pay a lot of attention to these things, because he was in attendance at another meeting when it was discussed, on 7 October 2014. Again, Councillor Wilson was there. He attended a further meeting, on 14 October 2015, which was chaired by none other than Councillor Armstrong, who, I think, is the same Kellie Armstrong who is now in this Assembly.

Here we have the Alliance Party, taking a full part in the process and giving the money to an organisation headed up by Mr Stitt, and they did not have an issue. They were in the meetings commending them — commending Mr Stitt for his wonderful work — and here they are today, complaining because of one stupid, flippant remark.

Let me be very clear: the work that is being done by the communities is excellent work. Mrs Long, at the invitation of her Alliance Party councillors, was to come to Lisburn last week and see the work that is going on with the Resurgam initiative, but, on the very day that she was to come, she cancelled, claiming that she had a conflict of interest because she was going to be participating in today's debate, wherever she is. How is it a conflict of interest to come and see what is happening on the ground? If she had bothered to come and see what is happening on the ground, she would have seen initiatives that involve youth work. She would have seen buildings being put up in deprived communities that are making a tangible difference. Mr Lunn knows what is going on in the Lisburn community. He knows the benefit. When there is something taking place in Resurgam, Alliance Party councillors are tripping over themselves to get into photographs and everything else to be associated with it, but Mrs Long decided to pull out.

Let me tell you about one of the key initiatives that is happening in Lisburn, and that is the early years initiative. I commend it to every constituency in Northern Ireland. We identified a serious problem with the educational tail, where young people were not achieving at the higher end, and those young people are now being targeted at nursery and in early primary years. Money from SIF is going into speech therapy, having been channelled through Resurgam. Resurgam could have kept the money, but it is being channelled through the schools. As a consequence, those children are coming to school ready and able to take on the lessons. They will not form the educational tail that there has been in deprived working-class loyalist areas very often. I commend those kinds of initiatives.

Today, we have heard politicians from all over — Mr Kennedy and others — talk about the great projects that

have been happening yet say that it is a terrible fund that is delivering them. The truth is that this is a hypocritical motion from a hypocritical party. SIF is doing great work. It is doing wonderful work. I want to see it going forward. Instead of targeting it because of one individual making a stupid comment, let us look at the good that is coming out of it. The same people did not have anything to say when, through neighbourhood renewal and all sorts of things, ex-prisoners' groups were getting the money, which was going to republican areas six or seven times more —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Poots: — than it was to loyalist areas. It is funny that, when it is money coming to loyalist areas — I am proud to be a loyalist by the way: loyal to the Queen and loyal to my country — the Alliance Party is complaining.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Before I call Claire Hanna, I have to let the Member know that she has two minutes.

Ms Hanna: OK. My colleague Nichola Mallon has outlined our consistent concerns about the process: the lack of open tender; the consistently opaque responses of OFMDFM; and the multi-layered and unresolved conflict of interest. It is worth saying that Government contributor after Government contributor was throwing up as straw men the good projects that we have all acknowledged here and immorally using them for cover. Each one of you has failed to acknowledge the substantive concerns that have been raised by many people and that are acknowledged in the deep concern in the DUP's own amendment that it tabled.

The fact is that the flaws are not oversights in the process. They are doing exactly what, as Mr McGuinness said last month, the fund was designed to do, which is to hand money to the Executive's preferred partners. It is the character of those preferred partners that is troubling very many people. We are told that groups are in transition but with absolutely no deadline for when they are supposed to become former paramilitaries. It is true, of course, that just because you have a past does not mean that you cannot have a future, but you cannot expect to be paid to be the future while simultaneously being the past.

We all voted in 1998 for paramilitary prisoners to be reintegrated. We did not vote for the elitism and patronage that has happened since and that has elevated people above their neighbourhoods. Sending those same neighbours to those people for renewal advice and employment advice is cruel. Two decades after the ceasefires, with most people much longer out of jail than they were in, the time for rewards for good behaviour is long since over. Therefore, as much as being anything about the process, this is about the failing of the Executive to tackle paramilitarism and the out-of-date group think of co-opting the troublemakers in order to make them a permanent part of our community infrastructure. We are supposed to be —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring her remarks to a close?

Ms Hanna: — giving money to people who are consistently good examples to their communities.

Toy soldier Dee Stitt is absolutely not that. If you will not face down that man, how can we have any confidence that you will face down hundreds of other paramilitaries?

11.45 am

Mr Ross (Junior Minister, The Executive Office):

Following the considerable media attention that has been given to SIF in recent weeks, it was inevitable that a motion such as this would be tabled. Of course it is the role of the Assembly to scrutinise Executive programmes, but it is concerning that it seems to be in response to what could be described as sensationalist and at times ill-informed media commentary on the social investment fund project. It is deeply unfortunate that recent media coverage focusing mainly on one individual has proven to be a distraction from what is in reality an innovative government project that is changing communities and lives across Northern Ireland. It is a project that is about communities identifying their needs and how to address them, rather than a top-down government approach that imposes solutions on communities. Before I address the points raised in the motion, I want to highlight some of the valuable opportunities that SIF provides to people in need and the very positive impact that it has on people's lives.

The social investment fund is now in full delivery mode, with all projects prioritised by local steering groups approved and funding committed in zonal budgets. A total of 68 projects will be delivered: 49 capital projects that will make improvements to 115 individual premises and 19 revenue-focused projects primarily on support for employment, early intervention and education as well as mental health, community capacity, transport, social economy and fuel poverty. Whilst the projects committed are at various stages of the delivery cycle, significant progress has been made over the last 18 months, with many projects now at delivery stage. As a result, 42 projects worth £54 million have commenced and 16 projects worth £27 million are operational. Five capital projects have completed their construction works and are providing vital services in local communities.

I had the enormous privilege of opening the Bridges Family Practice in east Belfast, which has totally transformed a once-derelict and unused Bryson Street surgery on the Newtownards Road into a state-of-the-art health centre that is accessible to everyone in the local community. The extension to Fermanagh House in Enniskillen has also been officially opened by the First Minister and junior Minister Fearon. That SIF investment has transformed the property into a larger, more spacious environment with the capacity to offer increased services to local people and provide a one-stop shop. It will make a really positive difference to people in that community.

Mr Stalford: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. I will be brief. He will be aware that Charter NI's website lists its funding organisations, which include not only the Government but Belfast City Council, the Housing Executive and a Department that, up until six months ago, was under the control of the Alliance Party. Does he agree that, if there was some vast conspiracy involving a slush fund, the Alliance Party was obviously part of it?

Mr Ross: That point about hypocrisy and who has funded that organisation has been well made and aired over recent weeks. However, I do not want to focus on one organisation because that does a disservice to the entire social investment fund. I want to make progress because I have a lot to get through and do not have a lot of time.

I want to talk about some of the other projects, such as the West Lisburn Community Centre, which is also being completed. It is being transformed into a dedicated youth facility. It is modelled on current youth development centres such as those in Laurelhill and the Colin area. It contains a range of spaces, such as a sports hall, drop-in facilities, group rooms, art space and kitchen facilities. Those new facilities allow the centre to become a safe environment where the community can centralise its youth activities and young people can develop and interact. Youth provision will expand due to the increased capacity of the centre and an increased ability to operate projects from a dedicated youth facility.

Only a few weeks ago, I went down to visit the Lanyon tunnels project with my colleague junior Minister Fearon and the Lord Mayor of Belfast to see how innovative solutions can reinvigorate a part of the city that has lain derelict for many years and can connect local communities to the city centre. That is a great example of thinking outside the box in projects.

Those are only some of the valuable projects that capital investment from SIF has brought to local communities. There are many more. To date, over 6,000 participants are engaged in social investment fund revenue projects. They are local people whom we are supporting in key areas such as employment, early intervention and education across all of Northern Ireland.

We are investing £18.5 million in employment-focused projects and supporting over 1,300 people through training and paid work placements. These place local people with local employers, and over 100 people have already secured full-time jobs out of it. They credit their success directly to their engagement with SIF projects, particularly as most of the jobs are with SIF project employers. One of the projects, Work Ready West in the western zone, has just completed its interim evaluation and demonstrated real examples of people turning their life around as a result of the intervention received. Thirty-one individuals have left the project to date, and, of those, 20 have moved into employment or self-employment. That is a 65% success rate, which shows just how much impact the project is making. In addition, local people are openly speaking at events to demonstrate how much the project has impacted on their lives. One of the participants spoke about how her children felt that they had a different mother since she had been on the placement. Having been out of work for several years, she acknowledged that she had no confidence or self-belief and could not even attempt to apply for a job. She spoke about how straightforward the process was of securing a placement and how the ongoing support from the employer and the project officers had truly changed her life and that of her family. I have had the opportunity to visit a number of employability projects in south Belfast, west Belfast and Portadown, and I was able to speak to people who have been encouraged back into work, set up their own business and been given the confidence to try to make a difference and move on in their life.

Some £5.7 million is also being invested in early intervention projects across the SIF zones, providing a range of family support interventions in schools and communities to support physical, intellectual, social and emotional development. Over 2,000 participants are already availing themselves of the services, and many are

sharing positive examples of how the support has helped them.

One of the other key areas in which SIF funds focus support is education. One project is now operational, with another two due to become operational over the coming months. That equates to over £5.5 million of investment in educational support to improve the life chances of those who need it most. Over 3,000 people are already engaged in support from the projects being rolled out, including improving educational skills to create greater employment opportunities; dedicated maths and English support at Key Stage 2 and 3; literacy support for primary-school children; and family support to better integrate schools and communities.

Mr Beggs: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ross: I am not giving way.

I want to emphasise those points because the social investment fund really is making a difference to people's lives and benefiting communities. The negative press coverage and the continued focus on a process that was openly consulted on and finalised on the basis of the outcome of that consultation continue to distract from the real value that the programme brings, which is, as I have said, a shame.

I will address some of the points raised. First, the motion refers to the:

"deep public concern regarding the formation, implementation and operation of the social investment fund".

The fact that some opposition politicians have welcomed SIF projects in their own area, sat on steering groups or turned up smiling for photographs, whilst choosing to criticise the fund, is a point that will not be missed by the general public.

Let me make it absolutely clear to the House that the development and final operation of the fund was the subject of in-depth public consultation. Not only was a pre-discussion paper published for public comment but this was followed by a formal public consultation process that included public events, an online questionnaire and the option to provide written responses. Almost 600 people engaged in the process and provided views on how SIF should operate. That included views on how steering groups should be selected and how the programme should be delivered.

I emphasise that the Department took the process very seriously, and the final programme that emerged was the direct result of what the public told us they wanted. On the establishment of steering groups, for example, 48% of respondents preferred option 4: the then Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister would invite groups and individuals to indicate interest in serving on the steering group. Subsequently, that was the approach that was adopted. Similarly, when asked about the delivery method, 72% preferred option 2, the community option: resources would be allocated directly to one or more organisations nominated by the steering group, and they, in turn, would deploy those resources to projects included in the strategic area plan. Again, that was the approach adopted. I have to come to the conclusion that it is contradictory to imply that there is "deep public concern" about the "formation,

implementation and operation" of a fund when its operation is based on exactly what people told us, as part of the public consultation, they wanted.

The motion also refers to an:

"independent review of the operation of the entire social investment fund process".

The Office of Government Commerce developed the gateway review process for projects and introduced it across government as part of the modernisation agenda to support the delivery of improved public services. That process has been operating since January 2001. The gateway review process is a series of short, focused, independent peer reviews at key stages of a project or programme. The review highlights risks and issues that, if not addressed, would threaten successful delivery. The reviews are carried out by a team of experienced people who are independent of the project or programme team and were chosen because of their relevant skills.

All reviewers have to go through an accreditation process and training. The social investment fund programme has undergone no fewer than four gateway reviews, commencing in 2011-12 and continuing as the programme has developed, with recommendations from each review being implemented. We are in the process of preparing to undergo a fifth gateway review as part of the ongoing quality assurance of that programme.

Mrs Little Pengelly: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ross: I will not give way because I have very little time left.

If people want government to be innovative in policymaking, it requires continual review and adaptation and an agile response, and this is an example of the type of innovative project that government has tried to do. It is also worth saying that all government programmes are subject to internal and external audit, and SIF is no different from any other programme.

As I said, the decision to adopt a lead partner approach was a direct result of the consultation responses in which the public selected this as a preferred delivery option. The lead partner has an oversight role to lead and manage the procurement of delivery agents and their resulting contract. It also reports to and draws down funding from the Department in respect of the project. This approach is not specific to SIF; it is an approach used in other programmes and funding schemes as well. It is a perfectly legitimate way of providing project oversight and ensuring that the original thinking behind the project is never lost sight of in the process of development and delivery. This oversight role is quite distinct from that of a project delivery that has been implemented through open public competitive procurement.

The motion also talks about the impact that the lead partner role has had on good governance. Good governance, of course, is a fundamental part of government funding, whether there is a lead partner approach or alternative delivery methods. As we have confirmed on many previous occasions and, indeed, as was acknowledged by an Alliance MLA on the radio this morning, a robust process is in place in relation to all social investment fund projects and, indeed, any departmental funding to ensure the capability of lead

partners and delivery organisations to manage public money and manage a project prior to any funding commitments being given. All projects are required to have an approved business case that takes account of advice from accountants and economists. There are also robust vouching and verification processes in place to ensure that projects are delivering and that finances are being allocated appropriately. We take good governance incredibly seriously, and we have the necessary checks and balances in place to ensure that money can be properly accounted for. I cannot, therefore, see how the lead partner role has had any impact on good governance.

I would like to pay tribute to all the people and communities involved in the development and delivery of social investment projects. I regret that the ongoing, unwarranted criticism is taking away from their dedication, hard work and genuine success in improving people's lives. Some are willing to ignore this good work and risk tarnishing the good name of the individuals and organisations working to improve the quality of life of some of our most deprived communities. Others have welcomed initiatives in their own areas and acknowledged the positive impact that a project is having whilst, at the same time, going on the airwaves to criticise the programme. We have had more of that in the Chamber today. One could be forgiven for thinking that Members support the programme but not those who thought it up.

SIF is an innovative and community-led approach to addressing long-term issues associated with poverty, unemployment and physical deterioration. It is an example of government trying something new and working in a genuine partnership with local communities. It is also a project that is transforming and will continue to transform communities and the lives of people right across Northern Ireland. This is exactly why councillors, MLAs and MPs from Alliance, the SDLP and the Ulster Unionist Party turn up to support SIF projects in their local areas. It is exactly why a UUP member of the Executive Office Committee last week described the local SIF project in his area as very successful and said that he was happy to support it. It is exactly why the House should reject this motion.

Dr Farry: At the outset, I want to say that this is a valid and legitimate debate. It is shining a spotlight on what is in effect a DUP and Sinn Féin scandal. I want to thank those who have spoken in favour of the motion and who have joined in highlighting the very serious and substantial concerns voiced about SIF for their very positive and constructive comments. There is a consensus, certainly in this corner of the House, that this is a major and legitimate public concern.

I want to highlight the failure of the DUP and Sinn Féin to address the heart of the arguments that have been voiced by a number of Members today. We have seen quite a lot of deflection in this regard, so let me run through some of the issues. First, it is claimed that parties are only raising concerns over SIF now, following the particular scandal around Charter and Dee Stitt. In fact, a number of parties have been raising concerns about SIF consistently since 2011. It has certainly been raised by me in a number of Budget debates, looking at the inefficiency of SIF and whether we could spend the money in support of communities in a more efficient and effective way.

12.00 noon

There has also been a lot of mud thrown at various elected representatives who have been sitting on SIF partnerships and other forums with some of the groups that we have been discussing. That is elected representatives doing their job by representing their constituents and engaging in public scrutiny.

Yes, Charter NI, if you want to talk about that, has been funded through other Departments. However, the key point is that it was funded through open, competitive, merit-based processes. Yes, when I was Minister for Employment and Learning, I funded Charter through the collaboration and innovation fund. Let me give some background to that. That came after a meeting in which I was invited by the then First Minister to run a pilot involving Fastrack to Information Technology Northern Ireland (FIT NI), with Charter as a subcontractor, with the potential to channel £7 million directly to that organisation outside normal procurement. That was some pilot. I said no to that. I advised that Charter could apply for public funds like any other organisation.

My experience of working with Charter was disappointing. Out of the 18 organisations on the collaboration and innovation fund, Charter gave us the most difficulty in terms of management. It is not actually a paradigm of good management, if that is what it is being asked to do in SIF. Everyone else was able —

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Dr Farry: Yes.

Mr Allister: Has the Member not come to the heart of the matter? In all that we heard from the Minister, who did not want to take interventions, he never addressed the key issue: why was the scheme designed to exclude competition in respect of the lead partners? The answer is clear: it was always intended to be a vehicle for cronyism, but it could not be that if they dared to have open competition.

Dr Farry: Yes, that is very much the case. At the heart of this is the suspicion, which has not been addressed — so we assume, therefore, that it is by silence confirmed — that the point of SIF was that money was not being channelled to the so-called right community organisations. So a plan — whether we call it innovative from the standpoint of OFMDFM or cunning from the standpoint of others — was designed to ensure that the money went into the so-called right hands, at the expense of others in the community.

Some people have spoken about issues of public concern and said that there is no public concern. Frankly, there is; there is actually huge public concern. In particular, there is concern right across the community and voluntary sector. What we have seen here is a top-down approach to picking winners. There is a lot of talk about this being a bottom-up approach —

Mr Stalford: Will the Member give way?

Dr Farry: Yes, go ahead.

Mr Stalford: When the Member talks about the right organisations getting money, I presume he includes the Greater Village Regeneration Trust (GVRT). Perhaps he would like to speak to his colleague in front of him about its capacity to deliver successful projects.

Dr Farry: Let me be very clear: Paula Bradshaw was not the person who said that should be the lead organisation on the South Belfast Partnership Board. Again, the winners were picked from the top. We have not had a bottom-up process to choose the groups.

I have to say that there is a real air of tension across the community and voluntary sector. Groups are afraid to speak out about funding decisions, lest the few pennies that they still get are cut by the two parties in the lead. That is not healthy in any open, democratic and pluralistic society. We are building up a client state, and that should be of great concern to anyone who believes in democracy and the rule of law. We have to get away from that. Most people in this room know exactly what I am talking about.

Let us talk for a moment about the issue around Charter. I was frankly stunned to hear Edwin Poots talk about Dee Stitt's comments as "flippant". This is an ongoing problem every single day. The issue is not simply one set of remarks made in a 'Guardian' video; the issue here is that we have someone who is a current paramilitary, on a day-by-day basis, running an organisation in receipt of £1.7 million of public funds. That situation is not being addressed or faced up to in any respect. Let us be clear: the DUP has had an open agenda of trying to steer money towards Charter. It is not simply that Charter happened to win contracts in an incidental way; money has been steered to it. It is no accident that Alex Easton, for example, did a reference for Dee Stitt. It is no accident that we have two members of Charter sitting on two different steering groups. That is all done by design.

Comments were also made about the fact that the projects on the ground are of good quality. I have no reason to doubt that but I cannot make a full judgement because I do not know how they would stack up against other projects procured through other means. We can say, in absolute terms, "Yes, things are good" —

Ms Bradshaw: Will the Member take an intervention?

Dr Farry: Yes.

Ms Bradshaw: Does the Member agree with me that it is only right and proper that we are concerned about a group like Charter, which is headed up by a UDA leader, receiving that funding given the number of death threats, attacks on our properties and bullets to our homes that we have received from the UDA in recent years?

Dr Farry: Absolutely. There are ongoing issues with respect to the role played by the UDA in our society.

Mr Carroll: Will the Member give way?

Dr Farry: Yes.

Mr Carroll: The Member will be aware that the Executive have a strategy for eliminating racism. However, they are providing millions of pounds of public money to a man who openly brags about his paramilitary connection. Does the Member find this issue concerning given the links between paramilitaries and racist attacks in our society?

Dr Farry: Those links are obviously of concern. In terms of strategies, the even wider concern that we have to have is the fact that we have a so-called action plan from the Executive on combating paramilitary activity, the credibility of which has been ripped out by the fact that we are openly having photographs taken with current paramilitary figures. There was no point in having a big

campaign launch yesterday about tackling organised crime and paramilitarism if, at the same time, people are giving comfort to current paramilitaries. It is a mixed signal for those in the community. Are people really going to be empowered to come forward and talk about their fears around organised crime and paramilitary activity if they see how the leadership in this society is reacting to them?

Mr O'Dowd: Will the Member give way?

Dr Farry: Yes.

Mr O'Dowd: I respect the Member very much, but he is crossing the line between being a legislator and a prosecutor. For eight or nine minutes, the Member has been speaking about who may or may not be a paramilitary leader. Surely the criticism in that case should be directed at not the Executive but the police, who are responsible for gathering evidence, giving it to prosecutors and bringing people before the courts to decide whether they are guilty.

Dr Farry: I agree with the Member: there is certainly a role for the police. They have questions to answer in terms of this particular issue and how robustly they are taking on paramilitaries. However, they cannot do so in a vacuum and without strong leadership from the Executive around these issues. I remind the Member that his leader in the Assembly — the deputy First Minister — has expressed concern about Mr Stitt, so it is not simply coming from these Benches and others in that regard.

The final point I want to stress is around value for money. We said that the rationale was about tackling deprivation and employability issues. All those things were being done and could have been done more through legitimate processes of Departments. I dare say that the money would have been spent a lot quicker; that certainly would have been my experience. Here is the rub: projects, particularly those using the community and voluntary sector, across the board have been cut over the past number of years while the favoured processes and groups through SIF have been protected. That is part and parcel of the resentment. Deprivation has built up. A report on educational underachievement from Queen's and Stranmillis has been buried by the Executive. People talk about —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Dr Farry: — dealing with the community. It is the self-picked community. The process by which people emerged was far from clear. A lot of voices in communities are not being given fair play or their fair share in that respect.

Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 38; Noes 53.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Eastwood, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Hanna, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr McCrossan, Mr McGlone, Mr McGrath, Mr McKee, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Mullan, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Dickson and Mr Lunn.

NOES

Mr Anderson, Ms Archibald, Mr Bell, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Ms Gildernew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kelly, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCausland, Mr McElduff, Mr McGuigan, Miss McIlveen, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr Maskey, Mr Middleton, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Murphy, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Poots, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McGuigan and Mr Robinson.

Question accordingly negatived.

Covenant Reference Group

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. I ask Members to leave the Chamber quietly, please. If they want to have a conversation, they should have it outside the Chamber.

The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Beattie: I beg to move

That this Assembly recognises the need to deliver for the veterans' community in Northern Ireland; and calls on the Executive to nominate a Northern Ireland representative to the UK-wide Armed Forces covenant reference group, which will be responsible for ensuring that the Executive are kept updated of issues relating to the veterans' community in Northern Ireland.

This country is trying to move towards a brighter future — I think that we all agree on that — but we have a deeply troubled past. Therefore, I fully understand that any debate on the British military can be viewed as contentious. I know that you all have your prepared notes, but, please, I ask everybody to listen to what is being proposed before you come back on what I say.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr McGlone] in the Chair)

Before I address the motion, I will speak to those people who predominantly sit to my right-hand side. I acknowledge that this is a difficult subject for you and that it is a difficult motion for you to support. I fully understand that you feel that those whom you represent and many of the communities that you represent have been brutalised by the British military, certainly in the 1970s and the early 1980s. I can fully understand that, and I reiterate what I have said on many occasions: if anybody from the British military has broken the law, they need to answer to the law. In the future, I hope that you will be able to stand up and say, as I have, that those who were part of terrorist organisations have brutalised our country.

Those impact statements are really something for later, and I do not want to dwell on them. I also understand that there are many in the House who have grave concerns about British military actions around the world in the likes of Iraq — I served in Iraq and fully understand the concerns; I also have concerns about that conflict — Afghanistan, Syria or, indeed, Libya. I ask for some balance in the debate and some understanding that we are not all bad. The British military helped to stop ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo, it helped to end genocide in Rwanda, it dropped aid to Yazidi Christians who were isolated on mountaintops, and it helped with the devastating Ebola virus in Sierra Leone. It also helps in this country; when a device is found somewhere, it is army technical officers who head out to dispose of it. Even today, members of our armed forces are helping the Afghan Government in Kabul, and we are deploying people from Northern Ireland to South Sudan in a peacekeeping role. That has to be applaudable. I ask for balance, but, with that balance, I have acknowledged how some may view the British military, and it is important to acknowledge that.

I have kept the wording of the motion as soft as possible because I fully understand the sensitivities with it. It is not about a political party; it is about trying to help vulnerable people in our community, whom we all represent. The armed forces community in Northern Ireland numbers over a quarter of a million people. That is serving personnel, veterans and their families and includes people who have served from the Second World War right up to more recent conflicts. I do not really want to argue about the conflicts because, in many ways, we need to point the finger at politicians as opposed to the military regarding the conflicts, but, if any incidents in those conflicts were unlawful, we need to deal with the individuals involved. Many of those veterans feel isolated because of the ongoing security situation in Northern Ireland. They are isolated and not coming forward for help.

It is important that we as an Assembly and as the politicians of Northern Ireland represent everybody in our community, regardless of their present or past employment. I have to say something; I will repeat it twice so that people really understand what I am saying. The motion does not seek to give service personnel or veterans an advantage. It does not seek to give them an advantage. It seeks to give them representation so that they are not disadvantaged because of their service. There are times when they are disadvantaged.

In 2011, the Armed Forces Covenant was instigated throughout the United Kingdom. It was instigated here in Northern Ireland. We are part of the United Kingdom; it is here. However, we are not represented. We do not have the ability to have oversight or to scrutinise that Armed Forces Covenant. We do not have that because we are not in the covenant reference group.

If we were in the covenant reference group, we would have representation, we would have oversight and we would have scrutiny. The group produces an annual report. We can all read it — it is an open-source document — yet Northern Ireland has had no input to it since 2011. That, I think, is wrong. The covenant reference group is a Cabinet-led group with representation from all devolved Governments except Northern Ireland. That is fundamentally wrong. It has representation from the MoD, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Education, Health and Transport Departments — the list goes on — and representation from Wales and Scotland.

12.30 pm

What could such representation help us to do? The covenant fund is £10 million a year that we are able to bid for. We get our fair share, and, in the last 12 months, £450,000 has gone to Combat Stress and £600,000 to the Somme Nursing Home, but there are other worthy groups out there, including cross-community groups. This money has been used for cross-community groups, but, if we are not in the reference group, we cannot target it and we cannot direct it.

A Departments of Community Mental Health (DCMH) facility in Thiepval barracks is underused. Only four people have gone to it, because nobody knows about it. It is paid for by the MoD, so this motion would not cost the Executive one single penny. If we could open up that facility, we could get help for our veterans who are suffering from mental illnesses. That must be a good thing, and it could help to alleviate issues in our health service.

Nobody in the military believes that they should get housing above anybody else, but service personnel leaving the military do not even realise that they are entitled to bid for social housing in Northern Ireland even if they live in England. They do not know that they are entitled to points because accommodation goes with the job: when you leave your job, you are made homeless and are entitled to points. They do not know this because we do not have anybody on the covenant reference group.

On education and learning, again, there is no ask. When you leave the military, the armed forces give you £1,000 a year to help you to retrain. Those in Northern Ireland are not using it, and they need to be educated.

As I said earlier, this affects all corners of our society. I visit a 94-year-old World War II RAF veteran who is living in a care home. He is deaf, nearly blind and getting no support. I know that people across the border in Ireland who served in the British military during the Second World War and later could also use this support. Somebody on the covenant reference group would be able to target and help them.

In conclusion, representation on the covenant reference group would not bypass any of the devolved functions. The Executive would still have the final say. There is no bypassing; it is purely about representation, but it would give us a link to what everybody else has in the United Kingdom has, but we, at present, do not. It would keep the Assembly informed and give our armed forces champions, who are on each of our 11 councils, somebody to work to. It would allow us to know what was going on and make sure that we got our fair share of what comes out of the Government in Westminster.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): Will the Member draw his remarks to a close, please?

Mr Beattie: I commend the motion, and I acknowledge its difficulty for many, but I ask them to listen to my words. I am using soft words, and I do so deliberately because I understand.

Mrs Hale: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion. However, before I begin, I must declare my many interests. First, I am an army widow and receive an HM Forces pension. I am an ambassador for the ABF — the soldiers' charity — and a member of the community that we are debating today. I am painfully aware of how veterans and their families have contributed to and sacrificed for this society.

As we have heard, the Armed Forces covenant reference group meets with no input from Northern Ireland. Yet, as a jurisdiction, we play a significant role in our armed forces. Over 20% of the reserve regularly deployed in operations are from Northern Ireland, despite the fact that we make up only 3% of the entire UK population. We must not lose sight of the fact that the armed forces community is tri-service and multi-cap badged, and it comes from every section of our communities.

The forces covenant is an agreement between the armed forces community, the nation and the Government, and it encapsulates the moral obligation to those who serve, those who have served, their families and the bereaved, of which I am one. As Doug said, the covenant fund was set up giving £10 million per annum to fund the Government's armed forces commitments. Funding priorities are annually

set by the covenant reference group, and we have no representation. There has been a further £170 million allocated to support covenant commitments since 2011, and, to date, as Doug has said, Northern Ireland has received £450,000 for combat stress and £60,000 for the Somme Nursing Home.

The covenant reference group was initially set up to oversee the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant, which is chaired by the Cabinet Office. In an answer to my DUP colleague Jim Shannon MP during parliamentary questions at Westminster, Mark Lancaster, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Defence, stated that there are unique challenges in Northern Ireland, but he was pleased to report that they estimate that 93% of the covenant issues are being enforced. I am sorry, but the number of constituents I am currently dealing with regarding veterans' issues indicates otherwise. Mark Lancaster went on to say clearly that they needed to do better and that this will be his focus in the coming year. I look forward to that end result and his active support. I visit my constituents in prison. I visit them in hospital when they have attempted suicide. I go with them to looked-after child (LAC) reviews where they try to keep hold of their children, and I attend police stations with them when they have issues with domestic violence and abuse through issues of PTSD.

I do not question the fact that more needs to be done in Northern Ireland to make veterans aware of the services, charities and Departments that they can have access to. Since my election in 2011, I have worked tirelessly with my party colleagues on behalf of my community. It was at my invitation that Lord Ashcroft's transition review team came to Northern Ireland. It met Ministers, senior personnel at 38 Brigade and representatives of the military charity sector. In his second follow-up report, published in November 2016, reference is made to Northern Ireland and the failings of the Armed Forces Covenant. He states that the Executive should appoint someone immediately to the covenant reference group.

On 26 October 2016, Kris Hopkins stated that it is up to the devolved Governments to make it work. Disappointingly, this shows a lack of understanding of the complex and multilayered issues that face the service community here in Northern Ireland. Those councils that have adopted the community covenant are to be applauded, however they do not have the same statutory authority as in Great Britain, and this results in the limited implementation of the meaningful application of the ethos of the covenant. They cannot compel the Housing Executive, the Education Authority or Health to consider years of service to the Crown as our colleagues in GB can when service personnel are transitioning to Civvy Street or need access to services such as education for themselves or their children or adequate clinical support for illness and life-changing injuries. We know that there is an open invitation for the Northern Ireland Executive to join that reference group, and, in fact, in October this year, when I spoke on 'Talkback' about this particular issue, my party leader, Arlene Foster, stated her support for me to be appointed to the group. A letter was sent to the Cabinet Office regarding this, and we are awaiting a response.

I want to put on record my acknowledgement of the work done by my colleagues at Westminster, my colleagues here in the Assembly and my colleagues at council

level, and I absolutely agree that the needs of the armed forces community must be heard at the highest level of government. I thank Mr Beattie for bringing this forward.

Mr Kelly: I listened to Doug Beattie and what he had to say, and I will be able to cover that. I approach, and Sinn Féin approaches, this from the point of view of objective need and equality of treatment. I have the Research and Information Service information pack that explains what the Armed Forces Covenant is about, and it is worth reading out the first couple of pieces of it. It says:

"The Armed Forces Covenant is an agreement between the armed forces community, the nation and the government."

Of course, the "nation" referred to is Britain, and the "government" referred to is the British Government. It continues:

"It encapsulates the moral obligation to those who serve, have served, their families and the bereaved."

As a republican, I do not find anything wrong with that. The British Government do have a moral obligation. It goes on to say:

"The covenant's twin underlying principles are that members of the armed forces community should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services".

I cannot find myself disagreeing with that either. Of course they have the right to all the services that are there for every citizen. However, it does go on to say:

"and that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given the most such as the injured or the bereaved."

And there, we start to move away from the ideas of equality and equal treatment. There is a covenant fund, which is dealt with further down, and it says that £170 million —

Mrs Long: I thank the Member for giving way. He has indicated that it would mean moving away from equality and equal treatment: does he not accept that objective need moves away from equal treatment? Equal treatment treats everyone the same; objective need allows resource to be targeted specifically at those in most need. It is not contrary to equality provisions to target those in most need.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Kelly: I agree on this: I have risen to speak on both issues — equality of treatment and objective need. They are complementary, rather than opposing.

In the covenant fund, there is £170 million from 2011. The document goes through a list of how that is used in different packages. In 2013, the British Chancellor announced that £10 million per annum would be allocated in perpetuity from the financial year 2015-16. People may think that that is good work or that it is not enough money and all that; that is a debate that, I am sure, Doug Beattie and others will continue. I understand where they are coming from — in particular, Brenda Hale. However, it will not be a surprise to the House that I do not agree with the interventions of the British Government — in fairness to

him, Mr Beattie said that there was bad and good in it — and certainly not with many of the interventions that they have been involved in in recent history and ancient history in terms of foreign wars. He mentioned Iraq: remember that people were sent to war on the basis of weapons of mass destruction that did not exist. I agree with Mr Beattie that this is not an issue around the soldiers who went out and fought; it is an issue around government.

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kelly: I have already given way.

Tens of thousands have been killed in recent years; hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, have been injured; and, certainly, millions have faced huge poverty. We have only to turn on our TVs to see the refugee problem that we have. In my view, it has destabilised the area.

All of this, as you said, may not be the relevant issue. However, young men and women were sent out as soldiers and were killed. Many have sustained life-changing injuries. The Sinn Féin position is as described earlier: there are bereaved and injured from the conflict that occurred here in the North of Ireland. Unionists, if I may say this, cannot and will not agree to a pension for a small number of people relative to other conflicts — a matter of hundreds — who want to have a pension. They will not agree to the funding of the Lord Chief Justice's approach to coronial courts and inquests that, since we are talking about bereaved families, would bring some closure or, if not closure, alleviation of their pain. Some of them have waited for over 45 years. Coming on to the Eames/Bradley project, I remember that, when £12,000 was mentioned, not for compensation but for recognition of the suffering that victims had gone through, political unionism and the British Government took a fit at the idea that they would hand out any money at all for that.

There is a duty that includes combatants — I absolutely accept that — but it is much wider. It is a duty to all those who have suffered — civilian or soldier, combatant or non-combatant. We need to break the logjam of legacy for victims and survivors, and the British Government and political unionism can do that. Sinn Féin will oppose the motion on the basis of equality of treatment, which everyone should have access to, and objective need.

Mr Attwood: First of all, I acknowledge the tone of the remarks of Mr Beattie and Mrs Hale. They struck the right note in relation to the debate and the issues that inevitably revolve around this sort of debate. I also acknowledge, in particular, that I have not heard any senior member of a unionist party refer to the fact that there are people in Northern Ireland, particularly people of the community that I and others represent, who feel, as Mr Beattie put it, "brutalised" by the actions of the British Army. I have not heard that sort of description. In my view, the experience was more than one of feeling that they were brutalised: they were brutalised by the British Army in many, many, many instances over the years. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that that was the tone and character of the debate that we heard. I also respond to Mr Beattie by saying that it was not just the state agencies who brutalised the people whom I represent; the terror organisations also inflicted an unwelcome violence on people across this part of Ireland.

12.45 pm

I also want to acknowledge that, when we are speaking today, we are speaking about people in the Chamber who might have reason to rely on the covenant in terms of their objective needs. So, when we talk about the issue, we have to tread cautiously, because we are treading on the experiences of people in the Chamber and many, many people besides.

I have a view about the role of the British Army in Ireland historically and in recent decades. I do not intend to rehearse what that view is, except to say that it became very much a big part of the problem because military and paramilitary approaches were not the way to resolve the conflict of identity around which our conflict revolved. I also recognise that there have been many, many people in the British Army who fought in good faith and with sincere beliefs wherever they went around the world over the years, even though I would dispute what the political and military leadership directed them to do. Whilst I may differ with Mr Beattie and other people about the contribution of the British Army around the world, I do not dispute the contribution of individual members of the army to the causes that they believed in. I say that — I have said this before in the Chamber — because my great-uncle, who I am named after, lies in an unmarked grave on the Belgian coast at a place called Nieuwpoort, having been killed in July 1917 in the First World War. I have visited with pride the memorial that bears his name.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he agree that the debate is around representation? As Mr Beattie set out when proposing the motion, there is no added cost to the Northern Ireland Executive. Given the fact that the Member has just spoken eloquently about the fact that this touches even this House, should it not be the case that Northern Ireland is represented to ensure that the people who are directly affected have their voice at that table nationally?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Attwood: Thank you for that intervention, and thank you for the extra time, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will touch on that in my concluding remarks.

It is our view — Naomi Long touched on this in her intervention on Mr Kelly — that the way to deal with any person who has particular requirements is on the basis of objective need. Over many decades, we have developed in Northern Ireland a policy and an architecture in order to ensure that objective need informs how people are responded to at public policy and state level. Maybe Mr Kelly will want to reflect on this: there is, if you like, special consideration for various sections of our society. The people who Mr Kelly speaks for on many occasions — prisoners — are given special consideration by way of funding from Europe. Our victims and survivors are given special consideration by the —

Mr Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: I have only a minute. I normally give way, but I want to conclude my remarks.

That is not special consideration that creates some sort of hierarchy; it is a special consideration that is informed by the practice of objective need. If that is all that the covenant is about and, to go back to the point of the

last intervention, if it is purely about representation and advocacy, I can understand why the argument has been made by Mr Beattie, Mrs Hale and others that there should be somebody representing Northern Ireland on the covenant reference group.

So, for all those reasons, the SDLP will not resist or oppose the motion. If that is the argument that is being made in good faith, we accept it.

Mr Lunn: We support the motion. I congratulate Mr Beattie for tabling it and for proposing it in, in his own words, a “soft” way. I agree with his sentiments, and I also agree very much with Mrs Hale. I do not pretend to have the experience that either Mr Beattie or Mrs Hale has in this area, but I am prepared to learn. They both spoke remarkably well.

Should we be represented? Of course we should. This is a covenant that arises from the Armed Forces Act, which applies to the whole of the United Kingdom, and we appear to be the only part of the United Kingdom not represented on the reference group. Northern Ireland is getting some benefit from the various funds. We could perhaps continue to have no direct input into the reference group and hope for the best, but it would not make any sense to do so when there is a place there for us. I do not know what the objection is, because I have not studied it closely enough, but somebody seems to be objecting to this move. I hope that, on the basis of what has been said today, that objection will be removed.

Northern Ireland has done pretty well from the present arrangement. As we all know, £450 million has gone to Combat Stress in either this financial year or the last one, and I am told that about £1 million has been invested in Northern Ireland projects, which is 10% of the annual spend for our much trumpeted 3% of the population. So, we do pretty well. However, it is important that we are represented at the heart of this, and I hope that the Executive Office moves ahead to appoint somebody.

I appreciate that not all our population might be in total agreement with this. Mr Kelly, in his remarks, was very measured; towards the end he was less measured, but he sympathised with those who had been injured and bereaved, and I give him credit for that. Both Mr Beattie and Mr Kelly made the point that armies do not decide where they go to fight; Governments do that. If a soldier or an airman or a sailor comes back to Northern Ireland injured and needs particular treatment through rehabilitation, education, the health service or housing, it is incumbent on our Government, whether the UK Government or the Northern Ireland Assembly, to provide them with the very best facilities and treatment that they can, because we owe it to them.

Old sores take time to heal, but people who do not support this proposition might need to reflect on where we would be today had it not been for the actions of our armed forces through the centuries. We can stand here now and speak with freedom because we fought the good fight when it had to be fought, and we cannot forget about our veterans. This is a big debate in the States as well, but we should be able to deal with it.

The question of section 75 was raised. The implementation group — the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee — came to the conclusion three or four years ago that this was not a particular problem, stating:

“Section 75 is a piece of equalities legislation and that the first key principle of the Covenant is no discrimination, we do not necessarily see any opposition between those.”

The MOD said that it had taken legal advice on the question of section 75 being in conflict with the covenant and had come to the conclusion that it was not insuperable, let us put it that way. There may be some slight difficulties, but, with a reasonable approach and a fair attitude, it can be dealt with.

If our veterans, the injured and the bereaved need special assistance to reintegrate and move on with their lives, the covenant, through its schemes, the covenant for communities —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): I ask the Member to draw his remarks to a close, please.

Mr Lunn: — the reference group, the charitable endeavours, the community grants scheme and so on, provides a way to smooth the way back into society for our veterans. I thoroughly support the motion. If it had gone a bit further, I would still have supported it. It is a good motion.

Mr McGuigan: Unsurprisingly, I will be opposing the motion. I will be doing so on the basis that this Assembly needs to deliver for the whole community and all citizens in the North and not elevate particular groups for special treatment. On that basis, I look forward to the day when the Members who tabled this motion table a motion on an equality Act and a bill of rights for the North, and the implementation of both being supported by all parties and Members. That is the way to address inequalities if and where they exist, and I could support that.

To be honest — and Gerry mentioned this — I could support the first of the two underlying principles in the covenant that we are debating, that is that no disadvantage should be faced compared with other citizens —

Mr Allen: Will the Member give way?

Mr McGuigan: Go ahead.

Mr Allen: Would the Member not agree with me that, in stating that he would agree with the two underlying principles that Mr Kelly pointed out, in reality, opposing this motion goes against that? The Armed Forces covenant reference group is about ensuring that those who serve and have served, and their families, are not disadvantaged by virtue of their service.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McGuigan: I thank the Member for his intervention, but he stopped me short of what I was going to say in relation to what the second principle contained, which Gerry also addressed, and that we could not support. I cannot support it because the covenant itself states:

“special consideration is appropriate in some cases”.

I cannot agree with that. I know there are Members who want to create hierarchies. Unfortunately, that is what this debate is about — in some way elevating the status of the British Army and its members in the North.

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr McGuigan: I want to continue.

I do not claim to be an expert on the employment obligations or additional services of duty of care provided by the British Army to its members. I have only my personal experiences and that of my community of contact with and knowledge of the special consideration that the British Army meted out here in the North.

I recognise, like others, the tone and content of Mr Beattie's contribution. For that reason, and for the reason that I have only five minutes to speak, I will not dwell on that experience because it would require much longer.

I want to assure Members that I did as Doug Beattie asked and listened to his and others' contributions. I want to assure everybody that my opposition to this motion is not based on my own very negative experiences of the British Army. Nor is it based on my antipathy to the actions and wars engaged in by the British Army across the globe in recent years.

I will not say, however, that my opposition is not political, because that is not the case. It is very political. It is political in the sense that my opposition to supporting this covenant is based on the protection of right and entitlements and fair access to services for every citizen who lives here in the North.

I, as an MLA, want to represent everyone as best I can and make laws and support legislation that are based on equality. Gerry talked about the issue in relation to victims and survivors. I would certainly not want to agree to anything that would elevate the rights and entitlements of British soldiers over the rights of victims and survivors of the conflict.

On top of that, I would not want to elevate the rights and entitlements of British soldiers over and above doctors and nurses, firemen and firewomen who risked their lives, people with disabilities or long-term illnesses, members of the PSNI, teachers, community and voluntary workers — the list goes on.

My answer to all that is no, and, for that reason, I will be opposing the motion.

Mr Allen: As I sit here, I vividly recall, at the age of 15 or 16, sitting in a school not far from here, deciding my career prospects and eventually choosing to join the military.

In 2008, I was deployed to Afghanistan with the 1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment. As my colleague Doug Beattie pointed out, we do not bring this motion forward to call for individuals to vote to legitimise or endorse any conflict. As individual soldiers, we do not choose where we go in the world.

We go to try to protect those citizens whom we are sent to defend, and we do that as best we can. Unfortunately, quite often, we are put in harm's way. I am evidence of that. In 2008, I was injured in Afghanistan. I recognise that there are many like me who have suffered physical and psychological injuries through service to Queen and country.

1.00 pm

The military covenant rightly points out that we as a nation have an obligation to those who serve and have served and their families to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by virtue of their service. I listened with interest to Members opposite say how they could support the two values of the covenant but not the preferential

treatment element. I call on them to rethink and ask them to abstain in the vote in acknowledgement that the motion does not, in any way, shape or form, call for preferential treatment. I speak to many veterans and their families on the ground, day and daily, and I am yet to come across any who want preferential treatment. I can sit here and say in testimony that, in no way, shape or form, would I have it that I be put in front of a doctor —

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Mr Kelly talked about young men being “sent out”, which is an admission that the Government deploy our army, not the military and certainly not the service personnel themselves.

I make this point to the Member. Members across the way talk about people being elevated by the covenant. Those of us in working-class communities have watched former prisoner organisations, including many republican prisoner organisations, receive funding from government. If that is not creating a disjointed and uneven playing field, what is?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Allen: I thank the Member for his point. I was not conscripted into the army. I went to Afghanistan quite willingly. I chose to go to Afghanistan knowing the potential consequences. I have had individuals approach me and say, “You sit and seek sympathy, but, going there, you knew full well that you could be injured or, worse, not come back”. I accept that. I do not dispute that whatsoever. However, it is not unrealistic to expect government to look after us when we are injured, whether physically or psychologically. We should expect our Government to be able to step up.

I acknowledge that the various different service charities that support veterans day and daily, often unseen and unnoticed behind closed doors, do sterling work, but that cannot be the only work that goes on. The covenant reference group would give individuals a platform and an opportunity. I would have no difficulties with Mrs Hale being nominated on to it. Personally, I would much rather see a non-political representative. From the various discussions that I have had with military people on the ground, I know that they would like to see somebody who has no party political affiliation and who would report to the Minister for Communities, for example. I raise that only because of my engagement with the various armed forces’ veterans and their families on the ground. That is what they are advising and telling me.

As has been outlined, the Armed Forces covenant reference group sets the priorities for £10 million a year funding. That is funding that will come regardless of whether we have a representative on the covenant reference group. However, if we have a representative on there, that will be a voice for those Northern Ireland veterans and their families. It will ensure that their needs and concerns are being voiced. We heard a comment about Combat Stress and the Somme Nursing Home receiving pivotal and vital funding. However, what we have not heard about is the fact that, owing to donations being scarce, Combat Stress has been forced into a decision to withdraw its welfare support from the front line. It has been revealed that nearly 3,000 individuals who rely on that service will be impacted on. Those are issues that could be raised at the covenant reference group.

I reiterate that this is not about providing preferential treatment. It is not about providing a passport so that somebody can queue-jump or move up the list to get something. I echo that I would not have it that I am put on a list before a doctor, a nurse or any one of our brave emergency services workers, or, for that matter, any other citizen in Northern Ireland, because, as an MLA, I fight day and daily to ensure that all our people are represented.

I believe that it is our duty as MLAs to ensure that we provide for our armed forces community in Northern Ireland as best we can.

Mrs Long: I had not intended to speak in the debate but felt that I wanted to in light of some of what I have heard against the motion, particularly from Sinn Féin. I understand the sensitivities that debates on the armed forces can raise in our society, particularly given our history of conflict here, but I think that it is really important that, when we approach this, we do it with maturity and recognise that people are affected by this legislation in Northern Ireland as things stand today. All that the motion calls for is for someone from Northern Ireland to be represented on the group that steers those decisions. That seems to me to be a very rational thing to do.

When we did the review in Westminster into the Armed Forces Covenant and its delivery in Northern Ireland, we found that delivery here was pretty good. Ministers have been quite good at maintaining responsibility over the areas for which they are accountable with regard to the Armed Forces Covenant. However, they do not get to report on the work that they do because, due to our political situation, there is no one to put their report into the annual report, with the result that we have ended up having to rely on individual reports from individual Ministers on what they did to meet the Armed Forces Covenant and the experience of veterans who gave evidence to us.

As regards equality and equal treatment, let us be clear: they are not the same thing. If we want a more equal society, treating everyone the same will not get us there. Those with advantage will continue to be advantaged, and those with disadvantage will continue to be disadvantaged. The only way in which we can bring about a more equal society is with special consideration targeting objective need — not just assessing it but targeting it — looking at what people require in order to give them the opportunity to improve their circumstances.

Mr Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mrs Long: I am happy to give way to the Member.

Mr Kelly: Just to be very clear: at no time have I argued against anything mentioned here, although it is the first time that I have seen £10 million per annum allocated in perpetuity for anything. I am not arguing against what is here. What I am arguing for is that the same treatment be given to other people, particularly those who, in our conflict, have gone through similar experiences to those outlined by Andy Allen and others. I understand absolutely that people have suffered. What I am arguing very clearly is that it cannot be specific to or given to the British armed forces above others. That is what the argument is here. In the second principle, which Andy Allen mentioned a few times, it says that.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): The Member has an extra minute.

Mrs Long: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would have to say that it does not say that. It says that the disadvantage that people have suffered is to be addressed, not that they are to be advantaged. Special consideration is not advantage: it is to consider the special conditions in which they have lived. I do not have a difficulty with funding going to organisations that have helped, for example, to support ex-prisoners — a very specific group in society — to enable them to get the qualifications and support that they need to re-enter the workplace. That is a very specific group of people who have been given very specific consideration and the support that they require to allow them to live a more equal life and overcome the disadvantage that having been imprisoned would have otherwise been to their ability to have an equal chance in society on their release.

It is good that we should do that if we want to tackle inequality, but we cannot do it for one group and then say that we are not willing to do it when it comes to the armed services. Families are often moved around. They can find it difficult, for example, to establish where they are entitled to apply for housing. It can be difficult for a family in that situation to access the housing waiting list in the same way as other people because of their deployment and history with regard to where they have lived, which is often army accommodation. All those issues are not about putting them to the top of the list but restoring them to the place where they would have been on the list had they not been giving service in the army, which disrupted the situation for them.

It is hugely important that we do this in a sensible way. We in Northern Ireland, in our rather haphazard way, already deliver for the armed services community.

What we do not have is direct input into shaping the policies that drive that process right across the UK. Also, our Ministers do not have the opportunity to feed directly back into the system. From the Westminster report of the review, we know that the then housing Minister was dealing with these issues in a way that was compliant with section 75 and with all Housing Executive regulations to ensure that the armed services were not being disadvantaged. In the same way, Stephen Farry, who was the then Employment and Learning Minister, was offering support to people when they came out of the armed services so that they were able to access training to enable them to reintegrate into normal life. It is important for a society that we do that.

The motion is not about debating the whys and wherefores of the Armed Forces Covenant; it simply asks that Northern Ireland has the opportunity to feed into the process. We are doing these things anyway, but, at the moment, our voice is not heard. I fully support the motion and thank the Members who tabled it.

Mr E McCann: Having listened to the various speeches in the debate, I will abstain on the motion. I am not a natural supporter of the British Army. My experience of it, as mentioned by others here, has been entirely negative. What first comes to mind when I hear the British Army mentioned is lying in the gutter of Rossville Street — literally, in the gutter — the street where I was born and brought up, and then crawling away. I was doing a leopard crawl, as they call it, dragging myself by my elbows to get away from the death storm that had erupted in our area on

Bloody Sunday. I find it difficult to adopt the benign attitude to the British Army that so many have taken here.

That said, I approved of the demands of the Bloody Sunday campaign, which included the prosecution of those responsible for the massacre in Derry in 1972. This morning, members of the Bloody Sunday families were informed that the results of the PSNI investigation into the killings were handed to the public prosecution service in England this morning, so we will see what comes of that. I have spoken to the PSNI officers involved, and they have interviewed all the shooters who are still alive and whom they could find — the people who pulled the triggers on Bloody Sunday. Regardless of whether they have spoken to more senior people, the fact is that none of the senior people have been interviewed under caution, and none are on the list of people named in this morning's report. If shooters from Bloody Sunday are charged with unlawful killing, punished in a way the courts think appropriate and put behind bars, I will not be out with a placard complaining about it or saying that it is an injustice. However, let me say this: the people who pulled the triggers on Bloody Sunday are, in my opinion, nowhere near as guilty of the killings as the officers who sent them in there, or the senior politicians who organised and approved, two days in advance of Bloody Sunday, an operation in which it was highly foreseeable — it had to be foreseeable because it was foreseen — that innocent people would die.

It is like Kipling said about the army when he referred to the "poor bloody infantry" and:

"Then it's 'Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' Tommy, 'ow's yer soul?'

But it's 'Thin red line of 'eroes' when the drums begin to roll."

That is true of armies all over the world. It is certainly true of the British Army, and it is certainly true of the way in which veterans of British Army actions are treated by their Government and the establishment. Some time ago, there was a piece in the 'Daily Mirror' in which, I think, Mr Beattie was quoted, among others. Philip Wesley, a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, described how, on leaving the army to look after his daughter when they became a one-parent family, his life:

"has been one of food banks, low-paid work, soaring energy bills and expensive housing."

He could not get out of it. That is a typical and common description given by soldiers of the way in which they were treated after being sent out to fight, as they would have understood it, for their country.

The massive injustice done to veterans by those who sent them to do what they did is a far bigger problem and has to be addressed. I am not minimising anything referred to by Mr Beattie, Mr Allen or anybody else. I am not minimising the experiences that they described but talking about the general, overall mistreatment. The fact that soldiers are abandoned when they have done what the state wanted them to do seems to me to be a much more fundamental problem than anything addressed in the motion. For that reason, my comrade Gerry Carroll and I will abstain.

1.15 pm

Ms Dillon: I do not intend to speak for very long on the motion. Many of the points that I would have made have already been made. We will oppose the motion because of the equality issue, and that is given all of what has been said by other Members in the Chamber today, as well as what Mr McCann has just said. Whilst I fully accept that there are soldiers who fought in wars that they may or may not have agreed with and that it is Governments and not armies that decide to go to war, I have to say that there are people here in the same situation who have been injured, bereaved or suffered trauma through the Troubles and through nothing to do with the Troubles. I think that everybody should be treated equally and on the same basis.

Mr Allen said that there were organisations there to help people to access benefits, and that is only right. My background is working in a Sinn Féin advice centre, where I helped people to access benefits. I helped everybody. I never asked anybody who came through the door what their background was. I did not ask them if they were in the armed forces or were a soldier, a combatant, an IRA volunteer, the family of a killed IRA volunteer or had no connection to politics or any organisation whatever. I just helped everybody who came in through the door. That is where we need to focus.

Mr Allen: Will the Member give way?

Ms Dillon: I will give way in a moment.

We need to give help to everybody on the same level. I agree with Naomi Long that equality does not mean giving equal treatment to everybody; I absolutely accept that. We need to look at targeted need, but people who suffer mental ill health suffer it regardless of why. It is regardless of whether it is trauma from something they have seen or something they have done or whether they have had an imbalance from the day they were born. All those people need to be able to access the same help and the same services. They need to be equally accessible to everybody who has the same difficulties. I understand where a number of people in the House are coming from today, but we need to give equal treatment.

Mr Allen: I thank the Member for giving way; indeed, I understand her comments about working in a constituency office and wanting to help everybody. This is an opportunity for those who serve and have served to be helped — not given preferential treatment but helped — and to allow there to be a voice on the covenant reference group. I will ask this again: will the Members abstain to allow the voice of the Northern Ireland service community to be heard?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): The Member has an extra minute.

Ms Dillon: I will reiterate what Mr Kelly said: it is simply about equality. It is simply about everybody having the same access to services. If we are to take one group over and above another, we have to look at it. I do not pretend to be fully briefed on all the ins and outs of this, but we have to look at it on the basis of equality.

Mr Allister: I commend Mr Beattie for tabling the motion. It is an issue that has long been deserving of attention, because it is a scandal that this part of the United Kingdom is the only area that does not have representation in respect of those who have served in the armed forces. Of

course, there is a very clear reason for that, which is that Sinn Féin has exercised a veto on Northern Ireland having such representation; indeed, by the looks of it, Sinn Féin has also exercised a veto on there even being a Minister from the First Minister's office here today to deal with the issue, such is its antipathy on the matter. We know for a certainty that it is the exercise of the Sinn Féin veto that has denied representation because of evidence given to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on 24 April 2013, referred to by Mrs Long, when the issue of why the Executive had not even responded to an invitation to send representation was raised. That was dealt with by two Ministers — Mr Poots and Mr McCausland — and both had to acknowledge that it had never been brought to the Executive table because Sinn Féin had blocked it.

Let us be under no illusion: the reason there is no representation for veterans in Northern Ireland at the centre of this matter is that bigoted, belligerent Sinn Féin veto, some evidence of which we have seen in today's debate. From Mr Kelly's lips came forth the real reason his party is not prepared to show due deference to military veterans: the pernicious equivalence that he and his party seek to establish between those who served the forces of law and order and those who served the forces of terrorism. He made it abundantly clear that, so long as others stand in the way of, for example, a pension for terrorists, Sinn Féin will belligerently block matters as just as this. It is that pernicious equivalence that Sinn Féin seeks to obtain between the soldier who served his country and the terrorist who shot civilians and soldiers — anyone they could find — in the back. The attempt to establish that equivalence lies at the heart of Sinn Féin belligerence and bigotry on the matter. That is the truth of it. It is, in fact, a badge of the failure of the system of government here that our veterans have been so badly let down. They have no representation because, under the system, a veto has been gifted to those who are on the side of the terrorists rather than on the side of the forces of law and order.

Let us be very plain: this is not about validating army actions internationally, nationally or any other way. It was not the ordinary soldier who decided that the United Kingdom armed forces should intervene in Iraq, Afghanistan or anywhere else; it was government and Parliament and politicians. Why are we penalising the ordinary soldiers who did the only thing they could do, which was to fulfil their duties in their day job? Why are we penalising them, when they suffer as they have suffered? The only answer is that we are penalising them because of the bigotry and belligerence of Sinn Féin, which wants to equate those gallant men and women with the terrorists who are closest to its heart and who set themselves up to do down the forces of law and order. Therein lies the scandal at the heart of this thing. It is the elevation of Sinn Féin's undying commitment to the terrorist cause that causes it to block doing the decent thing for the decent men and women who served in our armed forces.

Mr Nesbitt: Deputy Speaker, it was not my intention to speak. I apologise to the House for arriving late; I was travelling home from elsewhere on Committee business.

I would like to make some remarks in response to what Sinn Féin has said. Linda Dillon talked about mental health. She will know that I have campaigned passionately on the subject for a number of years; in fact, if she

checks a speech that I made to the Ulster Unionist Party conference a couple of years ago, she will find that I made a clear reference to the fact that I wanted us to help everybody with poor mental health or well-being, no matter how they came by it. Not one of the 400 delegates in the room that day raised any objection to helping everybody, no matter how they came by poor mental health.

We all recognise equality, but, sometimes, there are groups that need bespoke measures. Sinn Féin accepts that; there is reference in section A of the Fresh Start Agreement to the reintegration of people who were involved in the Troubles and the issues they have with employability. As leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, I have met a group administered and set up by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister — now the Executive Office — with representatives of paramilitary organisations. I have sat in a meeting room upstairs looking from left to right at representatives of the Official IRA, the UDA, the UVF, the Provisional IRA and the Red Hand Commando. They were all singing off the same hymn sheet; they all had the same agenda. They said, "We have issues with car insurance and home insurance. We have issues with our inability to obtain a visa to travel to the United States". They had a shopping list of issues that they were looking for cross-community and cross-party help with. That is fair enough. I say to Sinn Féin and to anybody else who is going to vote today that the Ulster Unionist Party has not stood in the way of that group seeking measures to address the obstacles in their lives. We understand that they are there and that they are intergenerational. When combatants — if that is the phraseology that Sinn Féin wants to use — pass away, the issues remain alive because they travel intergenerationally. We have not stood in the way, so I ask Sinn Féin to reflect on whether it will stand in the way today.

Mr Aiken: Obviously, I support this important motion. Before I add my commentary on the valued contributions made by all Members to the discussion today, I will, as a veteran of far too many conflicts with many years of service to my country, add my comments on the need for us to nominate a Northern Ireland representative to the UK-wide Armed Forces Covenant reference group, along with representatives from other regional and national government for that vital role.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served in the armed forces and their families will be treated fairly. From those words, we may assume that our armed forces veterans and those who serve along with their families are treated with extra care and attention above that of the ordinary citizen; indeed, if we lived in any other country, that may be the case. US veterans have the benefit of the GI Bill for higher and further education, free healthcare through the veterans' administration, preferential employment opportunities through the civil service and a well-supported route to employment through many private companies. Many of us have witnessed the support given to US servicemen and servicewomen at airports, in shops and across the States. Veterans are valued citizens and employees who contribute greatly to civil society; indeed, they are the bedrock of many American communities.

That approach to the serviceman or servicewoman and, when they retire, support to their next of kin is replicated in France, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Sweden, the

Netherlands and even the Republic of Ireland. The story in the United Kingdom, until recently, was very different. The tradition of two world wars, Korea, the conflict here in Northern Ireland, the Falklands War and the seemingly never-ending Cold War skirmishes that few have heard about even to this day have resulted in a series of casualties, deaths and disrupted lives that have largely been left to the dedicated charity support of organisations like the excellent Royal British Legion, whose exemplary work to this day is so crucial to the well-being of so many, the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA), the Royal Naval Association, the Royal Air Forces Association and the many regimental charities and support groups. There is little support from government, especially — speaking from personal experience — from the Ministry of Defence.

1.30 pm

Indeed, the Ministry of Defence support for serving personnel was especially inadequate, from substandard accommodation, poor resettlement training, limited educational opportunities for service children and a parsimonious attitude to everything from allowances to travel to, even on occasion, the provision of food. For those who were not directly in the front line or on operations, in many cases, it was not short of beggarly. Yet, those of us who served did it gladly, for the sense of doing something for the higher good and for the comradely attitude that service life built for us. All we ask for is equality with our fellow citizens.

Rather than fighting wars in the 21st century, our servicemen and women, of whom many thousands have come from and live in Northern Ireland or the Republic and continue to call them home — for long periods many more Irish citizens served proudly and loyally in the British armed services than ever served in the Irish defence forces — have become increasingly involved with conflicts of so-called choice.

Failures in foreign policy have resulted in our sailors, soldiers and airmen making up for our politicians' failure to effectively manage challenges to the international system. Rather than using the military as the last line of defence, it has, seemingly, been used as the first tool of power, often for highly disputed outcomes that, we must add, are not the result of the actions of those brave and committed members of our armed forces. They have had to bear the brunt of the conflict, with them and their families having to deal with the physical and mental aftermath and with a civilian society that, in many cases, treated them as an afterthought. It was in that spirit, and with a greater understanding of the sacrifice in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, that there was a realisation that that was not a case of benign neglect or unconscious discrimination, but, rather, that our nation should at least promote equality for our forces and their families — equality in healthcare, housing, education and opportunity. That is why the Armed Forces Covenant is so important.

You have heard that up to 93% of the covenant is being delivered in Northern Ireland and that, because of special circumstances, full recognition cannot be delivered. I, my party colleagues and thousands of serving personnel, veterans and our wider Northern Ireland armed forces family community dispute that. Indeed, a simple recognition by having the Executive appoint a

representative to the Armed Forces covenant reference group is a first step in taking a well-reasoned and mature approach to recognising that equality for our armed forces family — not special cases or special pleading but a recognition of objective need — is a laudable goal and one that I hope all Members can support.

I was going to sum up the excellent statements that we heard throughout the debate, and they have been excellent. However, I would like to put some particular points to Sinn Féin. I would like the Sinn Féin representatives to abstain rather than oppose the motion and show clearly that they understand that we are moving into a new era. By recognising equality for the 250,000-odd members of the Northern Ireland armed forces family by not opposing the appointment of a representative to the covenant reference group, they will send a clear message of reconciliation. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 58; Noes 20.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Ms Armstrong, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mr Butler, Mrs Cameron, Mr Chambers, Mr Clarke, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyons, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCausland, Miss McIlveen, Mr McKee, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Smith, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Aiken and Mr Beattie.

NOES

Ms Archibald, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms Dillon, Ms Gildernew, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McElduff, Mr McGuigan, Mr McMullan, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Murphy, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Ms Archibald and Ms Dillon.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly recognises the need to deliver for the veterans' community in Northern Ireland; and calls on the Executive to nominate a Northern Ireland representative to the UK-wide Armed Forces covenant reference group, which will be responsible for ensuring that the Executive are kept updated of issues relating to the veterans' community in Northern Ireland.

1.45 pm

Mrs Hale: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I ask that the Speaker's Office review Mr McCann's contribution for relevance to the motion. I am disappointed that he was not guided by the motion, and we heard more about his opinion of the army's role in Londonderry. I ask that the matter be referred to the Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone): I am not sure whether that is a point of order, but, nonetheless, we will ask the Speaker to have a look at it.

Members, the next item of business in the Order Paper is Question Time. I therefore propose, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm.

The sitting was suspended at 1.48 pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00 pm.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

Oral Answers to Questions

Economy

Mr Speaker: We will start with listed questions.

Jobs: Retail Sector

1. **Mr McAleer** asked the Minister for the Economy how his Department is creating jobs in the retail sector. (AQO 846/16-21)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister for the Economy): My number one priority is to help create the conditions for Northern Ireland to become a globally competitive economy. A key part of that is to create more and better jobs in Northern Ireland. My Department is developing a new economic strategy that sets out our ambition to grow the size of the economy and create jobs across our country.

Wider policy responsibility for the retail sector is shared by a number of Departments. In job promotion, support from my Department is primarily aimed at assisting companies to trade outside Northern Ireland. That brings money into the economy, which has a multiplier effect and indirectly supports domestic-facing sectors such as retail. My Department and Invest Northern Ireland have worked closely with the full range of businesses across Northern Ireland, including those in the retail sector, and a wide range of initiatives are available that offer support and guidance to local retailers. For example, Invest NI's business support team and the NIBusinessInfo website provide a valuable source of business information and signposting to specialist advice for retailers. Invest NI has supported local councils to develop programmes that are open and accessible to retail businesses, and they can also avail themselves of Invest NI's wide range of workshops and seminars. I am particularly encouraged that some of our town centres are benefiting from recent exchange rate changes that have seen an increase in cross-border shopping, bringing more money into the Northern Ireland economy.

Mr McAleer: I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he advise us as to what additional, specific measures he intends to take to create jobs in the retail sector, particularly in the aftermath of the closure of Austins in Derry, BHS and a number of other high-profile businesses?

Mr Hamilton: As I pointed out to the Member in my initial response, policy has traditionally been, for very good reason, not to financially support businesses in the retail sector. They tend to be, by and large, locally facing and not generally export-focused; and there is concern around issues of "displacement", as it is called. Investment in a retail business, say for example in Omagh, could displace jobs or trade away from one in Strabane. Clearly, whilst that might benefit one business, it would have a knock-on negative effect elsewhere. Those are some of the reasons why we have not, and we will continue not to, support retail

business in the way that we do other sectors, such as, say, manufacturing.

I pointed out some of the range of types of support and signposting that Invest NI can offer to retail businesses that are short of actual financial support, or support to create jobs or other areas of their business. An exception, I suppose, is online retail or wholesale distribution to retail. That would only be where they have export opportunities and, if they were genuinely additional in job creation and sales, they could be considered for support by Invest Northern Ireland. That would be on a case-by-case basis. Examples of that do not come up very often but, if they do, they will be assessed on their merits. No matter where they are located in Northern Ireland, if they have an online retail element and they are selling outside the region, genuinely additional and perhaps working in wholesale to retail — and they fit all the various criteria that any application has to go through — they can be considered for support of a financial nature.

Mr Chambers: Will the Minister agree with me that it is important to sustain existing retail jobs in current difficult trading circumstances? Are the Minister and the Executive committed to supporting small businesses in relation to rates review and finding ways to ease the bureaucratic burden on small businesses?

Mr Hamilton: I am tempted to ask the Member for his view. He is a retailer of some experience. I used to work in retail myself, but I do not have the experience that the Member has.

The Executive have a proud record of supporting small businesses, which includes many retail businesses. I am personally very proud of the record that my party has in the Department of Finance and the introduction of the small business rate relief scheme, which grew in size over the years from a modest scheme to where it now offers £20 million worth of support, on an annual basis through rates relief, to thousands of businesses across Northern Ireland. I know from experience that many businesses credit the small business rate relief scheme with helping them to keep people in employment and, in some cases, helping them keep their business alive.

Nobody wants to prop up or artificially support any business in any sector but, given the challenges that retail has faced, particularly from the influx or rise in online sales over the last number of years, there is a need to provide some support. We have done that through the small business rate relief scheme and empty premises relief, for example, which I think the current Minister has rebranded. It has allowed over 500 new businesses to open up in what were previously vacant shops across Northern Ireland. So, we have a proud record. I know that the Minister is proposing changes to the rating system. I think that there is a need for an examination and reform of elements of the rating system but, as the current Minister is finding out, when you change one element it has a knock-on effect elsewhere. I think that he needs to carefully consider this, and I am sure he intends to do so. Obviously, the Executive will take a final position in respect of his proposals when the consultation is over.

Mr Dunne: I, too, thank the Minister for his answers. Can he give his assessment of how important he sees the retail sector to the Northern Ireland economy and how our town centres are facing up to the ever-changing challenges?

Mr Hamilton: I accept and acknowledge — I think we all recognise — the range of challenges that the retail sector has been facing and continues to face. As I mentioned to Mr Chambers, we see a huge increase in the volume of trade being done online. It used to be in just a few small sectors, but it now seems that it is being done in even groceries and convenience goods in some areas. So, there is a huge challenge there.

Retail remains an important part of our economy. We may not be able to support it, for the reasons that I have outlined in the traditional sense of what we do with manufacturing, production or services, but it is a huge part of our economy, and I want to see a growing economy that benefits all sectors, including retail. It remains our largest employer. Around one in six of all jobs in Northern Ireland is in retail. The most recent figures, from 2015, show that the contribution that it makes to our economy through gross value added is down by around £240 million but its contribution in value to our economy still stands at around £4.8 billion, which is around a quarter of the total economy. About 10% of all Northern Ireland businesses are retail businesses and about 37% of the total turnover is in retail. So, it is a big part of our economy. Those figures are comparable with the UK average.

In terms of bearing up, I am very pleased that there has been a boost to many retailers across Northern Ireland, particularly in border regions, as a result of the fall in the value of sterling. InterTradelreland does some work in analysing car registrations in car parks at shopping centres and supermarkets along the border region. In quarter 3 of 2016, it recorded that 56.8% of cars in border region shopping centres had Republic of Ireland registrations. That has grown from 33% in quarter 1 to 43% in quarter 2 and, as I said, is up to nearly 57% in quarter 3. So, there is a boost from the fall in the value of sterling, which is of much benefit to local retailers.

Broadband: Rural Areas

2. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister for the Economy to outline any future plans for the delivery of broadband provision in rural areas. (AQO 847/16-21)

6. **Mr Irwin** asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on improving broadband provision in Newry and Armagh. (AQO 851/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: With your permission, Mr Speaker, I will answer questions 2 and 6 together.

Since 2008, my Department has channelled almost £64 million to encourage private sector upgrades to our telecoms networks, primarily in rural areas. Currently, 83% of households in Northern Ireland can access the Internet, compared with 86% across the UK. In Northern Ireland, 94% of premises can now access broadband services at 2 megabits per second or better. Across the UK, the figure is 98%. Broadband download speeds in Northern Ireland are continuing to increase. The average download speed now stands at 28.3 megabits per second, which is just below the UK average of 29 megabits per second. While there is no doubt that that investment has brought significant improvements for many rural dwellers, I recognise that more needs to be done. My Department's Northern Ireland broadband improvement project has already improved broadband access for over 46,000 premises. Within the Newry and Armagh constituency, almost 7,000 premises

have seen improvements, 1,774, or 25%, of which have taken up new services.

The contract that was awarded to BT has a mechanism that requires BT to return funding for reinvestment when take-up of service exceeds a certain threshold. That will allow more premises to see improvements.

My Department is also managing the superfast roll-out programme, which, by 31 December 2017, will provide access to superfast broadband with speeds of at least 24 megabits per second to a further 38,000 premises across Northern Ireland. Again, those will primarily be in rural areas. It is important to recognise that, where fixed-line broadband is not viable, there are other technological alternatives available. Details of those can be found on my Department's website, and we intend to publish further information in respect of that. For those premises that continue to have access to services of less than 2 megabits per second, my Department offers assistance with the cost of installing a basic broadband service using satellite or wireless technology.

In recognising the importance of access to faster broadband, the Executive's draft Programme for Government includes an indicator to improve Internet connectivity.

Mr Boylan: I appreciate the Minister's answer, but he knows that people are crying out for fixed-line broadband. Will he give us any more detail on how he will address those areas, especially those in rural Newry and Armagh? Does he not feel that, with the national broadband plan in the South, businesses here will be under threat because, if fixed-line broadband is installed in the South, more customers will go there?

Mr Hamilton: I am aware of the investment in the Republic of Ireland that the Member mentioned. They have similar problems to the ones that we have with rurality except on a much greater scale, and they have a very challenging job to get more fixed line and more fibre to premises.

As I mentioned to the Member in response to the substantive question, I have a good track record from making over £60 million of investment over the last number of years, which has unlocked similar figures of investment by the private sector. So, in excess of about £100 million has been invested. That has produced improvements for people, including those in the Member's constituency, where there is 62% superfast broadband availability, although not everybody has taken that up. Average download speeds, as I mentioned, are 21 megabits per second, which are well in excess of the 10 megabits per second that the UK Government want to set as a universal service obligation.

I will not deny that there are some who still do not have satisfactory speeds of broadband. I answered some questions the last time about Fermanagh and South Tyrone, and the same pattern is replicated in other constituencies in Northern Ireland. About 12% of people in Newry and Armagh have speeds of less than 2 megabits per second. That is not acceptable; in this day and age, we aspire to having fewer people in that position. The Member will appreciate that there are always individual circumstances that mean that you cannot get the very fast speeds to absolutely everybody, and 28% of people in his constituency have speeds of more than 30 megabits per second. So, around a third of the constituency have the

fastest available speeds. We need to work on the 12% who have less than 2 megabits per second by whatever means — superfast roll-out, the broadband improvement scheme or alternative technologies — to make sure that they get a satisfactory broadband speed.

Mr Kennedy: The Minister will know of my interest in this issue. Is he in a position to state the level of commitment required to provide an adequate and effective system of broadband in Newry and Armagh, and can he indicate how much money has been earmarked for that in the immediate future?

Mr Hamilton: I do not have the figure for the exact investment, but I am happy to provide that in more detail to the Member. I have the headline figures, which I can repeat. The Northern Ireland broadband improvement project has improved broadband access for over 46,000 premises across the whole of Northern Ireland. When you break that down on a constituency basis, for Newry and Armagh, which is the Member's constituency, around 7,000 premises have seen improvements. Of those 7,000, 25% have taken up the availability of those services. So, a further 75% have been enabled to have superfast broadband but have not availed themselves of it.

As I said in response to Mr Boylan, that is not where we see this finishing by any means; we want to roll-out better speeds to people right across Newry and Armagh and the whole of Northern Ireland. There are, as I have pointed out in the House before, alternative technologies available, so people who struggle to get fibre into their premises, and will be some way down the line in getting it, can avail themselves of the rapidly improving technologies of wireless and satellite. I encourage the Member to mention those when people in his constituency are asking about speeds. Instead of just looking at fibre and fixed line, they should also look at the alternative technologies. My Department can assist in the funding of that to ensure that everybody gets access to a reasonably affordable and satisfactory speed of broadband.

2.15 pm

Mr Irwin: I thank the Minister for his replies thus far. Given the issue and the problems with the speed of broadband in remote rural areas, does the Minister have any plans to bid for more funding in next year's Budget?

Mr Hamilton: It all ultimately comes down to money and the availability of resources. We have made improvements, and I accept that we still have work to do. Not all parts of Northern Ireland have benefited from the investments. The £60 million investment that we have made over the last number of years has improved our broadband speeds to the point where we are around the UK average. I want to be better than the UK average; I want to be at the top. I want Northern Ireland to have the competitive advantage that comes from having access to superfast broadband for businesses and companies wherever they are in Northern Ireland.

I very much welcome the Chancellor's pledge to invest £1 billion for better broadband in the UK. We are looking at the ramifications of that for Northern Ireland, how Northern Ireland might avail itself of that funding and how that is distributed. In the meantime, we have been developing an ambitious plan that would significantly improve speeds across Northern Ireland, particularly in rural areas. That will be costly and will take some time to develop, but it is

something that I want to discuss in more detail with the Finance Minister during Budget discussions.

It is incredibly important that we all support ambitious and visionary plans to improve broadband. As Members from all constituencies have said to me over the past six months in Question Times, this is seen as a critical issue in all areas, and it is incredibly important for improving and enhancing the competitiveness of our economy.

Ms Armstrong: Minister, as you said, a number of people across Northern Ireland do not have access to fixed-line broadband. There is an upcoming auction by Ofcom of mobile spectrum. Is there anything you can do ensure that there will be an equitable distribution of spectrum to ensure a genuine choice of provider for rural dwellers?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for her question. Her point is a good one: we are somewhat transfixed by getting fibre to premises. I do not want to say that that is not what I want to do — my ambition is to get fibre to as many premises as we can to get the fastest speeds available — but alternative technologies are available. I mentioned wireless and satellite, which maybe had a bad reputation but are fast improving. The Member makes the point around 5G. There is an opportunity, with the eventual opening up of the 5G spectrum, to use that. It will not be a direct alternative for fixed-line fibre broadband, but it may provide the opportunity to have a decent speed of access to the Internet for individuals and businesses, particularly in remote rural areas.

It is something that I am very mindful of. I have had discussions with Ofcom about that and a range of issues. I have had discussions with some mobile providers. Some are keen to ensure that their footprint and infrastructure in Northern Ireland are enhanced and improved. Acknowledging that it is a regulated industry, I am keen to continue to monitor and work with the various mobile operators not just to enhance 4G but to seize the opportunities that 5G will present.

Mr McNulty: I thank the Minister for his answers to date. Can he assure me that future schemes will prioritise rural border communities like Cullyhanna, Cullaville, Altnamackin, Armaghbreague, Derrynoose, Madden, Collegelands and Blackwatertown? Will he give me an assurance that BT will be held to account for delivering fixed-line broadband to a specific number of rural homes and businesses?

Mr Hamilton: There is the statement for the local press already written.

When you look at the data for broadband availability for Belfast, for example, you will see that 100% of premises are able to receive five megabytes or more and 97% can receive 30 megabytes per second — really fast speeds. We have done well in investing in cities such as Belfast and towns across Northern Ireland. I am not saying that there are not pockets in towns and cities where there is a problem, but it is almost entirely a rural problem. That is where the investments have been made. The broadband improvement project has been investing most of its money in rural areas, and I expect that any future scheme will do that. I am not happy with having very good figures just in Belfast, Londonderry or other urban areas. I want to see the same standard of figures spread across Northern Ireland and everybody benefiting from good Internet access. As I say, that will help competitiveness in the

economy. As the Member knows from his constituency, there are a lot of good businesses in rural parts of Northern Ireland for which good Internet access is now an absolutely essential requirement. Many do not have good enough access as it is. I want to see us invest more. I look forward to the Member's support for more funding in the Budget for broadband investment, which will help people in his constituency and elsewhere.

Boiler Installations: RHI Scheme

3. Mr Mullan asked the Minister for the Economy what action he has taken to claw back money paid for illegitimate boiler installations through the renewable heat incentive scheme. (AQO 848/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: As the Member will be aware, shortly after taking up post, I commissioned an independent review of allegations of abuse in the renewable heat incentive (RHI) scheme. It has identified cases of possible gaming and non-compliance. I can confirm that work is ongoing to investigate the potential to take enforcement action where there is evidence that there has been non-compliance with the eligibility requirements. Advice has been sought from the Departmental Solicitor's Office, and discussions are ongoing with Ofgem, as the scheme administrator.

Mr Mullan: Does the Minister have any sense of responsibility for identifying both those who approved and those who have drawn down money from the initiative?

Mr Hamilton: As the Member and the House will be aware, the issue is subject to a live PAC investigation. I am sure that the Member and other Members would not wish me or themselves to do anything that would compromise a successful outcome to that investigation.

These are serious issues that I am very seized of the importance of. I am dealing with the matter on an ongoing basis to try to find a resolution to many of the issues that have flowed from the allegations and the concerns that there have been about the renewable heat incentive. My Department is developing a proposal for changes to the renewable heat incentive that, if accepted, will lead to a significant reduction in future costs to the Northern Ireland Executive. That requires further detailed discussion, including legal advice and further engagement with the European Commission, given that the scheme received approval within the state aid regime. I plan to bring a proposal to the Assembly in due course and issue a consultation document as early as I can in the new year. We are also pursuing stronger enforcement of the existing regulations through Ofgem so that abuses of the scheme are addressed as effectively as possible and any possible fraud cases dealt with rigorously.

Mr Smith: Will the investigation initiated by the Minister be able to distinguish between maladministration and illegitimate installations — in other words, fraud? Are the police currently investigating this?

Mr Hamilton: As I pointed out in my answer to Mr Mullan, the very serious allegations of fraud and abuse that were received have been given the due serious attention. That is why we have commenced and carried out the investigations that we have. I am absolutely adamant that, where there is proof and evidence of abuse of the scheme — the important bit of this is that there has to be proof and evidence — all appropriate actions should

be taken, including, if required, criminal proceedings against anybody who has abused or sought to defraud the scheme.

Mr Murphy: The Minister has rightly pointed out that the PAC is doing a piece of work on the financial accountability for the scheme. Its recommendations and report will come to his Department and my Committee. He said in a previous response that he is bringing forward a new scheme that will hopefully be more robust. Regarding management of the scheme, what lessons have been learnt in his Department? What new system will be put in place? This is not simply about a suspicion of fraud; this is about the management of a scheme in the old Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Mr Hamilton: I accept the points that the Member has made. I am sure that, in his role as Chair of the Committee, he will ensure that we learn lessons. That is absolutely critical, and that is what we have been doing through a range of investigations that the Member and his Committee are very familiar with. We must not only learn those lessons but implement the recommendations. We have to manage the scheme moving forward, and new arrangements and a specific team have been put in place to do that and to give it the attention that it deserves. We have to learn those lessons from RHI and apply them to other projects not just in my Department but across government and the whole Executive.

Mr Lyons: It is clear that the Minister understands the seriousness of the RHI situation. Will he update the House on the actions that he has taken about accusations that RHI was subject to fraud and abuse?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his question. I take the issue extremely seriously. All Ministers take accusations of fraud and abuse exceptionally seriously. That is why, in July, shortly after taking up post, I commissioned an independent investigation of those very accusations. The review has been examining a sizeable number of installations across Northern Ireland and has identified significant weaknesses in the scheme. Those findings will be used to inform the next steps. Clearly, we will include consideration of recovering payments from any participants found not to be complying with their obligations under the scheme.

Mr Allister: It might cost him his job, but does the Minister agree that at least one of his predecessors, particularly Mrs Foster, was asleep at the wheel in failing to exercise ministerial supervision and ensure that adequate cost controls were in place? Will he give us an update on how much this squander made in Stormont will cost us in the future?

Mr Hamilton: The Member describes it as "squander": I did not see him refer to it as squander when he wrote to me a few weeks ago pleading for a constituent of his to be included in the scheme. *[Laughter.]* It seems that it is squander when it suits the Member.

I do not agree at all with the beginning of the Member's question; I was going to say that it was a statement rather than a question. The Member is long enough in the tooth and, if reports are right, may even be departing this place very soon, so he will know that policy experts — so-called policy experts, perhaps — in the Department devise policy. In this case, independent consultants were employed. They have come before the PAC and said that they got it wrong and that the advice given to the Minister at the time

by those external consultants and by the policy experts in the Department was wrong. It is clear to me that the Ministers followed all the advice given to them and that, because that advice was wrong and was based on bad grounds, the scheme was badly designed. Nobody, least of all me, has denied that this is shocking, that there are problems here and that we need to deal with them, but my focus now is on tackling the serious allegations of fraud, developing a plan of action to deal with the financial implications of RHI and, as soon as possible, examining the ways in which we can mitigate and start to reduce the cost of the scheme.

Mr Speaker: Before I call Mr Patsy McGlone, I advise him that he may not get a supplementary.

Infrastructure Projects

4. **Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for the Economy what discussions he has held with the Minister for Infrastructure to prioritise projects that will deliver an effective economic return. (AQO 849/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Executive have made and continue to make significant investment in Northern Ireland's infrastructure. As a member of the Executive, I have regular and ongoing discussions with all my ministerial colleagues, including the Minister for Infrastructure. Between 2011 and 2016, there has been £354 million of investment by the former Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department for Employment and Learning in capital infrastructure projects. The Minister for Infrastructure and I recognise the importance of targeted investment in our infrastructure as an enabler and driver of economic growth. Physical and digital connectivity is important in supporting our future economic competitiveness and social well-being. The Department for Infrastructure is engaged with my officials in the development of the draft economic strategy, which, together with the draft investment strategy for Northern Ireland, will set out in more detail the Executive's priority areas for investment in the years ahead. Investment in our infrastructure requires long-term planning and a sustained focus on delivery to meet the anticipated needs of today's generation as well as future generations.

2.30 pm

Mr Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We now move to topical questions.

Tourism Ireland: NI Support

T1. **Mrs Palmer** asked the Minister for the Economy to outline any discussions he has had with Tourism Ireland about investing support in Northern Ireland tourism. (AQT 616/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I have had discussions with the chief executive of Tourism Ireland on a casual basis and more formal discussions with the chair of Tourism Ireland. I am due to meet the chief executive of Tourism Ireland at the tail end of this week, and I look forward to a, hopefully, positive discussion on my priorities for tourism and its development in Northern Ireland, and on how we can align the work of Tourism Ireland with what the sector here, including Tourism Northern Ireland, is doing to develop and improve our tourism product.

Mrs Palmer: I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he ask Tourism Ireland to support the promotion of our excellent airports, as opposed to just Dublin Airport?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for her question. She will know that this is an issue that I have been very interested in, for a range of reasons, since taking office. I noted recent comments, similar to the question that the Member has just asked, by the chief executive of the International Airport. I agree with those comments on the need for the better promotion of our airports, not just the International Airport but the City of Derry Airport and Belfast City Airport. We all accept, including me, that Dublin is a very different place: it is much bigger; it has a bigger economy than ours; and it has one bigger airport that is better developed and serves a city population of around 1.5 million. As such, it will always have certain advantages over a region such as ours, given our scale and the fact that we have three airports serving a small region. That does not, however, take away from a point that the Member will, I am sure, echo: entering Northern Ireland from other parts of the world is as easy and simple as flying into Dublin. That is why I want, as I have said, to establish an air routes task force in order, first, to identify key routes and then to develop policies and interventions that can attract airlines to those key routes so that Northern Ireland is better served by air connectivity.

I welcome last week's announcement that Icelandair is to fly into Belfast City Airport from next week. People might not see Iceland as a big marketplace or a destination that will attract inward tourism, but there are, I think, 16 or 17 entry points into North America via Reykjavik Airport. It is a bit of a hub airport that expands our wider reach. Sometimes, that is the way in which a region such as ours develops its air connectivity — through another hub airport — which is why I suspect that it will be among the recommendations of the task force.

Wind Farms/Wind Turbines

T2. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister for the Economy what discussions he has had with NIE Networks about the capacity of the grid to cope with approved and planned wind farms or single wind turbines. (AQT 617/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I have had extensive discussions with not just NIE Networks but other key players in the energy sector about the grid infrastructure in Northern Ireland. I am sure that the Member will appreciate that it is not always viewed like this by some, but our grid is a scarce and precious resource and, as such, needs to be handled carefully. As the Member is aware, there are pressures on the grid and a need for further investment in it. That issue is handled through the regulator and NIE working together on their price determination. I think that they are in the process of doing that, and I look forward to a positive outcome.

I want investment in our grid, for a host of reasons, particularly because, as I travel around Northern Ireland, I regularly see many businesses that want to expand, but not only is there a sometimes a cost to get on to the grid, it can take a long time for them to do so. I have noticed that particularly on my travels in the west of the Province, so I want to ensure that the lack of cost-efficient and time-efficient access to the grid is not an inhibitor of the growth of companies in Northern Ireland.

Mr Beggs: Minister, an answer to a question for written answer from my colleague Andy Allen stated that some 2,423 planning applications for wind turbines and farms were approved between May 2007 and March 2016. Can the Minister give me an assurance that those that have been built are all connected to the grid?

Mr Hamilton: I do not have that information. I would need to speak to NIE and others to make sure that those that are built are all connected. In fact, I was at a business with Mr William Irwin last week that had a turbine erected but was not yet connected. That was all going through the process. There is a process that has to be dealt with. We have to be careful and mindful that there is a lot of demand on the grid and that, with the grid that we currently have, it is difficult to meet all that demand, particularly with renewables, which the Member mentioned. I want to point out to the House, as I have done before, that, at present, around 900 megawatts of electricity is connected to the grid. Offers for approximately 700 more megawatts are already out there, and there is another 200 or so megawatts to be offered. That will get us to a position where, when all those are onto the grid, we will be able to meet our 40% electricity consumption target by 2020. This is an issue that I am very mindful of and very aware of, and I expect it to be raised later this week when I am with the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee to give evidence as part of its ongoing inquiry into electricity supply in Northern Ireland. It is an issue that has far and wide interest, not least in my office, and I want to make sure that energy is not an inhibiting factor in any way, shape or form to the future growth and competitiveness of our economy.

Export Performance

T3. **Mrs Cameron** asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on how exports from Northern Ireland are performing. (AQT 618/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The latest data on exports, as measured by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, was released this morning. These are figures for the year ending quarter 3 of this year. Again, it is very good news for Northern Ireland business. Northern Ireland exports are up to £7.4 billion in the last year, and that represents a 6% increase in exports. The significance of the 6% increase is that that is the highest percentage increase in the whole of the United Kingdom. This is another really strong performance by Northern Ireland exporters, and I pay tribute to all the companies that have been working hard over the last year to improve their sales outside Northern Ireland. As we all know, in a small region like ours, if we want to grow our economy, we have to sell outside our region and sell more to the rest of the United Kingdom and also to the rest of the world. I am really pleased that it is the manufacturing sector and the life sciences sector that have posted a 24% increase in their sales over the last year, and I am also pleased that markets outside Europe are the ones that are driving this growth, with a nearly 30% increase in exports to the United States over the last year. The performance of Northern Ireland exporters has been excellent, and I hope that that continues to be the case.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for that answer. I very much welcome the continued success of Northern Ireland's exporters. Could the Minister tell us what steps he is taking to build on that success for Northern Ireland?

Mr Hamilton: It is important, as the Member suggests, that we do not just rest on our laurels, sit back and pat ourselves on the back for a job well done. We have to build on the success that we have experienced over the past year in the sense that the last quarterly results show that we were the only UK region to increase exports in that time. It shows that we have the highest increase of any UK region, so that is a really successful performance for a small economy like Northern Ireland's. We must build on that and that is why I have been bringing a focus to exports over the last few months.

The Member will know that I introduced a trade accelerator plan, which is particularly focused on first-time exporters and encouraging them to look at markets outside Northern Ireland. I have introduced a package of enhanced support for accommodation and travel to Great Britain and also for travel to the Republic of Ireland. There have been various market introduction programmes and more in-market trade advisory support. I also recently announced a new international trade plan, which will see the creation of a new trade advisory board, made up of many of Northern Ireland's best and most successful exporters, to advise me and Invest Northern Ireland on the policies that we should be developing to seize more trade opportunities. We will appoint a series of Northern Ireland trade ambassadors with the aim of utilising the power and strength of our diaspora, which is spread right around the world.

We will also increase the Invest NI presence, with a particular focus and emphasis on trade, by up to 10 new destinations before the end of next year. We are examining the potential to create new trade, investment and innovation hubs in key markets. There has been and will continue to be a relentless focus on trade as a key driver of growth in our economy.

EMAG Report: Recommendations

T4. **Mr Chambers** asked the Minister for the Economy when he will formally respond to the recommendations in the Energy and Manufacturing Advisory Group's (EMAG) report. (AQT 619/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: EMAG produced its recommendations earlier this year. I have been carefully considering those recommendations, and I will use them — there are many good recommendations in the EMAG report — to advise me and to help shape future energy policy in Northern Ireland. I am sure that the Member appreciates already from his time on the Economy Committee that the whole issue of energy is very intricate and interlinked, and that taking a decision in respect of one recommendation from EMAG will have consequences elsewhere in the energy system. What I am attempting to do, in what is a very complex and often very technical area, is to take cognisance of all the issues, whether around renewables, manufacturing and affordability, or security of supply, and to come forward with a comprehensive energy policy that will stand Northern Ireland in good stead, not just in the short term but for many years to come.

Mr Chambers: I understand that the Minister has perhaps queried the figures quoted in the EMAG report that large energy users here face electricity prices almost 60% higher than the EU 2015 median. Does that mean he is rejecting, at this point, recommendation 2 of the report?

Mr Hamilton: I am happy to go back and look in Hansard at what I said in response to a motion proposed by him and Mr Aiken a few weeks ago. I accept that there is a price differential: I am not arguing that large and very large businesses in Northern Ireland are paying more than the EU median. However, when you take on pence per kWh, I worked out that there was about a 30% difference. That is still a significant difference — I do not dispute that — but there is no argument over substance. There is not even an argument, it is an issue of figure work rather than one of substance about the policy. The Member will know that the powers I have as Minister to improve affordability are limited, but rest assured that I will do everything I can to keep the price of electricity as low as possible for all consumers in Northern Ireland.

Apprenticeship Levy

T5. **Mr Girvan** asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on his plans for the apprenticeship levy. (AQT 620/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I am on record as saying that I am not a fan of the apprenticeship levy, which is a tax being introduced from next year on businesses right across the United Kingdom. Businesses with an annual salary bill of over £3 million will be charged 0.5% tax on that. It will hit many businesses in Northern Ireland and right across the UK, so I am not a fan of it; I think it is a very bad example of Government taxing on an issue where the policy responsibility resides with the devolved Administrations, including ours. The Finance Minister and I are both on record as saying that this will be of no benefit, in a monetary sense, to Northern Ireland.

I recently launched a short, sharp, focused consultation to take the temperature of the business community, and particularly those businesses and sectors that will be most affected by the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. What I want to see coming from the consultation is, first, a better sense of the impact that the apprenticeship levy will have on businesses and, secondly, some ideas coming forward from businesses as to what they would like to see us as the Government, and as a provider of skills training for businesses, do in response to this tax on their businesses and on the public sector.

Mr Speaker: Time is up.

2.45 pm

Education

Schools: Maintenance Budget

1. **Mr McNulty** asked the Minister of Education whether he will increase the budget for maintenance for schools this year. (AQO 860/16-21)

Mr Weir (The Minister of Education): I thank the Member for his question. School maintenance is an area of the budget that is always under pressure due to the ageing schools estate. That is partly why there needs to be an overall assessment of the schools estate. While there is a significant capital programme under way involving new builds, school enhancement projects and minor works, a significant number of schools require maintenance. That

is funded from the resource budget. The budget for school maintenance is just one of the budgetary pressures faced by the Education Authority (EA). The budget position for Education as a whole remains challenging.

As in the previous year, an initial £14 million was allocated for maintenance for the 2016-17 financial year. I note that the Member asked about the budgets for this year; I am not quite sure whether he is referring to the remainder of 2016-17, which is about three months, or whether he is looking ahead. The £14 million was allocated for maintenance to enable the EA to undertake statutory and emergency response maintenance and address urgent health and safety issues. An additional £950,000 was allocated to the EA following the October monitoring round, which boosts it up to approximately £15 million. I will continue to highlight pressures in the maintenance budgets in monitoring rounds but, obviously, there will then be the question of where we are potentially for next year. Obviously, the focus, given the constraints of the budget, is still very much on urgent maintenance activities to address health and safety issues.

Mr McNulty: I thank the Minister for his answer thus far. Will he tell me whether there is a backlog in maintenance? If so, how much? Has he bid for additional resources in the monitoring rounds to clear that backlog?

Mr Weir: Some of these things depend on where you draw the line. One description of a maintenance backlog for the school estate could be estimated at just under £300 million. I am sure that the Member realises that this is a little bit beyond the scope of a monitoring round. The definition of a maintenance backlog is to make good the costs that are necessary to bring school buildings back to the condition they were in when they were built. In many cases, you are talking about a degree of transformation. The argument for many buildings would be that, if you are trying to restore them to the position they were in on day 1, the level of expenditure required would be prohibitive. In many cases, a school enhancement programme (SEP), a new school build or even minor works would be a much more cost-effective solution. Obviously, those are outside the direct remit of the maintenance budget.

It is something that will be kept under review. To be perfectly honest, considering where we are in terms of the overall Budget position at present with the Executive, is there likely to be a great deal of money available in the next monitoring round? It is highly unlikely, but we will continue to have discussions in relation to that.

Mrs Dobson: The Minister recently sent a letter to schools requesting responses on how they can have better control of their own budgets. Will he detail whether, at this stage, he has any plans or proposals to put to schools? If not, are they at least in development?

Mr Weir: The point was to have something relatively open-ended. There is no point in saying to schools, governors or school principals, "What autonomy do you want? We'll actually tell you what autonomy you're getting as part of that". It is an open-ended situation.

An issue around maintenance and procurement has been raised regularly with me as I have been out around schools. It was also raised with me before I became Minister. It is a very pertinent issue. It is an area that I intend to look at particularly closely if we look at autonomy, but the burdens in that regard go wider than that. There

may be, at times, a slight element of urban myth about some of that stuff as well. I sometimes get responses from various school principals that outline a degree of frustration in terms of procurement and some of the blockages in that regard. While one wants to ensure that we have an open and transparent process, we should not have a situation where, in terms of getting some relatively minor maintenance done, it takes twice the time — possibly at a greater cost — than it would if there were a level of autonomy locally.

From that point of view, whereas no decisions have been taken about additional autonomy for schools, that would be a very live area within that. When we look at issues of autonomy, we should look at the expertise on the ground, particularly among school principals. That is just one of the aspects that is looked at, but I do not come with a prejudged opinion in that regard; that is why I am seeking the information directly from schools.

Lord Morrow: My question is not dissimilar from the one that Mrs Dobson asked. Does the Minister accept that there is merit in considering delegating funding to schools for their maintenance projects? Surely there is some merit in that. Would he be prepared to consider that in future?

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for his question. I would certainly be prepared to consider that. It is part of the wider consultation — it is, effectively, a pre-consultation — on greater autonomy. There is a feeling in terms of what is known on the ground that there is a range of issues, and maintenance is one obvious example where school principals know the best way to do things. They should, sometimes, have a degree of autonomy over what they prioritise within that. Balanced against that, there are economies of scale. You have to balance that out to make sure that you get the best possible value for money. If you are looking at issues around public procurement, there is a good argument, because the maintenance that is done directly in schools tends to be at a lower level, that a lot of that can be done with a budget delegated directly to schools. Nobody is talking about giving a school the money to build a new school or for an SEP or anything of that nature, but, if we are talking about day-to-day maintenance, there is good sense in looking at that closely.

Mr Dickson: I thank the Minister for his answers. Continuing the theme of a certain autonomy for schools to carry out maintenance, is it the reality that there is no point in having autonomy if they do not have the budget and the resources to do that? Is this not in reality putting an additional burden on already overburdened school principals, who will now have to procure small works for their schools? Is this not and should this not be the work of the Education Authority?

Mr Weir: I have indicated that these are issues for consideration, so it is not a done deal. It is about trying to work out where the dividing lines should be. I mentioned the figure of £14 million. If there was movement towards that low-level maintenance being dealt with at school level, the budget would have to follow the function. There is no point in doing otherwise.

On the other side of the coin — again, there are compelling cases in relation to that — if there is going to be greater level of autonomy and responsibility, that creates a certain level of burden. That said, on the other part of the consultation, we also need to look at the

unnecessary bureaucratic burdens that we place on schools. Sometimes, schools will react and will say, “We do not want this” or “Why on earth are we being asked for that?”. It may well be that, depending on the nature of things, there are good reasons why the Education Authority, the Department or an external body would seek that particular piece of information, but I am also concerned that we do not get a situation where there is simply a level of duplication. Sometimes, when issues have been raised with schools, it has been about the weight of the paper load that is there. Consequently, if we can create a situation in which there is sensible removal, where we can, within that, in many ways that goes to the other side of the coin in looking at greater autonomy. As with anything in life, if you take bigger decisions, there will be bigger levels of responsibility on you.

Mr Speaker: Before I call Mr Christopher Stalford, I have to inform the House that question 4 has been withdrawn.

Teachers: Full-time Jobs

2. **Mr Stalford** asked the Minister of Education to outline how his Department is assisting newly qualified teachers in obtaining a full-time job in education. (AQO 861/16-21)

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for his question. Directly speaking, the Department is not the employer of teachers and, therefore, is not directly responsible for the appointment of teachers. Individual teachers in a school setting are employed by the board of governors, with the recruitment, selection and appointment of teachers carried out in conjunction with the employing authority, such as the Education Authority, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) or, in the case of a voluntary grammar school or grant-maintained integrated school, by the individual board of governors.

I acknowledge that, in the current economic climate, it can be difficult for many teachers to find employment in schools. The same can be said of graduates in a wide range of professions. My Department and the employing authorities have put in place a number of policies and practices that encourage the employment of newly or recently qualified teachers when filling vacancies. It includes recommending that employers should consider the newly qualified teachers or experienced, non-retired teachers seeking to return to employment when filling vacancies, including those of a temporary nature.

The Investing in the Teaching Workforce scheme passed through the Executive during the summer and was formally launched on 5 September. The primary aim of the scheme is to refresh the teaching workforce whilst providing job opportunities for those recently qualified teachers who have experienced the greatest difficulty in securing meaningful employment.

Mr Stalford: The Minister mentioned the Investing in the Teaching Workforce scheme: can he detail for the House the range of impacts he expects the scheme to have and the targets that have been set to increase opportunities in the profession?

Mr Weir: As indicated, the scheme was launched on 5 September. For 2016-17 it is a pilot scheme. Members may remember from the previous mandate a scheme that was mooted for a larger number of teachers all in one year. The feeling was that, irrespective of the merits of that scheme,

those numbers would not be achievable within one year. The primary aim of the scheme, as indicated, is to refresh and re-profile the teaching workforce whilst providing job opportunities for those teachers who have experienced the greatest difficulty in securing meaningful employment.

Not unreasonably, perhaps, those who are most recently qualified will have a higher unemployment rate in terms of permanent jobs than those who have been out for some time. The scheme bid for £8 million from the public sector transformation fund to enable 120 teachers aged 55 and over to avail themselves of it. That was the projected figure. Therefore, the aim was not simply to give an opportunity for early retirement — it needed to be driven by an application from the individual teacher — but the condition of accessing the fund was the provision of job opportunities for a corresponding number of teachers who qualified from 2012 up to and including 2016. That process is in place, and it is hoped that the posts will be advertised in the spring of 2017. Without the scheme, those opportunities would simply not exist. That will, I think, see teachers being secured for release by 31 March 2017.

Ms S Bradley: Does the Minister accept there are many young, vibrant, very good, well-qualified teachers who are excluded from the Investing in the Teaching Workforce scheme? Will he consider lifting the maximum profile which means that teachers with more experience cannot apply for these jobs?

Mr Weir: The scheme is already out there. I accept there are vibrant, young teachers who fall outside the scheme. The scheme is designed to re-profile the workforce. If we simply lift the requirements, where do we set them? We will be left facing one of two situations. If it is completely open-ended, in theory, a teacher who has been qualified for 30 or 35 years could replace someone who has less experience or is younger. I am not sure how that would re-profile the workforce. Alternately, you could draw an arbitrary line elsewhere, and again you will have people who qualify and those who do not.

To qualify for funding from the public sector transformation fund, the economic projections of what would be saved in the school's budgets are required to at least match the investment from the initial amount. The reality is that, if a business case were to be put forward for a completely open-ended scheme, the Department would not qualify for the public sector transformation fund, in which case the Department would have to fund it from its own very tight resources — and it is not fundable at present.

It is a requirement of qualifying for the fund. I understand that there is a degree of frustration about that.

I should also say that the scheme was suggested by the teacher unions. I know that the teacher unions and I are not always on the same page, but we are on this. Every single teacher union that I met prior to it being launched said that they supported the scheme and the fact that it was being done on that basis. The reality is that, without the cap, the scheme would not be doable, and no newly or recently qualified teachers would be able to avail themselves of it.

3.00 pm

Mr Speaker: I remind the Minister of the two-minute rule.

Mr McElduff: I empathise to some degree with those who are qualified longer needing to secure posts, and I encourage the Minister to look creatively at that in the future, if he can. Is there any possibility of introducing or exploring the possibility of a scheme to refresh the head teacher workforce in our schools?

Mr Weir: I understand where the Member is coming from. First, on his point about stretching the scheme, I was mindful of that. I appreciate that the previous Minister mooted a scheme with a similar motivation. The previous scheme was a bit more restricted, but I was able to stretch it from three years to five years. That was the limit to which it could be stretched while still qualifying for the funding, however.

The Member asked about head teachers. The scheme is essentially designed to provide a like-for-like replacement. A senior teacher who has been there for some time may fit on the scale by way of a replacement for a head teacher. If a maths or history teacher or a P6 teacher decides to retire, however, there is nothing to stop a very new or recently qualified teacher taking his or her place. I do not think that it is realistic to say that you can simply take out school principals and replace them with like-for-like replacements. If any schemes are proposed in the future, I will always be happy to examine them. However, when we talk about school principals, we are not talking about like-for-like replacements.

Mr Beggs: I understand that, in June 2015, only a third of newly qualified teachers gained employment after one year. All newly qualified teachers will have incurred significant student debt. Has the Minister considered altering the number of places for teacher training at our universities in Northern Ireland, rather than having to introduce one-off schemes that are not sustainable in the long term?

Mr Weir: This is a pilot scheme, so it may be sustainable. We should remember that about 750 vacancies become available each year, so there is some degree of throughput and change. There are a couple of issues. If you were to make changes to the overall intake of teacher-training students and there was then a further restriction on the numbers here, you would leave yourself open to a situation in which people would simply qualify elsewhere and then try to come back, in which case you would be left with a different problem. Even if a decision were taken today to reduce dramatically the number of teachers being trained, it would be at least four or five years down the line before that would have any particular impact on the workforce. The reality is that we need to take action now, and that is why the Department and I support the investing in the teaching workforce scheme, which tries to have some impact on the current situation.

There is a wider issue that the Assembly would have to deal with. If we were to reduce dramatically the number of teachers being trained, Stranmillis and St Mary's would not both be sustainable. I know that that has been looked at in the past, but there would need to be a degree of consensus on how we dealt with that and whether we went for a completely different system. From the point of view of economies of scale, you could not simply reduce the numbers and expect both institutions to be sustainable.

Mr Lyttle: The programme for international student assessment (PISA) 2015 has identified a gap of over two school years' attainment between the 25% most

advantaged and 25% most disadvantaged 15-year-olds in Northern Ireland. Does the Minister not accept, therefore, that that is further evidence of the need for fundamental educational reform, including immediate action to address the oversupply of teachers?

Mr Weir: That was a good opportunity to shoehorn the last bit on teacher education into a wider question on PISA. I admire the Member. The PISA figures show that we are, again, slightly above average in the OECD figures. The PISA tests are not as compatible with the Northern Ireland curriculum to the extent that, for instance, the trends in international mathematics and science study (TIMSS) tests are. Last week, there was a situation in which, because of the learning issues and the way in which the curriculum is established, they were not comparing like with like. On the overall situation, it was interesting that some of the PISA figures indicated that the gaps between those who are achieving the most and those who are achieving the least had narrowed considerably, and we were one of the best OECD countries in getting results across the board, if you like.

A range of education issues need reform, and I am trying to progress those. It is not simply a question of standing still. I know that the Member has discussed a number of those issues, and they have been the subject of debate in the House. That suggests that, while there has been some success in education in Northern Ireland — to paraphrase the inspector's report, we have much to be proud of with our results — we need to improve on other areas. That is why there is a need for overall reform in education.

Social Media

3. **Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Education to outline the steps taken in schools to highlight to pupils the risks associated with social media and the promotion of responsible usage. (AQO 862/16-21)

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for his question. As I am sure you are aware, in 2015, the Executive commissioned the development of an e-safety strategy and action plan for Northern Ireland. That was a recognition of the rising concerns of parents, carers, professionals and broader society for the safety of children and young people when using the Internet and engaging with social media. My Department is represented on the strategy cross-departmental project board and has contributed throughout the drafting process to ensure that the strategy includes as an aim the embedding of a culture of e-safety in schools and other educational settings. It is intended that the draft strategy will issue for public consultation early in the new year.

Alongside the contribution to the draft strategy, my Department has also issued guidance to schools on a number of occasions to provide the entire school community with advice on e-safety and how to use electronic devices safely. That guidance is available from the departmental website and includes links to other organisations that provide specialist information and advice on the subject.

Boards of governors have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, and, in fulfilling this duty, schools are required to have an e-safety policy in place. Schools have been provided with guidance on what should be included in that policy, and further updated guidance is scheduled to be issued in the near future. A

number of courses and resources that deal with various aspects of safety are aimed specifically at Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 pupils.

Mr Irwin: I thank the Minister for his response. What will an e-safety strategy mean for schools?

Mr Weir: The vision of the strategy is for all children and young people to make the best use of the educational, social and economic benefits of the online world while staying safe from potential harm online. Subject to Executive approval, the draft strategy will issue for public consultation early in the new year.

There are specific aims in the strategy that are applicable to schools. Those include developing a consistent approach to e-safety in schools through strong departmental direction and technical provision; the education of our children and young people and those who work with them; the development of a consistent approach to e-safety messages for children, young people, parents, carers and practitioners; the embedding of a culture of e-safety in schools, colleges, youth services and organisations; and the skilling up of practitioners who work with children, young people and families. It is not simply a question of creating of a strategy. Once agreed, the strategy will be implemented through a three-year delivery plan.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Minister for that update, although I am sure that he shares my frustration that we are still waiting for the consultation to come out next year, four years after such a strategy was agreed. I thought that that was due to happen around the time of the election.

Will the Minister ensure that the strategy is live? Technology changes constantly, and we need to make sure that such a strategy keeps up to date.

Mr Weir: That is a very valid point. As I said, the strategy is due to be launched early in the new year. If we all take a step back, we can see the speed at which technology is changing. When we think of our own schooldays — if we can think back that far — we know the difficulties. I appreciate that the journey is shorter for some in the House than for others. We have to realise that what is relevant now has changed from what was relevant two or three years ago. That is why it is critical not just to create a strategy but to have an overall implementation plan that is live and has the flexibility to ensure that, whatever the changes in technology or the broad cultural changes — sometimes, it is less about the technology and more about how it is adapted and used — there can be a fairly quick response to the changing environment. That is a critical issue.

Ms Archibald: Will the Minister outline the extent of cyberbullying and other forms of bullying that are affecting our children and young people?

Mr Weir: Towards the end of the last mandate, we passed anti-bullying legislation. As it is implemented by schools, part of that will be not simply to record the bullying but to find out its methodology and cause. When I was Chair of the Committee, we wrestled with how best that could be implemented. One thing was to try to ensure the accurate capture of all that information without running the risk of creating what would, effectively, become a league table showing where the greatest levels of bullying were and were not. There was a danger of stigmatising schools or that schools would not take bullying seriously enough and try to dismiss it.

The Bill, which received Royal Assent on 12 May this year, recognises cyberbullying as a key aspect. It is a complex legal issue, and cyberbullying is an area in which it is hard to differentiate. Schools have a clear remit, and that includes a provision for policies to be developed by boards of governors. However, it is very difficult also to capture where the cyberbullying is happening outwith the school, including at weekends or during the summer holidays. That is why it is not just a question for the Department of Education; it is a question for the Safeguarding Board. We have been trying to work in conjunction with other Departments. It is evil, and we have seen in some extreme cases not just the damaging effect that it can have on people's lives but that some young people in particular have been driven to suicide by cyberbullying or bullying. It is pernicious, and we need to take every possible step that we can to obliterate it from our society.

Ms Armstrong: I commend the Minister. Tonight, I am attending a social media workshop for parents with the PSNI at Strangford Integrated College, so the question is very timely. Given that many social media organisations have offices on the island of Ireland, how is he involving them in his programme?

Mr Weir: That is also part of the remit of the Safeguarding Board. There will need to be liaison with those organisations. Part of the issue is the question of finding where we can apply pressure on social media organisations and trying to find the root of the issue. Part of the problem, as we have seen in a general sense with a lot of Internet problems, is that it is multinational in nature. That makes it a lot more difficult to control, and it is why our minds need to be more agile when thinking about what actions we can take.

The stereotype that many of us remember from years ago is of one child hanging around outside the school gate, waiting for another child to emerge and then assault or threaten them. That still happens, but bullying has also moved well beyond that. We need to ensure that we have a flexible approach, and it is important that we see what links can be built with social media organisations to try to control that. Some steps have been taken, but a lot of them have been a bit slow at times to react. Hopefully, there is a bit of catch-up happening now.

Mr Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions.

3.15 pm

Teachers' Pay Dispute

T1. **Mr Mullan** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the teachers' pay dispute and resulting strike action, given that he will have concerns that the education system is approaching crisis stage. (AQT 626/16-21)

Mr Weir: I thank the right honourable member for the constituency of NASUWT for his question. [Laughter.] It has been made abundantly clear that a call has gone out from the managing authorities to try to sit down and see where we can provide long-term solutions to this. The reality is that, in the 2015-16 and 2016-17 budgets, there is not the money to pay. At times, there have been some issues raised in relation to parity, yet, when an offer was made by management side that was greater than parity, the teachers' unions said no to it. What has been put in

place for 2015-16 and 2016-17 was, ultimately, within the current constraints, a fair offer. I appreciate that not everyone will agree with that, but the important thing is that people try to move on from this position. Mr McCann said on a previous occasion that he would be on the barricades with the teachers. Wherever barricades were erected, I think that Mr McCann would be there. Let us remember that, on this direct issue, industrial disputes with teachers have been arising since 2011 onwards. That is not directly related to pay.

On the other issue with this, if we are sitting down, let us see what we can do across the board. I think that this is where there is a degree of common interest. As I mentioned earlier, if one of the arguments that is being used is around conditions to do with the pressures that are put on teachers with the requirements of additional paperwork, I am keen to see that discussed between management and the trade unions. We should explore where we can lift more bureaucracy out of the system, particularly where it is unnecessary. I urge the unions to take up the offer of sitting down with the management team to look at where we can get to from 2017 and beyond.

Mr Mullan: Regardless of what the Minister may think, I do not speak for the NASUWT; I represent the children. Can the Minister enlighten me on whether he has engaged with the Finance Minister or any other Executive colleagues concerning the future of teachers' pay?

Mr Weir: The position on the two-year pay deal was signed off by the Department of Finance as part of an overall package. Let us remember that increments were built in to 2015-16 and 2016-17. You can compare that with what happens across the water, where automatic increments were abolished in 2013. Again, if you are comparing, you have to compare like with like. The reality is that, as was highlighted in the monitoring round and, indeed, in a wider context, there is not any additional money. There is not any money in the budget, so a certain reality needs to be faced up to. Given where school budgets are at present, the reality is that, if you inject additional pay costs beyond what is there at present, I think that it is only likely to lead to a greater level of staff redundancies. I also have to be careful to try to protect teachers' jobs. My key concern is about protecting that school budget, particularly for the children.

Childcare Costs

T2. **Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Education how he will address the increasing cost of childcare, particularly in the light of the recent publication of Employers for Childcare's childcare cost survey 2016. (AQT 627/16-21)

Mr Weir: A childcare strategy is being prepared for the Executive, and we need to see how that can be best implemented. I think that there has been an acceptance of a level of support, and I want to see that increased. We will need to ensure that what we are getting is financially viable in the current circumstances. I am happy to engage — indeed, I have done at times — with various childcare organisations to see how we can best take this forward. They were, I think, fairly actively involved in the design work and, indeed, discussions around the development of that childcare strategy. I think that that will be coming fairly soon to the Executive.

Mrs Dobson: I think that a good starting point in this process would be to finally publish the childcare strategy. Since May, Minister, you have repeatedly stated in your written answers that you will be presenting the childcare strategy to the Executive in the coming months, and you are not much clearer today either in your answer. Can you confirm exactly when or in what month that will be?

Mr Weir: I am not in a position to give an exact date and, obviously, my duty is to get it onto the Executive's schedule, have it debated by the Executive and then, hopefully, have it passed. From that point of view, while I appreciate that I am directly responsible to the House, I am also directly responsible, in the first instance, to provide papers to the Executive. I hope that that will be reasonably soon. Depending upon what is agreed, we will have to look at the implementation of it.

Mr Speaker: I call Mr William Irwin.

Mr Irwin: Is it a topical question? OK.

Battlefields Project

T3. **Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the battlefields project. (AQT 628/16-21)

Mr Weir: The battlefields project was launched today by me and Minister Givan. It has been available in other parts of the United Kingdom, but it was not embraced here. It occasionally happened that the odd school was doing things off its own bat until now. This will now be available. It is jointly funded by my Department and the Department of Communities. It will be available from summer 2017, essentially for year 10 students. There will be representatives from every school.

It is particularly looking at the contribution and sacrifice that was made on the First World War battlefields. That was something that happened across the community. Sometimes, people tend to forget that, and pigeonhole it in some shape or form. As such, the offer will be made to all post-primary schools. No school is obliged to take it, but I encourage schools from across the community to take advantage of it and to, if you like, help to make history real, not just from the syllabus, but to highlight some of the great sacrifices that were made to allow us all the freedoms we have today.

Mr Irwin: I thank the Minister for his response. Will the Minister give us any idea of the longevity of the project in future years?

Mr Weir: I see it as something that could be mainstreamed. Initially, in the broad CSR period, it will be for the next three years. However, I do not see any cap on the time in that. Again, within the confines of the overall Budget, it is a relatively small amount of money compared to some other costs that lie within my Department or others. I hope that it will gain traction. It has been very successful in other parts of the United Kingdom. I think that there is a particular resonance as we move towards some of the most historic anniversaries. Obviously, this year marks the 100th anniversary of the Somme. Looking ahead, next year it will be 100 years since Passchendaele. The year after that will be the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. This is an important time for that opportunity to be given; it is available, and letters will be going out to every post-primary school in Northern Ireland.

Voluntary Youth Clubs: Governance

T4. **Mr McPhillips** asked the Minister of Education what governance structures are in place in voluntary youth clubs in Northern Ireland to ensure accountability in areas such as child protection and financial management and to state who in his Department is responsible for carrying out that work. (AQT 629/16-21)

Mr Weir: On the details of the particular person, I will be happy to write to the Member — I do not have the name off the top of my head. I pay tribute to a lot of the work that is happening through voluntary youth organisations. Obviously, there are Access NI checks to be done for child protection. That is something that lies outside my Department. I know that, at times, there can be frustration at the length of time they take. From that point of view, it is important that we pay tribute to all the good work that is happening in whatever organisation provides voluntary youth work. It fills the gap from what is there from the statutory sector. People give very willingly of their time to provide that service.

Mr McPhillips: I thank the Minister for his answer. Is he confident that the current arrangements in place, especially those involving child protection issues, are sufficient in the operation of those voluntary youth clubs?

Mr Weir: Broadly speaking, I am content. However, if the Member has any particular concerns in relation to that which he is keen for the Department to probe, I am very happy to receive those. I am happy to respond to whatever the Member raises. Generally speaking, things have worked fairly well. We have secure checks in place. Nothing in life can ever be 100% watertight, and that is always the danger that we have to try to avoid, where possible. However, I have a general level of contentment. If the Member has specific concerns and writes to me about them, I will look into those for him.

Strule Shared Education Campus: Cost

T5. **Mr Chambers** asked the Minister of Education why the estimated cost of the Strule shared education campus in Omagh has gone up by nearly £20 million in a matter of months. (AQT 630/16-21)

Mr Weir: The short answer is that it has not. Again, a couple of figures have been bandied about in that regard. The issue is whether you count the straight figure as the direct cost, but most major capital projects have an optimism bias added to the cost. So, the figure quoted, which, I think, was referenced to be about £140 million, was £137 million without the optimism bias, which is effectively to ensure that there is some degree of protection for contingencies. When the optimism bias is added, the figure is £159 million. So, it is about which figure you are looking at. From that point of view, the figure has not changed in the last couple of months. There have been alterations since the initial estimate a number of years ago. That has been through a range of additional pressures. For example, there was an issue in Omagh relating to road transport that had to be covered. However, the figures have not changed in the last couple of months.

Mr Chambers: Certainly, Minister, the figures that I am looking at are from your Department. If the project is not going to be completed until September 2020, as indicated by you in answers to written questions, do we have any

reason to believe that the cost of the project will not continue to spiral out of control over the next three and a half years?

Mr Weir: Sorry, with respect, they are not spiralling out of control. If you are comparing figures, you have to compare like with like. As I indicated, if you do not add an optimism bias, the figure is £137 million; with the optimism bias, it is £159 million. That has been the position for the last number of months. If I were buying something in the Member's shop, he could add VAT to it or not, and the money that the Member would get in his pocket would be different from the price on the shelf. It is a question of comparing like with like. I am not in a position to be able to knock down prices to provide a cheaper alternative. I commend anyone from the Groomsport area to Mr Chambers's shop. He provides a very good service. You will not get stuff being given away, like Santa's grotto, but the Member will provide a good service. The reality is that the amount has not changed but, as with any capital project, there is always likely to be some level of fluctuation.

Mr Speaker: Before I call Mr McCann, I inform him that he may not get a supplementary.

Teachers' Pay Dispute

T6. **Mr E McCann** asked the Minister of Education, given that he will be aware of the recent strike by members of the NASUWT, over which he has taken a rather obdurate position, and the fact that the other three teacher unions are balloting for strike action, whether he agrees that the best strategy that teachers might adopt in order to shift him from his present position would be for all four unions to strike together. (AQT 631/16-21)

Mr Weir: No, I would not. I am not going to take a lecture from the Member on being obdurate. I suspect he has not changed his position in about the last half century. What needs to happen —

Mr E McCann: There is consistency.

Mr Weir: Yes, to be fair, whatever other criticism I would make, like Castro, you have been consistent in your position for the last half century. I will not criticise the Member for inconsistency on that basis. As a Member who spoke previously alluded to, my main concern is the children. I think that it is highly irresponsible of the Member to encourage people to go out on strike, particularly in circumstances in which there is not additional money. It is not a question of obduracy; it is a question of there not being money in the budget to be able to provide for this issue. The Member is trailblazing with the red flag down the path of no return in relation to this, because there will not be, and cannot be, additional money for that period.

There have been long-term issues in relation to the teaching workforce. I believe that there can be constructive dialogue around those. It is not about how we look backwards, whether it is storming the Winter Palace or, if you like, the jungles of Havana; it is about looking forward to where we can move in the future, from 2017 onwards. That is the encouragement that I would give, rather than taking the irresponsible attitude of encouraging strike action to deprive our children of their education.

Mr Speaker: Members, time is up. That concludes —

3.30 pm

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. During Question Time, the Economy Minister said that I had written to him, pleading for a constituent to be included in the RHI scheme. In view of that distortion, may I correct the record? In September and October of this year, I wrote to the Minister on behalf of two separate constituents who had applied to the scheme back in February and who had heard nothing. I did what any other constituency Member would have done: I wrote to ask, "Why have these people not heard about their applications?"

Mr Speaker: You have placed your concerns on the record, and no doubt the Minister will be aware of them, Mr Allister.

That concludes Question Time. I invite Members to take their ease while we change the top Table.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Kennedy] in the Chair)

Motion made:

That the Assembly do now adjourn. — [Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy).]

Adjournment

Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre: Proposed Closure

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): In conjunction with the Business Committee, I have given leave to Mr Philip McGuigan to raise the matter of the proposed closure of Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre. The proposer of the topic will have up to 15 minutes.

Mr McGuigan: I am glad to have the opportunity to raise this subject and to show my support for Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre in the Assembly today. I thank the Minister for being present to listen to the arguments. I also welcome the elected councillors, members of staff and members of the public from in and around Bushmills who are in the Public Gallery to listen to the debate.

I am aware that there was a similar debate last week, so the Minister will be well versed in all the arguments. Perhaps, with a week's reflection since the last debate behind him and the Christmas break in front of him, he may be minded to end the 2016 Assembly term with a good news story for us all and announce the retention of the Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre.

I listened to the debate last week and support the arguments made for the retention of all the centres earmarked for closure. Obviously, I will mostly concentrate my remarks this afternoon on the specific case of Bushmills, which rests in my constituency of North Antrim. I do not apologise for repeating some of the very good arguments that were made last week: this is such an important issue, and the arguments need to be repeated and reinforced.

The Minister and other MLAs will say that this is not an issue for him and instead is one for the Education Authority. That is quite true and I understand that, but I also understand that it is true that the Minister is not powerless either and can act or use his influence. Sinn Féin's two appointees on the Education Authority board have expressed their concern about the closures.

The proposal for the closure of Bushmills and the other outdoor centres and the resulting consultation document, which I will come back to later, have come on the back of a review of residential and outdoor education. The document is 84 pages long, but, for me, the key sentence is on page 3 in the executive summary. It states:

"Throughout the review it was apparent that Residential and Outdoor Education is highly valued by all those who use the service, with regard to the quality of provision, the overall outdoor experience, the calibre and experience of staff and its value for money."

Those sentiments, which are contained in the Education Authority's own document, will run through everything that I say here today, because those sentiments and that sentence have been relayed to me time and time

again over the past few weeks in relation to the Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre.

Mr Dickson: I thank the Member for taking the intervention. Will the representatives of his party on the Education Authority board oppose any closure of the centres? Perhaps it would be helpful if other Members whose parties have representatives on the Education Authority board could indicate how they will vote when it comes to the closure of these centres.

Mr McGuigan: I thank the Member for his intervention. I said that the two Members have expressed concern. We are in the consultation process. I do not want to pre-empt what they are going to do. Hopefully, we may not need the Education Authority to do anything. That is the purpose of this debate.

People have relayed to me their sentiments about Bushmills. They have been relayed by principals of primary and secondary schools, teachers, pupils, the parents of pupils, community groups, church groups and people who went to Bushmills in years gone by and had such a positive experience that they took the time to call, email and text to show their support.

I am not sure whether the Minister has seen the online 'Save Bushmills' petition, which I think has now well over 2,000 signatories. If he has not, could I ask that he gets an official to let him see some of the testimonies on it from people sharing their story of staying at the Bushmills centre and the impact that it had on them. That is why I share the frustration of those in the Gallery and in the local community about this proposed closure.

Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre provides experiences for young people. In an age of Xbox and iPhone, when too many of our children are spending less time outdoors, the special experience that Bushmills and the other centres are providing becomes even more important. Education is about more than exams and books. Not everybody wants to follow an academic path, and even those who do need to be exposed to other life experiences. Children may discover talents that they would otherwise have had no opportunity to discover or develop.

These centres are also seen as hubs, where schools and children from different backgrounds and communities can come together in a safe environment and share and learn. A number of MLAs, including myself, were invited to the Bushmills centre recently by Knockloughrim and St Brigid's, Mayogall primary schools to witness at first hand how those two schools have been using the Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre for the past 15 years for a shared residential. Anyone who saw and heard the principals and children from the different schools talk about their experiences whilst staying in Bushmills will know that you cannot give it a monetary value.

I know that the Minister is going to say that his budget is finite and decreasing, and I understand that. In fact, I empathise with him on that. That said, any saving from the closure of Bushmills would be miniscule in his overall budget. It would be a false economy in the value to education and in what Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre can save other services in the short, medium and long term.

As I said, I have been contacted and lobbied by numerous schools and teachers in North Antrim, but also beyond,

in the rest of County Antrim and Derry, and by even the Principals' Association in Mid-Ulster. I note that Members from other constituencies have stayed behind to take part in the debate.

Those who use Bushmills know its value. They also know that children can go to Bushmills and have a first-class experience at a fraction of the cost of similar places in the private sector or other types of school trips. That is something I hope the Minister understands: the potential pressure put on parents and families who may not have a place like Bushmills to go to and the possible division that that can place within classes between those who can afford trips and those who cannot.

I know that Bushmills is not the only outdoor education centre proposed for closure, but I have no doubt that the Minister will know its location in comparison with the other centres. I have no doubt that he will know that Bushmills is the only residential outdoor education centre in North Antrim, in County Antrim and, indeed, in the north-east. If it closes, it is not just that schools that currently use it will go to another centre; geography and distance will dictate that. It is also true that, if Bushmills had to turn away 40 groups last year because of being over-booked, which it did, then, even if geography and distance were not the deciding factors, the availability of other centres would be. In my opinion, the loss of Bushmills cannot be subsumed into the rest of the outdoor education sector. Therefore, future generations of children will lose out on vital life-learning skills and experiences. That is a sad reality.

Who are the children who will lose out? A very small percentage of the Minister's budget to ensure the survival of Bushmills would allow 240 schools and youth groups to visit, adding up to over 8,500 children, as was the case in 2014-15. In 2015-16, even with enforced staff reduction, there were still 190 groups — 58 schools, 54 youth and church groups, as well as 78 day groups — that used the centre. That means that, overall, there were 7,500 overnight stays and 30,000 activity sessions last year. The planned closure of all the centres will remove 60% to 70% of our residential places. It is important that we compare the proposed reduction with acceptable standards elsewhere. Local education authority centres provide a ratio of 1:4,500 beds per head of population, while here in the North the ratio is currently 1:3,500. If the proposed changes take place, our ratio will decrease to 1:12,000. That is an unacceptable reduction.

I also want to highlight the implications of the range of proposals to reduce the remaining four to five centres from a seven-day-week service to a five-day-week service. The losers in that arrangement will be youth organisations, which will no longer be able to use the centres for weekend residential or day visits. Those are non-formal-education youth services, such as local youth clubs and projects dealing with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people in our society. Currently, those young people can access the centres 48 weeks a year. That will now be reduced to eight summer weeks only. The centres are also providing youth skills training for part-time staff and outdoor leadership courses for our youth workers and teachers. They are delivering award programmes and accredited training courses for young people, providing them with alternative routes to achievement.

Minister, if the Programme for Government is serious about all the things that it contains about children,

education and poverty, and if we are serious about outdoor education and having fully trained staff in a safe environment at a cost that parents and schools can afford, we need to look again at the proposals. Some 150,000 children across the North benefit from outdoor education every year. In my view, that service is well worth funding at its current level. The consultation process is flawed. I know that that was touched on a lot in last week's debate. It is flawed, and it is based on flawed information. Conspiracy theorists could easily make arguments about the whys and why nots of that. I want to believe that people, and the Minister in particular, are coming at this with an open mind.

I will not even get into the use of SurveyMonkey nor the misleading and closed questions contained in the consultation. I want to talk about the information in the review that was used to take us to the point at which Bushmills could be considered for closure. In the first instance, it was stated that any savings accrued from the review outcome will be directed towards front-line services, yet Bushmills and other front-line services are being closed or proposed for closure. That makes no sense. The review concentrated on over-provision and included voluntary centres funded by the Department of Education. That argument is used to justify the closure of the three centres in County Down. I disagree with it there, but, as I said earlier, there are no other centres around Bushmills.

In all the facts and figures presented about the low capacity, never once highlighted was the one factor that controls capacity; namely, the number of staff available to work with groups. The more staff that there are available, the more groups that you can work with and the greater the capacity of the centres, yet staff capacity has been cut by the Education Authority. That is a very important point. The centres should be allowed more staff and to maximise capacity rather than be closed.

Most confusing of all, however, is the fact that, in the initial review, Bushmills ranked third, and only three centres were earmarked for closure. Somehow, Bushmills is now ranked fifth and four to five centres are earmarked for closure. There appear to be no other options presented by the review or the Education Authority to avoid the closure of these valuable centres. It could be argued that minor changes to charges, staffing and resources could address the Minister's concerns about savings. Additionally, the centres can be and are used for teacher and part-time youth work training, and that will be totally lost if the planned closures go ahead. Who will the Education Authority pay to run all these courses? Will the same standards of safety apply? Will they be more expensive in the commercial world, as is the case with mountain centre courses?

Minister, given all of that, all that you heard last week, all that you are likely to hear today and all that you will hear in the remainder of the consultation process period, I urge you to rethink the proposed outcomes, halt the progress and instigate a working group to develop options to retain and develop the service.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I advise the House that this debate is not only well-attended but potentially oversubscribed with Members who wish to speak. I am prepared to allocate constituency Members up to five minutes. They will be taken first. Non-constituency Members will be allocated a maximum of three minutes.

No additional time will be allocated for any interventions. I seek your cooperation.

3.45 pm

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for securing the Adjournment debate. A number of points need to be made at the start that underline the importance of what we are debating tonight. Some years ago, Edward Lappin wrote a book about outdoor education, in which he said:

“Outdoor education enables students and teachers to interact in an environment free from the limitations of the classroom.”

The ‘Review of Residential and Outdoor Education’ gives us all the reasons why there should be a focus on the retention of these services. It states:

“Since their inception in the 1970s, Residential and Outdoor Education Centres have made a significant and valued contribution to the development of young people and society. They have operated across school and youth sectors in both formal and informal settings. This level of involvement has placed the centres in a unique position from which to influence the lives of young people throughout and beyond their formal educational experience.”

We need to keep the focus on that. It is the reason why I attended the debate in the House last week. The issue has implications for colleagues in other constituencies. We need to ask how we got to this place. What we have before us did not happen as a result of a decision taken primarily because of budget constraints, even though it is interesting that the Education Authority’s document states that there have been savings of £1.3 million. Where are the savings in the following years? It does not add up.

We need to go back to 2013 and the policy document, ‘Priorities for Youth: Improving Young People’s Lives through Youth Work’, because that is when the problem arose. That led to the regional youth development plan in 2015-16, which has brought us to the point that we are at today. I do not believe that we can say that this happened because of budgetary constraints alone. A decision was made by whomever in the Department or the Education Authority that certain places had to go. Why these facilities? Why a facility like Bushmills in our North Antrim constituency? These are not places that are just open, with cobwebs gathering in corners and a few small groups coming now and again. It can be clearly demonstrated that, in 2014-15, these places were used: 240 school and youth groups involving over 8,500 individuals, 73% from schools and youth services, and 27% adults.

The Member mentioned the following, but I want to expand on it a wee bit: was there a deliberate attempt by the Education Authority and the former North Eastern Education and Library Board to run down this service? The figures for 2015-16 show a reduction of part-time staff from 14 to three, so how would you expect an organisation, when it is audited, looked at and put under the microscope, to come up with figures that say that this is the reason why the provision should be retained? We then have to look at where these children and young people would go. If the Education Authority were to get its way and close the facility, where would they go? Would they go to Woodhall residential centre in Kilrea? It cannot take them because

it is full. They would have to travel many miles to get comparable — not just another type of — provision. The Minister needs to grasp that point. It is vital.

I ask the Minister to have a serious look at the Education Authority. Does it have the capacity to deal appropriately with the issue? Is it now time for the consultation to be suspended until we are satisfied that a proper assessment has been carried out that gives us the facts, based on reality, as opposed to what may be the assumption of the Education Authority?

Mr Swann: I will start where the last Member finished, by calling on the Minister to suspend the consultation because of the facts pointed out to him today by Philip McGuigan and the points rehearsed in last week’s Adjournment debate. The information from the Education Authority has been misunderstood, or possibly misconstrued. All North Antrim MLAs will be well used to that from our experience of the North Eastern Education and Library Board. We have seen how they managed other consultations to achieve their desired outcome.

Mr Ford: I thank the Member for giving way. I am sure that he will appreciate that not just Members from North Antrim but Members from South Antrim, East Antrim and East Londonderry will be aware of that.

Mr Swann: It is a point well taken, and that, I think, is why we are so well represented in the House today.

As Mr McGuigan referred to earlier, a number of us were invited to Bushmills Education Centre a couple of Fridays ago. I was pleased that we had representation from four parties. Knockloughrim Primary School and St Brigid’s Primary School, Mayogall handled the invitation and tour of the facility well. They brought down a pupil from each school to guide us round in groups of two. They showed us round and really relayed to us their experiences and how worthwhile their time at the centre has been. The young people told us, for example, “This centre has touched our hearts”, and, “This centre has stretched my boundaries”. It was very much a real life experience, and Mr Burns, Mr Bradley and Mr McGuigan will all reinforce the points made on that day.

It is the ethos of the centre itself that is important and crucial, and that came through very clearly in a point made by one of its former employees, Dr Robin Rodduck. He said that outdoor centres are not just about fresh air and running about; they are about the whole concept of outdoor education, what it means to our young people and how that develops team building, sharing and an understanding of the world at large. What really struck me on that visit was that the Bushmills Education Centre was delivering shared education long before “shared” was a buzzword in the Education Authority, the North Eastern Education and Library Board or even in the Department itself. That is its strength. What concerns all of us who were there on that day is this: if Bushmills is to close, even temporarily, in five years’ time, some great educationalist sitting in the Education Authority will dream up the concept of a residential education centre and have to start from scratch. By that stage, the personnel, the experience and the quality of provision currently at Bushmills will have been lost to generations.

When we were interacting with the pupils and the teachers there, we were struck by the ability of the trainers to truly engage with schools and youth groups in order to

ensure that their three- or four-day programmes were fit for their purpose. It is not some bland voluntary education centre where they offer the same programme this week, next week and the following week, meaning that the young people have to fit into that box. The centre provides a bespoke service to each one of the young people attending. Also, because it is part of the Education Authority, the centre can look at how its activities interact with the curriculum. It can ensure that it offers a bespoke, specific service.

One of the truly remarkable things that was pointed out to us on that day, almost as an aside, was that Bushmills and associated centres are inclusive and, for the young people who go there, affordable. A concern shared by teachers and parents is that this will price young people out of going to outdoor centres. A centre run by the Education Authority can make allowances and provisions for those entitled to free school meals, whereas other educational centres cannot. That support alone is worth some of the savings that the proposed consultation will talk about.

I will finish very briefly on the £1·3 million saving proposed by the Education Authority. If the Minister does not stop this consultation now, there are so many other avenues where that money could be found, such as through shared educational programmes, T:BUC and the summer camps.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Swann: The Executive already run summer camps and are looking for ideal situations and places to run them —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): The Member's time is up.

Mr Swann: In Bushmills, we have a place that you are denying the voluntary and community sector access to.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): The Member's time is up.

Mr Logan: I thank the Member for bringing this debate to the Chamber today. It is a great opportunity to discuss the outdoor education centre at Bushmills and all the benefits that it brings to young people. Let me echo what has been said already in the Chamber. I fully agree with those words.

Let me say two things at the outset. First, these closures are a disappointment for me, not only the one at Bushmills but the other outdoor education centres. I attended the debate last week on the others. I have spoken directly to people affected by the proposals, including staff and the schools. I apologise that I was not able to make the event that was organised. I had other constituency-related matters that day that I could not change, but I am happy enough to visit at another time, of course. I have spoken directly to people affected by that, including schools that make use of the services. The other day, I received — I am sure that other Members did, too — a letter from the Scripture Union, which praised these services and said that it will be directly impacted by any potential closures. It is my belief, and research shows, that a large amount of what a young person learns happens outside the classroom, mainly, I believe, at home. Parents have a huge responsibility for a child's education through being their chief educator, but these outdoor education centres play a huge part in the education of our young people and contribute to the social aspect of their education and, of course, to their physical well-being.

The other point that I want to make is to highlight the failure of the Education Authority to be straight about these proposed closures. We spoke extensively to the Education Authority in a Committee meeting and were told directly that this decision was not financial but is the best for our young people and is all about delivering a better service for them. While I do not doubt the Education Authority's goal and mission of delivering a sustainable and viable service that benefits all young people, I find it strange that the centres that are earmarked for proposed closure are the ones with the highest maintenance bill. It seems to be an attempt to save money, hidden behind a disguised message. If the Education Authority is aiming to save money with these closures, be upfront and tell us about that. Do not try to hide it behind a mask that it is supposedly meant to be best for our young people, because we have heard very clearly that it will affect young people directly. In reality, the Education Authority has a responsibility to live within its budget, and we have to accept — the Member who brought the debate has to, as a Member from an Executive party — that we are living in changing times and that we have tough decisions to make.

We have an education system, as the Education Authority said, that is built on historic structures. For example, we are funding an Irish-medium sector that, in primary alone, has 895 empty desks. We, as a party in government, will have tough choices and tough decisions to make, and discussing closures is not something that I get —

Mr Swann: Will the Member give way?

Mr Logan: I am happy to give way, yes.

Mr Swann: Sorry, I was making a point when I was coming to a close, and I will take this opportunity. The Member has been talking about savings. There are other avenues in the Executive to find that £1·3 million, should it be through T:BUC or shared education, because the provision in Bushmills education centre is meeting those other Executive needs. That money is already there and can be drawn down from elsewhere.

Mr Logan: I accept the Member's point on that and also agree with my colleague Mervyn Storey's points on the future savings that this will bring, but I do not believe that they are there, and I do not think that the Education Authority has proved those potential savings to be there in the long run.

As I was saying, I do not get excited about getting out of my bed in the morning to talk about potential closures. No one would run to come to the House for that. I do not envy the Minister's position at all. He asks the Education Authority to live within its budget, and, when it makes proposals to do that and to reduce its costs, we ask him to go back and say, "Actually, we do not want you to do that at all". I understand that, but I ask him to intervene on this, because I think that people will be greatly affected by those decisions. Let me make it clear though that it is an Education Authority proposal. It is out for consultation and that consultation will end on 6 February. I put this to Members and stakeholders: respond to that consultation with alternatives. Most parties in the Chamber have political representation on the Education Authority board. I ask them to lobby those people and ask them to find alternatives, because we need to put up suggestions.

We need to put up ideas and alternatives.

4.00 pm

In conclusion, it is simply not good enough to bury our head. If the Minister buries his head, it will be totally irresponsible for the long-term delivery of the education system in this part of the United Kingdom.

Mr Allister: I must say, I do not understand why the powers that be want to destroy a success story. That is what Bushmills is and has been for generations. Of particular concern — it raises my suspicions — is the manner of the process deployed here. First, there is a supposed review, and Bushmills is fifth on the list, and, because that seems to put three County Down centres at the top of the list, it is suddenly rejigged, and Bushmills is third.

What is even more concerning is that, during this process, no one even troubled themselves to visit the centre. No one went down to meet the excellent, dedicated staff, to talk it through with them and to see what they do day and daily. Some desktop operation was established, whereby it was decided, “Oh, well. Let’s close Bushmills.” That is an appalling decision. The first contact from those making the proposition in the Education Authority was four weeks ago, when they went down to the centre and broke the news that they were going to close it. That is no way to treat anyone, least of all a centre that has been a roaring success for many years.

I think of the squander by this Executive — we will hear something more about that tonight on BBC ‘Spotlight’ — and then I read that £1.3 million will be saved by this project. But will it? In fact, the £1.3 million will simply be redirected within the Youth Service. This will not save one penny of the Minister’s overall budget. The money will be redirected. It is quite clear to me, from the underhand way in which this has been done, that it is serving another agenda. The agenda is to cull and disengage the statutory sector, if I can put it like that, from these education facilities and to hand them over to the voluntary sector. What does that mean for the kids of north Antrim? There is no alternative voluntary capacity or opportunity there. I think the nearest centre is in Bangor.

That brings me to a critical point. Who have been the key beneficiaries of the scheme? Some of the most deprived kids in our schools, who are low in self-esteem and self-worth. They get a weekend or a few days at a centre such as this and suddenly they discover that they, who feel that they have always been put down, have got an interest. There is something good that they can do. There are things that they are good at. They leave those centres believing in themselves. That is worth far more than £1.3 million, yet that is the balance in which we are putting that achievement. For some kids, an outdoor activity venture is their parents paying huge amounts of money for them to go on a ski trip. However, many more parents are very glad of this affordable outlet, whereby they can give their kids the advantage of this scheme. It is those kids that we are putting down. Shame on the Education Authority for even thinking in those terms.

Let us not forget that Bushmills is much more than an outdoor education centre in one of the most beautiful parts of our country. It provides critical adult training for those who deliver things such as the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award. Where will that now be delivered? The Minister needs to get a grip on this. I invite him to come to Bushmills and visit

the centre when it is in full operation. I visited it last Friday. Others have also visited it. I would like him to see —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I ask the Member —

Mr Allister: — feel and experience the commitment, dedication and output before he is a party —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): The Member’s time is up. Thank you.

Mr Allister: — to the closure of such a marvellous venture.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I remind Members that, from now on, they will be allocated three minutes.

Mr Mullan: Because of the time constraints that have been placed on me, I will cut to the chase. I echo the sentiments that have been expressed by practically everybody in the House today. It is very concerning that the path to getting to where we are today has been one of deception and dishonesty from the Education Authority. Unless you, Minister, use your good offices to bring this despicable process to a halt, you will stand accused of being complicit in it. I urge you to do what you can to prevent that from happening.

When we look at the ranking of all the outdoor education centres in the review document supplied, we see that Bushmills is fifth, as has already been said, and at risk of closure. However, the conditional report has Bushmills ranked third. Can the Minister explain that? What methodology was used in the review document that differed significantly from the conditional report? What were the definitional terms used? Will he give a commitment to publishing the conditional report?

Despite many promises, staff at Bushmills have not been consulted, and neither have service users: the children. They are supposed to respond to a very complex consultation document. It does not make sense. How is that fair? How is it open? How is it transparent? The consultation document contains only predetermined decisions. That is disingenuous to all those who use and work at Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre.

The Education Authority has stressed that there is duplication of services across the North. The closest centre to Bushmills is Woodhall in Kilrea in my constituency, which is 20 miles away. That education centre has maximised capacity; it is oversubscribed, as others have said. It is crystal clear that demand heavily outweighs supply in that area. It means one thing: thousands of children will lose out. That is a fatal flaw in the consultation exercise.

Occupancy rates are highlighted in the consultation document. I will set the record straight: Bushmills has gone from catering for 5,000 children in 2012-13 to 3,000 last year, but that is not evidence of a lack of uptake. The Minister and the Education Authority have failed to state that, during that time, they have cut part-time staff at the centre from 24 to eight while full-time staff have not been replaced, which has dramatically impacted —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Mullan: — on the service provided.

Nowhere in the review is staffing mentioned. I urge the Minister to do what he can.

Mr Dickson: I thank all the Members who have spoken in the debate. I particularly thank Philip McGuigan for bringing the debate to the Chamber.

We have heard many Members — I reiterate the words — saying that the outdoor education centre in Bushmills strengthens, reinforces and builds on the knowledge of all the children, young people and others who use the centre. I will quote very quickly from one of the primary schools in east Antrim that uses the centre; it is the reason why I am speaking here today. The principal of Glynn Primary School said:

“The children learn so much about teamwork, consideration, empathy, determination and achievement on their trip; the list of what they learn is really endless. Bushmills is the only Outdoor Education Centre in the northern half of our county. My Primary 7 children talk the whole year about what we’ll do and what it’ll be like at Bushmills, having heard from their predecessors, but it still always far exceeds their expectations. It has several times been described as the best holiday ever!”

That comes from those families for whom this is a holiday — a genuine learning experience for children.

Other Members talked about the experiences of children from St Brigid’s Primary School and Knockloughrim Primary School, and I want to reiterate what they have been telling me as well:

“For over 15 years, our schools have worked together in class and in our community, but, at Bushmills, we learn so much more by being together. We enjoy what we do and realise what it is to be part of the community. We are really sad to hear of the current consultation process that may close the education centre in Bushmills in August 2017”.

I want to nail a few of the lies around the facts in all this. There are 40 schools that, quite simply, have been told that there is no room at the inn for them in Bushmills. They are not getting in. They have made applications, as they have done in previous years, but there is no facility for them. Those are just examples of the depth of feeling for Bushmills and the value that it is deemed to deliver for the education sector.

As I said, I commend those who have spoken in the debate. I re-emphasise and reiterate the comment that I made earlier: there are those in the Chamber today who are represented on the Education Authority and could commit to saying that they will keep Bushmills open.

Mr K Buchanan: First, I thank the Member for bringing the issue to the Chamber today. I welcome the opportunity to speak on the proposed closure of Bushmills Education Centre. As we all know, the centre is a fully staffed multi-purpose centre and is advertised on the Education Authority’s website as one of the best equipped residential centres in Northern Ireland. I will repeat that: it is now one of the best equipped residential centres in Northern Ireland. The centre’s mission statement is as follows:

“To provide a residential facility where a variety of curriculum related programmes and resources are offered, primarily in the field of outdoor education, designed to meet the needs of both young people and adults.”

Bushmills outdoor centre can provide residential and day courses to visitors and uses the resources of the outdoor environment to achieve educational objectives and experiences for our young people. It provides important learning experiences for young people, especially when it comes to their health and physical activity. The instructors are all qualified teachers with additional specialist qualifications in many activities.

Primary and secondary schools from my constituency of Mid Ulster, including, as other Members mentioned, Knockloughrim Primary School and St Brigid’s Primary School, use the facilities on an annual basis. Principals, teachers, parents and pupils are concerned that this is the last year that they will be able to access the excellent facilities.

Some rural schools in my constituency, such as Knockloughrim Primary School and St Brigid’s Primary School, have worked together and have been fully involved in the Save Bushmills campaign. While I understand the need to meet the expectations of the Priorities for Youth policy and to address the overprovision of services, I urge the Education Authority to consider how the closure would not only be a loss to schools and youth organisations but will affect the lives of those employed in the centre and their families. There will be a direct impact on local people employed there, the local community and the schools and community groups that utilise the centre. Should the closure go ahead, it will have an impact on children from poorer and more disadvantaged backgrounds who have little or no other opportunities to visit facilities of this nature. The centre provides protective clothing and specialist equipment to visitors, and that is a vital tool, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds who would not otherwise have the means or finance to provide them for themselves. I urge the Education Authority to consider other options regarding the sustainability of the centre, including opening the service to tourists and other groups.

In conclusion, I stress the importance of Bushmills Education Centre and the excellent service that it provides to schools in my constituency of Mid Ulster and those in North Antrim, South Antrim, East Londonderry and further afield. I urge all in our community to respond to the consultation. As my colleague said, the consultation closes on 6 February 2017, and it is important that people make their voice heard.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Member for securing the Adjournment debate this afternoon. The centre at Bushmills is the one most used by schools in the Mid Ulster constituency. My three children have all been there at least twice with their primary school. They travel there with other local rural primary schools and use it as an opportunity to get to know children in the neighbouring areas. As has been mentioned, Knockloughrim Primary School and St Brigid’s Primary School are in the Mid Ulster constituency and their use of the centre for shared education is second to none. In fact, Knockloughrim and St Brigid’s said that shared education becomes easier after they have been to Bushmills, as spending time together helps to break down the barriers, so that really is a benefit.

4.15 pm

I support the calls by my colleague and by the Member for North Antrim Mervyn Storey to suspend the consultation. There are a number of points about the consultation that cause me concern. The statistics have already been

well rehearsed. When I consider the high demand for Bushmills, I do not understand why it has been targeted for closure. I share the concern that there is no real strategy for outdoor education centres. The Education Committee was told that the £1.3 million of savings was the instigation for the decision, yet there is no overall strategy for outdoor education centres. As my colleague Robin Swann has stated, there are funds available elsewhere that could plug the gap from sources such as shared education and T:BUC, and I support that call. I support what other Members have said about the consultation: it seems to be flawed, and it is suggested that it has predetermined outcomes.

Stephen Moss, a British natural historian who talked about shared education said:

“So children who learn outdoors know more, understand more, feel better, behave better, work more cooperatively and are physically healthier. Not a bad result from simply changing the location where they are being taught. Importantly, this is not just for able and motivated pupils: under-achievers also do better in a natural environment, especially when exposed to high-quality, stimulating activities.”

That is something that needs to be brought to the debate: in these environments our young people find they have talents that, in a classroom, they do not realise they have. They must be given the opportunity to continue that at Bushmills.

Mr M Bradley: I thank the Member for bringing the debate to the Chamber. I welcome the opportunity to speak in support of the valuable contribution made by outdoor activity centres like Bushmills to the development of our young people and children across Northern Ireland.

The news of the consultation has caused concern not just in North Antrim but in East Londonderry, and, as we have heard tonight, in all other constituencies. I stress that I am not placing any criticism on the Education Minister; I know that he is fully committed to delivering for young people. The consultation and the proposals have come from the Education Authority, and I stress this is a consultation process — a consultation process that I believe to be flawed. While it is easy for some to blame the Minister, this recommendation is from the Education Authority, and I encourage as many users and supporters as possible to take part in the consultation by using the comments box.

Mr Swann: Will the Member give way?

Mr M Bradley: I will.

Mr Swann: I appreciate the Member's contribution. If he believes the consultation is flawed, will he not, like his party colleague Mervyn Storey, call on the Minister to suspend the consultation while they get it right?

Mr M Bradley: I thank the Member for his intervention. He has stolen my thunder and taken my last paragraph. *[Laughter.]* I will not hold it against him.

I have completed the survey online, and I have used both comment boxes to register my opinion on the proposed closure as opposed to answering the questions. One question makes reference to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and it says, “Where deemed appropriate”. There is no guarantee that anything will be guaranteed.

Understandably, when we think of education, we think of schools, given the role they play. However, we must also acknowledge that education ought to take many forms and include the vital contributions that the Youth Service and outdoor education make. Outdoor education provision accounts for only a small portion of the overall education budget, but it provides unique learning opportunities and skills development for around 150,000 children and young people every year. If this centre closes, the nearest centre is Woodhall at Kilrea, over 30 miles away. It has only 40 beds available and, I believe, is fully booked, so where is the overprovision?

Indeed, the Bushmills centre has had to turn away bookings during peak periods.

The centre in Bushmills offers a broad range of services. It is capable of generating income at weekends, but it is not permitted to do so. Groups wanting to avail themselves of its activities would have to travel over 100 miles to the nearest equivalent centre, which is in Newcastle, County Down. Therefore, there is no duplication of services in the area at all. The centre not only provides positive educational experiences for organisations but plays a vital role in training youth workers and teachers in a wide range of outdoor activities, providing positive educational experiences and opportunities to develop interpersonal and practical skills.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr M Bradley: In closing, I stress the importance of the centre. It has helped young people to open their mind and stretch their personal horizons far and wide. It is a shared educational facility, meeting the criteria to enjoy shared education from learning in a cross-community setting. If we can play together —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): The Member's time is up.

Mr M Bradley: — we can live together. I support the suspension of the consultation until there is further clarity.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): The Member's time is up.

Mr M Bradley: Thank you for your patience, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): The Member's time is well up.

Mr McGrath: I thank the Member for securing the Adjournment debate, which is similar to the one that we had last week. I do not wish to rehearse what was said last week, because the points were well made by everybody. It was one of those rare occasions when each and every side of the House was in agreement about the situation that we find ourselves in. Hearing the same remarks today reiterates the point that we made last week that this process needs to be paused, and I welcome hearing those remarks. There were two or three things that, I feel, were not said last week, and I will bring them into today's debate, because they are as relevant to Bushmills as they are to the three County Down centres.

The first issue that I want to discuss is the criteria. One of the variables used was the location of the centre and its proximity to other voluntary centres. What that means is that, if you remove a statutory centre, groups can simply

trot up the road and go to the next one. That is fictitious on several grounds. First, it makes the massive assumption that the voluntary centres are empty, and they are not. There may be some capacity in them, and I am happy that that capacity be utilised fully, but I am somewhat disappointed that that will be achieved by closing down the statutory centres and then creating an over-demand scenario in the voluntary sector. Secondly, I am a little bit concerned, because I am not entirely sure what we mean when we use the term “voluntary sector”. Many of the centres and provisions that will end up having to be used will be in the private sector. We know what that means: we are talking about increased prices to be able to achieve and drive more profits. Even the voluntary centres now charge more than the statutory centres. I hope that when the decision is taken — I say “when” because I have no faith in the consultation decision — that will be considered.

I want to accept the assertion that the Minister made last week that this decision is being taken by the Education Authority, but I know that the Minister understands my view on this because I have said it many times before. The Minister is the decision maker when it comes to education in Northern Ireland. It is therefore eventually up to you to overturn the decision, if it is made. I am sure that you, like any other Minister, past or present, would be happy to turn up for a good-news story by an arm’s-length body. If you are able to share ownership of those stories, you can share ownership of the bad-news stories as well.

You told us that the Education Authority is made up of political representatives. You are correct: eight of the 20 members on the board are political representatives. Four of them belong to the DUP, and I hope, Minister, that you will lobby them as well to make the right decision on this closure scenario.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a conclusion.

Mr McGrath: Certainly. We must stop this decision being taken on Bushmills and the other centres. We have to stop being biased against them because they are good at their job, are competitively priced, are located in the right place and are overwhelming loved by the children who attend them.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): The Member’s time is up.

Mr McGrath: It is a bad decision. Please make the right one, Minister.

Mr Weir (The Minister of Education): Like last week, I thank the Member for bringing forward the issue. I also acknowledge the contribution made by all Members, who spoke passionately and articulately about where we are with this. Somebody mentioned last week that the focus is always on schools. I will be honest: schools and, indeed, the delivery of education to children through schools have always been and will continue to be my first priority and that of the Department.

Beyond that, there is a key commitment to youth in the Department, and approximately £34 million of resource and about £9 million of direct capital has been spent in that area.

It is undoubtedly the case that there is a very passionate debate about the issue. We saw that last week with how it has affected the South Down area, and we have seen

that today with Bushmills. One of the indications of that is the high attendance in the Public Gallery, which I acknowledge. That is ultimately why decisions will need to be taken responsibly.

As we look ahead, there are a lot of issues. No one is decrying the fact that outdoor education is important or that good work has been done in Bushmills and the other centres; mention was made of the centres in South Down and others. From that point of view, any closure or change in the system is not being driven because a bad service is being provided; nobody is making that argument.

There are two issues. There is the matter of an appropriate balance of provision throughout Northern Ireland. While a clear decision has to be made and put forward by the Education Authority, it is critical that, whatever emerges from the process — we are in a consultation process, and decisions have not been finalised — it has to be fit for purpose for our young people. It will be critical to ensure that that is the case. Inadequate provision will simply not be stood over against whatever constraints there are. As mentioned by Members, it is also wrong to believe that it is simply about the level of provision. Previously, statutory outdoor centres were maintained by five education boards, and we now have one body in the Education Authority. Without being prejudicial to any decision that might be made, it is critical that we look at what is available and appropriate for Northern Ireland as a whole and try to deliver on that basis. That is without prejudice to any discussions taking place. Undoubtedly, there is also a financial element. Indeed, in education and other aspects, decisions that come across my desk are not, generally speaking, between good and bad services. They are sometimes about which good service we maintain and which good service we cut. From that point of view, whatever decisions are made on this and other issues, good things will be cut; I am not denying that. The bottom line is that we move ahead. I appreciate that suggestions have been made today. It is important that people build on those proposals.

Finance is undoubtedly a key factor in where we are with education. Some of this might be a bit repetitive of last week’s debate, but this year’s education budget — not in real terms but in actual terms — was down by £52 million against a backdrop of about £100 million of pressures. To be fair to the Executive, some things that emerged simply happened by way of life, such as pay pressures, but other things have been imposed nationally and have nothing to do with the Northern Ireland Executive or anyone in the House. In this year’s budget — it is ongoing — some £40 million of additional employers’ National Insurance contributions will have to be paid. In health, that figure is probably in the region of £100 million. That is part of the hidden cost of our block grant settlement. As we look ahead to next year and wait to see what emerges in the budget, there is not a great deal of hope that things will suddenly get a lot better. Investment from the Executive in education is needed across the board. A number of Departments face a key challenge with the amount of money that is available overall.

Unless there is a degree of change, we will face very difficult decisions; indeed, unless there is an increase in the education budget, cuts may well have to be made that are more painful even than the cuts that are proposed today. I add that caveat. I appreciate that people —

4.30 pm

Mr Allister: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Weir: I will give way briefly.

Mr Allister: Will the Minister bring clarity to the situation? It is said that £1.3 million can be saved by closing the centres, but it is not a saving to the Minister because the money will be redirected within the Youth Service. Is that not correct? Therefore, it is not a question of where it is best spent.

Mr Weir: That is not the reality. It may well be that it is redirected to plug another gap, but the Youth Service cannot be exempt from the pressures. If there have to be savings across the board, EA in particular will probably face a lot of the pressures because the principal responsibility is to protect front-line services in the aggregated schools budget as much as possible. There will be gaps. It can be dressed up as being redirected, but gaps will be plugged. From that point of view, if £1.3 million is not saved in one area, it will have to be saved elsewhere. That is the economic reality of the situation.

I appreciate that there will always be paranoia about how any consultation is conducted, who is conducting it and what the motivations are: I understand that entirely. What I will say is that those who will take the final decision or, at least, the decision from the EA's point of view will be those sitting on the board. Mr McGrath mentioned that, of a total of 20, eight come from a political background and others represent different sectors. Having spoken to some of those people, I do not believe that they have a doctrinaire position and an agenda of closure. From that point of view, there is an opportunity there. Some ideas of how to formulate an alternative — a plan B — were mentioned today. If people feel that they are restricted by a consultation, there is nothing to stop them writing directly to the members of the Education Authority, and suggestions can be put together. If there is an alternative way forward and a better way of providing outdoor education provision, it will, I suspect, require some change. If there is a belief that the ranking of centres is wrong and that there should be a different configuration of the services, the Education Authority members will, I think, be entirely open to that. Nobody is coming at this from a doctrinaire position. I will simply say that people have to put a viable alternative — a plan B. If, for instance, the argument is that, within the Education Authority, £1.3 million should not be saved here and another part of its budget should be cut, people should have the courage to make that argument.

I will simply say that, as with all these things, there are caveats. There will be limited money in the Department of Education and limited money available from the Education Authority. Consequently, if the response is simply a blanket, "No, this should not happen", I do not think that that would be good enough to persuade people into an alternative course of action. The opportunities are there, and there is a challenge there. I do not believe that members of the Education Authority board have a doctrinaire or set view of what should happen. I urge people who feel constrained by the way in which the consultation has been done to avail themselves of the opportunities and to make sure that, if there is an alternative, they put it forward. If there is something rational that, from a financial point of view, produces the

same result, that will, I think, be embraced, but there is no doubt that we are in tough times, and people should not delude themselves that it is otherwise.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy): That concludes the debate. I thank those who contributed and those who attended.

Adjourned at 4.34 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 19 December 2016

The Assembly met at 10.30 am (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Mr Nesbitt: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Ms Ní Chuilín: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Dickson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I am taking no points of order at this stage of the proceedings.

Members, having been given notice by both the First Minister and deputy First Minister —

Ms Ní Chuilín: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Attwood: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I am taking no points of order at this stage in the proceedings.

Members, having been given notice by both the First Minister and the deputy First Minister —

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. How can a statement that is not a ministerial statement be made to this House?

A Member: Keep it down.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr Speaker: I am taking no points of order at this stage in the proceedings.

Mr Allister: Farce.

Mr Poots: Show the Speaker some respect.

Mr Speaker: Members, having been given notice by both the First —

Mr Attwood: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Ms Ní Chuilín: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I am taking no points of order at this stage of the proceedings.

Mr Nesbitt: Shame.

Mr Allister: Shame.

Some Members: Shame. Shame.

Mr Speaker: Members, having been given notice by both the First Minister and deputy First Minister —

Mr Attwood: You have to explain yourself to the House.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to resume his seat.

Mr Aiken: Well, the other half of the Government has just walked out.

Mr Speaker: I have been given notice by both the First Minister and deputy First Minister — *[Interruption.]* — and 30 Members under Standing Order 11 — *[Interruption.]* — I have summoned the Assembly to meet today for the purpose of an oral statement by the First Minister on the renewable heat incentive scheme and a motion on the exclusion of a Minister from office under section 30 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. *[Interruption.]*

A Member: Bye, bye.

Some Members: Shame. Shame.

Resignation of Member: Ms Jennifer McCann

Mr Speaker: Before we proceed with today's business, I wish to advise the House that I have received a letter from Ms Jennifer McCann giving me notice of her intention to resign as a Member for the West Belfast constituency with effect from 6 December 2016. I have notified the Chief Electoral Officer in accordance with section 35 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

New Assembly Member: Ms Órlaithí Flynn

Mr Speaker: I also wish to advise the House that I have been informed by the Chief Electoral Officer that Ms Órlaithí Flynn has been returned as a Member of the Assembly for the West Belfast constituency to fill the vacancy resulting from Ms McCann's resignation. Ms Flynn signed the undertaking and Roll of Membership and entered her designation in the presence of the Speaker and the Chief Executive on 7 December 2016. The Member has taken her seat. I welcome the Member to the House and wish her success.

Mr Allister: Mr Speaker, before this turns into a total farce, I implore you to take a point of order on the probity of what is about to happen, in that this could not be a ministerial statement in that it does not have the consent of the joint office on whose behalf it purports to be made. There is no power in Standing Orders or in legislation to recall the House —

Mr Speaker: I ask you to take your seat.

Mr Allister: — for the purpose of a personal statement, and that is what this is.

Mr Speaker: Mr Allister, I ask you to take your seat.

I have received notice from the First Minister that she wishes to make a statement. *[Interruption.]* As the statement was made available to Members within only the last 15 minutes, I intend to suspend the sitting for 30 minutes to allow Members to read the statement. The sitting is suspended until 11.00 am.

The sitting was suspended at 10.36 am and resumed at 11.03 am.

Ministerial Statement

Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme

Mr Speaker: Members, the sitting is resumed.

Mr Nesbitt: On a point of order.

Mr Speaker: If the Members will allow me to make a few opening remarks, then we will take points of order.

Before I proceed, Members will be aware that there is a requirement on me to make announcements on certain items of business to the Assembly. It is not the procedure to take points of order until that business has been transacted. I anticipated fully that Members may wish to make points of order in relation to this morning's business. I have a few remarks to make to explain the issues that I have considered this morning and will then take points of order.

I have received notice from the First Minister that she wishes to make a statement. Before we commence, I advise Members that the original request on 14 December sought to recall the Assembly for the purpose of the First and deputy First Minister making a statement on the renewable heat incentive scheme.

Subsequently, I have had a communication from the deputy First Minister that the statement does not represent the position of the Executive Office. Having taken legal and procedural advice this morning, I can say that it is clear that, in my role in relation to the procedures of the Assembly and not the procedures of the Executive, I have discharged my responsibilities under Standing Orders to recall the Assembly. Earlier this morning, I wrote to the Executive Office stating that I would be content to be notified if the deputy First Minister, or another Minister on his behalf, also wished to make a statement.

I am now content to take points of order.

Ms Ní Chuilín: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Thank you very much for that advice, but it is still clear — it is at the top of the written statement that Mrs Foster is going to deliver to the House — that she is making the statement on behalf of herself. You have received correspondence from the deputy First Minister to indicate that. Is it the convention that, on behalf of the Executive, the First Minister and the deputy First Minister are then advised by your office to make two separate statements in order to satisfy the recall of the Assembly? I ask for advice on that.

Mr Speaker: Having taken legal and procedural advice this morning, I can say that it is clear that, in my role in relation to the procedures of the Assembly and not the procedures of the Executive, I have discharged my responsibilities in line with Standing Orders to recall the Assembly.

Mr Nesbitt: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. As you said, Mr Speaker, you recalled us on Friday, issuing a notice saying that you had received a valid notice from the First Minister and the deputy First Minister and that the purpose of summoning us today was to receive a statement from the First Minister and the deputy First Minister. You have now made clear that the deputy First Minister says that he no longer endorses what Mrs Foster is going to say. That invalidates Standing Order 11, so can you explain to the House under which Standing Order you propose to proceed?

Mr Speaker: I understand the frustration of many Members on the matter. I want to reiterate that, earlier this

morning, I wrote to the Executive Office indicating that I would be willing to accept a statement from the deputy First Minister or, in his absence, a statement from another Minister on his behalf. I have said twice now, I think, that I have discharged my responsibilities under Standing Orders to recall the Assembly. That is where we stand at the moment.

Mr Nesbitt: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I have asked you directly under which Standing Order you intend to proceed. The fact that you cannot answer forces me to ask it again: specifically which Standing Order are we operating under?

Mr Speaker: Mr Nesbitt, I suppose that we are coming close to you challenging the Chair's decisions. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Aiken: No, he is not.

Mrs Long: Not even close.

Mr Speaker: Let me be quite clear: I have taken legal and procedural advice from the officers of the Assembly, and I am content that we are proceeding with their advice in line with Standing Orders.

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Ms Ní Chuilín: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Further to that point of order, Ms Ní Chuilín.

Ms Ní Chuilín: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker, there is an acceptance in what you have just said that allowing this statement to continue is undermining the jointery of the First Minister and the deputy First Minister and the Executive Office.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr Attwood: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: That really is not a matter for me to decide on. That is a matter for the Executive to address.

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Attwood: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Point of order, Mr Attwood.

Mr Attwood: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. To put it moderately, I cannot agree with the last comment that you made. You have said to the House today that you will accept a second statement from a member of the Executive Office or from some other Minister on his behalf. Can you explain to the House how you reconcile that with not just Standing Orders but the Northern Ireland Act and subsequent legislation and the Good Friday Agreement, at the core of which is architecture that states that there shall be a joint office of First Minister and deputy First Minister?

Where do you have the authority, Mr Speaker — where do you have the authority? — to say to the Executive Office to make two statements? You have a duty to explain that to the House, to the people of Northern Ireland and to all those who endorsed the Good Friday Agreement, which established that office.

Mr Speaker: I think that you have made yourself quite clear. I have discharged my responsibilities under Standing Orders to recall the Assembly.

Dr Farry: Point of order.

Mr Allister: Point of order.

Mr Speaker: Point of order, Mr Allister.

Mr Allister: Thank you, Mr Speaker. We were notified to come here today to hear a ministerial statement. The Order Paper decrees that we will hear a ministerial statement. I presume that the Order Paper is issued under your direction. Can you, therefore, indicate how this now can be a ministerial statement from the Executive Office since one half of that office has withdrawn its imprimatur? Surely this no longer is a ministerial statement. I ask you to rule whether it is a ministerial statement. If it is not, by what Standing Order has the House been recalled to hear a personal statement? I know of no such Standing Order. Is this a ministerial statement? We need to know that.

Mr Speaker: I will take you back, Mr Allister, to the remarks that I have previously made indicating that, this morning, I wrote to the Executive Office stating that I would have been content for a subsequent statement to have been made by the deputy First Minister. I believe that I have discharged on all the advice that I have been offered this morning. I have discharged my responsibilities under Standing Orders to recall the Assembly.

Dr Farry: Point of order.

Mr Nesbitt: Point of order.

Mr Allister: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker, could you rule —

Ms Ní Chuilín: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker —

Mr Speaker: Sorry: Mr Allister has the Floor.

Mr Allister: Very much obliged. Could you rule whether what it is intended that we will hear is or is not a ministerial statement?

Ms Ní Chuilín: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker, I still persist that, if the statement from the First Minister is allowed to go ahead, it is undermining the joined-up approach of the Executive Office, and I believe that you are setting a precedent.

Mr Speaker: The Assembly was recalled at the request of the Executive Office. I believe that I have discharged my responsibilities. Matters around that are for the Executive themselves to deal with.

Dr Farry: Point of order.

Mr Nesbitt: Point of order.

Mr Attwood: Further to that point of order.

Mr Speaker: Point of order, Mr Farry.

Dr Farry: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is readily understood and, indeed, backed up by legislation that this is a joint office. The office cannot issue a press statement, issue a line to the media or give separate answers to oral or written questions: every single decision that emerges from it has to be signed off by the two halves of the office. Therefore, I add my voice to the requests for clarification on how this can be taken forward. The Assembly was recalled on the basis of a statement from the Executive Office, which clearly we do not have. Will you, therefore, clarify whether we are, in fact, receiving a personal statement from the person who happens to be First

Minister as opposed to a statement in the name of the Executive Office?

Mr Speaker: Thank you, Mr Farry. Again, I understand the frustration of Members in the Chamber on the matter. It is a matter for the Executive. The decision has been made by the Executive. It really is my responsibility only to discharge under Standing Orders the recall of the Assembly. With all the advice that I have received from officers, I believe that we have recalled the Assembly in line with my responsibilities and Assembly procedures.

Mrs Long: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Can you clarify whether, on the basis that you are proceeding today, we will now expect Standing Orders of the House to be changed so that both the First Minister and deputy First Minister will answer questions for oral answer and will have an opportunity to make a statement on every issue that the Executive Office brings to the House in order that this be done in a consistent manner?

11.15 am

Mr Speaker: That would not be an ideal situation but it is not a situation of my making. We have discharged our responsibilities.

Mr Nesbitt: On a point of order.

Mr Kennedy: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Point of order, Mr Kennedy.

Mr Kennedy: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can I bring you back to the original request by the First Minister and deputy First Minister on behalf of the Executive Office to bring forward a statement on RHI today? Clearly, when that original request was made, circumstances were different, but, in a fluid situation, it appears that events have overtaken it. It is clear now that the current statement is not being made with the agreement of the deputy First Minister. Surely the item of business for which the Assembly was recalled — the joint statement to the House — would, with other items of business, then fall, allowing the second and principal item of debate, namely the motion of censure. Then, with some amendment, the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party could have made her points in respect of the scheme.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr Speaker: Thank you, Mr Kennedy, for that point of order. I received a valid request from the Executive Office to recall the Assembly.

Mr Nesbitt: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Attwood: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Point of order, Mr Nesbitt.

Mr Nesbitt: Mr Speaker, you say that you have written to the Executive Office. Did you get a response? If so, what was it? Specifically, are you content that the independent Member of the Executive, Claire Sugden, had the opportunity to make a statement today?

Mr Speaker: I have not received a reply from the Executive Office as yet. Executive business is really —

I have received no request from Claire Sugden.

Mr Attwood: Further to that point of order.

Ms Ní Chuilín: Further to that point of order.

Mr E McCann: On a point of order.

Mr Speaker: We have not taken a point of order from Mr McCann as yet.

Mr E McCann: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Over the past 30 minutes or so, you have repeated a number of times that you are content that we are proceeding on a proper basis. With all respect to you, it is nice to know that you are at ease with your decisions on procedure, but not everybody would agree.

It seems to me, Mr Speaker, that, since no statement can be made on behalf of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, which was the basis on which we were called here, we have no proper way to proceed. Is it not the case that what ought to happen now is that we should proceed, as quickly as it can be arranged, procedurally and in relation to precedent, to an election to this House? It is perfectly clear that the House is not operating as intended and it is not operating in a way that serves the interests of the people of the North. Procedurally, it seems to me that we are now in la-la land and limbo land. Please can we stop this charade?

Mr Clarke: On a point of order.

Mr Speaker: I received advice this morning from the officers and I have discharged my responsibility under Standing Orders to recall the Assembly.

Mrs Long: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Clarke: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I will take a point of order from this side.

Mr Clarke: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Members have an obsession here this morning with process. The same Members who have been calling for clarity around the RHI scheme. At what stage are we going to let the First Minister speak, given that you have outlined that you have taken procedural and legal advice from your officials? *[Interruption.]* At what point are we going to hear the statement from the First Minister that many people outside the Chamber want to hear?

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mrs Long: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Will Members take their seats for a minute? If Members are going to continually raise the same point of order, we are not going to go forward on this matter. If Members have different points of order to raise, other than the ones that I have addressed within my responsibility to recall the Assembly, I will hear those.

Ms Ní Chuilín: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I repeat this again. Given the remarks from the DUP Whip, who is indicating that the First Minister is making this statement to give an account of the RHI scheme without the consent of the deputy First Minister, I appeal again to the advice given to the Speaker that this is actually challenging the integrity of the Executive Office. I ask for that advice to be considered.

Mr Speaker: That really is a matter for the Executive. I have considered all my responsibilities under the request that was lodged for the Assembly to be recalled.

Mrs Long: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Attwood: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Point of order, Mr Attwood.

Mr Attwood: Mr Speaker, I have to say to you that I do not understand your ruling and how you can reconcile that ruling either with the notice that all of us received in the Chamber or with the Good Friday Agreement, the democratic will of the people of Ireland and our Standing Orders. Consequently, given that you are relying on what you referred to as "legal and procedural advice", I am saying to you, Mr Speaker, that, before this meeting proceeds, you must release, as a matter of urgency and now, the legal and procedural advice that you received, because you need to have your eyes wide open to the consequences in law and politics of what you are proposing.

Mr Speaker: The Member's request has been recorded. Your point of order has been recorded.

Mrs Long: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Nesbitt: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Point of order, Mrs Long.

Mrs Long: Thank you, Mr Speaker. We fully accept — that is why we are here — that your original notice and the original intention to recall the Assembly to hear a statement on behalf of the Executive Office was entirely valid. However, it is now clear that the deputy First Minister has withdrawn his consent for such a statement to be made. Does that not therefore invalidate this sitting of the Assembly? Can you clarify for us the political and procedural consequences of continuing down this road where we have one half of a double-headed Ministry presenting to the Assembly without the consent of the other?

Mr Speaker: I agree with the Member that we are not in an ideal situation. I understand the frustration of many Members this morning. I did take the initiative to write to the Executive Office, stating that I would be content to accept a statement from the deputy First Minister. The deputy First Minister declined that invitation.

Mr Allister: Point of order.

Mr Dickson: Point of order.

Mr Nesbitt: Point of order.

Mr Speaker: Point of order, Mr Dickson.

Mr Dickson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is quite clear that the Standing Orders of the Chamber have been stretched to their limit this morning with regard to the ability to hear effectively what is a private Member making a private statement to the House on this matter. She no longer has the confidence of the deputy First Minister in making this statement, and it is my belief, Mr Speaker, that you need to advise the House under what Standing Order you are allowing this unusual arrangement to proceed, if that is your decision.

Mr Speaker: I am content, Mr Dickson, that I am complying with the requirements of Standing Order 18A.

Mr Allister: Point of order.

Mr Nesbitt: Point of order.

Mr Speaker: Point of order, Mr Nesbitt.

Mr Nesbitt: Mr Speaker, the last 53 minutes have been a disaster for the integrity and reputation of these institutions. Can I suggest that you call another short adjournment, summon the Whips and see whether we can find a way forward?

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr Speaker: The Member has his point on the record.

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I do not challenge at all the veracity of your original summoning of the House faced with the request that you had, but it is quite clear that that request has effectively been revoked. Hence, I press, for the third time, for a ruling on whether or not you regard as a ministerial statement what it is anticipated we will hear from Mrs Foster. Are we now going to hear a ministerial statement or are we not? That goes to the heart of the matter.

Mr Speaker: Mr Allister, having taken the legal and procedural advice this morning, it is clear that my role is in relation to the procedures of the Assembly, not the procedures of the Executive, and that I have discharged my responsibilities under Standing Orders to recall the Assembly.

Mr Allister: Further to that point of order —

Mr Attwood: Further to that point of order —

Mr Speaker: I call the First Minister.

Mrs Foster (The First Minister): Mr Speaker, I am grateful to you for agreeing to recall the Assembly today and permitting me to make — *[Interruption.]* — a statement about my role in the renewable heat incentive (RHI) scheme. *[Interruption.]* Unlike normal practice on these occasions, which, by the way, you endorsed, I want to make it clear that the statement has not been cleared or approved by the deputy First Minister. I felt that it was important that I come before the House at the earliest opportunity. For almost two weeks there has been a barrage of media coverage on this matter, including wild claims and allegations, many of which have been based on spin rather than reality. This morning, I want to set out the actual facts to the Assembly. To repeat what I said in media interviews, I want to make it clear that, in order to get to the bottom of the entire issue, I am prepared to waive the normal convention and give evidence to the Public Accounts Committee.

The one issue on which we can all agree is that there were shocking errors and failures in the RHI scheme and a catalogue of mistakes, all of which coincided to create the perfect storm, resulting in the position in which we now find ourselves. In all of this, it is critical that lessons are learned and that the costs of the scheme are brought under control. As First Minister, I am determined that that will be done.

Today, I want to cover in some detail the establishment, operation and eventual closure of the scheme. I want to set out the policy objectives behind the scheme and the flaws in its operation. I also want to address some of the more common questions that have arisen over the past two weeks and, most importantly, to put to rest some of the myths that have grown up around the scheme. However, I want to make it clear that the statement will not set out every failing and flaw in the scheme and process, every missed opportunity and every mistaken assumption. That

work has been and will continue to be carried out by the Public Accounts Committee.

Before I move to the chronology of what occurred, I want to say a few words about ministerial accountability. By convention, Ministers are answerable to the Assembly not only for their actions and decisions but for those of civil servants in their Department, regardless of any personal responsibility for actions or omissions by officials. In practice, Ministers determine departmental policies and delegate their implementation to officials. It is the departmental accounting officer — normally the permanent secretary — who is responsible for the stewardship of resources within the Department's control.

While it may have been lost amidst the media hype, I am on record as saying that I entirely accept that I am accountable to the Assembly for the actions of the Department during my tenure as Minister. I am sorry that the initial scheme did not contain cost control measures and that there were fundamental flaws in its design. This is the deepest political regret of my time in the House. As Minister, I accept responsibility for the work of the Department during my time at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). Once again, for the avoidance of doubt, I believe that it is right and proper that I answer to the Assembly for my role in the RHI scheme, and not for one moment do I seek to shirk or avoid that responsibility. But, if we are to learn lessons from the entire experience, it is essential that we know exactly where things went wrong.

The non-domestic RHI scheme was introduced in November 2012. It supports the UK objective of contributing to the EU-wide target that, by 2020, 20% of energy consumption should be from renewable sources. The UK's share of the target is 15%, and the plan is to achieve that through a combination of 12% renewable heat and 30% renewable electricity by 2020. In Northern Ireland, the renewable heat target is 10% by 2020. The non-domestic scheme incentivises the uptake of renewable heat technologies such as biomass, heat pumps and solar thermal installations. It provides payments for 20 years based on the heat energy generated. The level of tariff is dependent on the size and type of technology, and the calculation of the tariff was intended to cover capital costs, operating costs and non-financial hassle costs over the lifetime of the technology.

A domestic RHI scheme was introduced in December 2014. There was an increase in application numbers during 2015 that escalated quite rapidly to produce the crisis we now face. Focusing on the incentive for small to medium-sized biomass boilers, the scheme provided a tariff of just over 6p a unit.

11.30 am

Just under £38 million of funding was provided by the Treasury for the Northern Ireland RHI schemes during the five-year period from 2011 to 2016. However, scheme uptake was initially low in the first few years, with only 409 applications received by the end of 2014, leading to an underspend of around £15 million during the first four years. The total number of renewable heating installations under the non-domestic scheme had increased to over 2,000 by the time that the scheme was suspended in February 2016. Current estimates suggest that around 6% of our total heating needs in Northern Ireland are now met

through renewable heating technologies. In addition to the resultant reduction in CO2 emissions, the local Northern Ireland economy is benefiting from the ongoing investment through the RHI schemes. That investment brings benefits: job retention and creation in the energy services sector. I make those points simply to underline the point that, however bad the execution has turned out to be, the aims of the scheme were good and necessary.

One question that has been asked by many people is this: why did we not simply replicate the Great Britain arrangements in Northern Ireland? The answer is quite simple: in Great Britain, the main obstacle to the growth of renewable heat was and is the wide availability of affordable natural gas. Here, the main heating fuel is oil, and the gas market is relatively immature. It was even more so in 2012, hence it is clear that simply to import the GB arrangement to the Northern Ireland market at that time would not have been appropriate.

While this statement is not the place to rehearse every failing or flaw in the process, there is one matter that I believe it is important for me to address. It is the error that goes to the very heart of why the costs of the scheme ran out of control. The crucial mistake in the scheme was that the tariff for the most commonly used boilers — small to medium biomass — was set at a level higher than the market price of the relevant fuel, which is mainly wood pellets. In essence, that created an incentive to continue to burn fuel over and above the levels required for the relevant function, whether a commercial business operation or a community facility such as a nursing home or a church. Of course, the regulations do not provide for payment for wasted heat or heat that has no functional benefit. However, as the PAC has exposed, a further major failing of the scheme here has been that the necessary aspects of the regulations have not been rigorously enforced. There clearly should have been more and better inspections of businesses long before the summer of 2016.

At the heart of the RHI story is that the tariff subsidy was higher than the cost of the wood pellets, yet DETI's 2012 business case on the RHI wrongly stated that the tariff was lower. That crucial misunderstanding informed DETI's attitude to the RHI in subsequent years. It helps explain why concerns were not taken seriously enough and why action was not taken quickly enough when problems emerged. With the greatest of respect to those who criticise me for that, I remind them that I did not simply impose the scheme on the people of Northern Ireland. The tariff was set out in schedule 3 to the legislation, which was scrutinised by the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee and passed after debate by the Northern Ireland Assembly. Indeed, the Chair of the Committee at the time, Mr Patsy McGlone MLA, said:

"The Committee scrutiny of the development of the renewable heat incentive has been considerable and reflects the importance and long-term nature of the proposals. Before supporting the RHI, the Committee sought and received assurances on incentive and tariff levels, banding levels, incentives for domestic consumers, payments to participants and support levels for the renewable heat premium payment scheme." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 78, p299, col 2].

The unfortunate reality is that no one in government or in the Assembly in their work in creating and passing the legislation picked up on that crucial failing. Contrary to some accounts, in the early years of the scheme, that was not widely picked up by the industry either. In fact, as has been stated, when I was the Minister responsible, Northern Ireland was underperforming in that area. In my years as Minister, there was an underspend on the RHI up to and including my final year at DETI, which was 2014-15. That is detailed in the Northern Ireland Audit Office report. Take-up in the scheme's early years was low. Indeed, as hard as it is to believe now, there was even a publicity campaign in 2014 to encourage more applicants.

The BBC 'Spotlight' programme and subsequent comment has made significant play of a concerned citizen. I would ask the entire Assembly, if it were here, to join me in thanking that person for all that she did to try to prevent the calamity that we have fallen into.

She deserves our highest respect and a sincere apology on behalf of my former Department, which should not have dismissed her claims with disbelief but examined them with diligence. It is no exaggeration to say that, had she been listened to on any of the three occasions on which she approached DETI, the crisis would have been avoided.

Unfortunately, it has been difficult to establish the exact facts around contact between the concerned citizen and me and the Department. When asked by 'Spotlight' about correspondence from the concerned citizen, I replied:

"I passed these concerns on to departmental officials to investigate. It is now obvious that these investigations should have highlighted the failings of the scheme and ameliorative actions should have been taken."

I made that statement from memory and on advice that appeared to indicate that she had raised her concerns directly with me. It is my normal practice — indeed, it is the appropriate practice — to pass any concerns received from members of the public to the relevant departmental officials. However, my response was made without the benefit of having reviewed the concerned citizen's original letter. It is now clear that the initial communication to me did not raise concerns about the RHI scheme. I understood from the Department for the Economy officials who have spoken to the person in question that this was the only correspondence sent directly to me. However, a subsequent email to my private account the following week has now come to light in which there is a reference to concerns about the scheme.

It has also been alleged that I contributed to the problem by putting the introduction of the domestic RHI ahead of cost controls on the non-domestic scheme. It is quite wrong of anyone to describe this as a smoking gun. I make no apology at all for having pushed to see the domestic scheme introduced, as it was a totally legitimate and rational decision based on the information available to me at that time. I did not receive any indication that cost control of the non-domestic scheme was an urgent priority at that time. The Department for the Economy is seeking to establish the facts as to why the warning signals that had been given, not least those from the concerned citizen, were not escalated in the Department. It is important that this work progresses to a conclusion as soon as possible.

To sum up, at no time during my period as Minister were any recommendations made to me to introduce cost controls, nor were there any warning signs that spending on the scheme was spiralling out of control. In fact, during my time in the Department, there was an underspend of the money available to us.

I will now turn to the period after I left the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. In May 2015, I became Finance Minister and had no role whatsoever in the ETI Minister's decision to amend the RHI scheme. The then First Minister, Peter Robinson, has also made it clear that he was unaware of the issues around RHI as they had not been brought to him as party leader or as First Minister. Therefore, at no time did he seek to intervene either.

Let there be no doubt that the decision to amend the RHI scheme was a matter for the ETI Minister. The timing of the introduction of cost controls was entirely a matter for him. It has been suggested that my party sought to influence the decision on the timing of the introduction of cost controls. It has been only in recent days that I have been aware of this allegation, and I have now taken the opportunity to investigate it. The only person who would have been in a position to instruct the ETI Minister would have been the First Minister at the time. This has been checked with the then First Minister, who has made it clear that the problems surrounding RHI were never brought to him either as First Minister or as party leader. He made it clear, therefore, that he could not and did not intervene in any way.

No other Minister took any role in this matter, nor did they make any representations in relation to it. I can confirm that the DUP party officers took no interest or role in the question of the RHI. Therefore, regardless of what, if anything, was said in relation to the party's role, no one had any authority to instruct the ETI Minister to do anything. There is no evidence whatsoever of Mr Bell raising any concerns with the First Minister if he felt that he was being pressurised. Let me make it absolutely clear: any suggestion that the Enterprise Minister was instructed to delay the changes to the RHI scheme is totally without foundation.

By way of a submission from John Mills, the then director of DETI's energy division, on 31 December 2015, a recommendation was made to the then Minister to close the RHI scheme because of concerns about an overspend, and the Minister agreed to that proposal. A subsequent submission from John Mills on 19 January 2016 recommended steps to close the scheme by early to mid-March 2016.

These submissions were based on the assumption that conventional processes of consultation and Committee clearance were required. The Minister signed off on this submission on Friday 22 January, agreeing to the early to mid-March closure. However, as a result of concerns, a hold was put on this decision within half an hour.

In late January 2016, complaints about the operation of the RHI scheme were made to me. I informed the deputy First Minister and I passed them on to the head of the Civil Service. I was deeply concerned about the proposed mid-March closure date in light of the growing financial pressures, and the Executive agreed on 5 February to a closure around 15 February. Immediately after the announcement of the early closure of the scheme,

concerns were raised about those who had already installed boilers but had not yet applied and would be disadvantaged.

On the basis that cost control measures were now in place, there was a danger of legal challenges to those who had installed boilers but had not yet received authorisation and, with the agreement of senior civil servants, it was decided that the scheme should remain open for a further two weeks.

As the Enterprise Minister at the time highlighted in the Assembly, he took the decision with the agreement of the First Minister and the deputy First Minister. The extension of the amended scheme was an entirely proper and proportionate step to take in all the circumstances. Once again, for the record, the scheme was closed earlier than initially approved by the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Since the announcement of my decision to make this statement, the former Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has given an interview to the BBC. In that, he makes a number of allegations about the decision to amend and then subsequently to close the scheme. I think it is important that I also take this opportunity to put on record the factual position about a number of those allegations.

Mr Bell alleged on several occasions that he took action immediately to introduce cost control measures into the scheme and signed off the submission at the most immediate point he could. This is untrue.

Today my colleague the Minister for the Economy is placing in the Assembly Library a copy of the submission that was agreed by the former Minister. It will show that the Minister received a submission on 8 July 2015 recommending the introduction of cost control measures. It will also indicate that the original proposal from officials was to introduce cost controls from October 1 2015 but was amended to 4 November 2015 and signed off by the Minister on 3 September 2015. It is apparent from this document that action was not taken immediately but after considerable delay.

Mr Bell further claims that other SpAds became involved in the process who were, and I quote:

"Not allowing the scheme to close".

The fact remains that the Minister signed off a proposal that was to take effect from 4 November 2015. The only further delay in the introduction of cost control measures was as a result of legal and financial issues being resolved by departmental officials. This was unconnected to any ministerial decision. The decision was solely for the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to take.

The former Enterprise Minister claims that he made a decision to amend the RHI scheme but was overruled by special advisers. Since last week, I have specifically investigated this claim. The evidence is clear. The only decision taken by the Minister was in early September to amend the scheme in November. The Minister was not subsequently overruled by special advisers, and I am clear that whatever representations may have been made by anyone on this issue, it was not being done with the authority of the party.

I understand from Minister Hamilton that the permanent secretary recalls being told at the time that some in the party wanted the scheme to be kept open. He was unaware of the source of this suggestion, but believes it may have been based on the erroneous but widespread view at the time that because the scheme was funded through annually managed expenditure (AME), it was possible to maximise take-up without creating a problem.

I have checked and confirmed that no Minister made any such request or took any interest in the decision taken in September 2015. The DUP party officers took no interest in this issue and gave no instructions. It is, therefore, clear that, whatever the belief, the DUP did not ask the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to extend the scheme. I also understand that, when the suggestion of a four-week extension was mentioned in the DETI issues meeting on 24 August, the Minister did not voice any objections. In fact, he endorsed the decision.

The bottom line is that this decision was taken by the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. No attempt was made to overrule him and no such allegation was made at the time. In fairness to the Minister, I should say that I understand from Minister Hamilton that departmental officials did not object to a four-week extension.

11.45 am

Mr Bell also claimed that he acted in the way that he did because of what he referred to as “collective responsibility”. This demonstrates a total and fundamental misunderstanding of the convention of collective responsibility. The doctrine of collective responsibility refers to a convention whereby, once Cabinet takes a decision, all Ministers are expected to abide by it or resign. In this case, there was no decision of the Northern Ireland Executive, nor had there ever been any conversation between DUP Ministers, much less a decision, on the matter. There has been no allegation from Mr Bell that the First Minister Peter Robinson sought to delay the change to the scheme. Collective responsibility has no bearing whatsoever on this issue. Indeed, it is clear from Mr Bell’s statement on the two-week delay in February that he could robustly defend his role as Minister and would not change his course on the basis of SpAds acting without any ministerial authority or cover.

In discussing the decisions around the autumn of 2015, Mr Bell also claimed that he has a fact that reveals the role of special advisers in the scheme staying open. He then referred to a conversation he had with the deputy secretary of the Department, claiming his own special adviser had been asked by other special advisers to remove references to “Arlene Foster” and “the Department of Finance and Personnel”. This is the key allegation — that documents were amended — and it is a crucial point.

The truth is very different from that suggested by Mr Bell. I can set out the simple facts, based on the official records of the Department for the Economy. First, the only conversation approximating to this version of events took place in February 2016, not in 2015. Secondly, it relates to paperwork concerning the closure of the scheme in 2016, not the introduction of cost controls in 2015. Thirdly, the DETI adviser accepts that any changes he made were made of his volition and not at the request of others.

Fourthly, the amendment that was made relates to one draft submission before it was finalised for the Minister to consider, not to any attempt to delete emails or Government records. Fifthly, the reference that was removed was one that highlighted the role of OFMDFM in wishing to see the scheme close more quickly and without consultation. The removal of that reference had the effect of avoiding any impression that the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister had been told that he had agreed to a process of closing the scheme that was too slow.

Sixthly, this was a submission for the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister only and did not impact on the document that was being forwarded to the First Minister and deputy First Minister. Seventhly, and most importantly, the change to the submission had absolutely no effect on anything in the real world; the timing and process for the suspension of the scheme had already been agreed.

Minister Hamilton asked for urgent clarification on that issue from officials, who provided a note setting out the factual position. That was released to the media last evening, and the Minister has also placed in the Assembly Library copies of the draft submission with the tracked changes marked. The final version was then approved by the then Minister.

In relation to the closure of the scheme in 2016, Mr Bell has alleged that he wanted to close the scheme immediately. Once again, let us return to the documentary evidence. First, let me refer to a submission dated 19 January 2016. That proposed a closure date of early to mid-March 2016 and was signed off by the then Minister, Mr Bell. The deputy First Minister and I believed that we should act more quickly, and a further submission was prepared by DETI officials which provided three options. Minister Hamilton has also left a copy of that submission in the Assembly Library. In it, officials recommended a longer process to close the scheme over a longer period of time, but it was agreed that it should be closed as quickly as possible. So even taking into account the issue of the two-week delay that was agreed after the announcement, after all the complex processes the simple truth is that the scheme closed earlier than had initially been proposed by the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister. The reality is that it was the intervention of OFMDFM that ensured an earlier closure of the scheme than would otherwise have been the case.

To deal briefly with that subsequent two-week delay in the RHI closure, let us remember that it was decided, after cross-party concerns, that the scheme should not close within a fortnight of the announcement. Members across this House voiced concerns that businesses that had just bought boilers would be left in the lurch. The two-week extension that Mr Bell then agreed to as Minister was supported by me and the deputy First Minister. Other parties in this House, of course, wanted it to be longer. Cost controls were in place for the RHI at that stage, and civil servants were content with the two-week period.

This is not an exhaustive rebuttal of the allegations made by Mr Bell, but I hope it will convey, with documentary evidence, what actually happened.

I also want to make it clear that I support the need for an independent investigation, free from partisan political interference, to establish the facts around the renewable heat incentive scheme. I believe that the conclusions

of any investigation must be made public and that any investigation must be conducted speedily to assist in the process of building public confidence. I have been working to reach an agreement with officials and others on the precise details of such an investigation over the last number of days, and I hope that it can be resolved in the next few days.

While there will be significant interest in how we came to the present position, the most important issue for us now is to mitigate the costs of the scheme. Minister Hamilton plans to make a statement to the Assembly as soon as possible in the new year. The hope and intent is to reduce significantly the cost of the scheme to the Executive's Budget, but the details are still subject to considerable further work. This matters as we want to be fair to all those who responded to the incentive as it was intended to operate and to ensure that our process completely resolves the widespread abuse of the scheme.

In conclusion, unlike others, my priority in this is not headline grabbing or grandstanding. My priority, just as it was when I pressed for the earlier closure of the scheme rather than let it run to March, is to ensure that lessons are learned and to reduce the projected cost.

When I became First Minister, I said that I could think of no greater honour than to serve my country and the people of Northern Ireland. It is not a responsibility that I take lightly. I am not immune to the considerable anger and frustration that this issue has caused; not only do I understand it; I feel it too. I share those emotions because I am proud of this place and I want the best for it, and that is why I entered politics. I did not enter politics to shirk or shy away from difficult decisions.

The record shows that I have always put Northern Ireland first. The record shows that I have worked hard, throughout my political and ministerial career, to bring more investment and more jobs to Northern Ireland. The record shows that I have worked hard to keep Northern Ireland moving forward, and I will continue to do so as First Minister. That is why, rather than whipping up a media storm, I have actually been dealing with the problem along with my ministerial colleague Simon Hamilton and the Finance Minister, working on a practical solution, because that is what responsible politicians do. That is what government is about.

On a personal note, I want very much to thank each and every member of the public who has called my office at Stormont and, indeed, DUP offices across the length and breadth of Northern Ireland to offer words of support and encouragement. It really is appreciated. I will continue to work hard, as I have done throughout my political career, on everyone's behalf, to ensure a better and more stable future for Northern Ireland.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the First Minister for the lengthy and comprehensive statement that she has just given to the House. I ask the First Minister this: what is her view of those who say that they want facts and clarity around the situation but, when they have the opportunity to listen to those facts, walk out of the Chamber in an irresponsible way and in a media stunt to draw attention and grab headlines for themselves and are more interested in spin and propaganda than getting the truth for the people of Northern Ireland?

Mrs Foster: I just do not know what to say on this matter. For weeks now, people have been calling for me to come forward and calling on me to go to the PAC. I said I would go to the PAC; that was not good enough. I said I would come to the House, set out the facts and take questions from Members of the House, and where are they? Where are they? The people of Northern Ireland deserve better than this. The people of Northern Ireland will look at this today and say, "What is all that about — what is all that about?"

I have listened to people from across Northern Ireland — I have not been hiding away, I have been out and about. I have been in Upper Bann, South Belfast and my own constituency. I have been listening very carefully to what people have to say. They are angry, but they want a plan as to how to deal with this.

I am setting out a plan for how to deal with the matter whilst others seek party political advantage. I regret that. I regret that deeply. Others have to answer for themselves.

Mr Anderson: I thank the First Minister for her detailed statement to the House. Will she explain why the cost controls in the Great Britain scheme were not replicated in the Northern Ireland scheme?

Mrs Foster: I took the opportunity over the weekend to speak to officials to establish why that is the case, and there are three reasons. I have to say that none of them is good or very acceptable, because cost controls, as we know now with the benefit of hindsight, should have been in place right from the beginning of the scheme.

First, there was an understanding from the specialist report — the Cambridge Economic Policy Associates (CEPA) report — that the tariff set was lower than the cost of the fuel. That was the fundamental mistake, as I said in my statement. The suggested rate for biomass boilers below 100 kW was set initially at 4.5p per kilowatt-hour. At that rate, the consultants noted, there was no need for tiering, as, at the time, the proposed rate was less than the cost of wood pellets and therefore there was no incentive to use the boiler excessively just to claim the subsidy.

Secondly, there was not the level of demand for the Northern Ireland RHI in the first few years. In fact, the first application for the scheme was received in January 2013. Remember that the scheme opened in November 2012. Over the first four years, there was an underspend of approximately £15 million. Therefore, it was thought — incorrectly, as it turns out — that the need to introduce cost controls did not arise.

The third issue is around governance. The governance processes in the Department did not enforce compliance with commitments given when the scheme was approved, including careful review of tariffs and risks. Cost control was proposed back in the 2013 consultation paper but not acted on. There was no submission to me saying, "We think that you need to look at cost controls" or, "This has been raised as an issue". Nothing came to me on that matter.

The cost controls in Great Britain should of course have been replicated in the Northern Ireland scheme. I am giving you the reasons that were given to me as to why they were not replicated. They are not good enough, but they are the reasons that were given to me.

Lord Morrow: I, too, thank the First Minister for her very comprehensive statement. It is most regrettable that those

who have barked and shouted the most about the issue, when there was an opportunity for them to learn some facts around it, said, "We are not interested in the facts", and just walked out. They ran away. The First Minister is to be congratulated on her comprehensive report.

There has been much speculation as to why cost controls were not introduced when the scheme was established. Was any advice given to the Minister in 2012 about cost controls? Indeed, will the First Minister tell us what proposals for cost controls were considered and then rejected by the Minister?

Mrs Foster: Back in 2012, there were no submissions to me on cost controls. As I indicated in my last answer, cost controls of a sort were set out for comment in the 2013 consultation paper. It is not unreasonable for a Minister to expect that this document would have been acted on and that I would have been given a submission after the consultation closed. In fact, there was never a formal submission responding to that part of the consultation. I then went on to look at the introduction of the domestic scheme, but that is not a good enough reason for not bringing me a proposal or recommendation on the non-domestic scheme. One should have been brought, especially given that, by that stage, the concerned citizen had been in. She had spoken to officials on a number of occasions, yet they still did not think that it was the right thing to do to send me a submission on the issues. I deeply regret that that was the case.

Mr Stalford: I thank the First Minister for the statement that she made. In the precursor to it, several Members raised points of order and the issue of undermining the credibility of the House. Does the First Minister agree with me that what undermines the credibility of the House is when its elected Members run away from fulfilling their function of answering questions in this place and instead choosing to do so in TV studios?

12.00 noon

Mrs Foster: Of course it undermines this place when Members do not stay here to ask the appropriate questions but instead go outside and indulge in media spin. Unfortunately, this is not the first time that some Members have done that: we all remember the Ulster Unionist Party's stunt when I was appointed after the election. They said that they were going out of the Executive, and it was "Bring it on" and all that stuff. What was it? "Let battle begin", was that it? That was when they decided not to go into the Executive. They ran away then, and, of course, they ran away before that over the Fresh Start talks when they decided not to engage in that either. This is not new; it is a pattern. I do not think that they serve their constituents well: they do not. If they want to challenge me, the place to challenge me is in the House, but instead they will stay out. They will come this afternoon and put down an exclusion motion even though they have not been here to question me on the issues. They will come here with an exclusion motion even before the PAC has finished its investigation. They have made up their mind about the First Minister of Northern Ireland, but, thankfully, the electorate has also made up its mind about the First Minister of Northern Ireland.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the First Minister for a comprehensive statement to the House this morning. It is obvious from this morning's events that there are many

Members who should be in the Chamber who do not want this devolved Government to be in any way successful or to do their job in the rightful way, and that has been shown.

The 'News Letter' published a story this morning about the regulatory impact assessment. On what basis did the Minister sign off on the regulatory impact assessment, and should it not have been apparent that there was a fatal flaw at the heart of the scheme?

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for her question. It is an important question, and I am glad that she has asked it. First, let me say that our opponents told us that today was an important day but then could not be bothered to show up. They cannot be bothered to show up and ask me questions about the sorts of things that the Member has asked me about.

In the regulatory impact assessment, the Department recognised that setting incorrect support payment levels to the RHI tariff posed the most obvious risk to the Northern Ireland scheme. If the level was set too high, those installing renewable heat would be oversubsidised and less heat would be delivered per pound than would be under more optimal subsidy levels; alternatively, if the rate was set too low, renewable heat would not be deployed to the extent expected. In that document, it was made clear that there were to be regular planned reviews of subsidy levels after a number of years of experience with the subsidy. That would, of course, have provided the opportunity to amend tariffs if needed and ensure that they remained appropriate, given the potential changing market conditions. Of course, the market changes, and we saw that in the prices of wood pellets, oil and gas.

In that RIA, it was proposed that the first review would begin in January 2014, with any changes needed to be made by 1 April 2015. The review did not happen. Departmental officials did not carry out that review. As Minister, I have the right to expect that risks identified in an RIA would be managed by officials. As the accounting officer has explained at length to the Public Accounts Committee, several important commitments were made at the time when the RHI was approved, not least on risk management, that were not followed through. Those omissions by officials contributed materially to the very serious problem we now face. That is already under investigation in the fact-finding work that has been discussed with the PAC, and I look forward to the outworkings of the PAC. As I have already said on the record, I am more than happy to go to the PAC, even though that is not the convention. The reason I am happy to go to the PAC is that I have nothing to hide in the matter — absolutely nothing. I am putting everything out there and am calling for an inquiry if we can get it arranged with colleagues. I have nothing to hide, so why would other Members table a motion to exclude me? It is all party politics, and this party will not be part of it.

Mr McCausland: I thank the First Minister for her statement and the answers to the questions. They bring a great deal of clarity and dispel a lot of the confusion that folk have generated from other quarters on the matter.

Has the First Minister been able to ascertain or establish who was responsible for the assumption that cost controls were not necessary as they thought that the market price of wood pellets was higher than the tariff?

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for his question. It appears to have been a mistake that was made by DETI officials. The initial report from the consultants, CEPA, suggested that the rate for biomass boilers below 100 kW was set at 4.5p per kilowatt-hour based on a 20 kW biomass boiler reference case. At that rate, the consultants noted that there was no need for tiering because, at that time, the proposed rate was less than the cost of wood pellets, and, therefore, there would be no incentive to use the boilers excessively just to claim the subsidy.

The consultants were then asked to reconsider the rates following feedback from the industry after the consultation process, and, in February 2012, the consultants produced a new paper that increased the rates to account for a larger reference case boiler of 50 kW rather than the original 20 kW reference case. The rate proposed for biomass boilers of less than 100 kW was increased in this paper to 5.9p per kilowatt-hour, but there was no mention — no mention — of the need for tiering or that this was not in excess of the cost of wood pellets. So, the final business case approved by DFP in mid-2012 included a 5.9p tariff, which has subsequently been increased with inflation to 6.4p per kilowatt-hour.

The Department's business case to DFP stated that there was no need to consider tiering because the rate proposed was lower than the cost of fuel, and, therefore, there would be no incentive to abuse the system by generating heat just to claim the subsidy. However, in the case of biomass boilers, this was simply not true. In fact, the cost of wood pellets was shown in the same business case as being 4.39p per kilowatt-hour compared with the proposed tariff. It was there in black and white that the proposed tariff for the wood pellets was 6.4p per kilowatt. Nobody in DETI, CEPA or DFP spotted that that was the case, and, therein, lies the fundamental problem.

Mr Speaker: That concludes questions on the statement. The Business Committee has agreed to suspend the sitting for one hour following the conclusion of questions on the statement. I propose, therefore, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 1.00 pm. The next item of business when we return will be the motion under section 30 of the Northern Ireland Act.

The sitting was suspended at 12.07 pm.

1.00 pm

On resuming —

Assembly Business

Exclusion of Minister from Office under Section 30 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Mr Speaker: The next item of business is a motion signed by 30 Members under section 30 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in relation to the exclusion of the First Minister from office. The motion for exclusion of a Minister under section 30 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 must relate to the specific terms of that section. Any amendments that take the motion outside of those terms will be inadmissible. I have received legal advice from officials that the amendment proposed by Sinn Féin was incompatible with the requirements of section 30 of the 1998 Act and, as such, was inadmissible.

The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to three hours for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. The First Minister will have 30 minutes, and all other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes. At the start of the debate, I want to note that the motion has attracted the signatures of a wide range of parties. Whilst there is a three-hour time limit to the debate, I want to make Members aware that I intend to use my discretion to ensure that as many Members as is possible are heard from each party represented in the House. I advise Members that the vote on the motion will be on a cross-community basis.

Mr Eastwood: I beg to move

That this Assembly, in accordance with section 30 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, resolves that the First Minister no longer enjoys the confidence of the Assembly and that she be excluded from holding office as a Minister or junior Minister for a period of six months because of her failure to observe the terms of paragraph (g) of the Pledge of Office and the first paragraph of the ministerial code of conduct, in that she failed to observe the highest standards of propriety and regularity in relation to the stewardship of public funds surrounding the renewable heat incentive scheme.

The SDLP brings this motion before the House in the full awareness of just how serious a moment this is for our local politics. As we attempt to claw back the £400 million and more that may be lost to our local taxpayers, let us also act to claw back the fading threads of confidence in these institutions. As we draw towards the end of 2016, let us today act to redeem and restore some faith in the public service, because the common and the collective good remains worth fighting for. In that context, the SDLP very much welcomes the cross-party support the motion has received. There is a reason for that unity, and the DUP Members of the House would do well to take heed of it.

Since entering into public life as a councillor and as an MLA, I have never seen our public more engaged and angry about a single issue. I would hazard a guess that, as each of us walked around the streets of our constituencies this weekend, MLAs from across the Chamber were

hearing that same disgust. Our community is united in anger. Let it be recognised here today that it is an anger that the public have every right to hold.

Mr Givan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Eastwood: No.

The last number of months — *[Interruption.]* The last number of months has seen a damaging pattern to our politics: the cloud hanging over the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) deal; the inaction on Brexit; the structure of the social investment fund (SIF); and the continued funding and appeasement of a UDA boss. Amongst the many uncertainties of this last political period, there is one thing we can all say for sure: there is no fresh start here.

The scandal of the non-domestic renewable heating scheme is by far the biggest imprint on that damaging pattern. This is the biggest public finance scandal ever to hit these institutions. As this scandal has unfolded, it has suited some to try to muddy the waters, but we must not be distracted. This scandal must not be reduced to a psychodrama between the Member from Strangford and the now First Minister. It must not be reduced to being about just a falling out between former friends or revised to tell only a story of a split in one political party. It is so much bigger than that.

So far, digging into this scandal has uncovered staggering incompetence. Digging deeper has the potential to uncover corruption. Therefore, let us be precise and forensic about the information that is still left unanswered.

The best place to start is always at the beginning, and whether the First Minister likes it or not, this scandal begins with her. The RHI scheme was deliberately changed from the GB model. The question still remains as to why that happened. When the scheme was drawn up in Northern Ireland, why were some of the GB regulations copied and included and why were some not? In particular, why was section 9 of the GB regulations not included, a section that would have established cost controls for the entire scheme? Did the First Minister advise or take advice on the inclusion of such cost controls?

Move on to personal warnings received by the First Minister. We have now lost count of how many times the account and response of the DUP to the whistle-blower has changed. This morning's revelations add to the impression that the First Minister was aware of a lot more than the jot and tittle of this scheme. Did she deal with other whistle-blowers in precisely the same fashion as she dealt with this lady?

Move forward to 2015. When will we get the names of the 984 applicants to this scheme between September and November 2015? Did the First Minister advocate for the scheme and on what scale? The same question applies to her party colleagues and their staff. When did Mr Stephen Brimstone make his application?

Move on to the role of special advisers. Under what direction and under whose control do DUP special advisers work? Are DUP politicians collectively responsible to DUP special advisers, or is it the other way round? In addition to departmental files, will the DUP publish all its internal correspondence regarding the RHI scheme?

The questions are many and detailed. For two weeks now, confusion has been met with contradiction. My party is clear that it will now require a full, public, judge-led inquiry to get to the full truth. It is only right and reasonable, therefore, that the First Minister, having failed to take the opportunity to step aside, is excluded from office whilst this investigation takes place. Let it be in the hands of the person tasked with leading the public inquiry to determine whether the First Minister is fit to resume office.

I note that the Member for Strangford has been removed from his position by the DUP pending an investigation. Surely the First Minister should follow the same logic and accept the same fate. The continuation in office will further bring deadlock to an already failing Executive.

Today, Members were expecting to scrutinise the draft Budget from the Finance Minister, yet we meet to discuss the career of one individual. During the week, there was confusion about whether an Executive Office press release was actually a DUP press release. Today, we are informed that the First Minister is speaking without the authority of her joint office. All of this is because the DUP leader will not do the decent and dignified thing and step aside. We cannot go on like this.

The longer that the First Minister clings on, the more that her credibility will fade. Let me assure the First Minister that Christmas will not save her.

Let me now turn briefly to the First Minister's coalition partner, which, given its position, will play an important role in today's proceedings. I welcome that Sinn Féin has moved on to similar ground as the opposition parties. I acknowledge that it has come a distance over the past two weeks and has struggled to come to a position. I genuinely urge Sinn Féin Members, having travelled this far, to come a little further. Let them now support our motion and exclude the First Minister until a full investigation takes place. In doing so, let them follow the advice of someone whom they might respect, who spoke not so long ago on a similar scandal. He said:

"People have seen through this because citizens are not stupid. They have seen through the patronising responses and insulting remarks. The actions of the Government in this Chamber in failing to be straight with the Opposition or with citizens is damaging faith in the political system."

He goes on to say that a credible Government cannot continue to:

"evade questions and duck and dodge their responsibilities",

which:

"merely expose this Government's arrogance and incompetence."

Those are the words of Mr Gerry Adams supporting a motion of no confidence in the Dáil in 2014. They would be wise to avoid a partition in their principles.

Mr Speaker, 2016 has been a strange and serious year for politics. Even those who tune in to current affairs only occasionally will have noticed a change in its frequency and tone. If 2016 has been a bad year for losing musical greats, it has been an even worse year for politics. Too often in the past year, public service has been

opportunistically downgraded and demeaned in the mind of the public. As we face into 2017, let us begin to change that narrative. First Minister, redeem some faith in the notion that public service is beyond the selfish needs of any one individual. Redeem some faith in these institutions and restore some dignity in your office and in our politics. Think beyond yourself and beyond your party. First Minister, step aside now.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mrs Foster (The First Minister): It is good to see people back in their places.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mrs Foster: Of course, they will deal not with the facts of the RHI scheme but with a totally doomed motion. It is doomed because of what votes they need, and I will come to that in a minute.

I am proud to say that I serve this country as First Minister not at the pleasure of my political opponents but because of the mandate from the people of Northern Ireland in an election less than eight months ago. I am delighted to say that, in this country at least, it is still the people and not the politicians who get to decide who should be in office. It is certainly not the responsibility of those politicians who were soundly rejected at the polls such a short time ago to decide who should hold the highest ministerial office, however much they wish to do so.

The RHI debacle deserves to be fully investigated and understood, and that is what will happen. We need to know exactly what went wrong and how we are going to fix it. What does not serve the people of Northern Ireland well is people seeking to score cheap political points. I know that Christmas is coming, but the attempt to turn the issue into a political pantomime is a diversion and a distraction from the important work that is going on. This motion turns what has been a very serious issue into low farce. It is a kamikaze motion with no prospect of success, and the signatories to it know that. It will not shine any light on the truth, nor does it seek to find solutions. Instead, it will cruelly expose the impotence of those parties that shirk their responsibilities rather than face up to the difficult choices that a Government face. The motion exposes and confirms what has already been clear over the past few weeks: that this is nothing short of an attempt at a constitutional coup d'état. I have to say that it is a coup d'état more worthy of a 'Carry On' film.

I know that, if the election had been held amongst just newspaper pundits and elements in the BBC, this party would not be where it is today. If they had their way, a few of us would be scattered across the Back Benches — probably sitting where Mr Allister and Mr Agnew are today, though perhaps with a few more seats — but it is the people and not the media who decide.

1.15 pm

What people want is to get the problem sorted, not more arguing, bickering and stunts of walking out when they could have heard the facts from politicians here at Stormont. They want to know what our priority is to reduce projected costs — not claw back but reduce those costs — not to claim a political scalp. That is what this is all about: trying to claim a political scalp. I am here. I will stay here to fulfil the trust that has been placed in me and to make

sure that the whole mess is being cleared up. That is what my priority is in all this. I deeply regret the fact that the scheme was flawed from the outset. I regret the fact that it has placed a projected burden on our public finances, which we now seek to bring under control, but I totally and absolutely reject any notion that I have ever done anything other than act with the highest levels of integrity from the start of the process.

As should be the process, I have made a statement to the Chamber and laid down the facts of the scheme. My opponents were so interested that they walked out. So confident were they in their arguments that they could not be bothered to attend the debate or to ask me a question — just one question — on the record. They are very brave in front of a camera but cowards in the Chamber. *[Interruption.]* That is because they are not interested in a discussion let alone a debate: all that they are interested in is political distraction. You know why they want a distraction. You know why they are desperate for a political distraction. It is because they have no purpose. They have no plan or policies for Northern Ireland, unlike the DUP, which has a plan to create more jobs by bringing in more business investment and to ensure that we get the best deal for Northern Ireland. *[Interruption.]* Unlike the DUP, they have no plan to strengthen our schools and hospitals. We do, and we are not going to be distracted by these games.

My political life is about bringing people together. I am proud to see that I have done it again today by getting the UUP, the SDLP and Sinn Féin to work together. It shows what they can achieve when they put their selfish interest first. Imagine what could be achieved if they put the people of Northern Ireland first. Imagine what this Chamber could achieve if they harnessed that energy and made the people of Northern Ireland their priority instead of themselves. I will always put the people of Northern Ireland first. I am proud to do so.

What I want to do this afternoon, however, is to analyse the motion before us, to consider the statutory provisions on which it is based, to respond to the central allegations, to consider the role of the media in all this and, finally, to make it clear that this party will use the mandate of last May to defeat the motion. The motion is, of course, premature. It is inappropriate and has no evidence to justify it. Above all else, the one aspect of the motion that most cruelly exposes the motivation of those who have sought it is the timing. No one could possibly conclude that all the evidence has been weighed and considered and that action should follow. What we have here is trial by television, not by the appropriate authorities. What we have here are facts being disregarded in a fevered quest to build my political gallows. What we have here is nothing more than shameful political opportunism. The central charges against me in the debate today have not even been considered by the PAC, or any independent investigation for that matter, let alone decided on. This rush to judgement not only exposes the political motivations of my opponents but raises serious questions about the fitness of those who sit on the PAC to be impartial. The debate is a fact-free zone. There is no evidence, no adverse findings and nothing that could even resemble a basis for the motion being tabled, never mind passed.

Until very recently, there were constant calls from across the political spectrum for me to give evidence to the PAC. It almost seemed like every news outlet, bulletin and press release featured that demand. I would not be surprised

if Donald Trump even tweeted it. Well, guess what? I am ready and willing to go to the PAC. I have made that very clear. Suddenly, by magic, that is not good enough for Mike, Colum and Naomi; they want me out before I get near the PAC and before I am asked one single question or even open my mouth. So much for due process. So much for justice. So much for the facts. I ask this question in all sincerity of those who tabled the motion: would you tolerate for one second action being taken against a constituent on the basis of utterly unsubstantiated allegations? I sincerely hope that you would not, and I expect that your constituent would feel the same.

There are basic rules in the Assembly that my critics are trying to flout — rules at the heart of power-sharing. MLAs designated as nationalist or other cannot gang up and kick out the elected leader of unionism. Those rules work the other way, too. How many sermons on power-sharing have we heard over the years from the SDLP and the Ulster Unionist Party?

Mrs Long: You drove a coach and horses through it today.

Mrs Foster: Yet, here they are trying to bring back majority rule. I am sure that Mrs Long will get her chance to speak, as she always does.

Perhaps none of this should come as a surprise. When I look around the Chamber at those who have supported the motion, all I can see are individuals hungry for publicity and profile, jockeying for position as they desperately seek the media spotlight. I see Mr Eastwood and his party searching for political relevance after losing more seats at the election and opting out of government. I see Mr Nesbitt, the man who led the Ulster Unionist Party to its worst result in over 100 years, fighting for revenge against the party that humiliated him and defied his prediction at the polls. No matter what Mr Nesbitt says, let me say one thing: I will not be asking him to step aside as leader of the Ulster Unionist Party. *[Interruption.]* The SDLP and the Ulster Unionist Party chose to go into opposition, and that is entirely a matter for them. I do not object to it; I am just grateful that they are not very good at it.

Then, of course, there is Naomi Long of the Alliance Party. In the past, for the most part, the Alliance Party behaved in a more considered and responsible way than this, but, of course, that was under a different leader. No doubt, we will hear at some point today that this decision is related to the flags protest —

Mr Ford: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs Foster: No, I will not.

— or to costing her party a place in the Executive last May.

Then, of course, there is Mr Allister. Well, in fairness to Mr Allister, there has never been an exclusion motion that he was not prepared to sign, so we can let him off this time.

I turn now to the detail of the motion. It is an exclusion motion in accordance with section 30 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This is the most severe power on the statute book for dealing with political parties or Ministers. Section 30 of the Northern Ireland Act was introduced as a way of dealing with those who were linked to ongoing paramilitary and criminal activity after the Belfast Agreement but were otherwise legally entitled to a place in government. Indeed, in 2003, the provision was bolstered by a power to exclude for the Secretary of State

for Northern Ireland, following a report from the IMC. This provision has never been regarded as a substitute for the normal accountability arrangements of Ministers to the electorate or to the Assembly; it was intended as a long stop when the normal processes did not or could not work.

At Westminster, when the House of Commons passes a vote of no confidence in the Government, the convention is that it will precipitate a general election. When the House loses confidence in a Minister, the expectation is that the Minister will resign. Nowhere in the Northern Ireland Act are there powers of exclusion, for the very reason that the Northern Ireland powers were drafted to deal with the particular circumstances of the links between political parties and the paramilitary groups at the time of the Belfast Agreement.

Members on this side of the House will recall that, when the Ulster Unionist Party and the SDLP had the power to exclude Sinn Féin when IRA activity continued in the first term of the Assembly, they sat on their hands and did nothing. On any proper analysis, section 30 is appropriate only where there is a proven link to paramilitary or criminal activity, or where there is wrongdoing on the part of Ministers and the normal democratic processes do not suffice. It is not for MLAs to arrogate to themselves the role of appeal chamber to decisions of the electorate.

Absent some allegation of corruption, fraud or criminal activity, even the outrageous and outlandish allegations of the Opposition fall far short of what would justify a proper use of section 30. Even the use of section 30 represents a massive overreach by those who have tabled it. The fact that it has been tabled before the PAC or any other body has investigated the matter, never mind reached any conclusions or recommendations, make it an even more inappropriate device for this debate. Section 30 was not drafted for these circumstances, but the real truth for those who tabled the motion is that it is a motion designed to fail.

I turn now to the charges that have been made in this debate and in the motion on the Order Paper. The allegation is that I:

“failed to observe the highest standards of propriety and regularity in relation to the stewardship of public funds surrounding the renewable heat incentive scheme.”

One can only assume that this relates to the period when I was Minister responsible for the RHI scheme and not some guilt by association with what happened when I left the Department. We should be absolutely clear that the charge that is being made is not that I made some error of judgement in relation to the policy. The charge that has been made today is that I did not observe the highest standards of propriety and regularity. This is a remarkably serious and grave allegation to make. It is one that implies not merely an error of judgement but some malign intent or involvement. Of course, there is not a scintilla of evidence to justify such a charge. This claim goes far beyond any allegations made by the BBC, or even by Mr Bell for that matter, about my conduct as Minister for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

When it is published in full, the record will show that, at all points, I followed the professional advice of the officials, the experts and the consultants. I approved the recommendations that were made to me.

Mr Beggs: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs Foster: No.

I referred the correspondence of the concerned citizen to my departmental officials. At no point was any recommendation made to me to introduce cost control measures. In fact, far from it; I was being told that we needed to increase, not decrease, the take-up of the scheme. Although the Opposition do not want to hear it — they clearly did not want to hear it or they would have been in the Chamber earlier — the simple fact remains that at no time during my tenure in the Department was I warned that there could be an overspend. As Minister, I, of course, accept responsibility for the work of the Department, but the charge that I did not observe the highest standards of propriety and regularity is completely and totally baseless. If I am to be blamed for anything, it is for accepting the professional advice that I was offered.

However, in this regard, I am not alone. I did not introduce this scheme as a unilateral ministerial decision. I brought proposals for this scheme to the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee to be considered and scrutinised. It did not simply nod through the regulations but, as the Chairman, Mr Patsy McGlone, told us, and it bears repeating:

“The Committee scrutiny of the development of the renewable heat incentive has been considerable and reflects the importance and long-term nature of the proposals. Before supporting the RHI, the Committee sought and received assurances on incentive and tariff levels, banding levels, incentives for domestic consumers, payments to participants and support levels for the renewable heat premium payment scheme.” — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 78, p299, col 2].

In fact, as it was recorded at the time, the introduction of the regulations was delayed because the Committee took so long to scrutinise the scheme. Lest anyone thinks that concerns were raised that the tariff was too high, exactly the opposite was the case, as was so eloquently highlighted by Mr McGlone, who said:

“Some concerns have been expressed that the tariffs for the renewable heat incentive are lower than those in Britain because the tariff is generated against a counterfactual position of heating oil.” — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 78, p299, col 1].

If there were errors on my part, they were errors that were specifically endorsed by the Committee after “considerable” scrutiny. Indeed, not only did the Committee consider and approve this scheme, but so too did the entire Assembly. In fact, one of the other signatories of today’s motion, Mrs Overend, gave her specific support to the scheme and said:

“Having had the opportunity to scrutinise the regulations in Committee, I am happy to support the Minister in bringing them forward.”

So she too accepts that she had scrutinised the regulations that contained the vital flaw in the scheme. She also went on to address the issue of why we opted for a Northern Ireland-specific scheme and not the GB scheme. She said:

“Given that there are differences between renewable heat markets in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, it was important that the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment undertook its own research and economic appraisal of the situation here. That research, followed by a public consultation, has undoubtedly been invaluable in informing decision-makers on the best way forward for a renewable heat incentive scheme for Northern Ireland.” — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 78, p300, col 1].

In fairness to Mrs Overend and Mr McGlone, they were not alone. Everyone who spoke in the debate supported the regulations. There was not a single voice in opposition. Today, this motion is seeking to exclude me from office for a policy and a scheme that received not just Committee support but the unanimous support of the Assembly. This morning, I dealt with the issue of the concerned citizen. I do not intend to repeat that now, but I followed the appropriate steps in passing it to officials. In short, the motion seeks to castigate me for a scheme that was not just based on following the advice of officials but received the unanimous support of the Committee, after detailed scrutiny, and the endorsement of the Assembly.

As I said, it amounts to nothing more than a ‘Carry On’ coup d’état.

1.30 pm

None of the other allegations made in recent days relate to my period as ETI Minister, nor are they particularly germane today. However, I want to reiterate the fact that I had no role whatever in the decision of the ETI Minister to introduce cost controls to the scheme in 2015. My involvement and that of the deputy First Minister in 2016 was to bring forward the closure of the scheme, not to delay it. The publication by the Department for the Economy of the note for the record of the allegations concerning claims made about the leaking of government records speaks for itself.

I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to the motion. For almost two weeks, I have listened daily to lies presented as facts, the truth distorted out of all recognition and a public narrative created and relentlessly pursued that bears no relationship to reality. Now, I am not surprised that the Opposition, in their desperation, seek to exploit the situation for cynical political reasons, but I expect better of publicly funded broadcasters who fail to present the facts in a fair and impartial way. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. From the start of this process, I have not sought to hide from my responsibilities, the House or even the media. I have been out and about, fulfilling my engagements and meeting people from all walks of life who have offered me warm words of encouragement and support. I made a full and detailed statement this morning; I gave a lengthy interview to the BBC last week; and here I am, this afternoon, responding to the debate.

This does not elevate our political process. It does nothing to solve the many problems and challenges that we face. It reduces our politics to a soap opera and the conduct of

the House to little better than a television drama — and not a very believable one at that. Our people deserve better. Last May, I asked the people of Northern Ireland for a mandate: I got it. I do not intend to run away from my responsibilities. After this speech, I will have further meetings about how we find solutions, while others will talk to a meaningless motion in the House and, no doubt, will get coverage on the news tonight. I hope they enjoy it, because — do you know what? — their credibility will not be helped one iota by what goes on here today. However we got into this position, I will make sure that we put it right. It is time for solutions, not for the nonsense we are about to hear from the Opposition. As I said this morning, we will implement a plan; we will get the costs down —

Mr Nesbitt: What is the plan?

Mrs Foster: We will have a full, independent investigation — if you had been here this morning, you would have heard it. *[Interruption.]* We will have —

Mr Speaker: Order, Members. Order.

Mr Stalford: All talk, no action. You ran away.

Mrs Foster: Not for the first time.

We will get the costs down. We will have a full, independent investigation of where all this went wrong. Today, using the mandate we earned last May, we will defeat the motion.

Let me conclude by saying that I remain as committed today as I was on the day that I was elected First Minister to fight the good fight, finish the race and keep the faith.

Mr Weir: When an exclusion motion or vote of no confidence is put before the House, the debate is essentially about leadership. To my mind, the test of leadership is not whether we have a perfect society in which problems do not arise and mistakes are not made; the test of true leadership is in dealing with those problems, in facing up to responsibilities when problems arise and in finding solutions.

Today, the Assembly had two different routes that it could take. There were two pieces of business on the Order Paper. The first came from the First Minister. Her statement detailed the facts of how we got to where we are on the RHI. It outlined support for a fully independent inquiry. Indeed, let me make this clear in case there is any degree of confusion: it is not a DUP or a Sinn Féin inquiry. We support an entirely independent inquiry that will bring its own verdict on events so far and, most importantly, because this is what the electorate is looking for, identify potential actions to reduce the cost as we move ahead and remove the burden from future taxpayers. We saw the first steps —

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr Weir: No. The Member will have his chance. Indeed, the Member had the chance to question the First Minister earlier but abrogated that responsibility.

The First Minister took the responsible leadership role today by outlining that. People want to see a process in which the costs are reduced so that they are not a burden in the future. By contrast, the position taken by the opposition parties is a politically motivated stunt targeted at an individual. It offers no solutions as to how we move forward. The motion does not even reference an inquiry.

What we have seen over the past couple of weeks from the Opposition is an opportunistic and cynically driven approach to the issue. We have heard numerous members of the Opposition writing off the £400 million as if it has already been spent. They have dealt with the issue with a level of glee that shows that they hoped that it was a much greater figure, because that would cause a greater degree of political difficulty. It is a case of basking entirely in hindsight. As has been highlighted, throughout all the consultations and in all the debates in the Assembly and the Committee structures, not a single voice from the main opposition parties said, “Hold on a moment. This has been got wrong. We need to put a cap on this. We need to bring this to a swifter conclusion”. On the contrary, when the RHI scheme was brought to a close earlier this year, the opposition parties trooped in one by one to oppose its closure, complaining about the impact that that would have on jobs and the local economy. They did not want to close it; rather, they wanted it extended.

At the heart of this is the issue of the election. We have been told recently, “Vote Mike, get Colum” or, “Vote Colum, get Mike”. Let me make it very clear — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order, Members.

Mr Weir: That shows the kind of mature attitude that is being taken here.

People had the opportunity this year to vote Mike and get Colum or vote Colum and get Mike. That is possibly the most unattractive two-for-one offer that has ever been made in the history of marketing. *[Laughter.]* People said no. I give the leader of the SDLP some praise for what he has done on this issue. He has at least moved on. Some time ago, he was carrying the coffin of a dissident terrorist. He has now moved on to carrying the Ulster Unionist Party on his back, which has trooped in loyally behind him.

We are not going to have trial by television and radio. We are not going to have trial by innuendo and smear, trial by revenge or trial by jealousy. On the matter of prejudging the issues, members of the Public Accounts Committee, who are supposed to give an objective view on this, have already decided that they have given their objective view. They have produced a verdict before it is reached.

I have known Arlene Foster since she was 18. I am probably the person in the Chamber who —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Weir: — has known her the longest. She is a person of integrity, ability and conviction. She will carry on. She will lead for unionism in Northern Ireland. She is not a Mike-come-lately.

Mr Lyons: Will the Member give way?

Mr Weir: I am happy to give way.

Mr Lyons: I am happy to give the Member an extra minute. *[Laughter.]* Will the Member please continue?

Mr Weir: It is the case that —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Weir: OK. I urge Members to reject the motion before us and to deal with the issues.

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Is it not the rule of the House that any intervention after the five-minute period is null and void?

Mr Speaker: Your comments have been recorded, Mr Allister.

Mr Murphy: It is slightly embarrassing that we have this unedifying shambles taking place. It is not just about the revelations around a scheme that was very badly conceived and handled. Even if a good scheme can be put together to try to reduce that, it has already cost a substantial amount to the public purse. That was compounded by the television programme in which the First Minister and a former senior Minister in her Executive hurled accusations at each other. There were revelations and accusations around special advisers and the role that they played in the scheme.

Last night, then, we got on to the selective release of papers from the Department for the Economy by the Minister, involving civil servants in an internal DUP squabble as to who was right and who was wrong. Those issues are now being refuted by the former Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. Then we had this morning's behaviour, when the joint nature of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister was challenged and, in trying to allow business to go ahead, the Office of the Speaker was significantly challenged. All of this has been a very unedifying spectacle, which has added to public disquiet about the handling of the RHI scheme and the revelations and allegations around it. I have to say to the party on the opposite Benches that, as it continues, it may well circle the wagons thinking that that is the best method of defence. However, when you are in a hole, you need to stop digging.

None of this — the circling of the wagons or the robust defence — answers the questions that the public want answered. It does not deal with the broad range of issues that the public want answers on, and neither does this motion. By its proposer's admission, it is about the career of one individual: I think that I have quoted him correctly when I say that. This is about the career of one individual. If only this was about the career of one individual, it would, perhaps, be much easier to deal with. The reality is that this is about much more than the career of one individual. The motion does not deal with the investigation that is required, nor does it analyse the role of civil servants in relation to the matter. It does not deal with the former Minister, Jonathan Bell, and the allegations that he has made, and it does not deal with the role of the First Minister in relation to that and that of the special advisers who, it is alleged, were improperly involved in extending the length of the scheme when there was advice that it should have been closed down. The motion does not deal, as the proposer quite rightly said, with the applicants and the need to understand who benefited from the scheme. That will also cast up some answers about the operation of the scheme.

What we need is a proposition to the Assembly that deals with all those things and is not about a short-term fix or a quick headbutt for somebody followed by a walkout, saying that we have done our job, but a proposition that deals with the issues and with the very necessary and robust proposition to put a scheme in place that undoes the financial catastrophe that the RHI scheme has foisted on our public finances. This motion does not do anything for that. We asked the proposers and seconders of the motion

to put it to one side and join the motion that we have submitted for the new year, which is not just about the career of one individual but which deals with the entirety of what needs to be examined and the fact that we need to get to the bottom of it all.

Unfortunately, it seems that a day in the sun, or in the spotlight, is more important than getting to the heart of these issues.

Ms S Bradley: Will the Member give way?

Mr Murphy: I am very happy to give way.

Ms S Bradley: Does the Member accept that the motion, which I ask him to speak to, is the first step in looking at where that £400 million went, where it is agreed to go and what the principles are behind it? *[Interruption.]* The tone of this debate is not fitting given that the public are rightly angry. The debate so far is an absolute disgrace to the House.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Murphy: In fairness, in answer to the Member, it is not the first step; it is actually the last step. The public want to see a proper investigation into the entirety of the issue, not the career of one individual. The motion does not deal at all with such an investigation, nor does it deal with financial recovery or the broad range of people whom I mentioned, including the First Minister in her role, the former ETI Minister, the DUP special advisers and the civil servants. It does not deal with any of that.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Member very much for giving way. He and his party had every opportunity to put down an amendment to the motion, but you put one down that could not possibly be accepted. Who is playing stunt politics? There was an opportunity to put all those things into the motion but you missed your opportunity.

Mr Murphy: It is very interesting that the Member and his Opposition colleagues spent this morning challenging the authority of the Speaker on this matter. However, when he refuses an amendment from my party, it is entirely correct. You cannot have your cake and eat it. The motion does not get to the heart of what we are trying to do. It is simply about an opportunity to grandstand in the Chamber.

What this institution needs and what people are asking for is a proper, fully fledged —

Mr Speaker: Will the Member conclude his remarks?

Mr Murphy: — resolution. The First Minister should step aside until that is concluded. There is also a need for an urgent scheme to resolve the finance issue.

1.45 pm

Mr Aiken: It is important that we listen — *[Interruption.]* — listen — to the angry and increasingly frustrated voices of our constituents, many of whom have directly expressed their incomprehension at how the scheme, which was available to just 5,000 recipients, giving them a potential tax-free payout of around £275,000, could have happened, notwithstanding the fact that it costs us over £85,000 a day and every day until this is sorted out. However, I must express a much wider concern: a malaise about our Government, who have a disregard for the people of Northern Ireland and are focused on the retention of power for the sake of power itself. They are a Government who hold the process of good order, responsibility and

accountability in contempt. Whether it is the Economy Minister obfuscating about US airline routes, the Agriculture Minister denying that she has had discussions about waste incinerators, only to quote, 60 seconds later, from the same letter in the House, the Communities Minister telling councils to prepare to revive regeneration powers that then remain the same or the abject failure to address the existential challenge to Northern Ireland from Brexit, the arrogance of power with little or no accountability is beyond breathtaking — it approaches institutionalised corruption.

Added to that, we have a prison system in meltdown, with the suicide rate running at nearly one per week. We have an Executive who seem to believe that it is perfectly all right for paramilitaries to lead social enterprises, even when the Chief Constable categorically makes it clear that illegal activities are being perpetrated by members of that organisation — an organisation whose accounts have to be qualified because the files caught fire. It seems that the incineration of combustible material will be a metaphor for what will, hopefully, be the DUP leader's short term in office. Her epitaph will be less about leading Northern Ireland into its second century than helping to keep Ferraris warm — this is just since July.

As to the question of standing aside, we need to refer in greater detail to the period when the DUP leader was the ETI Minister; indeed, until recently, she and her party were at pains to explain that her wealth of experience as Northern Ireland's longest-serving Minister made her ideally suited for this highest office. Yet, she then explained that neither she nor any of the copious SpAds — more, I might add, than in Scotland and Wales combined — were, to use her language, "over the detail" of one of the most potentially expensive energy schemes anywhere.

Ministers do policy, and when that policy goes wrong in a normal government, they do the decent thing or are sacked. The SpAds are sacked, and, under normal rules, the ex-Minister's SpAds and culpable civil servants are banned for several years from employment in the sector covered by their Minister. Not here. Any mapping out of the golden circle here will see the same names connected to Ministers and parties regularly appearing on quangos, often receiving up to £22,000 a year for their trouble. Little wonder that a very senior US official compared Northern Ireland to the former East Germany but with better golf clubs.

We need to go back to 2012 when our then Minister decided — remarkably so, when many in her party deny that climate change is even happening — on a renewables policy for Northern Ireland. There was even a very clear model, one that the United Kingdom would largely pay for and that had safeguards attached and a regulator that would ensure its smooth running. It gave an incentive to industry and supported reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Why, then, did DETI or, more appositely, the leader of the DUP decide not to follow it? Did she have some form of intuitive insight that the rest of the UK renewables sector did not have? Somehow, the GB scheme has managed to remain largely on budget and on delivery. It is also noteworthy that GB is not commissioning renewable energy at twice the capacity of the grid to support it or charging small-scale producers three times the going rate for connection charges.

Again, those are all perverse policy decisions that deserve answers.

Why do we have a failure of energy policy, real concerns over brownouts or worse and some of the highest energy costs in Europe?

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Aiken: They were all policy decisions made directly by the leader, yet there is no Minister who was responsible. It was all the officials' fault.

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr Aiken: Yes.

Mr Beggs: Does the Member agree with me that a lot of this is about judgement, and that is where there is a big question mark over the actions of the Minister?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Aiken: Quite frankly, it makes little or no sense. Ofgem has made it clear that it was in regular contact with DETI, pointing out its concerns. Like many people, we find it inconceivable that the civil servants did not keep in regular contact with DECC.

While I have little sympathy for Jonathan Bell on many things, he was clearly handed a £1.18 billion hospital pass if ever there was one. Yet, no Minister is responsible. It is all the officials' fault, it was somebody else or it was the previous Minister. The responsibility, accountability —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Aiken: — and need to atone for this disaster lies with only one person. The so-called leader of our country has shown neither the leadership, the gravitas or the humility to be our First Minister. For all those reasons, she must stand down now.

Mrs Long: The year 2016 has not been a good year in politics generally, and it has been a particularly bad year for these institutions. It has been marked by allegations of corruption, cronyism and incompetence; of cock-up and cover-up. It is clear that, despite all of the DUP's bluff and bluster in an attempt to distract the public, the core questions around the RHI scheme remain unanswered. Why was the scheme changed to remove the cost control measures that existed in the GB scheme? Why was the opportunity to close that loophole and correct the scheme not grasped at the earliest possible opportunity? Who knew of all of this, and at what stage? Crucially, who stood to benefit from the lack of cost control and the delay in addressing that when it was drawn to their attention?

So far, despite the many statements emanating from the DUP — indeed, because of them — the only thing of which we can be sure is that we have not heard the truth or the whole truth; instead, we have heard anything but the truth. We now need an independent, judge-led inquiry to forensically examine those issues and all of the paperwork, including emails and memos between those involved, special advisers, those who benefited from the scheme, Ministers and everyone else, including the civil servants.

The First Minister has spoken, quite rightly, of due process, but there is a precedent in this place. The First Minister was called on today to voluntarily step down and allow an investigation to take place without prejudice. I said it last week and I say it again: she should put the integrity of office against the interests of her party. She still has time to do so. The

previous First Minister stood aside to allow an investigation into a £50,000 land deal, which pales into insignificance in comparison with what we are dealing with here.

Dr Farry: Will the Member give way?

Mrs Long: I will.

Dr Farry: Does the Member agree with me that standing aside should not be taken as an admission of wrongdoing but as a reflection of the fact that there are issues to be addressed and confidence to be restored?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mrs Long: Absolutely, I agree. That is why I said that she should do so without prejudice to the outcome.

However, the First Minister initially blamed her officials, behind whom she is now seeking shelter. The DUP said that neither of their Ministers had any responsibility for these issues, and so it stood until Jonathan Bell broke ranks. Suddenly, the DUP was openly willing to say that the errors which it had previously denied were entirely his fault. We have had whistle-blowers acknowledged, denied, exposed to the public and then acknowledged again, yet we still get lectures from the First Minister on clarity, truth and confidence.

Confidence is an issue that goes to the heart of this. Look at the manner in which the First Minister handled the fiasco of making her statement this morning. She failed to get the confidence and support of the deputy First Minister, and then continued with the statement in the absence of that support, undermining the very devolution settlement on which her office relies. Confidence in the First Minister has continued to be undermined. This is not about any individual; it is about these institutions, and it is about the anger, weariness and disgust that the public feel towards them at this point in time.

Stepping down at this stage, voluntarily and without prejudice, would be preferable, but it has been ruled out by the First Minister and her colleagues. That is why my colleagues and I are supporting the motion. In the new year, if Sinn Féin put forward a competent motion to effect an independent, judge-led inquiry, we will support that too.

Finally, we do not come here to support this lightly. When we went into opposition, we made a commitment that we would be a constructive opposition and would support the Government where we believed they were acting in the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland. Well, today they are not acting in the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland; they are failing them massively. I call again on the First Minister to put the people of Northern Ireland first, as she has said that she will do. Even at this late stage, voluntarily step down from your role and allow your colleague to step in and cover for you, as you did for the previous First Minister. Initiate an independent, judge-led inquiry, under the Inquiries Act, in order that the truth can be told. No one should fear the truth unless they are hiding it now. If people are being fully honest, then they have nothing to fear. I believe that it is the intention of the motion to get to the truth of this situation, not to satisfy me or the Chamber but to satisfy the people of Northern Ireland whose money has been squandered in this debacle.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr Givan: The public are rightly concerned about what has happened in the design of this scheme, about the abuse that has taken place in terms of the scheme and those who have been using it and how they have benefited from it. They are rightly concerned at the committed spend as a result of this scheme, and they rightly want people to be held to account. Those are all sentiments that Members, if they had been in the Chamber, would have heard the First Minister articulate in her statement and outline how we need to get to the truth in all of this. This motion does not have, however, the process in which to seek that. The motion is about one individual; it is not about the institutions or the Executive. If it was, it would have been a motion around the scheme and all of those areas that have been highlighted.

Mr Allen: Will the Member give way?

Mr Givan: I will happily give way, yes.

Mr Allen: Will the Minister tell the House how many social houses could be built from the £400 million, now in a black hole from the scheme, for those languishing on the social housing waiting list?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Givan: I appreciate the Member's additional minute. The contribution highlights, however, that this motion is to be used for a whole range of other issues, as opposed to dealing with the substance of this issue. It is about undermining Arlene Foster; that is what the purpose of this motion is.

If I was an Ulster Unionist, I would understand why you would want to undermine Arlene Foster. We only need to go back to the election. Mr Nesbitt, if he has his letter with him, can reopen it and see how many seats he was predicting. We know why the Ulster Unionists want to undermine Arlene Foster. We know why the SDLP is seeking to outflank Sinn Féin on this issue. I say to Sinn Féin, do not be spooked by what the SDLP and People Before Profit are doing. I understand that they are challenging in that constituency, but let us focus on tackling the key issues around the scheme and having a process in place that will get to the truth.

The motion brought forward by the SDLP has been seen for what it is. It is nothing but political opportunism from the party that once was the party of civil rights, that believed in innocent unless proven guilty and believed in due process. Now, set that all aside; this motion is about passing the sentence, never mind the verdict. Let us see if we can get the evidence to fit into the verdict that they now want to cast in the Assembly. That shows how the SDLP has moved from being the party of civil rights; it is not surprising that they have departed from that. When Mr Eastwood was being put right by Mr Weir with regard to the coffin that he carried, he did not like to be reminded of that. He does not like to be reminded of it because it is the truth. Members can point out all of the political opportunism that they have with the First Minister. There is nothing to hide on these Benches, but whenever the truth and the hypocrisy that they have had over many years is pointed out to the SDLP, they do not like it because it is the truth.

*(Madam Principal Deputy Speaker
[Ms Ruane] in the Chair)*

Then, we have the media and the narrative that they have been pursuing. Mrs Foster referred to the publicly funded

broadcaster — let us name it as the BBC — and the way in which it has conducted itself as an organisation, which is in stark contrast to some other media outlets. Again, it is about presenting allegations as fact. Again, it has been about —

2.00 pm

Mrs Long: On a point of order, Madam Principal Deputy Speaker. Is it possible for you to give a ruling? The Minister for Communities is currently speaking as a Back-Bench DUP Member, but he has responsibility for public broadcasting in Northern Ireland and is making serious allegations against a public broadcaster: is that in order?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has had the opportunity to put her point on record. The Member was called as an individual Member, not as a Minister.

Mr Givan: The BBC uses pejorative language in its interviews, presenting allegations as facts. Clearly, there has been a pursuit of Arlene Foster as an individual. The entirety of the case has been personalised. It has been made in the absence of fact on the broader issues about how submissions were never brought, the issue was never highlighted and there were failures on the part of civil servants to identify the issues. Like the public, I am alarmed that, although civil servants had given evidence to the PAC, it was only after the event — through a secret shopper — that we got to the truth. I share the anger that the public have around all of this. When the issue has been presented by the BBC and the Opposition, it has all been personalised in order to pursue the First Minister.

I remind Naomi Long, who spoke earlier, of something. This highlights how other Members reacted when the matter was dealt with in the Chamber. It was dealt with by Patsy McGlone when he was Chairman of the Committee and by all Members of the House. When Trevor Lunn, for whom I have a lot of respect, dealt with the issue of when the then Minister wanted the scheme to close, which we now know was at the end of March — then, obviously, it had to be within two weeks — he said:

"It is good news because it is an excellent scheme. A lot of people have already benefited from it, and a few more may do so before the thing closes." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 112, p388, col 1].

Opposition Members were saying then that it was an excellent scheme. Clearly, the evidence now shows that that is not the case, and hindsight is a wonderful thing.

Let us be clear, there will not be the resignation of the First Minister. There will not be a stepping aside by the First Minister. This party would not allow her to step aside even if she wanted to, but she does not want to. The First Minister has led the Executive for the past six months. We have been delivering on a range of issues. The Opposition want to diminish that and have used this motion as a smokescreen to try to dilute it all. We will continue to remain focused on what we need to achieve, which is to continue, over the mandate, to address the key issues that need to be tackled. Let us focus on what is important. Let us get to the root of the issues around the scheme and tackle the issue of the expenditure that is committed. Ultimately, that is what the public want. The public do not want to see the pantomime that went on this morning with the walkout, when Members could have held the First

Minister to account but chose not to do so. They want us to get to grips with the issue.

It was with regret that I watched Jonathan Bell's performance when he gave evidence. The public will make judgement in due course on what was said during that. As a believer — as someone who is a Christian — I know that Jonathan can reflect on his conduct. I point him to Luke chapter 18 and the parable that the Lord told about the publican and the Pharisee. Members who are familiar with that parable —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Givan: — will be able to draw a parallel.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that there is one Minister responding to the debate. I ask that Members do not make responses that relate to the Executive.

Mrs O'Neill: I think that the Benches opposite are absolutely misreading the public perception. We have spent a good part of the past number of hours since today's business in the Chamber started on antics, shambolic actions and statements being made without the authority of the entire Executive Office. I do not think that that is good enough. I am embarrassed as I stand here listening to the debate that has taken place so far. You are losing the run of yourselves. This issue is about public confidence.

The Member who spoke previously talked about how the Executive had delivered in the past number of months since they came into play after the election. They have delivered on many fronts. Every action and delivery that has happened to date has been overshadowed by the fact that the DUP cannot accept that its leader needs to stand aside to make sure that there is a full investigation of the issues that have been played out and drip-fed into the ether for the past number of weeks.

I am not interested in the internal wrangling of the DUP. Get on with it; fight among yourselves. I am interested in this: public confidence in politics. I am interested in making sure that people have faith that, when they go out on election day, they can return us to come up here to do business, deliver for public services, stand up against Tory austerity and deliver front-line services. That is what I am interested in.

There is a massive job of work to be done here on public confidence. We in Sinn Féin feel that the best way to do that is to make sure that the First Minister stands aside because she has a conflict of interest. There cannot be a full investigation that the First Minister in any way has her hands in through how it is played out. The only way that we will restore that public confidence is if the investigation is totally independent, in that not one of us can touch it. I think that it has to be an independent investigation. For me, the message that needs to go out to the public today is genuine. We have to get to the bottom of this RHI scandal. We need to know the ins and outs, and we need to know the design of the scheme and who did what, when they did it, how they did it and with whose influence they did it. We need all those —

Mr McCrossan: Will the Member give way?

Mrs O'Neill: Let me finish this point.

All that information needs to be in the public domain.

Secondly, the public need to know that action is being taken to stop the flow of money from the public purse. That is key in all this. The public need to know and to have faith that, when a problem was identified and a scandal uncovered, it was stopped. We need to do that. Thirdly, all this has to be in the public domain. Everybody needs to know exactly who benefited from the scheme and when they are going to benefit. All that information needs to be out there, and, for me, those three things are key.

Our position is very clear, and we have made it absolutely crystal clear. The First Minister, Arlene Foster, needs to step aside while this investigation happens. Let me say that, when I listen to those who tabled the motion, in some senses, I doubt your motivation. I listened to your antics and your contributions today. The public are not interested in playing games; the public are interested in answers. The best way to have those is to have this full investigation.

Ms S Bradley: Will the Member give way?

Mrs O'Neill: Let me make this point.

Those who tabled the motion focus on one issue: Arlene Foster standing down. I have said that I agree with that, but your motion does not go far enough. Your motion does not look at the whole gamut or at the need for the investigation. Your motion does not look at every other issue that needs to be out there in public. That is why we tabled an amendment that, given all the antics that went on this morning, the Speaker, for his own reasons, decided not to accept. We will bring that amendment back as a motion. I welcome the fact that Naomi Long said that the Alliance Party will be able to or could support that when we come back to it early in the new year.

People should stop getting on with all the nonsense. The institutions have taken an absolute kicking here. I am absolutely wedded to delivering front-line public services for individuals. I am a Health Minister with massive challenges in budgetary issues and in trying to do all the things we need to do to increase our investment in primary care. Those are the things that the public want to hear us talk about, not this stuff. So for me today, this is about antics, this is about stunts, this is about —

Ms S Bradley: Will the Member give way?

Mrs O'Neill: You will have your opportunity to speak.

This is about antics and stunts, so let us get back to the crux of the issue: credibility and integrity. Each and every one of us needs to have those. Arlene Foster needs to step aside. We have made that very clear. Let us use the next number of weeks to reflect so that, when we come back to our motion, which we have now tabled for debate early in the new year, I will look forward to all those who tabled the motion today supporting that motion. That is the key to delivering what the public are asking for. The public mood shows that people are angry. People want and deserve answers, and we will deliver those. I will not be distracted by party politics. This is not an orange and green issue, and it is not an issue between parties: it is about public confidence and integrity. Those are what I am most interested in in how we take things forward.

In the future —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can I ask the Member to bring her remarks to a close?

Mrs O'Neill: These are the only two points that I want to make: there should be integrity and credibility, and people should stop playing games and give the public answers. The First Minister needs to stand aside.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr McCrossan: Action is louder than words.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask Members not to make comments from a sedentary position.

Lord Morrow: We were not long in the Chamber today when we discovered the whole nature of the motion. Earlier today, we had the First Minister come to the House. She was asked and was willing to come to the House. She came to the House to put herself in front of Members for any interrogation and cross-examination, but all those sitting to my right said, "Look, we are not interested in the facts here. The facts don't bother us in the slightest. We are just interested in what hits the headlines, whether it is in the print media, the watching media, the listening media or anything else".

That is all that they are interested in. So, what did they do? They jumped up and said, "We will not be listening to any facts, folks. We must get out of the House because the facts will embarrass us". Therefore, they gowl here today. When you throw a stone into a pack of dogs, you always know the one that you have hit: it is the one that gowls the loudest. What we have right round the Chamber today are a lot of people gowling and shouting but not coming forward with very many facts. They just want to generate a whole lot of heat. *[Laughter.]* However, they do not want to generate a lot of light, because there is no light within them.

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Lord Morrow: Not at the moment; maybe later.

The motion is nothing short of a disgraceful attempt, to say the least, by failed parties to create the impression that the First Minister has:

"failed to observe the highest standards of propriety and regularity in relation to the stewardship of public funds".

They have, however, not produced a scintilla of evidence or any facts — not one.

I never knew Mr Steve Aiken until he came to the House, but I have learned one thing from him very quickly: he is an absolute maestro of exaggeration. My goodness, he can lift a pinhead and make it into a mountain instantly, and I remind him that he was at it today. He talks about the £400 million.

Mr Aiken: It is £87,000 a day.

Lord Morrow: Hold on a minute. You have had your say.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask Members not to make —

Mr Aiken: I apologise, Madam Principal Deputy Speaker.

Lord Morrow: At least there is a bit of humility in you. He talked about this £400 million. Well, £400 million has not been spent, Mr Aiken. He went on to say that there is a suicide in our prisons every week. When is that happening? This is unbelievable stuff. We have gone along

the line of fantasy and make-believe: grab the headlines, say the super things and the media will come racing for it.

Mr Allen: Will the Member give way?

Lord Morrow: OK.

Mr Allen: The Member has asked us to give him facts. The fact of the matter is that, if the money that has been committed — £400 million — cannot be clawed back, it will be taken away from our roads, our hospitals, our social housing and our front-line services, which are in much need of it. There are facts for you.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Lord Morrow: Mr Allen, here are some facts for you: had you been in the House earlier today —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask Members to address their comments through the Chair.

Lord Morrow: I forgot.

I say to Mr Allen that the facts are these: the First Minister stood at the Dispatch Box this morning and explained and outlined in graphic detail how she was dealing with the issue, but Mr Allen was bound — *[Interruption.]* You were not here to hear it. *[Interruption.]* You ran away.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member please take a seat?

Lord Morrow: I will.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind the Member to make his comments through the Chair. I hope that I do not have to repeat that.

Lord Morrow: I understand what you say, but I hope that Members will give me the courtesy of being heard. I suspect that they do not like what they are hearing. Do you know something? You are going to hear it anyway.

Let us turn to Mr Nesbitt —

Mr Nesbitt: Oh, yes.

Lord Morrow: Yes, of course. Mr Nesbitt now has the unenviable job of getting the monkey off his back, and the monkey is this: he was the great white hope for the Ulster Unionist Party. The Ulster Unionist Party had dominated the political scene for so long, and it wheeled in this TV kid and said, "This is the boy who will save us". What happened? He led his party to the lowest vote in its history. He now sees Arlene Foster as the real threat, and he must get rid of her. You will not be getting rid of her. You will not be getting rid of her.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Lord Morrow: Then, we turn to the SDLP. They, too, had a catastrophic election result under their young leader, the young pretender who tells his party that they will lead, but they are sinking desperately.

They sink so low that they will now even name children's play parks after terrorists so that they can court support from Sinn Féin supporters, and it does not work. They all sit with blushed faces and say, "We're sorry, but there's not a thing we can do about it". Let it be said very clearly that the same Mr Nesbitt — I will leave him for a minute.

Then we have the sanctimonious Alliance Party. They are whiter than white and purer than pure. They come into the House with this sanctimonious look on their face —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Lord Morrow: — and tell us that they would not do this. We know the fiasco that Mr Ford made of the policing depot in Cookstown. Where is our policing depot today? He spent and squandered millions of pounds, and we heard nothing from him.

2.15 pm

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up. There is a lot of noise from the Back Benches. I ask Members to respect whomever is speaking. I also ask that Members make comments through the Chair, rather than shouting across the Chamber.

Mrs Palmer: There are two principal reasons why the First Minister must take responsibility for the mess and stand aside. First, her ineptitude has dealt a devastating blow to our international business reputation. For a Minister who prided herself on the levels of FDI that she attracted and boasted of how attractive she would make Northern Ireland for investment, she has brought disdain on these institutions, which are now held up to public ridicule.

I agree that we ought to fight to limit the damage done to our public purse. We need to stop the bleed as best we can. The First Minister is not a safe pair of hands on Northern Ireland's public finances. She is clearly not across the detail, despite her public utterances that "detail is important". Why would businesses look to come here when our First Minister has made such a catastrophic policy decision? She was the First Minister; she was responsible. What must the United Kingdom Treasury think of us and our apparent inability to manage public funds? Will this impact on our future ask for additional block grant funding? What will the head of the Civil Service do about the possible negligence issues amongst senior staff? The DUP, particularly its leadership, is central to this, and the First Minister stepping aside will help to fix some of the harm that has been done to our business reputation.

The second reason for the First Minister to step aside is this: no one can trust her to do the right thing. How on earth can the First Minister expect anyone to put their faith in her while this issue is being investigated?

Mr E McCann: Will the Member give way?

Mrs Palmer: No, I will not.

How foolish does she think the people of Northern Ireland are that they would trust her to be impartial and allow a report to be published — and its recommendations enacted — that will damn her and her party? Does she honestly expect the House and the people of Northern Ireland to have such short memories? Does the First Minister expect the way in which I was treated to be forgotten and the slate wiped clean? I am sorry, Madam Principal Deputy Speaker, but it seems that she apparently has forgotten what happened the last time a DUP Minister was investigated for loathsome practice and the disdain with which the DUP treats Committee reports. A report was issued in 2014 in which I was vindicated and a certain gentleman sitting on the DUP Back Benches, as well as the special adviser who conveniently retired from politics

shortly before this mess was exposed, were found wanting. That report, which was produced by the Assembly's Social Development Committee after exhaustive evidence sessions and research, contained the truth of the matter. How did the First Minister's party react to the truth being shown? They tried to silence it. They tried to put forward their own spin in the form of a minority report. They tried to use the petition of concern to defend the party and the Minister from the truth coming out. They treated the Assembly, the Committee and me with contempt.

Why on earth should we ever trust that party to accept the truth? Why would anyone doubt for a moment that, if the report produced by the PAC was unpalatable to DUP Members, they would attempt to water it down or block it? They have done it before. They did it to me. Even if a report is issued independently — one that rightly points to the odious incompetence at the heart of the DUP — without the proper Assembly powers, why would we doubt that they would misuse the petitions of concern and other mechanisms to insulate their party from justice?

No, I am afraid that I for one, having been through purgatory because of the DUP, certainly will not allow them to conceal the truth behind opaque Assembly mechanisms.

Arlene Foster is too closely tied to the scandal. Her party has a miserable history of protecting itself from any meaningful scrutiny by this Assembly. For that reason, she absolutely must stand aside while a genuinely independent investigation is done.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr O'Dowd: Before us in the Chamber over these last number of hours, we have had two attempts to close down an investigation.

In the motion before us from the opposition parties and the Alliance Party, we have a proposal to come to the conclusion of an investigation before it is started. That, surely, is not the way we should be doing business.

The motion, as outlined to us, states that the First Minister, in her role as Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister, acted in a way that put public funds in severe jeopardy and squandered them. Is that the case? It is quite possibly the case, but to reach that conclusion, you require an investigation, and the motion from the opposition parties does not include any investigation. It does not include a reference to a judge-led inquiry or any material as to how that inquiry would be carried out, so the motion is fatally flawed and premature.

This morning, we had a statement from the leader of the DUP —

Mr Agnew: Will the Member give way?

Mr O'Dowd: Perhaps in a moment. I will see.

— we had a statement from the leader of the DUP that contained the conclusions of a DUP investigation. I referenced 15 conclusions or references to the truth or facts. I am sorry, but that is simply not good enough. It is not up to the opposition to find the leader of the DUP guilty, and it is not up to the DUP to find the leader of the DUP innocent.

That is why we have brought forward a motion that calls for a judge-led inquiry by a figure from outside this jurisdiction

into the rights and wrongs of what happened around the RHI scheme, which political figures were involved in it, which Civil Service figures were or were not involved in it and who benefited from it. That is how you do business in relation to placing accusations in front of people, whether in the Assembly or a court of law. Those are the rules that we all signed up to.

I listened with interest, I have to say, to the leader of the DUP talking about trial by television and ensuring that accusations are fully investigated etc. I hope they stick to that mantra. I think of my colleague Máirtín Ó Muilleoir and how, only a few short months ago, the same principles and high integrity were not adopted at that stage. But if we stick to the rules, we can all play by the rules.

In terms of what happened around RHI, there was, without doubt, a flaw in the system. We all acknowledge that. Everybody accepts that there was a flaw in the system. The question that has to be answered is this: when was the flaw identified, who identified it and who benefited from it?

At the heart of this is not an investigation into whether a Minister, a civil servant or a scrutiny Committee did not carry out their functions properly. The general public are highly suspicious — and they are quite right to be so — that someone or a group of selected people benefited to the tune of hundreds of thousands of pounds individually, and perhaps up to £1 million in one case, of public money.

Who told them of this lucrative deal? Who spotted the flaw and went out and met members of business groups and farmers who may or may not be contributors to the DUP? Because, folks, that is what is at the heart of this: corruption. Were members or supporters of the Democratic Unionist Party or other political parties in this Chamber taken to one side, shown the details of the scheme and told, "Buy into this and you'll make money"?

That is the public suspicion, folks. I am sorry, but the DUP investigation that was read out to us this morning does not cover that issue, and it needs to be covered.

I will end on this comment. Part of the problem is that some in the Chamber believe that we have a Prime Minister of Norn Iron: we do not. You are in the joint First Minister and deputy First Minister's office, and that is the way that things have to operate here. I do not care what legal advice was given to the Speaker this morning; I will give you some serious political advice: if the jointery of that office is corrupted, I doubt that there will be an office.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Simon Hamilton. Mr Hamilton, are you speaking in your —

Mr Hamilton: I am speaking as an ordinary Member, Principal Deputy Speaker.

I oppose the motion. I do so because the motion is based on a litany of erroneous charges — charges that are all without evidence. I want to do my best in the time that is available to me to address some of the issues surrounding at least two of those charges. The first one, which seems to be the argument coming from opposition Benches, is that Arlene Foster should take full and sole responsibility for mistakes that were made and flaws that were inherent in the original design of the renewable heat incentive scheme.

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hamilton: I have hardly started, for goodness' sake. The First Minister has made it clear that she does

take responsibility. She is answerable to the House. She is answerable to the Assembly. She made herself answerable to it at the Dispatch Box this morning at the request of Members whose names the motion stands in. Where were the opposition parties when the First Minister came to the House this morning to give a full and complete explanation of the circumstances behind the RHI scheme and her involvement in it? They were not here. They ran away. The charge is that the First Minister should take sole and full responsibility for the flaws in the design of the scheme. That completely misses out and obscures the involvement of Members on all sides of the House and, critically, others in the design of the scheme.

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hamilton: Yes, I will give way.

Mr Clarke: Will the Member agree with me that that may be a deliberate ploy by other Members to take the focus off themselves and some of their actions when the scheme was going to be closed?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his intervention. He makes a salient point.

The House knows full well that bad advice was given by so-called policy experts in the Department on the design of the scheme. External consultants were brought in to review the scheme. They have admitted to the Public Accounts Committee that they made mistakes, and they have apologised for those. The Assembly voted for it. This is not something that went through the negative resolution procedure or that did not have to come to the House: the House voted for the regulations to set up the scheme. They were scrutinised by and passed through the Committee. The then Chair of the Committee, Mr Patsy McGlone, is on record during the debate in the House in which the regulations were passed as saying:

"The Committee scrutiny of the development of the renewable heat incentive has been considerable and reflects the importance and long-term nature of the proposals." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 78, p299, col 2].

That is what Mr McGlone said in the House. In all that is said in here and outside the House, let us not forget for one second the role played by Members from parties on all sides of the House in the creation and scrutiny of the scheme. I am happy to say that no one — not politicians, civil servants or external consultants — spotted the flaws. No one. Members here wish to wipe away their involvement in the creation of the scheme and their part in passing the proposals. They do not want to take responsibility for that, but they should take responsibility.

The second charge that I want to deal with, which I have heard from Members who spoke previously, is that the Minister somehow intervened to keep the scheme open for a longer period for some nefarious reason that nobody seems to want to talk about or make any suggestion about. There is not a single shred of evidence of any involvement by the current First Minister in the issues surrounding the 2015 change in the tariff of the scheme. However, in 2016, the First Minister was heavily involved and intervened,

but her intervention at that time was to the benefit of the scheme.

It was to bring forward the closure of the scheme to an earlier date than that which had been agreed by the then Minister, who had agreed to close the scheme in mid-March. The intervention of the First Minister and deputy First Minister at that time brought forward the closure of the scheme to February. If anything, in respect of that charge, we should thank the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their intervention.

2.30 pm

Lest there be any doubt, Arlene Foster will not step aside. Why would she? She has done nothing wrong. She has nothing to fear. That is why she has called for and endorsed an independent investigation of the RHI scheme so that all the evidence is out there and the truth will be found. She fears nothing from the truth. There is no evidence whatsoever of any wrongdoing, yet people want to hang her on the basis of no substantial evidence at all. She certainly will not step down at the behest of her political opponents, who have shown themselves by their actions today and on previous days to have no interest in the substance of this and to be interested only in stunts. She will not go anywhere because she has a job to do. I am working closely with her on developing a plan to mitigate the worst costs and reduce substantially the cost of the RHI scheme. Arlene Foster is a leader. Leaders walk towards the problem. They do not walk away like others do. When they have the opportunity to lead or to take on the responsibility of government —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Can the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Hamilton: — others walk away. Arlene Foster will walk nowhere.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Ms Hanna: It is fair to say that belief in the will and ability of the Assembly has been low in recent years, but this fiasco has turned that public frustration and dissatisfaction into anger. The First Minister has had ample opportunity over the last two weeks to restore some confidence and dignity in the institution and to instigate a thorough public inquiry to get to the root of how and why £400 million of public money is being so shamefully wasted. We want to be clear that a fudged inquiry that is set up and directed by the Executive or their proxies will not be able to get to the bottom of that scandal. Any brinkmanship about and risk to the structure, despite that deep frustration, will leave us with no possibility of getting to the bottom of it.

Not for the first time, I wonder whether the party across the Chamber cares who they make cynical when they can just trot out, as the First Minister and her colleagues have done, the old headcount lines that it is about nationalists and others ganging up on the leader of unionism while the benign —

Mr Stalford: Will the Member give way?

Ms Hanna: No, I will not.

The benign taxpayer here is supposed to just continue picking up the tab and becoming more and more disenfranchised.

The arrogance today is breathtaking. You may think that this is hilarious, but nobody out there is laughing at this loss of money. The defence has been to spread it about and blame it on anybody but the boss — on civil servants, the Opposition and the media — using “whataboutery”, repeated versions of the story and a best defence of not being across the detail. The party that has been moaning about faceless unelected bureaucrats in Europe is apparently content to let SpAds run the show. The party that cannot even cut and paste London’s scheme tells us that it has the competence to lead Northern Ireland.

This scandal represents the Executive’s ineptitude and dysfunction. The fact is that, during the in/out charade of last year, when Arlene Foster was left to guard against rogues and renegades, and, according to Peter Robinson, was there to ensure that nationalists and republicans were not able to take financial and other decisions that may be detrimental to Northern Ireland, a well-intentioned scheme was apparently being used as a ruse to make money for those who were in the know. It is clear now who the rogues and renegades are.

It is also clear which party was in the driving seat here, but we are left wondering what the other partner in government has been doing. As with NAMA and SIF, Sinn Féin has either been turning a blind eye here or has merely been along for the ride: in government but not in power. We defend the joint nature of the Executive Office, as we did when we would not listen to illegitimate preaching to the choir this morning. People will want to know that there is, indeed, a joint office and that somebody is there to prevent what really is becoming worse than the worst excesses of one-party Stormont rule in the past. If Sinn Féin believes that it is what Mr O’Dowd just said it was — corruption — and it wants to do anything other than throw shapes, it can support our motion to exclude the First Minister. If, on the long finger in the new year, it wants to build on that with an inquiry, it can do so — we will all support an inquiry — but there is no reason why it cannot support our motion.

At a time when household budgets are under pressure, the sums here are horrifying, but I have heard very little about those sums from the Benches opposite. The view that, apparently, because it was London money, it was OK to squander it is really breathtaking and arrogant. Whether the money comes from London, Brussels, Washington or Belfast, somebody earned it and paid it in tax, and all taxpayers are entitled to know that their money is being fairly spent.

A Member: Will the Member give way?

Ms Hanna: I will not; I have a lot to get through.

The environmental aims of the scheme were completely ignored by the Department, which took it from the Department of Energy and Climate Change and made it into what has, apparently, been just a money-making scheme that has led to more environmental degradation as not just public money but the materials involved go up in smoke. The ramifications will be felt not just over the next 20 years but now, in that we were supposed to be discussing the Budget today and instead are discussing this fiasco. At a time when the Executive need more scrutiny, not less, the Opposition will not have access to the Budget figures this side of recess.

In the minds of the public, alleged cronyism and corruption are written all over this. Mrs Foster has an opportunity to restore some faith. You referred to conviction without trial, but Peter Robinson set the precedent for this and the Civil Service uses the same mechanism, whereby somebody who is being investigated stands aside. This very weekend, you suspended a member of your party, pending an investigation. Take the plank out of your eye, and take the opportunity to —

Mr McGlone: Will the Member give way?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring her remarks to a close?

Ms Hanna: — restore some confidence in the Assembly. I will give way.

Mr McGlone: I thank the Member for giving way —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member’s time is up.

Ms Hanna: No, I said I would give way.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: OK.

Mr McGlone: Does the Member agree that some on the Benches opposite have a short memory? As Mr O’Dowd mentioned, they suggested that Máirtín Ó Muilleoir step aside during an investigation of the affairs around Mr Bryson.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has less than a minute — 20 seconds.

Ms Hanna: Yes, I agree. If the party opposite is so confident that there has been no wrongdoing, let all the facts go into the public domain. Let it be dealt with at a remove from the Assembly, and let us restore some confidence in the Assembly.

Mr Humphrey: I am saddened and appalled by the motion because, as the leader of the SDLP clearly confirmed in his contribution to the debate, it is personal. I met Arlene Foster nearly 30 years ago. I have always believed her to be a true friend and colleague, a person of the highest integrity, honesty and loyalty and someone who works hard with commitment and dedication. It is fair to talk about the last week because, unlike Ms Hanna, I recognise that the Minister was in China the previous week, fighting for jobs and new markets for our pork producers. This all happened when she was out of the country, which is, perhaps, no surprise.

Many politicians and journalists have sought to attack Arlene Foster’s character. That portrayal of Arlene Foster — my colleague, my friend, my leader and our First Minister — is not what I know of her, and it is not what the people on these Benches know of her.

I will speak of Arlene Foster as a Minister. Since her election to Stormont, Arlene Foster has been a first-class Minister, holding the portfolios of environment; enterprise, trade and investment; and finance. She is now our First Minister, and a truly outstanding First Minister she is, popular in the unionist and broader Northern Ireland community. There is no doubt that she has brought competence, incisiveness, professionalism and attention to detail to every role that she has had here, particularly her ministerial roles.

Mr Stalford: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Figures have been bandied around in the media. Does the Member agree that it is a bit rich for a party that spent £40 million on a road that was never built to lecture anybody on how to run a Department?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Humphrey: If Members choose to deal with facts, not fantasy, they will remember that, in DETI, this Minister led from the front, securing jobs and attracting to Northern Ireland foreign direct investment that exceeded even that going to London and the south-east of England. Her focus and the focus of my party has been on strengthening the economy, and her leadership and the results delivered by Arlene Foster are absolutely testament to that.

From my short time on the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, I can confirm that, when she appeared in front of that Committee, Arlene Foster was absolutely in complete command of that brief. Indeed, most importantly, as a Minister, not only did she enjoy the confidence of that Committee and of the Chairman of the Committee, as has been exemplified by Mr Hamilton's remarks, she enjoyed the confidence of foreign Governments, foreign investors, local business, local business associations and, indeed, the trade unions.

I want to turn to the RHI scheme. There is no doubt that, in the First Minister's own words in the House this morning, there were shocking errors and failures in the RHI scheme, and a catalogue of mistakes. Without question. It is for the credibility of the House and of the Northern Ireland Executive that we have to regain the confidence of the people of Northern Ireland and of those people who sent us here to do a job of work. It is essential that these errors and mistakes in the scheme are arrested. There must be transparency and there must be openness. There must be an independent investigation. Indeed, that is exactly what the First Minister said this morning in the House. There must be financial recovery, and that is exactly what the First Minister, the Finance Minister and the Economy Minister are working on. Indeed, I understand that that is exactly what the First Minister is doing at this very moment.

I have spoken to many people over the last week when I have been out in my constituency and others, and it is absolutely clear that people out there are fearful and concerned about the levels of money that are being talked about, but the levels of money being talked about in the House — Members know it well — are not the levels of money that have been spent on this scheme. That is exactly the issue that the First Minister addressed this morning.

In conclusion, it is for the First Minister, the Executive and the House to provide certainty, confidence and surety to the people of Northern Ireland. It is our duty and our responsibility, but, as a member of the Democratic Unionist Party and as Chair of a Committee of the House, I have to say that I have known Arlene Foster a long, long time. She has the skills, the talent, the attributes and the determination, and will clear up what is a mess and see the confidence restored to the people of Northern Ireland, for this House and for these institutions. She has my full support.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Dr Farry: The situation is continuing to escalate today, and the hopes that some of us had — somewhat naively,

perhaps — that things would be brought to a head and confidence would be restored are being sorely dashed. The issue remains one of public confidence. Public confidence is extremely low, and we have to be humble across all corners of the Assembly and recognise that. That builds upon what has been a very difficult and challenging six months for the Assembly, where it has become characterised by a lack of openness and transparency on the part of the Executive and a succession of scandals. It is important to bear in mind that while the current fiasco around renewable heat is the most extreme, it is not the only issue of public concern at present.

This has now become a crisis of power-sharing, and the institutions are being pushed to their limits. The checks and balances that would be at play in other, normal democracies — I accept that we are not a fully normal democracy — are not at all present in our own situation. If this was happening elsewhere, the expectation, internally within the legislature and in the media, would lead to the main players voluntarily stepping aside while the process of restoring confidence played out. We can point to numerous examples of that in neighbouring jurisdictions and, indeed, further afield. Members have also cited the precedent of Peter Robinson in 2010, and I say to the DUP that, insofar as it is denying that there is any case for Mrs Foster to step aside, it is implicitly attacking Mr Robinson for having the decency to step aside in 2010. I stress that he was ultimately cleared as part of that process.

Mr Stalford: Will the Member give way?

Dr Farry: Yes.

2.45 pm

Mr Stalford: The Member, his colleagues and others in the House have had the best part of a week to throw questions and accusations at the First Minister in the press. The First Minister made herself available for questioning and scrutiny. Do you think that the public really care about this joint-nature defence that you have put up for not being here to ask questions? No, they do not.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Dr Farry: I care, and Mr Stalford should care as well. We need to take very seriously what has happened today and the wider implications that will flow from it. There is a case for reviewing the joint nature of the Executive Office; frankly, it is a cumbersome wreck. It takes weeks, if not months or years, for answers to emerge to questions and for correspondence to be addressed because of the joint sign-off. However, there can be no unilateral runs, as happened today. I dare say that what has happened today sets a precedent. Frankly, Mrs Foster was tone-deaf to political circumstances in the Chamber. If she was a true leader, she would have understood the potential damage to the institutions of a solo run and stepped back voluntarily. Now, I would like to have the proper forum to ask questions, and no doubt it will emerge in due course, but doing that today in this half-baked manner was entirely counterproductive.

Let us look at some of the issues before us: how the scheme was designed; how the whistle-blower was handled; the nature of the closure of the scheme; and concerns over potential conflicts of interest. Arising from that, we need to see the full list of those who were

recipients of the grants. Frankly, an opt-in scheme is not good enough, because there will be questions about who has not opted in. Alongside that, names of donors to the DUP need to be published, so that people can make a full comparison between the two lists. Everything may be perfectly innocent, but that important information should be out there in the public interest.

There is also the wider challenge in terms of the DUP's approach to governance. There are issues concerning Arlene Foster's attention to detail. When were questions asked? Indeed, were the relevant questions asked? Did she ask at the outset whether the approach they were adopting was sustainable and what the risks were? Any Minister doing their job should ask their officials those questions — particularly about the potential costs — whenever a submission comes across their desk. It is right that questions are asked of the Civil Service. The Civil Service includes many brilliant and dedicated people, but they are not infallible. That is why Ministers and special advisers are there. They are, in effect, the internal line of defence. They should scrutinise their Departments in the same way that they expect the Assembly to do so on the outside. In my experience, both I and my special adviser caught things that were not caught by the Civil Service and saved money as a consequence.

There is a wider issue, and I put this on the record: we have to be concerned about the potential politicisation of the Civil Service, which is becoming a political football on the issue. Officials are being dragged out, backwards and forwards, and cited to defend one political point against another. We need to be very careful that we do not lose the impartiality of the Civil Service.

Then there is the approach to decision-making by Ministers and SpAds. That is not how Alliance did government. Our Ministers and special advisers knew the boundaries of their respective roles. They respected one another and were, in turn, respected by their civil servants. I am sure that applies to those who have operated from many other political parties as well.

There is the issue of how this has been handled in the media over the past number of days. There was a refusal to apologise and accept responsibility until quite late in the day.

Then, there is the need for a proper public inquiry. On that point, I stress that the motion is necessary but not sufficient. If there had been a voluntary stepping aside, the motion would not be necessary —

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to draw his remarks to a close.

Dr Farry: — but it is necessary in that context. However, we are not precluded from discussing, on a separate day, a separate motion regarding a public inquiry. We are certainly happy to do that and will give it our support.

Mr Beggs: I rise in support of the motion. First Minister, as a result of your flawed renewable heat scheme some £485 million of taxpayer funds have been committed wastefully from future Budgets. That is a big number. Unused barns are being heated while many struggle to heat their homes. Inspections have been inadequate. These are all facts. I acknowledge that many businesses were attracted to the scheme, particularly in the early days, for sound environmental reasons rather than as a means of generating profit. Clearly, that changed. The integrity of

this institution is at stake. Who is accountable for these hundreds of millions of pounds in costs and losses?

'The Nolan Show' this morning revealed that Minister Foster received a personal email directly from the whistleblower in September 2013, in which the specific warnings were detailed, but they were not acted on. Explain.

The Northern Ireland Executive are in a state of turmoil. The attention of DUP Ministers is not on the well-being of the people of Northern Ireland but on continuing personal power. Today was pencilled in for the draft Budget originally. There has been no talk of it. Without proper, advance planning for all the Departments and agencies and the community and voluntary sector, poor decision-making will result. The Executive are in disarray. Rather than talking about a Budget, the focus is on the renewable heat incentive scheme and the losses incurred.

As others have said, when Mr Robinson's actions became the political focus, he voluntarily stood aside for an investigation to be completed and allowed government to function. I suggest that you should do the same. The renewable heat incentive was introduced in late 2012, when you were the ETI Minister — the Minister responsible. A short time later, in 2013, further protections were added in GB. There is tiering in GB, which greatly reduces the payment after a certain number of hours' usage. There is also degression, which is quarterly changes in the level of support offered depending on the demand. You, Minister, took the policy decision not to introduce either of those protections. For that, you are answerable. A vote was not put to the Assembly on that: you took that decision. The Northern Ireland Audit Office report states that a poultry industry boiler used 24 hours a day would give an 82% annual return on investment at public expense. Outrageous.

Minister, you then became Finance Minister. I agree with the comments from my colleague: a rugby hospital pass was given to Minister Bell. Alarm bells must have been ringing in May 2015 when DETI sought reapproval of the renewable heat incentive with the Finance Department at a very senior level. How was that handled from then on? Assembly Member Bell's evidence tells of the DUP's OFMDFM SpAds — gatekeepers — causing delays in facing the problem. Why are there delays in publishing the details of the companies and charities involved? Can we have them? How is it a data protection issue? Who benefited during that critical period? There are lots of questions that remain unanswered. It appears that there was a lack of focus on value for money. The assumption was, "Don't worry about it, because Westminster's picking up the bill". It is all taxpayers' money. Minister Foster, you were and are responsible —

Mr Frew: Will the Member give way?

Mr Beggs: The DUP did not give way to me on numerous occasions. I am not giving way to you.

You are and were responsible for your special advisers, who have been out of control. SpAds can be incredibly powerful. We learned that in the Social Development Committee when I served on it, when we had to resort to the 1998 Act to uncover the result of an independent investigation of Stephen Brimason, the DSD special adviser, over Red Sky. The investigation recommended that a formal disciplinary action be held, but the Minister refused to agree to it.

Mr Chambers: Will the Member give way?

Mr Beggs: I certainly will.

Mr Chambers: Do you agree that it is not unreasonable for the First Minister to be held accountable for her bad judgement in this case?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Beggs: Lots of decisions are made, and civil servants can present ideas to the Minister. The Minister should also be looking more widely around her at what is happening elsewhere. Ultimately, as the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, she took decisions and made judgements. She decided not to introduce protections.

Stephen Brimason then gave evidence to the Social Development Committee, but he stonewalled it. He kept saying, "I do not recall". What happened to him? Rather than being disciplined by the DUP, he was promoted by Peter Robinson. Subsequently, what did Arlene Foster do? She reappointed him. Where is your humility?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his comments to a close.

Mr Beggs: Clearly, we have too many SpAds. They are too well paid. They are paid even more than Ministers.

The power is going to their heads and they are protected by DUP Ministers. Clearly, it is time to assess what has been happening. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Order. The Member's time is up. There is a huge amount of noise coming from my right. I ask that Members refrain from being so noisy and interrupting other Members.

Lord Morrow: On a point of order, Madam Principal Deputy Speaker. The Member keeps talking about a Stephen Grimanson. Who is Stephen Grimanson? No person of that name ever worked for the DUP.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member take his seat, please. *[Interruption.]* I think that we all know to whom the Member is referring.

Mr Beggs: On a point of order, Madam Principal Deputy Speaker. Apologies, and I will clarify: I was talking about Stephen Brimstone, if the Member does not know. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: Order. Before I take the next point of order, points of order must be heard.

Dr Farry: On a point of order, Madam Principal Deputy Speaker. Can the record show that Stephen Brimstone actually worked for the Departments that he was a special adviser to and not the DUP, unless Lord Morrow has let the cat out of the bag when he says that Mr Brimstone worked for the DUP?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's comments are on the record. Let us move on.

Mr Agnew: From Department to Department, Arlene Foster has presided over a catalogue of failures. As Environment Minister, she rejected multiple calls following a public consultation to implement an independent environmental protection agency. Later, the Mills review highlighted the systemic failure in the then DOE and the £250 million clean-up cost that we could be faced

with in dealing with illegal waste dumping. There was an opportunity to put in proper regulation and enforcement, but Mrs Foster declined that opportunity, and the public will be left with the bill.

When she was Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister, we lost a £1 billion offshore wind farm project for Northern Ireland that would have been the largest in the whole of the UK. The project was put together by an international consortium, including a business from Hollywood in my constituency. The self-appointed champion of foreign direct investment did not get involved and did not secure that investment for Northern Ireland, and another failure happened on her watch.

The renewable heat incentive scheme, which had been successful in the rest of the UK, has been botched in Northern Ireland alone. Arlene Foster blamed it on her civil servants. She blamed it on her successor. She blamed it on the media. She blamed it on the Opposition. She blamed it on everyone except the person who was in charge at the time: Arlene Foster. She has form for blaming things on others and for abdicating responsibility to her civil servants. When I was first elected to the House in 2011, I called her out for not declaring land that her husband owned in relation to a licensed fracking area. She said that she had nothing to do with giving out petroleum exploration licences in Northern Ireland. She said that she had not signed the licences; it was her civil servants.

What we are left with is a picture of a Minister who either does not accept the responsibility that she has or who is incompetent in discharging that responsibility. I support today's motion of no confidence on behalf of the Green Party because I cannot have confidence in a Minister who does not stand up and take responsibility when things go wrong. The media furore that has surrounded this debate — rightly, given the sums of money involved — could have been avoided had she stepped up at the time and, when the failings came to light, said that she got it wrong. We would not have seen the heat that this debate has caused had she accepted responsibility from the start.

To have had a track record of such failure time and time again can only lead me to the conclusion that Arlene Foster is a very shrewd, a very ruthless and a very skilled politician. Unfortunately, I can only conclude that she is an incompetent Minister.

The right thing to do would be to step down pending an investigation. In any organisation, that is the normal due process when someone is accused of mishandling in their role, which is, indeed, the process that Mr Jonathan Bell has faced. He has been accused of breaching party rules and has been asked to step down without prejudice and pending an investigation. It is time that Arlene Foster did the same.

3.00 pm

The people of Northern Ireland deserve answers. They deserve to know how this was allowed to happen under Mrs Foster's governance. They deserve to know what went wrong, and they deserve the confidence of knowing that the mistakes will be learned from and that, in future, such mistakes will not be made again. They cannot, however, have that confidence while Arlene Foster remains at the helm and is involved in setting the terms of reference of any inquiry that goes forward. The inquiry must be

independent and judge-led, and we need to be confident that Mrs Foster's fingerprints will not be on that inquiry.

I hear the objection that today's motion does not go far enough, but I see no objection to the content of the motion, which asks Mrs Foster to step aside while she is investigated.

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his comments to a close.

Mr Frew: Of course, I reject the motion to exclude a Minister whom Northern Ireland needs to get us through some of the darkest weeks of devolution. There is absolutely no doubt that these have been a dark couple of weeks. There have been massive issues and failings, and they have to be investigated. However, while they are being investigated, we need to ensure that we get something in place that can claw back into the public purse some of the money that has not yet been spent but is projected to be spent. Of all MLAs, who is best placed to do that? I believe that it is the First Minister, Arlene Foster.

I agree with Sinn Féin that today has been a circus, and I will tell you why. For two weeks flat, the Opposition parties have been calling for the First Minister to come before them to address and answer their questions on the renewable heat scheme; yet, when they had the opportunity this morning, they walked out of this place.

Mr Nesbitt: I very much appreciate the Member giving way. He will have heard the Speaker say that he was granting the statement under Standing Order 18A. Will the Member tell the House what Standing Order 18A is?

Madam Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that we are debating a different motion. The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Frew: The Member can take Standing Orders up with the Speaker. I say to Mike Nesbitt that the public do not give a jot about what Standing Order he quotes. They want to hear information about what we will do and the facts that led to this issue.

Mr Dickson: Will the Member give way?

Mr Frew: No, I will make progress.

Here is the issue. I can tell you now that, if people feel that the First Minister has:

"failed to observe the highest standards of propriety and regularity in relation to the stewardship of public funds in relation to the renewable heat Incentive scheme"

we are all guilty. We are all guilty because the scheme came before the House and we all voted for it. It went through rigorous scrutiny. I was on the ETI Committee with a lot of my colleagues and the Chairperson, Patsy McGlone, who did a sterling job and was a very decent and fair Chairperson. We scrutinised it, as we did all legislation that came before us. We scrutinised it to death.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

The House also voted to close the scheme, but, at that point:

"SDLP West Tyrone MLA Daniel McCrossan has slammed a decision by the Minister Jonathan Bell to axe the Renewable Heat Incentive. The loss of the

scheme which funds renewable heating projects to produce renewable energy is predicted to cost 2,000 jobs with a business owner in Omagh expressing concern".

We also have Adrian Cochrane-Watson of the UUP saying:

"The original 31 March deadline for the sector should be reinstated and honoured." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 112, p387, col 2].

He went even further than that, saying that the Minister:

"needs to agree, through consultation with the industry groups such as the Federation of Master Builders, a phased winding-down period, which will allow businesses the opportunity to plan for the change in their revenue stream." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 112, p387, col 2].

How much longer did Adrian Cochrane-Watson want to give the scheme?

Of course, we had Jim Allister saying:

"Those who took up the scheme did so in good faith". — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 112, p390, col 2].

There is a change. All the businesses and domestic users involved have been ridiculed in the press over the last two weeks. It is they who feel, "What is going on up there?"

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Frew: No, I will not give way. [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order, Members.

Mr Frew: He said:

"They now find that they cannot do that and that it will cost them hugely." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 112, p390, col 2].

You cannot have it both ways, Members. We are all responsible for our actions, and we are all responsible for this.

The welfare reform crisis cost this country millions of pounds, and, were it not for the actions of this party, it would have cost us £100 million every year. The grass was growing long and potholes were not being filled, and those were only what the people could see; what about the waiting lists? Where was the SDLP when that was happening? It was playing politics, as it is with this issue. People want to know what happened. Let us have an independent investigation to see what happened. Let us drive this country forward. Who is best placed to do that? The First Minister of this country, Arlene Foster. Let us go forward and see whether we can organise a plan with the Finance Minister to try to draw back some of the projected spend.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Frew: That is what the people want to hear; they do not want to see walkouts. You are elected to this place to serve the people. Do not walk out of this place like a set of clowns.

Mr Speaker: As this is the first opportunity for Ms Joanne Bunting to speak as a private Member, I remind the House that it is the convention that a maiden speech is made without interruption. However, if the Member expresses political opinions, she may well find that that is challenged.

Ms Bunting: It may be pantomime season, but it would better serve this House to move away from play-acting and towards the resolution of a truly difficult situation in a spirit of cooperation and constructive behaviour. We face a serious situation, and Members showed by their actions this morning that they were more interested in Assembly process around statements and grandstanding by means of this exclusion motion than in hearing from the First Minister and taking the opportunity to put a direct question to her on the issue. We cannot, should not and must not be in a position where, every time an issue of significance is raised in the Assembly, politics is allowed to cloud that which is really important.

This motion seeks to exclude the First Minister. To what end? She has agreed to, and supports, an independent inquiry. She has acknowledged and accepted her responsibilities, insofar as they lay with her. At no time has she sought to shirk those responsibilities. Rather, as is her way, she has sought to address the problem head on. Members could have heard that this morning, had they remained with us.

Contrary to the principles of fairness or natural justice, the motion aims to exclude her without a shred of evidence of wrongdoing and, ultimately, on the basis that she followed advice. We all agree with the convention that Ministers bear responsibility for that which occurs in their Departments, but at the root of this matter is the lack of cost control measures built into the scheme. Let us remember that the brightest and best considered this scheme; it was pored over by experts from the departmental team and a team of highly paid consultants. Indeed, it was pored over by the Assembly scrutiny Committee, which, in fairness to it, had no more expertise in this area than the Minister herself.

None of them found any remote problem at the time. None of them expressed any concern at the time. The fact remains that the Minister would have been rightly and roundly criticised for ignoring such advice. It would be a bizarre state of affairs had we found ourselves in circumstances where, on receipt of confirmation from internal and external advisers that a scheme was correct and proper, a Minister did not follow that advice. If the advice to the Minister was incorrect, then so was the advice received by the Committee. The truth is that that advice convinced everybody who saw it, including the scrutiny Committee and every other party here.

What is important, for the sake of public confidence, is that the problem is rectified as quickly as is practicably possible and with the minimum expenditure of taxpayers' hard-earned cash. Yet, very regrettably, this has not been the focus. This is reflected even in the way in which this matter has been reported. If they were interested in resolving this situation effectively and efficiently for the sake of public confidence, the media would have come forward with all the information at their disposal and not played this out like a soap opera. They cannot have this both ways. On the one hand, they say that it is the gravest, most significant situation that the Executive have ever faced. Yet, on the other hand, they say, "We have news that is of critical import, but we will let you know tomorrow or maybe next week." This sensationalist, tantalising approach with a focus on "He said, she said" and how many people were in the room for some alleged row does nothing to foster an environment of conveying the

facts with the purpose of finding a resolution as quickly as possible. Instead, Ministers are asked to comment on emails that they are not shown, a line here or a paragraph there. They call for openness and transparency with which we agree — all of us — but this is the opposite of how they behave. Moreover, it ignores the root of the issue that the First Minister and the Minister for the Economy have been working hard to fix the fundamental problem and rein in the costs.

The First Minister has nothing to hide and nothing to fear — not the truth — as some have suggested this morning. There is nothing from which she should or will run away. What matters to her, to us and to the public is that this is fixed and who we trust to fix it.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude her remarks.

Ms Bunting: To that end, I can say sincerely and wholeheartedly that, without question or a shadow of doubt, the one person in whom I have faith to do that is Arlene Foster MLA, the First Minister of Northern Ireland.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr McGlone: This has been an interesting debate. The nub of it has been that the inevitably of where we are today is that an everyone-but-Arlene tactic has been used to try to dump the blame on everyone, including officials, consultants, the media and every Assembly Member and Committee. However, there is a distinction. Not all of those individuals had advice, access to notes or to memos to the Minister from SpAds or senior civil servants; that is crucial in all of this.

Was any detail provided to the Minister or her special adviser about the risks potentially associated with this scheme? None of that was available to any of the rest of us. We certainly had no access to whistle-blower's letters, notes or minutes of any meetings held as a consequence of that. Much has been made of that too. We had no ministerial power to alter significant policy controls and checks to the RHI schemes. Let us have it all out there, not selective leaking to the media and slippy auld press briefings. All the detail should be investigated in full and before the public eye.

I have now to place on record my knowledge, based on information provided by officials to all members of the ETI Committee. Indeed, a number of them are in the Chamber and were here for parts of the debate.

3.15 pm

The sequence of events on the RHI, as we know, is as follows. In November 2012, the scheme was introduced to the non-domestic sector. Later, in December 2014, it was introduced to the domestic sector. On 11 April 2013, the Committee asked the Department to provide biannual updates on the implementation of the scheme. That resulted in an update being received more than one year later, on 5 June 2014, and later still, on 4 November 2014. Despite requests for updates on a biannual basis, the Department did not consider it necessary to provide further progress reports or updates to the Committee. Who was Minister?

The June 2014 briefing to the Committee stated:

“the current NI uptake compares favourably with the GB uptake at the same point in time on a pro-rata basis.”

It went on to state:

“this suggests that the Northern Ireland RHI could experience a higher volume of applications but for smaller installations. Projecting forward it could be expected that around 300 applications could be received by end March 2015.”

Five months later, in November 2014, the briefing, again from the Department, stated:

“as of 15 October 2014 [Ofgem] have received 308 applications.”

Fact. Therefore, in November 2014, applications had already exceeded expectations for the projected March 2015 date. What was done at departmental level? Who was Minister? The alarm bells were clearly ringing at that stage.

Officials informed the Committee on 9 February 2016 that the process of thinking about the issue and asking questions began in March 2015, when it was noticed that the level of applications was rising — three months after the Department had informed the Committee of the very same fact. Officials said that the Minister was formally made aware of the problem in July last year. We wonder what the informal briefings contained. That was followed by the consultation on 22 July, which contained a proposal to introduce, among other things, demand-management measures from November 2015.

Given the fact that demand exceeded expectations and that this was apparent from as far back as at least November 2014, did anyone in the Department work out the impact of the announcement or think at least to ask this question: what impact will this July announcement have on the level of applications between now and February and the introduction of new measures in November? On the back of that, what advice was provided by the departmental officials to the Minister?

Even on 3 September 2015, the Enterprise Committee received a briefing on the RHI amendment regulations that continued to refer to the “recent success”.

Mr Speaker: Will the Member conclude his remarks?

Mr McGlone: There is no sign of any urgency there. On the level of detail, we need a full public inquiry, and that rests with the First Minister.

Mr Carroll: We are here today to discuss the scandal around the renewable heat incentive scheme — a scheme that saw hundreds of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money going up in smoke and hundreds of millions of pounds given to businesses in a lucrative handout that encouraged them to burn to earn.

It is a scheme that gave money to a car showroom with Ferraris out the front. There are empty sheds with 12 heaters on at full blast. It is money down the drain while people are homeless or lie on waiting beds in our cramped hospitals. This is not just a scandal but a crime against the people of this region.

These are the questions that everyone wants answered. Who benefited from the scheme? How many people linked

to the Executive parties benefited from the scheme? Where does the money trail lead you? I support the motion, but I also call for immediate elections. It is the only move that now makes sense. The Executive have lost the confidence of the electorate, and people are outraged. They are furious. The people of the North should now have the chance to register that disgust at the ballot box.

Last week, the First Minister said, arrogantly, that she has nothing to hide, but she certainly does. She was the architect of this whole scheme. She intervened on several occasions to keep the scheme in operation despite warnings from senior civil servants and others about it. This is not some administrative error or something on which Arlene can pass the buck. Nowhere else in the world would allow politicians to get away with this. Her position is untenable.

She should do the decent thing and step down. If she does not, we will have to ask this: where is the accountability? People are beginning to draw the conclusion that it is one rule for the Executive and another for everybody else. When teachers went on strike a few weeks ago, they were told that the money was not there. When welfare reform was rammed through, people were lied to and told that there was no money to pay their benefits. People in my constituency are unable to afford to heat their home and have to choose between heating and eating this winter. We find out that, all the while, quite literally, money was being burned. There was £485 million squandered on this scheme. What does that say about the priorities of this Executive?

Only one question needs answered today. Either there is a culture of gross incompetency in the Executive, or there is an endemic culture of corruption. Which is it? Time after time, Stormont has been racked by scandal: Red Sky, NAMA, the social investment fund and now RHI. People can be hauled in front of investigations and asked about every aspect of their life if they are on benefits and are asked every detail of their life to try to catch them out. However, if you are a big company, you can avail yourself of a scheme that gives you cash for ash, and, if you are a politician, you can just sweep it under the rug. You could not make it up.

People are right to have no confidence in our politicians when they see this kind of behaviour. The Executive cannot be trusted to lead any inquiry. It must be a public inquiry that is totally independent and has access to all the relevant documentation and personnel. We want to see all the books opened not only for the RHI but for NAMA, SIF and Red Sky. If Stormont will not do that, it will only fuel an angry public that believe some are once again trying to cover up and protect their own interests. People are sick and tired of this Executive. They want real change and answers from the Executive, not lip service.

As we look across the world, we see establishment politics everywhere in decline and in crisis. The Executive should seriously consider that they, too, may feel the backlash from frustrated people in the near future.

Mr Ross: There is no doubt that it has been an incredibly difficult time over the past two weeks for anyone involved in politics. It is quite clear that the public are, quite rightly, angry about a scheme that, with hindsight, was poorly designed and badly administered. It is remarkable to hear that some of the individuals who sat either as Chair

or members of the ETI Committee or Members of the House who voted through that scheme are now looking back, being wise after the event and claiming that they knew it was wrong all along. It is a remarkable thing that of everyone, including the external experts who gave guidance on this, the officials who were in the energy department and the media — all those individuals — no one flagged up any problems at the beginning of the scheme. That is why some of the hyperbole that has been around today is hard to stomach.

What we heard from my colleague Joanne Bunting was a thoughtful and considered first contribution to the Assembly, and I think that it was one that shows that she will be a valuable asset to the Chamber. That stands in sharp contrast to the antics we saw from other Members this morning when the opposition parties, to a man and woman, walked out of the Chamber and lodged a protest outside giving interviews to the media. It was pantomime politics at its very best, and it shows that opposition parties are more interested in stunts than solutions.

Mrs Long: Your colleagues in the Executive were there too.

Mr Ross: Again, I hear the leader of the Alliance Party chirping away in the background. I listened to her contribution, and she must have had 10 or 11 questions she wanted answered. Her constituents would quite rightly have expected her to turn up this morning when the First Minister stood at the Dispatch Box and to ask those questions and get them answered, but she did not. She chose instead to go out to the Great Hall and give an interview about a range of issues that, quite frankly, the public could not care less about.

It is becoming increasingly clear, as this has gone on and on, that the First Minister in her current and previous roles acted at all times with the highest regard. She has not done anything wrong, she acted appropriately at all times, as, indeed, her permanent secretary said in front of the PAC, and she has made herself available to answer all those questions.

In the last two weeks, we have also had the rather embarrassing circumstances in which leaders of the Opposition have put themselves on the airwaves not to make an informed contribution but to ask presenters questions about what is going on.

I know that, for some individuals, the old habit of asking questions rather than trying to answer them, dies hard, but what we had was not an opposition-driven policy or an attempt to hold the Executive to account; it was a media-driven thing, and some of the opposition parties tried to jump on the bandwagon.

I have just heard Mr Carroll make a comment that the First Minister was trying to sweep these issues under the carpet. As soon as the issue became live, the First Minister gave an interview from China, where she was trying to get more jobs and investment for Northern Ireland to help our economy. She said that she will waive convention and go in front of the PAC, which is not something that you would do if you had anything to hide. Over the weekend, she supported an independent investigation into everything that is going on in the RHI scheme. She has been working with the Economy Minister to try to make sure that we have something in place in early January to stop the costs of the scheme and reduce the cost.

We also heard some ill-informed commentary from Ms Bradley and Mr Carroll on the £400 million being squandered — it is not. I do not know how many times they have to be told before they understand that not all of this money has been spent. That is exactly why the First Minister and the Economy Minister are working to try to reduce that cost.

Today, we had the First Minister recalling the Assembly to give a statement and answer questions. When she did, what did other Members do? They walked away. They abandoned their seats, and they failed to discharge their duties or ask the questions that their voters might, quite rightly, want them to ask. The public care very little about procedures, points of order or Standing Orders. What they saw this morning was a First Minister making herself available to answer questions, and opposition parties running away and failing to ask them.

Let me make some final comments about what we have in front of us. This is an exclusion motion; it is not a vote of no confidence. It is nothing other than an exclusion motion —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Ross: — which is used for the most serious of offences. Mrs Foster has not been found guilty of any offence. She has not been found guilty of any wrongdoing. We absolutely want the facts to come out, we want to support the PAC investigation, we want an independent commission and we want fairness.

Mr Smith: We have been called back from recess, supposedly to help to restore the public's confidence in our Government. Today's events and lack of action from the First Minister and the Executive to tackle the RHI issue have no doubt diminished the reputation of these institutions even further. We now have to wait for some unspecified time in the new year until we see an action plan for RHI and a Budget for this Government. We needed to see leadership today from the First Minister and the Executive. The Opposition are doing their part by playing their role in holding this Government to account. We have raised this issue again and again in recent months, and now the BBC, via 'Spotlight' and 'The Nolan Show', has got its teeth into the story. I pay tribute to its journalistic endeavours because the issue is now rightly on top of everyone's agenda.

Some 251,000 people sat up to watch Stephen Nolan's exposé last Thursday night, which is testament not only to the theatre of good journalism but to the interest and concern of the people of Northern Ireland in getting to the bottom of this mess.

This scandal — let us be in doubt that it is a scandal — has hit home with people much more than the litany of previous allegations and problems that have beset this Government. The spat between Mr Bell and Mrs Foster was certainly jaw-dropping television. On the waste of money, he said that DUP SpAds overruled him; she said that it was his decision alone. On the emails, he said that DUP SpAds tried to change the email evidence trail; she said that there was no attempt to remove references to her Department and OFMDFM. On the row, he said that she was hostile and abusive; she said that he was physically intimidating. However, the focus must not be on the personality fight between, in their words, "aggressive" Bell and "hostile" Arlene. The critical issue is the £485 million of our money

that has been needlessly committed — the key word is “committed” — to a damaged scheme.

Who is responsible? Who is accountable for this debacle? Did the penny really drop only when the Treasury refused to pay the overspend? Was it OK to fleece the UK Treasury? They are our taxes too, do not forget, but the you know what hit the fan only when the block grant was impacted. This is why we need a full investigation. The public demand answers, and, this time, we cannot and will not be punted into the long grass. It is also why the First Minister cannot credibly continue in her role until this scandal has been properly investigated. This time, the scale of the failure is so enormous and so unique that it requires an exceptional response.

Although, of course, a First Minister standing aside in Northern Ireland is not exceptional. We have been here before, and Mrs Foster has played a key role not once, but twice. This time, it is different. Previously, Mrs Foster stepped in for Mr Robinson for a period of six weeks — the maximum allowed — in order for Mr Robinson to deal with his family difficulties resulting from his wife’s actions, and, more recently, as a political tactic to get him and his party out of a hole. This time, Mrs Foster must stand aside to account for her own actions — her responsibility for the design and outworkings of the disastrous RHI scheme.

3.30 pm

This is about leadership, as I said at the start. The First Minister needs to think of what is best for Northern Ireland, not what is best for herself as a leader or for the DUP. It is not party first but country first. Brazening it out is not a sign of strength but of weakness. The DUP can, of course, vote against everyone else and win a pyrrhic victory which will only further undermine public confidence and, understandably, push the public towards the Trumpism of wanting to drain the swamp. Who could blame them?

We also need to see leadership from the other partners in government, Sinn Féin, and the Justice Minister, Claire Sugden. Or, is Jonathan Bell correct: it is all about collective responsibility?

In conclusion, the public expect action on this issue. They rightly want an apology, action to mitigate the liability to the public purse and to see those who were responsible be accountable for their actions. First Minister, this happened on your watch, under your leadership. You need to go until the scandal has been fully investigated. I support the motion.

Mr Allister: The First Minister clearly does not get it. Otherwise, she would not be trying to spread the blame to everyone but herself. The public and the taxpayer certainly get it, because they see to the heart of the matter that it was the Minister, and no one else, who signed off this flawed scheme, and who consciously and deliberately took out the tariff-tiering that was in the GB template and put in only the high tariff, who was the author of this squander made in Stormont. There is no hiding place for the First Minister on that seminal issue, because it is her signature, and hers alone, which signed off the scheme on 13 April 2012 when she signed the declaration which stated:

“I have read the Regulatory Impact Assessment and I am satisfied that the benefits justify the costs”.

That is signed by Arlene Foster, Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. It is not signed by some hapless civil servant or some nameless consultant. It is signed by the Minister. Yet, when faced with the consequences of her negligence, she says, “Oh, it’s the civil servants’ fault” or “It’s a consultant’s fault”. It was even Mr McGlone’s fault; it is all our faults. But, it is not Arlene’s fault. Sorry, Arlene Foster and Arlene Foster alone signed the scheme into existence, and, from that flows the runaway nature of the scheme and the debt of the future.

She did not just fail there. In 2013, Cambridge Economic Policy Associates said, “You need to get tiered tariffs into the scheme”. The Department, under Arlene Foster’s watch, ignored it. In 2014, Ofgem said the same, “You need to get tiered tariffs into the scheme”. On Arlene’s watch, that was ignored. When the scheme was approved in 2012 by DFP’s Supply officer, the letter of approval said the scheme must be reapproved in March 2015. The responsibility for ensuring that that happened rested with DETI, but it did not happen — because, again, asleep at the wheel — and the opportunity to correct it, to catch on and to get the tiering into it was missed.

All the Department can say is, “Administrative oversight”. No, not administrative oversight: Minister asleep at the wheel.

Then, lo and behold, when suddenly they catch on that it needed to be reapproved, it is finally sent to DFP. Who is the Minister by that stage in DFP? Mrs Arlene Foster. And who, in October 2015 — I remind the House that this is at the height of the spike in applications — is the Minister heading the Department that reapproves the scheme? Mrs Arlene Foster. So, whether in DETI or DFP, she is asleep at the wheel.

Ms Hanna: Will the Member give way?

Mr Allister: Yes.

Ms Hanna: Does the Member agree with me that the attempt by the DUP to cast the blame across the Chamber ignores the fact that the scheme voted for in February by the opposition was the amended scheme?

Mr Allister: Absolutely.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Allister: Thank you. We heard some nonsense today that some of us voted against the closure of the scheme. No, we did not. We voted against the closure of the amended scheme — *[Interruption.]* — the scheme that was amended in November, that had the tiers put into it, that was then rectified and became a fair scheme. That is the scheme that was closed in February 2016, not the scheme in its original form with its runaway expenditure. That is the scheme that the DUP brought in and that the Minister repeatedly endorsed.

We have heard much talk of affirmation, “Oh, we want public inquiries”. Do you? If you do, then you will commit to one under the Inquiries Act, because only such an inquiry can call and compel witnesses.

There are DUP Members on these Benches who could tell a lot about this scheme, who could tell about their party donors who have benefited. Lord Morrow, the party chairman, has disappeared. He could tell us quite a lot about party donors who have benefited.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Allister: There are other Members on those Benches whose friends and family benefited from this scheme, as well as the friends and family of SpAds, but it is everyone's fault but theirs.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Allister: Sorry, that is not how the public see it.

Mr Poots: If Mr Allister had stayed in the Chamber as opposed to trotting out at the back of the flock like a little sheep, he would have heard what the First Minister had to say. The First Minister said that she was sorry that the initial scheme did not contain cost control measures, that there were fundamental flaws in its design, that it was the deepest political regret of her time in the House and that, as Minister, she accepted responsibility for the work of the Department during her time at DETI.

At least the First Minister is taking responsibility. Mr Allister, on the other hand, whenever it came to voting on this scheme, pushed and pressed that it was kept open until the end of March —

Mr Allister: The amended scheme.

Mr Poots: He has had his opportunity and berated everyone, so he can listen for a moment or two instead of trying to talk over the top of people, because he is not going to succeed.

Mr Allister: Tell the truth.

Mr Poots: Mr Allister would have cost us more money, as would all of the opposition parties that spoke today.

Mr Speaker: I ask Mr Allister not to speak from a sedentary position.

Mr Poots: The SDLP, the Ulster Unionists and Alliance would all have put that bill of over £400 million up further, because they pressed for the scheme to be kept open for longer.

What we have today are the actions of a lynch mob.

[Laughter.] Here we have the First Minister, who has come before the House, and there is no evidence whatsoever against her at this point, but we have a demand that she stands down, moves away and cannot do her job.

Let us go through the proper way of doing things, which we have grown up with in this United Kingdom — the British way of doing things. That is, that people are found innocent until proven otherwise.

Mrs Foster has done her job in an exceptional way in all the positions that she has held. She has been a superb First Minister. I find it absolutely amazing that, when we actually have a woman First Minister, so many women want to drum her out of office. That is a disgraceful action on the part of those Members. Mrs Foster has done an exceptional job as the First Minister, and we will be backing her. She will not be going anywhere. She will not be stepping aside. Get the message, folks: she will not be stepping aside. Also get the message in relation to the reviews of this: there will not be a public inquiry; there will be an open and transparent inquiry. *[Interruption.]* I will tell you why there will not be a public inquiry. When I took on the office of Health, I was informed that Minister McGimpsey had asked for a public inquiry on hyponatremia. Mr Allister, who has just jeered me, asked

a question the other day about how much that has cost so far. I think that the answer was around £15 million.

Mr Allister: Thirteen million pounds.

Mr Poots: Thirteen million pounds. Let us hear it again: £13 million to get the answers on hyponatremia. That was asked for something like eight years ago, and we have still not heard those answers.

Mr Kennedy: Will the Member give way?

Mr Poots: No, I will not give way. I do not have time. We have not heard those answers. The truth is that hyponatremia issues have been dealt with by all the health services responsible to ensure that the mistakes that happened then are not repeated. Let us be very clear: we do not need to get into a process that lasts seven or eight years to seek answers or to spend tens of millions to identify the answers, so we will not be going down that route. You can jeer all you like, but that is just not on the table. I will give way now.

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for giving way. The Member has, importantly, reminded the House that he did indeed serve as a DUP Minister. Mr Poots, during your tenure, were you aware of a system of collective responsibility operated by the DUP team of special advisers?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Poots: I think that everybody in the House knows the issues of collective responsibility. Where you have those cross-departmental issues, those kick into place. I can assure the Member that, as a Minister, I made the decisions and no SpAds made the decisions for me. I hope that, when Mr Kennedy was a Minister, no SpAds made decisions for him. That is just a fact of life. I made the decisions. I stood over my decisions, which were sometimes right and, on the odd occasion, wrong.

Mr Clarke: I thank the Member for giving way. Maybe Mr Kennedy wants to make an admission about the ferry that he commissioned at a cost of £5.7 million that is now docked in Strangford.

Mr Kennedy: That ship will sail. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Poots: I will take Mr Kennedy's word for that, but I do recall that, when he was in office, the lights were off even though someone was at home. We can all castigate various parties. The truth is that today has been unbecoming of the House. We have had walkouts, temper tantrums, grandstanding and all of those things. That does not add anything to the House. In fact, the opposition has come from —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr Poots: — the biased broadcasting corporation as opposed to Members who have been weak and inept.

Mr Speaker: Before I call Ms Claire Sugden, I ask Members to make their remarks through the Chair.

Ms Sugden: I rise to speak as the independent Member for East Londonderry. The events that have unfolded today and throughout the past week are a farce. I would kick the house of cards down myself if Northern Ireland did not have so much to lose. Let it not be forgotten by all sides of the House that I have the capability to do just that. I did not come back this morning because I did not want to

take part in a theatre. I was elected to serve the people of East Londonderry and then as Justice Minister to serve the people of Northern Ireland. I am so privileged and fortunate in both roles given to me. I was therefore deeply embarrassed, as a Member of the Assembly, to witness the antics this morning and the consistent berating of each other. People are angry, disappointed and weary, and they should be.

Regrettably, it seems that we are demonstrating contempt for the people of Northern Ireland. I do not speak for others, only myself, when I say that I am sorry that we as an Assembly have not been able to do what they expect of us and deserve from us.

3.45 pm

When I was elected in May, I promised my constituents that I would address issues relating to older people, children and young people, domestic violence and mental health. I believe that I am fulfilling those promises with my Executive colleagues. I will stand by my recent comments that the Executive were working because, for the first time since the Good Friday Agreement, there is genuine acknowledgement among government partners that we must work together in the interests of the people of Northern Ireland, and we were. That is what the people want from us. It is what they expect from us.

Nonetheless, the controversy surrounding the RHI scheme is devastating. The commentary is shocking. Allegations of corruption and cronyism make me feel sick. The potential cost is unfathomable. I certainly support a full independent investigation, judicially led if necessary, to clarify and substantiate information that is now in the public domain and, indeed, that which is not. We must also seek to mitigate the devastating financial effects of this flawed scheme.

I will not support the motion tabled by the Opposition and smaller parties because I believe it to be premature. You ask me to support a motion that excludes the First Minister on the basis of no confidence: my confidence or, indeed, lack of confidence in the First Minister will be based on substantiated information, not allegations manifested in the media. It would be remiss of me, particularly as Justice Minister, to pass judgement without a full investigation or hearing. No court in the land would do so, so why is it appropriate to do so in the House today before a fair independent investigation? The motion is premature.

If you will indulge me, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a point for the record. This morning, as Justice Minister, I asked my permanent secretary to investigate allegations made in the media yesterday suggesting that, in the previous mandate, the Department of Justice, amongst others, was informed of the flaws of the scheme. I am not suggesting that we table a motion for exclusion of those highlighted in the article, but I will suggest that we have an investigation that takes into account all Departments, Ministers, special advisers, officials and others and defines what knowledge, if any, they had of the flaws of the scheme, what they were aware of through any means, whether they were alerted to concerns about the scheme and whether they acted on that knowledge.

Mr Ford: Will the Member give way?

Ms Sugden: Not yet. Public confidence in our institution is at its lowest. I regret to say that this is a house of cards.

It is fragile. I do not believe that a successful motion today would ensure public confidence. It would bring the cards down. I am not sure that any of us would get up again. The people who would suffer most are the people of Northern Ireland. What we need to do to ensure confidence is to announce a full independent investigation.

Mr Ford: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Ms Sugden started speaking as an independent Member and then chose to speak as Minister. She referred to events in the Department whilst I was Minister of Justice and declined to take an intervention. I want to put it on the record that I am absolutely content, having had a discussion with the permanent secretary this morning, that any papers involving my time in the Department of Justice should be released to a judicial-led public inquiry at the earliest possible time.

Mr Speaker: You have placed your remarks on the record, Mr Ford.

Mr Stalford: This is an extremely serious turn of events for the Northern Ireland Assembly and the political institutions. It is right that Ministers should be held accountable for their actions in and out of office. It is right that public scrutiny should occur. It is right that people should ask questions where they see issues and where they think that things have gone awry. That is healthy in a democracy. That is how a democracy should function. It is regrettable, therefore, after more than a week of people taking to the air waves, casting aspersions and demanding answers from the First Minister and that she bring herself here to make herself accountable, that Mr Farry, in his contribution, said that he would look for a proper forum for accountability: this is the proper forum. This is the Northern Ireland Assembly. We are sent here to govern for the people of this country.

If there is a proper forum for holding Ministers to account, it is here. People —

Dr Farry: Will the Member give way?

Mr Stalford: Just one second, I want to make my point.

Mr Speaker: Let me remind the Member that if he takes an intervention during his speech, he will not get an extra minute as we do not have time.

Mr Stalford: Bad luck, Stephen.

This is the forum, and people had the opportunity this morning. After ten days of accusing the First Minister of all sorts, of accusing her of going to ground and hiding, and all of that sort of language that was being used, she came here and made herself amenable to all of the people who have made those claims about her. She sat there, she gave an account of herself and she offered all of you the opportunity to ask her questions. The response?

Mr Allister: And where is she now?

Mr Stalford: Well, oddly enough, Mr Allister, the First Minister has a country to run. She is not heckling from the sidelines.

Some Members: *[Interruption.]*

Mr Stalford: Yeah, yeah.

Mr Speaker: Order; order; order; order. I ask the Member not to respond to those remarks made from a sedentary

position, and I ask the Member not to make remarks from a sedentary position.

Mr Stalford: I listened to the First Minister give an account of herself, and Members had the opportunity this morning. She made herself open and available for any questions, and they chose; they chose not to take the opportunity. Now, I understand; I have been in politics for a very long time and I understand that it would be easier and more convenient, perhaps, to go on the airwaves and make allegations, but if you wanted questions answered, you should have availed yourself of the opportunity that the First Minister gave for you to ask them.

During the course of the debate, I heard several contributions that indicate to me that the people who are talking about accountability and questions that need answering are not really interested in the answers. They do not really care about the answers. For some people, this is about base politics. It is about trying to topple the First Minister and bring down the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party. I listened to Mrs Long's contribution, and she was perfectly reasonable in what she said, but other Members' contributions were truthfully, if we are being honest about it, malice dressed up as fairness. They are not really interested in the answers. What people want is a scalp. They want to bring down the First Minister as a scalp, as a political notch — and that is not going to happen.

I welcome that she said there would be an independent inquiry into all of these matters and I hope it gets to the bottom of all of them, and that all of the paperwork and the email trails and what have you are put out there for people to see, so that they can make their own mind up. It is clear to me, from a number of contributions in the House, not least by the Member for North Antrim, for whom, quite frankly, Arlene Foster could make every day 12 July and you still would not be happy with her.

Mr Speaker: The Member should conclude his remarks.

Mr Stalford: Some people are not interested in facts; they have made their mind up. Mr Poots was right: this is a lynch mob.

Mr Speaker: I call Mr Mike Nesbitt to wind up the debate on the motion, and the Member has ten minutes.

Mr Nesbitt: As it happens, I was in England at the weekend, and I am sorry to report that we are, collectively, a laughing stock. I was picking my son up after his first term at university, and I remember my first term at uni in England in the seventies. It was very difficult with the Troubles in full flow; everybody was suspicious of anybody from Northern Ireland. Of course, thankfully, we have moved on from that, but now we have replaced suspicion with derision. They know about it, and we are all tarred with the same brush. This is about the integrity of the institutions. It is about our collective reputation.

I ask the members of the Democratic Unionist Party to consider this: what have you done? You have made Gerry Adams the white knight. Gerry Adams stood forward over the weekend and said, "I am the man who will protect the reputation and credibility of these institutions", and you have done that; you have done that.

I listened to the First Minister over the weekend say that she looked forward to coming to the Chamber today to tell us about the plan that means that we will not lose £400

million. I read her speech and there is no plan. Even if there was —

Mr Frew: Will the Member give way?

Mr Nesbitt: I will make some progress first.

Even if there was, could we believe the DUP? It had a plan to save the United Airlines flight to Newark, except there was no plan at all and it knew it and had to issue a ministerial directive to try to make it happen. We have a plan. There is a precedent at Westminster of introducing a windfall tax against excessive energy costs, and perhaps Westminster should consider doing the same with this. There is a convention that says they do not interfere with devolved matters but, of course, in the Fresh Start Agreement, there is that commitment that the Government will legislate to make sure that we do not bring forward an imbalanced Budget again in the future. There is a precedent for this Executive having their homework marked by the big boys in London.

We have another plan, not just the one to ask Mrs Foster to stand aside. What about the special advisers? Should Mr Johnston, Mr Bullick and Dr Crawford not be on gardening leave? Is it right that they are still in the Department doing what they are doing as we investigate these issues? I welcome the fact that Claire Sugden has at least finally spoken on the issue, although I would prefer something a little more definite.

Mrs Foster says that she cannot be across every jot and tittle. I accept that Ministers do not have to do all the detail. Ministers are there to do policy. What was the decision to take control of renewables from DECC, the Department of Energy and Climate Change, in London? That was Mrs Foster's policy decision. What was it when the Department decided that it would not cut and paste and adopt the successful GB model? That was a policy decision, not a jot or a tittle. It was a decision by Mrs Foster on policy. Of course, it was a policy decision to adopt what we now know was the fatally flawed renewable heat incentive in Northern Ireland with no cost control, as Mr Eastwood pointed out in his contribution. That was in section 9 of the GB scheme and could have been cut and pasted. Simply put, that degression model works very simply. If there is one pound and only one person applies, they get the full pound, but if 100 people apply, they get a penny each. That protects the integrity of your pot of money. On Planet Foster, everybody who applied got the full pound, and that is why we are in the mess that we are in. Either her fingers are all over these policies or she was asleep at the wheel. Either way, she has to stand aside.

The colleagues to my left have brought renewables into disrepute. Hundreds of people availed themselves of the scheme in good faith and now feel that they are being looked upon as criminals when they are not. It is your fault. You brought forward the scheme.

I do not have time to reflect on everybody's contributions during a three-hour debate. Some of the contributions from the members of the Democratic Unionist Party are the most interesting to reflect on, not least that of Mrs Foster, who called the RHI a "debacle". Indeed, Conor Murphy said that it was badly conceived. She said, as others have, that this is about a ministerial scalp. It is not about a ministerial scalp. It is about ministerial responsibility — if it is to have any meaning in these institutions, Mrs Foster must do the honourable thing. She is complaining about

trial by television. Why did she bother taking part? Why did she walk into the trial and give the interview? She wanted to distract from the issues, did she not? The Bell/Foster spat is nothing more than a mere distraction. She says that we have not yet established the truth, yet, in her contribution, she said that the truth is being twisted out of all recognition. How does she know that it is being twisted if she does not know what the truth is?

4.00 pm

She did not mention the email that may be her undoing, sent by the whistle-blower on 3 September 2013 to arlene@arlenefoster.org.uk, which includes this line:

"the incentive to use more is leading to misuse in some cases".

Evidence in black and white that there was a fatal flaw in the scheme, identified by the whistle-blower, who said that it only took her five minutes on the Internet to discover the problem. She emailed the First Minister in early September 2013.

Mr Givan says that you are innocent until proven guilty — unless you are Jonathan Bell, of course, Mr Givan. The DUP are lily-white. Never mind Red Sky, NAMA, the social investment fund and all the other scandals that have preceded the renewable heat incentive. Mr Givan wants to blame the media. Well, if he thinks that the BBC is at fault, he should complain to Ofcom.

Michelle O'Neill said that the DUP is missing the public mood and then talked about the delivery of the Executive. Did anybody see the tweet from the Northern Ireland Executive on Friday? It said:

"This week the Executive has ... secured good deal for fisheries, announced €23 million on greenways and secured an £8 million contract with 170 jobs."

Did they mention £400 million of an overspend on RHI? No, they did not. How about the £13 million overspend on the social investment fund? No, they did not. They are very capable of spinning.

Lord Morrow, in his magnificent contribution, said that some people are intent on generating a whole lot of heat. He talked about politicians grabbing headlines, spinning and exaggerating. At Christmas time, it was nice to be reminded of the antics of the late Dr Ian Paisley.

Jenny Palmer spoke, as you would expect, as someone who has been subjected to character assassination.

From Mr Hamilton, our Economy Minister, there was no acceptance of ministerial accountability. He said that this is all happening at the behest of his political opponents. However, Sinn Féin wants it. Are they opponents? What a remarkable statement.

Joanne Bunting, making her maiden speech, after all this time, talked about fairness and natural justice. Once again, is that being afforded to Mr Bell? There was no mention or acknowledgement of the whistle-blower.

According to Alastair Ross, this was a stunt by the opposition parties. I think not.

Mr Poots talked about a lynch mob. Well, I can assure him that there are no members of the Third Force on these Benches. There are no red berets under our beds.

In conclusion, in the absence of a fresh inquiry, the Public Accounts Committee is the only show in town. I urge the members of PAC not to vote today. Do not allow yourself to be accused of being compromised. Mrs Foster says that this is a "debacle". The 'Oxford English Dictionary' defines that as "a sudden and ignominious failure". It is a story of incompetence, ineptitude and haplessness.

Mr Speaker, we will now vote. Those who go that way are voting for their career. Those who go this way are voting for the integrity of these institutions.

Mr Speaker: Members, before we proceed to the Question, I remind you that this motion requires cross-community support.

Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 39; Noes 36.

AYES

Nationalist

Mr Attwood, Ms S Bradley, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Hanna, Mr McCrossan, Mr McGlone, Mr McGrath, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Mullan.

Unionist:

Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Chambers, Mrs Dobson, Mr Hussey, Mr Kennedy, Mr McKee, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Smith.

Other

Mr Agnew, Ms Armstrong, Ms Bailey, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Carroll, Mr Dickson, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Aiken and Mr McNulty.

NOES

Unionist:

Mr Anderson, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lyons, Mr McCausland, Miss McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Poots, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr Robinson.

<i>Total Votes</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>Total Ayes</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>[52.0%]</i>
<i>Nationalist Votes</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>Nationalist Ayes</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>[100.0%]</i>
<i>Unionist Votes</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>Unionist Ayes</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>[29.4%]</i>
<i>Other Votes</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>Other Ayes</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>[100.0%]</i>

Question accordingly negatived (cross-community vote).

Adjourned at 4.16 pm.

Written Ministerial Statements

The content of these written ministerial statements is as received at the time from the Ministers. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.

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Department for Infrastructure

Review of Winter Flooding (Northern Ireland) 2015-16

Published at 12.00 noon on Monday 5 December 2016.

Mr Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure): On this date last year 'Desmond', the first of the significant named rain storms, was causing havoc across the north. Numerous other winter storms, most notably, Eva, and Frank followed, making last winter the wettest on record. Flooding was widespread in the Foyle, Erne and Neagh Bann catchments and this demanded exceptional effort from many people including those involved in the multi-agency response, businesses and homeowners. I cannot speak highly enough about the resilience of those impacted, as the flood events seemed never ending in comparison with previous years. I also need to recognise the negative impact these floods caused to users of the road and rail network, farms and businesses, and in particular those in Linen Green, Moygashel and Kinnego Marina.

Following the floods Michelle O'Neill, the then Minister with responsibility for flood risk management, asked Alan Strong to carry out a review. Alan is the current chairman of the Drainage Council, a visiting professor in civil engineering with the University of Ulster and a well respected civil engineer. Alan's review has captured evidence from an exceptionally wide range of people including those involved with the recovery and future planning for such events. This evidence, his commendations, and recommendations for improvements in the area of flood risk management are included in the report which I am making public today. I welcome this piece of work as it is clearly well informed, wide ranging and challenging. The report uses the theme of resilience throughout and focuses on a number of sectors such as farmers, staff and land use. Importantly, the report highlights that flooding is not something that can be solved but is a reality that we must learn to live with and manage. This will be particularly challenging given the predictions for climate change which indicate that we should expect more rainfall and storms in the years to come.

I am proud of our collective efforts to weather last winter's storms and I plan to build on this success to make our communities more resilient going forward. We all need to read Alan's report and then work together to implement the recommendations, so that we are even more prepared for future storms.

The report on 'Review of Winter Flooding' (Northern Ireland) 2015-2016 will be available at the link below from 12:00 Noon on Monday 5 December 2016.

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/alan-strongs-report-review-winter-flooding-northern-ireland-2015-2016>

Department of Finance

Fresh Start 2016

Published at 12.00 noon on Monday 5 December 2016.

Mr Ó Muilleoir (The Minister of Finance): In accordance with Section 64 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as amended by the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Act 2016, I am now outlining the amount of funding available to the Executive as notified to me by the Secretary of State.

Following the British Chancellor's Autumn Statement, announced on the 23 November, the Executive's DEL budget is as set out in the tables below. This includes the element of 'Fresh Start' funding where drawdown in specific years has been agreed.

Resource DEL

£million	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
RDEL Block Grant	10,454	10,476	10,508
Of which Non Ring-fenced	9,896	9,902	9,921
Of which Ring-fenced	558	574	587
Additional Funding for PSNI	34	34	31
Return of 2015-16 welfare deduction	21		
Shared Future Funding	12	12	12
Tackling Paramilitary Activity	5		
Welfare Reform – Fraud and Error	25	25	25

Capital DEL

£million	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
CDEL Block Grant	1,192	1,232	1,291	1,326
Of which General CDEL	1,091	1,155	1,224	1,271
Of which Financial Transactions Capital	101	77	67	55
Shared Education and Housing	7	19	10	6
Capital Borrowing – RRI	200	200	200	200
Capital Borrowing – SHA	100	50		

In addition to these amounts, the Executive, under the Fresh Start Agreement will have access to:

Resource DEL

£million	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Institutions to deal with the past	30	30	30	30
Welfare Reform – Fraud and Error				25
PSNI Security Funding				30
Tackling Paramilitary Activity		5	7.5	7.5
Shared Future Funding				12

Capital DEL

£million	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Shared Education and Housing	43	31	40	44

This Fresh Start Agreement funding will be available for draw down subject to further agreement between the Executive, the NIO and the British Treasury.

The Fresh Start Agreement also provided the Executive with the flexibility to use RRI borrowing for Voluntary Exit Schemes – up to £200 million in 2017-18 and up to £100 million in 2018-19. It also provided additional borrowing for capital investment in projects that promote regional economic growth of £100 million in 2017-18 and £50 million in 2018-19.

Over the coming few weeks the Executive will agree a one year Resource DEL budget for 2017-18 and a four year Capital DEL budget for the period up to 2020-21. This will be laid before the Assembly for consideration.

Attached for information are the tables and explanatory notes, as provided by the Secretary of State.

Department for Communities

Introduction of Universal Credit in Northern Ireland

Published at 9.30 am on Tuesday 6 December 2016.

Mr Givan (The Minister for Communities): I wish to make a Statement to the Assembly in respect of the introduction of Universal Credit in Northern Ireland.

Universal Credit is a working age benefit for people aged 18 to 64 that will replace Jobseeker's Allowance (income based), Employment and Support Allowance (income related), Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Housing Benefit (rental). It will include support for the cost of housing, and when a claimant is in employment, it will also assist with childcare costs as well as providing financial support for disabled people, carers and people who are too ill to work.

The new service is designed to remove a number of administrative and financial barriers from the current welfare system and aims to ensure that it is easier for people to move into employment, whilst ensuring that people who cannot work can continue to receive the financial support they need.

Universal Credit represents the biggest change to the welfare system for working age people for over 70 years and with its focus on helping people participate more fully in the labour market, it has the potential to become a significant economic driver for Northern Ireland.

Universal Credit is being introduced across the United Kingdom on a phased basis and Northern Ireland timescales must align with Great Britain. I am pleased to announce that agreement has now been reached for the roll out plan for Universal Credit in Northern Ireland.

I would also like to acknowledge the sterling work of Executive colleagues in previously securing the Northern Ireland payment flexibilities, which will greatly assist Northern Ireland claimants.

Crucially, the Northern Ireland approach reflects some of the learning arising from implementation across the rest of the United Kingdom. In Northern Ireland, the transition to Universal Credit will start with a number of smaller offices to ensure that the necessary customer experience is being delivered before increasing the scale of business. A series of breaks have been built into the plan in order to stabilise implementation in existing sites, and the transition schedule is spread across dates in the month in order to avoid repeated monthly peaks in activity.

I can announce that Universal Credit will be introduced for new claims, on a phased geographical basis from 25th September 2017 until September 2018. As it reaches the respective geographical areas, people living in those areas will be able to make a new claim for Universal Credit instead of having to submit multiple claims for the benefits that it is replacing.

The first office to deliver Universal Credit will be Limavady followed by Ballymoney, Magherafelt and Coleraine before Christmas 2017. A new Service Centre to support the new Universal Credit offices will open in Foyle in September 2017 and it is intended to establish a second Service Centre

in Newry in early 2018. A full roll out schedule, showing office locations, has been placed in the Assembly Library.

I believe this roll out schedule is challenging but achievable and I will update the Assembly again when further details are finalised in relation to future phases of Universal Credit implementation. My Department continues to modernise how it delivers its services and the launch of the Universal Credit digital led service represents a major step forward in the delivery of the digital public services for Northern Ireland.

Paul Givan MLA
Minister for Communities

Annex B

Universal Credit Roll Out Schedule

Week Beg.	Front Office Name	No. live sites
25/09/2017	Limavady	1
13/11/2017	Ballymoney	2
11/12/2017	Magherafelt and Coleraine	4
15/01/2018	Strabane and Lisnagelvin	6
05/02/2018	Foyle and Armagh	8
19/02/2018	Omagh and Enniskillen	10
05/03/2018	Dungannon and Portadown	12
16/04/2018	Banbridge and Lurgan	14
30/04/2018	Kilkeel, Downpatrick and Newry	17
14/05/2018	Bangor, N'ards and Holywood Road	20
28/05/2018	Knockbreda, N'abbey and Shankill	23
11/06/2018	Corp St, Falls and A'town	26
25/06/2018	Shaftesbury Sq, Lisburn and Larne	29
02/07/2018	Carrick, Antrim and Ballymena	32
Jul – Sep 18	Cookstown (2), B'hinch and Newcastle*	36

* offices subject to the outcome of the public consultation exercise

Department for Infrastructure

Ballynahinch Bypass — Publication of Formal Environmental Statement — Notice to Proceed and Making of the Direction Order

Published at 12.00 noon on Tuesday 13 December 2016.

Mr Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure): I wish to inform Members of my decision to accept the outcomes of the Public Inquiry for the A24 Ballynahinch Bypass scheme and to proceed to progress the scheme in readiness of funding becoming available.

The scheme will address a bottleneck on the strategic road network, through the provision of a bypass of Ballynahinch town centre. It will also separate strategic traffic from local traffic movements.

The Inspector, appointed to the inquiry to examine the case for and against the scheme, concluded that the Department has developed the proposed scheme for the Ballynahinch Bypass with due regard to the effects it will have on local residents, landowners and farmers and that all possible adverse impacts have been assessed and where those assessments have been challenged as a result of the Inquiry, the Department has justified its approach to his satisfaction.

The Inspector therefore recommended that having considered all of the submissions, objections and undertakings entered into by the Department to accommodate objectors, the proposal for the A24 Ballynahinch Bypass should proceed.

In considering the Inspector's Report, the Department carried out a thorough examination of the Inspector's comments and recommendations and concluded that the scheme should proceed to be progressed, subject to recommendations relating to mitigation measures.

Part V of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 sets out the statutory requirements for the assessment of environmental impacts of road schemes. With regard to Habitats Assessment, having caused an Appropriate Assessment to be carried out and having considered the Environmental Statement and the consultation responses to it, I am satisfied the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed scheme have been properly assessed and have been sufficient to inform judgements on the scheme. Accordingly, in light of the Appropriate Assessment process undertaken and the information presented within the Statement to Inform the Appropriate Assessment and the Environmental Statement, I accept the Department's conclusion (as the Competent Authority) that the construction and operation of the A24 Ballynahinch Bypass would not, by itself or in combination with other known plans or projects, adversely affect the integrity of Strangford Lough Special Area of Conservation, or indeed any other Natura 2000 site, or their ability to meet their conservation objectives.

I have carefully considered the Department's Statement on the Public Inquiry and agree with its conclusions. I have therefore decided to proceed to progress the scheme subject to the availability of future funding. In doing so, I commit my Department to carrying out the necessary

actions to facilitate the Inspector's recommendations and the mitigation measures described in the Department's Statement and the Environmental Statement.

I am keen to deliver Ballynahinch Bypass as it would provide significant benefits in terms of alleviating traffic congestion and improving journey times along the A24. The project will remain on my agenda as projects are considered in line with resources available from the forthcoming budget process (scheme expected to cost in the region of £35 million).

The release of the Inspector's report and making of the necessary statutory orders will permit the scheme to be progressed in readiness for funding.

Consequently, I have asked my Department to publish the formal "Environmental Statement - Notice to Proceed" and to make the Direction Order for the scheme. The associated Vesting Order will be made when finance becomes available to build the bypass.

Written Answers

This section contains the written answers to questions tabled by Members.

The content of the responses is as received at the time from the relevant Minister or representative of the Assembly Commission, and it has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process or changed.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 9 December 2016

Written Answers to Questions

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Dr Farry asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs what processes are in place to ensure the speedy release of a Freedom of Information request in circumstances where the absence of clearance from either her or her Special Adviser has taken the request beyond the statutory deadline for response.

(AQW 6074/16-21)

Miss McIlveen (The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs): My Department aims to ensure that Freedom of Information requests are responded to within the statutory limit of twenty working days.

All Freedom of Information Requests are passed out to the relevant business area to respond accordingly. Requests that may have Section 36 implications are forwarded to my Private Office.

The Private Office gives civil servants advance notice of any box closures to ensure deadlines are met wherever possible.

Other suitable arrangements are in place for any prolonged absences by myself or my Special Adviser.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an estimate of the number of tonnes of poultry litter produced over each of the last ten years.

(AQW 6600/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Estimates of the poultry litter produced in Northern Ireland annually are as follows:

- 2005 – 165,000 tonnes
- 2010 – 202,000 tonnes
- 2016 – 175,000 tonnes

While poultry numbers have increased since 2010, the quantity of litter has decreased due to changes in housing systems, improved feed efficiency and shorter production cycles.

My Department does not make estimates every year.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline how the Northern Ireland Environment Agency has (i) enhanced its enforcement and regulation activity; and (ii) developed a more rigorous approach to dealing with offenders involved in environmental crime.

(AQW 6601/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Following the Mills Review Report (2013) and the Criminal Justice Inspection Report (2015), NIEA has implemented the overwhelming majority of the recommendations made which, in combination with a range of other changes, has significantly enhanced its approach to regulation and enforcement. Specifically, the following have been achieved:

Enforcement

- NIEA has established an Assessment Unit which collates all information and intelligence on waste crime.
- NIEA has employed a dedicated Crime Analyst.
- Strategic assessments of waste crime are carried out on a bi-annual basis, helping NIEA to understand the problems and direct resources accordingly.
- An Enforcement Liaison Group has been established, which assists in spreading learning and good practice.
- A renewed focus on partnership working has led to significant gains through joint work with partners such as PSNI and HMRC. In addition, partnership work is being improved through, for example, the newly established Four Nations Waste Crime Group.
- A new Enforcement Policy has been approved and brought into use.
- Procedures are in place to direct resources to more proactive waste crime investigations, based on risk and harm.

Regulation

- A new compliance assessment model is in use for licensed and permitted sites which is showing positive signs of improved observance.
- A dedicated 'volume crime team' has been established within the Regulation Unit to investigate lower level incidents with a view to taking appropriate prompt action.
- Staff skills and professional development has been improved, with a robust technical development and training framework in place.
- The Resource Efficiency Division of NIEA has been re-structured to align business units, including in the area of regulation.
- A joint Local and Central Government Waste Working Group has been established with local Councils to support more effective handling of municipal wastes.

General

- In May this year, the Environmental Crime Unit secured its first ever cash seizure of £32,700 using powers under the Proceeds of Crime Act.
- Officers from the Environmental Crime Unit have been extending their use of seizure powers and have seized a number of vehicles, with a view to disrupting the activities of suspected environmental offenders.

The latter examples, in particular, are indicative of a more rigorous approach to serious waste crime enforcement.

While this outlines some of the ongoing work within NIEA to continually develop and respond to the significant issues of waste regulation and enforcement, clearly, there is no room for complacency. I and my officials are committed to ensuring that as the threat of waste crime develops and our understanding advances, we too continue to cultivate our responses.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 4940/16-21, for her assessment on the increase, including the factors contributing to it.

(AQW 6603/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The risk factors for bovine botulism exist in Northern Ireland, and include inappropriate handling of poultry litter which results in cattle being exposed to a potential source of the toxin, animals being grazed on contaminated land or fed contaminated fodder, translocation of carcasses by wildlife onto grazing pasture, and contaminated drinking water.

The most significant factor contributing to the increase in confirmed incidences of botulism detected over the past five years has been the ability of the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute, funded by my Department, to develop and use, from 2012, new and improved in vitro (ELISA) diagnostic techniques which are more sensitive than the in vivo (mouse) tests that were previously used.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the action she is taking to reduce organised waste crime.

(AQW 6697/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Much of the waste crime being dealt with by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's Environmental Crime Unit is clearly organised activity and is conducted for financial gain. This meets the strict definition of organised crime. Therefore, the current assessment by my officials indicates that organised waste crime remains a significant problem. However, infiltration by known organised crime groups is assessed as neither systematic nor prevalent in Northern Ireland.

The strategic outcome that my Department seeks is a compliant and crime free waste sector. This approach is framed by specific activities in each of the following areas:

- (a) Incident handling and assessment;
- (b) Regulation and compliance;
- (c) Waste movements;
- (d) Deterrence;
- (e) Disruption;
- (f) Detection and dismantling; and
- (g) Remediation

Through the implementation and development of the strategic approach to waste crime outlined, I and my officials remain committed to seeing the achievement of a compliant and crime free waste sector in Northern Ireland. I am encouraged by the level of commitment being demonstrated by my officials towards this aim. To that end, they have developed close and productive partnership links with a range of enforcement agencies throughout the British Isles and beyond. These partnerships have been invaluable in enabling the sharing of resources, intelligence and information.

It is important to note also that, with my full support, NIEA is continuing to progress its intelligence-led approach through the use of an intelligence database which allows information to be logged and analysed. Consequently any possible connections between incidents and offenders are all the more quickly and efficiently identified. In addition, NIEA has employed the

services of a crime analyst, who produces a strategic waste crime assessment twice a year. This allows NIEA to develop a more comprehensive and current analysis of waste crime and, therefore, to give considered direction to precious resources.

The strategic approaches outlined and the activities and principles which underpin them are a clear declaration of my calculated and robust approach to tackling organised waste crime and meeting the overarching aim of protecting and improving the environment

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment on whether genetically modified crops should be allowed to be cultivated in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 6849/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I am not opposed in principle to the cultivation of genetically modified (GM) crops. I take the view that their cultivation ought to be considered on a case by case basis, taking account of the latest scientific evidence to ensure that no harm is caused to either the environment or the agriculture industry.

I recognise the controversy that the whole GM topic attracts. Therefore, I would like to see greater demand for the technology from both growers and consumers before we seriously consider allowing GM crops to be grown here on a widespread basis.

It will also be essential to put in place appropriate coexistence measures. That is, measures which allow both GM and non-GM crops to be grown without risk of GM material spreading to non-GM crops, potentially reducing the commercial value of the latter.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether the cultivation of genetically modified crops is prohibited in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 6850/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: There is no general prohibition on the cultivation of genetically modified (GM) crops in Northern Ireland.

However, the former Environment Minister, Mark Durkan, put in place a limited ban under the terms of the transitional arrangements of Directive 2015/412/EU. His decision applies only to six specified crop varieties that were in the EU approvals process at that time and which were not commercially attractive to growers here. This was an administrative arrangement permitted under the Directive, and because this decision has no material effect on growers here, I have no plans to revisit it.

While I am open to the principle of GM crops being grown here, it is essential that coexistence measures are in place before this happens to protect the interests of all agricultural growers.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the dates she will meet the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to discuss agriculture issues on an all Ireland framework in relation to Brexit.

(AQW 7110/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I discussed agricultural issues with the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine at the NSMC Agriculture Sectoral Meeting on 26th October 2016. The next NSMC meeting is due to be held in Spring 2017.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail how many farmers attended each roadshow event for potential Farm Business Improvement Scheme - Capital applicants.

(AQW 7398/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My Department ran a series of roadshow events at six venues across Northern Ireland, from 7 to 17 November, to provide an opportunity for our farmers and growers to hear more about the key features of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme – Capital Scheme and to ask questions.

My officials have estimated that the total attendance figure over the six events was approximately 3,660.

I personally attended the final roadshow in Armagh where I joined officials for the presentations, and spoke to farmers in the break out sessions where they had the opportunity to speak about their potential project in more detail.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs how many people are employed in the Agri-food Sector; and how many are migrant workers.

(AQW 7413/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: In 2015, according to employment figures obtained from the Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey there were 18,000 employed in the food and drinks processing sector and 26,000 employed in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector. According to the latest available figures, from the 2011 Population Census, there were 3,999 migrant workers employed in the Northern Ireland food and drinks processing sector and 1,048 migrant workers employed in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline her Department's plans for the future of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute site at Loughgall.

(AQW 7426/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My officials are working closely with the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) on plans to develop the AFBI estate strategy so the Institute has leading-edge science platforms, including modern and efficient laboratory and office accommodation, and research farm facilities.

Against this background, plans directed by the AFBI science strategy are being developed for AFBI Loughgall. Currently options to consolidate the science functions undertaken at AFBI Loughgall are being evaluated, through the economic appraisal process. I would hope that an Outline Business Case to support future investments in the AFBI estate at Loughgall will be ready for submission to the Department of Finance by the end of this financial year.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline her Department's plans to address parking issues at the entrance to Gosford Forest Park.

(AQW 7427/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I am aware of concerns raised with regard to parking of cars along the main road at the entrance to Gosford Forest Park. I visited the Forest Park recently, along with William Irwin MLA, to see the issue for myself. It is clear that the practice of parking on the main road is not acceptable; it obstructs traffic and is a hazard, as well as depriving Forest Service of income needed to maintain the Park.

To address the issue, liaison will be required with other agencies as ultimately my Department does not have statutory responsibilities in relation to the management and maintenance of public roads or associated parking enforcement issues.

Following my visit to the Forest Park, I requested a meeting with Minister for Infrastructure Chris Hazzard MLA and TransportNI officials to discuss options to address the problem and a meeting is currently being arranged.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether she will review the present departmental Directive and allow the Loughs Agency to keep all accrued revenue for reinvestment.

(AQW 7440/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The Loughs Agency's annual Business Plan and Budget is prepared each year on a net basis (i.e. income is netted off expenditure) in accordance with Guidance issued by both Finance Departments. For 2016, this included an income target of £100,000, which was netted off the Agency's expenditure for the year.

If the Loughs Agency had projected total income in excess of this £100,000 during the year and incurred additional expenditure in doing so, my Department could have increased both the income and expenditure budgets in the next Monitoring Round, so that the Agency could utilise the additional receipts.

Any suggested modification to the treatment of income needs to be harmonised between Sponsor Departments (DAERA in Northern Ireland and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in the Republic of Ireland) and requires the consent of Finance Departments, both in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. I can assure you that the treatment of the Loughs Agency's income will be actively considered by both Sponsor Departments in the context of established budgetary processes.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether applicants to Tier 2 of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme – Capital do not have to have planning permission granted, rather just applied for, before the deadline of applications on the 28 February 2016.

(AQW 7441/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The focus of Tier 2 is on larger scale investment and construction projects in excess of £30,000 project costs to encourage transformational change.

I launched a Preparation Stage for the Capital Scheme on 20 September to encourage farmers and growers to begin preparations ahead of the Scheme opening on 31 October 2016. In addition, this month my Department hosted a series of information awareness events to help equip farmers and growers with the information they need to consider which Tier of the Scheme, if any, is most suitable to their business needs and also what they need to do next. Farmers and growers attending these events had the opportunity to ask questions about the Scheme and to talk to DAERA officials and planning officers from the councils.

As part of making their application for grant support, applicants proposing to carry out construction projects under Tier 2 are required to have any relevant planning permission, licences or other consents in place, or to demonstrate that they have applied for the relevant permissions by the scheme closing date. Tier 2 closes for applications in Tranche 1 at 4pm on 24 February 2017. However to allow more time, applicants will have until the end of May 2017 to provide evidence of having obtained the necessary permissions.

For farmers and growers who are not ready to complete an application under Tranche 1 of the Scheme, there will be a further opportunity to apply under Tranche 2 of the Scheme, which is planned for autumn 2017.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail the projected number of beneficiaries for each tranche and Tier of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme – Capital.

(AQW 7454/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Projecting the number of beneficiaries likely to arise from the Farm Business Improvement Scheme – Capital is difficult at this point in the Scheme roll-out, particularly given the diversity of agricultural and horticultural enterprises, and their particular characteristics and investment needs.

However, DEARA's business case for the capital component of the FBIS estimated that a total grant budget of £15 million for Tier 1, over two tranches, could result in approximately 2,025 approved applications, if the average investment is approximately £18,500. Tier 2 with a total grant budget of £25 million, over two tranches, could yield up to 500 approved applications, if an average investment is approximately £125,000 per farm.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline what she is doing to address animal abuse and neglect.

(AQW 7470/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My Department provides funding to local Councils to support them in their enforcement of the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011 (the 2011 Act) in relation to non-farmed animals. The available funding for this financial year is £1.25m.

My Department also has an animal welfare enforcement role for the welfare of farm animals. My officials undertake inspections for a number of reasons, including as part of the annual programme of welfare surveillance, as a result of complaints from members of the public, and as part of annual cross-compliance inspections.

My inspectors may inspect vehicles and animals under the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Regulations (NI) 2006 to ensure compliance with welfare standards. These are normally carried out at Larne and Belfast Ports, livestock markets, at the point of departure for exports or roadside checks.

In response to the concerns raised about the illegal transport of pups from ROI to Great Britain via Belfast and Larne, my Department introduced additional checks last year and my inspectors work with ferry operators to check consignments of dogs in transit. Further work is underway with local ferry operators to enhance detection capability. My officials are also working with Councils and liaising with animal charities here, and with equivalent organisations in Great Britain and ROI, to improve data and intelligence sharing.

My officials also licence and inspect petshops, animal boarding, riding and zoological establishments under the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 1972; and my Department has published Codes of Practice under the 2011 Act to promote the welfare of both farmed and non-farmed animals.

I am please to say that the vast majority of livestock keepers and pet owners here are compliant.

I recently published an Action Plan setting out how animal welfare enforcement bodies will work together to implement the Final Report of the Review of the Implementation of the 2011 Act. Many of the Report's sixty-eight recommendations have already been fully implemented, such as: a substantial increase in the maximum penalties for the most serious animal welfare offences to five years imprisonment; the addition of serious animal welfare offences to the Unduly Lenient Sentencing Scheme, so that the Director of Public Prosecutions can refer sentences to the Court of Appeal if he considers them to be unduly lenient; access for my inspectors to conviction data to help with animal welfare investigations; and the establishment of a single animal welfare presence on the NI Direct website to provide a single source of information on animal welfare enforcement.

My Department has also formalised its links with the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG) and the Irish Pet Advertising Advisory Group (IPAAG) to combat the growing concern amongst animal welfare organisations regarding the irresponsible advertising and sale of pets.

My Department will continue to implement the Action Plan to further improve animal welfare enforcement and protect animals against neglect and abuse.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether the developer for the proposed Greencastle ferry has formally consulted Greencastle Oysters; and to outline her powers to ensure such consultation takes place.

(AQW 7508/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Consultation with the aquaculture industry is carried out through the Aquaculture Initiative as the industry support organisation for this sector. With regard to the Greencastle Ferry application, the Aquaculture Initiative was consulted and responded on 26 February 2015. Specific issues for the Greencastle Oyster Company were raised and these have been addressed within the licensing process.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline Departmental work done or planned, to ensure the objectives of the international designations afforded to Greencastle, namely, Special Protection Area's, Areas of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ramsar and OSPAR to provide sufficient protection to the important species of this site in light of the proposed Greencastle ferry.

(AQW 7509/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: A full Environmental Impact Statement was completed by RPS Consulting on behalf of the applicant and my Department has considered this through both the planning and marine licensing processes. Full consideration was given to

all the protected areas through this process. The marine licence also includes a condition that an Ecological Clerk of Works is assigned for the scheme to ensure the protection of species and habitats.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 332/16-21, to outline the assessment of risk of invasive species being introduced from an international port.
(AQW 7510/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: A full Environmental Impact Statement was completed by RPS Consulting on behalf of the applicant and my Department has considered this through both the planning and marine licensing processes. As the plan is for the ferry to cross Carlingford Lough, there is no additional risk posed from the ferry than from the regular marine traffic in the Lough.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to publish the full sectoral audit conducted by her Department identifying possible impacts, risks, opportunities and contingencies which may arise from Brexit; and whether she has approved same.
(AQW 7513/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: This information, gathered by my Department, will be used to inform our input to the UK Government's negotiations. It would not be appropriate to publish it at this time.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the consideration given to ensure the progress made possible through the European stock sustainability measures will not be reversed.
(AQW 7522/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The issue is being progressed as part of a detailed assessment of the potential impact for us of a UK withdrawal from the EU and will feed into negotiations going forward.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the considerations given to secure access for the fishing industry to European waters, in the event of Brexit.
(AQW 7523/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: This issue is being considered as part of a detailed assessment of the potential impact for Northern Ireland of a UK withdrawal from the EU and will feed into the negotiations going forward.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the specific efforts since the EU referendum to ensure an all-island labelling scheme for Irish livestock products.
(AQW 7524/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: This issue is being considered as part of a detailed assessment of the potential impact for Northern Ireland of a UK withdrawal from the EU. The approach taken will be dependent on the arrangements for leaving the EU and it is too early to say what these will be.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail each occasion (i) she; (ii) her predecessor; or (iii) any of her officials attended a meeting (a) with; or (b) at the request or facilitation of Brown Rudnick over the last three years, including the date and purpose of each meeting.
(AQW 7590/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: No meetings with, or at the request or facilitation of Brown Rudnick have taken place within the last three years.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline (i) the assessment prior to the introduction of tugs into the Greencastle Special Protection Area; (ii) what investigation was carried out into the circumstances of the death of a harbour seal killed by corkscrew injury in July this year, less than a year after the introduction of a third larger tug with ducted propellers in the area; and (iii) whether she will publish details of the seal survey report.
(AQW 7600/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Tugs and pilot boats serving Warrenpoint and Greenore ports have been operating from Greencastle since before the designation of Carlingford Lough Special Protection Area and their activities are not considered detrimental to the protected features.

In July 2016, my Department investigated reports of a dead Harbour seal with corkscrew injuries, and allegations that the injury was caused by a jet ski. Photographs of the dead Harbour seal were investigated by a Marine Species Advisor within my Department and it was considered that the injuries were consistent with those inflicted by predation from Grey seals. It is understood that the animal was washed away by the tide before it could be collected for post-mortem.

In February 2015, the UK Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies released guidance which states that there was incontrovertible evidence that corkscrew injuries can be caused by Grey seals and that it is now considered very likely that the use of vessels with ducted propellers may not pose any increased risk to seals over and above normal shipping activities.

Seal surveys have been undertaken to establish a pre-construction baseline for the Greencastle Ferry and the survey report will be published once my Department has received the final draft.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment on comments made by the Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on the 19 October 2016 that agriculture must move away from the notion of subsidies.

(AQW 7603/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I welcome George Eustice's vision for a future UK agricultural policy but will be pressing to ensure that his vision caters for the needs of agriculture in Northern Ireland. The advantage of leaving the EU is that we can design our own policy which gives us the scope to remove the unnecessary bureaucracy associated with the current arrangements and make it better suited to local needs.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail (i) how many; and (ii) what proportion of successful applicants to the Young Farmer's Scheme in 2015 were asked to provide further documentation or proof of head of holding or decision making in 2016.

(AQW 7604/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: A total of 1648 successful applicants to the Young Farmers' Payment in 2015 were written to seeking further information in 2016. This represents 92% of all successful applicants in 2015. The remaining successful applicants were not written to as they had already provided the necessary information.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline plans to regulate the plastic bottle issue, at end of use.

(AQW 7609/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: There is Northern Ireland Producer Responsibility legislation in place which sets statutory targets for the recycling or other recovery of packaging such as plastic, glass and aluminium. The current Northern Ireland target for plastic packaging is 49% and this will increase by 2% per year, up to 57% by 2020.

In 2012 District Councils' powers to deal with litter were strengthened, and from January 2015 Councils are required to collect at least paper, metal, plastic and glass separately from households.

I understand that the potential for the introduction of a Deposit return system for drinks containers in Northern Ireland has been considered previously. It was concluded that it would not be feasible to introduce a mandatory scheme on a Northern Ireland only basis.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the specific efforts made since the EU referendum to ensure an all-island approach to the processing of dairy products.

(AQW 7623/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: This issue is being considered as part of a detailed assessment of the potential impact for Northern Ireland of a UK withdrawal from the EU. The approach taken will be dependent on the arrangements for leaving the EU and it is too early to say what these will be.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline Executive discussions with particular regard to border communities and how they may be affected by Brexit.

(AQW 7624/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: This issue is being considered as part of a detailed assessment of the potential impact for Northern Ireland of a UK withdrawal from the EU. It would not be appropriate to share the detail of discussions at this stage given that the terms of any future relationship between the UK and the EU is unknown.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline whether her Department has undertaken any scoping exercise in relation to Environmental protection policies and the impact of Brexit.

(AQW 7625/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My Department continues to carry out a detailed analysis of the potential impact of Brexit and the issues that will affect us locally. It would not be appropriate to share the results of this analysis as it will be used to inform the NI Executive's input to the UK Government's negotiating position.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline her strategy to enhance the protection and increase the population of the red squirrel, especially at Glenlyon in Holywood.

(AQW 7679/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: In 2008, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), together with colleagues from the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Republic of Ireland, published an all Ireland Red Squirrel Species Action Plan. To further

conservation efforts and to progress actions contained within the plan, NIEA chairs the Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum. This forum brings together various organisations in order to develop and deliver best practice in red squirrel conservation.

Since taking on this role, NIEA has helped create, and subsequently supports, a number of local squirrel groups. These groups focus on local squirrel issues and provide regular updates to the forum. There are currently eight groups active within Northern Ireland. One of these groups is based in the Ards Peninsula at Mount Stewart covering the Lower Peninsula area. It is hoped that the range of the Ards Group work could be expanded to encompass more of north Down in the near future.

Earlier this year, a major UK wide project called "Red Squirrels United" was initiated in Northern Ireland. The project is funded by the EU and HLF and led by Ulster Wildlife with close support from NIEA and the NI Squirrel Forum. Its initial aims are to target grey squirrels in two key areas; (south Down and east Antrim), and deliver further volunteer effort across three other areas of Northern Ireland. The project is employing 6 full and part-time staff (i.e. three in each of the two areas) over three years with the aim of strengthening red squirrel status in these areas and also helping the expansion of the existing red squirrel groups. It is envisaged that the legacy of this project will be increased community engagement across Northern Ireland supporting local red squirrel populations.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether she plans to alter the no catch period for sea bass.

(AQW 7680/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Measures for the conservation of sea bass that apply to United Kingdom waters are set out in European legislation, namely, Article 10 of the annual "Fishing Opportunities Regulation", currently Council Regulation (EU) 2016/72. It is not in my power to alter these measures.

The EU Commission has proposed changes to Article 10 which will be agreed at the forthcoming December Council. A general prohibition on fishing for sea bass is proposed with a complex set of derogations to allow fishing for various periods in certain areas depending on, whether fishing is commercial or recreational, and on what gears are used. The proposals can be viewed at the link below.

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:8a03b9bd-9c2d-11e6-868c-01aa75ed71a1.0006.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the current no catch period for sea bass.

(AQW 7681/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The current no catch period for sea bass is set out in article 10(2) of Council Regulation (EU) 2016/72 and this may be viewed at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R0072&rid=1>

Ms Archibald asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether she has any concerns that the conditionality laid down in Chancellor Phillip Hammond's statement on 4 October 2016 could affect on-going north-south co-operation in sourcing Horizon 2020 funding.

(AQW 7693/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Both the European Commission and the UK Government have issued statements confirming that UK organisations are fully eligible and welcome to apply to European Horizon 2020 programme and projects with UK participants and/or UK led will not be viewed or evaluated differently.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline what assessment has been made of the social economic and environmental impacts of the proposed Greencastle ferry.

(AQW 7714/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: A full Environmental Impact Statement was completed by RPS Consulting on behalf of the applicant and my Department has considered this through both the planning and marine licensing processes. The Statement included social and economic factors in addition to environmental impacts. All of this information is publically available on the Northern Ireland Planning Portal.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 6264/16-21, to outline whether her Department intends to have any formal engagement with the UK Government before Article 50 is invoked.

(AQW 7724/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Formal engagement with the UK Government has been ongoing and this interaction will continue.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 6376/16-21, to outline how this compares to each of the last five years.

(AQW 7725/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The number of farm businesses with breaches of cross compliance for the years 2011 to 2015 is detailed in the table below:

Year	Number of Businesses
2011	663
2012	621
2013	597
2014	589
2015	483

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to list each date and circumstance she, or Departmental officials, communicated with the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in relation to a new agricultural policy for the UK following the vote to leave the European Union.

(AQW 7728/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I have communicated with Andrea Leadsom, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and George Eustice, Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on numerous occasions on a range of issues associated with the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

I am not in a position to detail the specific dates of all communications between my officials and their Defra counterparts as that engagement occurs regularly and covers a range of issues.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the consideration given to the impact Brexit will have on the efforts to address illegal dumping.

(AQW 7740/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: This issue is being considered as part of a detailed assessment of the potential impact for Northern Ireland of a UK withdrawal from the EU.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the plans her Department has drawn up to ensure air and water quality safeguards remain in place in the event of Brexit.

(AQW 7769/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: This issue is being considered as part of a detailed assessment of the potential impact for Northern Ireland of a UK withdrawal from the EU. The approach taken will be dependent on the arrangements for leaving the EU and it is too early to say what these will be.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the plans her Department has started working on to ensure any future Agricultural policy accounts for the distinct nature of land ownership and agricultural markets.

(AQW 7771/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Significant thought is being given to a UK agricultural policy framework which will deliver the market and non-market outcomes that the agricultural industry is uniquely positioned to deliver. These issues are being considered as part of a detailed assessment of the potential impact for Northern Ireland of a UK withdrawal from the EU and will feed into negotiations going forward. It would, therefore, not be appropriate to share the information at this stage as will be used to inform the NI Executive's input to the UK Government's negotiating position.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the plans her Department has made to ensure ring-fenced funding for rural development in the event of the Common Agricultural Policy subsidy being removed.

(AQW 7772/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: It is too early in the process to be able to provide financial guarantees.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the plans her Department has started working on to mitigate the impact on individual farmers of any future loss of European subsidies such as the Common Agricultural Policy Basic Payment Scheme.

(AQW 7773/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Significant thought is being given to a future UK agricultural policy framework which will deliver the market and non-market outcomes that the agricultural industry is uniquely positioned to deliver. It is, however, too early in the process to outline the details of the future framework and, therefore, assess its impact.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the plans her Department has started working on to mitigate against any future loss of European Funding.

(AQW 7774/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The approach taken will be dependent on the arrangements for leaving the EU and it is too early to say what these will be. My Department is carrying out a detailed analysis of the potential impact of Brexit and the issues that will affect us locally. However, it would not be appropriate to share the results of this analysis as it will be used to inform the NI Executive's input to the UK Government's negotiating position.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the plans her Department has drawn up to ensure a sustainable future for the recycling sector in the event of Brexit.

(AQW 7775/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: This issue is being considered as part of a detailed assessment of the potential impact for Northern Ireland of a UK withdrawal from the EU. The approach taken will be dependent on the arrangements for leaving the EU and it is too early to say what these will be.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the areas of North Down where her Department plans to increase the tree population.

(AQW 7800/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My Department provides an indicative map for woodland creation on the DAERA website indicating the areas of land potentially "suitable for afforestation" and "suitable for afforestation with possible constraints". This map includes the North Down Constituency which currently has 9% woodland cover, 59% is suitable for afforestation, 1% is suitable for afforestation with possible constraints, 3% is unsuitable for afforestation and 28% is urban.

I opened a second tranche of the Forest Expansion Scheme in July 2016. Forest Service received applications for 370 hectares and letters of offer have been issued for 320 hectares for planting in winter 2016/2017. Unfortunately, there were no applications from the North Down Constituency.

The Forest Expansion Scheme is planned to reopen in summer 2017 in time to support new planting in the winter of 2017/18. Grant aid can be paid on up to 100% of eligible costs and in addition, land on which Single Farm Payment was paid in the 2008 scheme year remains eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme. I would encourage land owners in the North Down Constituency to apply for the scheme next year.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 6647/16-21, whether these two qualifications in unison meet the requirements of the Department's Young Farmers Support Scheme.

(AQW 7818/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: To qualify for payment under the Young Farmers' Support Scheme, one of the eligibility criteria is that applicants must at the BPS application closing date, have at least a Level 2 qualification in Agriculture (or a related subject, containing at least a farm business management module).

While a veterinary degree is classed as a Level 6 qualification, and an MBA as a Level 7, any assessment of a qualification or eligibility based on an MBA or veterinary degree, either separately or in conjunction, must take into consideration the individual modules upon which the qualification is based, against the qualification eligibility criteria set for the Scheme.

For those young farmers who currently hold a qualification but are not sure if it will meet the qualification eligibility criteria for the Young Farmers' Payment, the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise, (CAFRE) have provided a list of eligible qualifications. This list is published on CAFRE's website (www.cafre.ac.uk) in the Industry Support section. The list however is not exhaustive and young farmers wishing to check the eligibility of the qualification they hold can do so by submitting details on the qualification and modules / units achieved via email to Industry.TrainingAdmin@daera-ni.gov.uk within CAFRE or by calling 028 94426880.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the action her Department is taking in conjunction with key agencies to address rural crime.

(AQW 7824/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Veterinary Service Animal Health Group Welfare and Enforcement Branch (WAEB) represents my Department on the Department of Justice (DOJ) led Rural Crime Partnership, a multi-agency body which is developing strategies to counter rural crime.

WAEB also continues to work closely with the PSNI, the Garda Síochána, veterinary colleagues from Department of Agriculture Food and Marine in the Republic of Ireland and other agencies including Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to tackle rural crime across Northern Ireland.

In addition to this multiagency working, DAERA also liaises with representatives of the farming community on a number of joint initiatives aimed at reducing rural crime and raising awareness of action that can be taken to help prevent rural crime, including Farm Watch, the Freeze-branding initiative and the Crimestoppers Campaign.

I am very aware of the real concerns about rural crime and I would encourage farmers to participate in these initiatives and to do all they can to secure their properties.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 6599/16-21, whether she intends to hold a further phase after autumn 2017.

(AQW 7829/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The Farm Business Improvement Scheme (FBIS) is a package of measures to support the sustainable growth of our agriculture and horticulture sectors, and I am rolling it out in a phased and coordinated way.

Given the current economic climate, I am conscious that those applying to the FBIS Capital Scheme will be taking on additional investments at a time when many sectors have felt the impact of low prices and market volatility. The uptake of the initial two tranches of the Capital Scheme for both tiers will allow my Department to gauge the realistic demand and affordability of the Scheme for farmers and growers.

There will be on-going monitoring as the two tranches of each tier roll out. This information will be used to inform future decision making about any further roll out of the Scheme.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on the work of the independent TB Strategic Partnership Group.

(AQW 7830/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The TBSPG plans to publish its Eradication and Implementation Plan on 15th December.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether her Department will commit to enshrine in law those protections that derive from judgements of the European Court of Justice.

(AQW 7878/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The matter is still under consideration and it is too early to say.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the support her Department can provide to strengthen the negotiating position of farmers in the supply chain.

(AQW 7932/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I believe that it is only right that everyone involved in the food supply chain should share both the risks and rewards, and that farmers should receive a fair price for their work and produce.

As you will be aware, in the UK we have a Groceries Code Adjudicator to regulate the relationships between major supermarkets and their direct suppliers and promote fair dealing. The Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), which is responsible for the regulation of competition issues in the UK, has launched a review of the case for extending the Groceries Code Adjudicator's (GCA) remit. I have asked my officials to engage in this review at as early a stage as possible.

Through the Farm Business Improvement Scheme measures, my Department is also encouraging increased co-operation within the supply chain. For example, Business Development Groups bring farmers together to share knowledge and skills to help them make informed decisions about adopting new technologies and developing their business, and the selection process for Tier 2 of the Capital Scheme also encourages supply chain integration.

In addition, my Department provides support for cooperation within specific sectors. Examples include support to the Northern Ireland Stakeholders Potato Promotion Group (NISPPG), including for the group's promotional campaign to reverse the downward trend in potato consumption; participation in an industry-led working group to explore opportunities for co-operation within the field vegetables and top fruit sectors, and technical support from CAFRE on a recent industry study tour to look at the operation of Producer Organisations in Scotland.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment of the impact on farmers in relation to the plans to force taxpayers to submit tax information online.

(AQW 7934/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Tax collection, including the impact of changes to tax collection methods, is a matter for HMRC. Tax accountants are best placed to advise clients on submission options available to them.

Dr Farry asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment of the deficiencies that exist in waste regulations and legislative powers regarding the illegal importation and disposal of asbestos.

(AQW 7936/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: As stated in AQW 6417-16-2, legislation is already in place to deal with this matter. Specifically, Article 4 of the Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997 makes the illegal deposit of waste an offence with the person committing the offence liable, in the most serious cases, to an unlimited fine.

In addition, the Hazardous Waste Regulations (NI) 2005 set out specific requirements for anyone who makes a deposit of hazardous waste whether by way of storage or disposal in or on land, including notifying NIEA of such an activity and keeping

the required records. Failure to do so is an offence and the Regulations set out the various actions available to the Agency in dealing with such offences.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment of whether farmers will receive improved, matching or less financial support from the new arrangements and will she consider reintroducing farm subsidies, following our possible exit from the EU.

(AQW 7944/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: It is too early in the process to outline the details of the future UK Agricultural Policy Framework and to provide any financial guarantees.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail how many applications were received for the spreading of slurry after the ban came into effect; and how many were successful.

(AQW 7945/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I can confirm that there is no legal provision in the Nitrates Action Programme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, commonly referred to as the NAP Regulations, to grant farmers a waiver and let them spread organic manure during the closed spreading period and as such there have been no applications to or approvals from NIEA to do so.

NIEA are currently investigating two cases where it was confirmed that organic manure, namely slurry, was spread during the closed period. NIEA are considering all the circumstances of each case to determine if the farmers in question had no reasonable alternative due to exceptional circumstances beyond their control.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether she will review the sentencing laws for waste crime that would make them comparable with the waste crime laws in England, Scotland and Wales.

(AQW 8079/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: No such review is necessary as sentences available in Northern Ireland for waste-related offences are already in alignment with those available in other UK jurisdictions.

The key offences and penalties in relation to waste crime in Northern Ireland are contained within the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (the 1997 Order). They range from fixed penalty notices of around £300 to fines of up to £50,000, dependent on the nature and scale of the offence committed. In addition to fines, more serious offences may lead to imprisonment for up to 5 years.

In England and Wales, the equivalent legislation is the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2010, regulation 39 which applies the same level of penalties as those contained in the 1997 Order. The Scottish waste legislation is made under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which contains the same level of penalties as those in the 1997 Order.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether she will consider limiting the number of breeding dogs to be housed in any puppy breeding establishment.

(AQW 8166/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The issue of a cap on the number of dogs in a breeding establishment was discussed during the making of the Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (NI) 2013 and it was agreed that it is the conditions dogs and their pups are kept in that is relevant, rather than the number of dogs present. The issue was discussed at the then Agriculture and Rural Development Committee and the Regulations passed through the Assembly, via the draft affirmative resolution procedure.

In February this year, my Department published the Final Report of the Review of the Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011. The Review also considered the issue of a cap on the number of dogs in a breeding establishment and the Final Report concluded that welfare is not scale dependent and the assessment of welfare should be based on the condition of the individual dogs themselves and the environment in which they are kept. A cap would also be easy to circumvent with businesses being split across other sites to comply with any such requirements.

The Final Report is available on my Department's website at the following link: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/review-implementation-welfare-animals-act-ni-2011>. An Action Plan, to ensure the recommendations of the Final Report are fully implemented, is also available on the website and will be updated every six months.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on the establishment of an Independent Environment Agency.

(AQW 8199/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I have no plans to establish an Independent Environment Agency.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail how many 2015 Basic Payment Scheme Applications are still under review; and how many are related to the definition of an active farmer.

(AQW 8200/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: There are currently 645 Basic Payment Scheme 2015-related Stage 1 Review of Decision applications outstanding. Of these, 438 applications relate to a decision that the applicant was not eligible for payment due to the 'Active Farmer' requirements.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on her Department's work to address anti-microbial resistance.

(AQW 8204/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a global problem and a major concern for both human and veterinary medicine. In order to help tackle the threat posed by antibiotic resistance, it will be necessary to prevent unnecessary use in animal production and minimise the incidence of disease that would necessitate the use of antibiotics. Good farm management, biosecurity and animal husbandry systems are therefore crucial to minimise the occurrence of disease and reduce the need for antibiotic use.

My Department has had an AMR action plan in place since August 2014, devised in line with the strategic aims and key areas of the overall UK 5 Year AMR Strategy 2013-2018. The DAERA action plan focuses on encouraging good biosecurity practices and issuing antibiotic best practice guidance; and increasing awareness of AMR among PVPs, farmers and those entering the industry.

These best practice communications have been disseminated to farmers and PVPs. Agriculture students at CAFRE are also benefitting from enhanced AMR content in their animal health and welfare courses. Guidance and advice has also been made available at the annual Balmoral Show and Winter Fair to further enhance AMR awareness among those in the industry. Guidance is also available on the DAERA website.

The Health Minister and I worked together to promote European Antibiotic Awareness Day on 18 November this year to highlight the importance of responsible use of antibiotics in both human and animal health. This co-operation reflects the importance of the "One Health" approach which co-ordinates policy across health, agriculture and food safety in tackling antimicrobial resistance.

My Department continues to be represented on DEFRA's Antimicrobial Resistance Co-ordination (DARC) group to ensure that AMR surveillance here reflects that in Great Britain and is represented on the Strategic Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare-Associated Infections Group (SAMRHA) led by Department of Health Northern Ireland. My officials are working with Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), which is the lead for the UK in negotiations in Europe, for the review of the current law for veterinary medicines and medicated feeds. The Commission's review will include measures to tackle the threat posed by antimicrobial resistance.

Department for Communities

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 6284/16-21, to outline any proactive action he is taking to reduce the number of families with children presented to the NIHE as homeless.

(AQW 6911/16-21)

Mr Givan (The Minister for Communities): For 2016/17, over £35 million pounds has been made available to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to work with the voluntary sector to prevent homelessness and to provide vital support to those people, including those with families, who find themselves facing homelessness.

The Housing Executive has advised me that it currently provides funding for 27 accommodation based and 8 floating supporting schemes for homeless families with children at a cost of 4.7 million pounds per annum. These schemes are delivered by 11 service providers (including the Housing Executive) and provide a total of 858 units for homeless families with children throughout Northern Ireland.

In the draft Programme for Government (PfG) I have committed to a number of proactive actions to tackle homelessness including for those with families. These include building 9,600 new social homes, supporting 3,750 first-time buyers to purchase a new home and ensuring that the private rented sector is a good housing option for everyone including families.

In addition this year I am investing almost £1 million in housing advice services for mortgage debt and other housing advice.

The Housing Executive seeks to take proactive action in reducing the number of families with children who present as homeless to them through a number of different measures. The current Homelessness Strategy deals with a range of client groups, including families, while the Housing Options approach currently being piloted by the Housing Executive seeks to assist families in preventing the need to present as homeless and find sustainable housing solutions.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister for Communities to outline the wait times for each of the occupational approved housing adaption schemes in Upper Bann, over the past five years.

(AQW 7438/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that the table below shows the waiting times for adaptations within Housing Executive stock in the Upper Bann area, over the past five years, from Occupational Therapist referral.

Average waiting times (weeks)	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	31 Oct 2016	Comments
Showers – urgent (target: within 10 weeks)	8	20	No referrals	No referrals	2	n/a	
Showers non-urgent (target: within 40 weeks)	6	7	6	7	6	n/a	
Minor Adaptions (target: within 6 weeks)	2	3	3	3	3	n/a	
Major Adaptations -Extensions	57	68	84	90	104	60	Planning approvals timescales, site restrictions, changing complex needs and procurement process can impact on work completion times.
Heating Adaptations – urgent (target: within 12 weeks)	10	10	12	n/a	n/a	12	All occupation approved heating adaptations have been prioritised through heating programme since 2014 and are completed on average within 12 weeks
Heating Adaptations -non urgent (target: within 52 weeks)	13	17	26	n/a	n/a	16	All occupation approved heating adaptations have been prioritised through heating programme since 2014 and are completed on average within 16 weeks
Urgent Adaptations (target: within 2 weeks) (new contract from Sept 16)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	New classifications and target timescales have been applied to adaptations since September 2016
Non-urgent Adaptations (target: within 5 weeks) (new contract from Sept 16)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5	New classifications and target timescales have been applied to adaptations since September 2016

n/a – not applicable

In relation to information on Disabled Facility Grants, the Housing Executive has advised that this is based on those service standards which cover the stages of the process for which NIHE is responsible. The collated figures relate to performance of the full grants service, rather than just performance in Upper Bann.

Housing adaptations for people with disabilities in the private sector are not delivered on a scheme basis, but through individual applications made by home owners, landlords and tenants following receipt of a recommendation from an Occupational Therapist. The application process involves six stages, however, only Stages 2, 4 and 6 are within the control of the Housing Executive. Service standards for processing these stages are as follows:-

Stage	Service Standard	Actual
2	Issue 90% of DFG schedules of work within 12 weeks of inspecting the property.	NIHE is currently issuing 92% of schedules within 12 weeks.
4	Issue 100% of DFG approvals within 6 months of receiving all documents from the applicant.	NIHE is currently issuing 99% of approvals within 6 months.

Stage	Service Standard	Actual
6	Make 90% of payments within 6 weeks of a request for an inspection.	NIHE is currently making 97% of payments within 6 weeks.

Those stages which require input from the applicant, contractor or other agency are also important factors in the overall timescales for individual grant applications.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 6862/16-21, whether (i) he has spoken to the Minister of Finance about seeking a derogation from the Treasury since reclassification was announced on 29 September 2016; and (ii) this issue has been raised at any meetings of the Executive.

(AQW 7461/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) This issue is a matter of continued dialogue between the Minister of Finance and myself.
- (ii) The matter of derogation from Treasury was discussed at a meeting of the Executive on 29 September 2016, on the day of the ONS announcement.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Communities to detail how many people will receive a Winter Fuel Payment this year, in Strabane.

(AQW 7471/16-21)

Mr Givan: It is not possible to detail the number of people who will receive a Winter Fuel Payment this year in Strabane as payments are paid automatically to eligible customers from their relevant benefit system and are also paid to persons who are not in receipt of any of the qualifying benefits.

It is only possible to provide information on the estimated number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients in Strabane in the 2015-16 year – which was 6,450.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Communities to detail how many people are eligible for Winter Fuel Payments, in Strabane.

(AQW 7472/16-21)

Mr Givan: It is not possible to detail the number of people who are eligible to receive a Winter Fuel Payment this year in Strabane as payments are paid automatically to eligible customers from their relevant benefit system and are also paid to persons who are not in receipt of any of the qualifying benefits.

It is only possible to provide a figure for the population estimate for people in Strabane aged 65+ in 2015- this equates to 6,310.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) the roles his Department are currently recruiting for and at what grades; and (ii) whether any of these positions have previously been held by staff that left their roles under the Voluntary Exit Scheme.

(AQW 7475/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) As of 28 November 2016 the Department is in the process of recruiting:
 - 20 permanent Administrative Officers (16 to Employment Support Allowance, 4 to Belfast Service Centre). All 20 are being filled from the 2013 Northern Ireland Civil Service external AO recruitment competition;
 - 21 fixed-term Administrative Officers (20 to Belfast Service Centre, 1 to Universal Credit); and
 - 12 fixed-term Executive Officer 2s to Universal Credit.
- (ii) The Northern Ireland Civil Service Voluntary Exit Scheme operated in the 2015/16 financial year only for the 12 Northern Ireland Civil Service departments in place at that time. The Department for Communities came into existence on 9 May 2016 and comprises elements of 5 different former Departments. Departmental restructuring has given rise to changes in Departmental functions as well as new Programme for Government commitments and the implementation of Welfare Reforms. It is not therefore possible to identify whether roles being filled by recruitment were previously held by staff who left under the Voluntary Exit Scheme.
- (iii) Subject to the rules of the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (Northern Ireland), there is nothing to preclude staff who left under the Voluntary Exit Scheme applying for future employment within the Northern Ireland Civil Service or elsewhere.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to detail how many people were put into temporary housing by the Housing Executive over the last year.

(AQW 7495/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive advises that during the period 01 November 2015 to 31 October 2016, 2701 households were placed in temporary accommodation. The Housing Executive does not hold the figures on an individual person basis.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to detail the cost to Housing Executive to provide temporary housing over the last two year period.

(AQW 7497/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Table below includes the cost to the Housing Executive to provide temporary housing over the last two year period.

	2014	2015	Total
Homeless Temporary Accommodation Costs	3,967,581	3,915,842	7,883,423

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Communities to detail how many oil fired boilers were replaced or received approval for replacement with an oil fired cooker within the Boiler Replacement Scheme, in the past five years in Londonderry, Omagh and Enniskillen Offices broken down by (i) Office; and (ii) Community background.

(AQW 7511/16-21)

Mr Givan: I have been advised by the Housing Executive that the Boiler Replacement Scheme provides an allowance towards the cost of replacing old oil boilers with new efficient boilers. The Scheme may offer an allowance of £500 or £1,000, depending on the income of the household, to install a new oil boiler with full controls. If an applicant so wishes, this new oil boiler with full controls may take the form of an oil fired range cooker that will operate the central heating in the house. However, the Housing Executive does not retain separate records on the type of oil boilers installed under the scheme.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Communities to outline the criteria within the boiler replacement scheme to allow for an oil fired boiler to be replaced with an oil fired cooker.

(AQW 7512/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive have advised me that under the Boiler Replacement Scheme, the Housing Executive may allow £500 or £1,000, depending on the income of the applicant, towards the cost of replacing an oil boiler with a new oil fired heating appliance with controls which operates with at least 90% efficiency.

If an applicant so wishes, he/she may install an oil fired range cooker that will operate the central heating in the house.

The Housing Executive does not specify makes or models of boilers that may be installed under the Boiler Replacement Scheme. We have no specific criteria for the installation of range cookers.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities to outline the legal position in Northern Ireland regarding the evolving human rights framework as provided for the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights if Brexit occurs.

(AQW 7520/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department continues to carry out a detailed analysis of the potential impact of Brexit and the issues that will affect us locally. It would not be appropriate to share the results of this analysis as it will be used to inform the NI Executive's input to the UK Government's negotiation position.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities to outline the consideration his Department has given to the legal position of rights provided by EU protections to individuals in the event of Brexit.

(AQW 7521/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department continues to carry out a detailed analysis of the potential impact of Brexit and the issues that will affect us locally. It would not be appropriate to share the results of this analysis as it will be used to inform the NI Executive's input to the UK Government's negotiation position.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to detail how many NIHE tenants are waiting on a decant property to allow major repairs to be carried out on their current home, broken down by area.

(AQW 7584/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that the number of tenants, broken down by area, currently waiting for a decant property to allow major repairs to be carried out on their home is as follows:-

Region	Area	Numbers awaiting decant property
Belfast	West Belfast	9
North	Causeway	1

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities to outline the efforts made to ensure continued and future access to the European Investment bank for housing associations and bodies.

(AQW 7615/16-21)

Mr Givan: Existing housing association loans from the European Investment Bank are secure. Any future loan arrangements will depend on the nature of the UK's future relationship with the European Union and its institutions.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities to outline how the rights provided for in the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights will be secured for Irish citizens born in Northern Ireland under the jus soli principle if Brexit occurs.

(AQW 7616/16-21)

Mr Givan: This issue is being considered as part of a detailed assessment of the potential impact for us of a UK withdrawal from the EU and will feed into negotiations going forward.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities to outline any Departmental plans to mitigate against any future loss of European Funding.

(AQW 7617/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department continues to carry out a detailed analysis of the potential impact of Brexit and the issues that will affect us locally. It is too early at this stage to formulate plans to mitigate against future loss of European funding but this issue will be raised as part of the NI Executive's input to negotiations with the UK Government and the EU.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities to outline reviews on the impact of Brexit currently underway in his Department.

(AQW 7618/16-21)

Mr Givan: Officials within my Department have been engaged in a series of discussions to explore and determine the impact of the UK's decision to exit the European Union on the services which we provide.

All information collated will be used to inform our input to the UK Government's negotiations. It would not be appropriate to publish it at this time.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment of the number of new social houses that could be built with £1b public money.

(AQW 7619/16-21)

Mr Givan: You will be aware that Housing Associations in Northern Ireland must raise private finance to match the Housing Association Grant provided to build new social homes.

Based on current grant rates and assuming that new social housing will continue to be delivered by Housing Associations on the current model, up to 15,000 new social homes could be provided with £1 billion of public funding.

This rudimentary estimate is based on the current average costs of building general needs homes. It does not take into consideration major influencing factors such as the availability of suitable development land, the higher costs associated with developing difficult sites, variations in grant rates, the capacity of the construction sector and the terms on which matching private finance would be available to Housing Associations.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Communities whether he will commit to securing access to the Creative Europe programme so Northern Ireland's cultural institutions can continue to benefit from the funding and cross-border collaboration in the event of Brexit.

(AQW 7627/16-21)

Mr Givan: My Department continues to assess the potential impact of Brexit, the issues that will affect us locally and will contribute to the consideration being given to this issue by the UK government.

In relation to the Creative Europe programme, I am aware that the Arts Council of Northern Ireland took a decision earlier this year to close the Creative Europe desk that was based at their premises. This was because the costs of operating the service were disproportionate to the benefits owing to the highly competitive nature of the Creative Europe programme and limitations of capacity amongst many arts organisations to apply.

The Arts Council has advised that groups who are interested in EU funding programmes can access funding information via the Creative Europe website at <http://www.creativeeuropeuk.eu/funding-opportunities> or alternatively contact the Creative Europe desk in London where staff can provide further advice.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Communities to outline any departmental scoping exercises undertaken to access potential impact on cross border workers with regard to pension rights in the event of Brexit.

(AQW 7628/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department continues to carry out a detailed analysis of the potential impact of Brexit and the issues that will affect us locally. It would not be appropriate to share the results of this analysis as it will be used to inform the NI Executive's input to the UK Government's negotiation position.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Communities to outline any discussions with representatives of the creative arts industry regarding the impacts of a proposed Brexit on their profession.
(AQW 7629/16-21)

Mr Givan: Although I am not aware of any direct discussions with representatives of the creative arts industry, my Department is the lead in Northern Ireland on the remit of Creative Industries and represents NI on the British Irish Council Creative Industries workstream. Some early discussions have taken place in that arena on the implications of Brexit and it is expected that these discussions will continue both bilaterally and multi-laterally.

My Department continues to carry out a detailed analysis of the potential impact of Brexit and the issues that will affect us locally.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Communities to outline his Department's consultation with community and voluntary groups in receipt of European funding to ensure they have a sound financial future.
(AQW 7630/16-21)

Mr Givan: It is too early at this stage to consult with voluntary and community groups in receipt of European funding regarding their financial future from the UK's withdrawal from the EU. This will largely depend on the terms of the relationship between the UK and the EU which is ultimately agreed.

Under the review of the provision of regional support to the Sector proposals to replace existing provision include investment readiness support and promoting access to alternative sources of funding outside of grant funding.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline the Housing Executive's plans for better parking facilities for residents, particularly the elderly residents of Priors Lea in Holywood.
(AQW 7677/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has no plans for better parking facilities for residents of Priors Lea.

In line with Housing Executive policy they will not carry out parking schemes if 50% or more of properties that would benefit do not belong to the Housing Executive. Eleven out of the sixteen properties in Priors Lea have been sold.

If however, Transport NI agreed to provide additional parking and land was required from the Housing Executive, such a request would be given due consideration.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline his plans for the future provision of services at Bangor Social Security Office.
(AQW 7678/16-21)

Mr Givan: There are currently no plans under consideration for any further changes to the provision of services at Bangor Social Security Office.

In July 2015, my Department, working in partnership with the Department of Finance, relocated the Job Centre service from High Street to the Social Security Office at Hamilton Road Bangor. Customers can therefore access both benefits and work-related services in one building.

The introduction of new benefit regimes such as Universal Credit and Discretionary Support will enable customers throughout Northern Ireland to interact with the Department using various channels including on-line.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 6858/16-21, to outline the total amount of (i) development potential land held by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; and (ii) existing open space land held by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, broken down by Local Government district; and to provide a definition of each of these land types.
(AQW 7713/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has provided a list of existing open space land it holds, setting out its assessment of development potential. This information has been placed in the Assembly Library for your information.

The information is not available in the format requested but has been supplied on a NIHE District Office basis.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 6575/16-21, to outline (i) how his Department prevents the payment of benefits to anyone evading justice; and (ii) the level of information sharing that occurs with the relevant agencies within the Department of Justice on the location of persons of interest to statutory agencies.
(AQW 7721/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) The Single Investigation Service within the Department is responsible for bringing to justice those responsible for fraud where it occurs in the social security system. A suspected benefit fraud, including where the individual seeks to evade detection or investigation, may result in the discontinuation of benefit depending on the individual circumstances and rules of the particular benefit in payment. For those subject to wider criminal justice investigation, data sharing arrangements are in place with the Police Service of Northern Ireland where benefit information is helpful in locating individuals, including those who may be evading justice. Social security legislation provides for a person to be disqualified from receiving benefit if they are absent from Northern Ireland or undergoing imprisonment or detention in legal custody. In addition, each benefit has specific entitlement conditions that must be satisfied, which can include residence and presence conditions.
- (ii) Between 1st April 2016 and 31st October 2016 the Single Investigation Service dealt with 758 requests for information from the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to detail (i) the salary Sport NI's Chief Executive has been receiving while suspended; (ii) her salary before her suspension; and (iii) the amount claimed in expenses since her suspension, giving a breakdown of the amount by type such as mileage and accommodation.

(AQW 7729/16-21)

Mr Givan: Sport NI publishes remuneration and pension entitlements of senior staff in its Annual Report and Accounts. The salary banding used within the remuneration report is set out in accordance with the Department of Finance's FD 08/16 guidance.

The salary band Sport NI's CEO was receiving while suspended was between £75,000 and £85,000, the same as before her suspension.

To date, no expenses have been claimed during the period of suspension.

Mr Smith asked the Minister for Communities to detail each occasion (i) he; (ii) his predecessor; or (iii) any of his officials attended a meeting (a) with; or (b) at the request or facilitation of, Brown Rudnick over the last three years, including the date and purpose of each meeting.

(AQW 7737/16-21)

Mr Givan: Firstly, I should clarify that I do not have a predecessor as the Department for Communities was only established in May 2016 following the restructuring of NI Departments.

Secondly, I can confirm that neither I nor any of my officials attended a meeting (a) with; or (b) at the request or facilitation of, Brown Rudnick.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities further to the ministerial commitment in the forward to the draft Programme for Government Framework that previous Executive commitments will be met, (i) whether his Department is still committed to the adoption of a Gender Equality Strategy post 2016 and the adoption and publication of a Sexual Orientation Strategy; and (ii) to set out a timetable.

(AQW 7776/16-21)

Mr Givan: As a result of the restructuring of Departments in May this year, responsibility for a number of strategies covering a wide range of social inclusion issues, including gender equality and sexual orientation, transferred to my Department. I am currently considering how best to take forward this work in the context of the Executive's draft Social Strategy which will be issued for public consultation in due course.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities to detail (i) the number of calls received by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's emergency out-of-hours service in each year over the last five years; (ii) the time frame in which a visit by the contractor should be made; (iii) the number of cases where this timeframe was met; (iv) the number of cases where this time frame was exceeded; and (v) the cost of the out-of-hours contract.

(AQW 7797/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised the following:

- (i) The number of calls received by its emergency out-of-hours service in each year over the last five years:

Year	Number of Calls Received
01/04/11 – 31/03/12	64,401
01/04/12 – 31/03/13	68,843
01/04/13 – 31/03/14	60,721
01/04/14- 31/03/15	60,787
01/04/15- 31/03/16	60,713

- (ii) The timeframe in which a visit from the Contractor should be made:

Classification	Response Time – (Time from receipt of Job Request to completion of Job Request)
Emergency inc. Immediate Response	24 hours
Urgent	4 working days
Routine	15 working days

- (iii) the number of cases where this timeframe was met; and
 (iv) the number of cases where this time frame was exceeded:

Year	Jobs	Jobs outside time	%
Apr 11 - March 12	22,722	714	3.1
Apr 12 - March 13	18,340	349	1.9
Apr 13 - March 14	17,146	220	1.3
Apr 14 - March 15	17,190	243	1.4
Apr 15 - March 16	17,828	232	1.3
Total	93,226	1758	1.9

The cost of the out-of-hours contract:

- (v) The provision of the out-of-hours service was included as part of the overall contract and, therefore, the specific cost of the out-of-hours service cannot be separately reported.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to detail how many Personal Independence Payment applications have been received to date, by constituency; and how many of these applications have been awarded (i) standard; (ii) enhanced rate after initial assessment; or (iii) no award.

(AQW 7820/16-21)

Mr Givan: The information requested is not available as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) was only introduced in Northern Ireland on 20 June this year. Information on PIP will be published in due course in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 6847/16-21, whether his Department will consider a more comprehensive investigation into the automatic payment of Pension Credit.

(AQW 7832/16-21)

Mr Givan: There are no plans to conduct further research into the automatic payment of Pension Credit.

The report published by the Department of Work and Pension in March 2012 on the automatic payment of Pension Credit contained a comprehensive analysis consisting of a quantitative and qualitative evaluation report and a research summary which concluded that the approach of using automatic payments had little impact on increasing uptake of Pension Credit.

Improving benefit uptake is a key part of my Department's social inclusion agenda and over the last ten years, more than £100million in additional annual benefits have been generated through this initiative with almost 75% from claims relating to older people. Carers and older people remain among the key groups being targeted in the latest three year strategic plan for improving benefit uptake which was recently published.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Communities to outline the reasons for the delay in the Thermal Comfort Scheme for Northern Ireland Housing Executive tenants in Huntley Bungalows, Banbridge; and the steps to resolve these outstanding delays including the obtaining of planning approval.

(AQW 7835/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that, following a number of technical delays which have now been resolved, planning permission was signed and approved on 19 November 2016. Work is now underway to appoint a contractor to carry out the works.

The scheme will follow the open procurement process. Following successful procurement, and if no further complications arise, the Housing Executive anticipates that this scheme will be onsite in January 2017.

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Communities to outline the action his Department is taking to further the provision of social and affordable housing in Building Successful Community areas as pilots.

(AQW 7862/16-21)

Mr Givan: My Department, through the Building Successful Communities programme (BSC) and in conjunction with local BSC Fora, has agreed and published Regeneration Plans in each pilot area. Each Regeneration Plan details a number of Catalyst Projects relating to the specific regeneration needs in each area. They include a number of residential recommendations including potential social and affordable housing, where appropriate.

As a result, my Officials are working collaboratively with the NIHE and Housing Associations to build on existing proposals and develop options for the delivery of social housing within the parameters of the Social Housing Development Programme.

In addition, my officials are also progressing plans to pilot a Housing Development Grant (HDG) to assist developers, including housing associations, with the building of housing for sale in BSC areas demonstrating housing market failure. The HDG model will be applied along similar lines to the Urban Development Grant (UDG) also administered by my Department.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister for Communities to outline the Housing Executive maintenance schemes scheduled to take place over the next two financial years, in Upper Bann.

(AQW 7864/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that the following maintenance schemes are planned in Upper Bann in 2017/18:

External Cyclical Maintenance

Project	Scheme	Number of dwellings
14.78.0164	Taghnevan	261
17.78.0073	Cline Road / Hillhead	216

Window Replacement

Project	Scheme	Number of dwellings
17.78.0077	Banbridge Town	123

Revenue Replacement

Project	Scheme	Number of dwellings
17.70.0207	Maryville / Mountview BKR	93
14.70.0401	Rectory / Armagh Road	73
14.70.0398	Russell Drive / Mourne Road	69
17.70.0208	Banbridge / Seapatrick	64
14.70.0399	Manor Drive/ Park / Waring Terrace	94

Multi Element Improvements

Project	Scheme	Number of dwellings
14.84.0114	Wellington Street	31

Heating Replacement

Project	Scheme	Number of dwellings
14.66.0079	Parkmore 15yr	92
17.66.0028	Banbridge 15yr	98

Schemes from 2018/19 onwards will be programmed as part of the development of the Housing Executive's new 10 Year Investment Plan.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister for Communities to detail how many people (i) currently receive; and (ii) are eligible to receive Winter Fuel Payments in Upper Bann.

(AQW 7865/16-21)

Mr Givan: It is not possible to detail the number of people who have received, or are eligible to receive a Winter Fuel Payment this year in Upper Bann. This is because payments are paid automatically to eligible customers from their relevant benefit

system and are also paid to persons who are not in receipt of any of the qualifying benefits. Based on historical data however, I can advise that the number of Winter Fuel Payments made to recipients in Upper Bann in the 2015-16 year was 18,940 and that the population estimate for people in Upper Bann aged 65+ in the same period was 18,010.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister for Communities whether his Department will commit to enshrine in law those protections that derive from judgements of the European Court of Justice.
(AQW 7877/16-21)

Mr Givan: This matter is still under consideration.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) why the Warm Homes Discount, which is a government scheme for low income households in England, Scotland and Wales, is not available in Northern Ireland; and (ii) whether a similar scheme will be made available to help combat extra financial pressures over the winter period.
(AQW 7918/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Warm Homes Discount Scheme is currently not available in Northern Ireland. It is a scheme which is covered by legislation which does not apply in Northern Ireland. Any consideration for its application in Northern Ireland will be for The Minister for the Economy. The scheme is akin to a social tariff, with the GB energy companies passing on its costs to customers.

The Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) is funded through tariffs on customer energy bills and offers a range of energy efficiency schemes, via a process managed by The Utility Regulator.

My Department funds two fuel poverty schemes which provide grants to help people with heating their homes more efficiently. The Boiler Replacement Scheme will provide a grant to eligible homes, towards the replacement of an old inefficient boiler. The Affordable Warmth Scheme targets households most at risk of fuel poverty and provides a range of heating and insulation measures to improve the energy efficiency of low income households.

During these winter months my Department will administer the Winter Fuel Payment which gives financial assistance towards the cost of heating a home. This is a one-off payment made in year to people aged 63 or over. It will also make a cold weather payment to those who are eligible, when the average temperature is, or is forecast to be, 0 degrees centigrade or below over 7 consecutive days.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 6542/16-21, whether his Department no longer has any role in ensuring that the Charity Commission acts lawfully, including taking decisions and making Orders, or is this now a matter for members of the public to pursue with the Charity tribunal.
(AQW 7947/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Charity Commission's powers are set out in the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. It is for the Charity Tribunal, and ultimately the Courts, to determine whether the Commission has acted lawfully in exercising those powers. My Department routinely considers any judgements made and considers what or if any action is necessary.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities to outline why the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI) repeatedly stated in its risk register that it has Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Charity commission for England and Wales when Freedom of Information requests from both bodies revealed that no such MOU's exist or have been proposed by the CCNI.
(AQW 7948/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland have confirmed that MOUs have been in existence with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) since January 2012 and the Charity Commission for England and Wales (CCEW) since December 2009. The latest versions were signed by the PSNI in March 2013 and CCEW in April 2016.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to detail any assistance or support available to businesses to help them (i) improve disability access; and (ii) comply with relevant legislation.
(AQW 7990/16-21)

Mr Givan: My department's Disability Employment Service offers a range of programmes and services, aimed at helping people with disability and health related barriers to work, as well as providing assistance and support to employers.

The Access to Work (NI) programme provides financial assistance to help disabled people and their respective employers to overcome practical barriers that may be preventing people from accessing or sustaining paid employment.

Through this disability employment programme, the department can provide support to employers for the costs associated with any necessary 'adaptations to premises' or 'equipment' to enable a person with a disability to obtain or remain at work.

However, Access to Work (NI) funding is not available to help employers to meet their legal responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act, or any regulations pertaining to Health and Safety or Building Control.

Mr McCausland asked the Minister for Communities to outline the youth worker posts in (i) North Belfast; (ii) West Belfast; (iii) South Belfast; and (iv) East Belfast, funded through Neighbourhood Renewal, including the name of the organisation by which each are employed.

(AQW 7993/16-21)

Mr Givan: My Department provides funding through the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme that supports the employment of the following youth worker posts:

Area	Number of posts	Full-time Equivalent
North Belfast		
Ardoyne Youth Providers Forum	4	2.8
Belfast Activity Centre ¹	1	1
Extern ²	1	1
Manor St/ Cliftonville Community Centre	3	2
Northern Ireland Alternatives	1	1
Star Neighbourhood Centre	2	1.2
Streetbeat Youth Project ³	1	1
Westland Community Group	1	1
West Belfast		
Blackmountain Action Group ³	1	1
Northern Ireland Alternatives	1	1
Stadium Youth & Community Project ³	1	1
Upper Springfield Development Company Limited	6	2.7
South Belfast		
Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group	1	1
Northern Ireland Alternatives	1	1
East Belfast		
Lagan Village Youth & Community Group	3	2.04
Northern Ireland Alternatives	1	1

Notes

- 1 Services are delivered across Greater Shankill and North Belfast.
- 2 Post recorded in North, however this is a Citywide scheme.
- 3 Project delivers in the Greater Shankill area which crosses both North and West Belfast.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline the Housing Executive maintenance schemes planned for the Cotton area, over the next two financial years.

(AQW 7996/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that there are no maintenance schemes currently planned for the Cotton area in 2017/18. Schemes from 2018/19 onwards will be programmed as part of the Housing Executive's new 10 Year Investment Plan.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline the Housing Executive maintenance schemes planned for the Victoria Gardens area, over the next two financial years.

(AQW 7997/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that there are no maintenance schemes currently planned for the Victoria Gardens area in 2017/18. Schemes from 2018/19 onwards will be programmed as part of the Housing Executive's new 10 Year Investment Plan.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline the Housing Executive maintenance schemes planned for the Cypress area of Donaghadee, over the next two financial years.

(AQW 7998/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that there are no maintenance schemes currently planned for the Cypress area of Donaghadee in 2017/18. Schemes from 2018/19 onwards will be programmed as part of the Housing Executive's new 10 Year Investment Plan.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline the Housing Executive maintenance schemes planned for the Beechfield/Ashfield Estate, over the next two financial years.
(AQW 7999/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that there are 104 properties in Beechfield/Ashfield estate that are included in a kitchen replacement scheme currently planned for 2017/18. No other maintenance schemes are planned for the estate in 2017/18, and schemes from 2018/19 onwards will be programmed as part of the Housing Executive's new 10 Year Investment Plan.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline the Housing Executive maintenance schemes planned for the Churchill area, over the next two financial years.
(AQW 8000/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that there are no maintenance schemes currently planned for the Churchill area in 2017/18. Schemes from 2018/19 onwards will be programmed as part of the Housing Executive's new 10 Year Investment Plan.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) whether his Department remains committed to the IFA proposal that Glentoran FC receive £10M funding through the Sub-Regional Stadia Programme; and (ii) when he expects a decision to be made on allocation of the Sub-Regional Stadia Programme funding.
(AQW 8002/16-21)

Mr Givan: The consultation on the Sub Regional Stadia Programme for Soccer resulted in 1,279 responses being received by my Department.

My officials are currently finalising their consideration and analysis of the responses to the consultation together with all other relevant information to inform recommendations to me on the way forward.

I hope to make a decision on the programme going forward shortly and I anticipate that the programme will be launched and open for applications in the coming months.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Communities whether he has considered a review into the listing, and potential for delisting of the listed buildings on the Maze/Long Kesh site.
(AQW 8081/16-21)

Mr Givan: The decisions to list and schedule structures at the Maze were taken after a detailed examination and consideration of the architectural and historic significance of the site and buildings had been carried out. This detailed consideration concluded that the buildings listed meet the test of the legislation. A review carried out in 2009 supported this conclusion.

I am not aware of any arguments that have been made subsequently that were not considered at the time of the review.

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister for Communities whether clients being assessed for Employment and Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payment can take an audio recording of the proceedings.
(AQW 8101/16-21)

Mr Givan: Employment and Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payment claimants are permitted to make an audio recording of their assessment provided they comply with certain criteria. These include advising the Assessment Provider in advance of their intention to record the assessment and signing a form agreeing not to use the recording for unlawful purposes.

The claimant must also provide the Assessment Provider with a complete and accurate copy of the recording at the end of the consultation. Acceptable formats for such recordings are restricted to CD and audio cassette only. Mobile phones and laptops are not suitable mediums for recording consultations. These restrictions are in place due to the broadcasting and editing capabilities of such devices.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 7152/16-21, to outline (i) what the ECM maintenance scheme, to start in December 2017, involves for Millisle/Carrowdore ECM ; and (ii) how many Housing Executive property's will it involve.
(AQW 8152/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that:

- (i) External Cyclical Maintenance (ECM) schemes generally include works to the external fabric and curtilage of the properties. Actual works to the properties in the Millisle/Carrowdore ECM will be determined by a survey and individual tenants will be notified of proposed works when the surveys have been completed.
- (ii) There are 223 Housing Executive properties included in the Millisle/Carrowdore ECM scheme due on site in December 2017.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 7583/16-21, to outline (i) a completion timeline for the 4,769 Housing Executive properties under review in relation to asbestos; (ii) a breakdown of the cost; (iii) a timeline to remove the asbestos from the 326 properties with restrictions; and (iiii) how long restrictions have been in place for each of the 326 properties.

(AQW 8155/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that:

- (i) 4,064 properties have already been reviewed. It is proposed to have the remaining 705 properties reviewed by the end of January 2017;
- (ii) The initial desktop review is being carried out by NIHE staff and no additional costs will be incurred;
- (iii) Contractors have commenced the removal of the asbestos with 136 jobs issued to date. It is anticipated that the asbestos will be removed from all of the 326 properties by the end of March 2017;
- (iv) Access restrictions were put in place on commencement of the review with the initial properties being secured in July 2016. Subsequent properties were secured on an ongoing basis as the review progressed.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister for Communities to outline his intentions to extend the extraction pilot scheme in Whiterock to areas outside of Belfast, particularly Upper Bann.

(AQW 8163/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that the cavity wall insulation scheme in Whiterock Estate, Belfast was initiated in response to specific problems that were identified in relation to kitchen extensions built on to the properties in the 1980s. Therefore, it was not considered to be a pilot scheme for a province –wide cavity wall insulation programme.

The Housing Executive will be identifying the status of cavity wall insulation in its properties through inspections carried out as part of the surveys for External Cyclical maintenance schemes. Dwellings that are found to have inadequate cavity wall insulation will be addressed on a case-by-case basis through either the Housing Executive's response maintenance service or planned maintenance programme.

Mrs Little Pengelly asked the Minister for Communities to detail how many NIHE properties are fitted with Carbon Monoxide alarms.

(AQW 8179/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised it has installed carbon monoxide detectors in 43,183 properties.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Communities for an update on when the Affordable Warmth Scheme will start for Seacourt Estate, Larne.

(AQW 8212/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Affordable Warmth Scheme targets and assists low income privately owned and privately rented households to improve their energy efficiency. The Ulster University developed and tested a tailor-made targeting tool for identifying households in severe fuel poverty. It aimed to find small areas of Northern Ireland (around 150 households in size) where most households are likely to be in fuel poverty, and a sizeable proportion of these are likely to be in severe fuel poverty. It uses more than a dozen databases to calculate likelihoods in these small areas, and these include:

- housing quality data;
- estimates of income and benefit dependency;
- prevailing oil and gas prices;
- prevailing temperatures;
- demographic vulnerability profiles.

The Department provided Mid and East Antrim council with a ranked list of addresses which the targeting tool identified as being most likely to be in fuel poverty. Since the Affordable Warmth Scheme started two households from Seacourt Estate Larne have been referred from the council to the Housing Executive Grants Office for consideration.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for Communities to outline the impact assessments carried out prior to an adverse decision being taken or a financial sanction being imposed on social security claimants with dependent children.

(AQW 8284/16-21)

Mr Givan: A decision maker, on behalf of the department makes each decision by considering all the evidence, establishing the facts and applying the law, including any relevant case law, in each case. Where legislation specifies or implies discretion, the decision maker's judgement must be reasonable and made with unbiased discretion. Whilst the claimant's family circumstances are not directly relevant to the decision, a hardship award may be considered if the claimant shows that they, or a specified member of their family, would suffer hardship if an award was not made.

The primary legislation that gives the power to apply sanctions and award Hardship Payments is:

The Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015

www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/welfare-changes-overview

Other references which are available in the public domain are:

Social Security Benefit Fraud Sanction Policy

www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/social-security-benefit-fraud-sanction-policy

DMG Volume 9 Chapter 53

www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/decision-makers-guide-volume-9

DMG Volume 6 Chapter 34

www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/decision-makers-guide-volume-6

DMG Volume 6 Chapter 35

www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/decision-makers-guide-volume-6

DMG Volume 1 Chapter 05

www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/decision-makers-guide-volume-1

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the implementation of Welfare Reform.

(AQO 833/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- Substantial and very real progress has been made over the last year on the implementation of Welfare Reform. As the Member may be aware, the Welfare Reform and Work (Northern Ireland) Order 2016 received Royal Assent on 12 October 2016. This means that all the Primary legislation needed to implement Welfare Reform in Northern Ireland is now in place.
- A number of the bigger Welfare Reforms, including Personal Independence Payments and the Benefit Cap have already been successfully introduced.
- The new Finance Support Service went live last week. Its telephone application process allows customers to access the service at a time and place that suits them. Providing an immediate response to urgent financial need. The time limiting of contributory Employment Support Allowance also came into effect last week.
- Detailed timetables are in place to ensure that the outstanding welfare reforms will commence over the next ten month period, culminating in the introduction of Universal Credit from September 2017
- Equally significant progress has been made in ensuring that the mitigation schemes recommended by the Evason Working Group following the Fresh Start Agreement are in place. These payments are designed to provide additional financial support for vulnerable families (both in and out of work) who will be impacted by the introduction of welfare changes. An estimated 15,000 claimants will be receiving Welfare Supplementary Payments by March 2017.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline his plans for the future of the Women's Centre Childcare Fund.

(AQO 837/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- It is proposed that the provision of childcare in Women's Centres, provided through the Women's Centre Childcare Fund, will be addressed in the new Childcare Strategy, currently being considered by the Department of Education.
- The new Strategy is unlikely to be in place before April 2017 and my officials continue to engage with the Department of Education about the new childcare arrangements. I have not yet made any decisions about budget allocations for 2017/18.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Communities to outline the measures his Department is taking to inform and educate the public regarding the introduction of the Personal Independence Payment.

(AQO 838/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- All Disability Living Allowance (DLA) recipients have been advised every year, since 2013, about the introduction of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in Northern Ireland. This information was included in their annual DLA benefit uprating notification.
- In addition, the Welfare Changes booklet, which was delivered to all households in Northern Ireland in May 2016, contained a specific section relating to PIP. It also directed people that more information on PIP was available on the nidirect website.
- Extensive Engagement has taken place with the advice sectors and disability groups. To date, 16 specific PIP engagement events have been held across Northern Ireland to ensure regular updates about PIP were provided to key stakeholder groups.
- As reassessment for existing working age DLA claimants for PIP begins on 12 December 2016 a multimedia PIP advertising campaign was launched on 24 October designed to inform working age people about the changes to DLA. The advertising campaign which consisted of TV and Radio adverts supported by advertising in the Press and Billboards. It runs until early December.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister for Communities to outline his engagement with lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender advocacy groups since May 2016.

(AQO 839/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- Given the extensive remit of my Department, it is not always possible for me to engage personally with the many stakeholders and interest groups across society. My officials have met with representatives from LGB&T groups as part of the consultation on the draft Programme for Government.
- I have received one invitation to meet with representatives from the LGB&T community since taking up my role as Minister for Communities. Regrettably I was unable to take up that offer on that occasion due to other pressing diary commitments.
- I am however due to meet with representatives from The Rainbow Project early in the New Year.
- I have made it clear that when it comes to engagement, my door is always open.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister for Communities to outline any consultation undertaken with councils in relation to his decision not to proceed with the Regeneration Bill.

(AQO 840/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- Over the last 6 months I have visited a wide range of council areas and have met with individual councillors. I have also met NILGA and local council representatives formally through the partnership panel process. They raised the issue of the transfer of regeneration functions to local government and said that they wanted to have a definitive decision on the way forward.
- I have now made my decision. While I understand that there are those in councils who may have wanted some of the powers transferred, I have now set out very clearly the context on which the decision is based, and I have explained it extensively
- Now that a decision has been taken we should move on collectively so that we can address the needs that exist in our community.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Communities to outline the number of Disability Living Allowance claimants that have had their awards suspended or withdrawn since the introduction of the Personal Independence Payment.

(AQO 841/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- This information is currently not available as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) was only introduced in Northern Ireland on 20 June this year.
- My Department is working to the guidelines set by the UK Statistics Authority to ensure we can publish meaningful statistics that meet those standards at the earliest opportunity.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Communities to outline the opportunities that exist to devolve powers from his Department to local government.

(AQO 842/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- My priority is to ensure that the functions that my Department is responsible for are delivered in the most effective and efficient manner.

- I chair the Partnership Panel on behalf of the Executive, where I formally meet with both NILGA and representatives of the local authorities. That forum allows a direct connection with local government, and provides a mechanism to explore any opportunities that may exist to devolve powers from my or other Executive Departments to local government, should that offer a more effective and efficient mode of delivery.
- As was previously the case, any transfer of functions would, of course, require the consideration and agreement of the Executive.

Ms Archibald asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the sexual orientation strategy.
(AQO 843/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- As a result of the restructuring of NICS Departments in May this year, responsibility for a number of strategies covering a range of social inclusion issues, including sexual orientation, transferred from the former OFMDFM to my Department.
- I am currently considering how best to take forward this work in the context of the Executive's draft Social Strategy which will be issued for consultation in due course.

Mr Maskey asked the Minister for Communities to outline the actions his Department has taken to collect data in order to assess, monitor and address housing inequalities.
(AQO 844/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- My Department collects both quantitative and qualitative data and conducts research on a range of housing issues. This information informs my Department's consideration of the range of actions which may be taken to address housing inequalities.
- My Department has also noted the Equality Commission Northern Ireland's recent draft Statement on Key Inequalities in Housing and Communities and the supporting research commissioned by ECNI (Wallace, Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland, 2016)
- The reference material for the Wallace report includes data and research published by my Department and the Housing Executive and reflects the information available to my Department.
- The actions to address housing inequalities are set out in the delivery plan for indicators 8 and 48 of the draft programme for Programme for Government.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Communities for an assessment of the impact of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement on his departmental responsibilities.
(AQO 845/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- The overall DEL impact on this Department will ultimately be determined by the Executive in the out workings of Budget 2016, including the additional £250m capital.
- A number of measures will specifically relate to AME Budgets in relation to social security benefits.
- The Autumn Statement 2016 announced that the government will reduce the taper rate that applies in Universal Credit from 65% to 63% so working families will keep more of the Universal Credit award for every pound they earn.
- It is estimated that 105,000 households will benefit from an average weekly increase in their Universal Credit award of £4.31 (totalling approximately £23m per annum).
- Changes to the national living wage and national minimum wage were expected and have already been built into projections for Universal Credit. Any resulting tax credit implications which could ultimately impact on Universal Credit will require analysis by HMRC.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the revised Code of Conduct for Councillors.
(AQW 8616/16-21)

Mr Givan: An independent Review Group was established in November 2015, to carry out a review of Parts 3 (principles) and 8 (rules on decision-making) of the Code of Conduct.

The Review Group invited councils and local government bodies and organisations to give their views on the Code of Conduct.

The Review Group produced its final Report and recommendations in April 2016. I have considered this Report and a public consultation on a revised draft of the Code of Conduct, together with the Review Group Report, will commence before the end of the year.

The revised Code of Conduct must be laid before and approved by resolution of the Assembly before it can be issued and come into effect.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Communities for an update on when the 1 per cent pay increase agreed for Libraries NI workers will be implemented.

(AQW 8712/16-21)

Mr Givan: My officials submitted the final Libraries NI Pay Remit for 2016/17 to the Department of Finance (DoF) for its approval on 9 August 2016. Once this has been agreed and approved by DoF the 1% pay increase will be paid by Libraries NI as soon as possible thereafter. No further action can be taken until this approval has been received. My officials are, however, currently pressing DoF to progress this matter as an urgent priority.

Department for the Economy

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for the Economy (i) to outline why his departmental staff were partially relocated from Netherleigh to Adelaide Street during the recent Assembly Elections then returned to Netherleigh after the election; and (ii) to detail all associated costs connected with this relocation.

(AQW 1472/16-21)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister for the Economy):

- (i) Adelaide House and Netherleigh were both Ministerial buildings prior to the formation of the Department for the Economy. As Adelaide House was nearing completion of a major refurbishment project and located in close proximity to a number of key stakeholders, a working assumption was made by officials in the months before the Assembly Election that it would become the Ministerial headquarters for the new Department. To give effect to this a small number of staff (15) relocated from Netherleigh to Adelaide Street on 7 May in preparation for the arrival of the new Minister. Following the decision that Netherleigh would be the substantive Ministerial Headquarters these staff returned to Netherleigh at the end of May/beginning of June.
- (ii) Actual costs are not readily identifiable for these specific moves as they were part of a wider series of moves to the support the creation of the Department for the Economy.

Mr Aiken asked the Minister for the Economy for his assessment of current and future local electricity generation capacity.

(AQW 2387/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Generation capacity at our three conventional power stations, existing interconnection including the restored Moyle Interconnector with Scotland, and the additional 250 megawatt capacity at Ballylumford which became available in January of this year, ensures we have enough capacity to meet all electricity demand forecasts to 2020.

My Department is working closely with the Utility Regulator and the system operator SONI to consider how best to ensure security of supply after this point, and if considered necessary, I will agree further actions to safeguard our electricity supply.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for the Economy what plans he has to introduce high speed broadband to rural communities.

(AQW 2436/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The telecommunications market in Northern Ireland, as in other regions of the UK, is fully privatised and independently regulated by the Office of Communications. Decisions on where and when to invest are therefore made on a commercial basis.

My Department is currently managing the delivery of the Superfast Roll-out Programme which, by 31 December 2017, will provide access to superfast broadband, with speeds of at least 24 Megabits per second (Mbps), to around 39,000 premises, both business and residential across Northern Ireland and, primarily in rural areas.

Under the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project, the contract with BT has a mechanism which requires BT to return funding for re-investment, when take up of service exceeds a certain threshold. This will allow more premises to see improvements. When this is finalised shortly it will help further improve the coverage of faster broadband connectivity across Northern Ireland.

It is important to recognise that there are alternative technologies that can be used to deliver broadband services. For those premises that continue to have access to services of less than 2Mbps, the Department is currently administering a support scheme which offers assistance with the cost of installing a basic broadband service (using satellite or wireless technology), from a list of registered suppliers. It ensures that no household or business which meets the eligibility criteria, need pay more than £400, to access a basic broadband scheme over a 12 month period.

The Executive's draft Programme for Government includes an Indicator to improve internet connectivity. My Department, through the above programmes, is working to put in place infrastructure that will improve and extend superfast broadband services particularly in rural areas.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister for the Economy for his assessment of the 40 per cent target for electricity production from renewable sources by 2020.

(AQW 2498/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The latest official figure published by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency shows that during the 12 month period between April 2015 and March 2016 25.4% of our electricity consumption was from renewable sources.

In addition, there are approximately 700 megawatts of committed projects i.e. projects which have accepted a grid connection offer, awaiting grid connection. If all of these projects deploy, we should achieve the Executive's 40 per cent target for electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2020.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for the Economy to outline his timescale for bringing forward proposals for the regulation of Zero Hours Contracts.

(AQW 3013/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The issue of zero hours contracts was previously consulted upon in 2014, and the Employment Act (NI) 2016 contains a wide ranging regulation-making power to address issues connected to their use. The focus of this provision is on tackling abuses in these types of contracts.

My officials are engaging with stakeholders to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the types of situations and sectors where zero hours contracts are used effectively and those in which there would appear to be abuses.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister for the Economy to detail what action his Department is taking to enhance the digital infrastructure.

(AQW 3663/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Your question has been passed to the Department for the Economy to answer.

My Department has invested almost £64 million since 2008 to encourage private sector network upgrades, primarily in rural areas. Under my Department's NI Broadband Improvement Project, BT has completed the roll-out of infrastructure and this is now in the operational phase. Improvements in broadband services to over 46,000 premises have been reported by BT. Where the take up of services exceeds forecasts, then funds are released for reinvestment into further coverage along with any underspends identified. Under this arrangement, funding of around £3million is available to improve services across rural areas of NI.

My Department is also managing the delivery of the Superfast Roll-out Programme. It is expected that, by 31 December 2017, this will provide access to superfast broadband, with speeds of at least 24 Megabits per second, to around 39,000 premises, primarily in rural areas.

It is important to recognise that there are alternative technologies that can be used to deliver broadband services. My Department provides support under the Better Broadband Scheme with the cost of installing a basic broadband service (using satellite or wireless technology), from a list of registered suppliers. Aimed at premises that cannot access services greater than 2Mbps, this scheme ensures that no eligible household or business need pay more than £400 to access a basic broadband scheme, over a 12 month period. Further details can be found on DfE's website at:

<http://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-better-broadband-scheme>

You will also be aware that, in recognising the importance of access to faster broadband, the NI Executive's draft Programme for Government includes an Indicator to improve internet connectivity. The outcome of the Programme for Government and related budget discussions, will dictate the nature and scale of my Department's future telecommunications interventions.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for the Economy for his assessment of the importance of European Union funding on the construction of a second power station at Islandmagee.

(AQW 3756/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The proposal to develop a compressed air energy storage project at Islandmagee is a power storage facility rather than a power station. The storage project is a private sector, developer-led investment. As a designated EU Project of Common Interest (PCI) it is currently accessing Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) grant funding for a range of pre-construction activities. CEF is administered centrally by the European Commission, not through an allocation to each Member State, and the Commission carries out the evaluation and selection of submitted proposals.

The CEF budget does not typically extend to funding construction works associated with PCIs. As the project develops it will continue to be a matter for the project promoters to consider construction funding requirements and options.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for the Economy for his assessment of the sufficiency of courses on offer for young people seeking to pursue an apprenticeship in plastering.

(AQW 4823/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I am not aware of any employer demand for apprenticeship training in plastering that has not met.

My Department's ApprenticeshipsNI programme is employer-led training provision with uptake determined by employers based on the needs of their business. Apprentices must be in paid employment "from day one".

Sixteen training suppliers, located across Northern Ireland, are contracted to deliver training aligned to the Construction apprenticeship framework (including plastering).

Employers can select any contracted training supplier to deliver the “off-the-job” training element of an apprenticeship.

Mr Aiken asked the Minister for the Economy what assessment has been made of the implications for energy bills of the extension to Northern Ireland of the Warm Home Discount Scheme.

(AQW 4841/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Warm Home Discount Scheme (WHDS) is a scheme developed for the Great Britain market and paid for by GB consumers. It is underpinned by primary legislation specific to that market. In December 2014 officials met GB counterparts to determine if WHDS could be extended to Northern Ireland. This is not possible because of differences of scale and maturity of the respective markets and the legislative basis on which it has been implemented in GB.

Following that meeting officials examined the potential costs of a similar scheme in Northern Ireland. The implementation of a scheme tailored to local circumstances carries significant cost implications for consumers and would require wider consideration.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for the Economy for his assessment of the prospects for attracting further inward investors to the Causeway Coast area, once the Enterprise Zone has been established in Coleraine.

(AQW 4852/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The establishment of an Enterprise Zone in Coleraine enhances the investment proposition in the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area and therefore has the potential to increase the prospects for future inward investment.

Marketing of the area with an Enterprise Zone will also be enhanced and this will assist the Invest NI overseas sales teams to differentiate the investment projects to potential investors in order to win more projects.

While Enterprise Zones primarily favour capital intensive projects which tend to promote lower employment numbers, there would also be significant benefits in securing an anchor tenant, thereby creating a supply chain or enabler for other companies to locate in the area.

Invest NI will monitor the progress of the designation and will factor the benefits that it brings into its overall business proposition for Northern Ireland.

Mr Smith asked the Minister for the Economy (i) to detail the number of departmental and arm's-length body staff that exited under the Voluntary Exit Scheme, broken down by grade; (ii) how many of these posts were then suppressed; and (iii) (a) what proportion; and (b) how many posts were later (1) advertised; and (2) filled by internal promotion.

(AQW 5043/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The information is provided in the table below:

Grade	Number of staff that exited under VES	Number of these posts which were then suppressed	Proportion (%) of staff that exited under VES to suppressed posts	Number of suppressed posts which were later advertised	Number of suppressed posts filled by internal promotion
Non-teaching	235	169	72	6	6
Teaching	353	266	75	5	9
Senior staff	32	13	41	1	1
Grade 3 – 7 and equivalent	13	157	47*	0*	0*
Deputy Principal – Staff Officer and equivalent	63				
Executive officer and equivalent	103				
Admin and support grades	151				
HE Staff	6	0	0	0	0

* All posts were either suppressed or filled internally through redeployment of staff from other areas of the Department

The figures relate to the former Department for Employment and Learning and the former Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and their Arms Length Bodies.

It is not possible to further disaggregate Grades as to do so could identify individual members of staff.

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on the Tourism Strategy.

(AQO 440/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My officials are currently finalising the draft tourism strategy document and intend to go out to public consultation later this year.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for the Economy to detail (i) the average salary in each of the eighteen constituencies; and (ii) any actions or initiatives that his Department is taking or planning to take to increase the average salary in West Tyrone. (AQW 5179/16-21)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) The annual average gross pay in 2016 for all employee jobs in each Parliamentary Constituency is set out in the Table below.

Annual Average Salary by Parliamentary Constituency

Parliamentary constituency	Annual Average Salary (£)
Belfast East	26,896
Belfast North	22,701
Belfast South	29,204
Belfast West	27,954
East Antrim	27,953
East Londonderry	18,881
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	21,297
Foyle	21,700
Lagan Valley	21,099
Mid Ulster	22,870
Newry and Armagh	22,833
North Antrim	22,495
North Down	20,948
South Antrim	24,888
South Down	19,888
Strangford	19,578
Upper Bann	24,311
West Tyrone	19,811

Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, work based (2016)

- (ii) The Programme for Government (PfG) 2016-2021 consultation document focuses on creating a strong and competitive regionally balanced economy where growth benefits people across the region. I am committed to ensuring that all parts of Northern Ireland and all sections of our society share equally in the benefits of economic growth as we take forward the delivery of PfG and the Economic Strategy.

Invest NI has a remit to stimulate increased value added employment across the region by supporting high quality job promotion. To do this, they actively target jobs promoting salaries above the Northern Ireland Private Sector Median for all areas in the region. In addition, our higher education institutions, regional colleges and training providers, with bases geographically spread across Northern Ireland, provide a valuable resource for people everywhere to secure the necessary skills and qualifications to enhance their employment prospects and progress up the career ladder.

Mr Aiken asked the Minister for the Economy how much financial support has been provided to Fujitsu by Invest NI since 2006. (AQW 5208/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Since 2006 Invest NI has paid financial assistance totalling £3,466,758 to Fujitsu to support the creation of new employment, training and skills development, as well as research and development.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for the Economy what discussions he has had with mobile phone and broadband providers regarding the lack of service in rural areas of West Tyrone. (AQW 5232/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I and my officials meet regularly with representatives of all the major telecommunications providers who operate within this privatised and independently regulated market.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for the Economy whether he will carry out an inquiry into the Gobbins project and its future as a tourist destination.

(AQW 5252/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is responsible for the Gobbins tourist attraction and they will be undertaking their own reviews where appropriate. It is very unfortunate that the attraction has succumbed to the diverse weather conditions on our coastline but I have no plans to carry out an inquiry.

The Gobbins Visitor Experience is integral to the visitor journey on the Causeway Coastal Route. It has already proved to be a major attraction for our European visitors who are motivated to visit Northern Ireland in order to experience our coastline. It has provided Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland with an opportunity to go out to market with a new story to tell about this iconic driving route.

Tourism NI has engaged with a number of small tourism businesses around the Gobbins and the Glens of Antrim to ensure that they are market ready and able to benefit from the increased visitor numbers in the area by giving tourists reasons to stay longer and spend more. Initial feedback from tourism providers in both the immediate the area and in the wider destination is that they have seen an uplift in business following the opening of the attraction.

Tourism Ireland have already stated that the attraction is central to many of their overseas marketing and promotional campaigns on the Causeway Coastal Route and it was used as the key hook for a major marketing campaign across six European markets, in partnership with Trip Advisor and Tourism NI, which delivered 2,410 referrals to businesses in the area.

The Gobbins is resonating extremely well in the international markets and is fundamental to the brand awareness of the Causeway Coastal Route. For that reason, I am hopeful that the issues will be resolved and the attraction will open again soon to visitors.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for the Economy (i) why less than 10 per cent of Invest NI's offer of £750,000 financial assistance to Armaghdown Creameries was drawn down; (ii) what level of investment was made in the Banbridge Creamery; and (iii) to outline Invest NI's efforts to ascertain why funding was not being drawn down as originally agreed.

(AQW 5264/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Due to a strategic decision by Fane Valley Group not to fully implement the project as originally proposed, (against the offer of £750,000 was made), only £70,000 of eligible costs were paid to the company.

The company invested £702,400 in the Banbridge Creamery.

Invest NI maintains regular contact with companies during implementation of projects. Fane Valley Group, owners of Armaghdown Creamery, were initially in discussion with Lakeland Dairies about a possible merger which then became a purchase of Armaghdown Creameries by Lakeland Dairies.

Lakeland Dairies indicated it intended to move to seasonal production. This has resulted in 65 of the original workforce of 70 employees taking voluntary redundancy. Invest NI continues to meet with Lakeland Dairies and monitor their plans for the Banbridge site.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for the Economy to outline his plans for addressing the funding gap that exists between local universities and institutions in the rest of the UK.

(AQW 5340/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I am considering a number of options around funding the Higher Education sector on a sustainable basis. My Department will make any recommendations on funding within the context of the Budget process.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for the Economy for a breakdown of the expenditure by Invest NI's subsidiary NI-CO on its security and justice projects with Bahrain and Egypt since (i) 2012; and (ii) 2015, including salaries, travel and any material contributions made to either country.

(AQW 5387/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: In Bahrain NI-CO was selected to assist in the delivery of the technical assistance projects by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). NI-CO working in Egypt was selected by the European Commission as part of a European Consortium. The UK FCO and the European Union provide financial funding to NI-CO for the expenditure in these projects as follows:

- (i) Since 2012, NI-CO has received funding of £1.457million from the FCO for projects in Bahrain and £105,000 for projects in Egypt. This includes salaries and travel, NI-CO has not made any material contributions to these projects.
- (ii) Since 2015, NI-CO has received funding of £1.363million from the FCO for the Bahrain projects and £105,000 for the Egypt projects. This includes salaries and travel, NI-CO has not made any material contributions to this project.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for the Economy (i) for his assessment of Reprive's report into the work of Invest NI's subsidiary NI-CO in Bahrain and Egypt; (ii) whether he will convene an inquiry into NI-CO's work with countries that use torture and the death penalty; and (iii) to obtain and publish human rights risk assessments of NI-CO's contracts.

(AQW 5390/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Reprieve report seeks to establish a causal link between human rights issues in both Bahrain and Egypt and the work of NI-CO in each. However well-intentioned Reprieve may be, the suggestion that NI-CO is contributing to human rights abuses in these countries is misguided.

For example, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) has designated Bahrain a Human Rights Priority Country. The FCO-funded work undertaken by NI-CO in Bahrain is designed to address the human rights issues identified by building capacity and providing appropriate training in compliance with international human rights standards.

Appropriate safeguards are in place by awarding bodies such as FCO and EU when establishing funding programmes in Bahrain and Egypt. It would be inappropriate for my Department to conduct an inquiry into how the FCO or EU designs, implements or monitors funding programmes. For as long as they continue to work within the auspices of these programmes, NI-CO should continue to deliver programmes, sharing the learnings and experience of Northern Ireland to change attitudes, culture and behaviour, ultimately to align these countries with relevant international standards.

Awarding bodies are responsible for the completion of risk assessments. These are completed prior to project commencement and engagement of a delivery body. NI-CO is not involved in this process nor privy to these documents.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on the Graduating to Success strategy.

(AQW 5457/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Implementation of the Graduating to Success Strategy is progressing well. Recent progress has included:

- increases in the proportion of higher education awards in STEM areas at Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions (HEIs);
- continued drawdown of Horizon 2020 funding by Northern Ireland HEIs;
- Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman taking on responsibility for Higher education maladministration complaints from October 2016;
- increases in inward and outward student mobility;
- Southern Regional College, with support from Ulster University, establishing a number of blended approaches to Higher education curriculum delivery in an effort to enrich learning at modular level or reduce the need for classroom attendance.
- securing agreement with Queen's and Ulster for a simplified Higher education funding model to be put in place from 2017/18; and

My Department is currently developing of a refreshed implementation plan for the strategy for the period to 2020.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for the Economy whether he will suspend security and justice projects conducted by Invest NI's subsidiary NI-CO with Bahrain, until Bahrain ratifies the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and allows the UN special rapporteur on torture to visit.

(AQW 5549/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: NI-CO implements projects on behalf of the international donor community, including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the European Union, the United Nations and the World Bank.

NI-CO's work in Bahrain is funded by the FCO as part of a wider package of technical assistance provided by the UK. The aim is to support the Government of Bahrain's reform programme and implementation of the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry and the UN Universal Periodic Review. NI-CO's work in Bahrain is designed to build capacity, provide mentoring support and training, and to share best practice in compliance with international human rights standards.

It is therefore appropriate for the FCO alone to take the decision to suspend the projects rather than the Department for the Economy.

For as long as the FCO continues to identify the need for projects in countries where reform is required, NI-CO should continue to bid for and deliver programmes to share the learnings and experience of Northern Ireland to change attitudes, culture and behaviour, with the ultimate aim of aligning these countries to the relevant international standards.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for the Economy whether he will suspend the justice project conducted by Invest NI's subsidiary NI-CO with Egypt.

(AQW 5550/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: NI-CO implements projects on behalf of the international donor community, including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the European Union (EU), the United Nations and the World Bank. Specifically, NI-CO's work in Egypt is funded by the EU, as part of a consortium on modernisation of the administration of justice.

For as long as these awarding bodies continue to identify the need for projects in countries where reform is required, NI-CO should continue to bid for and deliver programmes - sharing the learnings and experience of Northern Ireland to change attitudes, culture and behaviour, with the ultimate aim of aligning these countries to the relevant international standards.

It is therefore appropriate for the EU alone to take the decision to suspend the project rather than the Department for the Economy.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for the Economy what facility is in place to extend current funded projects beyond March 2018.
(AQW 5575/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: European Social Fund projects currently in place will run as contracted.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister for the Economy to outline the protocols and procedures in place in his Department to inform MLAs of their constituency visits and of visits by VIPs and Royalty.
(AQW 5578/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Procedures for Royal visits are the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Office.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for the Economy whether he plans to intervene on the work being carried out by the Invest NI owned company NI-CO, given the nature of the Reprieve report published about NI-CO's involvement in training torturous regimes.
(AQW 5832/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: NI-CO implements projects on behalf of the international donor community, including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the European Union, The United Nations and the World Bank.

NI-CO was selected to assist in the delivery of the technical assistance projects by the FCO for Bahrain and the EU for Egypt as part of a European Consortium. The FCO and EU provide the financial funding to NI-CO in these projects and each project has explicit monitoring / review processes.

NI-CO's work is designed to build capacity, provide mentoring support and training, and to share best practice in compliance with international human rights standards. It is therefore appropriate for the awarding body alone to take the decision to suspend the projects rather than the Department for the Economy.

For as long as these awarding bodies continue to identify a need for projects in countries where reform is required, NI-CO should continue to bid for and deliver programmes to share the learnings and experience of Northern Ireland to change attitudes, culture and behaviour, with the ultimate aim of aligning these countries to the relevant international standards.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for the Economy, pursuant to AQW 3874/16-21, (i) what evidence he has that a direct transatlantic route from Belfast to North America has been important for Northern Ireland's economy; (ii) whether a formal business case was produced prior to the funding decision; and (iii) to publish this business case or place it in the Assembly Library.
(AQW 6014/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: A direct transatlantic route from Belfast to North America has been important for Northern Ireland's economy over the past decade in terms of increasing our tourism, enhancing our prospects in attracting US based investors and helping our local companies to export their products and services.

The United States is the largest source of Foreign Direct Investment into Northern Ireland and our largest exports market outside of the EU. Over the past decade of the United Airlines service over 1 million passengers travelled on the flight, with significant benefits for local tourism.

It was not possible to produce a formal business case in the tight timescales required by United for a decision. It is regrettable that in spite of all the efforts that were made that United are terminating the service.

Mr Smith asked the Minister for the Economy to detail each budgetary pressure in his Department and its arm's-length bodies; and which of these pressures were raised with officials from the Department of Finance in advance of the October monitoring round.
(AQW 6145/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department and its Arm's Length Bodies have managed emerging budget pressures from within existing resources, including partially managing a resource pressure in relation to commitments under the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for the Economy whether his Department has modelled the impact that leaving the European single market will have on the economy.
(AQW 6154/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Department continues to carry out a detailed analysis of the potential impact of Brexit and the issues that will affect us locally.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister for the Economy what discussions he has had with universities about introducing the guidelines released last week by the Universities UK taskforce, calling on universities to adopt a consistent zero tolerance approach to sexual violence and harassment against women.

(AQW 6173/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: While my Department provides funding and sets the strategic direction for the higher education sector, the universities are autonomous institutions and are responsible for their own policies and procedures including those relating to student harassment.

However, I would encourage our institutions to continue to work with Universities UK, to ensure they are doing all they can to protect the safety and security of all their students.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for the Economy how much funding Teleperformance Enniskillen has drawn down from Invest NI; and how much it has spent of the Assured Skills funding supplied by the Department of Employment and Learning.

(AQW 6246/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Since the project was announced in October 2015 no funding has been drawn down from Invest Northern Ireland and the Company has not spent any funding offered under the Assured Skills Programme.

In order to address customer requirements the supported investment proposal necessitates the construction of a new communications room and the installation of a network infrastructure to connect the Enniskillen site into the company's national and international computer network. The work for the first new line to the Enniskillen Exchange was completed in August 2016, work on a second line is in progress.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for the Economy (i) how many posts were created by Teleperformance in Enniskillen; (ii) how many of these posts have been filled; and (iii) how many of these staff have been transferred from Liberty.

(AQW 6247/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: When the project was announced in October 2015 the Company proposed to create 800 new jobs in addition to those being transferred from Liberty Insurance under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) arrangements.

The project required investment in infrastructure development including construction of a new communications facility and installation of additional network lines to provide the service resilience capability required by customers. This phase of the project has progressed well and when complete will enable phased recruitment for the 800 posts to commence.

These 800 new posts will be in addition to the 170 staff currently employed at the facility who transferred, under TUPE, from Liberty Insurance to Teleperformance in July 2015.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister for the Economy to list the full address of each publicly funded broadband cabinet.

(AQW 6306/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The addresses of broadband cabinets funded under the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project and the Superfast Rollout Project are available at the website <http://nibroadband.com/the-big-build>.

A list of addresses of broadband cabinets funded under previous interventions from 2009 – 2011 has been deposited in the Assembly Library.

Dr Farry asked the Minister for the Economy how the Skills Barometer is being utilised in Careers Advice and Guidance.

(AQW 6328/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Careers advisers use the evidence outlined in the Skills Barometer to highlight the skills and qualifications most valued by employers and the sectors expected to experience employment growth, thus helping to balance skills supply and demand.

The Department's ongoing work with the Ulster University's Economic Policy Centre, which developed the Barometer, will also assist in developing a robust, evidence based picture of the skills profile required to meet our economic ambitions over the next ten years

Careers managers engage with school principals and teachers, raising awareness of the Skills Barometer and the importance of labour market information to both careers guidance and education. In addition, the headline information is regularly disseminated to young people and parents at events such as the recent Skills Northern Ireland event.

A user friendly info graphic has been developed to ensure the information in the Skills Barometer can be utilised by all, including careers teachers, parents, students and people in work keen to upskill.

The Barometer is currently being updated to ensure it continues to be based on the latest, most comprehensive information available. Updated findings are expected later this year and awareness sessions for careers service staff will be arranged to share the refreshed findings.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for the Economy for a projection of the total overspend on the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme.

(AQW 6394/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The total cost of the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme is currently estimated to be £269.5 million over the next 5 years. £144.3m of this will have to be funded through NI DEL.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for the Economy whether his Department can take legal action against Ofgen over regulation of the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme.

(AQW 6397/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: As there are ongoing investigations in relation to the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme, it would be inappropriate to comment on any potential action, legal or otherwise, at this time.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for the Economy to outline (i) the reasons for the delay in the commencement of ENERGYWISE from September 2015 to April 2018, and (ii) whether he intends to re-commence the scheme in April 2018.

(AQW 6447/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I am currently considering future energy efficiency policy including the EnergyWise Scheme proposals. The Utility Regulator has agreed to extend the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme until March 2018 to facilitate further policy consideration.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for the Economy pursuant to AQW 1774/16-21, to outline the work InvestNI carries out in partnership with Mid Ulster Council.

(AQW 6524/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: As a statutory partner in the Community Planning process Invest NI is working closely with Mid Ulster Council in the development and refinement of the economic development strand of its plan, providing advice, guidance and economic information. This has included Invest NI providing a sub-regional briefing to help inform the planning process and in particular a sub-regional economic development strategy.

Invest NI is also working closely with Council to identify and scope local business support initiatives which could be supported under the Local Economic Development strand of the EU Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme.

In addition, Mid Ulster Council is part of a collaborative application submitted to Invest NI by the 11 Councils for funding towards Councils' proposed new local start provision, the Northern Ireland Business Start-Up Programme.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for the Economy to outline any plans for a gas installation scheme for Alexander Road, Limavady.

(AQW 6566/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Firmus energy has already laid gas mains in the section of Alexander Road which encompasses properties 2-34. Homeowners who wish to connect to natural gas may be able to avail of connection incentives detailed on firmus energy's website at: <https://www.firmusenergy.co.uk/home/help-advice/network/natural-gas-heating-grants/firmus-energy-incentives-natural-gas-heating-grants>.

The remaining section of Alexander Road, encompassing around 80 properties, is part of firmus energy's long term development plan. Investment in new gas networks is a private sector decision, and this part of Alexander Road was not included in the company's proposals submitted in response to the Utility Regulator's recent Price Control for gas distribution network operators for the period 2017-2022.

However, firmus energy advise that if there is interest from property owners in conversion to gas, this could allow development of new gas networks in this street to be brought forward earlier than currently anticipated.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for the Economy whether the business case for the EnergyWise Scheme has been approved.

(AQW 6609/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I am currently considering future energy efficiency policy. No decision has therefore been made on the business case for the EnergyWise Scheme.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for the Economy for a breakdown of the spend to date on the EnergyWise and the Project Heat Schemes.

(AQW 6610/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The EnergyWise Scheme, formerly developed by OFMDFM as the Household Energy and Thermal Efficiency Programme, has not been introduced. No spend has therefore been incurred.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for the Economy (i) to outline the source of funding for the EnergyWise scheme; (ii) how long it will be available; and (iii) what is the annual budget.

(AQW 6611/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I am currently considering future energy efficiency policy. No decision has therefore been made with regards to funding for the proposed EnergyWise scheme.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for the Economy whether there are any anticipated consequences for the support package for the airport at Londonderry arising from the European Commission's view on the Belfast International Airport package.

(AQW 6684/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I do not anticipate that there are consequences arising from the Commission's views on the agreement with United Airlines as I consider these to be two quite different issues. The urgent support package agreed with United Airlines was to try to secure an existing transatlantic route, whereas the support for City of Derry Airport is to attract new services which will be considered on their merits.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister for the Economy to outline the legal advice he received regarding the funding directed towards United Airlines lying outside state aid rules.

(AQW 6689/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Any legal advice provided to Ministers is protected from disclosure by legal professional privilege.

Mr Wells asked the Minister for the Economy whether he has had any contact with Rockwell Collins following its acquisition of the B/E Aerospace factory in Kilkeel.

(AQW 6692/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: On the 23 October 2016 it was announced that Rockwell Collins would acquire B/E Aerospace for \$8.3bn. This is still subject to shareholder agreement and as such I have not, nor have any of my officials, made direct contact with Rockwell Collins.

B/E Aerospace remains a significant employer and investor in Kilkeel and all steps will be taken to ensure that this business continues to deliver world class aircraft seating to the global aerospace sector.

I have asked Invest NI to continue to work with the Kilkeel management team to ensure that Northern Ireland is well positioned for any future developments.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for the Economy to detail (i) the number of inquiries from potential inward investors interested in setting up factories in East Derry; and (ii) the actual number visiting (a) Limavady; and (b) Coleraine in each of the last three years.

(AQW 6823/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: There have been no inquiries registered from potential investors interested in setting up factories in East Londonderry.

The recorded figures are available for District Council Areas only. With the changes to the boundaries in 2015, these figures are now recorded against the Causeway Coast & Glens Council area.

In 2013-14 and 2014-15, Invest NI hosted 1 visit for potential investors in the Limavady Council Area and 5 in the Coleraine Council Area.

In 2015-16 Invest NI hosted 3 visits for potential inward investors in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Area.

Mr Logan asked the Minister for the Economy whether his Department is working with local airports to expand the number of air routes and carriers.

(AQW 6840/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department, along with Invest NI and Tourism Ireland Ltd, continues to work with all of our airports to support their air route development endeavours.

I am also establishing an Air Routes Task Force to advise me on new policies and interventions to enhance Northern Ireland's air connectivity for key inbound tourism, investment and trade markets.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for the Economy to detail how many (i) informal; and (ii) formal cases of (a) threats; (b) harassment; (c) sexual harassment; and (d) stalking have been lodged by his staff over the last three years; and to detail (iii) the internal procedures taken; and (iv) how the victims were supported.

(AQW 6878/16-21)

Mr Hamilton:

- (i) Information on informal cases is not recorded centrally by the Department.
- (ii) In the last three years there have been three formal cases lodged concerning (a) threats. There have been no formal cases lodged for (b) harassment, (c) sexual harassment or (d) stalking.
- (iii) Cases lodged of this nature are dealt with internally in line with the NICS Dignity at Work policy and/or the NICS Discipline policy, as appropriate.
- (iv) There is a comprehensive range of support services available to staff in the Department. Welfare Support Services, including Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provided by Carecall, Harassment Contact Officers, Departmental Equal Opportunity Officers and Departmental Human Resources are all means of support and advice available for all staff involved in cases of this nature.

Mr McKee asked the Minister for the Economy for each month that the Renewable Health Incentive Scheme was open to applications (i) how many non-domestic applications were received in each month since the introduction of the scheme; (ii) how many non-domestic applications were (a) successful; and (b) unsuccessful; (iii) for a breakdown of the technology accompanying the applications; and (iv) for what proportion of capacity did solid biomass boilers account.

(AQW 6938/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Details on the number of monthly applications broken down by technology are set out in the table below:

Count of Applications by Submission Month & Tariff Band

Month of Submission	Tariff Band	Numbers Received	% Solid Biomass Boilers
Feb-2013	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	5	100%
Mar-2013	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	4	100%
Apr-2013	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	2	100%
May-2013	Large Solid Biomass Boiler	4	100%
	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	6	
Jun-2013	Large Solid Biomass Boiler	2	100%
	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	5	
Jul-2013	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	5	100%
Aug-2013	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	10	100%
Sep-2013	Large Solid Biomass Boiler	1	100%
	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	6	
Oct-2013	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	9	100%
	Small Solid Biomass Boiler	1	
Nov-2013	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	12	100%
Dec-2013	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	12	100%
	Small Solid Biomass Boiler	1	
Jan-2014	Large Solid Biomass Boiler	1	100%
	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	13	
Feb-2014	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	11	100%
Mar-2014	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	18	100%
Apr-2014	Medium Ground Source Heat Pump	1	94%
	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	17	
May-2014	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	28	100%

Month of Submission	Tariff Band	Numbers Received	% Solid Biomass Boilers
Jun-2014	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	33	100%
Jul-2014	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	31	100%
Aug-2014	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	28	100%
Sep-2014	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	27	100%
Oct-2014	Large Solid Biomass Boiler	1	100%
	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	40	
Nov-2014	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	42	100%
Dec-2014	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	33	100%
Jan-2015	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	54	100%
	Small Solid Biomass Boiler	1	
Feb-2015	Medium Ground Source Heat Pump	1	89%
	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	31	
	Small Ground Source Heat Pump	2	
	Small Solar Thermal	1	
Mar-2015	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	63	100%
Apr-2015	Large Solid Biomass Boiler	3	95%
	Medium Ground Source Heat Pump	1	
	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	49	
	Small Solar Thermal	2	
May-2015	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	54	100%
Jun-2015	Large Solid Biomass Boiler	1	96%
	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	52	
	Small Ground Source Heat Pump	1	
Jul-2015	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	43	100%
Aug-2015	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	52	100%
	Small Solid Biomass Boiler	1	
Sep-2015	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	99	99%
	Small Water Source Heat Pump	1	
Oct-2015	Large Solid Biomass Boiler	1	100%
	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	502	
	Small Solid Biomass Boiler	1	
Nov-2015	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	374	100%
	Small Solid Biomass Boiler	4	
Dec-2015	Large Solid Biomass Boiler	1	100%
	Small Solid Biomass Boiler	1	
Jan-2016	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	2	40%
	Small Ground Source Heat Pump	2	
	Small Solar Thermal	1	

Month of Submission	Tariff Band	Numbers Received	% Solid Biomass Boilers
Feb-2016	Large Solid Biomass Boiler	11	96%
	Medium Ground Source Heat Pump	3	
	Medium Solid Biomass Boiler	292	
	Small Ground Source Heat Pump	8	
	Small Solar Thermal	2	
	Small Solid Biomass Boiler	2	
Total		2128	98%

To date, 1946 applications have been approved by Ofgem, 12 have been rejected. The remaining 170 applications fall under a number of categories including cancelled, in review, submitted or with applicant.

Mr McKee asked the Minister for the Economy for her assessment on the success of the Agri-food Loan Scheme.
(AQW 7022/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: This question was asked of the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. The subject at hand falls within my remit as Minister for the Economy and I have therefore elected to answer the question.

The Agri-Food Loan Scheme for broiler production has helped to focus the banks on the potential of the sector and a large proportion of broiler houses have been subsequently funded entirely by the banks without any support through the scheme. The scheme was acknowledged by industry stakeholders as an enabler in helping farmers to secure financing, to facilitate continued industry expansion.

Invest NI remain engaged with a sub-set of the pork sector with regards to a potential project that would see full integration of the supply chain in this sector.

Mr McKee asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on the Agri-food Loan Scheme, including (i) the number of loans that have been made in each year; and (ii) how much funding has been awarded.
(AQW 7035/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Under the broiler scheme, seven loans were offered in the 2014/15 year with total Invest NI funding of £1,884,000. In the 2015/16 year three further loans were offered with total Invest NI funding of £935,000.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for the Economy how many people with visual impairment over the age of eighteen are enrolled in (i) further education, (ii) higher education; and (iii) training programmes, broken down by age, over the last five years.
(AQW 7181/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The number of students aged 18 and over enrolled in Northern Ireland Further Education colleges over the last five academic years who declared a 'Blind or Partially Sighted' disability at enrolment is provided in the table below:

Students Aged 18 and Over enrolled in Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges who declared a 'Blind or Partially Sighted' disability - 2010/11-2014/15

Age Group	Academic Year				
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
18 to 24	35	38	40	43	37
25 and over	102	73	61	84	147
Total	137	111	101	127	184

Sources: Further Education Statistical Record from 2010/11 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return from 2013/14 to 2014/15.

The number of students aged 18 and over enrolled in Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions over the last five academic years who declared a 'Blind or serious visual impairment' disability at initial enrolment is provided in the table below:

Students Aged 18 and Over enrolled in Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions who declared a 'Blind or Serious Visual Impairment' disability - 2010/11-2014/15

Age Group	Academic Year				
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
18 to 24	60	55	45	50	40
25 and over	50	40	40	35	35
Total	110	95	85	85	75

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes: The figures above include students at the Open University where the national centre is located in Northern Ireland.

To prevent the identification of individuals, figures have been rounded to the nearest 5, in line with HESA rounding strategy, with 0, 1 and 2 rounded to 0.

Due to rounding, the sum of columns may not match the total shown.

Data on participants with specific disabilities on Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI are not currently published routinely. However, DfE staff are in the process of making data quality assessments with the intention of future publication.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for the Economy for an update on the future of Renewables Obligation Certificates payments on solar installation, post 31 March 2017.

(AQW 7211/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) will close to all new solar PV installations on 31 March 2017, with exceptions for projects that meet the eligibility criteria for a grid or radar delay grace period, as set out in the associated legislation. Projects meeting the criteria can accredit under the NIRO up to 31 March 2018.

Once accredited under the NIRO, projects are eligible to receive Renewables Obligation Certificates for 20 years or until 2037, whichever is earlier.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for the Economy to outline any discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders in relation to Higher Education funding; and to what extent these discussions have involved student representatives.

(AQW 7394/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Since taking office, I have met the Vice Chancellors of Queen's University and Ulster University, as well as the National Director of the Open University. The discussions at these meetings were wide ranging, and included the funding of higher education in Northern Ireland.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for the Economy whether they have any (i) proposals; or (ii) remit in relation to addressing the high cost of car insurance for young drivers.

(AQW 7477/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I have no proposals and no remit as this is a reserved matter.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister for the Economy what work has been undertaken to determine whether Northern Ireland will remain within the Tariff/Customs Union with the European Union, should Article 50 be triggered.

(AQW 7529/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is continuing to carry out detailed analysis of the potential impact of the UK leaving the European Union and the issues that will affect us locally, including the future relationship with the EU Customs Union. The Joint Ministerial Council (Europe Negotiations) is the main mechanism under which discussions with the Government are taking place on the UK's approach to and objectives for negotiations with the European Union. The First Minister and deputy First Minister are leading discussions on behalf of the Executive, setting out the key priorities for Northern Ireland.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister for the Economy what support has been offered to ensure that local universities can continue to attract academics of international standing.

(AQW 7540/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Given the recognised excellence of our local universities, I am confident that they are well placed to continue to attract academics of international standing.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister for the Economy what support has been offered to ensure that local universities can continue to access the Erasmus exchange network and other European Union sponsored programmes.

(AQW 7541/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Whilst the UK remains a member of the EU there will be no change to projects funded through the Erasmus+ programme. The long term future of UK participation in Erasmus+ and other European sponsored programmes will form part of the UK's exit negotiations.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for the Economy pursuant to AQW 3161/16-21, to clarify the availability, as of November 2016, of the (i) NVQ Level 6 sign language at Belfast Metropolitan College; (ii) Master of Arts programme for sign language interpreters at Queen's University Belfast; and (iii) Postgraduate certificate in Education (further education) sign language programme at Ulster University.

(AQW 7682/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: These courses were funded by my Department to enhance the sign language tutoring and interpreting infrastructure within Northern Ireland. Ongoing sign language provision is a matter for the higher education institutions.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister for the Economy what assessment he has made of the impact of a Brexit on access for research institutions to the Innovative Medicines Initiative and other EU-funded research and collaboration programmes.

(AQW 7753/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Treasury has committed to underwriting the payments to EU funded projects under Framework Programme 7 and Horizon 2020 approved while the UK is still a member of the EU, even when the projects continue beyond the UK's departure from the EU.

Post UK exit from the EU, access to EU funded research and collaboration programmes will depend on the outcome of the UK's exit negotiations.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for the Economy how much is owed in student loans.

(AQW 7806/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Loan Balance (including loans not yet due for repayment) in respect of Northern Ireland borrowers at the end of financial year 2015-16 was £2.7 billion.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister for the Economy whether his Department will commit to enshrine in law those protections that derive from judgements of the European Court of Justice.

(AQW 7875/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department considers all relevant judgements from the European Court of Justice and legislates where appropriate.

Mr Beattie asked the Minister for the Economy for his assessment of Northern Ireland's air-connectivity.

(AQO 850/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I am encouraged by the latest Air Passenger Statistics which show that there were 7.68 million air passengers passing through Northern Ireland airports in the year to June 2016. This represents a 9% increase in passengers on the previous year and passenger numbers are at their highest since the pre-recession peak of 8.27 million in 2008. The statistics give a clear indication that growth is returning to the Northern Ireland air travel market.

I also welcome other positive developments, particularly a new service to Iceland from Belfast City Airport which was announced last week. This will open up connections to North America and is another important step as we continue to build our air connectivity so that it is as easy as possible for people all over the world to access Northern Ireland for both business and tourism purposes. The past year also saw Ryanair opening a new base at Belfast International Airport, and the introduction by Brussels Airlines of a route from Belfast City Airport to Brussels.

Regrettably there have been some set-backs to our air connectivity in recent months, most notably the loss of our only transatlantic route between Belfast International and Newark, and the termination of Ryanair flights from City of Derry Airport to Faro and London Stansted from April next year.

It is important that we continue to build our air connectivity so that it is as easy as possible for people all over the world to access Northern Ireland for both business and tourism purposes.

It is for this reason that I am establishing an Air Routes Task Force to advise me on new policies and interventions to enhance Northern Ireland's air connectivity and to identify priority routes for key inbound tourism, investment and trade markets. Year of Food and Drink 2016

Ms Archibald asked the Minister for the Economy how his Department plans to build on the legacy of the Year of Food and Drink 2016.

(AQO 852/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Year of Food and Drink 2016 has been an exciting initiative which has presented a great opportunity for us to celebrate all that is great about Northern Ireland Food and Drink, with lots more activity planned in the final month.

The initiative has been a resounding success, with government and industry partners working in collaboration to showcase key products, chefs and restaurateurs across Northern Ireland.

Tourism Northern Ireland is currently working with partners to develop plans to build on the legacy of the year.

A number of legacy initiatives are already planned for the first quarter of 2017 including the Year of Food and Drink People Focused Conference which will emphasise the importance of people and skills in delivering a sustainable legacy to the year.

The Year of Food and Drink Awards are also planned in partnership with Belfast Telegraph.

Tourism NI is developing plans for a sustained food and drink focused industry development programme, and will continue to work in partnership with key events such as BBC Good Food Show to ensure the continued development of the event over the next two years.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for the Economy to outline any discussions he has had with energy stakeholders in relation to new grid connections for businesses.

(AQO 854/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I have discussed a range of grid issues with the System Operator for Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Electricity Networks. I have discussed delays in the grid connection process and sought assurances that all appropriate actions are being taken to address them, particularly in the context of those seeking connections for renewables.

I have also expressed my expectation that where connections have implications for landowners, the process of engagement with those affected is conducted in a manner that seeks to reach agreement where possible.

The grid is a scarce and precious resource, a point I made in this House recently when responding to the motion on energy affordability and security. In that context I am keen to see connections policy that delivers efficient investment, at least cost to consumers, while taking account of wider economic policy.

Mr McCausland asked the Minister for the Economy how the potential of Ulster-Scots cultural tourism can be realised.

(AQO 855/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Cultural tourism, which includes Ulster Scots heritage has tremendous potential for Northern Ireland tourism. Tourism Northern Ireland is working in partnership with many organisations to ensure that this potential is maximised.

Tourism NI has engaged with Tourism Ireland, the Ulster Scots Agency, Ulster Historical Foundation and National Museums Northern Ireland to develop a series of tourism experiences that have a strong Ulster Scots theme, which resonate in the North American market.

This group recently collaborated to represent the Ulster Scots cultural tourism product as a collective at the Stone.

Mountain Highland Games which took place in Atlanta in October. This major event attracted 80,000 attendees and those that visited the stand demonstrated a strong and genuine interest Northern Ireland and in tracing their family roots.

The group also briefed key special interest tour operators who have the potential to source groups and associations that are interested in Northern Ireland and American connections.

This coordinated approach has set the pattern for the future development of the Ulster Scots cultural tourism product. In order for it to reach its full potential, stakeholders must all work together to develop sustainable and coordinated product experiences that are firmly rooted in market demand.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for the Economy to outline the financial incentives available through Invest NI for the provision of new visitor accommodation.

(AQO 858/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Subject to a project meeting the criteria for support, Invest NI may offer financial assistance for the development of new, or expansion of existing tourism accommodation. Such assistance may be by way of capital grant, loans or equity. Accommodation providers, again subject to meeting eligibility criteria, may avail of the full range of Invest NI developmental support and advice.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister for the Economy how his Department will ensure that young people with additional needs have access to suitable Further Education.

(AQO 859/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is committed to ensuring access to suitable Further Education for all individuals, including young people with additional needs, through a range of educational provision, targeted initiatives and funding.

This includes the delivery of FE provision in community settings, entitlement framework provision in which school pupils attend FE colleges, liaison between FE colleges, local schools, the Careers Service and other relevant professionals to ensure young people are aware of the opportunities and support available in FE.

There is an Additional Support Fund to provide the support necessary for students with learning difficulties and disabilities to access FE, financial support specifically for young parents with childcare responsibilities and additional financial support for students who are experiencing financial difficulties through FE Awards and the Hardship Fund.

In addition, my Department is implementing the FE 'Further Education Means Success', a key theme of which is Social Inclusion. The Social Inclusion Project will focus on identifying barriers which inhibit participation in FE and how the sector can work in partnership with other organisations to overcome barriers and strengthen pathways to FE at a higher level.

Department of Education

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail what opportunities are available for pupils with Special Educational Needs to access skills-based training.

(AQW 7312/16-21)

Mr Weir (The Minister of Education): Young people with a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) will be supported by the Education Transition Service in their transition from school to adult life. All available options will be explored with the young person and their family, taking into account their individual SEN and career aspirations. In addition, the young person will have an individual interview with a Careers Adviser from the Department for the Economy.

There are a number of opportunities available for pupils with SEN to access skills based training which are provided through FE Colleges and other training providers.

The Regional Colleges provide a range of training skills courses eg: essential skills in literacy and numeracy, employability skills, customer service, catering or horticulture, joinery, plumbing, bricklaying and life skills programmes designed specifically for pupils with SEN.

Skills based training courses are also available through other training providers eg: vocational skills, essential skills, ICT training, personal development, money management, employability skills and employment services.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of young people that have used the Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre in each of the last four years, broken down by age group.

(AQW 7409/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has provided the following information in relation to the number of young people that have used the Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre in each of the last four years broken down by age group.

Age	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
4 to 8	0	0	0	0
9 to 13	2512	2356	1733	1618
14 to 18	2204	2402	2624	898
19 to 21	49	272	217	206
22 to 25	40	56	0	0
Totals	4805	5086	4574	2722

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of times in the last four years that the Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre has hosted schools or organisations; and (ii) the names of those organisations or schools, broken down by community background.

(AQW 7410/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has provided the following information regarding the number of times that schools and other organisations have used the facilities at Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre in each of the last four years:-

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Schools/organisations hosted by Bushmills OEC	267	252	212	132

The EA has confirmed that they do not collect this information by community background.

I have arranged for the remaining information requested with regards to the names of schools and other organisations that have used the facilities at Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre in each of the last four years to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the schools; (ii) other organisations that have used the facilities at Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre in each of the last four years.

(AQW 7412/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has provided the following information regarding the number of times that schools and other organisations have used the facilities at Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre in each of the last four years:-

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Schools/organisations hosted by Bushmills OEC	267	252	212	132

The EA has confirmed that they do not collect this information by community background.

I have arranged for the remaining information requested with regards to the names of schools and other organisations that have used the facilities at Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre in each of the last four years to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education whether he is aware of the eBook written and illustrated by pupils of Saint Ita's Primary School, Carryduff entitled Stronger Together, which addresses the theme of bullying in schools.

(AQW 7478/16-21)

Mr Weir: I am aware of the eBook produced by the school which was a standalone resource produced in collaboration with the National Children's Bureau (NCB).

The eBook, written and illustrated by pupils from just one class within the school, was highlighted at the launch event for this year's Anti-Bullying Week for the imaginative and engaging way in which it encouraged younger children to think about what it feels like to be bullied and how they could support one another to overcome bullying behaviour.

The school has already distributed the eBook throughout schools in Northern Ireland via the C2k network, helping other teachers to start conversations about bullying and how everyone, no matter how young, can help make a difference. I understand they are already receiving valuable feedback.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education to detail how many children starting in primary one had speech and language difficulties requiring specific educational support, broken down for each year since 2006.

(AQW 7500/16-21)

Mr Weir: A significant number of children identified by school staff as having speech and language related difficulties on entering primary one will have their needs met as a result of relevant and purposeful measures put in place by schools at Stages 1 and 2 of the Code of Practice. The Education Authority (EA) does not hold this information centrally, as the recording of these pupils is the responsibility of the school concerned.

Children may have been identified and supported by other EA Services or by Health and Social Care Trusts prior to, or at the point of starting primary one. As engagement with these services is based on need and may only be for specified or short periods of time, the overall situation is a fluid one.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education what is the average length of time a child with speech and language issues that is starting primary one has to wait until the appropriate support is provided in the classroom.

(AQW 7501/16-21)

Mr Weir: The SEN Code of Practice requires every school to put relevant and purposeful measures in place for any pupil who presents with an identified special educational need. This includes those identified with speech and language difficulties.

The class teacher will immediately implement a range of appropriate support strategies when a pupil is identified and will liaise with the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator as required. School-based support will be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis. This will include liaising with parents in relation to accessing relevant Health-based advice/support/intervention.

For pupils whose needs are not met through these measures, after suitable review and consultation, a school may decide to refer the pupil for further assessment or input from appropriate Education Authority (EA) services. Any input from external EA services will complement and build on school-based measures.

EA can provide advice, training and support from a range of services which, together with the relevant and purposeful measures put in place by a school, will result in a continuum of provision accessed according to identified need.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education to outline the reporting system that is in place to ensure that children with speech and language issues are recognised and support is put in place as soon as possible.

(AQW 7502/16-21)

Mr Weir: The framework that all schools are required to follow is as set out in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

This framework allows for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) across a continuum of five stages. When a pupil is identified as having a SEN-related difficulty, including speech and language difficulties, the school involved is required to respond by implementing, monitoring and reviewing relevant and purposeful measures to meet those identified needs and seeking support from external specialists, as necessary.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Education what consideration he has given to a flexible school starting age.
(AQW 7506/16-21)

Mr Weir: As I am currently considering the legislative proposals I wish to progress during the 2016-2021 Programme for Government period, it is not possible to provide you with an update on this matter at present. However, I hope to be in a position to advise you of my position on this issue shortly. I am aware of the work that was undertaken during the previous mandate and the range of issues involved. I will take these into consideration when determining the way forward.

Ms Bunting asked the Minister of Education to detail the last date that each Outdoor Education Centre was inspected by the Education and Training Inspectorate.
(AQW 7577/16-21)

Mr Weir:

Statutory Sector		Inspection Date
1.	Ardnabannon OEC	1/6/2010
2.	Bushmills OEC	Not inspected
3.	Delamont OEC	11/5/2015
4.	Gortatole OEC	3/6/2013
5.	Killowen OEC	18/5/2009
6.	Killyleagh OEC	2/6/2008
7.	Shannaghmore OEC	14/5/2012
8.	Woodhall Residential Centre	26/3/2012
9.	Ballyhome Centre*	Not inspected
10.	Corick Centre*	Not inspected
11.	Derganagh House*	Not inspected

*These OECs are small residential self-catering type centres.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail his departmental spending per child, excluding children educated in a non-school setting, (i) at primary level; and (ii) at post-primary level.
(AQW 7579/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Department does not hold information on average spending per pupil. Such information would require disaggregation of central costs – e.g. administration and services such as transport, meals, Curriculum Advisory and Peripatetic Service etc. - which are not disaggregated at school or phase levels. In addition, overall expenditure will include grant-aided recurrent funding (and other non-public funds including voluntary contributions etc.), as well as capital expenditure - which, by its nature, is not regular or consistently applied across schools from year-to-year.

Every grant-aided school covered by the Common Funding Scheme receives a fully delegated budget for its day-to-day recurrent funding needs, distributed under the current Common Funding Formula arrangements. A breakdown of the average budget per pupil in grant-aided schools in the current financial year is provided below:

2016-17 Formula funding for schools *

Phase	Per Capita
Primary ⁽¹⁾	3,069
Post-primary	4,350

* Data source: Common Funding Formula 2016-17 including Transition and Budget Addition

Note:

(1) Includes nursery classes within Primary schools

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail his departmental spending per child educated in a non-school setting (i) at primary level; and (ii) at post-primary level.
(AQW 7580/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has provided the following answer as the Department does not hold this level of information:

Pupils in a non-school setting are not a homogenous group. Pupils are being educated on the basis of identified need and as such a cost will be individual, influenced by differing factors. These will typically include:

- age/year group of pupil
- the type /nature of the provision required
- the number of hours
- length of time
- whether the pupil has a statement of special educational needs
- level of assessed risk
- transport

A spend per child can therefore not be calculated.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) what activities are on offer at Outdoor Education Centres (ii) the capacity of each Centre, broken down by (a) pupils; and (b) accompanying staff; (iii) whether there are periods when any of the Centres are not in use; and (iv) how many pupils and young people have attended outdoor education centres over each of the last five years.

(AQW 7582/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has provided the information that you have requested regarding Outdoor Education Centres.

For the information in respect of points (i) to (iii), please see my recent response in relation to AQW 7164/16-21.

The information regarding point (iv) is as follows:

Centre Name	Address	Year	Primary	Post Primary	Field Studies	Youth Groups
Ardnabannon OEC	3 Ardnabannon Road, Castlewellan BT31 9EN	2011/12	1795	1151	217	1455
		2012/13	1927	733	67	1260
		2013/14	1693	833	0	941
		2014/15	1844	691	0	598
		2015/16	1766	520	208	408
		Total	9025	3928	492	4662
Bushmills OEC	7 Priestland Road, Bushmills, County Antrim, BT57 8QP	2011/12	1,370	770	0	1,277
		2012/13	1,963	635	11	2,340
		2013/14	1,964	1,040	69	2,091
		2014/15	1,777	633	59	1,509
		2015/16	1,418	691	75	682
		Total	8492	3769	214	7899
Delamont OEC	88 Downpatrick Rd, Killyleagh, Downpatrick, BT30 9TZ	2011/12	850	342	64	505
		2012/13	1001	478	59	632
		2013/14	833	348	58	516
		2014/15	778	519	55	545
		2015/16	772	418	53	530
		Total	4234	2105	289	2728

Centre Name	Address	Year	Primary	Post Primary	Field Studies	Youth Groups
Gortatole OEC	147 Marble Arch, Florencecourt, Enniskillen, BT92 1ED	2011/12	739	1043	184	980
		2012/13	599	772	245	1029
		2013/14	421	747	232	1021
		2014/15	427	578	297	957
		2015/16	354	544	240	1157
		Total	2540	3684	1198	5144
Killowen OEC	Killowen Rd, Rostrevor, Newry, BT34 3AG	2011/12	797	752	2452	943
		2012/13	748	682	2095	984
		2013/14	820	453	1976	871
		2014/15	812	305	1816	749
		2015/16	960	260	1614	743
		Total	4137	2452	9953	4290
Killyleagh OEC	Shore Road, Killyleagh, BT30 9UE	2011/12	1009	328	25	1057
		2012/13	774	261	260	1176
		2013/14	730	256	243	1228
		2014/15	913	206	342	1186
		2015/16	787	348	68	961
		Total	4213	1399	938	5608
Shannaghmore OEC	The Ballagh, Kilkeel Rd, Newcastle BT33 0LA	2011/12	1101	226	0	987
		2012/13	1000	107	0	902
		2013/14	1175	235	0	892
		2014/15	1184	191	0	830
		2015/16	1066	216	0	899
		Total	5526	975	0	4510
Woodhall OEC	27 Moneygran Road, Kilrea, County Londonderry BT51 5SJ	2011/12	1269	2241	0	1556
		2012/13	1194	2176	0	1907
		2013/14	1243	2345	0	1547
		2014/15	1284	2318	0	1560
		2015/16	1107	1362	0	1039
		Total	6097	10442	0	7609
Ballyhome*	51 Ballyhome Road, Coleraine BT52 2LX	2011/12	0	32	0	1357
		2012/13	0	0	0	985
		2013/14	0	41	0	800
		2014/15	34	31	0	1102
		2015/16	0	91	0	958
		Total	34	195	0	5202

Centre Name	Address	Year	Primary	Post Primary	Field Studies	Youth Groups
Corick*	3 Corickbeg Road, Newtownstewart, Co Tyrone BT78 4DN	2011/12	0	7	0	324
		2012/13	0	9	0	459
		2013/14	0	0	0	206
		2014/15	0	8	0	370
		2015/16	0	9	0	363
		Total	0	33	0	1722
Derganagh House*	33 Rathlin Road, Ballycastle BT54 6LD	2011/12	63	97	0	1129
		2012/13	66	86	0	891
		2013/14	28	38	0	869
		2014/15	65	29	0	951
		2015/16	53	67	0	990
		Total	275	317	0	4830

*self-catering centres.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Education to detail each occasion (i) he; (ii) his predecessor; or (iii) any of his officials attended a meeting (a) with; or (b) at the request or facilitation of Brown Rudnick over the last three years, including the date and purpose of each meeting.

(AQW 7593/16-21)

Mr Weir: Neither I, my predecessor, nor any of my officials have attended a meeting held, or facilitated by Brown Rudnick over the last three years.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Education what plans his Department has to mitigate against any future loss of European funding.

(AQW 7605/16-21)

Mr Weir: I would refer the Member to my answer to AQO 717/16, tabled by Declan McAleer MLA and published in the Official Report on 22 November 2016.

As I said in my answer, funding for Peace IV post Brexit is included in the guarantee provided by HM Treasury for structural and investment fund programmes signed before the UK leaves the EU.

The UK's future access to the Erasmus+ programme will be determined as part of the wider discussions that her Majesty's Government will be having with the EU.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Education what reviews on the impact of a Brexit are currently underway in his Department.

(AQW 7606/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Department continues to carry out a detailed analysis of the potential impact of Brexit and the issues that will affect us locally. It would not be appropriate to share the results of this analysis as it will be used to inform the NI Executive's input to the UK Government's negotiating position.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Education what plans his Department has to extend the Literacy and Numeracy CPD transitions project, which is due to conclude next year.

(AQW 7607/16-21)

Mr Weir: I will be reviewing the impact of the project to date and the value of its continuation beyond March 2017. Whether or not the project continues in its current form, it has demonstrated how the sharing of good practice, educational partnerships between schools, and the potential of ICT, can help to achieve positive outcomes. This learning will need to be shared and taken up by teachers and school leaders.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education whether there are any policies or guidelines in place that require new-build schools to install sprinkler systems.

(AQW 7653/16-21)

Mr Weir: There are no policies or guidelines in place that require new-build schools to install sprinkler systems.

Schools in Northern Ireland are designed and built to comply with the Department of Education's School Building Handbook and the Building Regulations for Northern Ireland that pertain at the time of construction.

In accordance Building Regulations, the school will be designed for simultaneous evacuation in the event of fire alarm activation. At present, Building Control regulations do not require new build schools in Northern Ireland to have sprinkler systems installed.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education (i) to detail any changes which have been made to (a) National Insurance contributions; and (b) pension contributions for teachers in each of the last three years; and (ii) for his assessment of the impact on teachers of each change.

(AQW 7689/16-21)

Mr Weir:

(i) Changes

(a) National Insurance Contributions

On 6 April 2016 a 'single tier' State Pension was introduced throughout the UK. Prior to this, members of defined benefit pension schemes, including the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS), were contracted-out of the Additional State Pension and they paid lower National Insurance contributions. The change means that members of all defined benefit schemes no longer receive the National Insurance rebate and pay a higher rate of National Insurance. However, the amount of State Pension accrued by such pension scheme members after 6 April 2016 will no longer be subject to reduction, as it was in the contracted-out arrangement.

(b) Pension Contributions

The average member contribution for teachers increased from 6.4% in 2012 to 9.6% in 2014. Whilst contribution rates were restructured at April 2015 there was no increase to the average contribution rate for teachers.

Contribution rates for NITPS members have increased in line with those of teachers in England and Wales, following publication of the Hutton Report on the affordability of public service pensions and UK government announcements that it would seek progressive changes to the level of employee contributions in public service pension schemes.

(ii) Assessment of the Impact on Teachers

The combined effect of these changes will have reduced take home pay for teachers who are NITPS members. This will be true for all other public service pension scheme members across the UK. However, they will accrue an increase in future benefits from the introduction of the 'single tier' State Pension.

The effect on NITPS membership has been closely monitored since the implementation of tiered contributions in April 2012. The rate of opt-outs from NITPS, at around 0.5% of members, has remained low throughout this period.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education whether the Executive received any additional funding when the Government applied a 1 per cent pay increase to all pay ranges and allowances in the national pay framework for teachers in September 2016.

(AQW 7691/16-21)

Mr Weir: Any decisions taken by the Westminster Government which result in additional funding (or cuts) are allocated to devolved administrations using the Barnett formula. Such changes in funding are unhypothecated and it is for the Executive to decide on the use of any additional funding (or reductions) in light of emerging pressures and priorities. It is for the Finance Minister to advise if any funding was received through the Barnett Consequentials as a result of the Westminster Government's decision on teachers pay. As a result the Department did not receive any specific additional funding for teachers pay nor did the Department receive any additional money for automatic increments, which are still paid in Northern Ireland, but have been abolished in England and Wales.

On a like for like basis with 2015-16, the 2016-17 resource allocation for Education meant a net cash reduction of £72.1m or (3.8%). As a result, no pay and price pressures were funded. This includes changes to teachers' pay, which are being absorbed in 2016-17.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education whether he will legislate to give parents of particularly young children the option to defer school starting year.

(AQW 7703/16-21)

Mr Weir: I am still considering the legislative proposals I wish to progress during the 2016-2021 Programme for Government period. I hope to be in a position to update you on this matter shortly.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education (i) for his assessment of the recent Education and Training Inspectorate Chief Inspector's report, with specific reference to the fact that Ards and North Down council area had the highest proportion of

schools having important areas for improvement or needing to address urgently the significant areas for improvement and (ii) what plans he has to raise the capacity of these schools.

(AQW 7708/16-21)

Mr Weir: I fully support the role of the Education and Training Inspectorate in promoting improvement for all learners.

The findings contained within the report for this period refer to 36% of schools evaluated in the district council area of Ards and North Down having important areas for improvement or needing to address urgently significant areas for improvement.

Through my school improvement policy, robust action is being taken to follow up on inspection reports and ensure schools receive the support they need to address areas for improvement and ensure best educational value for children and young people. Schools reported as having important areas for improvement or needing to address urgently the significant areas for improvement are prioritised to receive tailored support from the Education Authority (EA) and, in the case of Catholic maintained schools, from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS).

The EA consults with the school to determine a management response to the main findings in the inspection report, together with an indication of how the school intends to address the areas for improvement. The EA (in liaison with the CCMS where appropriate) then works with the school to prepare and implement an agreed post-inspection action plan detailing the actions that will be taken to address the areas for improvement. These plans are quality assured by the ETI and feedback provided to the school and managing authority. The school's progress is evaluated by the ETI through the follow-up inspection process.

I understand that the Board of Governors and Senior Management Team of the schools in the Ards and North Down Council Area have drawn up action plans to address the areas for improvement identified through inspection and that they are being supported by staff from the Education Authority, in liaison with CCMS, where appropriate.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education what is the frequency of contact for pupils that are participating in shared education.
(AQW 7732/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Sharing Works policy defines Shared Education as sustained provision of opportunities for young people to learn together. Within this context, it is for schools to determine the frequency of contact taking into account the practicalities of delivery with their partner school(s). There is no 'one size fits all' frequency requirement.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) how many meetings he has had with (a) the CCEA; (b) OCR; and (iii) AQA since May 2016; and (ii) to outline the content of those meetings.

(AQW 7733/16-21)

Mr Weir: I met with the CCEA Chair and two Council members on 20 July. A range of issues were discussed, including recruitment for CCEA Council, the challenges faced by Awarding Organisations, revision of CCEA's GCSE and AS/A Level specifications, Assessment and Qualification policies. Corporate Governance and budgetary issues were also part of the discussion.

I attended a meeting of the Joint Council for Qualifications in Belfast on 9 September. CCEA, OCR and AQA were represented at this meeting.

My officials are in regular contact with Awarding Organisations, in particular CCEA.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of staff in (i) the Education Authority; (ii) the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools; (iii) the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment; (iv) the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education; (v) the General Teaching Council; and (vi) Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, broken down for each of the last five years.

(AQW 7734/16-21)

Mr Weir: The number of staff in (i) the Education Authority (EA); (ii) the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS); (iii) the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA); (iv) the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE); (v) the General Teaching Council (GTCNI); and (vi) Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG), broken down for each of the last five years is detailed in the table below:

YEAR @ w/e 31/10	Staff Numbers ¹					
	EA	CCMS	CCEA	NICIE	GTCNI	CnaG
2012	3097	56	363	11	16	12
2013	3217	52	383	10	18	13
2014	3245	55	377	9	18	13
2015	3064	64	414	9	22	13
2016	3003	59	401	10	18	11

¹ The figures are based on a headcount of staff in post as at 31 October for each of the years in question.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education pursuant to AQO 715/16-21, to outline (i) how he arrived at his figure for the additional cost of a universal Sure Start programme; (ii) how; and (iii) why this figure differs from the £36.9m per annum estimated by the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action.

(AQW 7735/16-21)

Mr Weir:

- (i) Sure Start is delivered in the 25% most disadvantaged areas¹ in Northern Ireland, with current investment of around £25m p.a. As I said during my response to the follow up question to AQO 715/16-21 this is an estimate and is based on a direct extrapolation of the current level of funding. Costs to extend services by a further 75% could require additional funding of around £70m to £75m p.a. to provide 100% coverage.
- (ii) The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) estimated figure of £36.9m is based on a 'cost per child' (£658.11) figure, multiplied by NICVA's estimated number of children (56,095) that would take up services which they predict as 91% of the eligible cohort. However, Sure Start does not operate on the basis of 91% coverage.
- (iii) The Sure Start budget allocations are not calculated on a per capita (cost per child) basis. Rather, they are calculated, following full economic evaluation, on the financial need of each of the 39 Sure Start projects to deliver the service needed in their locality. The Independent Review of Sure Start acknowledged that Sure Start is not funded on a per capita basis, although the review team used cost per child as a proxy for comparison purposes.

Each project budget takes account of the many variants which can impact service delivery costs including:

- Location;
- Rurality;
- Number of eligible children in catchment area;
- Transport network;
- Existing support framework; and
- Number of staff.

The Department would not use an average 'cost per (existing) child' figure to estimate the costs of providing Sure Start on a universal basis.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many (i) fully-funded; and (ii) part-funded nursery places are available for St. Malachy's Primary School, Bangor.

(AQW 7764/16-21)

Mr Weir: All places provided under the Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) are fully funded by the Department of Education.

St Malachy's Primary School, Bangor, provides 52 part-time funded pre-school education places.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education pursuant to AQW 6556/16-21, (i) whether the audit has been published; and (ii) how can it be accessed.

(AQW 7778/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority's Review of Residential and Outdoor Education can be accessed at:

<http://www.eani.org.uk/about-us/consultations/review-of-residential-outdoor-education/>

Mr Chambers asked the Minister of Education to outline the criteria for a child attending Killard House School to qualify for taxi transport door to door.

(AQW 7781/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has advised that where a statement of special educational needs is maintained for a pupil the decision about where a child is placed, including whether they should be provided with transport assistance, will be considered as part of the statementing process.

Transport assistance, such as door to door taxi transport, will be provided where this is documented within the pupil's statement.

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of Education to detail the (i) percentage; and (ii) number of children that achieved at least three A-levels at grade A* to C in each year from 1996 to 2016; broken down by (a) gender; (b) community background; and (c) socio-economic background.

(AQW 7816/16-21)

Mr Weir: Information on the attainment of school leavers in 2015/16 will be available in May 2017. Figures for 1995/96, 1996/97 and 2002/03 are not available.

1 as identified by Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures (NIMDM 2010)

Tables 1 to 3 below detail the number and percentage of school leavers who achieved at least three A-levels at grades A* to C from 1997/98 to 2014/15.

Table 1: Number and percentage of school leavers achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications) by gender, 1997/98 – 2014/15⁽¹⁾

Year	School leavers achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications)					
	Boys		Girls		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2014/15	3544	31.1	5009	45.7	8553	38.2
2013/14	3513	30.2	4861	44.2	8374	37.0
2012/13(2)	3422	29.1	4858	43.2	8280	36.0
2011/12	3376	29.6	4841	43.4	8217	36.4
2010/11	3508	29.6	4743	41.9	8251	35.6
2009/10	3244	28.5	4848	42.4	8092	35.5
2008/09	3060	26.4	4417	37.8	7477	32.1
2007/08	2800	23.1	4187	35.0	6987	29.0
2006/07	2787	22.1	4139	33.9	6926	27.9
2005/06	2892	22.2	4390	35.1	7282	28.5
2004/05	2809	21.7	4281	34.6	7090	28.0
2003/04	2549	19.5	3965	31.5	6514	25.4
2002/03 ⁽³⁾						
2001/02	2091	16.3	3512	28.8	5603	22.4
2000/01	1832	14.3	2654	21.5	4486	17.8
1999/00	1721	13.3	2573	21.1	4294	17.1
1998/99	1719	13.2	2507	20.2	4226	16.6
1997/98	1609	12.5	2311	18.1	3920	15.3

Source: School Leavers survey

Notes:

- 1 Excludes special and independent schools.
- 2 Since 2012/13, two AS qualifications have not been counted as one A-level as in previous years.
- 3 Due to considerable difficulties with new software installed in schools, the School Leavers survey was cancelled in 2002/03.

Table 2: Number and percentage of school leavers achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications) by religion, 1997/98 – 2014/15⁽¹⁾

Year	School leavers achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications)							
	Protestant		Catholic		Other ⁽²⁾		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2014/15	3088	35.1	4684	41.1	781	36.1	8553	38.2
2013/14	3009	34.3	4565	39.9	800	33.3	8374	37.0
2012/13(3)	3056	33.5	4468	38.9	756	31.5	8280	36.0
2011/12	3003	33.1	4472	39.3	742	35.4	8217	36.4
2010/11	2961	31.8	4536	38.8	754	34.5	8251	35.6
2009/10	3027	32.7	4326	37.9	739	34.2	8092	35.5

Year	School leavers achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications)							
	Protestant		Catholic		Other ⁽²⁾		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2008/09	2814	29.1	3997	34.6	666	32.4	7477	32.1
2007/08	2633	26.4	3682	30.8	672	31.1	6987	29.0
2006/07	2742	26.3	3639	29.1	545	29.2	6926	27.9
2005/06	2778	25.8	3903	30.3	601	31.9	7282	28.5
2004/05	2738	25.4	3775	29.7	577	31.7	7090	28.0
2003/04	2548	23.6	3464	26.2	502	30.8	6514	25.4
2002/03 ⁽⁴⁾								
2001/02	2359	21.5	2838	22.5	406	28.6	5603	22.4
2000/01	1888	17.5	2229	17.1	369	27.1	4486	17.8
1999/00	1739	16.6	2166	16.7	389	23.6	4294	17.1
1998/99	1741	16.4	2136	16.3	349	20.7	4226	16.6
1997/98	1647	15.5	1920	14.5	353	20.2	3920	15.3

Source: School Leavers survey

Notes:

- 1 Excludes special and independent schools.
- 2 Other includes Other Christian, No religion and Non-Christian.
- 3 Since 2012/13, two AS qualifications have not been counted as one A-level as in previous years.
- 4 Due to considerable difficulties with new software installed in schools, the School Leavers survey was cancelled in 2002/03.

Table 3: Number and percentage of school leavers achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications) by Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME), 1997/98 – 2014/15⁽¹⁾

Year	School leavers achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications)					
	Non-FSME		FSME		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2014/15 ⁽²⁾	7569	44.4	984	18.5	8553	38.2
2013/14	7702	41.4	672	16.6	8374	37.0
2012/13 ⁽³⁾	7608	40.6	672	15.7	8280	36.0
2011/12	7622	41.0	595	15.0	8217	36.4
2010/11	7656	39.6	595	15.5	8251	35.6
2009/10	7582	39.5	510	14.1	8092	35.5
2008/09	7041	35.7	436	12.3	7477	32.1
2007/08	6654	32.7	333	8.9	6987	29.0
2006/07	6523	31.9	403	9.2	6926	27.9
2005/06	6742	32.4	540	11.5	7282	28.5
2004/05	6572	32.8	518	9.8	7090	28.0
2003/04	6074	30.0	440	8.2	6514	25.4
2002/03 ⁽⁴⁾						
2001/02	5272	25.9	331	7.2	5603	22.4
2000/01	4255	21.1	231	4.7	4486	17.8

Year	School leavers achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications)					
	Non-FSME		FSME		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1999/00	4051	20.1	243	4.9	4294	17.1
1998/99	3988	19.8	238	4.5	4226	16.6
1997/98	3662	18.4	258	4.5	3920	15.3

Source: School Leavers survey

Notes:

- 1 Excludes special and independent schools.
- 2 The increase in the number of FSME pupils in 2014/15 coincides with an extension of the eligibility for free school meals under the Working Tax Credit free school meal criterion which was extended to post-primary pupils from September 2014.
- 3 Since 2012/13, two AS qualifications have not been counted as one A-level as in previous years.
- 4 Due to considerable difficulties with new software installed in schools, the School Leavers survey was cancelled in 2002/03.

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of Education to detail the percentage; and number of children that achieved at least three A-Levels at grade A*-C in schools in (a) South Down; and (b) Newry and Armagh in each year from 1996 to 2016; broken down by (i) gender; (ii) community background; and (iii) socio-economic background.

(AQW 7817/16-21)

Mr Weir: Information on the attainment of school leavers in 2015/16 will be available in May 2017. Figures for 1995/96, 1996/97 and 2002/03 are not available.

Tables 1 to 6 below detail the number and percentage of school leavers in South Down and Newry and Armagh Assembly areas who achieved at least three A-levels at grades A* to C, from 1997/98 to 2014/15.

Table 1: Number and percentage of school leavers resident in South Down⁽¹⁾ achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications) by gender, 1997/98 – 2014/15⁽²⁾

Year	School leavers resident in South Down achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications)					
	Boys		Girls		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2014/15	267	33.3	393	51.8	660	42.3
2013/14	248	32.1	328	44.6	576	38.2
2012/13 ⁽³⁾	232	29.9	342	45.6	574	37.6
2011/12	225	30.2	321	44.2	546	37.1
2010/11	235	29.7	348	45.9	583	37.6
2009/10	203	28.0	350	46.1	553	37.3
2008/09	210	28.3	310	43.5	520	35.8
2007/08	182	22.8	306	39.7	488	31.1
2006/07	179	21.4	278	35.7	457	28.3
2005/06	193	21.9	290	34.4	483	28.0
2004/05	177	20.9	282	37.1	459	28.5
2003/04	146	17.3	313	36.4	459	26.9
2002/03 ⁽⁴⁾						
2001/02	125	15.4	263	33.7	388	24.4
2000/01	129	16.1	205	28.4	334	22.0
1999/00	97	12.1	195	24.7	292	18.4

Year	School leavers resident in South Down achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications)					
	Boys		Girls		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1998/99	105	12.3	204	24.5	309	18.3
1997/98	96	11.6	129	16.6	225	14.0

Source: School Leavers survey

Notes:

- 1 Assembly area of pupil residence is based on the residential postcode of each individual pupil.
- 2 Excludes special and independent schools.
- 3 Since 2012/13, two AS qualifications have not been counted as one A-level as in previous years.
- 4 Due to considerable difficulties with new software installed in schools, the School Leavers survey was cancelled in 2002/03.

Table 2: Number and percentage of school leavers resident in South Down⁽¹⁾ achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications) by religion, 1997/98 – 2014/15⁽²⁾

Year	School leavers resident in South Down achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications)							
	Protestant		Catholic		Other ⁽³⁾		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2014/15	142	37.2	503	44.5	15	31.9	660	42.3
2013/14	97	28.8	450	40.8	29	41.4	576	38.2
2012/13 ⁽⁴⁾	96	30.9	444	38.5	34	55.7	574	37.6
2011/12	104	32.0	419	38.0	23	52.3	546	37.1
2010/11	121	32.4	440	39.3	22	40.0	583	37.6
2009/10	99	32.8	430	38.2	24	43.6	553	37.3
2008/09	91	27.8	407	38.3	22	34.9	520	35.8
2007/08	80	25.2	393	32.4	15	36.6	488	31.1
2006/07	79	24.5	358	29.1	20	32.3	457	28.3
2005/06	105	27.8	369	28.3	9	20.9	483	28.0
2004/05	82	24.3	365	29.3	12	50.0	459	28.5
2003/04	85	22.7	361	27.9	13	32.5	459	26.9
2002/03 ⁽⁵⁾								
2001/02	76	22.1	304	24.9	8	30.8	388	24.4
2000/01	75	22.5	243	21.0	16	59.3	334	22.0
1999/00	#	#	211	17.4	*	*	292	18.4
1998/99	70	20.0	234	17.9	5	17.2	309	18.3
1997/98	#	#	161	13.0	*	*	225	14.0

Source: School Leavers survey

Notes:

- 1 Assembly area of pupil residence is based on the residential postcode of each individual pupil.
 - 2 Excludes special and independent schools.
 - 3 Other includes Other Christian, No religion and Non-Christian.
 - 4 Since 2012/13, two AS qualifications have not been counted as one A-level as in previous years.
 - 5 Due to considerable difficulties with new software installed in schools, the School Leavers survey was cancelled in 2002/03.
- * Denotes fewer than 5 pupils # Figure not provided under the rules of statistical disclosure

Table 3: Number and percentage of school leavers resident in South Down⁽¹⁾ achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications) by Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME), 1997/98 – 2014/15⁽²⁾

Year	School leavers resident in South Down achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications)					
	Non-FSME		FSME		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2014/15 ⁽³⁾	585	47.8	75	22.3	660	42.3
2013/14	533	41.5	43	19.0	576	38.2
2012/13 ⁽⁴⁾	534	41.5	40	16.7	574	37.6
2011/12	518	41.4	28	12.7	546	37.1
2010/11	555	42.0	28	12.2	583	37.6
2009/10	532	41.1	21	11.1	553	37.3
2008/09	496	39.4	24	12.4	520	35.8
2007/08	477	33.9	11	6.7	488	31.1
2006/07	441	31.7	16	7.1	457	28.3
2005/06	456	31.2	27	10.4	483	28.0
2004/05	436	32.7	23	8.3	459	28.5
2003/04	436	30.8	23	7.9	459	26.9
2002/03 ⁽⁵⁾						
2001/02	363	27.6	25	9.1	388	24.4
2000/01	315	24.9	19	7.4	334	22.0
1999/00	273	20.4	19	7.5	292	18.4
1998/99	287	20.8	22	7.2	309	18.3
1997/98	207	15.8	18	6.1	225	14.0

Source: School Leavers survey

Notes:

- 1 Assembly area of pupil residence is based on the residential postcode of each individual pupil.
- 2 Excludes special and independent schools.
- 3 The increase in the number of FSME pupils in 2014/15 coincides with an extension of the eligibility for free school meals under the Working Tax Credit free school meal criterion which was extended to post-primary pupils from September 2014.
- 4 Since 2012/13, two AS qualifications have not been counted as one A-level as in previous years.
- 5 Due to considerable difficulties with new software installed in schools, the School Leavers survey was cancelled in 2002/03.

Table 4: Number and percentage of school leavers resident in Newry and Armagh⁽¹⁾ achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications) by gender, 1997/98 – 2014/15⁽²⁾

Year	School leavers resident in Newry and Armagh achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications)					
	Boys		Girls		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2014/15	219	29.0	363	46.1	582	37.7
2013/14	251	31.1	345	48.3	596	39.2
2012/13 ⁽³⁾	233	28.4	347	46.9	580	37.2
2011/12	242	29.7	361	47.3	603	38.2
2010/11	243	27.7	325	43.2	568	34.8
2009/10	197	25.9	358	45.8	555	35.9

Year	School leavers resident in Newry and Armagh achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications)					
	Boys		Girls		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2008/09	174	22.8	307	40.1	481	31.5
2007/08	135	16.5	286	37.2	421	26.6
2006/07	176	22.2	309	38.4	485	30.4
2005/06	169	18.4	303	37.2	472	27.2
2004/05	164	18.4	269	32.8	433	25.3
2003/04	148	16.5	250	29.8	398	22.9
2002/03 ⁽⁴⁾						
2001/02	123	14.2	214	27.2	337	20.3
2000/01	112	12.3	186	20.4	298	16.3
1999/00	108	12.4	179	21.6	287	16.9
1998/99	111	11.9	168	18.9	279	15.3
1997/98	96	11.2	151	16.9	247	14.1

Source: School Leavers survey

Notes:

- 1 Assembly area of pupil residence is based on the residential postcode of each individual pupil.
- 2 Excludes special and independent schools.
- 3 Since 2012/13, two AS qualifications have not been counted as one A-level as in previous years.
- 4 Due to considerable difficulties with new software installed in schools, the School Leavers survey was cancelled in 2002/03.

Table 5: Number and percentage of school leavers resident in Newry and Armagh⁽¹⁾ achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications) by religion, 1997/98 – 2014/15⁽²⁾

Year	School leavers resident in Newry and Armagh achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications)							
	Protestant		Catholic		Other(3)		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2014/15	115	31.3	448	39.7	19	41.3	582	37.7
2013/14	129	29.9	449	43.2	18	36.7	596	39.2
2012/13 ⁽⁴⁾	128	31.1	443	40.3	9	18.4	580	37.2
2011/12	116	31.9	469	40.0	18	41.9	603	38.2
2010/11	102	23.8	455	39.2	11	28.2	568	34.8
2009/10	127	29.1	422	39.1	6	20.7	555	35.9
2008/09	83	20.0	383	35.5	15	44.1	481	31.5
2007/08	85	19.5	328	29.4	8	25.8	421	26.6
2006/07	98	21.6	380	34.0	7	26.9	485	30.4
2005/06	91	18.6	374	30.8	7	23.3	472	27.2
2004/05	#	#	356	28.8	*	*	433	25.3
2003/04	#	#	308	24.8	*	*	398	22.9
2002/03 ⁽⁵⁾								
2001/02	#	#	259	21.6	*	*	337	20.3
2000/01	#	#	246	17.9	*	*	298	16.3

Year	School leavers resident in Newry and Armagh achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications)							
	Protestant		Catholic		Other(3)		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1999/00	#	#	224	18.1	*	*	287	16.9
1998/99	#	#	212	15.8	*	*	279	15.3
1997/98	56	12.5	191	14.8	0	0.0	247	14.1

Source: School Leavers survey

Notes:

- 1 Assembly area of pupil residence is based on the residential postcode of each individual pupil.
- 2 Excludes special and independent schools.
- 3 Other includes Other Christian, No religion and Non-Christian.
- 4 Since 2012/13, two AS qualifications have not been counted as one A-level as in previous years.
- 5 Due to considerable difficulties with new software installed in schools, the School Leavers survey was cancelled in 2002/03.
- * Denotes fewer than 5 pupils # Figure not provided under the rules of statistical disclosure

Table 6: Number and percentage of school leavers resident in Newry and Armagh⁽¹⁾ achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications) by FSME, 1997/98 – 2014/15⁽²⁾

Year	School leavers resident in Newry and Armagh achieving at least 3 A-levels A*-C (including equivalent qualifications)					
	Non-FSME		FSME		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2014/15 ⁽³⁾	490	43.8	92	21.7	582	37.7
2013/14	520	42.6	76	25.2	596	39.2
2012/13 ⁽⁴⁾	518	42.4	62	18.3	580	37.2
2011/12	544	43.3	59	18.2	603	38.2
2010/11	504	38.6	64	19.8	568	34.8
2009/10	498	40.0	57	19.1	555	35.9
2008/09	437	34.8	44	16.0	481	31.5
2007/08	387	29.8	34	11.8	421	26.6
2006/07	438	34.3	47	14.7	485	30.4
2005/06	419	31.2	53	13.5	472	27.2
2004/05	381	29.2	52	12.9	433	25.3
2003/04	355	27.3	43	9.8	398	22.9
2002/03 ⁽⁵⁾						
2001/02	297	23.3	40	10.4	337	20.3
2000/01	272	20.3	26	5.3	298	16.3
1999/00	255	20.2	32	7.3	287	16.9
1998/99	240	18.0	39	7.9	279	15.3
1997/98	215	17.2	32	6.5	247	14.1

Source: School Leavers survey

Notes:

- 1 Assembly area of pupil residence is based on the residential postcode of each individual pupil.
- 2 Excludes special and independent schools.

- 3 The increase in the number of FSME pupils in 2014/15 coincides with an extension of the eligibility for free school meals under the Working Tax Credit free school meal criterion which was extended to post-primary pupils from September 2014.
- 4 Since 2012/13, two AS qualifications have not been counted as one A-level as in previous years.
- 5 Due to considerable difficulties with new software installed in schools, the School Leavers survey was cancelled in 2002/03.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education (i) what steps he will take to ensure that pupils are not excluded from class as a result of class size; and (ii) for his assessment of the prevalence of students attending secondary school that are, on occasion, directed to undertake study periods rather than attend class as a result of their class size.

(AQW 7825/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Department of Education delegates as much funding and decision-making as possible to schools which are best placed to assess the needs of their pupils. Schools are required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils and how they do this is a matter for each school.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to outline the support provided to teachers that undertake extra-curricular activities; including the provision of (i) health and safety training; and (ii) the necessary equipment.

(AQW 7826/16-21)

Mr Weir: Whether it is curricular or extra-curricular activity, it is the employer that has overall responsibility for health and safety and this would include supporting teachers in terms of providing appropriate training and the supply of necessary equipment.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Education to list all primary schools with (i) their capacity for pupils; and (ii) the number of pupils they were entitled to enrol for 2016-17.

(AQW 7852/16-21)

Mr Weir:

- (i) A school's approved enrolment is set having regard to the physical capacity of the school. Should any school believe it is unable to effectively deliver the curriculum within its existing accommodation, it should discuss options with the relevant managing authority.

The Department is currently undertaking an exercise to review the capacity of all primary schools. The outcomes of this review will be analysed and summarised and DE will develop a categorisation process to enable robust assessment of physical capacity.

This review will not be used to adjust the approved enrolment number of any school and the normal development proposal process for that will continue to operate.

- (ii) I have arranged for this information to be lodged in the Assembly Library

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the total number of schools; and (ii) how many have submitted three-year financial plans that the Education Authority have accepted.

(AQW 7853/16-21)

Mr Weir:

- (i) In total there are 1,112 schools.
- (ii) The Education Authority (EA) advise that none of the schools for which it is the funding authority have had their three-year financial plans approved. The current position is due to the increasing number of schools projecting a deteriorating financial position. The EA is working with these schools to ensure that all possible actions have been considered to help improve their financial position.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Education to detail each primary school (i) with 105 pupils or less; (ii) with 84 pupils or less; and (iii) that received the following grades in their most recent inspection; (a) important area(s) for improvement; (b) requires significant improvement; and (c) requires urgent improvement.

(AQW 7854/16-21)

Mr Weir: The information requested is provided in the table below showing schools with 105/84 pupils or less that received an overall effectiveness conclusion requiring them to address an important area(s) for improvement or needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement.

Primary School Enrolments 2015/16

DENI Ref	School Name	Year 1-7 Enrolments	Latest Inspection
2032473	Magheralough Primary	28	OEC3*
3050519	Carnlough Controlled Integrated Primary	36	OEC3
2012087	Bellarena Primary	39	OEC4
3010850	Upper Ballyboley Primary	41	OEC4
3040451	Kilcoan Primary	43	OEC3
5036001	St Mary's Primary, Glassdrumman	46	OEC4
1046672	Gaelscoil an Lonnain	54	OEC3
2016184	Lack Primary	59	OEC3
2016262	Newtownstewart Model Primary	63	OEC3
4030573	Ballymacward Primary	64	OEC4
2032573	St Brigid's Primary, Altamuskin	67	OEC4
2012053	Culmore Primary	69	OEC4
3010760	Mullaghduh Primary	78	OEC4
2012095	Ballougry Primary	79	OEC3
3010892	Ballytober Primary	81	OEC4
5031318	Killowen Primary, Rostrevor	86	OEC4
4011373	Kirkistown Primary	87	OEC3
4013046	Alexander Dickson Primary	92	OEC4
2016102	Tempo Primary	94	OEC4

Source: NI School census

Enrolments refer to years 1-7 only

Inspection grades were introduced in 2009

New overall effectiveness conclusions were introduced in September 2015 and grades have been converted to these.

- OEC3 – The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners.
- OEC4 – The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education to outline the steps that are taken when (i) creating learning spaces; and (ii) installing new equipment in order to minimise children's exposure to electromagnetic radiation.

(AQW 7867/16-21)

Mr Weir: When installing electrical equipment as part of the building services infrastructure for schools, the installation is primarily governed by the relevant British Standard for each particular item. All electrical equipment must comply with the Electrical Equipment Safety Regulations 1994, which aims to ensure that equipment is safe when utilised for its intended function. As such, equipment must carry a "CE Mark" and must be installed to the manufacturer's guidelines.

The Education Authority (EA) is committed to encouraging and supporting the use of new digital technologies in schools and the Education Network contract provides all schools with a modern, networked ICT infrastructure. While the majority of the equipment provided as a core element of the service continues to be connected through a cabled network, the strategy to enable schools to significantly enhance the levels of pupil access, by either providing school purchased devices or allowing pupils to bring their own smartphones, netbooks or tablet devices, has required that the cabled networks be supplemented with Wi-Fi connectivity throughout every school. This reflects the current advances in technology where all mobile and portable devices are now Wi-Fi enabled by default and Wi-Fi services are becoming increasingly available in homes and public spaces.

Of course the health and safety of children and staff is of paramount importance to the EA and advice from the Health Protection Agency (HPA) and the International Commission on Non-ionising Radiation Protection (ICNRP) is constantly monitored. The current position being taken by the HPA is that radiation exposure levels from laptops and wireless access devices is low in classroom situations and should not constitute a reason to discourage their use.

The decision to use Wi-Fi functionality can, however, be taken at the individual school level where wireless access points can be switched off without adversely impacting on the functioning of the cabled workstations.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister of Education whether his Department will commit to enshrine in law those protections that derive from judgements of the European Court of Justice.

(AQW 7876/16-21)

Mr Weir: The matter is still under consideration and it is too early to say.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the average teacher's pay for each year from 2010 to 2016; and (ii) how does this compare to the average teacher's pay in (a) Scotland; (b) England; and (iii) Wales.

(AQW 7906/16-21)

Mr Weir: The table below details teachers' average pay for each year from 2010 to 2016.

Year	Teachers' * Average Pay in NI
2010	£37,411.93
2011	£37,613.54
2012	£37,808.26
2013	£37,951.59
2014	£38,311.80
2015	£38,585.18
2016	£38,810.76

* Figures include DE-paid teachers employed on a permanent full time basis, permanent pro rata basis and one year full time contracts.

Average teachers pay is calculated by dividing total salary costs plus allowances by the number of teachers (full-time equivalent). Employers' costs are not included.

There is no data available for either Scotland or Wales. Certain details of the average salary of teachers in England from 2010 to 2015 can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-workforce> (figures for 2016 are not yet available). However, this data is not directly comparable with the data provided above for teachers in Northern Ireland.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many (i) fully-funded; and (ii) part-funded nursery places are available for Holywood Primary School.

(AQW 7907/16-21)

Mr Weir: All places provided under the Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) are fully funded by the Department of Education. Holywood Primary School, Bangor, does not provide any funded pre-school education places.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many (i) fully-funded; and (ii) part-funded nursery places are available for Redburn Primary School.

(AQW 7908/16-21)

Mr Weir: All places provided under the Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) are fully funded by the Department of Education. Redburn Primary School, Bangor, closed with effect from August 2012, therefore it does not provide any funded pre-school education places.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many (i) fully-funded; and (ii) part-funded nursery places are available for Glencraig Primary School.

(AQW 7909/16-21)

Mr Weir: All places provided under the Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) are fully funded by the Department of Education. Glencraig Integrated Primary School, Bangor, does not provide any funded pre-school education places.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many (i) fully-funded; and (ii) part-funded nursery places are available for Clandeboye Road Primary School, Bangor.

(AQW 7910/16-21)

Mr Weir: All places provided under the Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) are fully funded by the Department of Education. Clandeboy Primary School, Bangor, does not provide any funded pre-school education places.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many (i) fully-funded; and (ii) part-funded nursery places are available for St. Comgalls Primary School, Bangor.

(AQW 7911/16-21)

Mr Weir: All places provided under the Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) are fully funded by the Department of Education. St Comgall's Primary School, Bangor, does not provide any funded pre-school education places.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of pupils in and (ii) the name of each (a) primary; and (b) post-primary school in East Derry.

(AQW 7916/16-21)

Mr Weir: Schools in East Londonderry constituency and their enrolments in 2015/16 are as follows:

(a) Primary schools

Ballyhackett Primary School	41
Ballykelly Primary School	306
Ballysally Primary School	244
Ballytober Primary School	81
Bellarena Primary School	39
Carhill Integrated Primary School	67
Carnalridge Primary School	192
Castleroe Primary School	102
Culcrow Primary School	94
Cumber Claudy Primary School	139
D H Christie Memorial Primary School	412
Damhead Primary School	196
Drumachose Primary School	293
Drumrane Primary School	128
Faughanvale Primary School	199
Gaelscoil Leim an Mhadaidh	68
Gaelscoil NeAchtain	86
Garvagh Primary School	86
Gorran Primary School	87
Harpurs Hill Primary School	228
Hezlett Primary School	243
Irish Society's Primary School	318
Killowen Primary School, Coleraine	200
Kilrea Primary School	89
Limavady Central Primary School	424
Listress Primary School	27
Macosquin Primary School	200
Millburn Primary School	355
Millstrand Integrated Primary School	216
Portrush Primary School	198

Portstewart Primary School	275
Roe Valley Integrated Primary School	170
St Aidan's Primary School Magilligan	53
St Canice's Primary School, Dungiven	315
St Canice's Primary School, Feeny	116
St Colmcilles Primary School, Claudy	258
St Columba's Primary School, Garvagh	94
St Columba's Primary School, Kilrea	246
St Colum's Primary School, Portstewart	167
St Finlough's Primary School, Sistrakeel	78
St John's Primary School, Coleraine	157
St John's Primary School, Dernaflaw	137
St Malachy's Primary School, Coleraine	230
St Mary's Primary School, Gortnaghey	57
St Mary's Primary School, Altinure	165
St Matthew's Primary School, Limavady	88
St Patrick's & St Joseph's Primary School	184
St Patrick's Primary School, Portrush	71
St Peter's & St Paul's Primary School	42
Termoncanice Primary School	543

(b) Post-primary schools

Coleraine College	212
Coleraine Grammar School	1490
Dominican College, Portstewart	481
Gaelcholáiste Dhoire	15
Limavady Grammar School	891
Limavady High School	721
Loreto College	807
North Coast Integrated College	427
St Joseph's College, Coleraine	280
St Mary's High School, Limavady	607
St Patricks & St Brigids High School	517
St Patrick's College, Dungiven	258
St Paul's College	290

Source: NI school census

Notes:

- 1 Figures for primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Education to outline how the Education Authority's plan will impact on East Derry.
(AQW 7917/16-21)

Mr Weir: The draft Strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland: "Providing Pathways" focuses on the educational interests of children and young people. It aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs delivered by schools that are educationally and financially viable.

In developing a draft Strategic Area Plan for 2017-2020 the Education Authority, working with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and sectoral support bodies, has analysed the current position and identified key strategic themes and issues which are impacting on the education system. It was published on 17 October for consultation which will run for eight weeks until 12 December 2016.

The draft Strategic Area Plan does not identify individual schools but will act as a catalyst for discussion at a regional and local level. The school planning and managing authorities will engage at a local level to determine the most appropriate area solutions to ensure that children and young people have access to high quality education regardless of where they live. Schools will be involved in the process at a formative stage and will have an opportunity to inform the development of area solutions.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Education to outline how many (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools will be closed if the draft area plan proposed by the Education Authority is adopted.

(AQW 7962/16-21)

Mr Weir: The draft Strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland: "Providing Pathways"

aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs delivered by schools that are educationally and financially viable.

The draft Area Plan does not identify individual schools but confirms that in some areas there are too many school places for the number of children and young people available to fill them. In other areas it highlights that there is a sufficient number of places but they are not in the right place. The school planning and managing authorities will engage at a local level with communities and schools to determine how best to shape education provision in an area to ensure a network of sustainable schools. In this way, local communities and schools will have an opportunity to inform the development of area solutions.

Any significant change to a school, including a school closure, is subject to the statutory Development Proposal process.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of primary schools in West Tyrone; and (ii) their respective pupil numbers.

(AQW 7963/16-21)

Mr Weir: There are 68 primary schools in West Tyrone constituency. Their enrolments in 2015/16 are as follows:

All Saints Primary School	102
Altishane Primary School	17
Ardstraw Jubilee Primary School	87
Artigarvan Primary School	143
Bready Jubilee Primary School	122
Christ The King Primary School, Omagh	205
Cooley Primary School	146
Denamona Primary School	58
Donemana Primary School	99
Dromore Primary School	43
Drumduff Primary School	45
Drumlish Primary School	63
Dunmullan Primary School	34
Edwards Primary School	223
Erganagh Primary School	47
Evish Primary School	35
Gaelscoil na gCrann	146
Gaelscoil Uí Dhochartaigh	159
Gibson Primary School	300
Gillygooley Primary School	28
Gortin Primary School	52
Gortnagarn Primary School	20

Holy Family Primary School, Omagh	396
Killen Primary School	109
Knocknagor Primary School	65
Langfield Primary School	30
Loughash Primary School	35
Magheralough Primary School	28
McClintock Primary School	81
Newtownstewart Model Primary School	63
Omagh County Primary School	332
Omagh Integrated Primary School	363
Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School, Omagh	122
Queen Elizabeth II Primary School, Omagh	42
Recarson Primary School	104
Roscavey Primary School	56
Sacred Heart Primary School, Tattyreagh	83
Sion Mills Primary School	257
St Brigid's Primary School, Altamuskin	67
St Brigid's Primary School, Cranagh	27
St Brigid's Primary School, Mountfield	31
St Caireall's Primary School	86
St Catherine's Primary School	475
St Columba's Primary School, Clady	143
St Columbkille's Primary School, Carrickmore	321
St Conor's Primary School, Omagh	436
St Dympna's Primary School, Dromore,	204
St Eugene's Primary School, Tyrcur	20
St Eugene's Primary School, Victoria Bridge	61
St Joseph's Primary School, Drumquin	132
St Joseph's Primary School, Glenmornan	36
St Lawrence's Primary School	260
St Mary's Primary School, Cloughcor	188
St Mary's Primary School, Killyclogher	399
St Mary's Primary School, Strabane	728
St Matthew's Primary School, Garvaghey	36
St Oliver Plunkett Primary School, Beragh	109
St Patrick's Primary School, Castlederg	313
St Patrick's Primary School, Donemana	35
St Patrick's Primary School, Eskra	94
St Patrick's Primary School, Gortin	81
St Patrick's Primary School, Newtownstewart	119
St Peter's Primary School, Plumbridge	83
St Scire's Primary School	107

St Teresa's Primary School, Loughmacrory	147
St Theresa's Primary School, Glebe	100
Strabane Controlled Primary School	272
Tummary Primary School	42

Source: NI school census

Notes:

2 Figures for primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of post-primary schools in West Tyrone; and (ii) their respective pupil numbers.

(AQW 7964/16-21)

Mr Weir: There are 11 post-primary schools in West Tyrone constituency. Their enrolments in 2015/16 are as follows:

Castlederg High School	421
Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Omagh	976
Dean Maguirc College	509
Drumragh Integrated College	649
Holy Cross College	1539
Loreto Grammar School	880
Omagh Academy	673
Omagh High School	398
Sacred Heart College, Omagh	837
St John's College	177
Strabane Academy	591

Source: NI school census

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Education for an update on discussions his Department is having with teachers' unions over industrial action.

(AQW 7965/16-21)

Mr Weir: Teachers' terms and conditions are negotiated through the forum of the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC), at which I am represented.

TNC is made up of representatives from the Northern Ireland Teaching Council (NITC), comprised of the 5 recognised teaching unions, and Management Side, comprised of representatives from the Education Authority, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, sectoral interests and the Department.

Management Side meet regularly with the NITC as part of their work on TNC and I understand a meeting took place on Tuesday 22 November 2016.

Management Side has written to the NITC following the recent meeting inviting them to enter immediate and intensive negotiations to resolve issues connected with the ongoing industrial action, in an effort to focus on the future and bring an end to the ongoing disruption, in the best interests of pupils, teachers and schools.

I urge the NITC to get around the negotiating table with Management Side.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Education (i) for his assessment of the issue that not all children are ready to start formal schooling at four years of age; (ii) to detail how parental concerns regarding their child not being ready to start school are addressed in the new guidance on school starting age; and (iii) whether he plans to introduce any flexibility on school starting ages in the future.

(AQW 7989/16-21)

Mr Weir: I accept that some parents, particularly those of summer born children, feel strongly that it would be in their child's best interests not to start school at four years of age. I am also aware that a significant amount of research has been carried out, in England and elsewhere, on the issue of whether a later start contributes to improved outcomes for children, and that a wealth of evidence is available on both sides of the debate.

The Education Authority's guidance provides advice to parents on the issues they need to consider as their child approaches school starting age and on the curriculum at foundation stage. It also provides clarity for parents and schools on what is possible under the current arrangements.

I am aware that a consultation on proposals to provide some flexibility on school starting age took place during the previous mandate. I am currently considering the way forward on this issue.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail the Voluntary Exit Scheme currently in operation in the Education Authority.

(AQW 8019/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority's (EA) current Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) in 2016-17 for non-school based staff is intended to contribute to the EA's 2016-17 Savings Delivery Plan in tandem with supporting the continuing implementation of new management structures and reorganisation and restructuring of services on a functional basis. The opportunity for staff to express an interest in VES remains open.

The Scheme is funded by the Department of Education (DE) from the Public Sector Transformation Fund.

The severance terms available to staff are in accordance with existing contractual entitlements set out in the Education and Library Boards' Scheme for Redundancy in Accordance with the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations (NI) 2007 as amended; and the relevant pension schemes.

VES business cases are considered and approved on the basis that they set out a clear focus on business rationale in terms of service delivery review and long term strategic vision; demonstrate a reduction in FTE staffing levels; detail risks and consider risk mitigation in terms of service delivery; provide value for money including a payback period of 3.25 years; are consistent with the EA's budget parameters; and provide assurances in terms of equality of opportunity to all volunteers in the relevant staff groups.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) all primary schools that have a Department-funded nurture room; and (ii) for each school (a) the amount of capital; and (b) recurrent funding that they receive each year.

(AQW 8022/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Department currently funds a total of 32 nurture units at an annual cost of £70k per school. In addition to these annual operating costs, schools that set up a new nurture unit under the Delivering Social Change (DSC) Signature Project also received one-off start up costs of between £10k to £20k to refurbish and equip their nurture room. The two Irish Medium (IM) Primary Schools, which joined the Nature Group Pilot in September 2016 received start up costs of £10k.

The Department currently funds nurture units at the following primary schools:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ■ Blackmountain PS, Blackmountain Place, Belfast | ■ Ballycraig PS, Bracken Avenue, Antrim |
| ■ Currie PS, Limestone Road, Belfast | ■ Harryville PS, Casement Street, Antrim |
| ■ Edenbrooke PS, Tennent Street, Belfast | ■ West Winds PS, Sunderland Park, Newtownards |
| ■ Holy Trinity PS, Monagh Road, Belfast. | ■ St Kieran's PS, Bell Steel Road, Dunmurry |
| ■ Harmony PS, Forthriver Crescent, Belfast | ■ St Luke's PS, Glasvey Drive, Dunmurry |
| ■ John Paul 2nd PS, Whiterock Road, Belfast | ■ St Brigid's PS, Carnhill, Londonderry |
| ■ St Patricks PS, Pim Street, Belfast | ■ Good Shepherd PS, Good Shepherd Road, Dunmurry |
| ■ St Clare's PS, Cupar Street, Belfast | ■ Holy Family PS, Aileach Road, Londonderry |
| ■ St Joseph's PS, Slate Street, Belfast | ■ Ballysally PS, Daneshill Road, Coleraine. |
| ■ St Malachy's PS, Eliza Street, Belfast. | ■ Rathcoole PS, Derrycoole Way, Newtownabbey |
| ■ Taughmonagh PS, Findon Gardens, Belfast. | ■ Kilcooley PS, Ganaway Avenue, Bangor |
| ■ St Paul's Slievemore PS, Moss Road, Londonerry | ■ Tullycarnet PS, Kings Road, Belfast |
| ■ Fountain PS, Hawkin Street, Londonderry | ■ St Colmcille's PS, Glebetown Drive, Downpatrick. |
| ■ St Oliver Plunkett PS, Parkmore Drive, Londonderry | ■ Scoil an Droichid, Cooke Street, Belfast |
| ■ St Malachy's PS, Martins Lane, Newry | ■ Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain, Wyndham Drive, Belfast. |
| ■ Tullygally PS, Meadowbrook Road, Craigavon | |
| ■ Harpurs Hill PS, Ballycastle Road, Coleraine | |

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Education pursuant to AQO 720/16-21, what criteria are being applied when allocating the £14 million additional spending power to schools.

(AQW 8027/16-21)

Mr Weir: The £14million has two key elements.

As a result of the teachers pay settlement staff costs will reduce by nearly £7million. This cost reduction is being apportioned to individual schools on the basis of teaching staff costs.

I have proactively reviewed the overall Education budget and reallocated over £7million of new funding to the 2016-17 Schools Budget. This element has been distributed to schools using the Common Funding Formula, on the same basis as the overall 2016-17 Aggregated Schools Budget.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Education pursuant to AQO 720/16-21, to list the possible actions the Education Authority is asking schools to consider in order to improve their financial situation.

(AQW 8028/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority (EA) advises that as part of the 2016-17 planning process, schools were reminded of the need to live within the budget allocated to them. EA officials offered one-to-one appointments to assist schools in drawing up their three year plans. The majority of schools took up this offer of dedicated support.

The EA's engagement with schools is ongoing, given the challenging financial circumstances currently facing the education sector. The EA has advised schools with deficits to consider a number of options to reduce expenditure and improve their financial position including (but not limited to):

- review teaching numbers and associated costs;
- the potential to reduce non-teaching hours;
- optimising the use of available resources.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Education pursuant to AQO 720/16-21, other than placing this announcement on his Department's website and making an announcement at a party conference; when he will be announcing formally to schools that £14 million will be provided in additional spending power to schools.

(AQW 8029/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Department's Finance Director wrote to the Chairpersons of all Grant-Aided Schools on 31 October 2016 to inform them of my announcement regarding the £14m additional spending power to schools.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Education pursuant to AQO 720/16-21, whether (i) only schools projecting deficits have had their budget approval delayed; or (ii) if all schools have not had their budgets approved.

(AQW 8030/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority (EA) advises that none of the schools, for which it is the funding authority, have had their three-year budget plans approved.

As I previously advised, in response to AQO 720/16-21, this is due to the increasing number of schools projecting a deteriorating financial position. The EA is working with these schools to ensure that all possible actions have been considered to help improve their financial position.

In addition, my recent announcement of £14 million of additional spending power means that the schools' financial plans will need to be reconsidered. The EA will be liaising with the schools to determine the impact.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Education how many posts his Department suppressed in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Area since 2007.

(AQW 8045/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Department of Education has not suppressed any posts in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Area since 2007.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Education to list the number of Outdoor Education Centres that the Education Authority funds in East Londonderry.

(AQW 8111/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has confirmed that they fund two, Woodhall and Ballyhome, Outdoor Education Centres and Magilligan Field Centre in the East Londonderry constituency.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Education what plans his Department has for the future of the old Dromore Primary School building, which is now subject to vandalism.

(AQW 8122/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Department does not own the old Dromore Central Primary School building; responsibility for it lies with the Education Authority (EA).

The site and building previously used by Dromore Central Primary School has not been declared surplus by the EA as they are currently considering alternative educational use or potentially shared use of the site with another public body.

Should these options not be viable, the EA will move to declare the site surplus to its requirements and the EA will commence the disposal process in accordance with the Land & Property Services guidelines 'Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in Northern Ireland (March 2013).'

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Education to outline the levels of educational underachievement in each of the sectors in the Upper Bann.

(AQW 8150/16-21)

Mr Weir: Underachievement is where an individual learner's performance is below what might be expected. Through classroom observation and analysis of formative assessment, teachers are able to use their professional judgement to assess if a pupil is underachieving.

At a system level, summative data is collected which relates to levels of progression and achievements at the end of each key stage. On its own, this information is not a measure of underachievement but it does identify groups which are, on average, experiencing lower levels of achievement than other groups.

At a system level, one of our key academic indicators relates to the proportion of school leavers who achieve at least five GCSEs at A*-C (including equivalents) including GCSEs in English and maths.

The latest published data shows that in 2015 66% achieved at this level and, against this benchmark, the proportion of school leavers from Upper Bann was broadly in line with the overall average (64.8%). The table below shows the qualification of school leavers from Upper Bann by sector in comparison to the Northern Ireland average.

Percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A* - C (including equivalent qualifications), including GCSE English and Maths 2014/15 – Upper Bann

Grammar Upper Bann ¹	Total Grammar NI	Non-Grammar Upper Bann ¹	Total Non-Grammar NI	Total Upper Bann ¹	Total NI
97.4	95.6	44.6	45.3	64.8	66.0

Source: School Leavers Survey

Notes:

1 The home postcode of the pupil has been used to determine residency in the Upper Bann constituency.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Education to outline what efforts are being made to address educational underachievement (i) in Upper Bann; and (ii) across Northern Ireland.

(AQW 8151/16-21)

Mr Weir: Underachievement is where an individual learner's performance is below what might be expected. Schools, and in particular the teachers in the classroom, are best placed to identify those children at risk of underachievement and to consider the most appropriate strategies to address this.

I will continue to focus on those policies and strategies that are driving improvement and which aim to support schools and teachers in their work to raise standards and overcome the barriers to learning which some pupils face. This includes Every School a Good School – the school improvement policy; Count, Read: Succeed – the literacy and numeracy strategy; the curriculum; the Learning to Learn Framework; and the Teachers Professional Learning Strategy.

To support schools, I have maintained the level of funding for Targeting Social Need and in this financial year some £77.5m has been allocated directly to schools to target the learning of socially disadvantaged pupils and those at risk of educational underachievement.

Additional resources have been provided to schools serving those most at risk of underachieving through targeted programmes such as Extended Schools and Sure Start, and schools in Upper Bann have availed of this.

I will also ensure that effective practice, that has demonstrated positive impact, is widely shared across the school system.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Education (i) whether any nurture units exist in Upper Bann; and (ii) to outline the process for such an application.

(AQW 8250/16-21)

Mr Weir: My Department currently fund 32 nurture units, none of which exist in the Upper Bann area.

In 2013 20 new nurture groups were set up as a Signature Project, under the Delivering Social Change Programme, which was delivered jointly by DSD and DE. Both Departments also provided funding for 10 longer established nurture groups, to run in parallel with the Signature Project. Most recently, in August 2016, the Department of Finance made funding available to support a two school pilot to identify if any specific difficulties arise when using Nurture Groups within an Irish Medium setting.

Following on from the recent very positive evaluation of the impact of Nurture Groups, I will be considering over coming months how we can most effectively mainstream nurture provision. I have asked that a new Nurture Programme be developed and I will ensure that available resources are targeted to those schools with children most in need of nurture support.

Until that programme can be put in place, I have committed my Department to protecting the expertise that has now been built up and I will ensure there is no break in current funding support for the existing 32 nurture groups. It is unlikely; however, that further funding will become available to support any additional Nurture Groups ahead of the introduction of the new programme.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail which departmental spending area did the funding for the Strule Shared Education Campus, Omagh originate.

(AQW 8547/16-21)

Mr Weir: Prior to 2014/2015 the Strule Shared Education Campus Programme was funded from within the Department's conventional budget allocations.

For the financial years 2014/2015 to 2016/2017 funding was provided by Economic Pact additional Reinvestment and Reform Initiative (RRI) borrowing, under the Together: Building a United Community (T: BUC) initiative.

Discussions are currently on-going with the Department of Finance in respect of my Department's Capital budget for the next 4 years.

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Education how his Department plans to ensure teachers receive continuous professional development and support.

(AQO 863/16-21)

Mr Weir: At the outset I want to acknowledge that inspection evidence supported by OECD evaluation demonstrates that teachers here do excellent work and are supported by increasingly effective professional learning particularly within schools. Data from the 2015 TIMSS are extremely encouraging and reflect the good teaching in our classrooms. This is further evidenced by improvements in GCSE and A level results. We need to examine the practice that drives this welcome progress.

Within schools, teacher professional learning needs are identified through School Development Plans and schools can choose to meet the cost through their delegated budget.

External teacher professional learning is already provided through the Department's educational partners, particularly, the Education Authority and Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment. This includes leadership programmes, online resources and workshops which provide opportunities to share practice and engage in professional dialogue.

Some of the most innovative and effective professional learning takes place when teachers collaborate and share best practice within or between schools. I want to see this good practice sustained and enhanced.

My Department's Teacher Professional Learning Strategy will bring coherence to this work. At its core will be the development of a Teacher Professional Learning Framework, dissemination of good practice, building professional learning communities and building leadership capacity. As a result teachers will feel more in control in shaping their learning.

We will engage with teachers and other stakeholders in the design, development and delivery of our approach.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education for an update on the future of pre-school special educational needs home teaching.

(AQO 864/16-21)

Mr Weir: The statutory responsibility for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) rests with schools, and the Education Authority (EA) which is the body responsible under special education legislation for identifying, assessing and in appropriate cases, making provision for children with SEN.

It is recognised that for young pre-school children with SEN access to a home based learning programme may provide the most appropriate help. The EA provides this type of support through its SEN pre-school home teaching service. The EA is currently considering the arrangements for its SEN pre-school home teaching service and its Early Years SEN Service. Work is in progress to create interim management arrangements for a single Early Years' SEN Service, which will include pre-school home teaching.

The EA has confirmed that an interim regional manager has been appointed and has begun the process of moving towards a single service entity.

The EA is working to ensure that appropriate intervention can be accessed consistently across the Authority, for those children who require these services.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the Education and Training Inspectorate Chief Inspector's statement on 16 November that there is excellent capacity in education and training but too many learners are not being served well.

(AQO 865/16-21)

Mr Weir: I fully support the findings of the Chief Inspector's report 2014-2016 and the role of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in promoting improvement for all learners.

Capacity in the system is demonstrated by the 79% of all organisations inspected which had a high level of capacity or capacity to identify and bring about improvement. We have many schools and providers that demonstrate excellence and there are many exceptional leaders and teachers/lecturers/trainers that put the learners needs and their success above all else.

This is testament to the hard work of staff in our schools and providers.

However the report also acknowledges that 21% of organisations inspected had important areas for improvement or needed to address urgently the significant areas for improvement. There are still unacceptable variations and persistent shortcomings that need to be addressed. The difference in achievement and standards for particular groups of learners, particularly FSME entitled pupils, boys and Looked After Children reflects a system that serves some better than others.

Through my school improvement policy, robust action is being taken to follow up on inspection outcomes and ensure schools receive the support they need to address areas for improvement identified and ensure best educational value for children and young people.

Inspection also leads to improvement, the ETI's follow up process is a key driver of school improvement. Of the 123 organisations in the follow up process during the period of the Chief Inspector's report, 77% were able to demonstrate improvement and this has resulted in better provision for the learners.

Dissemination events for the Chief Inspector's Report planned for the New Year will also give principals and leaders an opportunity to reflect on the key messages contained within the report.

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister of Education how many children are waiting to be assessed for a statement of special educational needs.

(AQO 866/16-21)

Mr Weir: As allowed by statute, where the Education Authority (EA) decides to proceed with a statutory assessment of special educational needs (SEN), it will have 10 weeks to conduct the assessment.

The EA has advised that, as at 29 November 2016, 1548 children were awaiting completion of their statutory assessment.

This figure is based on the number of children where the EA has agreed to commence a statutory assessment and advice has been sought from a range of professionals to inform whether the Authority will make a statement of SEN.

Mr McCausland asked the Minister of Education how he will address the need for an additional classroom at Ligoniel Primary School.

(AQO 867/16-21)

Mr Weir: Ligoniel Primary School is a Controlled Primary School and as such the responsibility for minor works and additional accommodation at the school is that of the Education Authority (EA).

I have been advised by the EA that it has a scheme to provide one additional modular unit at Ligoniel Primary School and the scheme is in the Minor Works prioritisation process, where schemes are prioritised regionally, and in line with agreed criteria.

Presently the scheme for additional accommodation at the school will only be considered further should additional funding become available.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education to outline his policy on the provision of music lessons in schools.

(AQO 868/16-21)

Mr Weir: Music is a statutory part of the curriculum from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 3. Pupils wishing to continue studying music at Key Stage 4 may choose it as one of their exam subjects.

The Education Authority's Music Service also plays an important role in providing support for music in schools. Its key aim is to enable learners from all backgrounds to receive musical education of the highest quality. At present the EA is undertaking a major review of the Music Service in order to establish a single service for the whole region. Given that the Music Service is a non-statutory one, the EA will be required to consider how it might meet challenging savings targets. However, it is the EA's responsibility to prioritise its resources accordingly and schools also have an important role to play in ensuring young people have access to music education.

Finally, my Department provides £12k of funding annually to Music for Youth, a registered charity which gives large numbers of young people across the UK the opportunity to take part in, and attend, a series of music festivals. The funding provided by my Department ensures that young people in Northern Ireland have access to the high quality musical experiences on offer. In the past, this has included the opportunity to perform in the Royal Albert Hall, one of the world's greatest stages.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education, following the change from Education Boards to the Education Authority, for an update on the ongoing job evaluations.

(AQO 869/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Department of Education is not the employer of staff in the Education Authority (EA).

The EA has advised that there were 39 job evaluations completed in the year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, of which 27 originated in schools and 12 within the EA.

Since 1 April 2016 a further 21 evaluations have taken place of which 16 originated in schools and 5 within the EA.

Within the EA there are currently a further 14 posts under consideration and the EA is in the process of drafting the documentation for the evaluation.

The EA has advised that the organisation is not experiencing any delays in carrying out the evaluations at present.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Education for an update on the dispute over teachers' pay.

(AQO 870/16-21)

Mr Weir: A number of teaching unions have been engaged in ongoing industrial actions for a range of issues, which include teachers' pay.

In recent weeks, industrial action has escalated following the rejection of a pay offer, made by Management Side (MS) of the Teachers' Negotiating Committee through which teachers' terms and conditions, including pay are negotiated. MS proposed a 1% pay increase for 2016/17 in line with NI Executive Pay Policy guidance, in addition to incremental progression which has already been paid for 2015/16 and 2016/17 pay deal totalling 2.61% over the two years.

The Management Side recommendation followed intense negotiations where earlier and better offers were made to the teaching unions, which they rejected and advised MS that the negotiations had formally ended; therefore, a pay remit business case was prepared on the basis of the 2.61% deal.

The 2.61% pay deal for 2015 and 2016 has received Department of Finance approval, and arrears will be paid to teachers in the coming weeks.

The negotiations for teachers pay in 2015 and 2016 are over. The teaching unions are urged to get around the table with the MS of the Teachers' Negotiating Committee in order to focus on the future.

Ms Bailey asked the Minister of Education to outline the guidance his Department has issued to schools and youth service providers to better enable them to support transgender and non-binary gender young people.

(AQO 871/16-21)

Mr Weir: Under the Department's I-Matter programme, a range of posters, leaflets and diary inserts have been produced for use by schools. These provide information and advice on a range of 20 subjects of concern to young people including 'Sexual Identity'.

The 'iMatter' Programme, as I'm sure you are aware, is the overarching vehicle for promoting pupils' emotional health and wellbeing and addresses how the entire school community should be engaged in promoting resilient emotional health for all pupils, what support systems are available for vulnerable pupils and what support is available to schools in the event of a crisis. The Programme aims to support a school in integrating its individual policies and support systems in a consistent and coherent way.

The leaflets and posters provide links and contact details to a range of organisations in Northern Ireland that offer specific advice and support to children and young people, their parents, schools and other education settings

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the Education and Training Inspectorate Chief Inspector's Report published on 16 November.

(AQO 872/16-21)

Mr Weir: I fully support the findings of the Chief Inspector's report 2014-2016 and the role of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in promoting improvement for all learners.

The report has many encouraging positive messages that should be celebrated. It acknowledges that the education and training system continues to improve and there are many exceptional leaders, teachers, trainers and lecturers that put the learners' needs and success above all else.

However, although it highlights much of the provision as having a high level of capacity or capacity to identify and bring about improvement, there are still too many pupils receiving an education that is not good enough.

Inspection is a powerful lever for raising standards and tackling underachievement to ensure pupils get the best possible education. It is critical to ensuring best practice is highlighted and shared, poorly performing schools are identified and support is directed to areas where it is needed.

It is important that we have the key messages highlighted in the Chief Inspector's biennial report.

Shortcomings in aspects of school provision, that impact on young people's life chances, which are identified through the inspection process, results in clear and effective action for improvement. Through the school improvement policy, robust

action is being taken to follow up on inspection outcomes and ensure schools receive the support they need to address areas for improvement and ensure best educational value for children and young people.

During 2014-16, the report period over 77% of organisations that had follow-up inspections improved by at least one performance level from their original inspection, and this can only be seen as a positive outcome for the young people involved.

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Education how his Department will respond to the Education and Training Inspectorate Chief Inspector's Report, in particular on building the capacity of school governors.

(AQO 873/16-21)

Mr Weir: Governors are a vital component in our education system. As the Chief Inspectors Report notes "most governors are passionate and loyal to the organisations they serve. Their dedication is commendable".

The Chief Inspector's report provides evidence of good practice right across our education sector but also highlights some areas that need to be addressed.

For example, the Report identifies a need for governing bodies to be better informed about how well their learners are doing.

I share the Chief Inspectors concerns that governing bodies that are insufficiently informed may, unknowingly, accept lower standards than might otherwise be the case.

To support Governors the Education Authority provides an extensive training and support programme for governors covering a wide range of issues including effective governance and school improvement. The latter addresses the specific issue of how governors monitor and evaluate their schools performance for maximum effect.

I would encourage all governors to take full advantage of the training opportunities available to them.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to outline the action he plans to take in relation to the findings in the Education and Training Inspectorate Chief Inspector's Report that the quality of the provision for science is less than good in 33 per cent of the post-primary schools inspected.

(AQO 874/16-21)

Mr Weir: Science education starts in primary school. The statutory curriculum for primary has been designed to provide flexibility for schools to develop experiences that suit the needs of their pupils. As part of revisions to the curriculum in 2007, the World Around Us area of learning was formed to combine the three contributory elements of geography, history, and science and technology. Since then, primary schools have been working on developing this area of learning to a greater or lesser degree, alongside many other competing priorities.

The Chief Inspector's Report acknowledges that the provision for learning in the World Around Us was good or better in 84% of lessons observed.

My Department is committed to playing its part to supporting the delivery of science at post-primary level and is undertaking a wide range of interventions to promote STEM, including programmes to encourage female participation in STEM subjects. My Department provides annual core funding of £300k to Sentinus, the Department's front line STEM delivery partner.

Sentinus' core programmes promote innovation and creativity in STEM. Since 2009, the Department's STEM Module has been deployed in schools, colleges and key educational and industrial venues on an average of 150 days per year prioritising visits to post-primary schools.

In addition since 2009/10, DE has provided funding in the region of £2m for teachers' STEM Continuing Professional Development (CPD), to improve the skills and knowledge of teachers in STEM subjects.

Within post-primary, Science and Technology is a compulsory element of the curriculum at KS3 and a qualification choice at KS4 and beyond.

Department of Finance

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance, pursuant to AQW 2377/16-21, to place in the Assembly library a copy of the agreed rates, terms and conditions applicable to ministerial driver arrangements.

(AQW 2644/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir (The Minister of Finance): It would not be appropriate to place a copy of the contract for ministerial driver services in the Assembly library as it contains third party information and specific procedural details. However, I am happy to summarise details of the agreed rates, terms and conditions below.

The Department of Finance is responsible for the provision and servicing of the ministerial car. Sinn Féin will provide approved drivers who hold a valid driving license entitling them to drive the ministerial car. These drivers shall use all reasonable care and consideration in providing driver services and shall carry out daily checks on the vehicle, reporting any defects to the Department. Drivers can only use the ministerial car for official purposes.

These driver arrangements will remain in place as long as I am in office, unless there is a material breach of any of the obligations which requires the agreement to be ended earlier. An individual driver shall not continue to provide driver services if they no longer hold a valid driving licence; have committed a serious breach of their obligations; or no longer appear to the Department to be a suitable person for the role.

In respect of the driver services detailed above, the Department is invoiced £2,807 per month by Sinn Féin. This figure covers all driving services and there is no additional charge for holiday cover or driver overtime.

It is worth noting that when overtime costs are added to the calculation, the use of Sinn Féin driver services by my Department is considerably cheaper than employing a ministerial driver directly.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance pursuant to AQW 5942/16-21, to publish, or place in the Assembly Library, a copy of his request to the Treasury; and whether the Department for Communities was provided with a copy.
(AQW 7457/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Correspondence between the Finance Minister and Chief Secretary to the Treasury is not routinely published and I do not consider there is a need to publish in this instance.

While the letter was not formally copied to the Communities Minister, my department worked in tandem with Department for Communities on the content of the letter.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Finance to detail each occasion (i) he; (ii) his predecessor; or (iii) any of his officials attended a meeting (a) with; or (b) at the request or facilitation of Brown Rudnick over the last three years, including the date and purpose of each meeting.

(AQW 7591/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: There are no such occasions.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Finance what discussions the Executive has had regarding the protection of future PEACE funding.

(AQW 7657/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: As Minister with responsibility for European PEACE funding, I have articulated to the EU and to my counterparts in Dublin and Westminster the necessity for full protection of the current round of PEACE funding.

The Executive will be fully engaged in any discussions on our future relationship with the EU, and I intend to strongly make the case for the importance of continued access to funds and programmes in support of peace and reconciliation. The detail on Executive discussions are of course confidential.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Finance to outline the process by which a business can apply for hardship relief on rates.
(AQW 7697/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: When a business owner contacts Land & Property Services (LPS) to apply for Hardship Relief, an application form together with comprehensive guidance notes are issued to them.

Information on the scheme is available on the NI Business Info website and the application form and guidance notes can be downloaded from there.

The application form asks for details about the business, the exceptional circumstances that exist, whether there has been a previous application and if so whether the circumstances have changed since the last application. The guidance note explains that financial information may be required if their application meets the criteria for exceptional circumstances.

When LPS receives the completed form, a full assessment of the ratepayer's application is made. This assessment will often require the provision of further evidence such as comparable accounts from the previous year(s) and bank statements. Any further evidence requested needs to be submitted within 30 days from the date of the request. If LPS does not receive the requested information within 30 days, the Hardship Relief application is rejected.

Following an assessment of all the evidence provided the applicant is advised in writing of the outcome of their application. Successful applicants will have their rate account adjusted accordingly.

If the applicant disagrees with the LPS decision they have a right to ask for a review of the case. The request for review must be lodged within one month of the date of outcome letter. A case will be reviewed by a more senior officer in LPS and the applicant will be informed of the outcome of the review in writing. If the applicant is still dissatisfied with the decision, they have a right to challenge it by way of Judicial Review.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance to publish the full sectoral audit conducted by his Department identifying possible impacts, risks, opportunities and contingencies which may arise from Brexit; and whether he has approved same.
(AQW 7699/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: This audit will be used to inform the Executive's input to the negotiations. It will be published as and when it is appropriate to do so.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Finance for his assessment on the impact of the most recent rates announcement for Upper Bann.

(AQW 7810/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: In my announcement to the Assembly on 22nd November I noted that the Rates Rethink package would be subject to consultation before policies were finalised.

The associated consultation paper will lay out further detail on the anticipated impacts but the aim of the package will be to ensure that rates system encourages regeneration, investment and entrepreneurship, while at the same time discourages dereliction and decline.

District Councils stand to gain up to £10M a year from the policy proposals I laid out at the Assembly. This will help them deliver better outcomes in terms of local services as well as their new role in place shaping, building communities and economic development.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Finance for an update on the establishment of the Independent Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland, including (i) membership; (ii) the dates of meetings; and (iii) terms of reference.

(AQW 7844/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Fiscal Council has not yet been established, however the Executive are currently considering a shortlist of possible candidates.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Finance whether the Independent Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland has prepared its annual report on the sustainability of the Executive's public finances, including the implications of spending policy and the effectiveness of long-term efficiency measures.

(AQW 7846/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Fiscal Council has not yet been established.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Finance whether the Independent Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland has prepared an assessment of the Executive's revenue streams and spending proposals; and how these allow the Executive to balance its budget.

(AQW 7847/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Fiscal Council has not yet been established.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Finance what discussions have been held with the British government regarding any proposals for a replacement system of regional funding.

(AQW 7886/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: My discussions with the British Treasury to date have been focussed on the EU referendum, the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and the Tory Government's austerity agenda. Further discussions relating to regional funding will be progressed in due course.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance how many domestic properties in each constituency are likely to be affected by removal of the £400,000 rates cap.

(AQW 7894/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I refer the Member to the table attached.

While figures are not available at a constituency level they have been provided by district council area.

Number of Properties with NAVs >£400K by District Council Area

	£400k - £500k	£500k - £600k	£600k - £700k	£700k - £800k	£800k - £900k	£900k - £1m	>=£1m	Total Properties
Antrim and Newtownabbey	88	35	12	6	0	1	0	142
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	165	58	26	5	5	3	8	270
Belfast	1097	725	326	179	120	53	128	2628

	£400k - £500k	£500k - £600k	£600k - £700k	£700k - £800k	£800k - £900k	£900k - £1m	>=£1m	Total Properties
Causeway Coast and Glens	129	61	18	9	5	3	3	228
Derry and Strabane	41	30	17	4	1	1	4	98
Fermanagh and Omagh	50	21	11	4	2	3	1	92
Lisburn and Castlereagh	462	167	53	35	22	8	6	753
Mid and East Antrim	64	28	9	4	6	1	2	114
Mid Ulster	80	29	15	3	4	5	6	142
Newry, Mourne and Down	204	90	40	13	11	6	11	375
Ards and North Down	840	426	239	105	69	49	120	1848
Total	3220	1670	766	367	245	133	289	6690

Mrs Long asked the Minister of Finance to outline the consideration given to the introduction of protections for those on fixed or low incomes, in light of proposals to remove the rates cap for properties valued at £400k and above.

(AQW 7954/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The low income rate relief scheme provides considerable protection in the case of, for example, an elderly pensioner living alone in the family home. That scheme can allow receipt of relief even in cases where the ratepayer has up to £50,000 in capital.

There is also the Lone Pensioner Allowance that provides an automatic 20% discount to ratepayers who are aged 70 or over and live alone. That scheme, which is not means tested, is also likely to support people in this position.

As advised during my statement to the Assembly on 22 November, I plan to lift the cap only in respect of the regional rate element, thus ensuring that the additional charge resulting from the revised policy is moderated to a considerable extent.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance how many domestic properties are valued (i) between £400,000 and £499,999; (ii) £500,000 and £599,000; (iii) £600,000 and £699,000; (iv) £700,000 and £799,999; (v) £800,000 and £899,999; (vi) £900,000 and £999,999; and (vii) at £1 million and above.

(AQW 7978/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I refer the Member to the table attached.

While figures are not available at a constituency level they have been provided by district council area.

Number of Properties with NAVs >£400K by District Council Area

	£400k - £500k	£500k - £600k	£600k - £700k	£700k - £800k	£800k - £900k	£900k - £1m	>=£1m	Total Properties
Antrim and Newtownabbey	88	35	12	6	0	1	0	142
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	165	58	26	5	5	3	8	270
Belfast	1097	725	326	179	120	53	128	2628
Causeway Coast and Glens	129	61	18	9	5	3	3	228
Derry and Strabane	41	30	17	4	1	1	4	98
Fermanagh and Omagh	50	21	11	4	2	3	1	92
Lisburn and Castlereagh	462	167	53	35	22	8	6	753
Mid and East Antrim	64	28	9	4	6	1	2	114
Mid Ulster	80	29	15	3	4	5	6	142

	£400k - £500k	£500k - £600k	£600k - £700k	£700k - £800k	£800k - £900k	£900k - £1m	>=£1m	Total Properties
Newry, Mourne and Down	204	90	40	13	11	6	11	375
Ards and North Down	840	426	239	105	69	49	120	1848
Total	3220	1670	766	367	245	133	289	6690

Mr Stalford asked the Minister of Finance in light of his announcement of special economic status for the Falls and Newtownards Roads, whether he will designate Sandy Row and the Donegal Road area in a similar fashion.

(AQW 7985/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: It is my intention to run these two pilots and if successful roll this out to other disadvantaged areas. I will be consulting on this basis very soon.

The Sandy Row and Donegal Road areas have not fully shared in this peace dividend and could be considered for the wider roll out.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister of Finance whether the entire £250 million announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for infrastructure investment will be transferred to the Department for Infrastructure for spending.

(AQW 8013/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Allocations to the Executive under the Barnett Formulae are unhypothecated meaning the Executive is not required to use funding for a specific purpose.

It is for the Executive to decide through the local Budget process how additional funding received in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement will be spent.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Finance whether he intends to legislate on regulations concerning private property management companies.

(AQW 8188/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Northern Ireland Law Commission has considered property management in relation to apartments and has recommended the regulation of managing agents, rather than additional regulation for private property management companies. Such companies are already subject to regulation under general company law and the issue of additional regulation would not be a matter for my Department, as company law does not fall within its remit.

Department of Health

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister of Health whether she intends to implement a commitment of 11 per cent of the Health and Social Care budget to General Practitioner services.

(AQW 2868/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Health): In 'Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together' I have set out the actions I will take to transform health and social care services in the North, including general practice. I am committed to investing in a future model of primary care based on multidisciplinary teams embedded around general practice, aimed at building capacity and capability within these teams to keep people well and support self-management and independence. By March 2017, every GP practice will have a named district nurse, health visitor and social worker to work with and I will continue to invest in the rollout of the practice-based pharmacists scheme across the North.

I will also invest to increase the number of GP training places over the next two years to 111. Building on the rise in training numbers agreed earlier this year, this represents an increase of more than 70% in GP training places within a three year period. I have also committed to further investment in technology to help free up GP time, through the continued rollout of the AskMyGP online and telephone triage system.

In addition, I will redirect funding for undergraduate training so that undergraduate medical students get more experience of general practice, helping to better prepare doctors for a role in primary care. I will also bring forward a consultation on the role of GP Federations here and whether they should become health service bodies.

These investments will build on the already significant investment in general practice over recent years and reflect some of the recommendations of the GP-led Care Working Group. While that report did not set a specific target for levels of investment in general practice, it made a number of recommendations aimed at addressing the pressures facing the service. I will provide a full response to the working group's recommendations before the end of the year.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health what measures she is taking to improve the Out-of-Hours service in Craigavon. (AQW 2983/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware that the Southern Health and Social Care Trust has been facing significant challenges in the provision of out of hours service.

The Southern Trust provides GP out of hours service from five bases—Armagh, Craigavon, Dungannon, Newry and Kilkeel. This configuration is intended to ensure that the vast majority of residents in the Southern Trust area have access to an out of hours base should a face to face appointment be required.

A number of actions have been taken within the Southern Trust to support the out of hours service. These include the introduction of nurse practitioners and clinical pharmacists to support GPs in managing the service; ongoing recruitment campaigns for GPs; the provision of additional funding to boost capacity at busy times and supporting flexibility in shift hours and bases to work from. The Trust has also established a link with Dalriada Urgent Care which provides call triage support.

The out of hours service in the Southern area has also recently been subject to a review. An action plan has subsequently been developed and the Trust is working with the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) to address the issues highlighted, recommendations made and to implement actions to support the out of hours services across the Trust area.

The Trust hosted a GP engagement event in May 2016 to provide local GPs with the opportunity to discuss issues about the service with the Trust, the HSCB and the Southern area Local Medical Council.

My Department and the HSCB have been working with out of hours providers across the North to address the challenges facing the service. In 2015/16 an additional £3.1m was made available to help build capacity in GP out of hours services with a further £1.1m made available to help out of hours providers meet increased demand for services over the winter months and the Easter 2016 period.

The report of the Departmental-led working group set up to review the pressures facing GP-led services also incorporated recommendations from a review of GP out of hours services. I am carefully considering the findings of the review group and am committed to ensuring that everyone here has access to high quality, sustainable GP services both in hours and out of hours.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health to outline the reasons for the 22 month waiting list in Belfast for autism assessments for children.

(AQW 2985/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Demand for autism assessments over the last few years has substantially outstripped capacity to provide diagnostic services. In 2015/16, there was a 17% increase overall in demand for autism assessment. The number of referrals – 3000 in total – was double the number the current system was designed to deal with.

The Belfast Trust has had a much higher level of referral than the other HSC Trusts (e.g. 2,262 referrals over the last three years, compared to 1,316 in the South Eastern Trust during the same period). This differential in referral rates, accounts for longer waiting times in the Trust.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together. It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients. That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Middleton asked the Minister of Health when she will be in a position to outline the full extent of the underspend in learning disability services in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 2986/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Based on financial data provided by the Health and Social Care Board, the average capitation variance relating to the funding of adult community learning disability services in the Western Trust area has been quantified at around £7m per annum. While this variance does not necessarily indicate an under or over spend, in this case the Western Trust has accepted the need to increase its resourcing of this area by £8m. Plans to deliver investments totalling £3m of this have already been provided by the Trust and plans for the remaining £5m are now to be developed. As I have made clear to the Chief Executive of the Trust, I expect these plans to be developed in partnership with families and carers in the area which is why, in light of the recent breakdown in discussions between the families and the Trust, I have taken a number of actions that include putting arrangements in place for the appointment of an independent facilitator to support the co-production process. I have also appointed an official in my Department to oversee this process and to act as a contact point in the Department for the families. The Trust has also been asked to draw up a wider communications and engagement plan to ensure that openness and transparency underpins this urgent work and that the focus can rightly now return to the delivery of front line services.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health what action her Department is taking to increase public awareness of sepsis.

(AQW 3050/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Health and Social Care Board has identified sepsis as a priority for inclusion on the 'Illnesses and Conditions' section on the new HSC pages of NI Direct and is available by accessing the link below.

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/sepsis>

There are no plans at this time for a public awareness campaign. The Public Health Agency applies a number of criteria to assess proposals for campaigns and prioritises these within its budget. These include evidence of effectiveness; learning from elsewhere; degree of need; suitability for mass media communication; clarity of messaging for public; capacity of services to cope with increase in presentation, and complementarity with other interventions, such as new diagnostic/care pathways.

My Department recently endorsed NICE Clinical Guideline NG51 on sepsis and issued it on 9 September to the Health and Social Care bodies for implementation and distribution to family practitioners. The guideline covers the recognition, diagnosis and early management of sepsis, escalating care, identification of the source of infection, provision of support for patients and carers, and training and education.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Health how she intends to encourage greater co-operation between the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine and Altnagelvin Area Hospital, Derry; and to outline examples of collaboration and shared services.

(AQW 3100/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Northern HSC Trust and the Western HSC Trust have worked in partnership for many years and will continue to work collaboratively to provide safe, sustainable and quality services. Formal clinical networks help to secure shared access to specialist services and expertise, improved outcomes for patients and a more efficient use of resources. Clinical networks between the Trusts have been established in respect of urology, trauma & orthopaedics, cardiology, ophthalmology and oral surgery.

Through Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together, I will work with the wider HSC system to design the new partnership approaches to the planning and management of HSC services, which moves away from competition towards collaboration, integration and improvement. Instead of focusing on buildings and hospitals, the new model of person-centred care will be designed for and with people and communities rather than by organisations and services. The way we design and deliver services will be focused on providing continuity of care in an organised way and will involve increasingly working across traditional organisational boundaries.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health (i) how many nursing posts exist at HMP Maghaberry; (ii) how many are occupied; and (iii) how many are filled by agency staff.

(AQW 3596/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) The 2016/17 funded staffing position for nursing posts, across both Primary Care, Mental Health and Addictions in HMP Maghaberry, is 44.70 whole time equivalent (WTE).
- (ii) & (iii) In October 2016, 31.1 WTE nursing staff were in post across both Primary Care, Mental Health and Addictions in HMP Maghaberry. This was supplemented by 12.0 WTE overtime, agency nursing and corporate bank staff.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health to detail the average waiting time for hip replacement operations in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 4518/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the average waiting time for hip replacement operations (including revisions) at 30th September 2016, the most recent quarter for which official statistics are available, is shown in the table below.

HSC Trust	Average Number of Weeks Waiting
Belfast	29.8
South Eastern	3.8
Southern	27.1
Western	44.5

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

Hip replacement surgery is not carried out within the Northern HSC Trust and only revision surgery is carried out within South Eastern HSC Trust.

Hip replacement procedures were identified using the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys tabular list of operations and procedures (OPCS – 4.7) codes W37, W38, W39, W46, W47, W48, W93, W94 and W95.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an

increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of patients on waiting lists for hip replacements in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 4519/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of patients waiting for hip replacement operations (including revisions) at 30th September 2016, the most recent quarter for which official statistics are available, is shown in the table below.

HSC Trust	Total Waiting
Belfast	1,499
South Eastern	<5
Southern	272
Western	718

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

*In line with Branch policy, cell sizes have been masked to protect patient confidentiality.

Hip replacement surgery is not carried out within the Northern HSC Trust and only revision surgery is carried out within South Eastern HSC Trust.

Hip replacement procedures were identified using the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys tabular list of operations and procedures (OPCS – 4.7) codes W37, W38, W39, W46, W47, W48, W93, W94 and W95.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of how recommendations contained within the Bengoa report would affect the Daisy Hill Hospital and the Downe Hospital.

(AQW 4540/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My vision for health and social care, Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together takes significant account of the Expert Panel's report. It is clear that the configuration of services is not able to meet current and future demands. Delivering Together is an ambitious approach which will radically change the way we plan and deliver HSC services focussing on people rather than structures.

I have launched a public consultation on the proposed criteria to be used to reconfigure, change and improve our health service. As part of this process there will be a series of consultation meetings in December 2016 and January 2017 at various locations. This will be a real opportunity for people to put forward their views, as well as providing a forum to ask questions on the criteria and engage directly with the transformation team officials from my Department.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health what action her Department has taken to resolve the adult learning disability underspend in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 4846/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer the member to my response to AQO 747/16 -21.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health (i) for an update on the investigation of the underspend for services for adults with learning disabilities in the Western Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) whether she has appointed a lead official to deal with the

Trust; (iii) for details of the underspend from the initial findings in 1998 to date; and (iv) to list any meetings she has held with the Chief Executive of the Trust and senior directors about this issue.

(AQW 4904/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: As I have made clear in many public statements, my clear focus at this time is on finding a co-designed resolution to this issue and to working with families and the Trust to ensure that appropriate services are delivered on the ground for people with a learning disability and their carers in the Western Trust area.

This is reflected in the clear actions I have taken, which include the appointment of a senior official from my Department who will act as a contact point for families and also oversee progress on the work that now needs to be done to develop a new investment plan that has the backing of the families for the further investment of £5m planned by the Western Trust. As I have previously stated, this is in addition to the investment of

£3m in adult community learning disability services that the Western Trust has already put in place and follows confirmation, based on financial data provided by the Health and Social Care Board, that the average capitation variance relating to the funding of adult community learning disability in the Western Trust area over the past six years has been quantified at around £7m per annum.

It is important to note, however, that such variances do not necessarily mean that a programme of care is receiving too much or too little investment. This is because capitation based analysis is designed to support Trusts in considering the overall complexion of their funding allocations and to determine whether any re-balancing is necessary. In addition, in assessing any recurrent over/under funding position, it would not be appropriate to add together year on year indicative values. A meeting is currently being arranged between the families and the Health and Social Care Board to discuss the capitation formula and how it is used.

I discussed this issue with the Chief Executive of the Western Trust on 12th October following a meeting I had with the families during which I listened to their concerns and proposed that an independent facilitator should be appointed to work with the Trust and the families to restore trust and confidence following the recent breakdown in relationships. This work is being taken forward in the context of the wider communication and engagement plan I have also asked the Trust to develop.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the scale of each of the 2016/17 budgetary pressures faced by her Department and each of its arm's-length bodies.

(AQW 4926/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There are a significant number of front line service pressures, right across health and social care from the hospital sector, through community services to social care. The scale of budgetary pressures that my Department and each of its arm's length bodies is facing in 2016/17 is considerable, and these are being proactively managed in order to live within our resources. I will continue to engage with the Department of Finance to address the additional investment necessary to support the delivery of services.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of outpatients as of 1 October 2016 waiting (i) 18 and 26 weeks; (ii) 26 to 40 weeks; (iii) 40 to 52 weeks; (iv) 52 to 78 weeks; (v) 78 to 104 weeks; and (v) 104 weeks or more for their first appointment, broken down by hospital.

(AQW 4928/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Waiting times for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment is not available by hospital as it is collected and reported on the basis of Health and Social Care Trust, rather than hospital.

Information on the number of outpatients waiting for their first consultant-led appointment as at 30th September 2016, the most recent quarter for which official statistics are available, is provided by specialty and at HSC Trust level at the following link: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-waiting-times-september-2016>

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Health for an update on her recent meeting with Western Learning Disability Action Group and the South West Carers Forum on the learning disability underspend; and to detail the actions being taken by her Department to resolve the situation.

(AQW 5229/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I met with both the Western Learning Disability Action Group and the South West Carers Forum on 11th October, following which a number of actions were taken. Firstly, I spoke with the Chief Executive of the Western Trust to relay the concerns of the families and carers expressed to me at the meeting; and to make clear my expectation that progress is now made on the development of a new investment plan that has the backing of the families for the further investment of £5m planned by the Western Trust. This is in addition to the investment of £3m in adult community learning disability services that the Western Trust has already put in place.

As proposed at the meeting, I also subsequently wrote to WLDAG and SWCF on 4th November about the appointment of an independent facilitator to work with the Trust and the families to restore trust and confidence following the breakdown in relationships between them. This work will be taken forward in the context of the wider communication and engagement plan I have also asked the Trust to develop. In addition, a meeting is currently being arranged between the families and the Health and Social Care Board to discuss the capitation formula and how it is used.

Finally, I appointed a senior official from my Department to oversee progress and to act as a point of contact for the families.

These actions mark my commitment to finding a co-designed resolution to this issue, and to working with the families and the Trust, so that the focus can return to the delivery of much needed frontline services for people with a learning disability and their families in the Western Trust area.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health how much funding her Department and its arm's-length bodies have awarded to the community and voluntary sector for mental health service provision in each of the last five years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 5251/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Funding by my Department (DoH) and the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) to the community and voluntary sector for mental health service provision is provided on a regional basis and is not available broken down by Trust. Annual figures for the last five years are detailed below in Table 1.

Table 1

	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
DoH	£676,000	£676,000	£676,000	£676,000	£676,000
HSCB	£605,138	£668,479	£603,320	£961,881	£874,352

Funding provided by the Public Health Agency (PHA) to mental health organisations in each Trust area is shown below in Table 2. These figures incorporate suicide prevention funding and the Lifeline service and includes anticipated spend for 2016/17.

Table 2

	Belfast HSC Trust	Northern HSC Trust	Southern HSC Trust	South Eastern HSC Trust	Western HSC Trust	Regional*	Total
2012/13	£982,857	£639,229	£159,767	£374,245	£437,646	£3,432,281	£6,026,025
2013/14	£1,105,133	£957,614	£372,560	£462,396	£967,152	£4,907,427	£8,772,282
2014/15	£1,130,400	£543,163	£187,086	£348,082	£839,439	£3,597,330	£6,645,500
2015/16	£1,314,254	£739,416	£348,712	£445,802	£939,372	£2,750,624	£6,538,180
2016/17	£1,247,299	£789,108	£395,371	£517,602	£728,659	£2,868,683	£6,546,722

* The regional line represents funding for services that are provided across localities - this information cannot be broken down by locality. This includes the Lifeline service.

Revenue grant payments to voluntary organisations for mental health service provision by HSC Trusts are detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Trust	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
Belfast	2,084,490	2,318,342	2,542,128	2,549,875	2,838,185
South Eastern	1,826,343	1,826,343	1,821,705	1,826,042	1,873,020
Southern	306,119	353,117	331,780	291,247	286,325
Northern	1,220,282	1,227,092	1,243,734	1,313,106	1,626,128
Western	414,000	934,000	1,179,000	735,000	866,000

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the claim by the Southwest Carers Forum that the underspend in adult learning disability services in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area reached almost £33 million in a five year period.

(AQW 5445/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Based on financial data provided by the Health and Social Care Board, the average capitation variance relating to the funding of adult community learning disability in the Western Trust area over the past six years has been quantified at around £7m per annum.

However, it is important to note that such variances do not necessarily mean that a programme of care is receiving too much or too little investment. This is because capitation based analysis is designed to support Trusts in considering the overall

complexion of their funding allocations and to determine whether any re-balancing is necessary. In addition, in assessing any recurrent over/under funding position, it would not be appropriate to add together year on year indicative values.

This is a complex subject that is to be discussed at a meeting currently being arranged between the families and carers in the Western Trust and the Health and Social Care Board. I proposed this meeting when I met with the families in October, as well as a number of other actions focused on finding a co-designed resolution to this issue and the delivery of much needed front line services on the ground for people with a learning disability and their carers. These actions include the appointment of an independent facilitator to work with the Trust and the families to restore trust and confidence following the breakdown in relationships. It is intended that this person will also support the work that now needs to be done to develop a new investment plan for the further investment of £5m in adult community learning disability services planned by the Western Trust. This is in addition to the additional £3m investment in adult community learning disability services that the Western Trust has already put in place.

I have also appointed a senior official from my Department to oversee progress in relation to this issue and to act as a point of contact for the families.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health for an update on the capacity and GP cover at the Bannview Practice in Portadown Health Centre.

(AQW 5802/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware that Bannview Medical Practice in Portadown is currently under significant pressure. The Health and Social Care Board is working with the practice to secure locum cover and has advertised the contract to provide general medical services from the practice. The Board is continuing to work with all local practices to ensure that the provision of the full range of services resumes as soon as possible, and to develop a longer term solution to deliver sustainable GP services in the Portadown area. While this work is continuing, emergency appointments and a limited number of routine appointments will be available.

In recognition of the pressures facing GP-led services, I have committed to a number of actions aimed at building sustainable GP services across the North. I will increase the number of GP training places over the next two years to 111 and will redirect funding for undergraduate training so that undergraduate medical students get more experience of general practice. I will invest in a future model of primary care based on multidisciplinary teams embedded around general practice. By March 2017, GP practices will have a named district nurse, health visitor and social worker to work with and I will continue to invest in the rollout of the practice-based pharmacists scheme across the North. My intention is that these initiatives—together with planned investment in new technology such as phone and online triage systems—will help to ease GP workload pressures and attract more doctors into general practice.

Mr Lyons asked the Minister of Health following the introduction of the national living wage, to outline the estimated additional costs for the social care sector.

(AQW 5961/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Following the introduction of the living wage, the estimated additional costs for the social care sector are £25m for 2016/17.

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister of Health to detail the average waiting time for (i) hip; and (ii) knee operations in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 6103/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the average waiting time for (i) hip and (ii) knee replacement operations (including revisions) at 30th September 2016, the most recent quarter for which official statistics are available, is shown in the table below.

HSC Trust	Average Number of Weeks Waiting	
	Hip Replacement	Knee Replacement
Belfast	29.8	31.5
South Eastern	3.8	-
Southern	27.1	29.2
Western	44.5	48.8

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

Hip and knee replacement operations are not carried out within the Northern HSC Trust.

Hip replacement procedures were identified using the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys tabular list of operations and procedures (OPCS – 4.7) codes W37, W38, W39, W46, W47, W48, W93, W94 and W95. Knee replacement procedures were identified using codes W40, W41 and W42.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health to outline the maximum allowable waiting time for a patient on a priority waiting list, broken down by speciality; and how many patients have been on priority waiting lists for longer than the maximum waiting time.

(AQW 6109/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Waiting lists are managed by HSC Trusts according to clinical priority therefore there is no separate waiting time target for patients deemed as urgent.

Information on the number of urgent (i) first consultant led outpatient appointments and (ii) admission for inpatient and day case treatment, waiting over the maximum waiting time in each HSC Trust is shown in Tables 1 & 2.

Table 1: Number of patients waiting longer than 52 weeks for an urgent first consultant led outpatient appointment as at 24th October 2016

Specialty	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western ¹
Cardiology	21	-	<5	-	-
Dental Surgery	-	<5	-	-	-
Dermatology	-	-	5	-	-
Ear Nose Throat	6	5	32	-	-
Endocrinology	-	-	-	6	-
Gastroenterology	-	9	-	<5	--
General Medicine	-	-	467	-	10
General Surgery	-	<5	-	-	128
Gynaecology	-	-	<5	-	-
Mental Health	5	-	-	-	-
Neurology	21	107	427	-	-
Ophthalmology	197	-	7	-	-
Oral Surgery	-	-	-	<5	-
Paediatrics	-	-	<5	-	-
Paediatric Rheumatology	<5	-	-	-	-
Pain Management	7	<5	-	-	-
Plastic Surgery	-	-	<5	-	-
Rheumatology	97	<5	-	<5	<5
Thoracic Medicine	-	-	<5	-	-
Trauma and Orthopaedics	371	-	<5	-	9
Urology	9	-	56	-	-
Vascular Surgery	35	-	-	<5	-

Source: HSC Trusts

* Cell sizes have been masked to protect patient confidentiality.

Data has been provided for the 24th October or the closest date to that for which information is available.

1 General Medicine includes Diabetic, Endocrinology, Gastroenterology and Respiratory.

Table 2: Number of patients waiting longer than 52 weeks for inpatient or day case treatment as at 24th October 2016

Specialty	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western
Breast Services	10	-	-	-	-
Burns & Plastics	<5	-	-	-	-
Cardiology	<5	-	-	-	-
Dermatology	50	-	-	-	-
Ear Nose Throat	16	<5	-	-	16
Gastroenterology	9	-	-	-	-
General Medicine	<5	-	16	-	-
General Surgery	68	5	20	<5	52
Gynaecology	9	-	15	-	<5
Haematology	-	-	<5	-	-
Hepatology	7	-	-	-	-
Nephrology	<5	-	-	-	-
Neurology	38	-	-	-	-
Neurosurgery	<5	-	-	-	-
Ophthalmology	8	-	-	-	-
Paediatric Cardiology	<5	-	-	-	-
Paediatric Plastics & Burns	<5	-	-	-	-
Paediatric Surgery	<5	-	-	-	-
Paediatric Urology	<5	-	-	-	-
Plastic Surgery	-	-	45	-	-
Radiology	<5	-	-	-	-
Rheumatology	<5	-	-	-	-
Thoracic Medicine	<5	-	-	-	-
Thoracic Surgery	<5	-	-	-	-
Trauma and Orthopaedics	150	-	-	5	172
Urology	267	-	28	-	5
Vascular Surgery	20	-	-	111	-

Source: HSC Trusts

* Cell sizes have been masked to protect patient confidentiality.

Data has been provided for the 24th October or the closest date to that for which information is available.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health how her Department is addressing the increase in the number of people attempting suicide.

(AQW 6175/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: A range of self-harm and suicide prevention services are available across the north of Ireland. These include: Lifeline 24/7 helpline and associated support services; the Self Harm Intervention Service; bereavement support; mental health services; psychological therapies; public information campaigns; and training on suicide/mental health awareness.

Consultation on the new draft Protect Life 2 strategy closed on 4 November. The new strategy aims to improve the identification and response to suicidal behaviour, to prevent suicide by people in crisis, support recovery from suicidal behaviour and repeat self-harming, and to support those bereaved by suicide.

I will continue to work with my colleagues in the Ministerial Co-ordination Group on Suicide Prevention to meet the challenge of reducing suicide rates.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of anti-depressants prescribed per 100 patients in the Western Health and Social Care Trust; and to detail the strategies and action plans aimed at reducing this number.

(AQW 6245/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information is not available on the number of anti-depressants prescribed. However, in the Western Health and Social Care Trust and for the financial year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, approximately 21 prescription items for anti-depressants were dispensed for every 100 patients who were dispensed a prescription item.

Optimising the use of antidepressants is a key work stream in the Health and Social Care Board's (HSCB) Pharmaceutical Clinical Effectiveness Programme Action Plan. Activities include:-

- Encouraging the review of patients prescribed anti-depressants.
- Promoting non-pharmacological therapies, such as talking therapies, for mild to moderate depression.
- Monitoring primary prescribing of anti-depressants and specifically discussing prescribing of anti-depressants in high prescribing practices by phone, e-mail and at prescribing visits.
- Collaborative working with Trust clinicians to ensure appropriate prescribing and review of anti-depressants across primary and secondary care.
- Maintaining a regional Formulary which details the preferred prescribing choices for the management of depression and anxiety disorders with non-pharmacological management as the preferable first line option for most people with depression or anxiety disorders.
- Providing access to the Choice and Medication website which can be accessed by anyone in the North of Ireland (www.choiceandmedication.org/hscni). The website is a useful resource for service users and their carers and a valuable educational aid for all health and social care professionals.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health how patient preferences for their appointment confirmation messages are recorded and maintained across the Health Service, especially for patients affected by sight loss.

(AQW 6345/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: On receipt of a GP referral where there is an indication that the patient has a visual impairment then this is recorded on the Patient Administration System (PAS) under the Record Patient Need function. Subsequently, staff are alerted on the PAS screen during the appointments booking process that they should select a letter code which prints in larger font.

If the patient has total sight loss then this is recorded on PAS at the time of registration which alerts the appointments booking clerk of the need to contact the patient by telephone instead of an appointment notification letter.

Ms Bailey asked the Minister of Health when she will answer AQWs 4811/16-21, 4810/16-21, 4806/16-21, 4858/16-21, and 4857/16-2.

(AQW 6348/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I answered: AQW 4811/16-21 on the 22 November 2016; AQW 4810/16-21 on the 22 November 2016; AQW 4806/16-21 on the 24 November 2016; AQW 4858/16-21 on the 28 November 2016; and AQW 4857/16-21 on the 25 November 2016.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health (i) to detail the total number of (a) doctors; and (b) nurses that have qualified and graduated in each of the last five years; and (ii) what proportion are now working in Health and Social Care in (a) Northern Ireland; (b) Great Britain; (c) Republic of Ireland; (d) another European Member State; (e) outside of the European Union, broken down by country.

(AQW 6490/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) The number of (a) medical students; and (b) nurses who have graduated from our local universities in each of the last five years is set out in the tables below.

(a) Medical Students

2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
244	244	271	238	254

(b) Nurses

Institution	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Queen's University Belfast	395	424	402	380	372
Ulster University	204	216	218	220	221
Open University	74	26	13	9	16
Total	673	666	633	609	609

- (ii) The information requested is not available in the format requested. However, doctors completing the 2016 Career Destination Survey compiled by the NI Medical and Dental Training Agency at the end of Foundation Training indicated the following:

31	Service post in Britain & the north of Ireland
26	Service post outside Britain & the north of Ireland
110	Appointed to specialty training programme (likely to be mainly but not solely within HSC)
14	Continuing F2 training
13	Other Britain & the north of Ireland (locum)
3	Other outside Britain & the north of Ireland
18	Still seeking employment inside Britain & the north of Ireland (intending to locum)
10	Still seeking employment outside Britain & the north of Ireland(intending to travel)
16	Career break
3	Other academic post
1	Left medicine
245	

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of occasions when the GP out-of-hours base in Armagh City has had to close due to lack of GP cover in each of the last 18 months.

(AQW 6587/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The out-of-hours base in Armagh City is open each week night and during three slots each on Saturday and Sunday.

The Southern Health and Social Care Trust seeks to ensure that a safe and sustainable GP out of hours is available across all five bases in the Trust area. However, due to difficulties in securing sufficient numbers of GPs and other staff, there have been occasions when—in the interests of patient and staff safety—the Trust has had to consolidate resources in those bases where patient demand is greatest. Where this is the case, all patients calling out of hours services will continue to receive telephone advice and will be offered an appointment at an alternative base or a home visit as deemed clinically appropriate following initial telephone triage.

The table below sets out the number of occasions a scheduled out-of-hours service at the Armagh base was closed, during the last eighteen months.

Month	Out of Hours Service Closed
April 2015	18
May 2015	15

Month	Out of Hours Service Closed
June 2015	7
July 2015	11
August 2015	19
September 2015	13
October 2015	17
November 2015	14
December 2015	16
January 2016	16
February 2016	14
March 2016	11
April 2016	8
May 2016	12
June 2016	17
July 2016	11
August 2016	16
September 2016	7
Total	242

The Trust has taken a number of actions to support the out of hours service. These include the introduction of nurse practitioners and clinical pharmacists to support GPs in managing the service; ongoing recruitment campaigns for GPs; and the provision of additional funding to boost capacity at busy times. The Trust has also established a link with Dalriada Urgent Care which provides call triage support. In addition, following recent reviews of the Trust's out of hours service, an action plan has been developed and the Trust is working with the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) to implement this.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Health how much money has been invested in autism services for (i) young people; and (ii) adults in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6588/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested has been provided in the attached Annex.

Annex

		2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
BHSCT	Children	£643,671	£643,671	£643,671	£743,671	£1,162,611
	Adults	£97,963	£149,963	£149,963	£149,963	£149,963
Total		£741,634	£793,634	£793,634	£893,634	£1,312,574
NHSCT	Children	£440,977	£440,977	£440,977	£490,977	£978,337
	Adults	£148,880	£209,734	£209,734	£209,734	£209,734
Total		£650,711	£650,711	£700,711	£1,188,071	£589,857
SEHSCT	Children	£507,391	£507,391	£507,391	£507,391	£865,591
	Adults	£97,473	£142,455	£142,455	£142,455	£142,455
Total		£604,864	£649,846	£649,846	£649,846	£604,864
SHSCT	Children	£1,056,322	£1,056,322	£1,056,322	£1,056,322	£1,452,482
	Adults	£95,939	£144,939	£144,939	£198,939	£198,939
Total		£1,152,261	£1,201,261	£1,201,261	£1,255,261	£1,651,421
WHSCT	Children	£766,848	£766,848	£766,848	£766,848	£1,106,188
	Adults	£147,071	£189,914	£189,914	£189,914	£189,914

		2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Total		£913,919	£956,762	£956,762	£956,762	£1,296,102
Region		£4,002,535	£4,252,214	£4,252,214	£4,456,214	£6,456,214

Note:

It should be noted that these figures have been compiled from 2013 Trust audits of staff involved in Autism Services, and therefore represent indicative Trust baseline investment in frontline services.

Services for people with Autism may be provided by staff across a number of programmes of care and by a range of staff in a number of disciplines.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of shifts left unfilled at the GP out-of-hours service in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last 18 months.

(AQW 6589/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Southern Health and Social Care Trust seeks to ensure that a safe and sustainable GP out of hours is available across all five bases in the Trust area. However, due to difficulties in securing sufficient numbers of GPs and other staff, there have been occasions when—in the interests of patient and staff safety—the Trust has had to consolidate resources in those bases where patient demand is greatest. Where this is the case, all patients calling out of hours services will continue to receive telephone advice and will be offered an appointment at an alternative base or a home visit as deemed clinically appropriate following initial telephone triage.

The table below provides details of the number of GP out-of-hours shifts available, and the number vacant, within the Southern Health and Social Care Trust during the eighteen month period April 2015 to September 2016.

Month	Total OoH Shifts Available	No.of Vacant Shifts
April 2015	559	111
May 2015	605	122
June 2015	508	99
July 2015	527	113
August 2015	550	146
September 2015	498	91
October 2015	520	117
November 2015	513	124
December 2015	548	129
January 2015	645	209
February 2016	608	300
March 2016	622	209
April 2016	535	141
May 2016	561	147
June 2016	510	180
July 2016	601	186
August 2016	551	215
September 2016	490	140
Total	9951	2779

The Trust has taken a number of actions to support the out of hours service. These include the introduction of nurse practitioners and clinical pharmacists to support GPs in managing the service; ongoing recruitment campaigns for GPs; and the provision of additional funding to boost capacity at busy times. The Trust has also established a link with Dalriada Urgent

Care which provides call triage support. In addition, following recent reviews of the Trust's out of hours service, an action plan has been developed and the Trust is working with the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) to implement this.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 6489/16-21, what efforts are being taken to support patients to move to other nursing locations.

(AQW 6607/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Muckamore Hospital (in partnership with the Health and Social Care Trusts and the Health and Social Care Board) actively plans for the timely discharge of patients. Discharge; and person-centred care plans are based on the assessed needs of the individual patient, and are discussed at regular planned meetings, involving clinical multi-disciplinary and community teams; the patient and their carers.

When a potential provider has been identified and the patient/carer are in agreement with the proposed placement, staff from the former, work alongside hospital teams to enable the development of a therapeutic relationship, prior to the individual leaving hospital. This initial transition from the hospital to community placement is made on a trial resettlement basis, during which the patient remains under the care of their responsible hospital medical consultant. They may also continue to receive a period of outreach support from hospital staff.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health when she will answer AQW 5724/16-21.

(AQW 6632/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I answered AQW 5724/16-21 on the 25 November 2016.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister of Health how much her Department has spent on the production of departmental external reports, in each of the last five years, broken down by the spend on each report.

(AQW 6659/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Departmental external reports have been defined as those produced as a result of independent reviews commissioned by Ministers. During the period 2012 to 2016 the Department has spent up to, but probably less than, £120k on the Bengoa Report and £117k on the review undertaken by Sir Liam Donaldson and his subsequent report "The Right Time, The Right Place".

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the merits of working with the Minister for Health to develop an all-island strategy for the recruitment and retention of nurses.

(AQW 6681/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department already works collaboratively with nursing colleagues in the South on a range of issues, including consideration of the challenges associated with the recruitment and retention of nurses; often sharing ideas and good practice.

An excellent example of this successful joint working is the 'All Ireland Chief Nursing Officers' Conference. The third annual conference is due to take place on the 5 December 2016. This provides a platform to bring together nursing leaders from across Ireland with the aim of sharing practice and learning. It also provides a great opportunity for nurses and midwives to identify and explore further areas for collaborative working in their respective fields.

The title of this year's conference is 'Strengthening the Sustainability of the Nursing and Midwifery Workforce – Delivering Results'.

The Nursing and Midwifery professions are facing a global recruitment crisis and both countries have resorted to recruitment overseas. The conference aims to share learning and to consider areas where joint working could be maximised to help address common workforce issues on an all island basis.

I am committed to identifying and maximising opportunities to expand such a collaborative approach and to develop even closer joint working. We will continue to explore opportunities to plan and deliver healthcare services on an all-island basis, where clinically appropriate to do so.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 4921/16-21, to detail the overall expenditure on all day support services provision (i) at Northern Ireland level; (ii) at Health and Social Care Trust Level; and (iii) provided to the community and voluntary sector.

(AQW 6691/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested in this question and AQW 4921/16-21 is not readily available and can only be obtained at a disproportionate cost. I have, however, provided a table in the attached Annex which details the total expenditure at Trust level in the Learning Disability programme of care. Expenditure on day support services is mainly recorded under Grants, Goods and Services Total and Day Care facilities Total in Personal Social Services. Systems are being rectified to enable Day Opportunities expenditure to be recorded separately in future Trust Financial Returns.

Annex

Summary Expenditure by Trust on Learning Disability Programme of Care 2014/15 (Source: Trust Financial Returns)

Year Ending 31st March 2015

Programme of Care (POC) Learning Disability

	Belfast HSC Trust	Northern HSC Trust	South Eastern HSC Trust	Southern HSC Trust	Western HSC Trust	TOTAL
	Expenditure	Expenditure	Expenditure	Expenditure	Expenditure	Expenditure
Hospital						
Total Inpatient	£24,945,068			£2,235,452	£2,850,611	£30,031,131
Outpatient	£669,471	£6,783		£180,481	£34,045	£890,780
Daycare	£2,158,094				£175,714	£2,333,808
Hospital Total	£27,772,633	£6,783		£2,415,932	£3,060,370	£33,255,718
Community						
AHPS Expenditure Total	£3,184,403	£2,203,364	£844,946	£2,261,400	£580,475	£9,074,588
Community medical/dental expenditure Total	£1,255,407	£1,776,955	£1,230,199	£1,907,958	£1,177,734	£7,348,254
Grants, Goods and Services Total	£1,355,011	£289,934	£2,415,488	£688,817	£102,987	£4,852,237
Incontinence products	£27,521	£97,264	£127,627	£171,546	£2,853	£426,811
Nursing costs Total	£1,036,868	£1,107,947	£1,221,931	£1,185,447	£1,349,980	£5,902,173
Step up / step down facilities					£73,393	£73,393
Community Total	£6,859,209	£5,475,464	£5,840,192	£6,215,168	£3,287,422	£27,677,455
Personal Social Services						
Daycare facilities Total	£12,053,918	£11,525,340	£8,204,082	£9,661,903	£9,777,958	£51,223,200
Grants, Goods and Services Total	£2,394,069	£1,473,105	£292,285	£769,958	£298,230	£5,227,647
Domiciliary care Total	£2,512,470	£3,270,293	£10,482,371	£4,126,718	£2,918,081	£23,309,932
Supported and other accommodation Total	£9,389,619	£8,871,071	£2,247,532	£9,834,380	£3,591,837	£33,934,439
Meals delivered to clients' homes		£23,625	£3,058	£8,933		£35,616
Nursing Homes Total	£7,942,702	£9,033,325	£4,376,296	£8,039,865	£6,232,666	£35,624,853
Residential Homes - Adult Total	£8,231,083	£5,867,904	£11,588,049	£5,490,296	£8,865,523	£40,042,855
Residential Homes - Children Total	£3,070,503	£2,319,955	£1,835,204	£2,056,741	£1,590,740	£10,873,143
Social work	£2,843,236	£3,645,120	£2,371,836	£3,928,987	£2,078,135	£14,867,314
Personal Social Services Total	£48,437,600	£46,029,737	£41,400,712	£43,917,782	£35,353,170	£215,139,000
Grand Total	£83,069,442	£51,511,984	£47,240,903	£52,548,883	£41,700,962	£276,072,174

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 6489/16-21, for her assessment of these costs compared with the basic tariff for nursing homes.

(AQW 6707/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Patients in Muckamore Abbey Hospital in long-stay wards are people with more complex assessed needs and therefore it would not be appropriate to compare the cost per day of the care they receive with the current weekly basic regional tariff for nursing homes. A direct comparison would also not be appropriate in respect of patients in Muckamore Abbey Hospital in short-stay wards. These patients have been admitted for assessment and treatment and therefore the cost of their care per day in Muckamore will reflect the associated additional hospital medical and nursing treatment they receive that would not be present in a nursing home.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the longest patient wait before handover to each Emergency Department, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 6711/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the time taken to handover a patient at emergency care departments is not available.

However, information is available on ambulance turnaround times at hospitals with emergency care departments, which refers to the time between an ambulance arriving at the emergency care department and it 'clearing' the location. The crew will remain with the patient until they have been handed over to the relevant clinical personnel within the HSC Hospital environment. The ambulance turnaround time will include other aspects such as the time to clean and replenish the ambulance for the next call.

The longest ambulance turnaround time at each acute hospital with an emergency care department, during each of the last three years, is detailed in the table below.

Hospital ^{1,2}	Turnaround Times (HH:MM:SS)		
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Royal Victoria	03:08:51	02:59:28	02:40:48
RBHSC	03:08:00	02:27:15	01:58:27
Mater	01:53:00	02:08:05	02:35:39
Antrim Area	01:38:13	03:27:00	02:19:00
Causeway	02:03:23	03:25:47	02:26:00
Ulster	02:48:20	03:29:00	06:40:34
Lagan Valley	01:30:52	02:07:49	02:18:27
Downe	01:29:33	01:41:00	03:40:28
Craigavon Area	04:36:08	03:26:29	04:04:27
Daisy Hill	03:14:56	02:51:13	03:13:51
South West Acute	02:02:38	02:56:18	03:30:32
Altnagelvin Area	02:46:48	02:42:30	03:43:07

Source: Ambulance Service (NIAS)

- 1 Refers to ambulance journeys resulting from emergency/urgent calls.
- 2 Excludes routine journeys and cases where the crew and/or vehicle required forensic examination by the PSNI.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health when she will answer AQW 4141/16-21.

(AQW 6760/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I answered AQW 4141/16-21 on the 24 November 2016.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health when she will answer AQW 5102/16-21.

(AQW 6761/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I answered AQW 5102/16-21 on the 24 November 2016.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health when she will answer AQW 5077/16-21.
(AQW 6778/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I answered AQW 5077/16-21 on the 24 November 2016.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health when she will answer AQW 5426/16-21.
(AQW 6779/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I answered AQW 5426/11-16 on the 7 November 2016.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health when she will answer AQW 5483/16-21.
(AQW 6780/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I answered AQW 5483/16-21 on the 22 November 2016.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health for a timeframe for a new capital build for Lisnaskea Health Centre.
(AQW 6819/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The business case for a new Health and Care Centre within Lisnaskea is currently being developed by the Western Health and Social Care Trust and is expected to be submitted to my Department over the next few weeks for review and approval.

A final decision on the timing of this project will be taken as soon as possible after the Executive's capital budget allocation for Health for 2017-18 and the three following years is known.

Following approval it would take approximately 30 to 36 months to complete the project.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health whether her Department will close inpatient services at the South Tyrone Hospital with a view of increasing provision at Craigavon Area Hospital.
(AQW 6820/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer the member to the recent answer provided to AQW 5728/16-21.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister of Health when she will answer AQW 4259/16-21; and to outline the reasons why it has not yet been answered.
(AQW 6839/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I answered AQW 4259/16-21 on the 25 November 2016.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to detail the (i) number; and (ii) function of staff based at each Southern Health and Social Care Trust facility; and how many staff have been relocated between sites in each of the last three years.
(AQW 6854/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of staff based at each Southern HSC Trust facility at March in each of the last 3 years and at September 2016 is detailed in the table below.

Location / Personnel Area	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Sep-16
Craigavon Hospital Site				
Admin & Clerical	642	662	704	695
Estates	55	58	60	57
Support Services	408	400	376	373
Nursing & Midwifery	1,547	1,666	1,699	1,710
Social Services	17	20	27	25
Professional & Technical	531	540	572	580
Medical & Dental	355	385	388	391
Craigavon Hospital Site Total	3,555	3,731	3,826	3,831

Location / Personnel Area	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Sep-16
Daisy Hill Hospital Site				
Admin & Clerical	226	227	240	231
Estates	18	21	23	24
Support Services	135	131	120	123
Nursing & Midwifery	634	665	711	728
Social Services	27	28	26	24
Professional & Technical	189	201	193	187
Medical & Dental	133	142	147	144
Daisy Hill Hospital Site Total	1,362	1,415	1,460	1,461
South Tyrone Hospital Site				
Admin & Clerical	78	77	76	74
Estates	3	3	3	3
Support Services	60	55	54	54
Nursing & Midwifery	224	225	229	234
Social Services	57	65	65	69
Professional & Technical	95	95	94	90
Medical & Dental	9	9	8	9
South Tyrone Hospital Site Total	526	529	529	533
St Luke's Hospital Site				
Admin & Clerical	232	210	202	218
Estates	18	16	17	15
Support Services	56	30	26	27
Nursing & Midwifery	228	191	207	198
Social Services	106	105	133	150
Professional & Technical	110	110	113	121
Medical & Dental	19	18	18	19
St Luke's Hospital Site Total	769	680	716	748
Lurgan Hospital Site				
Admin & Clerical	124	120	119	120
Estates	1	1	1	1
Support Services	36	36	32	33
Nursing & Midwifery	134	178	187	195
Social Services	125	124	167	168
Professional & Technical	94	119	123	117
Medical & Dental	8	9	9	10
Lurgan Hospital Site Total	522	587	638	644

Other Locations

Aldergrove House

Admin & Clerical	2	0	0	0
Nursing & Midwifery	6	4	4	4
Social Services	3	3	5	5
Aldergrove House Total	11	7	9	9
Appleby Social Education Centre				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Support Services	1	1	4	4
Nursing & Midwifery	6	4	4	4
Social Services	16	22	22	21
Appleby Social Education Ctr Total	24	28	31	30
ARC Project - Divernagh				
Social Services	7	17	15	16
ARC Project - Divernagh Total	7	17	15	16
Ardaveen Manor				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Support Services	1	0	0	0
Nursing & Midwifery	7	7	8	9
Social Services	24	23	24	23
Ardaveen Manor Total	33	31	33	33
ARKE Surestart				
Admin & Clerical	1	2	2	2
Nursing & Midwifery	2	2	2	2
Social Services	4	3	4	4
Professional & Technical	1	2	2	2
ARKE Surestart Total	8	9	10	10
Armagh Adolescent Partnership				
Social Services	4	5	5	6
Armagh Adolescent P'ship Total	4	5	5	6
Armagh Health Centre				
Admin & Clerical	0	0	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	12	24	30	31
Armagh Health Centre Total	12	24	31	32
Aughnacloy Day Centre				
Support Services	1	1	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	1	1	0	0
Social Services	1	1	2	2
Aughnacloy Day Centre Total	3	3	3	3
Ballybot House				

Social Services	2	1	0	0
Ballybot House Total	2	1	0	0
Ballysaggart Business Park Unit 1				
Admin & Clerical	4	3	3	3
Nursing & Midwifery	1	1	1	1
Ballysaggart Business Park U1 Total	5	4	4	4
Banbridge HSS Centre				
Admin & Clerical	19	20	30	32
Support Services	14	13	4	4
Nursing & Midwifery	49	47	48	48
Social Services	79	80	145	159
Professional & Technical	24	23	22	21
Medical & Dental	1	1	1	1
Banbridge HSS Centre Total	186	184	250	265
Banbridge Polyclinic				
Admin & Clerical	4	4	4	4
Support Services	1	1	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	3	3	3	3
Professional & Technical	3	3	3	3
Banbridge Polyclinic Total	11	11	11	11
Banbridge Social Education Centre				
Support Services	2	2	1	0
Social Services	9	7	9	0
Banbridge Social Educ. Centre Total	11	9	10	0
Banbridge Surestart				
Nursing & Midwifery	0	1	1	1
Professional & Technical	0	0	0	1
Banbridge Surestart Total	0	1	1	2
Bannvale-Social Education Centre				
Admin & Clerical	0	1	1	1
Support Services	5	3	3	4
Nursing & Midwifery	0	1	1	1
Social Services	36	41	43	40
Bannvale-Social Educ. Centre Total	41	46	48	46
Belfast HSC Trust ¹				
Support Services	1	2	2	2
Social Services	1	0	0	0
Belfast HSC Trust Total	2	2	2	2

Bessbrook Clinic				
Admin & Clerical	2	2	3	2
Support Services	2	1	0	0
Nursing & Midwifery	13	11	11	13
Social Services	1	1	1	1
Bessbrook Clinic Total	18	15	15	16
Binnian Resource Centre				
Support Services	1	1	1	1
Social Services	1	1	1	1
Binnian Resource Centre Total	2	2	2	2
Blossom Surestart				
Admin & Clerical	3	4	3	3
Nursing & Midwifery	4	3	3	3
Social Services	3	4	4	5
Professional & Technical	5	3	3	3
Blossom Surestart Total	15	14	13	14
Bocombra - Bocombra Lodge				
Admin & Clerical	12	11	10	11
Support Services	2	2	2	2
Nursing & Midwifery	9	12	8	7
Social Services	25	26	29	29
Professional & Technical	6	4	7	5
Medical & Dental	6	4	5	5
Bocombra - Bocombra Lodge Total	60	59	61	59
Bocombra - Childrens Home				
Admin & Clerical	2	1	1	1
Support Services	3	3	3	3
Nursing & Midwifery	1	1	1	2
Social Services	17	17	16	16
Bocombra - Childrens Home Total	23	22	21	22
Bowens Close				
Nursing & Midwifery	1	1	2	2
Social Services	13	16	17	16
Bowens Close Total	14	17	19	18
Brownlow HSS Centre				
Admin & Clerical	13	11	12	11
Support Services	4	4	4	4
Nursing & Midwifery	31	30	34	38

Social Services	35	32	35	35
Professional & Technical	8	5	4	5
Medical & Dental	2	1	1	1
Brownlow HSS Centre Total	93	83	90	94
Canal House				
Admin & Clerical	1	2	2	2
Nursing & Midwifery	1	1	1	1
Social Services	9	11	11	9
Canal House Total	11	14	14	12
Carn Industrial Estate Carn Orchard Park				
Admin & Clerical	13	1	2	2
Nursing & Midwifery	60	13	8	7
Professional & Technical	23	4	3	3
Medical & Dental	3	0	0	0
Carn Ind. Est. Carn Orch. Pk Total	99	18	13	12
Carrickore - Childrens Home				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	2	2
Support Services	1	3	3	3
Nursing & Midwifery	8	8	7	9
Social Services	2	14	15	16
Carrickore - Childrens Home Total	12	26	27	30
Carrickore - Drumcashel House				
Admin & Clerical	0	0	1	2
Nursing & Midwifery	0	0	2	3
Social Services	0	0	9	11
Professional & Technical	0	0	1	2
Carrickore-Drumcashel House Total	0	0	13	18
Carrickore - Drumcashel Lodge				
Admin & Clerical	2	1	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	5	7	2	1
Social Services	11	10	7	5
Professional & Technical	4	4	3	3
Carrickore-Drumcashel Lodge Total	22	22	13	10
Carrickore - Manse View				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	3	3
Social Services	7	8	8	7
Professional & Technical	5	3	5	8
Carrickore - Manse View Total	13	12	16	18

Carrickore - Newry Social Education Centre				
Admin & Clerical	1	0	0	0
Support Services	1	0	0	0
Nursing & Midwifery	1	0	0	0
Social Services	12	1	1	1
Carrickore-Newry SEC Total	15	1	1	1
Carrickore - Windsor Day Care Centre				
Admin & Clerical	0	1	1	1
Support Services	0	2	2	2
Nursing & Midwifery	0	1	1	1
Social Services	2	18	24	21
Carrickore-Windsor Day Care Total	2	22	28	25
Ceara School				
Professional & Technical	2	2	2	2
Ceara School Total	2	2	2	2
Cedar Grove Centre				
Admin & Clerical	1	0	1	1
Support Services	2	2	2	2
Social Services	13	13	13	12
Cedar Grove Centre Total	16	15	16	15
Cherrygrove Childrens Home				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Support Services	1	1	1	1
Social Services	12	13	13	14
Cherrygrove Childrens Home Total	14	15	15	16
Clanrye Surgery				
Nursing & Midwifery	1	1	1	1
Clanrye Surgery Total	1	1	1	1
Clogher Valley Health & Day Care Centre				
Admin & Clerical	2	2	2	1
Support Services	3	3	3	3
Nursing & Midwifery	11	10	9	9
Social Services	6	6	6	6
Professional & Technical	1	1	1	1
Clogher Valley Health & DC Total	23	22	21	20
Clogher Valley Surestart				
Nursing & Midwifery	3	4	3	3
Social Services	1	1	1	1

Professional & Technical	2	2	2	2
Clogher Valley Surestart Total	6	7	6	6
Cloughreagh-Archways Centre Portacabin				
Admin & Clerical	4	4	3	3
Nursing & Midwifery	8	7	8	9
Social Services	5	4	6	5
Professional & Technical	10	10	10	9
Cloughreagh-Archways Centre Total	27	25	27	26
Cloughreagh-Cloughreagh House				
Admin & Clerical	15	16	18	17
Support Services	8	8	8	5
Nursing & Midwifery	6	7	7	7
Social Services	18	19	23	24
Professional & Technical	1	1	0	0
Cloughreagh-Cloughreagh Hse Total	48	51	56	53
Coalisland Day Centre				
Nursing & Midwifery	1	1	0	0
Social Services	1	1	2	3
Coalisland Day Centre Total	2	2	2	3
Coalisland Health Centre				
Nursing & Midwifery	7	6	5	5
Coalisland Health Centre Total	7	6	5	5
Copperfields				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	0
Support Services	1	0	2	0
Nursing & Midwifery	0	1	0	0
Social Services	5	6	4	0
Copperfields Total	7	8	7	0
Crossmaglen Community Centre				
Support Services	1	1	1	1
Crossmaglen Community Ctr Total	1	1	1	1
Crossmaglen Day Centre				
Support Services	1	1	1	0
Nursing & Midwifery	1	1	1	1
Social Services	2	2	2	2
Crossmaglen Day Centre Total	4	4	4	3
Crossmaglen Health Centre				
Admin & Clerical	0	0	0	1

Support Services	2	1	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	9	9	10	10
Crossmaglen Health Centre Total	11	10	11	12
Crozier House/Lodge				
Admin & Clerical	0	1	1	1
Estates	1	1	1	0
Support Services	4	4	4	3
Social Services	29	28	27	28
Crozier House/Lodge Total	34	34	33	32
Dobbin Street Children& Young Person Centre				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Support Services	1	1	1	1
Professional & Technical	1	1	0	0
Dobbin Street Children& Young Person Ctr Total	3	3	2	2
Donard Day Centre				
Support Services	1	1	1	1
Social Services	2	2	2	2
Donard Day Centre Total	3	3	3	3
Dromore Health Clinic				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	3	10	11	10
Social Services	0	0	0	0
Professional & Technical	2	2	3	3
Dromore Health Clinic Total	6	13	15	14
Drumglass-Oakridge Social Education Centre				
Admin & Clerical	2	2	2	2
Support Services	0	2	2	2
Nursing & Midwifery	8	7	1	0
Social Services	18	19	25	28
Drumglass-Oakridge SEC Total	28	30	30	32
Dungannon Health Clinic				
Admin & Clerical	7	7	7	7
Support Services	1	1	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	9	10	14	10
Social Services	7	5	63	66
Professional & Technical	17	16	17	17
Medical & Dental	3	3	2	2
Dungannon Health Clinic Total	44	42	104	103

Eden Social Education Centre				
Support Services	2	2	2	0
Social Services	13	12	12	8
Eden Social Education Centre Total	15	14	14	8
Edenderry House				
Admin & Clerical	6	5	6	6
Support Services	1	2	2	1
Nursing & Midwifery	0	1	1	3
Social Services	16	12	12	12
Professional & Technical	1	2	2	4
Edenderry House Total	24	22	23	26
Edenderry House Cherrytrees Resource Centre				
Admin & Clerical	14	15	16	16
Support Services	2	2	2	2
Nursing & Midwifery	12	8	9	10
Social Services	20	21	26	30
Professional & Technical	12	10	10	9
Edenderry House Cherrytrees Resource Centre Total	60	56	63	67
Edenvilla Childrens Home				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Support Services	2	2	2	2
Social Services	12	11	12	11
Edenvilla Childrens Home Total	15	14	15	14
ENNIS				
Nursing & Midwifery	1	0	0	0
ENNIS Total	1	0	0	0
Gilford Health Centre				
Admin & Clerical	5	2	2	2
Support Services	1	1	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	13	8	9	9
Social Services	3	0	0	0
Professional & Technical	21	14	10	9
Gilford Health Centre Total	43	25	22	21
Glanree House				
Nursing & Midwifery	1	1	1	1
Social Services	21	20	20	21
Glanree House Total	22	21	21	22

Granville				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Support Services	4	2	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	16	14	10	12
Social Services	49	49	52	52
Granville Total	70	66	64	66
John Mitchell Place				
Admin & Clerical	33	34	28	29
Support Services	2	2	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	67	63	58	62
Social Services	22	19	24	25
Professional & Technical	20	21	24	25
Medical & Dental	10	9	9	10
John Mitchell Place Total	154	148	144	152
Keady Day Centre & Health Clinic				
Support Services	3	2	2	2
Nursing & Midwifery	15	9	14	13
Social Services	6	6	6	6
Keady Day Ctr & Health Clinic Total	24	17	22	21
Kilkeel Primary Care Centre				
Admin & Clerical	5	7	9	9
Support Services	8	7	4	4
Nursing & Midwifery	13	20	26	24
Social Services	0	7	8	8
Professional & Technical	5	7	4	4
Kilkeel Primary Care Centre Total	31	48	51	49
Legahory Centre				
Admin & Clerical	2	1	1	2
Social Services	14	14	16	17
Legahory Centre Total	16	15	17	19
Lennox House				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Professional & Technical	6	5	6	6
Lennox House Total	7	6	7	7
Lilburn Hall				
Social Services	9	12	11	13
Lilburn Hall Total	9	12	11	13
Linenbridge (Day Care) Centre				

Admin & Clerical	0	0	0	1
Support Services	0	0	9	12
Nursing & Midwifery	0	0	0	1
Social Services	0	0	0	16
Linenbridge (Day Care) Centre Total	0	0	9	30
Lisanally House				
Admin & Clerical	25	22	24	27
Support Services	2	4	2	2
Nursing & Midwifery	7	7	5	5
Social Services	75	72	86	98
Lisanally House Total	109	105	117	132
Lisanally Special School				
Professional & Technical	6	5	5	5
Lisanally Special School Total	6	5	5	5
Manor Centre				
Admin & Clerical	8	9	7	7
Support Services	7	8	7	7
Social Services	7	8	5	4
Professional & Technical	1	1	1	1
Manor Centre Total	23	26	20	19
Markethill Health Centre				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Support Services	1	1	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	6	5	7	7
Markethill Health Centre Total	8	7	9	9
Meadows Day Centre				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Support Services	3	2	3	3
Social Services	9	8	8	7
Meadows Day Centre Total	13	11	12	11
Millview Centre				
Admin & Clerical	1	0	1	1
Support Services	1	2	2	2
Social Services	11	9	7	7
Millview Centre Total	13	11	10	10
Moy Health Centre				
Nursing & Midwifery	9	9	8	10
Moy Health Centre Total	9	9	8	10

Moylinn House				
Admin & Clerical	9	9	12	12
Nursing & Midwifery	9	9	10	9
Social Services	29	31	31	29
Professional & Technical	7	7	6	4
Moylinn House Total	54	56	59	54
Needham House				
Admin & Clerical	4	4	3	4
Nursing & Midwifery	6	4	5	6
Social Services	3	6	8	7
Professional & Technical	2	2	1	1
Medical & Dental	2	2	2	2
Needham House Total	17	18	19	20
Newry Teachers Centre				
Social Services	1	1	1	1
Newry Teachers Centre Total	1	1	1	1
Newtownhamilton Health Centre				
Admin & Clerical	0	0	1	1
Support Services	1	1	1	
Nursing & Midwifery	10	11	10	10
Newtownhamilton Health Ctr Total	11	12	12	11
Novara House				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	7	7	9	7
Social Services	0	0	0	1
Novara House Total	8	8	10	9
Oaklands				
Support Services	2	1	2	1
Nursing & Midwifery	9	10	9	10
Social Services	9	8	7	8
Oaklands Total	20	19	18	19
Orana Surestart				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	1	1	1	1
Professional & Technical	2	2	1	2
Orana Surestart Total	4	4	3	4
Orchard House				
Support Services	2	0	0	0

Nursing & Midwifery	16	15	14	13
Social Services	1	3	3	4
Orchard House Total	19	18	17	17
Portadown HSS Centre				
Admin & Clerical	11	13	15	15
Support Services	6	5	6	6
Nursing & Midwifery	42	39	46	52
Social Services	17	25	20	19
Professional & Technical	24	30	34	34
Medical & Dental	3	8	9	10
Portadown HSS Centre Total	103	120	130	136
Rathfriland Health Centre				
Admin & Clerical	0	0	1	1
Support Services	1	1	1	
Nursing & Midwifery	14	17	17	17
Professional & Technical	2	2	2	2
Medical & Dental	1	1	1	
Rathfriland Health Centre Total	18	21	22	20
Rathore School				
Professional & Technical	5	6	5	5
Rathore School Total	5	6	5	5
Richhill Health Centre				
Support Services	1	1	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	0	2	2	2
Richhill Health Centre Total	1	3	3	3
Roxborough House				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Support Services	7	7	7	6
Nursing & Midwifery	0	0	0	1
Social Services	18	17	18	16
Roxborough House Total	26	25	26	24
Russell Drive Centre				
Admin & Clerical	6	9	10	13
Nursing & Midwifery	0	28	29	26
Social Services	3	6	6	4
Professional & Technical	4	3	3	2
Medical & Dental	0	1	1	1
Russell Drive Centre Total	13	47	49	46
Shanlieve House				

Admin & Clerical	0	0	1	1
Support Services	1	0	0	0
Social Services	13	13	13	14
Shanlieve House Total	14	13	14	15
Silverwood Centre				
Social Services	2	2	2	2
Silverwood Centre Total	2	2	2	2
Skeagh House				
Admin & Clerical	1	0	0	0
Support Services	1	1	1	1
Social Services	13	11	10	8
Skeagh House Total	15	12	11	9
Slieve Roe House				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Estates	1	1	1	1
Support Services	7	6	5	4
Social Services	16	14	15	13
Slieve Roe House Total	25	22	22	19
Southern HSC Trust ²				
Admin & Clerical	2	2	2	0
Nursing & Midwifery	1	1	2	7
Social Services	0	0	1	2
Medical & Dental	0	0	1	1
Southern HSC Trust Total	3	3	6	10
Southern ITEC				
Admin & Clerical	2	3	4	4
Professional & Technical	15	17	15	15
Southern ITEC Total	17	20	19	19
Sperrinview Special School				
Professional & Technical	3	3	3	3
Sperrinview Special School Total	3	3	3	3
St Mary Street Level 1				
Admin & Clerical	1	0	1	1
Social Services	10	10	10	12
Professional & Technical	1	0	0	0
St Mary Street Level 1 Total	12	10	11	13
Station Road Resource Centre				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1

Support Services	1	1	1	
Social Services	5	6	5	6
Station Road Resource Centre Total	7	8	7	7
Surestart South Armagh				
Nursing & Midwifery	5	5	5	4
Social Services	2	2	3	5
Professional & Technical	2	3	2	2
Surestart South Armagh Total	9	10	10	11
Tandragee Medical Centre				
Nursing & Midwifery	0	4	6	5
Tandragee Medical Centre Total	0	4	6	5
Teach Sona				
Social Services	14	11	12	12
Teach Sona Total	14	11	12	12
The Enterprise Centre				
Admin & Clerical	1	0	0	0
Social Services	1	3	1	1
The Enterprise Centre Total	2	3	1	1
The Mews				
Admin & Clerical	1	0	0	0
Nursing & Midwifery	5	5	4	5
Social Services	3	3	3	3
Professional & Technical	1	1	1	1
The Mews Total	10	9	8	9
Tower Hill Hospital Site				
Admin & Clerical	34	30	30	27
Support Services	13	13	13	13
Nursing & Midwifery	33	23	25	24
Social Services	1	3	3	2
Professional & Technical	39	33	32	29
Medical & Dental	7	8	8	8
Tower Hill Hospital Site Total	127	110	111	103
Trasna House				
Admin & Clerical	6	8	7	7
Support Services	2	2	1	0
Nursing & Midwifery	43	49	48	46
Social Services	11	16	15	14
Professional & Technical	9	8	9	8

Medical & Dental	1	1	1	1
Trasna House Total	72	84	81	76
Vela House				
Nursing & Midwifery	7	8	7	8
Social Services	2	2	2	2
Vela House Total	9	10	9	10
Warrenpoint Health Centre				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	18	16	14	15
Professional & Technical	1	1	1	1
Warrenpoint Health Centre Total	20	18	16	17
Win Industrial Estate				
Admin & Clerical	1	1	2	2
Nursing & Midwifery	1	0	0	0
Social Services	1	1	1	1
Professional & Technical	2	2	2	2
Win Industrial Estate Total	5	4	5	5
Woodside Adolescent Centre				
Admin & Clerical	2	1	1	1
Support Services	2	2	2	2
Social Services	12	11	12	12
Woodside Adolescent Centre Total	16	14	15	15
Bannvale Site				
Admin & Clerical	67	77	77	76
Support Services	1	2	2	2
Nursing & Midwifery	13	7	9	8
Social Services	5	4	2	2
Bannvale Site Total	86	90	90	88
INCH				
Support Services	1	1	1	1
Nursing & Midwifery	20	21	21	24
INCH Total	21	22	22	25
Drumglass Site				
Admin & Clerical	7	5	5	5
Social Services	26	25	30	28
Drumglass Site Total	33	30	35	33
Dromalane Site				

Admin & Clerical	44	48	46	49
Estates	1	1	1	1
Support Services	4	5	6	3
Nursing & Midwifery	29	23	22	23
Social Services	124	123	207	221
Professional & Technical	6	3	8	7
Dromalane Site Total	208	203	290	304
Total	9,482	9,656	10,183	10,277

Staff on Employment Breaks and staff seconded out of the Trust are excluded.

1 Refers to Southern HSC Trust staff who work in Belfast HSC Trust locations.

2 Refers to staff who work across the Southern HSC Trust.

Information on the number of staff who have been relocated between sites in each of the last 3 years cannot be provided.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister of Health how many people aged eighteen and over in each Health and Social Care Trust have epilepsy.

(AQW 6863/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Epilepsy was one of the disease registers in the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF), the purpose of which is to reward contractors for the provision of quality care. Further information on QOF may be found at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/about-quality-and-outcomes-framework-qof>, and QOF data can be accessed at:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/quality-and-outcomes-framework-qof-statistics-annual-report>.

This year, the majority of register-focused indicators of conditions were subsumed into core funding for practices, with the register for Epilepsy being one of these conditions. Therefore, practices were not required to submit data regarding their patients diagnosed with Epilepsy for the year 2015/16 and the most recent data available for use is from 2014/15.

In relation to Epilepsy, the contractor was required to 'establish and maintain a register of patients aged 18 or over receiving drug treatment for epilepsy'. The total number of people on this register for receiving drug treatment for Epilepsy at 31st March 2015 was 15,649.

QOF data is not reported on by Health and Social Care Trust, but by Local Commissioning Group (LCG); table 1 presents the requested data according to these groups.

Table 1. Number of people on the QOF register for receiving drug treatment for Epilepsy in each LCG in Northern Ireland, at 31st March 2015

LCG	Number of people receiving drug treatment for Epilepsy
Belfast	3,984
Northern	3,458
Southern	2,892
South Eastern	2,575
Western	2,740
Total	15,649

Source: Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF)

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 4921/16-21, to detail the overall expenditure on all day support services.
(AQW 6870/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer the member to AQW 6691/16-21 for the information requested.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health to detail the out-of-hours GP provision in (i) Strabane; (ii) Omagh; (iii) Castlederg; (iv) Plumbridge; (v) Newtownstewart; (vi) Drumquin; (vii) Dromore; (viii) Beragh; (ix) Gortin; and (x) Donemana, in each of the last twelve months.

(AQW 6873/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: GP out of hours services are provided to the entire population of the Western Local Commissioning Group area by Western Urgent Care across five bases – Strabane, Omagh, Altnagelvin, Enniskillen and Limavady.

The out of hours centres in Strabane and Limavady provide services from 7pm to 11pm on weekdays and from 8am to 11pm during weekends and banks holidays. The out of hours centres in Omagh, Altnagelvin and Enniskillen provide services from 6pm to 8.30am on weekdays and 24 hour cover across weekends and bank holidays.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 4922, to detail the Northern Ireland Average (Traditional) Day Care Cost. (AQW 6874/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested is not readily available and can only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health to detail how many (i) informal; and (ii) formal cases of (a) threats; (b) harassment; (c) sexual harassment; and (d) stalking have been lodged by her staff over the last three years; and to detail (iii) the internal procedures taken; and (iv) how the victims were supported. (AQW 6880/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: For staff employed within my Department:-

- (i) No records are held of informal cases in respect of a-d within the last three years.
- (ii) There were no formal cases lodged in respect of a-d within the last three years.
- (iii) Not applicable.
- (iv) Not applicable.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 3748/16-21, to detail these figures as a percentage of the overall nursing costs and/or budget for HMP Maghaberry, broken down per year.

(AQW 6887/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below details nursing agency spend as a proportion of overall nursing spend for HMP Maghaberry for the last three financial years.

Trust	2013/14	2014/15	2015/2016
SEHSCT	24.7%	21.2%	25.7%

Source: South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health for her assessment on the study by Queens University Belfast and Bournemouth University on the benefits of music therapy for children and young people with mental health issues.

(AQW 6888/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I welcome the 2014 study by Queens University Belfast and Bournemouth University, which examines the efficacy of music therapy in clinical practice for young people with mental health needs, as it adds to our knowledge in this area. Whilst I do not wish to go into the detail of this academic article, I do note that the trial did not lead to definitive recommendations for the inclusion of music therapy in clinical practice and recommended that further research would need to be undertaken. I look forward to further developments.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 5426/16-21, to outline what other reasons caused the cancellation of (i) 248 appointments in 2015-16; (ii) 334 appointments in 2014-15 and; (iii) 337 appointments in 2013-14.

(AQW 6890/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the reasons for the cancellation of operations in South Tyrone Hospital not included in AQW 5426/16-21 during the last three years are provided in the table below

Cancellation Reason	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
List Overrun	2	1	3
Equipment Failure/Unavailable	12	1	0
Administrative Error	1	0	0
Other Non-Clinical Reason	140	104	62
Other Clinical Reason ¹	182	228	183
Total	337	334	248

Source: P9 Cancelled Operations Information Return

¹ Operations cancelled due to clinical reasons are not currently included in Departmental monitoring of cancelled operations.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health when she will answer AQW 3655/16-21.

(AQW 6894/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I answered AQW 3655/16-21 on the 23 November 2016.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health for an update on the establishment of an air ambulance service.

(AQW 6897/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Good progress has been made by the Ambulance Service (NIAS) and Health and Social Care Board to plan for a doctor-led, daylight hours Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) in line with the AAA Framework for a High Performing Air Ambulance Service 2013. A service specification and a Memorandum of Understanding between NIAS and the charity partner, AANI, have been developed; procurement of an experienced HEMS service provider has been completed; a regional clinical lead for major trauma has been appointed; and a business case, including assessment of location options and capital costs for enablement works to the helipad at the Royal Victoria Hospital, is currently being finalised. I have asked the Chief Medical Officer to provide advice regarding the clinical and patient safety aspects of the service and I will announce further details about the implementation of the service once this process has been completed.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 4920/16-21, to detail the delivery partners and the number of people supported by each partner for (i) Northern Health and Social Care Trust; and (ii) Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 6898/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested has been provided in the attached Annex.

Annex

Day Opportunity Provision – Delivery Partners and Number of People Supported by Each – Northern and Belfast HSC Trusts

Belfast Trust

The 661 service users using statutory day centres; community-based club models, and community day services (providing leisure; educational; recreational and social opportunities) are with the following organisations:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ■ Everton Day Centre – 105 | ■ Junction Club – 9 |
| ■ Fortwilliam Day Centre – 44 | ■ Edging Out – 14 |
| ■ Orchardville TRC – 100 | ■ Suffolk Day Centre – 79 |
| ■ ETC Club – 14 | ■ Focus Club – 7 |
| ■ Bluebell Stars – 12 | ■ Fallswater Centre – 24 |
| ■ Mount Oriel Day Centre – 32 | ■ Mica Drive Day Centre – 49 |
| ■ Skyways Club – 7 | ■ Community Day Services West – 22 |
| ■ Edgcumbe TRC – 121 | ■ Community Day Services North – 22 |

The 377 service users using independent non-statutory service providers commissioned by the Trust, providing employment support; education; training; volunteering opportunities; travel training and life skills are with the following organisations:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ■ Orchardville Society – 216 | ■ Action Ability – 59 |
| ■ NOW Project – 72 | ■ ARC - 10 |
| ■ Mencap – 20 | |

Northern Trust

In the course of compiling the answer to this further question, the Northern Trust discovered a systems issue which would have impacted on the accuracy of the numbers provided in the answer to AQW 4920/16-21. While this is being resolved, the Northern Trust has based its answer to this further question on information submitted by each of their contracted providers and commissioning departments at October 2016.

In total, there were 553 individuals availing of community-based day opportunities with the organisations listed below. Some will attend more than one organisation. It should also be noted that this information does not include Trust adult day centres; satellite building-based services; Direct Payments (that may be made to individuals for the purpose of providing day activity), and Independent Sector providers (who may provide day activity in traditional buildings based provision regulated by RQIA).

Vocational Training (Total 190)

- Triangle Progression to Employment services - participants in enterprise provision across five sites - 118
- Compass Advocacy Network - Social Enterprise vocational training ('WE CAN' project) – 25
- Acceptable Enterprises (Larne) Social Enterprise - social enterprise vocational training ('Hands On Training'), and general social enterprise provision – 30
- Greenlight Gateway – 'Greenlight Social Enterprises Moyle' vocational training in catering; garden centre and recycling social enterprise activities – 17

Supported Employment (Total 244)

- Triangle Progression to Employment services - Trust-wide supported employment provision – 215
- Royal Mencap Society EmployAbility Project - Trust-wide supported employment provision) – 7
- USEL – 12
- DfC - 10

Volunteering (Total 50)

- AIVC – 20
- Cookstown and Magherafelt Volunteer Centre – 10
- DfC – 4
- NHSCT Day Opportunities Program – 16

Statutory Further and Higher Education (Total 90)

- NRC - 62
- SWC - 28

Base ('Drop-In') Facilities (338)

- Compass Advocacy Network - recreational and social provision across 3 facilities as at September 2016
 - Coleraine - 42
 - Ballymoney - 27
 - Ballymena - 31
- Kilcreggan Homes - recreational and social provision across 2 facilities:
 - Larne – 39
 - Carrickfergus - 41
- InVOLve - recreational and social provision in Antrim - 28
- Cookstown and Magherafelt Volunteer Centre - recreational and social provision across 2 facilities:
 - Magherafelt – 33
 - Cookstown - 31
- NHSCT provision across 3 facilities:
 - Ballyclare – 13
 - Moyle – 6
 - Newtownabbey – 47

Community Groups (Total 21)

- Short-term recreational activities with leisure and community groups across the Trust – 21

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of GP practices in each Health and Social Care Trust with GP vacancies waiting to be filled.

(AQW 6915/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of vacant GP posts is not available. GPs are independent contractors who contract with the Health and Social Care Board to provide primary medical services to their patients. As independent contractors, GPs are responsible for identifying and recruiting the number of GPs and other staff required to deliver those services.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of second appointment waiting times following a first outpatient, inpatient or diagnostic test appointment.

(AQW 6916/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department does not collect information on waiting times for second appointments. Not every patient will require a further appointment following their outpatient assessment, diagnostic investigation or inpatient treatment. If a second appointment is required this would be scheduled within a clinically appropriate timescale, taking account of the individual patient's case.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health where the the air ambulance service will be based.

(AQW 6919/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department's consultation earlier this year concluded that a base in the greater Belfast area would be most suitable for the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS). The assessment of a number of options is therefore being completed on this basis, including Belfast International Airport, Belfast City Airport, and the Maze Long Kesh (MLK) site, which the First Minister and deputy First Minister recently agreed to make available. This assessment will be included in the HEMS business case which is currently being finalised by the Ambulance Service for approval by my Department.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health to list the GP practices that have written to her Department since June 2016 raising concerns over staffing and the future sustainability of their practice.
(AQW 6920/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Since June, the following practices have written directly to my Department to raise concerns about staffing issues and the pressures being experienced by their practices:

- Dr Crawford and Partners, Bangor Health Centre
- Coagh Medical Centre

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Health for an update on the rehabilitation unit in Omagh.
(AQW 6921/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The contract has been awarded for the construction of a new £3.7m recovery and rehabilitation unit in Omagh. The 'Rathview' unit is expected to open in Spring 2018.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health what social programs are available for 16-21 year olds with physical disabilities in Fermanagh and South Tyrone.
(AQW 6932/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Western Health and Social Care Trust has a day care facility in Drumcoo, Enniskillen, for those in the local community with a physical and sensory disability. The facility provides access to a range of therapeutic and leisure activities and addresses practical, personal and social aspects of independent living in the community.

The Trust has also set up a Community Access Programme in Fermanagh and Tyrone which assists young people to participate, contribute and be part of their local community.

In addition, the Trust has contracts in place with the Cedar Foundation, Leonard Cheshire Disability (LCD) and other organisations who work in partnership with the Trust in promoting social inclusion. The Hub in Omagh, for example, which is run by LCD, is a place for those with disabilities to meet and socialise.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health what social programs are available for 16-21 year olds in Fermanagh and South Tyrone that are deaf.
(AQW 6933/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The voluntary sector and the deaf community help to facilitate social groups for those who are deaf in Fermanagh and South Tyrone.

The Western Health and Social Care Trust's Sensory Support Service team who provide training, support, advice and information to those with hearing loss and their families/carers work in partnership with the sector in delivering a range of services.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the average number of days lost per nurse due to sickness absence in each hospital, in each of the last five years.
(AQW 6940/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the average number of hours lost per registered nurse due to sickness absence from 2014/15 onwards is detailed in the table below. The required breakdown cannot be provided prior to 2014/15.

HSC Trust	Location	Average Hours Lost per WTE		
		2014/15	2015/16	Apr-Sep 16
Belfast	All	68	61	31
Northern	Antrim Hospital Site	120.13	160.86	132.05
	Braid Valley Hospital Site	41.42	72.97	32.22
	Causeway Hospital Site	133.87	177.45	133.45
	Dalriada Hospital Site	58.92	183.53	44.28
	Holywell Hospital Site	164.60	190.31	102.65
	Mid Ulster Hospital	222.95	213.27	160.99
	Moyle Hospital Site	142.17	191.62	127.77
	Robinson Hospital Site	159.83	202.05	68.05
	Route Hospital Site	61.74	127.67	140.77
	Whiteabbey Hospital Site	126.71	170.63	134.95

HSC Trust	Location	Average Hours Lost per WTE		
		2014/15	2015/16	Apr-Sep 16
	Total	128.86	167.03	123.76
South Eastern	Ards Community Hospital	154.11	145.82	68.07
	Bangor Community Hospital	145.48	80.70	50.80
	Downe Hospital	145.02	150.42	46.98
	Downshire Hospital	186.06	180.65	56.83
	Lagan Valley Hospital	137.43	113.76	61.94
	Ulster Hospital	121.04	117.84	47.70
Southern	Craigavon Area Hospital	105.48	123.98	54.59
	Daisy Hill Hospital	111.09	114.21	45.10
	Lurgan Hospital	119.15	148.30	80.55
	South Tyrone Hospital	147.88	140.35	54.78
	St Luke's Hospital	109.65	90.05	58.83
	Tower Hill	110.41	73.09	16.89
	Other Sites	118.07	107.77	49.18
	Total	112.57	118.78	53.13
Western	Atnagelvin	105.21	103.53	56.40
	Gransha Hosp (incl Lakeview)	102.25	110.50	53.36
	Waterside Hospital	172.64	80.09	31.40
	Southwest Acute Hospital	100.48	125.85	60.29
	Tyrone County Hospital	91.53	121.42	51.34
	Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital	117.11	182.73	84.09
	Total	105.39	114.29	57.63

Source: HSC Trusts

Excludes bank staff and midwives.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health whether she will rule out the reintroduction of prescription charges.
(AQW 6947/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I have no plans to reintroduce prescription charges.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of social workers employed in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.
(AQW 6948/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of social workers employed in each Health and Social Care HSC Trust at 31 March in each of the last five years is detailed in the table below.

HSC Trust Social Workers Employed at 31 March

HSC Trust		At 31 March				
		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Belfast	Headcount	827	848	861	873	874
	WTE	771.11	789.30	806.65	814.84	817.52
Northern	Headcount	795	820	843	876	903
	WTE	738.59	760.26	781.93	810.45	847.10

HSC Trust		At 31 March				
		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
South Eastern	Headcount	604	608	624	641	644
	WTE	556.82	560.88	572.86	585.28	588.66
Southern	Headcount	641	636	626	622	663
	WTE	589.48	582.36	576.14	571.17	612.91
Western	Headcount	628	638	651	651	685
	WTE	602.54	604.26	620.36	624.70	660.44

Source: Human Resources, Payroll, Travel & Subsistence system (HRPTS)

Information on social workers employed is published annually in the N I Health and Social Care Workforce Census on the Department of Health website at the following link: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/staff-numbers>

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health what plans her Department has to manage and support the increasing number of carers; and how it is updating the relevant strategies.

(AQW 6955/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am fully committed to carers being recognised and valued as equal partners in the provision of care, and be properly supported to maintain their life outside their caring role. The existing 'Caring for Carers' inter-departmental and inter-agency strategy, deals with health and personal social services, employment, training, education, availability of information and support services for our carers.

It is anticipated that the provisions in the current carers strategy, alongside new rights and duties with respect to carers, will be updated as part of the wider Reform of Adult Care and Support. This reform is a three stage process seeking to address the challenges facing the adult care and support system. Stage one was a large scale pre-consultation on the discussion document "Who Cares? The Future of Adult Care and Support in NI", intended to raise awareness about the need for reform and build consensus on the need for change.

We are currently in the second stage of the reform process, involving the development of a proposals paper for public consultation in 2017. The third and final stage will see the publication of a final strategic document outlining the way forward for adult care and support.

As we move forward with the development of proposals for change, I can assure you that the importance of support for carers will be reflected in ongoing work in this area.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 4131/16-21 and while the trial is not part of the NSC pilot, to detail any findings that the pulse oximetry trial at Daisy Hill has presented to the (i) hospital; (ii) Southern Health and Social Care Trust; (iii) Health and Social Care Board; or (iv) Department.

(AQW 6977/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department contacted the Southern Health and Social Care Trust and the Health and Social Care Board and has been advised as follows.

In the 12-month period from 1st September 2015 to 31st August 2016 a total of 1812 babies were born in Daisy Hill Hospital. Of these, 872 babies were documented to have had pre- and post-ductal oxygen saturation screening prior to discharge. There were a total of 5 babies with abnormal initial oxygen saturations, all of which were normal 4 hours later. No cases of congenital heart disease have been identified to date through this screening programme.

Data analysis of this programme in Daisy Hill Hospital has identified a need to improve documentation. Only 48% babies were on record as having been screened.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail her legislative programme for this mandate.

(AQW 7042/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I would refer you to the answer given by the deputy First Minister on 13 June 2016 in response to Oral question 6/16-21 when asked what consideration had been given to publishing a legislative programme.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister of Health (i) how many nurses need to be recruited for the full operation of the new Ulster Hospital ward block; (ii) at what stage is the recruitment exercise; and (iii) how many posts are yet to be filled.

(AQW 7062/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: 84 additional nurses are required for the full operation of the new Ulster Hospital ward block. Recruitment is ongoing and will continue until all posts are filled. 48 of these additional posts are yet to be filled.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister of Health what plans the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has for the current wards in the Ulster Hospital once the new ward block is brought into use.

(AQW 7063/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: When the new ward block opens in Summer 2017, 15 of the current wards will transfer to the new building and 8 wards will remain operational in the existing building until completion of the new Acute Services Block in Summer 2019.

Of the 15 wards transferring, 8 are medical wards and 7 are surgical wards.

The 8 wards which will remain in the existing block include cardiology, medical assessment unit and gynaecology services.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister of Health (i) when the new ward block at the Ulster Hospital is due to be handed over from the contractor; (ii) when it will be fully operational; and (iii) whether target dates for these events have been met.

(AQW 7064/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) Handover of the new ward block is imminent. It was scheduled for 14 November 2016 however the contractor has informed the Trust of a delay. A new date has not yet been set.
- (ii) Following a phased decant of services it is intended that the building will be fully operational by Summer 2017;
- (iii) As indicated the contractor has informed the Trust of a delay to the handover date. A delay to the facility becoming operational is not expected.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health what key lessons have been learned from the Promoting Good Nutrition policy; and how they will be incorporated into new policy and care pathways.

(AQW 7067/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Since the initiation of the Promoting Good Nutrition Strategy in 2011 there has been a significant amount of work progressed to improve good nutrition, good hydration and enhance the patient/client experience of mealtimes.

Two key issues which are currently being developed to inform policy and care pathways are work relating to dysphasia awareness and screening and swallow assessment for people who have swallowing difficulties.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the recent health economic report, carried out the British Association for Parental and Enteral Nutrition and the National Institute for Health Research on the costs of malnutrition on the health service in England, that identified approximately £200m in annual savings for health and social care; and what actions her Department is planning to take on this issue.

(AQW 7069/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware that a report produced by the Southampton Biomedical Research Centre on the cost of disease related malnutrition in England and a budget analysis of implementing the NICE clinical guidelines/quality standard on nutritional support in adults, estimates that there is a potential to realise financial benefits by implementing the NICE clinical guidelines.

My department has reviewed the NICE Clinical Guidelines, CG 32 – Nutrition support for adults: oral nutritional support, enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition, for applicability and has formally endorsed it as applicable in the North of Ireland from May 2016.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of hoax ambulance calls received in each of the last five years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 7071/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of hoax ambulance calls at constituency level is not available.

However, information is available by Local Commissioning Group (LCG) on the number of potential hoax calls received by the ambulance service (NIAS), and is detailed in the table below.

LCG	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Belfast	669	678	646	862	1,079
Northern	975	876	680	778	672
South Eastern	308	289	298	297	326
Southern	743	645	600	675	676
Western	579	552	646	650	565
Total 1	5,382	5,190	4,784	4,830	4,852

- 1 The total provided does not equate to the sum of each LCG, as there are a number of calls for which it is not possible to determine the postcode of the caller, i.e. hung up or a mobile signal was lost before information could be obtained.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health how many agency doctors have been employed in the (i) South West Acute Hospital; and (ii) South Tyrone Hospital, in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 7072/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of agency doctors employed in each of the last three years in the (i) South West Acute Hospital and (ii) South Tyrone Hospital is not available.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health how many agency nurses have been employed in the (i) South West Acute Hospital and (ii) South Tyrone Hospital, in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 7073/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of agency nurses employed in each of the last three years in the (i) South West Acute Hospital and (ii) South Tyrone Hospital is not available.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health to detail the progress on construction of the new ambulance centre in Enniskillen, including the expected opening date.

(AQW 7074/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The contractor started on site for the new ambulance station in Enniskillen on 7 November 2016. The contract is due to complete in September 2017 with the new ambulance station expected to open in October 2017.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health for an update on the delivery of all the recommendations in the McCollum Report.

(AQW 7078/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I attach at Annex A an update on each of the recommendations in the McCollum Report.

Update on the McCollum Report

Annex A

Recommendation	Current position	Achieved
Recommendation 1: A lead for muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions is appointed from within Health and Social Care in NI to take overall control and be accountable for identifying and fixing the gaps in specialist multidisciplinary neuromuscular care, which require urgent service development.	Michelle Tennyson, Assistant Director, Allied Health Professions and Public Patient Involvement at the Public Health Agency, has been identified as the lead for muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions in Northern Ireland.	Achieved
Recommendation 2: The NI Executive and HSC define and fully recognise neuromuscular services as specialist services in order to distinguish the complex muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions as requiring specialist support, which includes different specialisms.	Services for people with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy are provided by HSC Trusts on the basis of assessed need and may involve hospital and/or community based services. There is a generic, regional neuromuscular clinic for all age groups provided by the Belfast Trust which is led by an adult neurologist and a paediatric neurologist with an interest in neuromuscular conditions. Occupational therapy services for neuromuscular patients are available in the community. The management of neuromuscular conditions also requires input from other specialties such as cardiology, orthopaedics and respiratory medicine. Other specialties, for example, endocrinology and gastroenterology, may also be involved.	Achieved

Recommendation	Current position	Achieved
<p>Recommendation 3: The NI Executive ensures that the care advisor post in NI is secured long term within HSC, and takes urgent steps to create more of these posts. These steps will provide the best possible support and advice for people with muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions and will reduce unplanned emergency admissions by investing small amounts to save a large amount in the long term.</p>	<p>The Belfast Trust has funding for 6 Care Advisor Posts – 1 Neurology Care Advisor Coordinator (Manager) and 5 Band 4 care advisors.</p> <p>The Neurological Care Coordinator was appointed in September 2015, with the first Care Advisor appointed in January 2016. Overall three rounds of recruitment were necessary in order to secure the Care Advisor posts, with a second appointee commencing in June 2016 and two further Care Advisors due to commence in November 2016. The final Care Advisor is due to take up post in December 2016 at which stage the full complement of staff will be in place. To date the feedback from service users has been extremely positive.</p> <p>Service at the Neurology Clinics commenced in February 2016. The service will expand as the additional care advisors are recruited.</p> <p>Feedback from service users is positive, and patients particularly like that the advisors are present at the Neurology Clinics.</p>	
	<p>A dedicated Telephone Service (07590447222) has also been established and this went live on 18th January 2016. There will be an answerphone service available for out of hours.</p> <p>A dedicated email service (neurocareadvice@belfasttrust.hscni.net) has also been established.</p> <p>The Trust have indicated that there are increasing patient numbers contacting these services as they become more well know.</p> <p>Leaflets and posters outlining the role of the service have been developed</p> <p>Meetings have been ongoing between the Care Advisor Coordinator and the neurology charities to introduce the service and establish ways to work in partnership.</p>	Part Service in place

Recommendation	Current position	Achieved
<p>Recommendation 4: Health and Social Care Board and the NI Executive create a steering group for developing specialised neuromuscular services which incorporates the views of people affected by muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions, health professionals, commissioners and the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign.</p>	<p>Members of the APG identified the preferred engagement mechanism should be through APG rather than meeting between HSCB/PHA, Muscular Dystrophy Campaign and Action Duchenne. The Board/ PHA will continue to engage with people living with neuromuscular conditions, health and social care professionals and other interest groups.</p> <p>Belfast Trust held a meeting on 10 October 2016 chaired by Bernie Owens, Director in Belfast Trust and attended by the parent of a child who has muscular dystrophy, Trust managers and clinicians, and representatives from the Health and Social Care Board. The purpose of the meeting was to review the current position of the adult Neuromuscular Service and identify work that needs to be undertaken to improve the service and to develop collaborative ways of working with key stakeholders. The group discussed a number of matters including a draft service model, progress with recruitment in relation to a consultant neurologist and clinical nurse specialist, the Neurological Care Advice Service, and a planned waiting list initiative. A further meeting was held on 7 November with Claire O'Hanlon, Chair of Muscular Dystrophy UK's NI Council also in attendance. The next meeting has been planned for 16 January 2017.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: Health and Social Care Board initiate steps to ensure that a network approach for muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions is formally developed for adult services, following the announcement of increased coordination of paediatric services.</p>	<p>The HSC Board has allocated funding to Belfast Trust for the appointment of an adult neuromuscular consultant and adult neuromuscular nurse specialist. This will be linked to the existing paediatric neurology service and will support the seamless transition of children and young people from paediatric to adult services.</p> <p>Belfast Trust has been asked to bring forward detailed proposals for a viable, fully functional specialist neuromuscular service (adult and paediatric) that integrates primary, community, secondary care.</p> <p>Consultant Post</p> <p>The Neuromuscular Consultant Post was initially advertised in August 2016 and closed middle of September 2016. However; there were no applicants at that time. The position was re-advertised and subsequently closed 8 November 2016. The Trust was hopeful of at least one applicant but there were no applicants.</p> <p>Nursing Post (Adult Services)</p> <p>The Neuromuscular Specialist Nurse post was initially advertised in August 2016; however, unfortunately there were no applicants at that time. This post was also re-advertised and there have been a number of applications on this occasion with interviews scheduled for 30 November 2016.</p>	<p>Partially achieved</p>

Recommendation	Current position	Achieved
<p>Recommendation 6: Health and Social Care Board and Health and Social Care Trusts use the specialist expertise within Belfast Health and Social Care Trust to develop further a 'hub and spoke' model of service provision, with Belfast Trust at the centre of the set-up at which core specialists are located.</p>	<p>Services for people with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy are provided by HSC Trusts on the basis of assessed need and may involve hospital and/or community based services.</p> <p>There is a generic, regional neuromuscular clinic for all age groups provided by the Belfast Trust which is led by an adult neurologist and a paediatric neurologist with an interest in neuromuscular conditions.</p> <p>HSC Board has resourced an expansion in capacity for adult/young adult care and enhancement of the transition service.</p> <p>Going forward the vision is to establish Belfast as a robust central hub which will in due course support an NI axis linked to local services as well as to tertiary/quaternary services in GB.</p> <p>Where a clinical need has been identified for treatment which cannot be provided in Northern Ireland, appropriate patients may receive treatment outside Northern Ireland, subject to the HSC Board's approval via the ECR process.</p>	Partially achieved
<p>Recommendation 7: Health and Social Care Trusts appoint transition workers to facilitate patients' transition from paediatric to adult services.</p>	<p>The HSC Board has allocated funding to Belfast Trust for the appointment of an adult neuromuscular consultant and adult neuromuscular nurse specialist. This will be linked to the existing paediatric neurology service and will support the seamless transition of patients from paediatric to adult services.</p> <p>Details of progress on this are set out under previous recommendations.</p>	Partially achieved
<p>Recommendation 8: Health and Social Care Board and Social Care Trusts develop a more streamlined and efficient genetic testing system to reduce delays.</p>	<p>NI gains access to specialist genetic testing for muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular disorders via the UK Genetic Testing Network (UKGTN). This network provides advice throughout the UK on genetic testing and aims to ensure the provision of high quality equitable genetic testing services.</p> <p>HSC Board has recently secured significant recurrent funding to ensure equity of access for patients from NI to all approved UKGTN Tests in 16/17. UKGTN offers panel testing allowing for a number of genetic tests to be carried out at the same time which improves the potential for diagnosis and replaces the single gene testing arrangements.</p>	Achieved
<p>Recommendation 9: Health and Social Care Trusts address the need to increase clinical time dedicated to specialist neuromuscular care</p>	<p>The HSC Board has allocated funding to Belfast Trust for the appointment of an adult neuromuscular consultant and adult neuromuscular nurse specialist. This will be linked to the existing paediatric neurology service and will support the seamless transition of patients from paediatric to adult services.</p> <p>Details of progress on this are set out under previous recommendations.</p>	Partially achieved

Recommendation	Current position	Achieved
Recommendation 10: The Health and Social Care Board develops a neuromuscular registry for both the paediatric and the adult services in NI to ensure the most efficient delivery of specialist care.	The HSCB is supportive of the development of a neuromuscular registry for both paediatric and adult services. This will be taken forward by the care advisors working in partnership with voluntary organisations.	To be progressed
Recommendation 11: The Duchenne Standards of Care guidelines are made widely available to those commissioning, planning and delivering services so that high quality standards of care are achieved in a multidisciplinary approach for all muscular conditions. As new guidelines emerge for other neuromuscular conditions, these should also be made widely available so that commissioning, planning and delivery of these services can be improved.	<p>The Duchenne Standards of Care Guidelines do not have any formal status in NI but rather are considered as good practice.</p> <p>Consensus statements on standards of care are also available for Congenital Muscular Dystrophies and Spinal Muscular Atrophy.</p> <p>Patient journey for DMD will depend on outcome of GAIN project which is being taken forward by Northern Trust.</p>	Currently used as good practice guidelines
Recommendation 12: The NI Executive addresses the inequalities of wheelchair service provision so that there is consistency and that people with muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions are not forced to resort to private purchases of suitable wheelchairs.	<p>The HSCB on behalf of DHSSPS carried out a Review of the Eligibility Criteria to consider the eligibility criteria for the provision of wheelchairs.</p> <p>The Terms of Reference for the project were:</p> <p>To review current eligibility criteria in collaboration with key stakeholders to take into account other 'best' practice models of provision both nationally and internationally; and,</p> <p>Analyse current eligibility criteria and consider opportunities for further standardisation, improved efficiency/effectiveness and quality improvement.</p> <p>The HSCB approved the revisions to the original eligibility criteria which have been ratified by DHSSPS in 2016.</p>	
	<p>Every referral for wheelchair provision is based on clinical assessment of each client's need which is initially carried out in each Trust area by wheelchair therapists; there is only one overarching pathway which allows for individual need to be prioritised. In addition to local wheelchair therapists, there is a regional specialist seating service based at Musgrave Park Hospital, BHSCT provided by two Bio-engineers who work closely with all five Trusts. The BHSCT is currently reviewing and evaluating the specialist seating service improvement plan that was put into place in 2014 and intend to produce an options paper in relation to equity of wheelchair provision along with maintenance and repair in the near future.</p> <p>The HSCB continues to liaise with the Belfast Trust in relation to this and wheelchair performance.</p>	Achieved
Recommendation 13: The NI Executive, in conjunction with HSC, improves the level of recognition and knowledge of muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions at GP level.	A training event for health and social care professional, including GPs, was held on 25 February 2015 to raise awareness of living with neuromuscular conditions.	Achieved

Recommendation	Current position	Achieved
Recommendation 14: The Health and Social Care Board implements a structured long term succession planning system so that key neuromuscular posts are recruited for and appointed quickly to prevent a detrimental gap in services for people with muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular condition.	Every effort is made to ensure effective succession planning for doctors across a range of specialties. Generally, where possible, medical posts where the post holder is approaching retirement age are highlighted and identified to the NI Medical and Dental Training Agency in order for them to allocate a junior doctor to a specialist training programme. Similarly, where it is apparent that a specialist nurse/AHP is approaching retirement, steps can be taken to begin to train staff with generic skills. However, as specialist medical training can take up to 5 years and retirement age is not fixed, it can prove challenging to coordinate the completion of training with the retirement of a senior consultant in specialties where the number of consultants is small. Both the HSC Board and Trusts are aware of these challenges and aim to address via advance planning where possible.	Achieved
Recommendation 15: Health Trusts and NI Councils develop structured joint planning provision so that there is a seamless transition and coordination between health and social care services.	This recommendation is not relevant in a NI context as an integrated health and social care system already exists here.	Not applicable

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health to detail the homecare provision commissioned by each Health and Social Care Trust through the private or independent sector by (i) employee numbers; and (ii) allocated hours, in each year since 2010. (AQW 7087/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below shows the total number of hours commissioned through the private or independent sector for homecare provision, broken down by each Health and Social Care Trust. Health and Social Care Trusts do not hold information on the number of employees in the private or independent sector.

HSC Trusts	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Belfast	1,657,916	1,580,852	1,536,080	1,604,824	1,472,380	1,554,384
Northern	Not available	Not available	Not available	217,855	215,714	217,568
South Eastern	2,058,590	2,422,279	2,588,050	2,765,883	2,784,811	Not available
Southern	Not available	1,209,963	1,499,602	1,663,054	1,576,574	1,574,262
Western	1,191,672	1,153,504	1,257,059	1,464,796	1,692,400	1,982,836

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health whether there are plans to reduce Health Service homecare provision; and to outline the plans for core provision and re-enablement in 2017. (AQW 7088/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There are no plans to reduce homecare provision in the Mid Ulster area. Under the Northern Trust's reform and modernisation programme it is reducing the number of teams that provide long term care and increasing the number of teams working in the re-ablement service. Staff within the Trust's re-ablement service will be encouraging service users to reach their maximum level of independence over a short period of time. However, if at the end of this period the service user requires a reduced long term service, then provision will be transferred to the Trust's long term care teams. This programme of reform is ongoing and will continue into 2017.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health (i) whether there are plans to move or realign homecare services; (ii) whether any homecare teams have been stood down in the last twelve months; and (iii) whether any core or re-enablement work will move to the private sector. (AQW 7089/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) Under the Northern Trust's reform and modernisation programme for its homecare services, it is reducing the number of teams that provide long term care and increasing the number of teams working in the re-ablement service.

- (ii) One re-ablement team was stood down in the Mid Ulster area to enable staff to move to long term core service temporarily. This was due to recruitment difficulties. However, there has been an increase in recruitment over the past 6 months, and the re-ablement team is now in a position to provide a re-ablement service to those who meet the criteria.
- (iii) During the reform process, some long term core service users for whom the Trust is unable to provide services internally, may be transferred to the independent sector to create capacity for re-ablement teams to be developed.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of employees in each Health and Social Care Trust that worked in homecare provision; and how many hours of homecare provision each Trust provided in each week of each year since 2010.

(AQW 7090/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health when she will provide a full response to the Health and Social Care Board's review of residential care.

(AQW 7091/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My predecessor asked the Health and Social Care Board to halt and review the process on the review of statutory residential care homes, as a precautionary measure. The Health and Social Care Board has now completed its review and I will consider the outcome in due course.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 54351/11-16, what these chemicals were used for in 2014 in the Renal Dialysis Unit in Antrim Area Hospital.

(AQW 7092/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Hydrogen peroxide and Peroxyacetic acid (also known as Peracetic acid) are active ingredients of a commercially supplied product called STER-CID II (also known as Kickstart) which was the disinfectant agent used in the process for the disinfection and processing of renal waste at the Renal Dialysis Unit in Antrim Area Hospital.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health how many people have been admitted to Antrim Area Hospital by the Renal Unit, in each each month of the last three years.

(AQW 7093/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The number of people admitted to Antrim Area Hospital by the Renal Unit, in each month of the last 3 years is shown in the table below.

	2013	2014	2015	2016
January		13	12	11
February		10	7	11
March		6	11	6
April		3	15	9
May		8	12	12
June		4	12	8
July		11	11	9
August		12	9	9
September		11	10	6
October		15	8	4
November	18	21	8	
December	11	18	9	

Source: Northern HSC Trust, PAS

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health whether (i) Health and Social Care Trusts; and (ii) the Health and Social Care Board has Crown Immunity.

(AQW 7103/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Neither the Health and Social Care Trusts nor the Health and Social Care Board have Crown Immunity.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the allergy research being conducted at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge; and whether, based on that research, she plans to include desensitisation treatment as part of the combination of therapies available to local patients affected by allergies, including peanut allergy.

(AQW 7107/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Evidence on new and emerging treatments is evaluated by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and informs clinical guideline development.

Once NICE make a recommendation on the routine use of a new treatment, then guidelines will be implemented in line with current policy.

Mr Middleton asked the Minister of Health to detail the average length of time to fill a vacant social work post in each of Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 7108/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The average time to fill a vacant social work post, during 2016, is detailed in the table below:

Health & Social Care Trust	Average time to fill
Belfast	84 days
Northern	79 days
South Eastern	43 days
Southern	95days
Western	91 days

The information provided refers only to the time taken to process an appointment from receipt of initial requisition to completion of all checks. It does not take into account an individual candidate's notice period.

Mr Middleton asked the Minister of Health how many social work posts are vacant in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 7109/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of vacant social work posts is detailed in the table below.

HSC Trust	Vacancies	
	Social Worker	Social Care
Belfast	83	109
Northern	42	16
South Eastern	11	3
Southern	36	8
Western	15	25

Source: HSC Trusts

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health (i) to detail the (a) number; and (b) location of doctors with a mental health speciality employed in each Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) to detail the (a) number; and (b) location of mental health consultants in each Trust; (iii) how many mental health (a) doctors; and (b) consultants have retired in the last five years; (iv) how many have given notice of their intention to retire this year; and (v) to detail the (a) number; and (b) location of mental health doctor and consultant vacancies in each Trust.

(AQW 7141/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: (i) & (ii) Mental Health Doctors & Consultants Employed

HSC Trust & Location	Doctors		Consultants	
	HC	WTE	HC	WTE
Belfast HSC Trust				
Adolescent Psychiatry Unit	0	-	1	-
Beechcroft	1	-	1	-
CAMHS Building	1	-	0	-

HSC Trust & Location	Doctors		Consultants	
	HC	WTE	HC	WTE
Forster Green Hospital Main Building	1	-	0	-
Graham House	2	-	8	-
Belfast City Hospital	1	-	0	-
Fairview	4	-	0	-
Iveagh Buildings	1	-	0	-
Knockbracken Clinic	10	-	1	-
Knockbracken Healthcare Park	7	-	0	-
Malone Hospital	0	-	1	-
Mater Hospital	11	-	5	-
Muckamore Abbey Hospital	2	-	8	-
Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children	1	-	8	-
Shaftsbury Square Day Hospital	1	-	0	-
Tower Block	4	-	0	-
Windsor House	6	-	34	-
Woodstock Mental Health Unit	0	-	2	-
Total	53	-	69	-
Northern HSC Trust				
Antrim Hospital Site	0	-	4	-
Antrim Hospital Site: Alder House	1	-	2	-
Audley Terrace	0	-	1	-
B'money Child & Adolescent Unit	1	-	0	-
B'money Mental Health Resource Ctr	0	-	1	-
Causeway Hospital Site: Main Building	7	-	2	-
Community Addictions Team	1	-	0	-
Cookstown Mental Health Resource Ctr	0	-	1	-
Ferrard Site: Ferrard House	0	-	1	-
Ferrard Site: Antrim Child&Adol Ctr	1	-	3	-
Ferrard Site: Antrim Health Centre	1	-	0	-
Holywell Hospital Site	32	-	17	-
Loughview Resource Centre	0	-	1	-
Magerafelt Health Centre	0	-	1	-
Moyle Medical Building	0	-	1	-
The Brook	0	-	1	-
Whiteabbey Hospital Site	1	-	2	-
Total	45	-	38	-
South Eastern HSC Trust				
Lisburn	15	-	7	-
Ards/UHD	18	-	9	-
Downpatrick	12	-	6	-

HSC Trust & Location	Doctors		Consultants	
	HC	WTE	HC	WTE
Prison Health	5	-	2	-
Total	50	-	24	-
Southern HSC Trust				
Craigavon Area Hospital Site	17	16.60	9	7.90
Daisy Hill Hospital Site	3	2.80	4	4.00
South Tyrone Hospital Site	1	1.00	2	2.00
St Luke's Hospital Site	7	6.80	8	8.00
Tower Hill Site	0	0.00	1	0.80
Trasna House	0	0.00	1	1.00
Total	28	27.20	25	23.70
Western HSC Trust				
Grangewood	13	12.80	7	6.25
Lakeview	0	0.00	2	2.00
South West Acute Hospital	2	1.80	0	0.00
Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital	12	12.00	7	5.40
Woodlea House	1	0.64	4	2.90
Total	28	27.24	20	16.55

Source: HSC Trusts

(iii) Mental Health Doctors & Consultants Retired in Last Five Years

HSC Trust	Doctors	Consultants
Belfast	1	8
Northern	0	6
South Eastern	0	3
Southern	0	2
Western	1	4

Source: HSC Trusts

(iv) Mental Health Doctors & Consultants Intending to Retire

No mental health doctors or consultants have given notice of their intention to retire this year.

(v) Mental Health Doctor & Consultant Vacancies

HSC Trust & Location	Doctor	Consultant
Belfast HSC Trust	10*	0
Northern HSC Trust		
Holywell Hospital	0	1
South Eastern HSC Trust		
Ards/UHD	1	1
Southern HSC Trust		
Craigavon Area Hospital Site	0	1 (0.80 WTE)#

HSC Trust & Location	Doctor	Consultant
Western HSC Trust		
Grangewood	2.20	2.00
Lakeview	0.00	1.00
South West Acute Hospital	0.00	1.00
Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital	0.00	2.50
Woodlea House	0.00	0.40
Total	2.20	6.90

Source: HSC Trusts

* Psychiatry training vacancies.

An applicant has been appointed but has not yet taken up post.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health (i) to detail the (a) number; and (b) location of the registered mental health nurses employed in each Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) how many mental health nurses have retired in the last five years; (iii) how many have given notice of their intention to retire this year; and (iv) to detail the (a) number; and (b) location of mental health nursing vacancies in each Trust.

(AQW 7142/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

(i) Registered Mental Health Nurses Employed

HSC Trust & Location	Headcount	WTE
Belfast HSC Trust		
Adolescent Psychiatry Unit	2	-
Agape Centre	2	-
Avoca	14	-
Ballyowen EPH	1	-
Beechcroft	36	-
Clare	10	-
Dorothy Gardiner Re-hab Unit	5	-
Dunluce Health Centre	3	-
Everton Complex	9	-
Everton LD Centre	9	-
Fairview	36	-
Finaghy Health Centre	2	-
Forest Lodge	2	-
Glendinning House	1	-
Graham House	12	-
Innishfree Neuro Re-hab Unit	8	-
James Street	2	-
Knockbracken Clinic	2	-
Knockbracken Day Centre	6	-
Mahee	2	-
Malone Hospital	3	-

HSC Trust & Location	Headcount	WTE
Mater Hospital	60	-
Maureen Shennan Centre (1)	6	-
Old See House	24	-
Ormeau Road Supported Housing	1	-
Rathlin	20	-
Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children	2	-
Royal Victoria Hospital	1	-
Shaftsbury Square Day Hospital	1	-
Shannon Clinic (RSU)	34	-
Shimna House	3	-
Skerries	3	-
The Shannon Clinic (RSU)	4	-
Twin Spires Centre	1	-
Valencia	7	-
Whiterock Complex	2	-
Whiterock Health Centre	2	-
Windsor House	1	-
Woodstock Mental Health Unit	38	-
Young Peoples Centre (1)	5	-
Young Peoples Centre (2)	4	-
Total	386	-
Northern HSC Trust		
Antrim Hospital Site	11	-
Antrim Hospital Site: Alder House	13	-
Ballymena Health & Care Centre	1	-
Beeches Resource Centre	7	-
Ballymoney Child & Adolescent Unit	3	-
Ballymoney Mental Health Resource Centre	5	-
Braid Valley Site: Ballymena HC	5	-
Braid Valley Site: Main Building	3	-
Braid Valley Site: Spruce House	1	-
Braidwater Quays	2	-
Carrickfergus Health Centre	1	-
Causeway Hospital Site: Main Building	25	-
Churchlane Mews	8	-
Coleraine Community Services Centre	1	-
Coleraine Mental Health Resource Centre	4	-
Community Addictions Team	11	-
Cookstown Mental Health Resource Centre	6	-
Dalriada Hospital Site	1	-

HSC Trust & Location	Headcount	WTE
Ferrard Site: Antrim Child & Adolescent Ctr	3	-
Ferrard Site: Ferrard House	9	-
Gloucester Park Site: Larne Health Centre	2	-
Holywell Hospital Site	203	-
Larne Adult Centre	1	-
Loughview Resource Centre	6	-
Moyle Hospital Site	1	-
Moyle Hospital Site: Moyle Medical Centre	2	-
Rosebrook House	1	-
The Brook	6	-
West Street	1	-
Westlands Site: Cookstown Comm Serv Ctr	1	-
Westlands Site: Cookstown Health Centre	1	-
Whiteabbey Hospital Site	17	-
Total	362	-
South Eastern HSC Trust		
Mental Health Services for Older People	51	49.04
Acute Community MH Services	24	22.60
Prison Health	13	12.50
Community Mental Health Services	44	42.60
Psychological Therapies & Specialist Roles	6	6.00
Addictions	34	34.00
Management Team	6	5.40
Mental Health Care Management	2	2.00
Mental Health Hospital Services	71	69.50
Supported Housing	10	10.00
Total	261	253.64
Southern HSC Trust		
Aldergrove House	4	4.00
Carn Industrial Estate Carn Orchard Park	1	1.00
Craigavon Area Hospital Site	115	108.92
Daisy Hill Hospital Site	35	32.95
Dromalane-Mournes Resource Centre	4	2.41
Dungannon Area-Dungannon Health Clinic	1	0.80
INCH facilities	8	8.00
Novara House	5	4.84
South Tyrone Hospital Site	10	9.61
Southern HSC Trust	1	1.00
St Luke's Hospital Site	69	64.61
The Mews	5	4.91

HSC Trust & Location	Headcount	WTE
Tower Hill Site	15	14.70
Trasna House	43	41.04
Total	316	298.79
Western HSC Trust		
Community	106	103.05
Gransha	83	82.73
South West Acute Hospital	17	16.80
Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital	71	68.79
Tyrone County Hospital	9	8.14
Total	286	279.51

Source: HSC Trusts

(ii) Mental Health Nurses Retired in Last Five Years

HSC Trust	Mental Health Nurse Retirements
Belfast	51
Northern	56
South Eastern	46
Southern	52
Western	58

Source: HSC Trusts

(iii) Mental Health Nurses Intending to Retire This Year

HSC Trust	Mental Health Nurses Retiring
Belfast	3
Northern	0
South Eastern	0
Southern	1
Western	5

Source: HSC Trusts

(iv) Mental Health Nurse Vacancies

HSC Trust & Location	Vacancies
Belfast HSC Trust	
Mater Hospital	14
Knockbracken (Shannon)	7
Knockbracken (Valencia)	2
Old See House	2
Everton Centre	1
Twin Spires Centre	2
Graham House	1
Woodstock	9
MH&IC Dementia Service	1

HSC Trust & Location	Vacancies
Agape Centre	2
Adolescent Psychiatry Unit	1
Donard	1
Young Peoples Centre	1
Total	44
Northern HSC Trust	
Holywell Hospital Site	9
Whiteabbey Hospital	1
Cookstown Community Resource Centre	1
Antrim/Ballymena locality	5
Total	16
South Eastern HSC Trust	
Mental Health Services for Older People	1
Acute Community MH Services	0
Prison Health	5.5
Community Mental Health Services	2
Psychological Therapies & Specialist Roles	0
Addictions	3
Management Team	0
Mental Health Hospital services	19.49
Total	30.99
Southern HSC Trust	
Craigavon Area Hospital, Bluestone	26
Armagh Community Hospital	2
Total	28
Western HSC Trust	
Londonderry	3
Omagh	4
Enniskillen	1
Limavady	1
Total	9

Source: HSC Trusts

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health how her Department determines the budget allocation to each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 7149/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department allocates a resource budget to the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and Public Health Agency (PHA) to cover hospital, community health and social care services.

The HSCB attributes its resources to the five Local Commissioning Groups (LCGs) at the start of each financial year. Additional resources are allocated using the regional capitation formula fair shares, which take account of the population size, gender, age and socio-economic profile across each LCG. In conjunction with the PHA, the HSCB leads on the production of a Commissioning Plan which explains how services will be commissioned within the available budget.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health what was the budget of each Health and Social Care Trust in the 2015-16 financial year.

(AQW 7150/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The final budget of each Health and Social Care Trust for the 2015/16 financial year has been reported in their published annual accounts. This information is already in the public domain.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health what plans her Department has to reduce waiting lists for outpatients.

(AQW 7151/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I have said many times that long waiting times are unacceptable to me. I will therefore bring forward a plan, by January 2017 that will clearly set out how, over the next five years, how we will address waiting lists.

Key areas of innovation that we are considering for the plan, subject to securing the required investment, include: the further development of Ambulatory Assessment and Treatment Centres which will allow patients to be assessed diagnosed and if required receive a treatment or procedure all on one day. I recently visited similar facilities in Royal Victoria Hospital and in the Mater, and I was impressed to see the positive impact that they have on the experience for patients, and for staff.

Elective Care Centres will also be established for less complex planned treatment. The centres will be a resource for the region and the way they operate will be designed around patients. However Elective Care Centres are not the solution to the unacceptable delays currently faced by patients but part of a holistic approach to patient centred care for the future.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health what plans she has to increase the number of GPs.

(AQW 7153/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: In 'Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together' I committed to increase the number of GP training places over the next two years to 111. Building on the rise in training numbers agreed earlier this year, this represents an increase of more than 70% in GP training places within a three year period. In addition, I will redirect funding for undergraduate training so that undergraduate medical students get more experience of general practice, helping to better prepare doctors for a role in primary care.

I have also committed to taking a number of other actions aimed at building capacity and capability within general practice and addressing the challenges GPs face. I will invest in a future model of primary care based on multidisciplinary teams embedded around general practice. By March 2017, every GP practice will have a named district nurse, health visitor and social worker to work with and I will continue to invest in the rollout of the practice-based pharmacists scheme across the North. In addition, I have committed to further investment in technology to help free up GP time, through the continued rollout of the AskMyGP online and telephone triage system. I will also bring forward a consultation on the role of GP Federations here and whether they should become health service bodies.

These commitments will build on the already significant investment in general practice over recent years and reflect some of the recommendations of the GP-led Care Working Group. That report identified a number of other actions aimed at addressing the pressures facing general practice and ensuring that it remains an attractive career choice for newly qualified doctors. It is my intention to provide a full response to the working group's recommendations before the end of the year.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister of Health how many social worker posts are filled by agency staff.

(AQW 7165/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of social worker posts filled by agency staff is not held by the Department.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister of Health what percentage of GP posts in each of the 349 GP practices are filled by locum GPs.

(AQW 7166/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: GP practices are independent contractors and are responsible for engaging locums as required. Therefore, the information requested is not collected centrally and is not available.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister of Health to detail the cost of employing agency staff to fill social worker posts in each Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last five years; and what this figure represents as a percentage of the total cost of employing social workers in each Trust.

(AQW 7167/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: HSC Trusts have provided the following information showing the cost of social worker agency spend and social worker agency spend represented as a proportion of the social worker payroll for each Trust in each of the last five years where available:

Table 1 – Cost of Social Worker Agency Spend

Year	BHSCT Social Worker Agency cost (£)	WHSCT Social Worker Agency cost (£)	SHSCT Social Worker Agency cost (£)	NHSCT Social Worker Agency cost (£)	SEHSCT Social Worker Agency cost (£)
2011/12	Not available	357,000	48,874	850,000	606,000
2012/13	476,617	211,000	102,012	996,000	553,000
2013/14	446,275	771,000	42,152	582,000	553,000
2014/15	1,132,323	629,000	70,531	409,000	612,000
2015/16	1,672,647	1,112,000	166,538	452,000	1,198,000

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

Table 2 – Social Worker Agency Spend as a % of Social Worker Paybill

Year	BHSCT % of Trust Social Worker paybill	WHSCT % of Trust Social Worker paybill	SHSCT % of Trust Social Worker paybill	NHSCT % of Trust Social Worker paybill	SEHSCT % of Trust Social Worker paybill
2011/12	Not available	1.31	0.18	2.17	1.94
2012/13	1.12	0.77	0.37	2.47	1.72
2013/14	0.93	2.56	0.15	1.43	1.69
2014/15	2.17	1.98	0.24	0.93	1.82
2015/16	3.01	3.21	0.53	0.98	3.46

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health for an explanation for each under delivery of commissioned volumes of each core elective activity across each specialty in each hospital over each quarter in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7198/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Delivery of commissioned volumes of core elective activity is reliant on a number of factors, including unscheduled care pressures and the need for a wide range of staff to always be in place at the required times. In practice, this is not always the case due to operational difficulties such as long term sickness absence, maternity leave, vacancies, recruitment difficulties etc.

The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) continues to work with HSC Trusts to produce elective improvement plans for a number of specialties where there has been an underdelivery of core capacity in the first half of 2016/17.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 4277/16-21, on how many occasions in the last 12 months have independent (i) voluntary; and (ii) private ambulance service providers been utilised to provide support to Ambulance Service; and to detail the cost on each occasion.

(AQW 7202/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Ambulance Service (NIAS) regularly uses voluntary and private ambulance service providers to support emergency and non-emergency patient flows. The table below gives the number of occasions in the last twelve months when voluntary and private ambulance providers were used to support HSC emergency ambulance provision. Voluntary and private ambulance services are used mainly to provide transport in response to healthcare professional calls, which are requests for ambulance transport from GPs, nurses, hospitals, approved social workers, etc. Where voluntary and private ambulance services are utilised in Category A (life threatening) or Category B (serious but not life threatening) calls, they are not responding as the first response to emergency incidents; a NIAS resource will already be in attendance with the patient, or if attending a lower category call the voluntary/private ambulance crew may arrive on scene first and update the call via Emergency Ambulance Control due to the patient's condition having changed from when the 999 call was received.

Number of occasions when voluntary and private ambulance service providers were used: November 2015 to October 2016

Type of call					
Category A	Category B	Category C	Healthcare Professional Calls	Routine	Total
64	110	105	5,878	475	6,632

The expenditure on voluntary and private ambulance services during this period was £1.3 million.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to detail any financial estimations (i) complied by; or (ii) provided to her Department on the likely costs of implementing in full the outworkings of (a) Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together; and (b) Systems and Not Structures: Changing Health and Social Care.

(AQW 7203/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The transformation programme outlined in my ministerial statement, Delivering Together, was underpinned by the Expert Panel's report, as well as other recent reports and cannot happen without investment.

The cost of transformation may be significant and the approach will be iterative over the next 10 years. At this point, it is not possible to be definitive about the cost of the overall programme of work. Once the process of design and co-production has started financial requirements will become clearer.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health what plans her Department has to adapt the recommendation made by the Association of Social Workers to establish a task force to take forward a whole systems approach to tackling unnecessary bureaucracy within social services, with a focus on developing IT solutions.

(AQW 7213/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I welcome the Workload Survey Report which was provided by NIASW in September 2016. The report acknowledges that whilst the survey identifies some challenges, efforts have been by the Department and HSC to make improvements and reduce bureaucracy. Senior officials in the Department have met with the Directors of Social Work in each Trust who have agreed to drive forward the reduction of unnecessary bureaucracy at a systems level in the HSCT's. The HSC Trust Directors have also met with NIASW representatives to discuss the findings of this report and they have indicated their support to address the issues raised, and their commitment to support the social services workforce.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health why mental health provision is 8.5 per cent of the Health budget despite mental health constituting approximately 25 per cent of health need; and whether she will change this ratio for the 2016-17 budget.

(AQW 7214/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There have been increases in mental health expenditure during the last decade, but there is a legacy of underinvestment and unmet need and, as I outlined in the Assembly on 15 November, this will take some time to address. I am committed to moving towards parity of esteem, to ensure that mental health receives the time, effort and resource required to meet local needs.

The 2017/18 budget is still under consideration across the Executive but it is clear that we face a very challenging financial situation. I am fully aware of the significant issues with regard to mental health and I am committed to improving services. Whilst I am actively making the case for more resources for mental health, it is also incumbent on us to get the best value for the money we already spend, and systemic reform is important in this regard. For example, the Health and Social Care Board is currently working up proposals for a managed care network to better utilise existing expertise across Trusts and promote uniformity and better continuity of care across the region.

The pressure on mental health services also highlights that fundamental reshaping of the health and social care service is vital to enable money to be released across the system so that it can be targeted to those areas that need it most.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister of Health whether she will allocate funding to the Mental Health Street Triage Pilot in Belfast; and if so, when the funding will be allocated.

(AQW 7253/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department is represented on a working group, chaired by the Police Service, which also comprises representatives from the Public Health Agency, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Belfast City Council, Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership, Lifeline, Bridge of Hope, Lighthouse, Start 360 and Extern. The group met for the first time on 27 September to discuss how a street triage pilot might be developed.

Scoping of existing provision is now under way, and a number of costed models will be developed and eventually considered for prioritisation.

It is therefore too early to consider funding allocations.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health what specialist training on working with children with a visual impairment is given to rehabilitation staff in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 7254/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Health and Social Care Trusts' rehabilitation staff have availed of a range of specialist training in working with children who have a visual impairment including:

- (i) Blind Children UK/Guide Dogs, 'Making it Child Friendly' which focuses on play therapy and resources for use in assisting assessments of those with a visual impairment;
- (ii) Sensory Stimuli – 2 day training course which focuses on equipment and sensory rooms for those with a visual impairment;
- (iii) The Foundation Degree in Rehabilitation Work at Birmingham City University;
- (iv) Level 5 Diploma in Deaf Blind Studies, Open University, covering children with a hearing and/or visual impairment; and
- (v) Optometrists working in partnership with Trust rehabilitation staff.

Where other specialist training for Trust rehabilitation staff is identified then this is considered by the Trust's Regional Training Lead for sensory support services.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health (i) whether all school children are screened for visual impairments; (ii) what types of school screening is used in each Health and Social Care Trust; and (iii) how many children have been identified to have a visual impairment that cannot be corrected with glasses over the last five years.

(AQW 7255/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- i. Screening for visual impairments is offered to all school children as part of the P1 health appraisal which is carried out by school nurses.
- ii. Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts use the Logarithm of the Minimum Angle of Resolution (logMAR) test to determine a child's visual acuity.
- iii. The HSC Trusts do not hold this information.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health (i) to detail the specific impact on the development of policy within her Department from the implementation of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016; and (ii) what mechanisms are in place to achieve this.

(AQW 7262/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) In line with the existing Executive commitment from 2002, which was reaffirmed in 2009, individual Departments are currently responsible for rural proofing their respective new and revised policies and strategies, meaning the implementation of the Rural Needs Act should not have a markedly different effect on the development of Departmental policies. Officials in my Department routinely develop and review policy in line with all statutory requirements and best practice guidance, including rural proofing, and that approach will continue in the future.

The Act will come into operation for Government Departments on 1 June 2017, and the existing training course for Departmental policy makers on rural-proofing, "Think Rural", will be updated to reflect the requirements of the Act. In addition, the existing guidance for public authorities on rural proofing "Thinking Rural:

- (ii) The Essential Guide to Rural Proofing" will be reviewed and updated by DAERA to take account of the new statutory requirements.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health whether there are any plans to implement a scheme similar to the NHS England Accessible Information Standard.

(AQW 7289/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: While there are currently no plans to implement the NHS England Accessible Information Standard in the north of Ireland, the guide 'Making Communication Accessible for All'- A Guide for Health and Social Care Staff, was launched in June 2016 by the Health and Social Care Board. The guide outlines good practice in ensuring that those who have a disability or communication difficulty receive the support they need from HSC staff.

The guide was co-produced by a range of disability organisations and, on balance, it is considered prudent to first see how this guide works in practice. In early 2017, my Department will write to Health and Social Care Trusts to seek assurance that they are fully complying with the guide. This exercise will help inform any future decision about the need to introduce the NHS Accessible Information Standard here in the north.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to list each Ministerial Direction she has issued since May 2016, including (i) the date; (ii) its purpose (iii) whether she was overruling any concerns of officials either before or after the Direction; and (iv) whether each Direction was accompanied by a full business case.

(AQW 7300/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There have been no Ministerial Directions issued since May 2016.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health to detail the out-of-hours GP provision in Fermanagh and South Tyrone.

(AQW 7302/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: GP out of hours services are provided to the entire population of the Western Local Commissioning Group area by Western Urgent Care across five bases – Strabane, Omagh, Altnagelvin, Enniskillen and Limavady.

The out of hours centres in Strabane and Limavady provide services from 7pm to 11pm on weekdays and from 8am to 11pm during weekends and banks holidays. The out of hours centres in Omagh, Altnagelvin and Enniskillen provide services from 6pm to 8.30am on weekdays and 24 hour cover across weekends and bank holidays.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of farm animals rescued by the Fire Service in the last three years; and the cost of these rescues.

(AQW 7303/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Fire and Rescue Service does not record the number of farm animals it has rescued. The table below details the estimated cost of mobilisations to animal rescues by the Fire Service in the last 3 years (November 2013 to October 2016).

Estimated Cost of Mobilised Calls 1 Nov 13 to 31 Oct 14	Estimated Cost of Mobilised Calls 1 Nov 14 to 31 Oct 15	Estimated Cost of Mobilised Calls 1 Nov 15 to 31 Oct 16
£	£	£
£227,351	£271,325	£277,14837

Please note that these costs are based on the average mobilisation cost per Station where each incident occurred, calculated on a full cost recovery basis.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health when she will answer AQW 4710/16-21.

(AQW 7305/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I answered AQW 4710/16-21 on the 22 November 2016.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health when she will answer AQW 4708/16-21.

(AQW 7308/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I answered AQW 4708/16-21 on the 22 November 2016.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of agency social workers employed; and the cost of employing agency social workers, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7319/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of social worker posts filled by agency staff is not held by the Department. The table below details the social worker agency costs broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five financial years, where available.

Year	BHSCT Social Worker Agency cost (£)	WHSCT Social Worker Agency cost (£)	SHSCT Social Worker Agency cost (£)	NHSCT Social Worker Agency cost (£)	SEHSCT Social Worker Agency cost (£)
2011/12	Not available	357,000	48,874	850,000	606,000
2012/13	476,617	211,000	102,012	996,000	553,000
2013/14	446,275	771,000	42,152	582,000	553,000
2014/15	1,132,323	629,000	70,531	409,000	612,000
2015/16	1,672,647	1,112,000	166,538	452,000	1,198,000

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health to outline her plans for social care workers being based in general practice.
(AQW 7320/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am committed to enhancing support in primary care and utilising the skills and knowledge of the multi disciplinary team, which will include social work, to best effect in meeting the health and well being needs of the population. Social work at its best involves effective partnerships with people and communities and also across professions and sectors in the pursuance of social wellbeing. Community development approaches by social workers can support communities to strengthen local capacity to maintain health and well being and to make connection between the individual, family and appropriate community assets. As such social workers will undoubtedly have a valuable contribution to make in any new models of care which will be co-designed by the HSC, and by the people and communities that use health and wellbeing services.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health to detail the social worker post vacancy rates in each Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last five years.
(AQW 7321/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on social worker vacancy rates in each of the last five years is detailed in the tables below.

HSC Trust Social Worker (Headcount) Vacancy Rate

HSC Trust	Mar-12	Mar-13	Mar-14	Mar-15	2016*
Belfast	6.45%	12.03%	6.72%	7.72%	8.67%
Northern	4.56%	4.21%	1.75%	2.45%	4.44%
South Eastern	0.98%	0.49%	0.95%	0.00%	1.68%
Southern	2.88%	1.40%	1.11%	2.35%	5.15%
Western	2.94%	1.24%	1.36%	1.36%	2.14%

Source: NI HSC Workforce Vacancy Survey

* Vacancy rate for 2016 is calculated from information from the workforce census at 31 March 2016 and vacancies at November 2016.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health whether social care workers will receive access to the Electronic Care Record.
(AQW 7322/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There is no barrier to any health and social care professional who has access to the HSC network receiving access to the Electronic Care Record, providing there is a justified need for account creation. Social care workers can receive access by submitting an access request through their organisations' established procedures. Such requests are subject to validation processes to ensure that appropriate access levels are granted.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health for an update on the departmental workforce planning reviews currently being conducted.
(AQW 7323/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The workforce planning reviews currently being led by my Department are set out in the table below:

	Review
1	General medical (overall future requirements for doctors in HSC)
2	Domiciliary Care
3	Anaesthetics (medical specialists)
4	Imaging Services
5	Dental
6	Intensive Care Medicine (medical specialists)
7	Acute Medicine (medical specialists)
8	Neurology (medical specialists)
9	Palliative Care
10	Urology (medical specialists)
11	Occupational Medicine (medical specialists)
12	Geriatrics (medical specialists)

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health to detail (i) the number of legal cases brought against social care workers in each of the last three years; (ii) the cost of such cases; and (iii) how her Department plans to limit cases and mitigate costs. (AQW 7324/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) The number Social Care litigation cases for the period requested were:
 - In the year 2013/14: there were 7 cases
 - In the year 2014/15: there were 0 cases
 - In the year 2015/16: there was 1 case
- (ii) The total cost of these cases was £99,197.
- (iii) Organisations that provide Social Care services must have robust governance processes in place, including those in the independent sector. There are a wide range of strategies to promote good Social Care practice and to detect negligent practice when it occurs. The provision of high quality and safe Social Care is provided for through the following mechanisms:
 - The Social Care Council (NISCC)
 - Regulation and inspection by the Regulation Quality and Inspection Authority (RQIA)
 - Responsible Authorities staff vetting, recruitment and training programmes
 - Serious Adverse Incident (SAI) learning events
 - The operation of the HSC Complaints Procedures
 - HSC and Independent Sector Disciplinary Procedures
 - Public Interest Disclosures under HSC Whistle-Blowing Policy.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Health to outline the role of social workers that will be based in general practice. (AQW 7325/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am committed to enhancing support in primary care and utilising the skills and knowledge of the multi disciplinary team to best effect in meeting the health and well being needs of the population. Social work at its best involves effective partnerships with people and communities and also across professions and sectors in the pursuance of social wellbeing. Community development approaches by social workers can support communities to strengthen local capacity to maintain health and well being and to make connection between the individual, family and appropriate community assets. As such social workers will undoubtedly have a valuable contribution to make in any new models of care which will be co-designed by the HSC, and by the people and communities that use health and wellbeing services.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of special guardianship orders being introduced in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 7326/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department consulted on proposals to introduce Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) in the north of Ireland in 2006. Provision, which would introduce SGOs here, is included in the draft Adoption and Children Bill, which will be subject to public consultation. In consulting on the draft Bill, it is also intended to seek views on a number of options to further strengthen the implementation of SGOs here, should they be introduced. I intend to seek Executive approval to consult on the draft Bill, with a view to introducing the Bill in the Assembly as soon as possible in the current mandate.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Health for an update on adoption and foster care legislation.

(AQW 7327/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer the Member to my answer to AQW 4805/16-21.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Health whether her Department has plans to increase administrative staff numbers with the aim of reducing the administrative burden on social workers.

(AQW 7328/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The provision of support staff for social workers is an operational matter for the employing organisation.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Health what safeguards are in place to ensure that families which contribute to a relatives stay in a residential or nursing facility are not financially burdened by mistakes in invoicing and the expectation of repayment in full. (AQW 7365/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Departmental Circular HSC (ECCU) 1/2010 'Care Management, Provision of Services and Charging Guidance' advises that where a service user selects residential or nursing home accommodation which is more expensive than that which a Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust can secure, the additional cost must be met by a third party such as a family member. In such circumstances, the HSC Trusts should enter into legally binding agreements with the family member.

To ensure families are not financially burdened, if an error is identified, the relevant HSC Trust will seek to correct this. If a query is raised, HSC Trusts may suspend issuing an invoice, pending completion of an investigation undertaken in line with the operational procedures implemented in each HSC Trust.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health to provide an answer to AQW 4662/16-21.
(AQW 7369/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I answered AQW 4662/16-21 on the 18 November 2016.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health to detail the total cost involved in establishing her private office in the South Tyrone Hospital.
(AQW 7372/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The total cost of establishing a private office in the South Tyrone Hospital is £5,426.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health how many staff will work on a full time basis in her private office in South Tyrone Hospital.
(AQW 7373/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: No staff will work on a full time basis in my private office in South Tyrone Hospital. My private secretary and I will use the office as a base when I am conducting Ministerial business in the surrounding area.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Health for an update on the proposal to scrap the Health and Social Care Board; and how this will impact staff in each location.

(AQW 7377/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: On 25 October 2016 to align with the publication of my vision for health and social care, Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together I wrote to all HSCB staff confirming the HSCB would close and that I would move quickly to conclude the work on the new approach to planning and management of HSC services.

I have confirmed previously that there are no plans to centralise functions and jobs in Belfast upon the closure of the HSCB. I owe the staff in the Board the courtesy of talking to them first about their future and it is my intention to do this as soon as possible.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health what consideration she has given to having a social worker present in all GP surgeries.
(AQW 7383/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am committed to enhancing support in primary care and utilising the skills and knowledge of the multi disciplinary team to best effect in meeting the health and well being needs of the population. Social work at its best involves effective partnerships with people and communities and also across professions and sectors in the pursuance of social wellbeing. Community development approaches by social workers can support communities to strengthen local capacity to maintain health and well being and to make connection between the individual, family and appropriate community assets. As such social workers will undoubtedly have a valuable contribution to make in any new models of care which will be co-designed by the HSC, and by the people and communities that use health and wellbeing services.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health what support mechanisms are in place for social workers experiencing high levels of stress and pressure.

(AQW 7384/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Responsible Authorities in the north of Ireland make a number of resources, toolkits and supports available to Social Workers to address high levels of stress and pressure within the profession such as;

- Line Manager support through a supervision process
- Access to free independent confidential support and counselling services such as Staff Care and Care Call
- HSC Occupational Health Service support
- A HSC Coaching / mentoring network
- Health and Wellbeing support mechanisms, including access to training and a resilience toolkit
- Learning and development opportunities to build resilience and understand the indicators of stress and burnout.

Examples of Departmental and regional initiatives that may contribute to alleviating stresses and pressures on Social Workers are;

- An increase in Social Work recruitment into HSC organisations
- Continued and significant departmental investment in Social Work Training and post-qualifying training
- The use of Caseload Weighting Guidance for Children's Services
- The development of a Regional Workload Management Framework for Adult Services
- Development and roll-out of new Information Systems and Technology.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health what consideration she has given to introducing administrative IT support staff for social workers to reduce their paperwork.

(AQW 7385/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The provision of IT support staff for social workers is an operational matter for the employing organisation.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health (i) to list each request for a meeting she has received since May 2016, including (a) on what date they were received; and (ii) from whom they were received; and (ii) which meetings (a) have taken place; (b) were declined; (c) have been acknowledged and agreed but not yet taken place; and (d) were not acknowledged or answered.

(AQW 7386/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health in light of recent comments at Londonderry Magistrates Court about the failure of the Western Health and Social Care Trust to release medical evidence to police, (i) how many staff are employed in the Trust's records departments; (ii) how many record departments are in the Trust; (iii) how many staff employed in this area are on sick leave; (iv) how many outstanding requests for information are on record; and (v) what is the average time taken to respond to requests.

(AQW 7489/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) There are 36 whole time equivalent (WTE) staff employed in the Trust's Medical Records departments;
- (ii) There are four Medical Records departments;
- (iii) There are currently 3 Medical Records staff on sick leave;
- (iv) The Trust is currently processing 207 subject access requests, 133 Form 81 requests and 27 Freedom of Information requests;
- (v) The Trust does not hold data on average time taken to respond to requests due to the volume and complexity of the various requests received and different legislative timeframes which apply.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health why the £1 million set aside in the current financial year for the Health and Social Care Innovation Fund has not been made available.

(AQW 7490/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The launch of the Health and Social Care Innovation Scheme has been delayed. However, it is intended that the Scheme will open for applications in early 2017.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Health how she is promoting better use of antibiotics.

(AQW 7491/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is one of the most serious global threats to human health. Antimicrobial stewardship is a key element of my Department's Strategy to Tackle Antimicrobial Resistance (STAR).

This year updated guidelines on the management of infections have been produced for use in primary and community care. HSC Board resources linked to these guidelines have been updated and disseminated.

Other initiatives to support general practice with the appropriate prescribing of antibiotics include the appointment of Practice-Based Pharmacists who will be responsible for antimicrobial stewardship. In addition, a new Locally Enhanced Service is being developed for GPs. To participate in the service, a GP practice must appoint an "Antibiotic Champion" who will be responsible for taking forward antimicrobial stewardship.

In secondary care the Antimicrobial Pharmacists Network is well established. Part of its remit is to promote prudent antibiotic use along with other activities outlined in STAR. Furthermore, the Public Health Agency is taking forward the development of surveillance of antimicrobial resistance and antimicrobial usage.

The Agriculture Minister and I recently promoted European Antibiotics Awareness Day to highlight the importance of responsible use of antibiotics in both human health and agriculture. This cooperation reflects the importance of the "One health" approach which coordinates policy across health, agriculture and food safety in tackling antimicrobial resistance.

AMR is a complex issue which requires a multi-faceted response and close cooperation between agencies. My Department leads the Strategic Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare-Associated Infections Group which includes leaders from healthcare, public health, DAERA, and the Food Standards Agency. To drive progress at operational level, the PHA leads the Regional Healthcare Associated Infections and Antimicrobial Stewardship Improvement Board.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health what action is being taken to secure North-South collaboration in radiotherapy services.

(AQW 7530/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The new £66m North West Cancer Centre, which will start delivering radiotherapy to patients later this month, is a flagship example of North-South co-operation – the new centre is part funded by the health authorities in the South and will treat patients from Donegal.

Having a centre where cancer patients can receive the treatment they need without having to travel for hours to either Belfast or Dublin will be a major boost to the people of the North West. It is expected that when fully operational the new Unit will provide radiotherapy treatment to approximately 1,159 patients from the North and 385 patients from the South annually.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health what work her Department has taken to secure the growth of the life sciences industry.

(AQW 7533/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: In February 2015 MATRIX, the North of Ireland's Science Industry Panel, published its Life and Health Sciences Foresight Report. The report was based on an in-depth analysis of the life and health sciences sector in the North and it highlighted the priority areas to be progressed in order to build the right conditions for sectoral growth.

A steering group was subsequently established, jointly led by my Department and the Department for the Economy, to take forward the development of a Life and Health Sciences Strategic Action Plan based on the evidence in the MATRIX report. The Plan, which we hope to see finalised in early 2017, will set the context for a new health and prosperity agenda for the North over the next decade and beyond. It will aim to deliver greater connectedness between the health service, industry and academia with a view to enabling a continuum of support from early stage research through to commercialisation. My priority as Health Minister is to see it leading to improved health outcomes by facilitating the development and adoption of healthcare innovations.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 4517/16-21, for a breakdown of the £13m referred to in the answer.

(AQW 7570/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: A breakdown of costs was provided by the Inquiry and is set out below:

	Total £k
Inquiry Legal Costs including Chairman	4,260
Inquiry Admin Costs	1,813
Family Legal Costs	2,544
ICT Costs	1,067
Accommodation	963
Banbridge Courthouse	549
Other Costs (expert witnesses etc.)	1,793
Total	12,988

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the projected 2016-17 annual salary cost of (i) her Department; (ii) each of her departmental arm's-length bodies; and (iii) each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 7585/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The current projected 2016-17 annual salary costs of my Department, each of my departmental arm's-length bodies and each Health and Social Care Trust are set out in the table below:

	2016-17 Year-End Forecast £'m
Department of Health	22.2
Departmental Arm's Length Bodies	
BSO	48.8
HSCB	25.1
NIBTS	6.2
NIFRS	61.5
NIGALA	3.3
NIMDTA	6.7
NIPEC	0.8

	2016-17 Year-End Forecast £'m
NISCC	2.2
PCC	1.2
PHA	16.5
RQIA	6.2
Total	178.5
Health and Social Care Trusts	
BHSCT	810.0
NHSCT	412.6
NIAS	52.3
SEHSCT	376.0
SHSCT	390.0
WHsCT	378.0
Total	2,418.9

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of full-time equivalent staff employed in the (i) Health and Social Care Board; (ii) Public Health Agency; and (iii) Business Services Organisation, in each of the last three years, including as of 1 November 2016.

(AQW 7587/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of staff employed in the HSC Board, Public Health Agency and Business Services Organisation at 30 September in each of the last three years is detailed in the table below.

Staff Employed at 30 September (Headcount & Whole Time Equivalent)

At 30 September	HSC Board		PHA		BSO*	
	HC	WTE	HC	WTE	HC	WTE
2014	592	540.2	335	315.7	1,366	1,305.0
2015	594	538.9	323	304.2	1,412	1,342.0
2016	531	479.5	295	280.0	1,448	1,369.7

Source: Human Resources, Payroll, Travel and Subsistence system (HRPTS)

*Note the increase in BSO is due to the transfer of HSC Trust staff to BSO Shared Services.

Information on the number of staff employed in HSC Organisations is published in the quarterly HSC Key Facts Workforce Bulletin. This information, for quarters March 2015 to September 2016, can be found on the DoH website at the following link:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/staff-numbers>

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health when she last met the Chief Executive Officers of each of the Health and Social Care Trusts; and for a summary of the issues discussed.

(AQW 7589/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I last met with the Chief Executive Officers of each of the Health and Social Care Trusts collectively on 3 November 2016 to discuss HSC Resilience Planning for Winter 2016.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health to detail the attendance figures for (i) Bangor; and (ii) Ards Minor Injury Units for each of the last four years.

(AQW 7650/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of attendances (new, unplanned and planned reviews) at both Bangor and Ards Minor Injuries Units (MIU) are published on an annual basis, and available to view or download for each of the last five years from:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/emergency-care-and-ambulance-statistics>

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health whether she will examine the issue of car parking fees at the Ulster Hospital, with particular reference to the free car parking provided for consultants and senior management, when all other staff members pay for parking.

(AQW 7651/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Car parking charges for staff at the Ulster Hospital are set at a consistent value regardless of grade or perceived status. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health how many people are diagnosed with polio; and what action her Department is taking to contribute to the global commitment to eradicate polio.

(AQW 7696/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Data on the number of those diagnosed with polio in the north of Ireland is not held.

The Public Health Agency oversees the implementation of immunisation programmes in the north of Ireland and it offers doses of polio containing vaccine to children and young people in line with the Joint Committee for Immunisation and Vaccination guidelines.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 3018/16-21, to detail the waiting times for autism services in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7701/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The tables overleaf detail the number of children waiting for specialised intervention following an autism assessment in each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust at 30 September in each of the last three years.

Table 1

HSC Trust	Waiting times (weeks) at 30 September 2014				Total
	0 – 4	>4 – 8	>8 – 13	>13	
Belfast	42	42	50	39	173
Northern	61	31	42	34	168
South Eastern	16	0	0	0	16
Southern	8	0	0	0	8
Western	3	9	9	1	22
Total	130	82	101	74	387

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Table 2

HSC Trust	Waiting times (weeks) at 30 September 2015				Total
	0 – 4	>4 – 8	>8 – 13	>13	
Belfast	40	32	39	29	140
Northern	43	39	19	34	135
South Eastern	17	1	0	0	18
Southern	2	0	2	0	4
Western	22	6	7	3	38
Total	124	78	67	66	335

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Table 3

HSC Trust	Waiting times (weeks) at 30 September 2016				Total
	0 – 4	>4 – 8	>8 – 13	>13	
Belfast	53	37	61	74	225
Northern	125	21	11	10	167
South Eastern	76	13	1	0	90

HSC Trust	Waiting times (weeks) at 30 September 2016				Total
	0 – 4	>4 – 8	>8 – 13	>13	
Southern	3	1	0	0	4
Western	2	6	14	23	45
Total	259	78	87	107	531

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health what plans her Department has to introduce a regional strategy to support people affected by Huntington's Disease.

(AQW 7704/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: While I have no plans to produce a regional strategy for Huntington's Disease, the member will wish to note that in October 2015, my Department published 'Providing High Quality Care for people affected by Rare Diseases – The NI Implementation Plan for Rare Diseases'.

The plan reaffirms my Department's commitment to ensure that people living with a rare disease such as Huntington's Disease have access to the best evidence-based care and treatment in the north of Ireland.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health how many Huntington's Disease nurses are employed in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 7705/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There is currently 1.00 WTE Huntington's Disease nurse employed in the Belfast HSC Trust.

The Northern, South Eastern, Southern and Western HSC Trusts do not employ any specialist Huntington's Disease nurses.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health what steps her Department will take to address the inequality of service received by people impacted by Huntington's Disease.

(AQW 7706/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: In October 2015, my Department published 'Providing High Quality Care for people affected by Rare Diseases – The NI Implementation Plan for Rare Diseases'.

The plan reaffirms my Department's commitment to ensure that people living with a rare disease such as Huntington's Disease have access to the best evidence-based care and treatment in the north of Ireland.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 6137/16-21, when the measures being taken to ensure that a GP service will be maintained at the Antrim Coast Medical Practice, Glenarm, will be outlined.

(AQW 7707/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: As set out in AQW 6137/16-21, The HSCB advertised a new full-time contract for the provision of GMS services in Glenarm, welcoming single or joint applications. The contract was advertised widely through a range of media. Sessional doctors also received communication on the advertisement through Northern Ireland Sessional Doctors Association. The closing date for applications was 18th November 2016. Unfortunately as no applications were received, the HSCB will now explore the alternative options to ensure GP services in Glenarm continue to be delivered when the current contractor retires at the end of March 2017.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 6488/16-21, (i) why the requested information is not available; and (ii) who is responsible for recording fees paid to recruitment agencies.

(AQW 7716/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) The Department does not routinely collect information on the amount paid to each recruitment agency. Only total expenditure by category is captured. To provide the information requested in a consistent format would therefore exceed the disproportionate cost threshold.
- (ii) Individual Arms-length bodies are responsible for recording information paid to recruitment agencies.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 6491/16-21, why this information is not available.

(AQW 7717/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested in AQW 6491/16-21 is not collected centrally by the department and was requested from Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts. The HSC Trusts stated that this information is not routinely recorded and could only be obtained through a manual trawl of records at a disproportionate cost.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 6491/16-21, what evidence or research confirms the importance of timely treatment following a first episode of psychosis.
(AQW 7718/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Clinical Guideline [CG178] (2014) Psychosis and schizophrenia in adults: prevention and management, recommends that early intervention in psychosis services should be accessible to all people with a first episode or first presentation of psychosis, irrespective of the person's age or the duration of untreated psychosis. This guideline was endorsed by the Department in April 2015. The NICE process reviews all available evidence before recommendations are made.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 6488/16-21, whether each organisation listed was contacted to determine the information before a response was issued.
(AQW 7719/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Total expenditure information was requested from Arms-length bodies to answer AQW 6488, only where it was not already held by the Department.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Health to detail each occasion (i) she; (ii) her predecessor; or (iii) any of her officials attended a meeting (a) with; or (b) at the request or facilitation of, Brown Rudnick over the last three years, including the date and purpose of each meeting.
(AQW 7739/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Neither my officials nor I have attended any meetings with Brown Rudnick.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health with Bannview surgery close to closure, what she is doing to address the GP shortage in the Portadown area.
(AQW 7744/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware that Bannview Medical Practice in Portadown is currently under significant pressure. The Health and Social Care Board is working with the practice to secure locum cover and has advertised the contract to provide general medical services from the practice. The Board is continuing to work with all local practices to ensure that the provision of the full range of services resumes as soon as possible, and to develop a longer term solution to deliver sustainable GP services in the Portadown area.

In recognition of the pressures facing GP-led services, I have committed to a number of actions aimed at building sustainable GP services across the North. I will increase the number of GP training places over the next two years to 111 and will redirect funding for undergraduate training so that undergraduate medical students get more experience of general practice. I will invest in a future model of primary care based on multidisciplinary teams embedded around general practice. By March 2017, every GP practice will have a named district nurse, health visitor and social worker to work with and I will continue to invest in the rollout of the practice-based pharmacists scheme across the North. My intention is that these initiatives—together with planned investment in new technology such as phone and online triage systems—will help to ease GP workload pressures and attract more doctors into general practice.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health how many businesses have been prosecuted for contraventions of the Sunbeds Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.
(AQW 7748/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Sunbeds Act (NI) 2011 came into force on 1 May 2012. The legislation is enforced by district councils. Since May 2012, 6 prosecutions have been taken and 22 Fixed Penalty Notices served for contraventions of the legislation.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 4739/16-21, to address this question not from the service available but from the number of patients registered in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust.
(AQW 7749/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: AQW 4739/16-21 asked 'To ask the Minister of Health to detail the (i) longest; and (ii) average time patients are waiting for urgent heart surgery in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust'.

At 30th September 2016, there were 34 patients residing within the Southern HSC Trust area who were waiting for urgent cardiac surgery. The longest wait was 40.6 weeks and the average wait was 12.2 weeks.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an

increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of nursing vacancies in each Health and Social Care Trust, broken down by (i) grade; and (ii) speciality.

(AQW 7807/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer the member to my response given to AQW 4850/16-21 which details the number of nursing vacancies at Band 5 and above by HSC Trust and speciality.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health to outline the overall capital spend on Craigavon Area Hospital site in the last five years; and the planned spend in the next five years.

(AQW 7811/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below provides overall capital spend on the Craigavon Area Hospital site over the last 5 years.

Year	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Spend £000's	12,771	24,557	12,470	10,781	12,594

Future capital investment projects at Craigavon Area Hospital site will be considered by my Department and the Executive as part of Budget 2017 which will conclude by the end of this year.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health how many victims of domestic abuse are there in each Health and Social Care Trust area; and how many of these people have been separated from their children by Social Services.

(AQW 7812/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Figures on the total number of victims of domestic abuse are not held by the Department of Health.

Information on the number of victims of domestic abuse separated from their children by Social Services is not centrally available and could only be provided by a manual trawl through thousands of files at disproportionate cost.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health how many children are in (i) family care placement, kinship care; (ii) foster placement; (iii) placed on interim care orders; (iv) placed on supervision orders; and (v) placed on contact orders.

(AQW 7813/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) It has been assumed that family care/kinship care refers to children placed in kinship foster care placements. At 30 September 2016 there were 987 children in kinship foster care placements.
- (ii) At 30 September 2016 there were 1,277 children in foster care placements. This figure excludes those in kinship foster care placements.
- (iii) At 30 September 2016 379 children had been placed on an interim care order.
- (iv) There were 55 children with a supervision order at 30 September 2016.
- (v) Information on the number of children with a contact order is not routinely collected. To provide this information would require a manual trawl through hundreds of files and therefore cannot be provided due to disproportionate costs.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the scale of the pressures facing (i) unscheduled care; (ii) improving patient flow through hospitals; (iii) social care provision; and (iv) highly specialised technologies.

(AQW 7837/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There are a significant number of pressures in unscheduled care, hospital flow and social care, which are of course interlinked. Section 2 of the Expert Panel's report, Systems, not Structures, provides a comprehensive assessment of the pressures facing Health and Social Care, including hospital and social care services. The report is available on the Department's website.

With regards to highly specialised technologies, these drugs are evaluated under the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE's) Highly Specialised Technologies programme and tend to be significantly more expensive than other

medications. I have made funding available for these drugs in 2016/17; it will be for the Health and Social Care Board to assess the future resource implications for NICE recommendations under this programme as they are published.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to list each configuration of health care specialities on the grounds of staffing in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 7838/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The development and delivery of health care specialities is a continually evolving process dependent on a wide range of factors. It would not be practicable to list all the changes that have taken place over the past ten years.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to list each planned configuration of health care specialities in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 7840/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer the member to the answer to AQW /6708/16-21.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health for an update on a Northern Ireland Skin Cancer Strategy.

(AQW 7848/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department published a ten-year strategy for the prevention of skin cancer in 2011. A multi-disciplinary implementation group was established to take forward the strategy's action plan. This group meets quarterly and is jointly chaired by the Public Health Agency and Cancer Focus NI. In addition, a number of subgroups have been established to focus on specific areas of the action plan, including: public awareness; sunbeds; sun safe behaviour; and early detection.

A mid-term review to assess the progress and impact of the strategy has recently been initiated by my Department. It is expected that the review will be completed by March 2017.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health for an update on the status of the Infant Mental Health Strategy being developed by the Public Health Agency.

(AQW 7887/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Infant Mental Health Framework was issued and disseminated widely from April 2016 and can be accessed at <http://pha.site/IMHF>.

The Framework represents a commitment by the health and social care sector, as well as academic, research, voluntary and community organisations, to improve interventions from the ante-natal period through to children aged 3 years old. It has three key priorities:

- to ensure that commissioners and policy makers are fully informed of the latest evidence and interventions;
- to provide practitioners across health, social care and education disciplines with the skills to support parents and children in the development of positive infant mental health; and
- to encourage service development to ensure effective delivery of evidence based interventions for families with children where there are significant developmental risks.

Since its publication in April, governance arrangements have been established including a multi-agency Implementation Group to oversee the delivery of the framework. The Implementation Group had its first meeting June 2016 and is scheduled to meet again in January 2017.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to detail the (i) number; and (ii) location of vacancies in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

(AQW 7892/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: At 31 October 2016, there were 98.58 WTE vacancies in the NI Ambulance Service (NIAS). Details of where these vacancies are located within NIAS are provided in the table below:

Location	Vacancies (WTE)
Operations Directorate	93.41
HR & Corporate Services Directorate	1.17
Finance Directorate	3.00
Chief Executive's Office	1.00
Total	98.58

Source: NI Ambulance Service

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health to outline the level of engagement her Department has with the Patient and Client Council.

(AQW 7898/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Patient and Client Council is an Arm's Length Body of my Department.

The relationship and engagement between a Department and its Arm's Length Bodies is set out in the Department of Finance document entitled Managing Public Money NI.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health what action her Department is taking in conjunction with key agencies to address the issue of prescription medication that is obtained from illicit sources.

(AQW 7899/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department's Medicines Regulatory Group (MRG) is responsible, along with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), for enforcing aspects of the Human Medicines Regulations in respect of the unlawful possession and supply of Prescription Only Medicines.

The MRG and the MHRA work with key partner agencies including the Police and Border Force to act against those illegally importing or selling medicines. There is also regular liaison between the MRG and counterparts in the Health Products Regulation Agency in Dublin with particular regard to the illegal cross-border trade in medicines.

The MRG has had recent notable successes with significant seizures of illegal prescription medicines, including controlled drugs. For example, MRG officers took part in the Interpol co-ordinated action known as Operation Pangea from 30 May 2016 to 7 June 2016.

Involving over 100 countries, the operation was aimed at disrupting the online supply of substandard and counterfeit medicines, resulting in the interception and seizure of multiple packages destined for addresses throughout the North of Ireland. The packages contained some 90,000 tablets and injections including those medicines subject to abuse.

My officials will continue to work diligently in partnership with other key partner agencies to combat the illegal use and availability of prescription medicines to protect the legitimate medicines supply chain and ensure public safety.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health whether the whereabouts of any of the posted notifications of appointments at Altnagelvin Hospital which failed to arrive with patients have been traced or located.

(AQW 7920/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am advised by the Western HSC Trust that while they are investigating an issue raised by a patient's relative regarding notification of an outpatient's appointment, they are not aware of any wider issues at this time regarding the non receipt of posted notifications of outpatient appointments. If an issue is identified, the Trust will investigate and take corrective action.

In addition to appointment confirmation letters, the Trust also sends a text reminder (if mobile phone number has been supplied) or Voice Reminder Message (to landlines) to patients three days before appointments are due to take place.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health whether she will carry out an investigation into why some posted notifications of outpatient appointments for Altnagelvin Hospital are not arriving with patients either on time or not at all, to establish whether this is an issue with the Western Health and Social Care Trust or Royal Mail.

(AQW 7921/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am advised by the Western HSC Trust that while they are investigating an issue raised by a patient's relative regarding notification of an outpatient's appointment, they are not aware of any wider issues at this time regarding the non receipt of posted notifications of outpatient appointments. If an issue is identified, the Trust will investigate and take corrective action.

In addition to appointment confirmation letters, the Trust also sends a text reminder (if mobile phone number has been supplied) or Voice Reminder Message (to landlines) to patients three days before appointments are due to take place.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of appointments that have been missed at Altnagelvin Hospital due to a recent increase in notification letters not arriving with patients, broken down by department or speciality.

(AQW 7922/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am advised by the Western HSC Trust that while they are investigating an issue raised by a patient's relative regarding notification of an outpatient's appointment, they are not aware of any wider issues at this time regarding the non receipt of posted notifications of outpatient appointments. If an issue is identified, the Trust will investigate and take corrective action.

In addition to appointment confirmation letters, the Trust also sends a text reminder (if mobile phone number has been supplied) or Voice Reminder Message (to landlines) to patients three days before appointments are due to take place.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health how many needle replacement schemes are operational throughout Northern Ireland; and how many needles have been issued over the last five years.

(AQW 7923/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There are currently 18 needle replacement schemes operational throughout the North of Ireland.

The table outlines how many needles have been issued over the last five years:

Year	Number of needles issued
2011/12	193,405
2012/13	213,295
2013/14	237,040
2014/15	292,375
2015/16	309,570

Source: Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme, Public Health Agency

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister of Health what assurances she can give about the future of the Emergency Department at Daisy Hill Hospital.

(AQW 7924/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Daisy Hill Hospital is a key part of the Southern Health and Social Care Trust's acute hospital network along with Craigavon Area Hospital, and the Trust remains committed to a 24/7 emergency department at Daisy Hill.

Daisy Hill Hospital emergency department continues to provide 24/7 emergency care; however the shortage in Ireland and Britain of consultant and middle grade staff in emergency medicine continues to present significant challenges to the recruitment and retention of senior medical staff in the department. The Southern Health and Social Care Trust has recruited one permanent consultant and secured a number of locum agency speciality doctors on a short term basis, and is continuing to explore every recruitment option.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health for an update on Lisnaskea Health Centre; and whether a capital build will proceed.

(AQW 7928/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The business case for a new Health and Care Centre within Lisnaskea is currently being developed by the Western Health and Social Care Trust and is expected to be submitted to my Department over the next few weeks for review and approval.

A final decision on the timing of this project will be taken as soon as possible after the Executive's capital budget allocation for Health for 2017-18 and the three following years is known.

Following approval it would take approximately 30 to 36 months to complete the project.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health how many of the Serious Adverse Incidents since October 2013 are in relation to child deaths; and how many of these were from natural causes.

(AQW 7937/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Since October 2013, 387 Serious Adverse Incidents (SAIs) were reported by HSC Trusts in relation to child deaths. Information relating to the cause of death is not available.

There is a requirement to record every child death as an SAI which was introduced in October 2013. The rationale behind this decision was to provide clarity in reporting child deaths and to enhance the culture of learning and review.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the current waiting times for general surgery across each relevant hospital site.

(AQW 7938/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of patients' waiting for admission in the General Surgery specialty in each hospital is shown in the following table for the position at 30th September 2016, the most recent quarter for which official statistics are available.

Hospital	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Belfast City	356	318	323	202	538	349
Mater	255	227	284	142	278	169
Royal Victoria	136	86	86	39	220	507
Antrim ¹	272	240	248	97	202	28
Causeway	444	242	197	69	36	7

Hospital	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Mid-Ulster	82	48	37	10	<5	0
Whiteabbey	160	95	81	25	13	0
Ards Community	211	167	161	72	149	5
Downe	136	44	71	38	161	68
Lagan Valley	103	60	71	11	50	10
Ulster	117	84	81	41	333	387
Craigavon	449	247	157	67	165	28
Daisy Hill	441	211	126	55	171	28
South Tyrone	111	62	19	6	21	0
Altnagelvin	248	193	223	98	410	383
South West	148	98	55	33	96	57
Tyrone County	150	38	9	13	46	5

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

*Cells containing less than five have been masked to protect patient confidentiality

1A small number of cases which could not be attributed to a specific hospital site in the Northern Trust have been included within the Antrim Area Hospital figures.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the reasons for the increases contained in the latest quarterly publication of the waiting list statistics.

(AQW 7939/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I would refer the member to the response issued to AQW 7455/16-21.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of patients waiting (i) 9 to 17; (ii) 18 to 51; (iii) 52 to 77; (iv) 78 to 103; and (v) 104 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment as of 1 November 2016, broken down by hospital site.

(AQW 7940/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Waiting times for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment is not available by hospital as it is collected and reported on the basis of Health and Social Care Trust, rather than hospital.

Information on the number of outpatients waiting for their first consultant-led appointment as at 30th September 2016, the most recent quarter for which official statistics are available, is provided by specialty and at HSC Trust level at the following link:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-waiting-times-september-2016>

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 5191/16-21, whether details of appointments undertaken by the services at the Banbridge Health and Care Centre are held electronically; and why it is not possible to provide details of the number of appointments undertaken at the Centre.

(AQW 7950/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested in AQW 5191/16-21 is not collected centrally by the department and was requested from the Southern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust. The Trust stated that they could not provide the information requested due to the range of services offered at the centre, and the need to trawl electronic and manual records in order to obtain it. In order to do this staff would have to be diverted from their operational duties which would have an impact on patient care.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health to detail the average unit cost in each Health and Social Care Trust of (i) hospital-based haemodialysis; (ii) home-haemodialysis; and (iii) peritoneal dialysis.

(AQW 7952/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the unit cost of (i) hospital-based haemodialysis; (ii) home-haemodialysis; and (iii) peritoneal dialysis is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of end-stage kidney disease (ESKD) patients in each Health and Social Care Trust area on 31 December 2015; and to outline the number of ESKD patients in each Health and Social Care Trust area on 31 December 2015 that were in receipt of each of (i) kidney transplant; (ii) hospital-based haemodialysis; (iii) home-haemodialysis; and (iv) peritoneal dialysis.

(AQW 7953/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of end-stage kidney disease patients in each Health and Social Care Trust area and the number of ESKD patients that were in receipt of each of kidney transplant, hospital-based haemodialysis, home-haemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis on 31 December 2015 is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Ms Bailey asked the Minister of Health to outline her Department's compensation settlement plans for people infected with blood-borne viruses.

(AQW 7956/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am not considering any financial assistance proposals that would apply to all people infected with blood-borne viruses. I am considering options for reforming the existing payment schemes that support people infected with HIV or hepatitis C by NHS-supplied blood and blood products.

In considering options on proposed reform of the schemes I also have to also assess affordability. Any reform here will have financial consequences and I have to assess the impact of these within the health budget. Until I make a decision on the matter, payments for the north of Ireland beneficiaries will continue at their existing levels.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Health to detail the cost in each of the last five years of the Health and Social Care Trusts' use of locum doctors.

(AQW 7967/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The tables below show the Health and Social Care Trusts' expenditure in the Medical and Dental Agency category for each of the last 5 years;

Medical and Dental Agency Expenditure

TRUST	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/16
WHST	£6.6m	£6.0m	£6.9m	£10.6m	£13.0m
NHST	£3.0m	£6.5m	£6.4m	£8.3m	£7.8m
SHST	£2.6m	£3.6m	£4.2m	£3.7m	£6.1m
SEHST	£2.2m	£5.2m	£4.3m	£4.0m	£4.4m
BHST	£8.8m	£11.1m	£10.6m	£11.8m	£15.1m

Source: HSTs

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of agency nursing staff employed in each Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last five years; and the associated costs.

(AQW 7968/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The number of agency nurses employed is not held by the Department. The table below details the Health and Social Care Trusts' expenditure in the Nursing and Midwifery Agency category for each of the last five years.

Nursing and Midwifery Agency Expenditure

TRUST	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
WHST	£2.0m	£1.6m	£2.2m	£2.8m	£2.4m
NHST	£0.8m	£1.1m	£1.2m	£1.6m	£3.3m
SHST	£0.26m	£0.67m	£0.23m	£0.19m	£1.4m
SEHST	£2.4m	£2.8m	£2.2m	£1.9m	£2.0m
BHST	£3.1m	£3.7m	£5.3m	£5.6m	£6.7m

Source: HSTs

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Health (i) whether there will be a series of public meetings for consultation on the criteria for reconfiguring health and social care services; and if so (ii) whether such a meeting will be held in Downpatrick.

(AQW 7969/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I launched the public consultation on the proposed criteria for reconfiguring health and social care services on 11 November 2016. As part of this process there will be a series of consultation meetings and it is intended that one of these will be in Downpatrick in January 2017. This will be a real opportunity for people to put forward their views, as well as providing a forum to ask questions on the criteria and engage directly with the transformation team officials from my Department.

Mr Logan asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 5714/16-21 and given the increase in suicide rates, for her assessment of the need for earlier intervention.

(AQW 7972/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Data gathered by the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness shows that 72% of people who die by suicide in the north of Ireland are not known to mental health services. In light of this, early intervention, in terms of identifying people at risk of suicide but who are not in contact with services, particularly mental health services, is a key focus of the draft Protect life 2 strategy.

I also recognise the importance of early-years intervention to enhance emotional resilience from childhood, particularly where infants and children are at risk of regular exposure to adverse experiences. Strong emotional resilience and coping skills from early childhood are a protective factor against later vulnerability to suicidal behaviour. Protect

Life 2 advocates the development of a specific action plan for the promotion of positive mental health under the Public Health Strategic Framework Making Life Better.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health how many patients living with learning disabilities are resident at Muckamore Abbey Hospital.

(AQW 7973/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: On 31st August 2016, the latest information available, there were 107 learning disability patients resident in Muckamore Abbey Hospital.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health how many patients live in Muckamore Abbey Hospital.

(AQW 7974/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: On 31st August 2016, the latest information available, there were 107 patients resident in Muckamore Abbey Hospital.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 6702/16-21, whether this applies in instances of Health and Social Care Trust and General Medical Council registered staff that carry out assessments and compile reports in a private capacity.

(AQW 7982/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: When an opinion is provided by a doctor in a private capacity, it is the individual doctor's responsibility, should the assessment reveal significant risk, to advise or refer to appropriate supports that may be available. Such private practice is common and falls outside the remit of Health and Social Care.

However, all clinical activity as a doctor, not only that undertaken as a Trust employee, is formally reviewed during annual appraisal and doctors are accountable for all their actions as medical practitioners to the General Medical Council.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health for how long has there been an issue with posted notifications of appointments at Altnagelvin Hospital not arriving with patients on time or not at all.

(AQW 7983/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am advised by the Western HSC Trust that while they are investigating an issue raised by a patient's relative regarding notification of an outpatient's appointment, they are not aware of any wider issues at this time regarding the non receipt of posted notifications of outpatient appointments. If an issue is identified, the Trust will investigate and take corrective action.

In addition to appointment confirmation letters, the Trust also sends a text reminder (if mobile phone number has been supplied) or Voice Reminder Message (to landlines) to patients three days before appointments are due to take place.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 3473/16-21, to provide copies of her Departments FOI Policy Statement; and to outline the appropriate procedures and practices referenced.

(AQW 7984/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: A copy of my Department's FOI Policy Statement is available on the Departmental website via the following link <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/dhssps-foi-policy-statement>.

Under the Freedom of Information Act my Department has a substantive responsibility to respond to any written request for information promptly and in any event, taking not more than 20 working days. This is achieved by using a network of appropriately trained Local Information Managers (LIMs) managed centrally by the Information Management Branch. All requests are recorded and monitored to ensure timely responses are issued. Internal guidance and procedures are available to all staff on my Department's intranet site as well as being disseminated periodically to all staff.

Details of the type of information that my Department is committed to publishing can be found in the Publication Scheme, which is available on the Departmental website via the following link <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/dhssps-publication-scheme>.

Mr Allen asked the Minister of Health when she will answer AQW 5443/16-21; and to detail the reasons for the delay.

(AQW 7986/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I responded to AQW5443/16-21 on 25 November 2016, which in turn referred the member to AQW 5095/16-2. The delay is due to the large volume of Assembly questions.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health for an update on the implementation of the sixteen recommendations in the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority Review of Specialist Sexual Health Services in Northern Ireland, which was published in October 2013.

(AQW 8008/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board have established regional groups involving Health Trust Specialist Sexual Health Services and commissioners to consider how specific recommendations in the RQIA report can be implemented within the context of the long term vision for the service.

Progress has been reported by some, but not all, of the Trusts in implementing a number of recommendations at local level, including staff training, partner notification arrangements and provision of information about services. Progress in certain areas is dependent on the availability of additional resources.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister of Health how many patients have presented at each Emergency Department in each quarter of the last ten years.

(AQW 8012/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on attendances (new and unplanned reviews) at each emergency care department is published on a quarterly basis, and available for each month since April 2008, at the link below:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/emergency-care-waiting-times>

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health how many doctors, broken down by general practice and speciality, have completed training through the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency and are currently working for (i) the Health Service; (ii) the National Health Service; (iii) the Republic of Ireland's healthcare system; and (iv) outside of the British Isles, broken down by country.

(AQW 8043/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of doctors who completed training through the Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA) during the period 5 August 2015 to 2 August 2016, broken down by specialty, is detailed in the table below.

Doctors who Completed NIMDTA Training

Specialty	Completed Training
Anaesthetics	12
Cardiology	3
Cardio-thoracic surgery	1
Child and adolescent psychiatry	3
Clinical genetics	1
Clinical Oncology	3
Clinical Radiology	3
Dermatology	3
Emergency medicine	9
Endocrinology and diabetes mellitus	2
Forensic psychiatry	1
Gastroenterology	2
General (internal) Medicine	9
General Practice	74
General psychiatry	5
General surgery	3
Genito-urinary medicine	1
Geriatric Medicine	2
Haematology	4
Histopathology	1
Medical oncology	2
Neurology	1
Obstetrics and gynaecology	7
Old age psychiatry	3
Paediatrics	5
Palliative medicine	1
Psychiatry of learning disability	1
Public health medicine	1
Respiratory medicine	3
Rheumatology	1
Trauma and orthopaedic surgery	3
Total	170

Source: Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA)

NIMDTA do not hold information on where those who have completed training subsequently find employment.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health what is the estimated cost of the posted notifications of appointments at Altnagelvin Hospital that failed to arrive with patients.

(AQW 8052/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am advised by the Western HSC Trust that while they are investigating an issue raised by a patient's relative regarding notification of an outpatient's appointment, they are not aware of any wider issues at this time regarding the non receipt of posted notifications of outpatient appointments. If an issue is identified, the Trust will investigate and take corrective action.

In addition to appointment confirmation letters, the Trust also sends a text reminder (if mobile phone number has been supplied) or Voice Reminder Message (to landlines) to patients three days before appointments are due to take place.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health what workforce planning has been undertaken to ensure that there are sufficient district nurses over the next ten years.

(AQW 8055/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has developed a ten year Workforce Plan for Nursing and Midwifery, which recommends the number of education and training commissions that will be required for district nursing over the ten year period 2015-2025. Uptake of commissioned places is dependent upon HSC Trusts identifying and releasing nurses to undertake post registration district nursing training.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health to detail how many prisoners have accessed autism services to assist in their prison care.

(AQW 8060/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: When a specialist assessment is required, it is completed by the Trust of origin as an in-reach from the Trust's community specialist team. The South Eastern Trust, who deliver healthcare services in prisons, do not record this type of data as it is individual client specific.

The South Eastern Trust are committed to the continual improvement of the prison health care model and in particular to the progression of work on the delivery of specialist healthcare services. To this end the Justice Minister and I have just recently agreed to the commissioning of an urgent review of vulnerable people in prison custody. Officials from both Departments are now working together to determine the structure, scope and timeframe of this Review.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health to detail how many prisoners have been diagnosed with (i) autism; and (ii) ADHD.

(AQW 8061/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: As at the 1st December 2016, the prison healthcare clinical system reported that:

- (i) there were no prisoners diagnosed with Autism; and
- (ii) five prisoners diagnosed with having an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of patients on rheumatology waiting lists in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 8097/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of patients waiting for (i) a first consultant-led outpatient appointment and (ii) admission for inpatient and day case treatment, in the rheumatology specialty at 30th September 2016, the most recent quarter for which official statistics are available, is provided at the following links by specialty and HSC Trust level:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-waiting-times-september-2016>

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-inpatient-and-day-case-waiting-times-september-2016>

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of children in care, broken down by gender.

(AQW 8103/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The number of children in care broken down by gender is published annually in the publication "Children's Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland Tables", Table 3.1.

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/childrens-social-care-statistics-northern-ireland>

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of GP appointments undertaken by patients who are waiting for (i) a first outpatient appointment; (ii) a diagnostic test; or (iii) inpatient treatment at hospitals, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8105/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of GP appointments undertaken by patients who are waiting for (i) a first outpatient appointment, (ii) a diagnostic test, or (iii) inpatient treatment is not readily available, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health how many times patients, who are on waiting lists for (i) a first outpatient appointment; (ii) a diagnostic test; or (iii) inpatient treatment, have had to attend GP for an appointment in each of the last three years.

(AQW 8109/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on how many times patients, who are on waiting lists for (i) a first outpatient appointment, (ii) a diagnostic test or (iii) inpatient treatment, have had to attend GP's for an appointment, is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health following reports on Monday 28 November 2016 that the working group on fatal foetal abnormality has recommended legislative change in cases of fatal foetal abnormality, whether she will publish immediately the working group's report.

(AQW 8121/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: As I indicated in the Assembly Chamber, the report has been shared with the First and deputy First Ministers and the Justice Minister and I intend to submit joint proposals to the Executive early in the new year.

It remains our intention to publish the document after it has been considered by the Executive.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health whether any facilities in the Western Health and Social Care Trust, other than Altnagelvin, have experienced problems with posted notifications for appointments not reaching patients.

(AQW 8125/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am advised by the Western HSC Trust that while they are investigating an issue raised by a patient's relative regarding notification of an outpatient's appointment, they are not aware of any wider issues at this time regarding the non receipt of posted notifications of outpatient appointments. If an issue is identified, the Trust will investigate and take corrective action.

In addition to appointment confirmation letters, the Trust also sends a text reminder (if mobile phone number has been supplied) or Voice Reminder Message (to landlines) to patients three days before appointments are due to take place.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health which aspects of the updated fostering regulations will contain provisions to ensure children admitted to care receive a holistic assessment of physical and mental health needs.

(AQW 8129/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Several current sets of Regulations contain provisions to ensure that children and young people admitted to care receive health assessments and that those assessments are then reviewed regularly: paragraph 1(c) of Schedule 3 to The Foster Placement (Children) Regulations (NI) 1996; Regulations 7(1)(a) and 7(1)(c) of The Arrangements for Placement of Children (General) Regulations (NI) 1996; and Regulation 6 of, and Schedule 3 to, the Review of Children's Cases Regulations (NI) 1996.

The draft Foster Placement and Fostering Agencies Regulations which were issued for consultation place a particular duty on the responsible authority (the Health and Social Care Trust) to promote the health and development of children placed with a foster parent. These draft Regulations explicitly refer to medical, dental, nursing, psychological and psychiatric advice, treatment and other services. They also require the Trust to ensure that, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with a foster parent, the foster parent is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable the foster parent to provide appropriate care for the child. In particular, each foster parent is to be provided with the appropriate information regarding the state of health and health needs of any child placed or to be placed with the foster parent. I am currently considering the draft Regulations and intend to seek Health Committee scrutiny of them thereafter.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Health what plans her Department has for Skeagh House Nursing Home in Dromore, which has been closed since 2013.

(AQW 8169/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: While Skeagh House residential care home in Dromore has been temporarily closed since 2013, it is one of nineteen homes included in the current regional review on the future role and function of statutory residential care homes. I have not yet made final decisions on proposals for any of the statutory residential care homes under review, including Skeagh House.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health to detail out-of-hours GP provision in Strabane, broken down in each of the last twelve months.

(AQW 8214/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: GP out of hours services are provided to the entire population of the Western Local Commissioning Group area by Western Urgent Care across five bases including Strabane.

The out of hours centre in Strabane provides services from 7pm to 11pm on weekdays and from 8am to 11pm during weekends and bank holidays.

The table below details the number of cases dealt with by Western Urgent Care, Strabane, between November 2015 and October 2016.

Month	Strabane
November 2015	763
December 2015	879
January 2016	1001
February 2016	701
March 2016	914
April 2016	721
May 2016	756
June 2016	679
July 2016	666
August 2016	567
September 2016	662
October 2016	799
Total	9108

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of GP provision in Portadown; and what is being done to prevent the possible closure of Bannview Surgery.

(AQW 8219/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Health and Social Care Board has been engaging with the practices in Portadown Health Centre to address the challenges currently facing Bannview Medical Practice. As part of this engagement, HSCB officials have met with the individual practices based in Portadown Health Centre, held an information evening with the practices from the health centre and the surrounding area, and met with Bannview Practice staff. The HSCB advertised the contract to provide general medical services from Bannview Practice. Unfortunately no applications were received for the contract by the closing date for applications on 2 December 2016.

While efforts continue to develop a longer term solution, a number of measures are in place to support service provision. The HSCB is providing funding for locum support; advanced nurse practitioner services are being provided; and Dalriada Urgent Care Services continue to provide telephone triage for the Practice.

In recognition of the wider pressures facing GP-led services, I have committed to a number of actions aimed at building sustainable GP services across the North. I intend to increase the number of GP training places over the next two years to 111 and to redirect funding for undergraduate training so that undergraduate medical students get more experience of general practice. I will invest in a future model of primary care based on multidisciplinary teams embedded around general practice. By March 2017, every GP practice will have a named district nurse, health visitor and social worker to work with and I will continue to invest in the rollout of the practice-based pharmacists scheme across the North. My intention is that these initiatives—together with planned investment in new technology such as phone and online triage systems—will help to ease GP workload pressures and attract more doctors into general practice.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of staff members that have been disciplined in her Department, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8260/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The number of staff disciplined in each of the last five years within my Department is detailed below:

Year	Number of Staff disciplined
2016/17	0
2015/16	1
2014/15	0
2013/14	2
2012/13	0

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of people admitted to hospital for mental ill-health in the last five years, broken down by age.

(AQW 8264/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of people admitted to hospital for mental ill-health broken down by age is not available. However, information on the number of admissions under the mental health programme of care is published annually and available to view or download at:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/hospital-statistics-inpatient-and-day-case-activity-statistics-201516>

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health in relation to Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland; (i) what is the process for responding to queries from elected representatives; and (ii) what are the target turnaround times for HSCNI to respond to enquiries made by elected representatives through her private office.

(AQW 8290/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My aim is that all queries are responded to in a timely manner.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 7198/16-21, to answer the question that was asked; and why she did not do so in the first instance.

(AQW 8662/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested in AQW 7198/16-21 is not available in the level of detail requested.

The information provided in response to AQW 7198/16-21 is a summation of the issues primarily responsible for the under delivery of core activity.

Department for Infrastructure

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he will issue guidance to traffic attendants in the Dungannon area for reasons of both vigilance and their own protection following reported incidents in town centre car parks.

(AQW 6671/16-21)

Mr Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure): The Mid Ulster Council is responsible for car parks in Dungannon. My Department's parking enforcement service provider NSL patrols the council car parks to carry out enforcement on their behalf.

Traffic Attendants in Dungannon have been alerted to the situation and have been instructed to immediately report anything suspicious to their base manager who will contact the police and the council.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) all development sites that have lodged a cash bond; (ii) the monetary value of each bond; and (iii) the date of lodgement.

(AQW 6812/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I have listed in the table below details of cash bonds lodged with my Department where the cash bond still has some residual value together with the original date the bond was lodged.

In order not to prejudice commercial interests the total current value of the cash bonds held has been reported at a Council level.

Antrim And Newtownabbey Borough Council

Total Current Value £359,885

Development Site that has Lodged a Cash Bond	Date of Lodgement
Blackrock, Newtownabbey, Stage 1, PS 1655/1	23-Feb-16
Blackrock, Newtownabbey, Stage 2, PS 1655/2	23-Feb-01
Mount Pleasant View, Jordanstown, Stage 1, U/2003/0574/01	04-Jan-11
Mount Pleasant View, Jordanstown, Stage 2, U/2003/0574/02	25-Mar-15
Willendale, Ballyclare, Stage 2, U/2006/0527/2	23-Feb-15
Willendale, Ballyclare, Stage 3, U/2006/0527/3	14-Apr-15
Jubilee Drive, Newtownabbey, Stage 1, U/2006/0534/1	16-Jun-14
Jubilee Drive, Newtownabbey, Stage 2, U/2006/0534/2	19-May-16
Jubilee Drive, Newtownabbey, Stage 3, U/2006/0534/3	21-Apr-16
Foxton, Newtownabbey, Stage 1, U/2006/0644/1	29-Jun-15
Foxton, Newtownabbey, Stage 2, U/2006/0644/2	29-Jun-15

Development Site that has Lodged a Cash Bond	Date of Lodgement
Foxton, Newtownabbey, Stage 3, U/2006/0644/3	29-Jun-15
Foxton, Newtownabbey, Stage 4, U/2006/0644/4	24-Feb-16
Foxton, Newtownabbey, Stage 5, U/2006/0644/5	24-Feb-16
Blackrock, Newtownabbey, Stage 10, U/2008/0154/10	08-Jun-15
Blackrock, Newtownabbey, Stage 11, U/2008/0154/11	24-Nov-15
Blackrock, Newtownabbey, Stage 12, U/2008/0154/12	24-Nov-15
Blackrock, Newtownabbey, Stage 5, U/2008/0154/5	01-Apr-15
Blackrock, Newtownabbey, Stage 6, U/2008/0154/6	01-Apr-15
Blackrock, Newtownabbey, Stage 7, U/2008/0154/7	01-Apr-15
Blackrock, Newtownabbey, Stage 8, U/2008/0154/8	23-Feb-15
Blackrock, Newtownabbey, Stage 9, U/2008/0154/9	01-May-15
Glenavna, Newtownabbey, Stage 1, U/2011/0051/1	29-Jun-15
Sandymount Green, Glengormley, Stage 1, U/2012/0324/01	01-Mar-16
Sandymount Green, Glengormley, Stage 2, U/2012/0324/02	01-Mar-16
Sandymount Green, Glengormley, Stage 3, U/2012/0324/03	01-Mar-16
Ballyduff Road, Newtownabbey, Stage 1, U/2013/0321/1	02-Apr-15
Laurelvale, Crumlin, Stage 1, PS 1381/1	21-Jan-16
Laurelvale, Crumlin, Stage 99, PS 1381/99	18-Sep-15
Coyle Court, Antrim, Stage 1, PS 1404/1	03-Jul-15
St John's Close, Crumlin, Stage 1, PS 1424/1	08-Jul-16
St John's Close, Crumlin, Stage 99, PS 1424/99	21-Jan-16
St Joseph's Court, Crumlin, Stage 1, PS 1592/1	21-Jan-16
St Joseph's Court, Crumlin, Stage 99, PS 1592/99	18-Sep-15
Lylehill Road, Templepatrick, Stage 1, PS 1651/1	03-Aug-16
Lylehill Road, Templepatrick, Stage 99, PS 1651/99	22-Jul-15

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Total Current Value £38,450

Development Site that has Lodged a Cash Bond	Date of Lodgement
Hartley Hall, Greenisland, Stage 3, V/2006/0189/3	20-May-16
Hartley Hall, Greenisland, Stage 1, V/2013/0103/1	20-May-16
Riverside Mews, Larne, Stage 1, PS 1483/1	22-Jul-15
Maine Grove, Cullybackey, Stage 4,	06-Oct-06

Causeway Coast And Glens Borough Council

Total Current Value £605,176

Development Site that has Lodged a Cash Bond	Date of Lodgement
Whitepark Rd/Leyland Rd, Stg 1, E/03/0436	Feb 07
Seaport Avenue Stage 1,C/1999/0300/F	Apr 04
Strand Road P'stewart, Stg 1 C/2003/1176/F	Jan 09
Strand Road P'stewart, Stg 2 C/2003/1176/F	Jan 09

Development Site that has Lodged a Cash Bond	Date of Lodgement
Briar Hill Stage 1, B/2007/0505/F	Dec 11
Off Mageraboy Rd, Stage 1, C/2004/0925/F	Jun 12
Off Mageraboy Rd, Stage 2, C/2004/0925/F	Jun 13
Off Mageraboy Rd, Stage 3, C/2004/0925/F	Jun 13
Old Coach Road, Stage 2, C/2011/0588/F	Mar 12
Off Knocklynn Road, Stage 4, C/1993/0663/F	Jul 13
Off Station Rd, Stage 1, C/2008/0372/F	Jul 13
Off Station Rd, Stage 2, C/2008/0372/F	Jul 13
Off Magheraboy Ave, Stg 1, C/2011/0174/F	Jun 15
Dev at Fox Rock, Stage 2, C/2007/0718/F	Mar 14
Dev at Knock Rd, B'money, D/2013/0085/F	Apr 14
Dev at Knock Rd, B'money, D/2013/0085/F	Apr 14
Dev at Knock Rd, B'money, D/2013/0085/F	Oct 14
Dev at Sunset Park, Stage 1, C/2013/0019/F	May 14
Dev at Sunset Park, Stage 2, C/2013/0019/F	May14
Bamford Park, Stage 1 D/2005/0530/F	Jun 14
Bamford Park, Stage 1 D/2005/0530/F	Jun 14
Herring Field, Stage 1 C/2011/0174	Jun 14
Herring Field, Stage 2 C/2011/0174	Jun 15
Tullyview, L'guile, Stage 4, D/2003/0185/F	Oct 14
Off Station Road, Stage 4, C/2006/1189/F	Mar 15
Off Greenhall Highway, Stg 1,C/2014/0259/F	Apr 15
Off Greenhall Highway, Stg 2,C/2014/0259/F	Jun 15
Off Greenhall Highway, Stg 3,C/2014/0259/F	Jun 15
Off Greenhall Highway, Stg 4,C/2014/0259/F	Sep 15
Off Knock Road, Stage 2, D/2008/0089/F	Nov 15
Galvally Close, Stage 1, LA01/2015/0010/F	Sep 15
Cregagh View, Stage 1, E/2007/0211/F	Feb 16
Off Station Road, Stage 3, C/2008/0371/F	Feb 16
Off Station Road, Stage 1, C/2015/0105/F	Jun 16
Off Station Road, Stage 2, C/2015/0105/F	Jun 16
Brighter Gdns, Stage 1, LA01/2016/0195/F	Jun 16
Off Station Rd, Stages 1&2, D/2011/0088/F	Jun 16
Balnamore Road, Stage 1, D/2009/0256/F	Jul 16
Off Station Rd, Stage 3, C/2015/0105/F	Jul 16
Off Swilly Park, stage 2, C/2010/0706	Sep 16
Off Greenhall Highway, C/2014/0259	Nov 16

Armagh City, Banbridge And Craigavon Borough Council

Total Current Value £2,099,705

Development Site that has Lodged a Cash Bond	Date of Lodgement
Breagh Drive Portadown	3/08/2005
12 Townsend St Banbridge	5/07/2006
Clare Rd Waringstown St 1	20/01/2006
Newry Rd, Rathfriland St 1	16/01/2007
Glen Road , Keady Stage 1	27/02/2007
14a Derrytrasna Lane	10/03/2010
Blacklion Park Magheralin	21/04/2010
Derrytrasna Lane Lurgan	07/05/2010
Killuney Pk Rd, Armagh St 1	26/08/2010
Killuney Pk Rd, Armagh St 2	26/08/2010
Hillmount Manor Stage 2	26/11/2010
Kinallen Rd, Banbridge St 1	11/07/2011
Mossview, Waringstown St 5	19/07/2011
Neills Ave, Loughgill Y St 1	19/09/2011
Mulacreevy Pk , Keady St 4	02/02/2012
Drumcree Mews, P'adown St1	29/02/2012
Drumcree Mews, P'adown St 2	29/02/2012
Gilford Community Centre	30/03/2012
Bridgewater Pk, Banbridge	31/07-2012
Milltown Road, Benbrurb St1	09/01/2013
Belvedere Manor, Lurgan St20	14/02/2013
Barbrook Court, Dromore	20/02/2013
Eden Drive, Markethill St8	22/02/2013
Old Coach Hill, Banbridge St4	03/05/2013
Scarva Road, Banbridge St 1	01/07/2013
Old Clare Grange, Tandragee	06/08/2013
Cedar Wood , Bleary Stage 2	12/08/2013
Derryscallop Rd, Charlemont	21/01/2014
Willowtree Mews,Lurgan St3	07/02/2014
Lotus Green, Banbridge St 2	24/03/2014
Lisnisky Walk, Portadown St 3	31/03/2014
Bocombra Meadows Stage 4	02/04/2014
Rock Road, Armagh Stage2	28/04/2014
Hunters Lodge, Lurgan St 1	23/05/2014
Mossview,Waringstown St6	23/06/2014
Loughvale Grane,Derrymore	30/06/2014
St Teresa's School Lurgan	30/06/2014
Belvedere Manor, Lurgan St21	03/07/2014
Railway St, Poyntzpass	21/07/2014
Ballykeel Road, Aghagallon	01/08/2014
Ballymoney Road Banbridge	04/08/2014

Development Site that has Lodged a Cash Bond	Date of Lodgement
Drumnagoon Craigavon St 1	08/08/2014
Drumnagoon Craigavon St 2	08/08/2014
Kiln Lane, Lurgan Stage 1	27/08/2016
Lynden Gate, Portadown St 1	19/09/2014
Drumnagoon, Craigavon St 3	08/10/2014
Edenkennedy Way Markethill	14/10/2014
Lisnisky Walk, Portadown St4	24/10/2014
Tesco, Railway St Armagh St 1	18/11/2014
Tesco, Railway St Armagh St 2	18/11/2014
Old Railway St, Castlewellan	01/12/2014
Lace Hill Portadown Stage 2	06/01/2015
Spinners Court Armagh St 3	07/01/2015
Beaumont Ave, Portadown	22/01/2015
Clonmakate Rd, Birches St 1	18/02/2015
Church St, Dromore St 2	16/03/2015
Jubilee Road, Dromore St 1	18/03/2015
Lotus Green, Banbridge St 4	26/03/2015
Mossview, Waringstown St 7	21/04/2015
Lynedale Manor, P'adown St 6	27/04/2015
Lynedale Manor P'adown St 6	27/04/2015
Chancellors Court Dromore	19/05/2015
Edenkennedy Way Stage 2	01/06/2015
Killyruddan Road Stage 1	25/06/2015
Bocombra Manor P'down St6	26/06/2016
Bowens Mews, Lurgan St 5	01/07/2015
Castlewellan Rd, B'bridge St2	01/07/2015
Castlewellan Rd, B'bridge St 1	01/07/2015
Belvedere, Lurgan Stage 22	16/07/2015
Chancellors Ct, Dromore St 2	21/09/2015
Banbridge, Stage 1	01/10/2015
Ballycrummy Road, Armagh	27/10/2015
Ballycrummy Road, Stage 2	27/10/2015
Old Fort Lodge Craigavon St7	28/10/2015
Bannview Ct, Banbridge St 2	11/11/2015
The Fairways , Portadown	11/11/2015
Regency Manor, Stage 2	17/11/2015
Spinners Court, Armagh	27/11/2015
Drumcree Mews, P'adown St 3	16/12/2015
St Teresas P.S Lurgan Stage 2	30/12/2015
Lotus Village, Banbridge St 5	12/01/2016
Salters Grange, Armagh	12/01/2016

Development Site that has Lodged a Cash Bond	Date of Lodgement
Acton Road, Poyntzpass St 1	12/01/2016
Gilford Road, Portadown St 1	28/01/2016
Bowens Mews, Lurgan St 6	04/02/2016
Old Clare Grange, Clare St 2	18/02/2016
Mulcreavy Pk, Keady Stage 5	26/02/2016
Bachelors Ave, Portadown St6	04/03/2016
Baltylum Meadows Stage 10	18/03/2016
Address Manor, Stage 2	18/03/2016
Gosford View Manor, Stage 2	14/04/2016
Spinners Ct, Armagh Stage 5	14/04/2016
Bocombra Meadows, Stage 5	21/04/2016
Old Manse Rd, Banbridge St 1	28/04/2016
Lisnisky Lodge, P'adown St 7	12/05/2016
Damhill Road, Magheralin	19/05/2016
Obins St, Portadown Stage 1	19/05/2016
Ferryview, Bannfoot	24/05/2016
Headington Ave, Lurgan St 1	24/05/2016
Cloncarrish Road, Stage 2	01/06/2016
Mullinure Lane Armagh	16/06/2016
Tannaghmore P.S Lurgan	18/08/2016
Beaumont Ave, P'down St 2	24/08/2016
Ashgrove Road, P'adown St 3	30/08/2016
Moy Road, Armagh Stage1	01/09/2016
Cambric Ct, Dromore St 2&3	15/09/2016
Annaghmore Parish Church	06/09/2016
Drumnagoon Meadows, St 5	23/09/2016
Hunters Lodge, Lurgan Stage2	27/09/2016
Loughvale Grange, Stage 2	05/10/2016
The Hollows, Lurgan Stage 1	05/10/2016
The Hollows, Lurgan Stage 1	11/10/2016

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Total Current Value £871,867

Development Site That Has Lodged A Cash Bond	Date of Lodgement
Glenmullan, Newry	15/09/2006
Hollywood Grove Newry	15/09/2006
Riverside Road, Ballynahinch	06/12/2007
Church Street, Castlewellan	27/11/2009
Gullion View, Meigh Newry	18/03/2011
Ashleigh Heights, Newcastle	16/06/2011
41 Crossgar Road, Saintfield	03/11/2011

Development Site That Has Lodged A Cash Bond	Date of Lodgement
Mullach Allainn, Newry	25/09/2012
19 Old Grand Jury Rd, Saintfield	13/12/2012
Carbane Industrial Estate, Newry	28/03/2013
Liska Road/Watsons Rd Newry	11/06/2013
Rathcuan Heights, Downpatrick	10/06/2014
Carneyhough, Newry 1	16/09/2014
Carneyhough, Newry 2	16/09/2014
The Forge, Ballygowan	27/01/2015
Carrickcruppin Hill, Camlough	01/07/2015
Marguerite Park, Newcastle	26/08/2015
The Forge , Ballygowan	09/09/2015
Seacliff Close, Newcastle	06/10/2015
Killyleagh Road, Crossgar	03/12/2015
Crossgar Road, Ballynahinch	06/01/2016
Chapel View, Crossmaglen	11/02/2016
Carneyhough, Cireve Newry	10/03/2016
Dromore Ridge, Warrenpoint	23/03/2016
Anncloy Road, Downpatrick	23/03/2016
Carneyhough Court, Newry St 5	28/04/2016
Greencastle Pier Road, Kilkeel	16/06/2016
Chapel View, Ardglass	06/07/2016
Legmoylinn Road, Silverbridge	08/09/2016
Carneyhough Court, Newry	06/09/2016
Shortcross Lane, Crossgar	18/10/2016

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Total Current Value £437,145

Development Site That Has Lodged A Cash Bond	Date of Lodgement
Main Street, Carrowdore	02/11/2007
Main Street, Conlig	25/02/2011
Main Street, Conlig Stage1	25/02/2011
7a Hazelwood Lane, Lisbane	03/02/2012
Morey Hills, Donaghadee	04/10/2012
The Tides, Portavogie	15/05/2013
Morey Hills , Donaghadee	02/10/2013
The Tides, New Road Portavogie	27/11/2013
Strangford Road, Downpatrick	15/01/2004
High Bangor Rd, Newtownards	13/02/2014
Castle Meadows, Cloughey	03/04/2014
Fairfield Road, Bangor	16/04/2014
Lakeview, Newtownards	16/09/2014

Development Site That Has Lodged A Cash Bond	Date of Lodgement
Castle Meadows, Cloughey	27/01/2015
Morey Hills, Donaghadee	18/02/2015
North Road/Talbot St N'ards	20/05/2015
North Road/Talbot St N'ards	20/05/2015
Lansdowne Crescent N'ards	01/06/2015
Castle Meadows, Cloughey	12/08/2015
Cranmore Road, Rubane	05/11/2015
Wyndell Park, Newtownards	01/02/2016
The Forge, Ballygowan	02/03/2016
Castle Meadows, Cloughey	07/06/2016
The Square, Cloughey	16/06/2016

Belfast City Council

Total Current Value £918,850

Development Site	Date of Lodgement
Barnetts Road, Belfast	19/Feb/2015
College Park, Belfast	06/Aug/2007
College Park, Belfast	06/Aug/2007
Donegall Pass, Belfast	09/May/2006
Dunmore Drive, Belfast	05/Jun/2009
Fairway Gardens, Upper Malone Road, Belfast	12/Aug/2013
Galway Drive, Dundonald	04/Apr/2016
Glen Grove, Belfast	16/Sep/2013
Glenmachan Street, Belfast	26/Nov/2013
Glenmachan Street, Belfast	26/Nov/2013
Grosvenor Road, Belfast	11/Dec/2009
Harberton Park, Belfast	01/Jul/2015
Harberton Park, Belfast	01/Jul/2015
Harberton Park, Belfast	10/Aug/2016
Henry Place, Belfast	18/Apr/2008
Henry Place, Belfast	18/Apr/2008
Kingsway, Dunmurry	06/Mar/2009
Knock Road, Belfast	05/May/2015
Millmount Village, Millmount Road, Dundonald	02/Jun/2015
Old Saintfield Road, Belfast	11/Apr/2016
Old Saintfield Road, Belfast	14/Aug/2015
Priory Park, Belfast	28/Jul/2014
Priory Park, Belfast	28/Jul/2014
Rosgoill Park, Belfast	07/Dec/2006
School Road, Newtownbreda, Belfast	14/May/2015
Suffolk Road, Belfast	25/Nov/2013

Development Site	Date of Lodgement
Thornberry Road, Belfast	12/Mar/2015
Upper Springfield Road, Belfast	20/Jan/2015
Victoria Road, Belfast	06/Feb/2014
Victoria Square, Belfast	11/Mar/2007
Woodstock Road/Cregagh Road, Belfast	04/Feb/2013

Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

Total Current Value £957,850

Development Site	Date of Lodgement
Ashfield Hall, Kesh Road, Lisburn	18/Oct/2010
Ballynahinch Road, Lisburn	30/Jul/2014
Blaris Meadows, Blaris Road, Lisburn	22/Oct/2014
Blaris Meadows, Blaris Road, Lisburn	30/Apr/2015
Blaris Meadows, Blaris Road, Lisburn	30/Apr/2015
Blaris Meadows, Blaris Road, Lisburn	30/Apr/2015
Brokerstown Road, Lisburn	05/Jan/2016
Brokerstown Road, Lisburn	08/Feb/2011
Brokerstown Road, Lisburn	08/Feb/2011
Brokerstown Road, Lisburn	16/Oct/2013
Brokerstown Road, Lisburn	22/Feb/2011
Brokerstown Road, Lisburn	22/Feb/2011
Causeway End Road, Lisburn	25/Aug/2016
Clonduff Drive, Castlereagh	15/Nov/2011
Clonduff Drive, Castlereagh	15/Nov/2011
Gransha Wood, Old Dundonald Road, Castlereagh	07/Oct/2014
Gransha Wood, Old Dundonald Road, Castlereagh	20/May/2014
Gransha Wood, Old Dundonald Road, Castlereagh	22/Nov/2013
Kings Oak, Kesh Road, Lisburn	09/May/2014
Kings Oak, Kesh Road, Lisburn	28/Jul/2015
Lany Road, Hillsborough	09/Feb/2010
Longstone Street, Lisburn	27/Aug/2014
Lurgan Road, Moira	31/Jan/2007
Lurganure Road, Lisburn	05/May/2006
Lurganure Road, Lisburn	30/Mar/2011
Magheralave Road, Lisburn	13/Jan/2016
Magheralave Road, Lisburn	14/Aug/2015
Magheralave Road, Lisburn	14/Aug/2015
Meeting Street, Moira	04/Apr/2016
Meeting Street, Moira	20/May/2016
Meeting Street, Moira	22/Mar/2016
St James Road, Hillsborough	26/Oct/2016

Development Site	Date of Lodgement
Whitehill Lodge, Causeway End Road, Lisburn	11/Mar/2013

Mid Ulster District Council

Total Current Value £1,032,970

Development Site	Date of Lodgement
Mullan Road Coagh	Jun-15
Mullan Road Coagh	Jun-15
Mountview Drive Coagh	Nov-13
Lomond Heights Cookstown	Jul-16
Ballinderry Road Cookstown	Jun-16
Coolreaghs Road Cookstown	Jun-15
Chapel Road Cookstown	Oct-15
Westland Rd South Cookstown	Sep-15
Clarefields Killyman	May-13
Washingbay Road Coalisland	Mar-16
Washingbay Road Coalisland	Apr-16
Richmond Hill Ballygawley	Jun-14
Richmond Hill Ballygawley	Oct-16
Knockmoy Park Coalisland	Nov-15
Killymeal Road Dungannon	Nov-14
Killymeal Road Dungannon	Nov-14
Willow Drive Dungannon	Nov-13
Carland Road Dungannon	Jul-07
Coalisland Road Dungannon	Apr-13
Coalisland Road Dungannon	Jan-14
Killyman Street, Moy	Mar-15
Killyman Street, Moy	Mar-15
Killyman Street, Moy	Sep-15
Killyman Street, Moy	May-16
Gort Manor, Gortgonis Road Coalisland	Oct-15
Gort Manor, Gortgonis Road Coalisland	Oct-15
Gort Manor, Gortgonis Road Coalisland	May-16
The Olde Fairways Fivemiltown	Dec-15
Hollow Mills Meadows Dungannon	Aug-14
Clonabay Dungannon	Jul-15
Pinebank Park, Regents Court Coalisland	Sep-16
Richmond Manor Ballygawley	Oct-16
Brookfield Road Dungannon	May-12
Ballygawley Road Dungannon	Mar-16
Lambfields, Coalisland Road Dungannon	May-16
Lambfields, Coalisland Road Dungannon	Oct-14

Development Site	Date of Lodgement
Lambfields, Coalisland Road Dungannon	May-15
Sydney Street Aughnacloy	Mar-16
Sydney Street Aughnacloy	Mar-16
Salters Bridge Magherafelt	Oct-16
The Oaks, Tobermore Road Magherafelt	Sep-15
The Oaks, Tobermore Road Magherafelt	Jul-15
Hospital Road Magherafelt	Jul-15
Hospital Road Magherafelt	Sep-16
Main Street Bellaghy	Sep-16

Derry City and Strabane District Council

Total Current Value £414,145

Development Site	Date of Lodgement
Glenmornan Drive Strabane	Oct-16
Glenmornan Drive Strabane	Oct-16
Garvetagh Road Castlederg	Feb-16
Garvetagh Road Castlederg	Feb-16
Lisnaragh Road Donemana	May-15
Art Road Artigarvan	Apr-14
Art Road Artigarvan	Apr-14
Church View Strabane	Jun-15
Glen Road Strabane	Oct-14
Glen Road Strabane	Oct-14
Glen Road Strabane	Apr-15
Glen Road Strabane	Jul-15
Glen Road Strabane	Mar-16
Stoneybrook, Lisnaragh Road Donemana	Apr-16
Ashleigh Court Castlederg	Jul-06
Linen GreenSion Mills	Mar-15
Linen GreenSion Mills	Feb-16
Woodvale Mews Eglinton	Sep-04
Butlers Wharf Strathfoyle	Sep-16
Braehead Road Londonderry	Nov-06
Carmony Road Londonderry	Sep-13
Springtown Court Londonderry	May-15
Springtown Court Londonderry	May-15
Ivy Mead Drumahoe	May-15
Irish Street Londonderry	Jun-16

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

Total Current Value £463,693

Development Site	Date of Lodgement
Tempo Road Enniskillen	Jun-15
Tempo Road Enniskillen	Jun-15
Main Street Derrylin	Mar-11
Main Street Derrylin	Mar-11
Manderwood Park Lisnaskea	Aug-15
Manderwood Park Lisnaskea	Aug-15
Carnwood Lisnaskea	Oct-14
Scallen Road Irvinestown	Aug-16
Scallen Road Irvinestown	Sep-16
Carnhill Irvinestown	Sep-15
Castle Street Irvinestown	Oct-13
Mossfield Road Irvinestown	Sep-15
Gorteen Road Garrison	Apr-08
Loughyoan Road Enniskillen	Nov-12
Ramaley Crescent Clabby	Mar-16
Derrylin Road Enniskillen	Apr-08
Glencam Road Omagh	Mar-16
Glencam Road Omagh	Mar-16
Tirquin Road Omagh	Oct-15
Tirquin Road Omagh	Nov-15
Tirquin Road Omagh	Aug-16
Glencam Road Omagh	Apr-16
Retreat Heights Omagh	Jun-16
Knockmoyle Drive Omagh	Apr-16
Brookmount Road Omagh	Jun-15
Glencam Road Omagh	Nov-13
Glencam Road Omagh	May-16

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline his Department's plans to cope with the anticipated increase in shoppers from the Irish Republic using border towns in the lead-up to Christmas.

(AQW 7403/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I can advise that TransportNI aims to operate the road network to maximise efficiency at all times. I can confirm that officials will work with the PSNI and local councils to provide advice and guidance if there are any further measures proposed by others to cater for increased traffic flow throughout the Christmas period. I would also make you aware that information is also available to motorists via the Trafficwatch website and social media accounts.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure what efforts have been made to secure current funding proposals for York Street Interchange.

(AQW 7550/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As I outlined previously to the Assembly, the York Street Interchange scheme remains a priority to me and I am committed to doing all I can to deliver it in the current financial context.

However, funding for the project must be considered alongside other priorities as part of the Budget 2017-2021 process, which I am taking forward in association with the Finance Minister and other Executive colleagues.

In addition I am also establishing an infrastructure forum to explore alternative funding streams which may enable this and other projects to be taken forward.

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) the cost; and (ii) location of vandalism at (a) bus stations; and (b) rail stations over the last three years.

(AQW 7594/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Translink has advised that when damage occurs to a building or premises (whether it involves vandalism or otherwise) it is reported to its central property department which coordinates the repairs. Costs of repairs are not recorded by location and therefore Translink cannot identify the separate cost relating to vandalism alone at Bus and Rail stations.

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister for Infrastructure what has been the cost of damage, as a result of anti-social behaviour, to bus shelters over the last three financial years.

(AQW 7595/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The provision and maintenance of bus shelters is funded by Adshel through advertising revenue and at no cost to my Department. The contract covers the vast majority of the north's bus shelters and my Department does not retain information on costs incurred by Adshel in carrying out its contractual commitments.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he will introduce a policy of gritting outside rural schools during winter months.

(AQW 7683/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Following the severe wintry conditions experienced at the start of December 2008, the then Committee for Regional Development requested that an examination was carried out in relation to the winter service operational response to areas around rural schools.

The outworking of this examination resulted in the introduction of priority "secondary" salting and of enhanced communication arrangements, to the 46 rural schools most affected by weather conditions throughout the winter of 2008/09.

The policy which is maintained at a local level by TransportNI Section offices takes on board local weather conditions and has the flexibility to add other schools as conditions dictate throughout the winter period. At the same time the criteria for the provision of grit/salt piles and salt bins was also amended so that these can now be provided to affected schools, if requested.

I can confirm that this amended policy which prioritises such schools will be in operation again this winter.

I am therefore satisfied with current arrangements and have no plans to alter the current policy relating to the winter service operational response around rural schools.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister for Infrastructure how many Blue Badge holders have life-long conditions.

(AQW 7687/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: On 22 November I announced that my Department would review the renewal process for Blue Badge holders with life-long mobility issues. My Department currently does not hold this information. The outcome of the review will direct us in identifying what cases may be considered as having a life-long mobility condition and then we will be in a position to develop a report to identify these cases.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail how many times the Strangford ferry has been suspended or cancelled due to (i) weather conditions; and (ii) maintenance issues in the last five years.

(AQW 7688/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The number of sailings suspended due to weather and mechanical problems since January 2011 is given in the table below. Please note that the figures given in the Weather column includes fog, storm and extreme tides conditions. The ferry sails every 15 minutes during timetabled operating hours.

Year	Number of suspended sailings (from approximately 22,000 sailings per year)		Total
	Weather	Breakdown / Essential Maintenance	
2011	63	63	126
2012	119	6	125
2013	77	59	136
2014	174	51	225
2015	115	43	158
2016 (to end Nov)	114	35	149
Total	662	257	919

I would also like to draw your attention to the availability statistics for the service over the past five years as tabulated below. These figures exclude sailings that have been suspended due to weather and extreme tides conditions.

Year	Availability %
2011/2012	99.71%
2012/2013	99.99%
2013/2014	99.66%
2014/2015	99.53%
2015/2016 (up to end November)	99.77%

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Infrastructure pursuant to AQW 3487/16-21, to detail on what estimated cost did he decide that it would not be possible to introduce free travel on public transport to both people that are partially sighted and the aides that travel with them.

(AQW 7695/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Despite my appreciation of the difficulties faced by people who are partially sighted, the fact remains that my budget is facing pressures.

The cost of funding the NI concessionary fares scheme in 2015 – 2016 was £42.9m. My budget allocation from the NI Executive to fund the scheme this year is £41.2m; however the cost of the scheme is projected to be £44.2m.

I have had to request additional funding to cover the deficit. It is on that cost basis that I am unable to support an extension of the Scheme at this time.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Infrastructure for his assessment of the introduction of third party right of appeal similar to that which operates in the planning regime of the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 7742/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I am aware of previous calls for a system of third party right of appeal (TPRA) in the planning system and views were sought on this issue as part of the recent planning reform and transfer initiative. This work led to the reform of the planning system and the transfer of the majority of planning functions to our new locally-elected district councils. This, in itself I believe, has enhanced local accountability and decision-making. In addition, the reformed two-tier system is front-loaded with enhanced opportunities for public and stakeholder engagement early in the planning process which supports much greater third party participation than was previously the case.

I can appreciate that there are strong, and possibly conflicting, views on the merits of TPRA as evidenced in responses to the public consultation which informed the planning reform programme. While some would see TPRA as necessary to redress the balance of rights between differing parties others would contend that it would introduce additional cost, delay and uncertainty into the planning system.

I believe that it would be appropriate to allow the new planning reforms introduced in April 2015 to bed in and be subject to assessment before I would consider the merits or otherwise of introducing TPRA.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Infrastructure what plans he has to put in place the traffic calming measures in Beechfield Estate, Donaghadee.

(AQW 7763/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Demand for such work greatly exceeds my Department's ability to implement schemes. In such circumstances, priorities must be established in order to ensure our funding is targeted at those sites that offer best returns, particularly in terms of casualty reduction.

The Beechfield Estate, Donaghadee has been continually assessed over the past 10 years for traffic calming and unfortunately, to date, this site remains a low priority compared to other competing requests in the Ards and North Down Council area.

While my Department has no immediate proposals to carry out a scheme at this location, your request will be kept on record for consideration when future programmes are being reviewed.

Mr Smith asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail each occasion (i) he; (ii) his predecessor; or (iii) any of his officials attended a meeting (a) with; or (b) at the request or facilitation of, Brown Rudnick over the last three years, including the date and purpose of each meeting.

(AQW 7850/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I can confirm that neither myself nor my officials have been involved in any meetings with Brown Rudnick since I became Minister for Infrastructure in May 2016. As the Department for Infrastructure only came into existence at that time, I

am not in a position to comment on whether any Ministers or officials from former Departments were involved in meetings with Brown Rudnick prior to May 2016.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail local councils' powers under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 to request the convening of a public hearing following the service of a notice of opinion indicating an intended decision on; (i) a planning application dealt with under 'call in' procedures; and (ii) currently undetermined planning applications retained and being dealt with by his Department after Local Government Reform.

(AQW 7861/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Under section 29 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011, where the Department serves a notice of opinion indicating an intended decision for a called-in application or a retained application (which is treated as a called-in application) the council may within the period specified in the notice request a hearing. The Department must afford the council the opportunity of appearing before and being heard by the Planning Appeals Commission or a person appointed by the Department.

For further guidance I would refer the Member to the Department's Development Management Practice Note 13: Notification and Call In of Applications which is available on the Planning Portal.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the number of routes which (i) are used by school buses and included in Transport NI's winter gritting schedule, broken down by Constituency; (ii) are used by school buses and not included in Transport NI's winter gritting schedule, broken down by constituency; (iii) are used by school buses and are not initially gritted and are included in Transport NI's secondary gritting schedule; and (iv) to list the schools impacted by this.

(AQW 7873/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department does not maintain a record of the requested information and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

Mr Beattie asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the progress made in introducing legislation to bring Northern Ireland's laws relating to driving whilst under the influence of drugs in line with the rest of the UK.

(AQW 7930/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Under existing legislative provision it is already illegal to drive in the north of Ireland whilst unfit through drugs (whether through illegal drugs or through legal prescription drugs). Drug driving penalties are just as severe as those for drink driving, in terms of fines, disqualifications and imprisonment.

In Britain changes have been made to adapt this offence by prescribing the limits of various named drugs that can be present in the driver's body, above which the driver is deemed to be unfit to drive. Work on strengthening the statutory provision on drug driving has commenced in the south of Ireland but it is not currently clear how this will progress in the future.

In the north of Ireland, alcohol is a more significant factor than drugs in road casualties. In 2015, 65 people were killed or seriously injured where the driver/rider was impaired by alcohol. During the same period seven people were killed or seriously injured where the driver/rider was impaired through drugs. My priority has therefore been to focus on the introduction of new drink drive arrangements, with lower alcohol limits than in Britain. The required enabling provision for this is contained in the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2016 and implementation on a phased basis is underway.

Policy development in the area of drug driving is likely to be a lengthy and resource intensive process, due to the nature of the subject matter. The science of measuring drug levels and determining when driving ability is impaired to an unacceptable degree is complex. I have therefore asked my officials to continue to monitor the effects of the new legislation in Britain, as well as developments in Ireland, before I decide on any legislative change in this area.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether his Department will commit to enshrine in law those protections that derive from judgements of the European Court of Justice.

(AQW 7959/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The matter is still under consideration and it is too early to say.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Infrastructure what discussions he has held regarding the impact of a Brexit on the Common Vehicle Standards currently in operation across the EU which ensures road vehicles may continue to travel or be sold between owners in different member states without being subject to further inspections.

(AQW 7961/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The responsibility for vehicle type approval within Britain and the north of Ireland rests with the Department for Transport, delivered by the Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA). The VCA operates a system known as "EC Whole Vehicle Type Approval" which allows a vehicle design to be "type approved" for sale, registration and entry into service across all member states in the EU without the need for further testing in each country. This creates a single market by ensuring common vehicle standards.

Any negotiations on the impact that Brexit may have on the Common Vehicle Standards would be a matter for the Department for Transport, on behalf of Britain and the north of Ireland.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail all capital works planned for Fermanagh and South Tyrone in 2016-17.

(AQW 8016/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Details of TransportNI's proposed Capital works programmes are not available on a constituency basis however the area in question is covered by Mid Ulster South and Fermanagh & Omagh West Section Offices. Details of proposed works across these Section Office areas can be found within the council reports presented to the respective Councils in Spring 2016. Links to these reports are below:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/annual-report-fermanagh-and-omagh-district-council-2016>

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/annual-report-mid-ulster-district-council-2016>

Details of additional works brought forward since the Spring Council reports will be provided when the Autumn updates are presented to Councils; the Autumn update was presented to Mid Ulster Council on 5 December 2016 and the update to Fermanagh and Omagh Council will be presented on 16 January 2017.

You will be aware also of the Rural Roads Initiative that I have implemented and this has allowed £1.6m to be allocated to the Mid Ulster South and Fermanagh & Omagh West Section Offices. Mid Ulster South Section Office covers areas within both Fermanagh and South Tyrone and Mid Ulster Constituencies and again it is not possible to provide figures on a constituency basis.

Details of the proposed works due to be completed under the Rural Roads Initiative can be found on the Department's website by using the following link <http://riversagency.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0783fd3dbf9046acbb0ea03bc3ff7f36>.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether there any plans for Transport NI to close any roads across the rural network due to lack of use.

(AQW 8047/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I can advise the Member that my Department has no plans to close or abandon rural roads due to a lack of use.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether Transport NI have plans to adopt the roadway at The Point, Groomsport.

(AQW 8048/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: TransportNI has no plans to adopt The Point, Groomsport on the basis that it is a short unmade-up laneway leading to the shoreline serving a small number of dwellings.

There are many such lanes, entries and mews throughout the north which are not adopted within the public road network. These are not essential links within the street network and are generally used for local access.

In cases where the Department is of the opinion that a sub-standard lane may warrant being brought into the public road network it would first require to be improved to a standard suitable for adoption in terms of road and footway widths, drainage, street lighting and turning heads. The costs of all such works would have to be borne by the frontagers or landowners in accordance with the Private Streets (NI) Order 1980 and the Department is precluded by the legislation from making any contribution to costs.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether Northern Ireland Railways will introduce body cameras for staff.

(AQW 8082/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: NI Railways is planning to introduce eight body cameras to staff operating selected services and/or managing event traffic. It expects to have the cameras purchased during this calendar year.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the cost of introducing body cameras for rail service staff.

(AQW 8085/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The cost of purchasing eight body cameras for NI Railways will be in the region of £5,000.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister for Infrastructure pursuant to AQW 6693/16-21 and given that Portaferry is in the definition of 'rural' for the Rural Transport Fund, to outline his Department's definition of rural.

(AQW 8087/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I would advise the Member that the Rural Transport Fund was designed primarily to tackle social exclusion in rural areas and to address equality of access to transport. The definition of "rural" in the context of the Rural Transport Fund is those areas within the North of Ireland not served by the Disability Action Transport Scheme.

When referring to roads as referenced in AQW 6693/16-21 is any road which is not urban. In other words roads which are outside the development limits of towns, etc as set out in Area Plans and which are normally defined by the national speed limit.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister for Infrastructure in light of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's announcement in the Autumn Statement to provide an additional £250 million in capital spending to the Executive, to outline the projects in Newry and Armagh that he will be able to progress.

(AQW 8116/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Decisions on the allocation of the £250 million capital funding announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement will be taken forward within the Executive's overall Budget 2017-21 considerations. Until those considerations have concluded and budgets for each department agreed, I will not be in a position to provide details of my spending plans.

However, I would direct the Member to my answer to his earlier question (AQW 4957-16-21) which provides details of the current projects being taken forward by my Department in Newry and Armagh.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Infrastructure what action is proposed to address the problem of rat infestation on the embankment of the A2 Dual Carriageway adjacent to a number of homes at Strand Avenue, Holywood, which was first reported to Transport NI in June 2016.

(AQW 8140/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I am pleased to advise the member that my Department is currently seeking quotations for the necessary work to control the reported issue of the presence of rats on the embankment adjacent to Strand Avenue, Holywood and I have approved the funding required to carry out this work.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Infrastructure (i) whether the refilling of grit boxes can be reported via the NIDirect Report a Fault of Problem website; and (ii) whether consideration has been given to enabling the public to report the boxes which require refilling via this method.

(AQW 8146/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I can advise that my Department has provided a facility to request the refilling of a grit box at a location on the NI Direct Report a Fault website. This facility has been available since the beginning of 2016 and I have attached the relevant web page link for your convenience below <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/report-issue-ice-or-snow>.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether his Department is planning a re-engine programme for the Northern Ireland Railways Enterprise fleet.

(AQW 8149/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Enterprise fleet is owned and operated by both Translink and Córas Iompair Éireann. Both companies are currently reviewing options to re-engine the Class 201 locomotives which operate on the service. Neither my Department or the Department in the South have received a proposal at this time.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the amount spent on the A5 redevelopment scheme in this financial year.

(AQW 8193/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As at the end of November 2016, the expenditure on the A5WTC in the current financial year scheme amounted to £2.818m. These costs are mainly associated with the project consultant's on-going design work as well as their preparation for and participation in the Public Inquiry which is scheduled to finish in mid December 2016.

Department of Justice

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether she plans to introduce legislation and/or adopt the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, in order to bring Northern Ireland in line with the UK.

(AQW 7482/16-21)

Ms Sugden (The Minister of Justice): Tackling terrorism is treated as an excepted matter which means that the UK Government retains legislative responsibility.

The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, however, is UK wide legislation, the vast majority of which already extends to Northern Ireland. Part 5 of the Act does not apply in Northern Ireland because it deals with the PREVENT duty.

PREVENT forms one part of CONTEST which is the UK Government's overarching strategy for countering terrorism. The Home Secretary has responsibility for CONTEST. The primary focus of CONTEST is in relation to countering international terrorism, not domestic related terrorism which is the principal threat in Northern Ireland.

The UK Government has said that tackling terrorism, including Northern Ireland Related Terrorism, is its highest priority. Measures are in place to ensure that the security agencies, the police and others are equipped to deal with any threat.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline the circumstances in which a female prison officer in HMP Maghaberry was bound to a chair by prisoners; and clarify how many prisoners have been charged in connection with this incident, specifying the offences each face.

(AQW 7483/16-21)

Ms Sugden: This incident was fully investigated by a Senior Manager. A Unit Manager, Senior Officers and Officers were interviewed during this review.

The review concluded that the officer had one arm loosely taped to the arm of a chair and the Officer advised that she could have released her arm at any time. The incident occurred whilst the officer and a colleague were having an informal discussion with an individual prisoner. The officer was never alone during the incident. Both staff immediately advised the prisoner that his actions were inappropriate and it is reported that he immediately apologised.

The prisoner who was involved in the incident has not faced any disciplinary charges. Following the review a number of prisoners were relocated from Shimna House to other areas of Maghaberry Prison.

The Officer and her colleagues were interviewed. After consideration all staff were given "advice and guidance" regarding their future conduct, contact with prisoners and the levels of professionalism expected.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many prisoners are considered vulnerable adults.

(AQW 7515/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Many prisoners can be considered vulnerable for a variety of reasons and data is not specifically collected on the number of people who are considered to be vulnerable adults.

For the purposes of our Supporting Prisoners at Risk (SPAR) Policy and Procedures, "vulnerable prisoner" is defined as:

"An individual whose inability to cope with personal situations within the prison environment may lead them to self-harm. Some at risk prisoners will display their inability to cope through their actions or behaviours or the manner in which they present; others may give little or no indication."

On the 1 December 2016, the overall prisoner population was recorded at 1513 and on that date 744 prisoners were recorded as currently self-harming or having a history of self-harm. These prisoners would be considered to be vulnerable.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice following her statement on prisoner mental health and specifically her remarks about the Supporting Prisoner at Risk scheme, whether she will reconsider the current process and make opening of same a trigger for mental health assessment as a mandatory requirement.

(AQW 7673/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Not all prisoners availing of the Supporting Prisoners at Risk (SPAR) process have mental health issues and to commit to triggering a mental health assessment as a mandatory requirement which follows the activation of the SPAR process would not make efficient use of the mental health services provided in prison. On the 21 November I announced a review of Vulnerable people in Custody which will include an appraisal of mental health service provision in prisons.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many prison officers and staff have been dismissed or made redundant due to links or associations with dissident republicans.

(AQW 7722/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Within the last 10 years no prison officers or staff have been dismissed or made redundant due to links with dissident republicans.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Justice to outline the investigations or reviews undertaken after reports that a female prison officer was taped to a chair by prisoners.

(AQW 7723/16-21)

Ms Sugden: After unspecified concerns were raised in regard to Shimna House, the Governor of Maghaberry Prison tasked a Senior Manager within the Prison to complete a review of this area.

The review established that a female officer in the presence of a male officer did have one wrist taped loosely to a chair but at no time was restrained.

Concerning this, the Officer and her colleagues were interviewed. After consideration all staff were given "advice and guidance" regarding their future conduct, contact with prisoners and the levels of professionalism expected.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Justice to detail each occasion (i) she; (ii) her predecessor; or (iii) any of her officials attended a meeting (a) with; or (b) at the request or facilitation of, Brown Rudnick over the last three years, including the date and purpose of each meeting.

(AQW 7738/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Neither I, my predecessor, nor any of my Departmental officials have attended any meetings with, or at the request or facilitation of Brown Rudnick over the last three years.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail how much was expended in respect of the failed prosecution of Person A in Omagh Crown Court, both in respect of prosecution and defence costs.

(AQW 7798/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The identifiable and estimated cost for the prosecution of Person A is given in the table below:

Cost Type	Identifiable & Estimated Cost
a) Prosecution ¹	£2,556
b) Legal Aid ²	£11,537
c) Court (Judiciary and Staff Costs)	£1,532
d) Jury costs ³	£1,547
e) Facilities (e.g. Courtroom Accommodation)	£280
f) PSNI costs ⁴	n/a
Total	£17,452

- Source:** Public Prosecution Service. In the absence of detailed records of time spent on individual cases it is not possible to produce precise costs for a particular case or even average costs for a particular type of case. This is because the amount of time required to take individual decisions as to prosecution will vary depending upon a range of factors including the complexity of the case, the extent of the case papers and any other work in hand. As the PPS does not charge clients for work done there is no business need for such detailed records to be maintained. Some costs are identifiable however, including, for example, the fees paid to prosecuting counsel and expenses paid to witnesses.
- The estimate of fees provided are based on the fixed fee structure provided under the Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings (Costs) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2005, as amended, and include fees based on actual court attendances. The estimates do not include subsidiary fees such as travel time, mileage or consultations by Counsel.
- Costs include jury keepers, jury meals and jury expenses.
- Costs for individual investigations and subsequent court appearances for PSNI Officers/Staff are not recorded separately.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline (i) how long the Forensic Science Northern Ireland microscope has been broken; (ii) when it is due to be repaired; and (iii) how many cases are backlogged as a result.

(AQW 7802/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Comparative microscopy equipment used within the Firearms section in Forensic Science Northern Ireland was assessed as requiring an upgrade and, in line with the Agency's Quality Management System, the equipment was taken out of casework on 14 September 2016.

Arrangements are ongoing with the equipment manufacturer for the upgrade components to be procured and fitted as soon as possible.

Three cases have been impacted by the equipment being temporarily out of service. However, under an established mutual support agreement, colleagues in FSNI's sister organisation, the Scottish Police Authority Forensic Service, have agreed to assist FSNI in firearms cases where comparative microscopy is required, in order to minimise the impact on the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice System.

Other FSNI firearms work, not involving comparative microscopy, is unaffected.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline her plans for the extension of the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust for both serving and retired prison officers; and a timeline for when she anticipates this will be functional.

(AQW 7804/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Following a visit to the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust I asked officials to develop a proposal that would enable both current and retired Prison Officers to access services similar to serving and former police officers.

The Prison Service held an initial meeting with the Trust on 6 December to discuss the nature, likely demand and type of services that could be offered. Further discussions are to take place before the end of the year.

I anticipate the agreed services will be offered to former and serving Prison Officers early in the New Year.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Justice whether she will work with the Minister of Health to address the re-victimisation of victims of domestic abuse through the removal of their children by social services.

(AQW 7819/16-21)

Ms Sugden: My Department in conjunction with the Department of Health and the PSNI, fund Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs). MARACs draw together representatives from local voluntary and statutory agencies to discuss high

risk cases of domestic violence in local areas, share information and agree a co-ordinated action plan to ensure the safety of victims and their children.

I recognise however that there may be scenarios involving domestic violence which give rise to Social Services applying to the court for the removal of children from the home. The Children (NI) Order 1995 is the principal statute governing the care, upbringing and protection of children in Northern Ireland and in considering any such application the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration for the court.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Justice pursuant to AQO 650/16-21, to outline any arrangements to monitor and evaluate the impact of programmes that receive funding from her Department.

(AQW 7863/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Tackling Paramilitarism Programme Board is responsible for deciding on allocations of funding for programmes in support of the Executive action plan. To be clear, funding is held centrally and allocated on the advice of the Programme Board, it is not allocated by my Department.

The Programme Board will receive regular updates on progress and expenditure. Individual projects will be responsible for ensuring effective project evaluation mechanisms are in place to allow them to report back to the Board.

The Board are also giving consideration to the commissioning of an independent evaluation to assess the overall impact of the action plan.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in absence of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 in Northern Ireland, (i) what current safeguards are in place to protect citizens; and (ii) is there specific provision for public bodies, including agencies within her departmental remit, to report people considered to be at risk of being drawn into terrorism, as per Prevent duty guidance.

(AQW 7902/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I refer the Member to my answer to AQW/7482/16-21.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice pursuant to AQW 6891/16-21 and given prisons are government owned and operated and fall under the remit of HSENI, whether she will implement a policy for NIPS to ask the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) to investigate all incidents in which there is injury, damage or danger and produce a report on each.

(AQW 7903/16-21)

Ms Sugden: NIPS currently fulfil all the requirements of RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) and these reports are copied to the HSENI for consideration.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the proposed new build for Magilligan prison.

(AQW 7925/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I am committed to providing a redeveloped prison at Magilligan to enable the Northern Ireland Prison Service to deliver essential programmes to address re-offending behaviour; to meet Disability Discrimination Act standards; and to replace the existing infrastructure, which has outlived its useful life and is expensive and inefficient to staff, maintain and operate.

An outline business case for the Redevelopment of Magilligan Prison was approved by the Department of Finance (then the Department of Finance and Personnel) in January 2015.

Project Delivery is dependent on the provision of capital funding. This will be considered as part of the process of setting the next budget.

I will not be able to confirm when the rebuilding of Magilligan Prison will commence until capital funding is secured.

Mr Beattie asked the Minister of Justice to outline the extent of compulsory drug testing in the Northern Ireland prison regime.

(AQW 7929/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Everyone held in custody by the Northern Ireland Prison Service can be subject to drug testing at any time. Drug testing would normally take place as part of regime progression, prior to periods of Home Leave, as part of the work allocation process or if there is reasonable suspicion of the use of illegal or unauthorised substances.

A refusal to undergo a drug test is regarded as an offence under prison rules and is dealt with accordingly.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice pursuant to AQW 6789/16-21, to publish the order, warrant or policy as requested.

(AQW 7942/16-21)

Ms Sugden: There is no requirement for such an order, warrant or policy. It would not be appropriate for the Department to impede an arm's-length body of another Department in the pursuit of a statutory inquiry. I understand that the Charity

Commission relies on the general powers of investigation provided by the Charities Act (NI) 2008. Questions regarding the specifics of its inquiry should be directed to the Charity Commission.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister of Justice whether her Department will commit to enshrine in law those protections that derive from judgements of the European Court of Justice.

(AQW 7958/16-21)

Ms Sugden: It is too early to make an assessment of the effect of judgments from the Court of Justice of the EU following the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Justice to outline the support provided to family members of Police Officers that have been subject to threats.

(AQW 7970/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Support services to police officers fall within the Chief Constable's responsibility as the employer; for senior police officers (Assistant Chief Constable and above), the Policing Board is the employer.

I am advised by the PSNI that there are a number of support mechanisms available to police officers who are subjected to a threat on their life. These mechanisms also seek to ensure the safety of family members at the same address and include both financial and practical measures.

I understand that serving police officers are able to apply for Home Security Aid, personal and tailored security advice, as well as the support of PSNI Occupational Health and Welfare Mental Health Services. Counselling may also be made available to the partners or spouses of officers. Family members who live with the officers affected will benefit from many of the practical measures extended to the officer. The Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust provide services to officers and the children of serving members under such circumstances.

Where there is a certified threat to their life, officers can also apply for purchase of their property at current market rate by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive under the Department for the Communities' Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwelling (SPED) scheme. This scheme is also open to members of the public who find themselves in similar circumstances.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline (i) the safety information required from NIPS for it's employees injured in work; and (ii) whether they are entitled to receive (a) a copy of the risk assessment of the scene and circumstances where injury occurred; and (b) the safety investigation report.

(AQW 7994/16-21)

Ms Sugden: NIPS undertake to comply with the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations in relation to health and safety information.

As with any information disclosed, redactions and security restrictions may be applied.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline the policy for NIPS safety officers or representatives to report hazards or concerns; and to provide or place a copy in the Assembly Library.

(AQW 7995/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Each establishment has a Works Department helpline for the reporting of physical hazards. There is also a health and safety committee at each establishment where safety representatives can advise of any health and safety concerns. Staff can also avail of the Staff Communication sheets to advise the local health and safety units of any health and safety concerns.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Justice to outline (i) the training or advice provided to officials within her Department and each of its Arm's Length Bodies in relation to outcomes-based accountability; (ii) who delivered the training; (iii) an overview of each session including the number of people in attendance and themes covered; (iv) the total paid to each individual or organisation involved in the delivery training up to 28 November 2016; and (v) the projected costs to be paid to each individual or organisation involved in the delivery training in 2016/17.

(AQW 8056/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Outcome based accountability (OBA) training has been provided to NISRA statisticians in all Executive Departments, to Programme for Government Senior Responsible Officers and their teams, and to policy officials with a particular identified requirement.

In addition, OBA familiarisation sessions have been provided at meetings of senior officials involved in Programme for Government implementation across Departments.

All of this training has been provided at no cost to Departments, by NISRA statisticians seconded to the Executive Office.

Within the Department for Justice OBA familiarisation workshops were delivered for staff by in-house practitioners, at no cost. In addition, one senior official attended a global summit on Outcome Based Accountability, hosted by the National Children's Bureau, at a cost of £275.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many people have been convicted for drink driving since 2013.

(AQW 8063/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Offences related to driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs may be prosecuted under the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. Driving under the influence offence descriptions do not always distinguish between the involvement of alcohol or drugs and, to establish the nature of the substance concerned would require a manual trawl of court records, an exercise that would incur a disproportionate cost. Information in relation to convictions for drink or drugs driving offences up to the end of 2015, the most recent year available, has therefore been provided.

Convictions for drink or drugs driving offences, 2013 – 2015

Year	Convictions
2013	2,321
2014	2,215
2015	2,143

Notes:

- 1 Figures relate to convictions which included at least one count of the offences specified.
- 2 The figures provided relate to convictions for all classifications of the offences specified.
- 3 Figures relate to initial disposals at court: disposals as a result of appeals are not included.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail any discussions held with the Chief Constable in relation to high sickness and/or absence rates across Public Protection Units, and to provide an assurance that the responsibilities of associated agencies and arm's-length bodies under her remit will not be impacted upon in their public protection roles as a result.

(AQW 8076/16-21)

Ms Sugden: PSNI staffing levels across districts are a matter for the Chief Constable and the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am satisfied that operational capacity is being maintained in the Public Protection Units where there has been absenteeism. Departmental Agencies are continuing to operate public protection arrangements normally, in close cooperation with PSNI and other partner bodies, and on this basis there have been no grounds for discussion with the Chief Constable.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice following the release of John Stanfield from custody, to outline the agency that is to undertake the role of Designated Risk Manager.

(AQW 8077/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Risk management is the responsibility of the multi-Agency Local Area Public Protection Panel with PSNI acting as the Designated Risk Manager in this case.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline (i) why the Prison Service Trust has not been providing support for serving and retired prison staff, comparable to that which exists in and is to be extended by the Police Rehabilitation & Retraining Trust; and (ii) whether the Prison Service Trust will become responsible for delivering services for serving and retired prison officers on behalf of the Police Rehabilitation & Retraining Trust.

(AQW 8157/16-21)

Ms Sugden:

- (i) The Prison Service Trust provides healthcare, life planning and support services to their client base which includes the families of officers who have died in service.
- (ii) The Northern Ireland Prison Service will be responsible for agreeing the services which will be provided by the Police Rehabilitation & Retraining Trust.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Justice whether people convicted of the vandalism or theft of life saving equipment such as defibrillators or flotation aids will be dealt with in the courts to the same extent as people prosecuted for attacks on the emergency services and their personnel.

(AQW 8164/16-21)

Ms Sugden: According to sentencing guidelines, damage to emergency equipment, such as defibrillators or flotation aids, or to a public amenity can be included as aggravating factors in the offence of criminal damage.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Justice to outline when all funding for the proposed additional investigative capacity to address criminality linked to paramilitary groups, that was considered and agreed by the Cross-Departmental Programme Board at its meeting on 9 June 2016, was released to the PSNI.

(AQW 8470/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The PSNI were notified on 14 June that their bid of £1,123k for additional investigative capacity to address criminality linked to paramilitary groups had been agreed by the Cross-Departmental Programme Board at its meeting on 9 June 2016. The full amount was drawn down as part of the October Monitoring Round.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Justice to outline the circumstances around which a Northern Ireland Prison Service van collided with The Cut in Banbridge on 27 November 2016.
(AQW 8485/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The circumstances around which a Northern Ireland Prison Service van collided with The Cut in Banbridge on 27 November 2016 are currently the subject of an investigation and as such, it would not be appropriate to respond further.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice what criteria was applied in deciding not to consult on the policy decision to support gay pardons.
(AQW 8578/16-21)

Ms Sugden: As these amendments were not tabled until Report Stage of the Policing and Crime Bill there was no time for wide consultation. We did, however, consult with key stakeholders, including representatives of the LGBT community.

As I said in my speech to the Assembly on 28 November, I believed that the balance lay in seizing a timely opportunity for the criminal justice system to right the wrongs of the past and offer equality of treatment for gay and bisexual men in Northern Ireland, on the same basis as in England and Wales.

The legislative consent motion did provide the Assembly with the opportunity to decide otherwise.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr McCausland asked the Assembly Commission for its assessment of the Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series programme.
(AQO 811/16-21)

Mr Dickson (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series or KESS programme is now in its sixth year. It is an annual programme of seminars, jointly delivered by the Assembly's Research and Information Service or RaiSe, in partnership with the three local universities - Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University and The Open University. Research from all academics at the three partner universities is welcome, as long as it meets KESS standards, meaning it must be objective, evidence-based, reliable and robust; AND relevant to policy and law-making in this jurisdiction.

Each KESS seminar provides a forum for policy-makers, MLAs, external stakeholders and academics to discuss academic research findings, which could be used to inform debate and decision-making in Northern Ireland. In doing so, KESS provides effective and high quality support to the work of the Assembly.

In the first five years of its operation, 73 KESS seminars were delivered across a range of topics, with representatives from Assembly statutory committees – usually the Chair – providing opening remarks highlighting the relevance of the seminar topic to committee business.

During that time, a total of 2,960 individuals registered to attend KESS, representing a broad spectrum from across the public and private sectors, academics, voluntary and community groups, as well as the general public.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 16 December 2016

Written Answers to Questions

The Executive Office

Mr McAleer asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the eligibility criteria for community groups who wish to apply to the Social Investment Fund community premises support grant.
(AQW 3149/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): The application process for the Community Premises Support Project is administered by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, which is the Lead Partner Organisation for the project.

The application process is now open and full details including the application form and guidance notes, incorporating final eligibility criteria is available on the Council website at <http://www.fermanaghomagh.com/residential-services/funding-and-grants-2/community-premises-support-project/>

Mr Kennedy asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the post of Director of Communications to the Executive will be filled.
(AQW 4062/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Following Departmental restructuring, roles and responsibilities have been reviewed and this post no longer exists.

Mr Kennedy asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what plans they have to bring forward amending legislation to remove Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Equal Treatment Order 1998.
(AQW 5337/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Although our Department has responsibility for the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, the issue clearly impacts on the Department of Education. Therefore, we are currently working with the Department of Education to consider the matter further.

Mr McKee asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the (i) total number; and (ii) proportion of (a) Assembly Written Questions; (b) Assembly Priority Written Questions; and (c) Freedom of Information requests directed at their Department that have been answered within the maximum permitted timescales since May 2016.
(AQW 5743/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The information requested is as follows and refers to the period May to the end of September 2016:

- (a) Assembly Written Questions: 130 and 8%;
- (b) Assembly Priority Written Questions: 28 and 0%;
- (c) Freedom of Information Requests: 64 requests have been received by the department. 36 have reached the deadline for response and, of these, 28 have received a response within the deadline (77 %).

In considering this information, we would emphasise that the unique nature of our responsibilities, which requires joint consideration and agreement on an appropriate response, adds an additional element which has a significant bearing upon the timescales required to provide appropriate and accurate responses.

It should also be noted that, of the 158 Assembly Written Questions tabled to the Executive Office to the end of September 2016 (both priority written and ordinary), 133 have now been answered (84%). Of the 36 Fol requests received during this timeframe which had reached their deadline for response, responses have now issued to 34 (94%).

Dr Farry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the Lower Shankill Community Association were granted resources from the Central Good Relations Funding Programmes; and to detail (i) the amount given and; (ii) for for what purposes it was granted.

(AQW 6024/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The Lower Shankill Community Association has been granted resources from the Central Good Relations Funding Programmes as follows:

- (i) £239,051.00 from 2014/15 to present; and
- (ii) Funding was granted to support the delivery of a Good Relations Programme which was focussed on Women and Youth (WAY).

Dr Farry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline their position in relation to Brexit on the negotiation of (i) a special status for Northern Ireland in relation to the European Union; and (ii) a series of special arrangements for different sectors or aspect of Northern Ireland's relationship with the European Union.

(AQW 6329/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: We refer the Member to our letter to the Prime Minister of 10th August and our comments following the Joint Ministerial Committee meeting on 24th October, both of which can be found at:

- <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/letter-prime-minister-rt-hon-theresa-may-mp>
- <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/news/foster-and-mcguinness-comment-following-joint-ministerial-committee-meeting>

Mr Anderson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the progress of the Fresh Start Agreement.
(AQO 575/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Since the last Fresh Start progress report on 29 June we have continued to make good progress on delivering on our commitments.

The Executive published its action plan on tackling paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime on 19 July. Work is underway to take forward a number of measures this year and to develop programmes for future years.

The UK and Irish Governments signed a treaty on 13 September to establish the Independent Reporting Commission. The aim is to have the Commission in place by the end of 2016.

The OECD report was launched on 6 July following Executive agreement. Recommendations from the report are to be included in Programme for Government delivery plans.

In the recent monitoring round we agreed the allocation of £30m of RRI borrowing as part of an Economic Stimulus package to fund capital allocations of £25m for Roads Structural Maintenance and the purchase of new buses and £5m for a Community Regeneration Fund.

A number of projects to support shared and integrated education have also been agreed with the UK Government providing for access to £3.5m of additional Capital DEL funding this year.

The Commission for Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition has met five times since it was established on 20 June and has recently begun a period of public and sectoral engagement.

The Bill to reduce the number of MLAs to five per constituency received Royal Assent on 22 July.

We will also be finalising the membership of the Civic Advisory Panel shortly.

Mr O'Dowd asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Together: Building a United Community headline actions.

(AQO 576/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The Together: Building a United Community Strategy committed to the delivery of seven headline actions across a wide range of areas, and there has been considerable progress in their delivery.

For example the Summer Camps programme delivered 101 camps in 2015/16. The programme has been mainstreamed with a further 103 camps being delivered in 2016/17. Over 4000 young people have taken part in the Summer Camp Programme in each of the two years.

The initial phase of the United Youth Programme, involving over 300 young people, concluded on 31 March 2016. The findings from the evaluation have been very positive. A key element of the United Youth Programme, "Youth Initiative" was identified and agreed by SEUPB as falling within the eligibility of the Peace IV funding. Extensive funding has been secured by the Executive to deliver the United Youth Programme in the form of a cross-border programme with the Irish Government under PEACE IV Children and Young People Priority 2.1. The call for applications for this Priority launched on 3 November 2016 with a closing date of 4 January 2017. Projects are scheduled to be approved at the end of July 2017, with implementation to begin in August 2017.

Three Shared Neighbourhoods have been completed to date - Ballynafoy Close in Belfast; Manse Court in Saintfield; and Felden Mill in Newtownabbey with another scheme in Cookstown nearing completion. The remaining six schemes are underway.

The first call for expressions of interest in the Shared Education Campuses Programme resulted in 3 projects being supported. A further two projects have been successful under the second call for applications and a third call for applications to the programme was announced on 20 September 2016. The deadline for submission of proposals under this third call is 27 January 2017.

We launched Strategic Frameworks for each Urban Village area at events in Derry~Londonderry and Belfast in September 2016 where we also announced £45 million of planned capital investment over the next PfG period to help transform the physical environment in UV areas; build capacity for the local community; and foster positive community identities. These frameworks identify key strategic actions in each UV area and have been shaped by local communities.

The number of barriers has been reduced from 59 to 50 with sections of four other structures removed. The launch of the removal of the first NIHE Peace Wall took place on 11 August 2016. It has now been replaced by a family friendly landscaped area and railings with decorative panels, which local residents helped to design.

Two phases of the Cross Community Youth Sports Programme have been successfully delivered in Falls and Greater Village. The 2016/2017 Embedding Sustainability programme in these areas seeks to build upon the skills, leadership and confidence of the young people on the programme to empower them to design and deliver projects within their own communities. The programme has also been linked to the Strategic Frameworks for Colin and Eastside Urban Village areas. Stakeholder engagement has progressed well in both these areas and a wide range of community, youth and sporting organisations have been informed and engaged. A pilot programme commenced in Lisnaskea at the end of July 2016 and a range of key activities and events for participants will roll out January-March 2017.

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of (i) Schedule 11 of the Immigration Act 2016; and (ii) its implications.

(AQW 7408/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The provisions in the Act are wide ranging and introduce significant changes to asylum support. Officials are currently exploring the implications of the Act, and Schedule 11 in particular, with community and voluntary sector stakeholders.

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions have taken place with the Scottish and Welsh Governments regarding the triggering of Article 50.

(AQW 7547/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Triggering Article 50 is a matter for the UK Government. Discussions between the UK government and Devolved Administrations are taking place at the Joint Ministerial Committee (European Negotiations) and in bi-lateral meetings.

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions have taken place with the Home Office regarding securing the unhindered freedom of movement across the island of Ireland.

(AQW 7549/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: This is being considered as part of the ongoing work of the Joint Ministerial Committee (European Negotiations) and in bi-laterals.

Mr McPhillips asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions have taken place with (i) the European Commission; or (ii) any of its bodies or representatives regarding the triggering of Article 50.

(AQW 7562/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Article 50 of the consolidated Treaty on the European Union describes the mechanism for a member state to withdraw from the European Union. It is the individual member state that is responsible for triggering the process through notifying the European Council of an intention to withdraw. The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, has instructed the European Commission that there should be 'no negotiation without notification'.

Therefore, while Ministers and officials continue to engage with the European Commission across a number of ongoing policy issues, there has been no discussion regarding the triggering of Article 50.

Mr Mullan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of (i) the Salisbury Convention in light of any triggering of Article 50; and (ii) the manifesto commitment of the Conservative Party to ensure Northern Ireland's place within the European Single Market will be safeguarded.

(AQW 7567/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The application of the Salisbury Convention to the legislative business of the UK Government is a matter for the Parliament at Westminster.

Mr Attwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the consideration given to the impact of Brexit on the Dublin Regulation and the provision of support to refugees and asylum seekers.

(AQW 7568/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: At present, the UK and Ireland are among the 32 states (European Union and European Economic Area members and Switzerland) covered by the Dublin III Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013). This permits applicants for international protection to be transferred to another participating state *inter alia* where that was the participating state they first entered, or that was where they first applied for protection.

It is too early to say what impact any planned exit from the EU would have on the regulation as far as the UK is concerned.

Support for asylum seekers is a reserved matter and falls under the Home Office. It is UK Government legislation that will impact upon support to asylum seekers (the answer to AQW/7408/16-21 concerning Schedule 11 of the Immigration Act 2016 refers).

Brexit should have no particular impact on support for refugees.

Mr Frew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, given the result of the United States Presidential election, how they intend to build on the relationship between Northern Ireland and the United States.

(AQO 691/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: We are fortunate that Northern Ireland has a strong, mutually beneficial relationship with the United States. It is our single most important inward investor and our most important international trading partner. Last year alone we welcomed nearly a quarter of a million visitors from North America.

We have enjoyed unparalleled access to the White House since devolution was reintroduced and successive Presidents have welcomed us to the White House to discuss economic development and political process. We are privileged to be the only devolved administration to enjoy that level of access and we are determined that it will continue under President-elect Trump.

We have instructed our Washington Bureau to work with the incoming Trump administration to ensure that our relationship with the White House is maintained and strengthened. We look forward to meeting President-elect Trump in person in March during the annual St Patrick's Day events. It should be noted that the Bureau works hand in glove with Invest NI and Tourism Ireland to maximise our message to as wide an audience as possible.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, following the closure of the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities, how they will ensure ethnic minorities retain a political voice.

(AQO 698/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The Racial Equality Subgroup has been established to be the voice of minority ethnic people and migrants at the heart of government here. Its role is to support and drive forward work on racial equality and good race relations. The Subgroup has already met twice in order to establish a framework and structures to support its work. A further meeting in December is currently being arranged.

Although the Minority Ethnic Development Fund is not open to applications of a party political nature, there are over 30 projects being funded in the current financial year. These projects not only address the needs of people from minority ethnic backgrounds, they also work towards promoting good relations between different ethnic groups. They help to ensure that the voices of minority ethnic people are heard.

Additionally, we would certainly hope that all our political parties here ensure that they represent all members of our society, including those from a minority ethnic background.

Mr McGrath asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions have Northern Ireland's representatives on the Committee of the Regions been involved in since the EU referendum.

(AQW 7658/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Ministers do not have oversight of the discussions in which Committee of the Regions representatives are involved.

Mr McGrath asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any discussions they have had with representatives of Belfast City Council regarding the impacts of a proposed Brexit on the city of Belfast.

(AQW 7659/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Executive Departments are engaging directly with their key stakeholders, including, where appropriate, local councils, to ensure all relevant issues and perspectives arising from the EU referendum result are identified and understood.

Mr McGrath asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any discussions they have had with representatives of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council regarding the impacts of a proposed Brexit on that district.

(AQW 7660/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Executive Departments are engaging directly with their key stakeholders, including, where appropriate, local councils, to ensure all relevant issues and perspectives arising from the EU referendum result are identified and understood.

Mr McPhillips asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what initiatives has their departmental European Support Unit been tasked with since the EU referendum.
(AQW 7667/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The European Policy and Co-ordination Unit provided insight, analysis and research on Brexit related matters both prior to and immediately following the referendum outcome; and continued to provide this support until the establishment of the EU Future Relations project management team in early autumn.

The Unit now continues with its main role of facilitating the Executive's engagement on cross-cutting domestic EU business, including participation in the Joint Secretariat which prepares meetings of the Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe).

The Unit is the formal regional contact point for all EU related matters, receiving over 4,000 pieces of documentation annually from London and Brussels; it co-ordinates the distribution of this material across Executive departments.

Mr McPhillips asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what representations have been made by the Executive to the UK's Permanent Representative to the European Union.
(AQW 7668/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Regular engagement is undertaken at all levels by Executive Ministers and officials with the UK Permanent Representation to the European Union including pre-Council briefings, bilateral meetings on specific topics of interest, and participation in briefings with relevant policy leads.

Mr McPhillips asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions have taken place between the Executive and Northern Ireland's local councils since the EU Referendum.
(AQW 7669/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Executive departments are engaging directly with their key stakeholders, including, where appropriate, local councils, to ensure all relevant issues and perspectives arising from the EU referendum result are identified and understood.

Mr Mullan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any discussions they have had with representatives of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council regarding the impacts of a proposed Brexit on that district.
(AQW 7670/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Executive departments are engaging directly with their key stakeholders, including, where appropriate, local councils, to ensure all relevant issues and perspectives arising from the EU referendum result are identified and understood.

Mr Mullan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any discussions they have had with representatives of Ards and North Down Borough Council regarding the impacts of a proposed Brexit on that district.
(AQW 7671/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Executive departments are engaging directly with their key stakeholders, including, where appropriate, local councils, to ensure all relevant issues and perspectives arising from the EU referendum result are identified and understood.

Mr Mullan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any discussions they have had with representatives of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council regarding the impacts of a proposed Brexit on that district.
(AQW 7672/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Executive departments are engaging directly with their key stakeholders, including, where appropriate, local councils, to ensure all relevant issues and perspectives arising from the EU referendum result are identified and understood.

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any discussions they have had with representatives of Derry City and Strabane District Council regarding the impacts of a proposed Brexit on (i) Derry city; and (ii) that district.
(AQW 7782/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Executive departments are engaging directly with their key stakeholders, including, where appropriate, local councils, to ensure all relevant issues and perspectives arising from the EU referendum result are identified and understood.

Mr McPhillips asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any discussions they have had with representatives of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council regarding the impacts of a proposed Brexit on that district.

(AQW 7792/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Executive departments are engaging directly with their key stakeholders, including, where appropriate, local councils, to ensure all relevant issues and perspectives arising from the EU referendum result are identified and understood.

Mr Mullan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any discussions they have had with representatives of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council regarding the impacts of a proposed Brexit on that district.

(AQW 7793/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Executive departments are engaging directly with their key stakeholders, including, where appropriate, local councils, to ensure all relevant issues and perspectives arising from the EU referendum result are identified and understood.

Mr Mullan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any discussions they have had with representatives of Mid Ulster District Council regarding the impacts of a proposed Brexit on that district.

(AQW 7794/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Executive departments are engaging directly with their key stakeholders, including, where appropriate, local councils, to ensure all relevant issues and perspectives arising from the EU referendum result are identified and understood.

Mr Mullan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any discussions they have had with representatives of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council regarding the impacts of a proposed Brexit on that district.

(AQW 7795/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Executive departments are engaging directly with their key stakeholders, including, where appropriate, local councils, to ensure all relevant issues and perspectives arising from the EU referendum result are identified and understood.

Mr Mullan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any discussions they have had with representatives of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council regarding the impacts of a proposed Brexit on that district.

(AQW 7796/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Executive Departments are engaging directly with their key stakeholders, including, where appropriate, local councils, to ensure all relevant issues and perspectives arising from the EU referendum result are identified and understood.

Dr Farry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to list any Ministerial directions that they have issued in relation to the Social Investment Fund since its commencement.

(AQW 7949/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: We have not issued any Ministerial directions in relation to the Social Investment Fund.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the appointment of Victims' Advocates to assist victims and survivors with the range of justice, information and services pathways available.

(AQW 8195/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: On 24 November 2016, The Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) opened a call for applications to the Victims Support Programme and the PEACE IV Programme. This call invites community and voluntary organisations to apply for this funding, specifically to enable them to deliver services that will benefit victims and survivors.

The victims and survivors element of the PEACE IV Programme runs from April 2017 – July 2021. This programme will develop and deliver a network of Advocacy Support Workers (Truth, Justice and Acknowledgement) and Health and Wellbeing Caseworkers, in addition to significant funding for specialist training, research and regulation. These programmes will build upon existing vital health and wellbeing services at a community level and ensure that support is there for those who need it most.

The call for applications will close on 4 January 2017. Letters of offer will be issued in March 2017 to allow organisations to recruit Advocacy Support Workers at the start of the new financial year.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 5930/16-21, how does the answer comply with Standing Order 19(5).

(AQW 8240/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: The answer to AQW 5930/16-21 referred to a previous answer – that given to AQW 5929/16-21. It is therefore considered that the requirements outlined in the specified standing order have been complied with.

Mr McPhillips asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they have referred the Social Investment Fund programme to the Northern Ireland Audit Office for investigation.
(AQW 8265/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: We have not referred the Social Investment Fund programme to the Northern Ireland Audit Office for investigation.

The Executive Office is subject to external audit by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO). The NIAO determines its annual audit strategy, including the audit approach and the specific areas to be considered.

The Social Investment Fund was included in the NIAO's audit strategy for 2015-16 and it is expected that it will continue to feature in future strategies.

Mr McPhillips asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether her Department is aware of any historical abuse that occurred in sporting organisations.
(AQW 8364/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: Cases of abuse that occurred in sporting organisations fall outside the Terms of Reference of the current Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry and the Executive Office is not aware of any current or historical abuse cases of this nature.

The statutory framework requires that child abuse must be reported immediately to PSNI and Social Services for investigation.

Anyone who has information on child abuse should report it immediately so it can be investigated and steps taken to protect children and where appropriate alleged perpetrators brought before the courts.

Ms Mallon asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to (i) list all the lead partners involved in the Social Investment Fund; and (ii) outline why the list has not been published to date.
(AQW 8418/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: A full list of all Social Investment Fund projects, including the associated lead partner organisations, is available on the departmental website at <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/sif-projects-all-zone-tables.pdf>

Mr McKee asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail how much has been spent on the decontamination of the former Shackleton Barracks site from 7 October 2011 to date.
(AQW 8440/16-21)

Mrs Foster and Mr McGuinness: There has been no spend on decontamination on the Shackleton site while in our ownership.

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, pursuant to AQW 4520/16-21, to outline when she will provide an answer.
(AQW 5379/16-21)

Miss McIlveen (The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs): I can confirm that AQW 4520 was answered on 25 October.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs given the current adverse weather conditions, to outline the consideration given to a hard manure ban extension.
(AQW 6833/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: As you will be aware one of the aims of the Nitrates Directive and the Nitrates Action Programme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (NAP Regulations) is to protect water quality by ensuring that the correct amount of nutrients are applied under favourable conditions and at a time that they can be used by growing crops, including grass. One of the key methods for achieving this is the requirement for a closed spreading period for organic manures – including both slurry and farmyard (sometimes referred to as solid or hard) manure. The closed spreading period prohibits organic manures, excluding dirty water, from being spread from midnight 15 October to midnight 31 January. Farmyard manure must not be applied from midnight 31 October to midnight 31 January. These periods represent the time when the risk of nutrient leaching is at its

highest and there is little or no plant growth. Farmers are encouraged to spread slurry and manures throughout the growing season rather than leaving applications until just before the start of the closed spreading period.

The NAP Regulations make provision the storage of farmyard manure, for up to a maximum of 120 days, in compact heaps in the field where land application will take place subject to certain environmental requirements. This provision would mean that the farmyard manure would not need to be spread during the closed spreading period thereby eliminating the environmental risks. I would encourage farmers to avail of the provision to store farmyard manure if required rather than spreading it during the closed spreading period.

I would continue to encourage farmers who are experiencing particular difficulties to speak to either their DAERA Advisor or local farming organisation. I can assure you that NIEA will continue to work in partnership with the agricultural community to raise awareness of environmental obligations and support farmers in delivering better environmental and economic outcomes, through sustainable farming practices which meet all legal requirements.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether he has any plans to increase the maximum fine for a pollution offence from £20,000.

(AQW 6984/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The principal water pollution offences are contained in the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. I currently have no plans to revise the maximum fine of £20,000 for a pollution offence under this Order.

Other environmental pollution offences include:

The Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 contains penalties for offences (including for example operating without a permit, or contravening the conditions of a permit) which are liable:

On summary conviction (i.e. in a Magistrates Court), to a fine not exceeding £50,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to both; and

On conviction on indictment (i.e. in a Crown Court), to a fine or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or to both.

There are no plans to review these fines.

Under the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 various fines are levied from £300 (various Articles) up to £50,000 on summary conviction for an offence under Article 4 (Article 4(8) (a)) or, on conviction on indictment, to an unlimited fine (Article 4(8) (b)). Both of these also carry the possibility for imprisonment.

There are no plans to review these fines.

The Environmental Liability (Prevention and Remediation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 contains penalties for offences under specified provisions. These are liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months; or on conviction on indictment, to a fine or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years.

There are no plans to review these fines.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline how launching the Farm Business Improvement Scheme – Capital on the 31 October 2016 was sufficient time to allow farmers to devise a scheme, secure planning permission and develop a robust business plan, given the deadline for applications for Tier 2 of the Scheme is 27 February 2017.

(AQW 7021/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I launched a Preparation Stage for the Capital Scheme on 20 September to encourage farmers and growers to begin preparations ahead of the Scheme opening on 31 October 2016. In addition, this month my Department hosted a series of information awareness events to help equip farmers and growers with the information they need to consider which Tier of the scheme, if any, is most suitable to their business needs and also what they need to do next. Farmers and growers attending these events had the opportunity to ask questions about the Scheme and to talk to DAERA officials and planning officers from the Councils.

As part of making their application for grant support, applicants proposing to carry out construction projects under Tier 2 are required to have any relevant planning permission, licences or other consents in place, or to demonstrate that they have applied for the relevant permissions. Tier 2 closes for applications in Tranche 1 at 4pm on 24 February 2017. However to allow more time, applicants will have until the end of May 2017 to provide evidence of having obtained the necessary permissions.

For farmers and growers who are not ready to complete an application under Tranche 1 of the Scheme, there will be a further opportunity to apply under Tranche 2 of the Scheme, which is planned for autumn 2017.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline why it took until 31 October to launch the Farm Business Improvement Scheme – Capital.

(AQW 7023/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The Farm Business Improvement Scheme, with its package of measures aimed at knowledge transfer, cooperation, innovation, as well as capital investment, is one of the largest and most complex programmes within our RDP, so I want to ensure that our agri-food industry is prepared to take full advantage of all aspects of this programme. Therefore, I am rolling out the Programme in a phased and coordinated way to maximise benefits for our farmers and growers, and the local economy.

The early focus was on Knowledge Transfer, with the launch of the Business Development Groups programme, which opened on 9 November last year, three months after the RDP was approved. This was then followed by the launch of the Farm Family Key Skills suite of training courses in March 2016.

The next phase to be rolled out was the FBIS – Capital. I launched the Preparation Stage for the FBIS – Capital on 20 September in order to provide advance information on Scheme requirements to farmers and growers. Further information was released on the 17 October prior to the Scheme opening on the 31 October.

I am conscious that those applying to the FBIS – Capital Scheme will be taking on additional investments at a time when many sectors have felt the impact of low prices and market volatility so I want to encourage farmers to think carefully about developing a viable long term business plan before they decide to commit to a major investment. If farmers are not yet in a position to submit an application to Tranche 1 of the Capital Scheme, especially for Tier 2, there will be the opportunity to submit an application in Tranche 2, which is planned for autumn 2017.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline how the Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy took account of the Mills Review, into Mobuoy Road in 2013, which questioned the validity of data relating to waste recycling and waste disposal.

(AQW 7027/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy 'Delivering Resource Efficiency' was published in October 2013. Under section 6.2 Enforcement, the Strategy contains the following action: 'The Department will implement an Action Plan to tackle serious environmental crime informed by the recommendations of the expert review'. Thus the Strategy took account of the Mills review in anticipation of the publication of the review report in December 2013.

However, as the Strategy pre-dates the Mills review report the (historic) data on waste recycling and waste disposal contained in the Strategy document was not altered.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail the conclusions of the independent review, recommended at paragraph 4.06 of the 2013 Mills Review into Mobuoy Road, aimed at establishing the facts around conflicting accounts in the Environmental Crime Unit.

(AQW 7028/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: You will be aware that the matter of a criminal prosecution in the case of the waste site at Mobuoy Road, Londonderry is currently before the courts. It is therefore inadvisable, while those proceedings are active, to make public the detailed conclusions.

I therefore regret, at this stage, I am unable to provide the detail you seek.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs what talks have taken place between her Department and representatives of the quarry industry on the reintroduction of a Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme.

(AQW 7029/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: No talks have taken place between my Department and representatives of the quarry industry on the reintroduction of an Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline any discussions between the North of Ireland and the South of Ireland regarding the levels of regulation on waste management post Brexit.

(AQW 7376/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I discuss environmental issues, including the implications of the UK referendum, with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment at the NSMC Environment sectoral meetings.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment on why her Department has only £40m to cover two tranches for the Farm Business Improvement Scheme - Capital, when the Executive previously agreed to prioritise the agri-food sector for support and make up to £250 million.

(AQW 7399/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Given the current economic climate, I am conscious that those applying to the Capital Scheme will be taking on additional investments at a time when many sectors have felt the impact of low prices and market volatility. A budget of £40 million has been agreed for the first two tranches of the Capital Scheme in its initial phase. There will be ongoing monitoring as the two tranches of each tier roll out, and the uptake for the two initial tranches will allow us to gauge the realistic demand and affordability of the Capital Scheme for farmers and growers. This information will be used to inform future decision making about any further roll out of the Scheme.

Ms Archibald asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether she has any plans for a village regeneration scheme, similar to the Town and Village Scheme introduced in the South of Ireland in August 2016.

(AQW 7694/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I am aware of the Town and Village Scheme introduced in the Republic of Ireland in August 2016, and my officials are assessing the detail of this scheme and will report back to me shortly. In addition, the Minister for Communities recently announced he is reviewing the population cap on urban development grants and I will be working closely with him to ensure that villages and small settlements are not neglected.

Under the LEADER component of the Rural Development Programme, delivered through the Local Action Groups (LAGs) there is a Rural Village Renewal scheme. The LAGs have indicated through their Local Rural Development Strategies that they plan to invest £12.7m in Rural Village Renewal going forward. The LAG for your area is Causeway Coast and Glens who should be able to provide you with further information on individual Village Plans.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 6263/16-21, to provide a breakdown of the £47m.

(AQW 7726/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Based on the outcome of the October Monitoring Round the latest projected cost of administration in DAERA for 2016-17 is £47.0m. The following table sets out the breakdown of this cost by Group within the Department:

	Total £m
Salaries and Wages	34.9
General Administrative Expenditure	9.0
Income	(0.8)
Total Staff and Operating Costs	43.1
Depreciation	3.9
Total	47.0

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 6499/16-21 and given the question asked for expenditure by each Council, (i) whether each Council was contacted before a response was issued; and (ii) why her Department refused to answer the question that was asked.

(AQW 7727/16-21)

Miss McIlveen:

- (i) Each Council was not contacted before a response was issued.
- (ii) On the mainland Councils were required by law to collect information on fly-tipping, including associated costs and report this to the relevant Department. However, this was not the case in Northern Ireland. The reporting system has recently changed to Waste Data Flow and this covers the entire UK. Under this new reporting system councils in Northern Ireland are required under the Northern Ireland Landfill Allowance Scheme (NI) Regulations 2004 to report to the Department on the tonnage and incidents of fly-tipping but not the cost.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline her plans for discussions with the Northern Ireland Office and the Republic's Department of Foreign Affairs to introduce regulation on the aqua-culture in Lough Foyle.

(AQW 7805/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I have no current plans to hold discussions with either the Northern Ireland Office or the Republic of Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to introduce regulation of aquaculture activities in Lough Foyle.

The Foyle and Carlingford Fisheries (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 extended the functions of the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission (FCILC) in relation to the licensing and development of aquaculture in the Foyle and Carlingford Areas. The Order provided for a new aquaculture licensing system in the Foyle and Carlingford Areas under the control of the FCILC.

You will be aware, that the transfer of aquaculture licensing to the Loughs Agency cannot take place until such time as the jurisdictional issues surrounding Lough Foyle have been addressed. The ownership issue of both Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough is not a matter within the competence of this Assembly. However, I know that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Crown Estate have been talking about this issue for some time. I understand that the next meeting between the two Governments is scheduled for later this month in Dublin.

The pressing priority for all those involved in these discussions should be to come to an arrangement which will allow the Loughs Agency to properly fulfil its role in relation to the regulation of aquaculture in both the Foyle and Carlingford Areas.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 7113/16-21, to outline all levels of engagement that has taken place to date and the actions agreed.

(AQW 7828/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Further to the Minister for Infrastructure's response to AQW 7113/16-21, I can confirm that my officials have been liaising with colleagues in the Department for Infrastructure and key planning contacts in the local councils on development and delivery of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme – Capital.

As a result of this engagement, planning officials participated in a series of roadshow information events about the Capital Scheme that were held in November at six venues across Northern Ireland, providing advice and answering farmers and growers questions about planning requirements.

I have written to the Northern Ireland Local Government Association and all the Chief Executives of the local councils emphasising the importance of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme - Capital Scheme to our agri-food industry and the local economy.

My officials continue to engage with local council planning contacts on how best we can assist applicants with the planning process.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail the average processing time taken by her Department to issue Fish Culture and Shellfish Fishery Licences, in the past ten years.

(AQW 8005/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Each application for a Fish Culture Licence and Shellfish Fishery Licence is considered on its own merits, within the process laid down by Section 11 of the Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966. The application process requires a description of the proposal, provision of supporting documents, advertisement/consultation, receipt of comments and objections, and determination of impacts, based on the reports and scientific assessments before final decisions can be made.

The length of time taken to grant Fish Culture Licences is therefore outside the control of the Department.

As an indicator of this complexity, over the past ten years the average processing time for Fish Culture Licence applications has been 8 years (96.25 months).

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline (i) the training or advice provided to officials within her Department and each of its Arm's Length Bodies in relation to outcomes-based accountability; (ii) who delivered the training; (iii) an overview of each session including the number of people in attendance and themes covered; (iv) the total paid to each individual or organisation involved in the delivery of training up to 28 November 2016; and (v) the projected costs to be paid to each individual or organisation involved in the delivery training in 2016/17.

(AQW 8035/16-21)

Miss McIlveen:

- (i) Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) on-line training is available to all Departmental staff, and staff in the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), through the NICS Centre for Applied Learning (CAL). In addition, some DAERA staff attended an OBA conference in the Waterfront Hall in October 2016.

The Department has 3 other Arms Length Bodies (ALBs), as defined within the DAERA Corporate Governance Framework, but none of these have access to training through CAL, and manage and procure their own training in line with their specific business needs.

- (ii) OBA on-line training available to DAERA & AFBI is delivered through the NICS Centre for Applied Learning and the OBA Conference was delivered by a company called Clear Impact.
- (iii) The OBA on-line training is a series of video presentations which provides an overview of OBA methodology. To date 15 DAERA staff have completed this. No AFBI staff have completed it and there are no immediate plans to do so.
The OBA Conference featured a number of speakers, break-out sessions, discussion panels and workshops, and was attended by 5 senior DAERA staff. No AFBI staff attended the conference.
- (iv) OBA on-line training has no cost to the Department and the OBA Conference was funded by the Executive Office.
- (v) There are no projected costs for OBA training in the Department for 2016/2017.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 6132/16-21, to detail the number of (i) individuals; and (ii) organisations that were prosecuted.

(AQW 8038/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Pursuant to AQW 6132/16-21, (i) 17 individuals and (ii) 6 organisations have been prosecuted.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 6132/16-21, to detail (i) the nature of the pollution incidents; and (ii) where they occurred.

(AQW 8039/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The table below detail the nature of the pollution incidents using six descriptors: Farm, NI Water, Domestic, Industry, Transport and Other. The incidents are broken down into River Water Bodies to provide information on where the incident occurred.

Incident severity is also provided. A low severity incident is one that has minimal effect on water quality, a medium severity incident has a significant effect on water quality and a high severity incident is one that has a major effect on water quality.

Confirmed pollution incidents by source and severity via River Water Bodies.

By Source/Severity	Farm			N. I Water		
River Water Body	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
Arney River	0	1	7	0	0	2
Arney River tributary	0	0	2	0	0	1
Ballinamallard River tributary	0	1	1	0	0	1
Ballycassidy River	0	1	20	0	0	2
Ballycassidy River upper	0	1	1	0	0	0
Ballygawley Water	0	1	9	0	0	1
Belcoo River	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blackwater Aghnacloy	0	0	1	0	2	3
Blackwater tributary	1	2	0	0	0	0
Colebrooke River	0	3	14	0	0	9
Colebrooke River Fivemiletown	1	0	1	0	0	1
Colebrooke River tributary	0	0	6	0	0	0
Colebrooke River upper	0	0	1	0	0	0
County River Lower	0	0	1	0	0	0
Curlagh tributary Blackwater	0	4	3	0	0	0
Derrycaw Burn Neagh	0	0	1	0	0	0
Derrygorry Tributary	0	0	0	0	0	0
Drumard Burn Blackwater	0	2	0	0	0	0
Drumharriff Burn	0	0	4	0	0	0
Finn River Lower	0	0	0	0	0	0
Finn River Middle	0	0	0	0	0	4
Finn River tributary	0	0	1	0	0	0
Finn River Upper	0	0	1	0	0	0
Fury River	0	0	1	0	0	0
Glendurragh River	0	0	1	0	0	2
Glendurragh River tributary	0	0	5	0	0	0
Hollybrook River	0	0	5	0	0	2
Keenaghan Lough feeders	0	1	0	0	0	0
Kesh River	0	0	0	0	0	1
Kesh River tributary	0	0	5	0	0	2
Knockmany Burn Blackwater	0	0	1	0	0	0
Lackey River - Killylackey River Lower	0	1	8	0	0	0
Lisnarrick River	0	0	10	0	0	2
Lough Melvin peripherals	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lower Lough Erne tributaries	0	1	23	0	0	1

By Source/Severity	Farm			N. I Water		
River Water Body	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
Lurgan River	0	0	0	0	0	0
Many Burns River	0	1	3	0	0	0
New River	0	0	1	0	0	1
Newtownbutler Stream	0	0	2	0	0	0
Oona Water	2	3	8	0	0	0
Oona Water tributary	0	1	3	0	0	0
Owengarr River	0	0	2	0	0	0
River Blackwater	0	5	7	0	0	0
River Blackwater 5	0	3	3	0	0	0
River Blackwater 6	0	3	5	0	0	0
River Blackwater Benburb	0	2	4	0	0	1
River Erne Bellanaleck	0	0	0	0	0	1
River Erne Enniskillen	0	0	2	0	0	36
River Erne Lower	0	0	1	0	0	0
River Erne tributary	0	0	7	0	0	0
River Rhone	0	2	3	0	3	1
Roogagh River	0	0	0	0	0	1
Screenagh River	0	0	5	0	0	0
Sillees River	0	2	9	0	0	1
Sillees River Ross Lough	0	0	0	0	0	4
St Angelo Stream Erne	0	0	2	0	0	0
Starraghen Tributary Lower	0	0	1	0	0	0
Starraghen Tributary Upper	0	1	2	0	0	0
Swanlinbar River	0	0	2	0	0	0
Swanlinbar River tributary	1	0	3	0	0	0
Tall River	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tamlaght Stream	0	0	7	0	0	1
Tempo River	0	0	10	0	0	1
Tempo River tributary	0	0	3	0	0	0
Termon River Lower	0	0	1	0	0	0
Termon River Upper	0	0	0	0	0	0
Torrent River	0	0	1	0	0	1
Upper Lough Erne	0	2	11	0	0	1
Whitehill Stream Colebrooke	0	2	3	0	0	0
Woodford River	0	0	0	0	0	0
Woodford River tributary	0	0	2	0	0	0
Total	5	46	246	0	5	84

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether Reeves's Muntjac was recently recorded near Comber and along the southern end of the Ards Peninsula.

(AQW 8067/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: A road traffic casualty Muntjac was recorded on the Grahamsbridge Road in Dundonald in September 2014. A member of the public also reported a 'near miss' road collision on the Rowreagh Road near Saltwater Brigg in the southern end of the Ards Peninsula in February 2016.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline (i) whether her Department is aware of the escape of a significant number of Reeves' Muntjac in the Letterkenny area of County Donegal; and (ii) what steps she has taken to work with the authorities in the Republic of Ireland to prevent these deer reaching Northern Ireland.

(AQW 8068/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My Department is not aware of a significant escape of Reeves' Muntjac in the Letterkenny area of County Donegal. My officials have reviewed the records directly with the Invasive Species Officer at the National Biodiversity Data Centre and there are no records in this area. Officials have also consulted their counterparts in the Republic of Ireland about such a release and they are not aware of it either.

My officials maintain close contact with agencies in the Republic of Ireland where there are issues of a mutual interest, and would assess what action may be required within our legislative remit should such an outbreak be confirmed. In Northern Ireland, if any member of the public suspects that a wildlife crime has occurred, such as releasing this species into the wild, they are directed to call the P.S.N.I. on the 101 number and report it.

Together with our colleagues in the Republic of Ireland, we encourage members of the public to report such sightings.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline (i) the number of waste incidents by location on properties in receipt of Basic Payments; and (ii) how much finance has been retained from the Basic Payment Scheme relating to waste crime, in the past five years; and to list the number of payments involved.

(AQW 8073/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: There is no specific Cross-Compliance verifiable standard relating to illegal dumping. However illegal dumping could be the cause of a breach being identified across a number of Cross-Compliance Statutory Management and Good Agricultural Environmental Condition verifiable standards. Illegal dumping could also have land eligibility implications for land used to support area based scheme applications. Breaches of Cross-Compliance can result in penalties being applied to area-based scheme payments.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to list the number of local commercial carriers that are licensed to carry controlled waste.

(AQW 8078/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: As of the 30th November 2016, there are 3577 registered waste carriers in Northern Ireland. These are registered by the Department under The Controlled Waste (Registration of Carriers and Seizure of Vehicles) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999.

Please note, this is a snapshot of a very fast moving system. There is potential for up to 10 new registrations per day into the Department.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to list all exempt activities in the Waste Prevention Programme.

(AQW 8080/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The full list of waste management licensing exemptions is contained within Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Waste Management Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, as amended.

Exemptions were introduced in order to regulate lower-risk waste management activities. These include recycling, recovery, preparation for re-use, storage, beneficial use and the manufacture of finished goods from waste.

Ms Archibald asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment on the recommendations contained in the report of the Agricultural Markets Task Force; and what steps she intends to take with the aim of improving farmers' position in the supply chain.

(AQW 8100/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I welcome the recent EU Agricultural Markets Task Force Report which makes recommendations aimed at improving the position of farmers in the supply chain, including implementation of effective enforcement regimes in Member States such as through the use of an Adjudicator. It is a detailed report and its recommendations, particularly those that advocate the introduction of EU wide legislation on such matters as unfair trading practices require careful consideration within the European Union.

The UK already has the advantage of having in place a Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA) to regulate the relationships between the major supermarkets and their direct suppliers and promote fair dealing. The timing of this Report coincides with the review of the GCA being taken forward by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), which is responsible for the regulation of competition issues in the UK. In particular, the review will consider the case for extending the

GCA's remit beyond the investigation of issues between supermarkets and their primary suppliers. I have asked my officials to engage in this review at as early a stage as possible.

I believe that it is only right that everyone involved in the food supply chain should share both the risks and rewards, and that farmers should receive a fair price for their work and produce. I and my Department will therefore continue to encourage increased co-operation within the supply chain. For example, within the Farm Business Improvement Scheme package of measures, the Business Development Groups bring farmers together to share knowledge and skills to help them make informed decisions about adopting new technologies and developing their business, and the selection process for Tier 2 of the Capital Scheme also encourages supply chain integration.

Ms Archibald asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on the all-Island LEADER Cooperation Scheme, as part of the Rural Development Programme.
(AQW 8104/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The LEADER Cooperation Scheme provides the opportunity for Local Action Groups (LAGs) in Northern Ireland to undertake joint actions with other LAGs, or with groups taking a similar approach, from countries within and outside the European Union.

My department and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in the Republic of Ireland jointly hosted a conference in Newry on the 8th and 9th November 2016 to launch the Cooperation process. Delegates who attended, represented LAGs and Rural Networks from Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England. Early feedback from the conference indicates that the event will facilitate applications for Cooperation projects involving a broad range of LAGs across themes including enterprise and employability, landscape, heritage and cultural development, rural tourism and service delivery.

My officials and the Rural Network for Northern Ireland are actively supporting our local LAGs to explore opportunities to cooperate with other LAGs.

Ms Archibald asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQO 547/16-21, to outline the process and timeframe she intends to put in place to ensure independent external input to, and scrutiny of, the NIEA Board.
(AQW 8139/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: As I highlighted in my response to the oral AQ (AQO 547/16-21) I firmly believe that there should be independent input and scrutiny of the NIEA Board. I have therefore instructed my officials to initiate a process which will commence with an external advertisement inviting applications from suitably experienced applicants to become Independent Board Members (IBMS) on the Agency Board. IBMS can make an important contribution to the workings and business of the Board by providing constructive advice and a challenge function across all of the Board's business. This is particularly important now that the Agency is part of the new Department. It is planned to recruit two members to be in post by the start of the new financial year (April 2017).

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the assistance her Department is providing to agricultural contractors.
(AQW 8153/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) does not provide financial assistance directly to agricultural contractors. However, if contractors are themselves farmers, then they may be eligible to apply for funding that is available to farm businesses such as that from the Farm Business Improvement Scheme – Capital (Tiers 1 and 2). My Department has also provided one-off financial assistance in the past to farmers during periods of bad weather, most recently through the Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme at the end of last winter.

There is no representative body for agricultural contractors in Northern Ireland and my Department has no remit in the governing of this aspect of the industry. If assistance in governance arrangements for agricultural contractors is being sought, it may be appropriate to raise this with the Department for the Economy which is, amongst other things, responsible for economic policy development, enterprise, innovation, health and safety at work and skills training and promoting good employment practice.

Health and Safety is the remit of the Health and Safety Executive NI, however, improvement of health and safety on farms continues to be one of my priorities. My Department continues to support the delivery of health and safety awareness training and this is available to all farmers, farm family members and farm workers. This training is available through classroom-style training; online awareness campaigns; individual farm business online risk assessments (www.farmsafenet.org); and a range of short training courses, which include aspects of Health and Safety, delivered by the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE). An agricultural contractor, who has an eligible Farm Business Identification Number, may avail of these courses. Examples of these training courses include Safe Use of Pesticides, Safe Tractor Driving and Safe use of Rough Terrain Telescopic Materials Handler. Further details can be found on the CAFRE website (www.cafre.ac.uk).

Under the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) 2014-2020 and as a part of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme, CAFRE launched the Farm Family Key Skills (FFKS) training initiative in April 2016. Farm Safety is a mandatory element of the Business Development Group programme and also a key area of training as part of FFKS.

Farmers, farm family members and farm employees are actively encouraged to attend these 3 hour training sessions which will include an on-farm demonstration and will also cover elements of the 'Making it Safer' online tool.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline her Department's plans for future investment at the 3 campuses of College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise.

(AQW 8154/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My Department has an ongoing programme of capital investment at all three campuses of the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE). This ensures that CAFRE is able to deliver programmes of education, training, business development and technology transfer using equipment and facilities that are fit-for-purpose and demonstrate best practice. Looking to the future, CAFRE is currently in the early stages of developing two economic appraisals which will assess the needs and evaluate options for strategic investment at Loughry and Greenmount Campuses in teaching facilities, classrooms, laboratories, student and staff accommodation.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the level of investment for the Assisted Rural Transport Scheme for (i) 2016/2017; and (ii) 2017/2018.

(AQW 8174/16-21)

Miss McIlveen:

- (i) The DAERA financial allocation for the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (ARTS) in 2016/17 is £400,000.
- (ii) Once the Executive agrees the parameters for the Budget 2016 exercise, my Department will firm up our proposals for all programmes, including ARTS, for the 2017/2018 financial year.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether she will consider providing financial support to farmers following the identification of a positive result through the Northern Ireland BVD Eradication Programme.

(AQW 8201/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I have already announced a scheme to incentivise the removal from herds of dairy and beef calves persistently infected with Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD). A flat rate payment will be made available to herd keepers who have humanely destroyed their persistently infected (PI) calves and registered their death on the Department's Animal and Public Health Information System (APHIS) within four weeks of receiving an initial BVD positive test result.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

(AQW 8202/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The 21st Conference of the Parties (CoP 21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) reached a global agreement in December 2015 to limit increases in global temperatures to 2°C by 2050. The Paris Agreement, as it is now known, also agreed to uniform reporting requirements, monitoring and reviewing of progress and funding to developing nations to address the impacts of climate change.

The Paris agreement came into effect on 4 November 2016, having been ratified by the required number of countries. It has been ratified by 115 parties out of 197 parties to the convention including the EU and UK.

CoP 22 was hosted by the Moroccan government in Marrakesh from 7 to 18 November 2016. In advance of the conference I wrote to Nick Hurd MP, Minister of State for Climate Change and Industry endorsing the UK negotiating position. My department has been, and continues to be, in regular contact with the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy on this matter.

Whilst this conference did not result in any new agreements or actions, it marked a shift from commitments and aspirations to compliance and implementation.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on the Northern Ireland BVD Eradication Programme, including a full breakdown of the results to date.

(AQW 8203/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: At industry's request, my Department introduced legislation to make tag and testing of all calves born after 1st March 2016 compulsory. BVD is endemic in Northern Ireland and the tag and testing scheme provides an effective and efficient approach to tackling the disease by identifying infection in new-born bovines.

Animal Health and Welfare Northern Ireland (AHWNI) is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the scheme. By 31 October 2016, over 12,000 herds had joined the scheme. Around 350,000 calves (96% of all calves born since the scheme became compulsory) have been tested, with a positive test rate of 0.7% for the presence of BVD virus.

Almost 90% of initial test positives that have been re-tested have had a confirmatory positive result; re-tests are therefore confirming that most animals with an initial test positive are persistently infected (PIs). We know that prompt removal of these highly infectious animals is one of the most important elements in the control of BVD and I would like to do more to encourage

farmers to remove PIs as quickly as possible. As a result, I have recently announced an incentivisation scheme to encourage the early removal of these animals from herds.

My officials are continuing to support AHWNI to ensure the effective operation of this industry-led BVD eradication programme, including taking appropriate steps to address a small number of breaches of the legislation. This is an approach which has the support of industry.

Ms Bailey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the work of her Department and future plans to reduce harmful emissions and air pollutants in Belfast city.

(AQW 8257/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: In addressing air quality in Belfast and more widely across Northern Ireland, my Department has commenced a review of air quality policy and legislation with the intention of developing a dedicated Northern Ireland Air Quality Strategy and revised Local Air Quality Management policy guidance. This review will consider new thinking on air quality policy across the UK and internationally aimed at reducing emissions from all sources to protect public health, assist with climate change targets and improve congestion. These new policies will be consulted on in due course.

In addition to this review, my Department currently provides financial support to councils, including Belfast City Council, to carry out their statutory local air quality management duties as set out in the Environment (NI) Order 2002. Under the Order, councils have a duty to periodically review and assess air quality within their districts. Where air quality objectives are not being met, councils must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and draw up, along with relevant authorities such as Department for Infrastructure (DfI), an accompanying Action Plan. Belfast City Council has declared four AQMAs as a consequence of this process and formulated an air quality Action Plan.

My department has worked with the council and with DfI to draw up an Air Quality Action Plan for the Greater Belfast area. The air quality issues here are predominantly due to road traffic emissions. Therefore the Plan focuses on introducing measures relating to sustainable transport – such as the forthcoming Belfast Rapid Transit scheme; the development of the Belfast Transport Hub; Park and Ride as well as strategies that promote public transport, walking and cycling.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment on the recently published report by the European Commission's Agricultural Markets Task Force.

(AQW 8269/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I welcome the recent EU Agricultural Markets Task Force Report which makes recommendations aimed at improving the position of farmers in the supply chain, including implementation of effective enforcement regimes in Member States such as through the use of an Adjudicator. It is a detailed report and its recommendations, particularly those that advocate the introduction of EU wide legislation on such matters as unfair trading practices require careful consideration within the European Union.

The UK already has the advantage of having in place a Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA) to regulate the relationships between the major supermarkets and their direct suppliers and promote fair dealing. The timing of this Report coincides with the review of the GCA being taken forward by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), which is responsible for the regulation of competition issues in the UK. In particular, the review will consider the case for extending the GCA's remit beyond the investigation of issues between supermarkets and their primary suppliers. I have asked my officials to engage in this review at as early a stage as possible.

I believe that it is only right that everyone involved in the food supply chain should share both the risks and rewards, and that farmers should receive a fair price for their work and produce. I and my Department will therefore continue to encourage increased co-operation within the supply chain. For example, within the Farm Business Improvement Scheme package of measures, the Business Development Groups bring farmers together to share knowledge and skills to help them make informed decisions about adopting new technologies and developing their business, and the selection process for Tier 2 of the Capital Scheme also encourages supply chain integration.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline (i) the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in each of the last 10 years; and (ii) whether Northern Ireland is still on course to meet the target reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2025 of at least 35 per cent on 1990 levels.

(AQW 8270/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Greenhouse gas emissions are reported annually in the UK GHG Inventory. Each year is extended and updated and the complete historical data series revised to incorporate methodological improvements and new data.

Once the latest year's Inventory is published, the previous versions effectively become redundant. Only the latest Inventory provides a single consistent data series which can be used to examine trends stretching back to 1990.

The table below provides Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions per million tons carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO₂e) for the last ten years and the percentage reduction per year against the 1990 baseline.

Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2005 to 2014

Year	Emissions per million tons carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO₂e)	Percentage reduction per year against the 1990 baseline of 24.61 MtCO₂e
2005	23.54	4.3
2006	23.90	2.9
2007	22.66	7.9
2008	22.41	8.9
2009	20.83	15.3
2010	21.75	11.6
2011	20.43	17.0
2012	20.71	15.9
2013	20.95	14.9
2014	20.33	17.4

The latest projection based on the 2013 greenhouse gas inventory estimates a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 34.1% by 2025 against the 1990 baseline.

The draft PfG, currently subject to consultation, contains an indicator to reduce GHG emissions supported by a draft delivery plan, with input from all departments. The Executive will agree the final content of the Programme for Government early in the New Year.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment on the study commissioned by the European Commission entitled the Accumulative Economic Impact of Future Trade Agreements on EU Agriculture, and to outline any particular lessons for Northern Ireland.

(AQW 8271/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I welcome this study which demonstrates the potential gains, particularly for the dairy and pigmeat sectors, that can be made from negotiating new trade deals with countries beyond Europe. After exiting the EU, the UK will be able to seek new export opportunities around the world that will help to underpin growth in the agri-food sector in Northern Ireland.

Any country entering trade negotiations will have offensive and defensive interests. This study adds to existing evidence that suggests beef should be treated as a sensitive product in future trade negotiations. Export markets have always been important for our industry, but there is a need to tread carefully to ensure vulnerable agricultural sectors are not sacrificed for gains in other areas. At the same time there is a need to ensure that after leaving the EU, the UK pursues ambitious trade deals that deliver beneficial outcomes for the local industry.

I will continue to monitor international trade developments closely and will seek to secure outcomes on trade issues that are in the best interests of the local industry.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the Executive's obligations on limiting the increase in the global average temperature.

(AQW 8272/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to limit the increase of global average temperatures is in place under the Climate Change Act 2008. The Climate Change Act covers all of the UK and sets a long term target of an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. This is supported by a series of 5 yearly carbon budgets, in effect interim targets, of emission reductions of 34% by 2020, 53% by 2025 and 57% by 2030. Northern Ireland contributes to the achievement of these targets.

As a member state the UK also contributes towards the achievement of the greenhouse gas emission targets set out under the EU Energy and Climate Framework. The EU 2020 package sets a target to reduce emissions by 20% by 2020. In October 2014 all EU member states, including the UK, agreed to a new EU Energy and Climate Framework that will require the EU to reduce GHG emissions by 40% by 2030.

In advance of the Paris Agreement all countries/parties publicly outlined what post-2020 climate actions they intended to take under the new international agreement, known as their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). In the case of the EU this was a commitment to reduce EU GHG emissions by 40%, in line with its commitment under the EU Energy and Climate Framework.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment the on the current negotiations between the European Union and the Mercosur Group, and its potential impact on the Northern Ireland agricultural industry, particularly beef.

(AQW 8273/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Progress with respect to advancing the EU-Mercosur free trade negotiations has been slow. It is very unlikely that a deal could be agreed and ratified within the next two years. Research carried out on behalf of the EU suggests there could be some opportunities to sell more dairy produce to Mercosur countries representing a market of 280 million people. I am aware that an unrestricted deal with Mercosur could see market share and prices reduce for EU beef producers. However, the EU Commission is likely to treat beef as a sensitive product in the Mercosur negotiations and will aim for a deal that permits the continued use of tariffs and quotas to put limits on EU beef imports from Mercosur countries.

Export markets have always been important for our industry, but there is a need to tread carefully to ensure vulnerable agricultural sectors are not sacrificed for gains in other areas. At the same time, ambitious trade deals can deliver beneficial outcomes for the local agri-food industry. I will continue to monitor international trade developments closely and will seek to secure outcomes on trade issues that are in the best interests of the local industry.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment on future access by fishing fleets to the exclusive economic zone following the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

(AQW 8338/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: It is too early at this stage to make an assessment of any impact on future access by fishing fleets to the exclusive economic zone following the UK's withdrawal from the EU. This will largely depend on the terms of the relationship between the UK and the EU which is ultimately agreed.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to list all buildings owned by the previous Department of Environment; and which of those are now under her Department's control.

(AQW 8339/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The attached table contains all buildings which were owned by the previous Department of Environment (DOE) and highlights those which are now under my Department's control.

Property Name	Street Name	Post Town	Post Code	Tenure	Under DAERA control
Aberdelghy Golf Course	Bells Lane, Lambeg	Lisburn	BT27 4QH	Owned by Department	YES
Castle Archdale Country Park	Lisnarick	Irvinestown	BT94 1PP	Owned by Department	YES
Colin Glen	163 Stewartstown Road	Dunmurry	BT17 0HW	Owned by Department	YES
Crawfordsburn Country Park	Bridge Road South	Helen's Bay	BT19 1JT	Owned by Department	YES
Ness Country Park	50 Oughtagh Road	Claudy	BT47 3TR	Owned by Department	YES
Peatlands Park	33 Derryhubbert Road	Dungannon	BT71 6NW	Owned by Department	YES
Portrush Coastal Zone	8 Bath Road	Portrush	BT56 8AP	Owned by Department	YES
Quoile Countryside Centre	5 Quay Road	Downpatrick	BT30 7JB	Owned by Department	YES
Rathlin Cottage	Rathlin Island Harbour	Ballycastle	BT54 6QH	Owned by Department	YES
Roe Valley Country Park	41 Dogleap Road	Limavady	BT49 9NN	Owned by Department	YES
Scrabo Country Park	203A Scrabo Road	Newtownards	BT23 4SJ	Owned by Department	YES
Water Management Unit	17 Antrim Road	Lisburn	BT28 3AL	Owned by Department	YES

Property Name	Street Name	Post Town	Post Code	Tenure	Under DAERA control
78 Coastguard Road	78 Coastguard Road	Larne	BT40 1AU	Owned by Department	NO
Ballycopeland Windmill	Windmill Road	Millisle	BT22 2DS	Owned by Department	NO
Bellaghy Bawn	Castle Street	Bellaghy	BT45 8LA	Owned by Department	NO
Benburb Castle	10 Main Street	Benburb	BT71 7LA	Owned by Department	NO
Carrickfergus Castle	Marine Highway	Carrickfergus	BT38 7BG	Owned by Department	NO
Carrickfergus Gas Works And Depot	Irish Quarter West	Carrickfergus	BT38 8AT	Owned by Department	NO
Castle Barracks	Wellington Road	Enniskillen	BT74 7HL	Owned by Department	NO
Dundrum Castle	Dundrum Castle	Dundrum	BT33 0NF	Held In Guardianship by Department	NO
Dunluce Castle	86 Dunluce Road	Portballintrae	BT57 8UY	Held In Guardianship by Department	NO
Dva Driving Test Centre Belfast	Dill Road, Castlereagh Road	Belfast	BT6 9HT	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Test Centre Armagh	47 Hamiltonsbawn Road	Armagh	BT60 1HW	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Test Centre Ballymena	Larne Road	Ballymena	BT42 3ER	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Test Centre Belfast	66 Balmoral Road	Belfast	BT12 6QL	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Test Centre Coleraine	2 Loughan Hill Industrial Estate	Coleraine	BT52 2NJ	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Test Centre Cookstown	Sandholes Road	Cookstown	BT80 9AR	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Test Centre Craigavon	Carn Industrial Estate	Craigavon	BT63 5WH	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Test Centre Downpatrick	Cloonagh Road	Downpatrick	BT30 6DU	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Test Centre Enniskillen	Chanterhill Road	Enniskillen	BT74 6DE	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Test Centre Larne	Ballyboley Road	Larne	BT40 2SY	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Test Centre Lisburn	1 Enterprise Crescent	Lisburn	BT28 2BP	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Test Centre Londonderry	Victoria Road	Londonderry	BT47 2SX	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Test Centre Mallusk	Commercial Way, HydePark Ind Estate	Mallusk	BT36 4YY	Owned by Department	NO

Property Name	Street Name	Post Town	Post Code	Tenure	Under DAERA control
Dva Test Centre Newry	51 Rathfriland Road	Newry	BT34 1LD	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Test Centre Newtownards	Jubilee Road	Newtownards	BT23 4XP	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Test Centre Omagh	Gortrush Industrail Estate, Derry Road	Omagh	BT78 5EJ	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Weighbridge Belfast	Garmoyle Street	Belfast	BT15 1DY	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Weighbridge Crumlin	Moirs Road	Crumlin	BT29 4JS	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Weighbridge Larne	Larne Harbour	Larne	BT40 1AW	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Weighbridge Lisburn	Hillsborough Road	Lisburn	BT28 1JL	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Weighbridge Loughbrickland	Banbridge Road	Loughbrickland	BT32 3YB	Owned by Department	NO
Dva Weighbridge Toombridge	Rougery Road	Toomebridge	BT41 3TG	Owned by Department	NO
Greyabbey Abbey And Depot	9 Church Street	Greyabbey	BT22 2NQ	Owned by Department	NO
Jordans Castle	Kildare Street	Downpatrick	BT30 7TR	Owned by Department	NO
Kilclief Castle	Shore Road Kilclief	Downpatrick	BT30 7UL	Owned by Department	NO
Kirkistown Castle	Main Road	Cloghy	BT22 1JA	Owned by Department	NO
Nendrum Monastic Site	Magee Island Comber	Comber	BT23 6EP	Owned by Department	NO
Nie A Depot Markethill	1 Ashley Close Markethill	Armagh	BT60 1EX	Owned by Department	NO
Niea Depot Moira	7A Station Road	Moira	BT67 0NE	Owned by Department	NO
Scrabo Tower	203A Scrabo Road	Newtownards	BT23 4SJ	Owned by Department	NO
Tully Castle	Derrygonnelly	Derrygonnelly	BT93 6AZ	Owned by Department	NO

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline her Department's plans for zero waste exports and to move towards waste-to-energy.

(AQW 8346/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The current Waste Management Strategy aims to support managing waste as effectively as possible in accordance with the waste hierarchy. This means promoting prevention and recycling as the best way of using waste as a resource, supported by energy recovery and, ultimately, disposal where necessary.

There are a variety of initiatives to encourage preventing or making best use of our waste such as the Carrier Bag Levy and the Rethink Waste programme where I have made £2.5 million available this year to support local council waste infrastructure.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail the markets of local processed fisheries products.

(AQW 8382/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The sales of processed fish products from Northern Ireland in 2014 are given in the table below.

NI (£m)	GB (£m)	RoI (£m)	Other EU (£m)	Rest of the World (£m)	Total (£m)
13.0	34.1	6.5	21.2	2.3	77.1

Source: DAERA Size and Performance of the Food and Drinks Processing Sector Subsector Statistics 2014

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline how she ensures confidentiality is maintained between a Member's query and the departmental response, now that enquiries are answered through her private office.
(AQW 8390/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: All correspondence answered through my Private Office is treated confidentially.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the (i) frequency; and (ii) distribution of microbial antibiotic resistance, recorded in farms, in each of the past five years
(AQW 8432/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Please see table below listing all instances of antimicrobial resistance detected in Northern Ireland since 2014. Livestock Associated MRSA (LA-MRSA) was first identified in Northern Ireland in June 2014 and since then there have been 6 further cases and 1 case of antimicrobial resistance with an infection of Salmonella Typhimurium.

Given the very small number of incidents, I regret that I cannot be more explicit about the location of these incidents as to do so would almost certainly enable individual farmers to be identified. There have only been 8 cases over the previous two and a half years.

Date	Resistance Detected
June 2014	Livestock Associated MRSA (LA-MRSA) CC398
February 2015	LA-MRSA CC30
Feb / March 2015	LA-MRSA CC398
March 2015	LA-MRSA CC398
April 2015	CTX resistance Salmonella Typhimurium
September 2015	LA-MRSA CC398
July 2016	LA-MRSA CC398
July 2016	LA-MRSA CC398

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline the progress on establishing finishing units for calves from herds closed by Bovine TB.
(AQW 8504/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Following consultation with industry the Alternative Control Herd (ACH) policy was introduced in November 2013 with the primary aim that ACHs would be biosecure locations into which animals from herds closed by bovine TB could be moved.

Any moves of cattle from herds closed due to bovine TB are constrained by legislation and the need to minimise any risk of spread of infection.

The TB Strategic Partnership Group has considered the impact of restrictions on TB breakdown herds. I will be giving their Strategy my fullest consideration, following its publication on 15th December.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 6699/16-21, for her assessment on the proportion of programme costs compared to administration costs.
(AQW 8554/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: AQW 6699/16-21 provided a breakdown of the costs of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) between administration and programme expenditure covering the financial years 2008-09 to 2015-16. For the financial years 2008-09 to 2014-15 the average percentage for administration costs, compared to the total cost, was 59%. However, this percentage rose to nearly 80% for 2015-16. The programme costs for 2015-16 (£8.1m) relate primarily to the grants disbursed through the Environment, Challenge and EU Interreg IVA Funds (£2.5m), contracted services (£3.9m) and also depreciation costs (£1.4m). The main reasons for the increase in the proportion of expenditure scoring as administration between 2014-15 and 2015-16 are the transfer of the Historic Environment Division (HED) to the DOE core department on 1st April 2015,

thereby reducing the programme costs by £4.5m for 2015-16, but also budget reductions applied to the Agency's programme budget following the reduction to the Department's (DOE) overall resource DEL budget for 2015-16. Although the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) resulted in the departure of a number of staff during the 2015-16 financial year, with the first tranche leaving by 30 September 2015, the full year salary savings relating to these staff and therefore a reduction in the administration costs, was not realised until 2016-17.

In regard to the NIEA administration costs for 2015-16 (£31.7m), £23.6 million of this relates to salary costs commensurate with the 440 staff in post at 31 March 2016. Most of these staff are in the scientific grades reflecting the operational nature of their work as the Agency delivers a broad range of functions including the regulation of businesses, protecting the environment and providing technical advice and financial support or working in partnership with community and other groups. A further £6.8 million relates to the provision of HR, Finance and Accommodation services notionally charged to the Agency, mainly by the Department of Finance (DoF). The inclusion of these costs in the NIEA accounts is to ensure that the full cost of delivering the Agency's services and activities is included in the audited accounts in line with DoF and NIAO guidance. The actual budgets to cover the cost of these notional services are held by the provider organisations. It is expected that the percentage of administration costs will reduce in the forward years closer to the average figure over the financial years 2008-09 to 2014-15 (59%), however the split between administration and programme costs will ultimately depend on the preferred delivery models used to ensure the most effective and efficient delivery of the Agency's services.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline any recent discussions she has had with the Irish and British Governments on resolving the dispute over the jurisdiction of both Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough. (AQO 816/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: In responding to a Parliamentary Question about Fishing Rights in Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough after the UK leaves the EU, the Secretary of State restated the UK's position that the whole of Lough Foyle is within the UK.

The ownership issue of both Loughs is not a matter within the competence of this Assembly. However, I know that the Irish Government, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Crown Estate have been talking about this issue for some time. I understand that the next meeting between the two Governments is scheduled for later this month in Dublin.

My immediate concern is that the on-going dispute is impacting on the ability of the Loughs Agency to effectively manage aquaculture activities, particularly licensing in Lough Foyle.

I am therefore anxious that it is resolved. For this reason, it was discussed during my first North South Ministerial Council meeting in September in relation to how the ongoing dispute is adversely affecting the operational activities of the Loughs Agency.

The pressing priority for all those involved in these discussions should be to come to an arrangement which will allow the Loughs Agency to properly fulfil its role.

Mr Murphy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether she plans to review the Going for Growth strategy. (AQO 818/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Going for Growth is the strategic plan developed by the Agri-Food Strategy Board, setting out industry's ambitions for the sustainable growth of the sector. The Executive Response was published in October 2014, showing the agreed actions to be taken by Government to address the Board's recommendations.

Good progress continues to be made on implementation of agreed actions and I am committed to delivering those remaining actions not yet complete.

Key achievements to date include:

- Securing access to nearly 50 new markets, including Singapore, Canada and Thailand for beef and India for pork;
- Ongoing engagement to open up access to further Third-country markets, including the Philippines for beef, US for beef and lamb, and China and Australia for pork;
- Delivery of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme which has seen almost 3,000 farmers getting actively involved in Business Development Groups, Farm Family Key Skills training, and the opening of the £40m initial phase of the FBIS-Capital Scheme;
- Development of a Sustainable Agricultural Land Management Strategy which sets out a framework for productive and sustainable agriculture whilst improving the environment;
- Achievement of Officially Brucellosis Free status for Northern Ireland, and
- Work to develop a strategy for the eradication of TB.

I believe that the underlying vision and key principles within Going for Growth – particularly that of a single supply chain producing what the market wants – remain as valid today as when they were first drafted and I will continue to work to support that ambition.

Mr Middleton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on the action being taken in relation to the Mobuoy Road site in Londonderry.

(AQO 824/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My Department is developing the Mobouy Remediation Strategy in line with UK best practice in environmental risk management.

The environmental risk assessment for the site is now complete. This assessment was supported by an extensive investigation of the illegal deposits of waste and the ground conditions in addition to environmental monitoring of the site and the River Faughan.

In summary, the findings of this risk assessment show that (i) the site is currently having no adverse impact on water quality in the River Faughan (ii) risks to NI Water's drinking water abstraction at Cloghole are very low, (iii) zones of contamination due to the illegal waste deposits have been identified that may cause future risks to water quality in the River Faughan.

The next stage is to develop a costed remediation strategy that will detail the remediation treatments that must be implemented at the site to meet the clean-up targets and thus protect the River Faughan and the wider environment. This work will start in January 2017 and my Department will endeavour to have it completed by Spring 2017.

My Department's strategic remediation objectives are to protect water quality in the River Faughan and to protect NI Water's drinking water abstraction. The clean-up targets for site remediation and protecting water quality in the River Faughan are provided by the risk assessment.

The Department in partnership with InnovateUK (IUK), has appointed five new contracts under the Mobuoy Road Waste Remediation Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI). This initiative aims to stimulate new innovative remediation treatments. The outcome of this initiative will further inform the development of the remediation strategy.

On agreement of the remediation strategy, a supporting implementation plan will be developed and this will also be available by spring 2017. Thereafter the remediation strategy will be implemented.

In the meantime, my Department will continue monitoring the illegal waste site and the River Faughan, prior to, during and after remediation.

Mr Sheehan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs how many meetings she has had with the Minister of Health regarding the health of agricultural workers and their families.

(AQO 825/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: While I have not met the Minister of Health to specifically discuss the health of agricultural workers and their families, it is a matter that I and my officials take extremely seriously. For this reason, my department has a multi-stranded approach to support good health and well-being for those working within the agri-food sector in Northern Ireland.

The Farm Families Health Checks initiative, that operates as part of our Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme has screened the health and well-being of over 12,000 individuals, primarily farmers, farm workers and farm family members attending marts and community events right across Northern Ireland. The Health Checks programme is an excellent example of a collaborative approach between the agriculture and health sectors.

My department also provides TRPSI funding to Rural Support who operate a telephone Helpline and signposting service for farmers and rural communities. Rural Support's recent report on the 'health and social effects of the agricultural downturn' has helped to highlight the pressures associated with modern farming and we are working with Rural Support and other stakeholders to promote early intervention and a proactive approach to help farmers tackle issues before they become a concern to their personal health and well-being.

Farm Safety awareness is another extremely important dimension to promoting good health and well-being. Farm Safety self-assessment and training is now an integral element of the Rural Development Programme and is available through both the Farm Business Improvement Scheme and Farm Family Key Skills. In addition, our long-standing work through the Farm Safety Partnership, the 'Stop and Think SAFE campaign' and more recently, the Farm Safety Partnership Affiliate Scheme is also contributing to reducing work-related fatalities and injuries on our farms.

These actions demonstrate how my department is working proactively to encourage good health and well-being for those working in the farming sector by providing advice, training and sign-posting before issues arise and also reactively, when individuals require referral to specialised services for further support or treatment.

Mr Maskey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs how she plans to meet recycling targets.

(AQO 826/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Household waste recycling rate has increased by more than fourfold from 10% in 2002 to the latest figure of 42.2% in 2015/16. Recently, however, increases in the recycling rate have levelled off.

To seek to improve the overall management of waste in the longer term my officials have been working in partnership with representatives of local government to develop an Action Plan to address a range of strategic waste management issues including actions to enhance recycling rates and meet the 2020 recycling target. I am currently considering the Action Plan.

However, I continue to support recycling through ongoing work to introduce the Food Waste Regulations which Councils are required to implement by April next year. These are expected to make a significant additional contribution to the amount of household waste recycled.

This year I have also allocated upwards of £2.5 million in financial assistance for local councils to invest in, and improve, recycling infrastructure and services.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, given that the Assembly passed a motion on 30 November 2015 calling on the Minister of the Environment to work with his Executive colleagues to introduce a Climate Bill for Northern Ireland that included legally binding, long-term and interim targets on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, to outline how she is progressing this Bill.

(AQO 827/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Legislation to address climate change is already in place in the form of the UK wide Climate Change Act. The Act establishes a long term target of an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050, against a 1990 baseline.

Interim targets are in effect set by five year carbon budgets, which are legislated in advance by statutory instrument, laid in Westminster, as a requirement of the Act. The current carbon budget for the whole of the UK targets a 34% reduction in GHG emissions by 2020. I wrote recently to the Secretary of State supporting new legislation at Westminster for a UK carbon budget of a 57% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

The latest greenhouse gas inventory published in June 2016, shows a reduction of 17.4% from 1990 levels, whilst the most recent projections indicate that we are on target to achieve a 34.1% reduction by 2025.

The need to take action on climate change and its importance to the Executive is demonstrated through measures included in the draft delivery plan for indicator 29 of the draft Programme for Government. An annual progress report is submitted by the Cross Departmental Working Group on Climate Change to the Executive summarising progress made towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in NI.

I am satisfied that progress has been made in reducing GHG emissions in Northern Ireland. I am content with the plans currently in place, or being developed that will reduce our emissions further. In these circumstances I currently see no need to introduce a Northern Ireland Climate Change Bill.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to outline her plans to support Areas of Natural Constraint in the future.

(AQO 828/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: I announced in June that I will not reduce the Basic Payment Scheme to fund an Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) Scheme under Pillar I of the CAP. I also announced at that time that a Pillar I to Pillar II transfer to fund an Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme in Pillar II under the Rural Development Programme will not be introduced. I am still considering other options available.

Given the pressure on both the Department's and the Executive's budget providing any additional support will be challenging. Long term value for money cannot be ignored, nor indeed the redistribution of Pillar I monies which is already occurring as a result of the transition towards flat rate support in Pillar I.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an update on the relocation of her departmental headquarters to Ballykelly.

(AQO 829/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Following a tendering process, JH Turkington & Sons Ltd were appointed in March 2016 to design and build accommodation on the Shackleton site in Ballykelly. All planning approvals are now in place and construction work began at the site on 21st November 2016 and will be completed in time for the building opening in January 2018.

Mr Logan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment of the appeals processes that exist for farmers in relation to decisions taken by her Department.

(AQO 830/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The introduction of the CAP Reform area based schemes has led to an unprecedented increase in the number of Review of Decisions applications received by the Department. Review of Decisions is an important part of the decision making process that provides farmers and farm businesses with the opportunity to seek a reconsideration, where they believe the Department did not reach the correct decision in respect of an area-based payment.

Whilst the current process has been meeting objectives, I am never the less concerned by the time taken to issue final decisions.

I have therefore, asked my officials to review our current provision and put in place a process which better meets the needs of farmers, for the 2017 Scheme year, going forward. This work will be taken forward in consultation with our stakeholders, over the coming months.

However, my immediate priority is to address the timeliness of final decisions for those already awaiting reviews arising from the introduction of CAP Reform area-based schemes. Therefore, my officials will shortly engage with Stakeholders to determine a means by which Review of Decisions can be streamlined and made more efficient.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail how many microchipped stray dogs were found in (i) 2013-14; (ii) 2014-15; and (iii) 2015-16.

(AQW 8575/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Statistics provided to my Department by local Councils on the number of stray dogs seized by Council Dog Wardens that were microchipped in each of the last three years is set out in the table below. Please note that the data is collected by Councils and is presented on the basis of calendar year rather than financial year.

Year	Stray dogs that were microchipped
2013	2,439
2014	2,803
2015	2,148

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail how many dogs were microchipped in (i) 2013-14; (ii) 2014-15; and (iii) 2015-16.

(AQW 8576/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My Department does not hold records showing the number of dogs microchipped here each year. Dogs can be microchipped by a veterinary surgeon or person who has received instruction on how to implant a microchip, and databases on which microchip numbers are recorded are operated by commercial or non-governmental organisations rather than my Department.

However, local Councils do provide my Department with data on the number of dogs they have licensed. It is a condition of licensing that the dog is microchipped if it has not already been microchipped in previous years. The number of dog licences issued each year for the last three years is shown on the table below. This data is collected by Councils and is presented on the basis of calendar year rather than financial year.

Year	Dog licences issued
2013	129,194
2014	135,391
2015	137,216

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whether she has given consideration to the implications the European Referendum will have on current animal welfare laws.

(AQW 8577/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: This issue is being considered as part of a detailed assessment of the potential impact for Northern Ireland of a UK withdrawal from the EU.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for her assessment on the need for Northern Ireland Climate Change legislation to improve the position of Northern Ireland as the poorest performing region of the UK, in terms of greenhouse gas reduction at 17 per cent reduction compared to 4 per cent reduction in Scotland.

(AQW 8582/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: My response to AQO 823/16-21 provided my position on the need for Northern Ireland climate change legislation.

Ms Archibald asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 6210/16-21, whether she will be advocating for farmers and primary producers to be included in the remit of the Groceries Code Adjudicator.

(AQW 8632/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: As I have stated previously I believe that it is only right that everyone involved in the food supply chain should share both the risks and rewards, and that farmers should receive a fair price for their work and produce.

I welcome the review of the GCA being taken forward by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), which is responsible for the regulation of competition issues in the UK. The review's outcome will depend on the evidence presented to BEIS.

I support a well-functioning food supply chain. For that reason, my officials are continuing to engage with BEIS during its review to explore whether the extension of powers to enable the investigation of issues beyond those between the

supermarkets and their primary suppliers would be appropriate. My Department will present any relevant information we have pertinent to the scope of the consultation. I would encourage Northern Ireland stakeholders to respond to the Call for Evidence on the case for extending the GCA's remit.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs pursuant to AQW 7604/16-21, to outline why applicants were not written to earlier.
(AQW 8675/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: Applicants have been asked to provide business accounts and tax returns for the year in which they became head of holding. This evidence was required to show the Young Farmer was receiving the majority of profit within the businesses and was a critical check in determining that an applicant actually was head of holding. My Department wrote to applicants in September and October 2016 as applicants were unlikely to have had this evidence earlier in the year.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail how many welfare standards checks were carried out on known dog breeding sites in (i) 2013-14; (ii) 2014-15; (iii) 2015-16; and (iv) if any of these checks have resulted in prosecution for a lack of welfare standards.
(AQW 8744/16-21)

Miss McIlveen: The Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (NI) 2013, which were passed by the Assembly and came into operation on 1 April 2013, require commercial dog breeding establishments to be licensed by their local Council. These Regulations protect the welfare of all dogs and pups in commercial breeding establishments and provide each Council with powers to inspect and grant licences to establishments in their district.

Although Councils are required to maintain a register of all persons licensed under these Regulations, they are not required to send my Department information on the inspection of those establishments or on enforcement action carried out. However, you may wish to seek this information directly from Councils.

Councils also have powers under the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011 to ensure the welfare of non-farmed animals, such as domestic pets and equines, and I am aware that Council Animal Welfare Officers and Dog Wardens support each other in ensuring that animal welfare is protected, and work closely together when investigating animal welfare concerns relating to dog breeding.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to detail the (i) contents; and (ii) level of achievement required to meet the farm management module being delivered by the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise at Level 2.
(AQW 8926/16-21)

Miss McIlveen:

- (i) The contents of the Farm Business Management module of the Level 2 Agricultural Business Operations provide for the following learning outcomes:
 - i Understand the importance of measuring farm business performance;
 - ii. Know how to categorise receipts and expenditure for a farm business enterprise;
 - iii. Be able to calculate gross and net margins for a farm business enterprise;
 - iv. Understand the principles and application of benchmarking;
 - v Be aware of the range of support available to farm businesses.
- (ii) In order to successfully complete the Farm Business Management module participants must complete a written assessment that covers all the learning outcomes in the module.

Department for Communities

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Communities to outline how many Technical Officers and Senior Grants Managers are currently employed in the Derry, Omagh and Fermanagh Grants Offices, broken down by office and community background.
(AQW 7331/16-21)

Mr Givan (The Minister for Communities): The NI Housing Executive have provided details in the table below, of how many Senior Grants Managers are currently employed in the Derry/Londonderry and West (Fermanagh & Omagh) Grants offices.

They have not included community background details, as identifying community backgrounds where there is a small number of staff there is a risk of identifying individuals.

Grants Office	Position	Total
Londonderry Grants	Technical Officer	5

Grants Office	Position	Total
West Grants	Grants Manager	1
West Grants	Technical Officer	7
Total Technical Officer/Grants Managers		13

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Communities to outline how many Technical Officers and Senior Grants Managers have left the Derry, Omagh and Fermanagh Grants Offices in the past five years broken down by year, office and community background.

(AQW 7332/16-21)

Mr Givan: The NI Housing Executive have provided details in the table below, of how many Technical Officer and Senior Grants Managers have left the Londonderry and West (Fermanagh & Omagh) Grants Offices.

They have not included community background details of these staff, as identifying community backgrounds where there is a small number of staff, there is a risk of identifying individuals.

Year	Grants Office	Position	Total
2016	West Grants	Technical Officer	1
	Londonderry Grants	Technical Officer	1
	Londonderry Grants	Senior Grants Manager	1
2015	West Grants	Technical Officer	1
2014	Londonderry/West Grants	Both positions	0
2013	Londonderry/West Grants	Both positions	0
2012	Londonderry/West Grants	Both positions	0
Total Technical Officers and Senior Grants Managers left in the past 5 years			4

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Communities to outline how many Technical or other Officers have acted up as Senior Grants Managers in the Derry, Omagh and Fermanagh Offices in the past ten years broken down by year, office and community background.

(AQW 7335/16-21)

Mr Givan: The NI Housing Executive have provided details in the table below, of how many Technical or other Officers have acted up as Senior Grants Managers in their Londonderry and West (Fermanagh & Omagh) Grants Offices, in the past 10 years.

They have not included community background details of these staff, as identifying community backgrounds where there is a small number of staff, as there is a risk of identifying individuals.

Year	Grants Office	Position	Total
2015	Londonderry Grants	Senior Grants Manager	1
Total officers acted up in the past 10 years			1

Mrs Long asked the Minister for Communities to detail how much money has been spent on the Regeneration Bill to date.

(AQW 7890/16-21)

Mr Givan: The team responsible for the Regeneration Bill were also responsible for other regeneration and legislative activities which they continue to carry out. Therefore, it is not possible to accurately disaggregate the costs specifically associated with the Bill.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) when the Charity Commission NI (CCNI) will inform 144 Disabled Police Officers' Association Northern Ireland (DPOANI) members that they took their private, confidential and medical details and that of their next of kin without permission or knowledge from the DPOANI office; (ii) if any Order or warrant existed which stated that that such details were allowed to be removed; (iii) if such an Order or warrant existed, when will CCNI inform those affected; and (iv) why a quorum of DPOANI directors were not informed of these actions by CCNI.

(AQW 7946/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) The Commission has informed the Department that it does not intend contacting individual members of the Disabled Police Officers' Association Northern Ireland (DPOANI) about the documentation provided to it by the charity trustees following the issue of Order 0025. It further advises that although some of the documentation provided by the DPOANI related to individuals, no medical records were included. The Commission has assured the Department that the documentation was held securely by the Commission at all times and returned to the charity on 21/11/2014.
- (ii) Order 0025, which was made in accordance with Section 23 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, required the newly appointed trustees to provide documentation in respect of the appointment, remuneration and travel and subsistence claims of the charity employee, board appointments, minutes of meetings, documentation concerning financial procedures, conflicts of interest and any other relevant documents.
- (iii) The Commission does not intend contacting individual charity members but advises that all trustees were aware of the Commission's actions.
- (iv) The Commission advises that no quorum was required in this instance as the decision to provide documentation to the Commission was taken by the named trustees in accordance with the Order.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for Communities to detail how many posts have been suppressed by his Department in the Fermanagh and Omagh Council Area, since 2007.

(AQW 8036/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department for Communities came into existence on 9 May 2016. It comprises all functions from the former Department for Social Development and elements of functions from 4 other former Departments.

As the information which has been requested relates to a period of time prior to 9 May 2016, it is not possible to provide this. I have therefore agreed with Mrs Barton to provide details of the number of staff employed in the Fermanagh and Omagh Council area since 2007. This is set out in the table below.

Year*	Number of staff in Fermanagh and Omagh District council area
January 2007	202
January 2008	182
January 2009	175
January 2010	175
January 2011	175
January 2012	174
January 2013	190
January 2014	211
January 2015	201
January 2016	190
July 2016	252

* Numbers for January 2007 – January 2016 are Department for Social Development staff.

Numbers for July 2016 are Department for Communities staff

Mr McKee asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) the training or advice provided to officials within his Department and each of its Arm's Length Bodies in relation to outcomes-based accountability; (ii) who delivered the training; (iii) an overview of each session including the number of people in attendance and themes covered; (iv) the total paid to each individual or organisation involved in the delivery training up to 28 November 2016; and (v) the projected costs to be paid to each individual or organisation involved in the delivery training in 2016/17.

(AQW 8058/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- 1 Outcome based accountability training has been provided to NISRA statisticians in all Executive Departments, to Programme for Government Senior Responsible Officers and their teams, and to policy officials with a particular identified requirement.

In addition, OBA familiarisation sessions have been provided, focusing on specific areas of outcomes-focused practice, at meetings of senior officials involved in Programme for Government implementation across Departments.

All of this training has been provided at no cost to Departments, by NISRA statisticians seconded to the Executive Office.

- 2 As part of normal arrangements for cascading the emerging Programme for Government within the Department for Communities (DFC), awareness sessions are being delivered to key staff. Each session includes an overview of the emerging PFG and the outcomes accountability approach. To date, 111 staff participated. These awareness sessions are being delivered internally by DFC staff; DFC has not paid any organization to deliver training and has no plans to do so. The Department has not organised outcomes-based accountability training for its Arms Length Bodies.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities to detail the total amount of Social Security benefits paid, broken down by benefit, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8069/16-21)

Mr Givan: The amount of Social Security benefits paid, by benefit type, in each of the last five years is disclosed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Social Security benefits paid in the last five years

	2015/16 £000	2014/15 £000	2013/14 £000	2012/13 £000	2011/12 £000
Retirement Pension (Income Based and Contributory Based)	2,151,183	2,076,639	1,986,379	1,908,856	1,784,923
Attendance Allowance	203,327	205,325	201,625	203,169	197,185
Carers Allowances	150,470	141,764	132,652	123,588	111,219
Disability Living Allowance (includes Disability Working Allowance)	1,003,786	956,133	898,015	856,682	800,107
Severe Disablement Allowance	6,911	15,354	39,796	41,008	40,865
Pension Credit	283,716	307,899	325,463	333,889	349,355
Income Support	160,501	169,147	223,998	324,422	385,200
Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based and Contributory Based)	141,743	179,880	211,505	219,253	198,625
Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related and Contributory Based)	811,419	734,317	528,693	298,125	147,943
Industrial Injuries Benefits	29,982	30,067	29,748	29,494	29,357
Family Benefits	(3)	34	(6)	0	(5)
Widows Benefits	20,339	20,347	20,998	21,435	21,253
Incapacity Benefit	(818)	1,986	73,731	197,479	273,804
Maternity Allowance	12,312	12,164	11,873	11,396	10,797
Christmas Bonus	5,104	5,159	4,852	4,869	4,855
Job Grant	1,641	1,956	1,896	1,630	1,693
Budgeting Loans	58,741	53,971	53,960	50,667	49,255
Crisis Loans	12,333	13,659	14,113	12,993	14,001
Maternity Payments	1,445	1,615	1,673	1,730	2,048
Funeral Payments	4,584	4,748	5,353	5,004	4,766
Community Care Grants	13,708	13,708	13,747	13,497	13,694
Winter Fuel Payments	53,330	53,900	54,045	54,007	54,312
Repayments of Social Fund Loans	(67,924)	(69,465)	(67,104)	(65,038)	(62,041)
Periodicity and Pay Days	0	0	0	0	17
Cold Weather Payments	0	375	0	0	47
Housing Benefits - Housing Executive	665,079	655,233	639,973	620,756	590,829
Housing Benefits - Land and Property Services	40,939	42,909	41,064	41,080	39,892

	2015/16 £000	2014/15 £000	2013/14 £000	2012/13 £000	2011/12 £000
	5,763,848	5,628,824	5,448,042	5,309,991	5,063,996

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister for Communities to outline the minimum medical training required by Capita staff that carry out assessments for Employment and Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payment.

(AQW 8102/16-21)

Mr Givan: Capita Business Services Ltd (Capita) is the Assessment Provider who carries out Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments for Northern Ireland.

Capita do not carry out Employment and Support Allowance medical assessments for Northern Ireland.

Capita recruit qualified Health Professionals with a minimum of two years post registration experience which must be fulfilled within an approved health profession. These professions include medicine, nursing, physiotherapy, paramedic or occupational therapy. Having satisfied this requirement each Disability Assessor undergoes an extensive 10 week Foundation Training Programme prior to conducting a face to face consultation and must demonstrate they have met key competencies for performing this role.

Following the formal training period, each new Disability Assessor is physically shadowed by an experienced Disability Assessor, who observes them undertaking assessments and provides feedback. This one-to-one support ends following a robust audit process to ensure reports are of the required quality standard. Capita will then formally refer the Disability Assessor's name and registration details to the Department for Communities Health Assessment Advisor to request approval.

A quality monitoring and support programme is in place for Disability Assessors on an ongoing basis.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Communities to outline the funding opportunities to assist the celebration of the 500th anniversary of The Protestant Reformation in 2017; and his Department's plans to mark this occasion.

(AQW 8227/16-21)

Mr Givan: There are currently several funding opportunities available across my Ministerial remit that eligible organisations, wishing to celebrate the 500th anniversary of The Protestant Reformation, may be able to apply to. The Community Festivals Fund (CFF), which is administered by the local councils and supported by my Department, offers grants to assist communities celebrate and promote cultural expression. The Arts Council also operates a Small Grants Programme to support the delivery of arts projects which reflect the diversity of Northern Ireland's society and culture. Grants from £500 to £10,000 are available under this Fund.

In addition, local accredited museums, who wish to mark the anniversary, can seek support through the Accredited Museums grant programme. This programme is administered by the Northern Ireland Museums Council (NIMC). I understand from the NIMC that applications to the programme are likely to have a deadline of the end of February 2017 for events taking place in 2017/18.

My plans for marking the occasion are still at an early stage. The Protestant Reformation is, however, already reflected within the history galleries of the Ulster Museum in Belfast. National Museums NI's programme for 2017 is still to be finalised but it, along with the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), is exploring options for programming and collaboration with other organisations. PRONI has also been in discussion with the Presbyterian Historical Society as part of early planning for events and activities to mark this anniversary. In addition, Libraries NI is hoping, in 2017, to produce an exhibition of materials from Belfast Central Library's fine book collection that is contemporaneous with The Reformation period.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Communities to outline when the Sub Regional Stadia Programme for Soccer will open for applications.

(AQW 8255/16-21)

Mr Givan: The consultation on the Sub Regional Stadia Programme for Soccer resulted in 1,279 responses being received by my Department.

I have now received the report on the consultation from my officials and I am currently considering this together with all other relevant information before making a decision on the programme going forward.

I anticipate that the programme will be launched and open for applications in the coming months.

Ms Bailey asked the Minister for Communities to detail (i) the number of social housing units built in South Belfast by Common Landlord Areas; and (ii) whether these were (a) new social houses; or (b) replacement of existing stock, over the last five years.

(AQW 8256/16-21)

Mr Givan: The table below provides details of social housing provision in South Belfast by Common Landlord Area for the last complete 5 years and the current position in 2016/17. In addition to new build provision, new social housing is also delivered

through other scheme types, such as, off-the-shelf, existing satisfactory purchase, rehabilitation and re-improvement. In the table below figures have been broken down into New Build units and "Other" units which include these four scheme types. Please be advised that the 136 units associated with the Donegall Road CLA were delivered as part of the Village Urban Renewal, and involved replacement of existing unfit housing stock. A significant amount of vesting of private properties was undertaken by the Housing Executive prior to redevelopment of the area.

Common Landlord Area	2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15		2015/16		2016/17 (to-date)		Total	
	New Build	Other	New Build	Other	New Build	Other	New Build	Other	New Build	Other	New Build	Other	New Build	Other
Annadale	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	8	0	0	0	0	15	8
Castlereagh Road	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	15	0
Cromac/Markets	14	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	0
Donegall Pass	0	58	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	59
Donegall Road	0	0	0	0	87	0	2	7	27	13	0	0	116	20
Lisburn Road	0	2	0	25	0	0	0	23	0	3	12	0	12	53
Lower Donegall Road	0	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	0
Lower Ormeau	42	0	12	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	70	0
Other (Carryduff)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	39	0	0	0	39	9
Other (Knockbracken)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Taughmonagh	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	15	0
Upper Ormeau	0	0	2	19	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	2	24
Woodstock/Ravenhill	11	0	16	0	47	0	67	1	0	2	127	0	268	3
Totals	67	61	48	44	151	0	114	53	66	18	154	1	600	177

Ms Bailey asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the number and location of social housing units built in South Belfast, since 2006.

(AQW 8258/16-21)

Mr Givan: The number of social housing units built in South Belfast since 2006 are detailed in the table below.

Year	New Build
2006/07	87
2007/08	125
2008/09	64
2009/10	62
2010/11	104
2011/12	67
2012/13	48
2013/14	151
2014/15	114
2015/16	66
2016/17 (to-date)	154
Total	1,042

The locations and details of these new social housing units built are provided below.

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Ward	Units	Completion Year
Ark	Roseville House Ormeau Road	Rosetta	4	2006/07

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Ward	Units	Completion Year
Choice	Donegall Road	Shaftsbury	23	2006/07
Choice	Donegall Road	Shaftsbury	20	2006/07
Choice	140 University Avenue	Botanic	3	2006/07
Choice	140 University Avenue	Botanic	4	2006/07
Choice	140 University Avenue	Botanic	7	2006/07
Fold	Roden/Beit/Roosevelt	Blackstaff	26	2006/07
Choice	609 Ormeau Road	Rosetta	29	2007/08
Clanmil	North Rugby Club Phase 1	Botanic	12	2007/08
Clanmil	North Rugby Club Phase 1	Botanic	67	2007/08
Habinteg	Ardkeen House, Marlborough Park	Malone	11	2007/08
Habinteg	Hillmount Court Finaghy Road South	Upper Malone	6	2007/08
Clanmil	North Rugby Club Grounds Phase 2	Botanic	45	2008/09
Clanmil	North Rugby Club Ph 2B, Balfour Ave	Botanic	9	2008/09
Helm Housing	Village URA Overspill Phase 1 (339-343 Donegall Rd)	Blackstaff	10	2008/09
Helm Housing	Candahar Street	Ballynafeigh	23	2009/10
Helm Housing	Candahar Street	Ballynafeigh	19	2009/10
Helm Housing	14-20 University Street	Botanic	10	2009/10
Helm Housing	14-20 University Street	Botanic	10	2009/10
Choice	70 Sunnyside Street	Ballynafeigh	12	2010/11
Choice	Finaghy Road South	Upper Malone	12	2010/11
Choice	6-12 Breda Park	Galwally	22	2010/11
Choice	6-12 Breda Park	Galwally	12	2010/11
Choice	Charter Youth Club Sandy Row	Shaftsbury	3	2010/11
Fold	Roden Street Phase 2	Blackstaff	43	2010/11
Choice	2A Cherryville Street	Woodstock	11	2011/12
Clanmil	North Rugby Club	Botanic	42	2011/12
Helm Housing	McAuley Street Phase 3	Shaftsbury	14	2011/12
Clanmil	North Infill Hatfield Street	Botanic	4	2012/13
Clanmil	North Rugby Club Phase 4	Botanic	8	2012/13
Connswater	2 Sunnyside Drive	Ballynafeigh	2	2012/13
Helm Housing	Lily Bar Albion Street	Shaftsbury	18	2012/13
Wesley	St Anthony's Church, Willowfield	Woodstock	6	2012/13
Wesley	St Anthony's Church, Willowfield	Woodstock	10	2012/13
Clanmil	Boiler House Site Stewart Street	Shaftsbury	16	2013/14
Clanmil	Farnham Street (T)	Botanic	1	2013/14
Fold	Village URA Phase 1 (T)	Blackstaff	33	2013/14
Fold	Village URA Phase 1 (T)	Blackstaff	4	2013/14
Fold	Village URA Phase 2 (T)	Blackstaff	46	2013/14
Fold	Village URA Phase 2 (T)	Blackstaff	4	2013/14
Helm Housing	Ormeau Embankment	Rosetta	47	2013/14

Housing Association	Scheme Name	Ward	Units	Completion Year
Apex Housing	314 Ravenhill Road	Ravenhill	3	2014/15
Apex Housing	314 Ravenhill Road	Ravenhill	64	2014/15
Choice	London Road	Ravenhill	15	2014/15
Fold	Village Non-ATC Rehabs	Blackstaff	2	2014/15
Fold	Finnis Drive, Taughmonagh (T)	Upper Malone	15	2014/15
Triangle	29a Annadale Avenue	Rosetta	15	2014/15
Choice	Killynure Road (T)	Moneyreagh	39	2015/16
Fold	Village URA Phase 3 (T)	Blackstaff	27	2015/16
Choice	53-57 Botanic Avenue	Botanic	12	2016/17
Clanmil	137/141 Ormeau Road	Rosetta	15	2016/17
Fold	Ravenhill Avenue	Ravenhill	84	2016/17
Fold	Ravenhill Avenue	Ravenhill	2	2016/17
Fold	95-103 Ravenhill Avenue/Millar Street	Ravenhill	41	2016/17

In addition to the above, 332 off-the-shelf purchases, existing satisfactory purchases, rehabilitation and re-improvement units were also completed during this time for South Belfast.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister for Communities to outline the services his Department provides for victims of historical abuse that occurred in sporting organisations.

(AQW 8274/16-21)

Mr Givan: Providing support to victims of non-recent abuse that occurred in sporting organisations is the responsibility in the first instance of both the Department of Health in terms of the victim's physical and mental well being and the Department of Justice and the Chief Constable in terms of bringing perpetrators of abuse to justice.

The services provided by the Department for Communities for victims of historical abuse reflect the remit of the Department. The role of the Department of Communities in terms of Sport, centres on the safety and security of participants in sport at every level, a requirement that is absolutely paramount.

The Department for Communities, together with Sport NI, compels recognition across the sports sector of the moral duty and legal obligations to protect children and young people in sport through the provision of a safe environment which protects them from harm.

The NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) impacts on the sporting sector in Northern Ireland and has been working through Sport NI since 2001 in applying best practice standards for safeguarding child participants that sports organisations should adhere to. In relation to recent revelations the NSPCC has launched a dedicated hotline for victims of abuse in football across the UK. It is being supported by the Irish FA. The number is 0800 023 2642.

The Department is working through Sport NI to ensure the culture of safeguarding in sport is a priority. Sport NI require all funded sports to go through a safeguarding assessment process to ensure organisations have policies in place to ensure the welfare of the children taking part. The Sports Governing Bodies and all applicant bodies for funding are required to satisfy the following safeguarding assessment framework:-

- safe recruitment (including vetting, Access NI);
- effective management of volunteers;
- reporting procedures;
- codes of conduct;
- sharing of information; and
- health and safety.

In addition Sport NI through the CPSU provides the following Safeguarding Training for the sports sector:-

- Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport (delivered by Sport NI tutors) ;
- Designated Safeguarding Children Officer courses (delivered by Sport NI tutors);
- Online free safeguarding refresher course (on sport NI site);
- Risk Assessment and recruitment (delivered by CPSU);
- Preventing Bullying in Sport (delivered by CPSU);
- Understanding the Grooming and Entrapment Process in Sport (delivered by CPSU); and

■ Engaging Parents in Sport (delivered by CPSU).

The efficient management of safeguarding issues is also supported through the provisions of the following functions:-

- Case advice via the agreement with the CPSU;
- Support meetings held for Governing body designated officers;
- Sample policies and pro-forma available under resources section of Sport NI web site
- Free safeguarding webinars <https://thecpsu.org.uk/Search?term=webinar>; and
- Information and briefing papers available on www.thecpsu.org.uk

In 2014 the Department and Sport NI worked with the Irish Football Association (IFA) and the NSPCC to build a mobile phone application for 'Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football'. The app' for i-phone users is the first ever safeguarding app' in sport and was launched in April 2014, with an Android version following quickly after. The app,' which gained FIFA recognition, communicates a significant amount of safeguarding information to clubs, coaches, parents and players in a way that is easy to access, simple to use and easy to understand using written, video and audio formats. The app is available to download free from Apple's App Store under the search – 'IFA Safeguarding'. Its impressive features include a feature using GPS technology that allows parents to track the movements of their children whilst in the care of sports clubs and coaches.

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) is the official place of deposit for records created by the Northern Ireland Departments and the wider public sector which have been selected for permanent preservation. PRONI also holds records of individual sporting organisation on deposit. Victims of historical sexual abuse or their representatives can apply to access information by submitting a request to PRONI.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline the Housing Executive maintenance schemes planned for Barnagh Park, Donaghadee, over the next two financial years.

(AQW 8277/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that there are currently no maintenance schemes planned for Barnagh Park, Donaghadee in 2017/18.

Schemes from 2018/19 onwards will be programmed as part of the development of the Housing Executive's new 10 Year Investment Plan.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Communities for (i) a list in each council area; and (ii) the percentage of council owned play parks that contain play equipment for children with a disability.

(AQW 8282/16-21)

Mr Givan: The provision of play parks and play equipment is an operational matter concerning service delivery by councils and I would advise the Member to request this information directly from the eleven councils.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for Communities to detail the total amount paid to (i) ATOS for administering Work Capability Assessment; and (ii) Capita for administering the Disability Living Allowance assessments processes, for each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 8285/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) Amounts paid to Atos for administering Work Capability Assessments cannot be disclosed as the charging regime within the Medical Support Services Agreement is designated as commercially sensitive, in accordance with Schedule 30 of the Agreement.
- (ii) The disclosure of this information may prejudice the commercial interests of the current healthcare provider and the Department's future dealings with them or any other service providers, which would not be in the public interest.
- (iii) Capita do not administer Disability Living Allowance assessments.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for Communities to outline the average caseloads for Departmental Decision Makers or Case Managers in respect of (i) Job Seekers Allowance; (ii) Employment Support Allowance; (iii) Disability Living Allowance; and (iv) Personal Independence Payments.

(AQW 8286/16-21)

Mr Givan: Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payments (PIP) decision-makers and case managers do not have an average caseload figure.

Work is allocated to staff, depending on their skill set and capacity, through an IT enabled Workflow Management system for ESA, DLA and PIP and through a clerical Workflow Management system for JSA.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for Communities to outline clearance targets for Departmental Decision Makers or Case Managers in respect of (i) Job Seekers Allowance; (ii) Employment Support Allowance; (iii) Disability Living Allowance; and (iv) Personal Independence Payments.

(AQW 8287/16-21)

Mr Givan: The fresh claims clearance targets for Decision Makers are as follows:

- Employment and Support Allowance - 14 working days.
- Disability Living Allowance - 35 working days.
- Job Seekers Allowance – 11 working days

As Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is a new benefit and only went live on 20 June 2016, work is underway to finalise and publish an appropriate clearance target which will take account of the various steps in the PIP Customer Journey.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for Communities to detail the total money recouped from benefit claimants by his Department as a result of (i) Job Seekers Allowance sanctions; (ii) Employment Support Allowance adverse decisions; (iii) Personal Independence Payments assessment processes; and (iv) Disability Living Allowance assessment processes that reduced or removed benefits payments, over the past three financial years.

(AQW 8288/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department for Communities does not routinely collect information regarding the total money recouped for (i) Job Seekers Allowance sanctions; (ii) Employment Support Allowance adverse decisions; (iii) Personal Independence Payments assessment processes; and (iv) Disability Living Allowance assessment processes that reduced or removed benefits payments.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Communities to outline any discussions he has had with the Housing Executive to carry out an up-to-date survey providing updated figures for fuel poverty in each council area.

(AQW 8341/16-21)

Mr Givan: The level of fuel poverty is measured by the NI Housing Executive through the Northern Ireland House Condition Survey which is currently being conducted and is expected to report in Autumn 2017.

The House Condition Survey will provide data to update key measures in relation to the current housing stock. This data will include updated figures for fuel poverty at council level.

Mr M Bradley asked the Minister for Communities whether there are plans for replacement heating systems and uPVC windows in flats in the Ballysally area of Coleraine, to bring them in line with the living standards in the rest of the houses in the area.

(AQW 8343/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that replacement schemes for these elements will be programmed as part of the development of the Housing Executive's new 10 Year Investment Plan.

The replacement of the heating systems in Ballysally estate would be due to be planned around 2018/19. The timber-framed double glazing in the flats in the estate was installed in 2003 and 2004, and would not be due to be replaced until the mid-2020s.

Mr M Bradley asked the Minister for Communities to outline the Housing Executive maintenance schemes planned for the Causeway Coast and Glens area over the next two financial years.

(AQW 8344/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that the maintenance schemes currently planned for the Causeway Coast and Glens area in 2017/18 are set out in the table below. The start dates for these schemes are subject to the scheme design and approvals process as well as the availability of funding.

Schemes from 2018/19 onwards will be programmed as part of the Housing Executive's new 10 Year Investment Plan.

External Cyclical Maintenance (ECM)

Scheme	Dwellings
Cloughmills/Loughgiel	262
Harpers Hill/Curraghmore	226
Drumavalley/Coolessan/Drumceatt	118

Heating

Scheme	Dwellings
Ballycastle heating/boiler replacement	100

Scheme	Dwellings
Ballymoney heating	158
Portrush/Portstewart heating	146
Coleraine heating	146
Limavady heating/boiler replacement	67

Kitchens

Scheme	Dwellings
Bushmills	94
Carnany/Cloughmills/Balnamore	118
Buskin Way/Curraghmore/Ramsay parks	81
Limavady kitchens (1)	100
Limavady kitchens (2)	87

Windows

Scheme	Dwellings
Ard Na Smoll/Kings Lane etc	415

Roof Replacement

Scheme	Dwellings
Ramore St/Main St/Maple Dr.	60

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities to outline why the Savill Report was not required to further consider the condition of cavity wall insulation as part of their survey of housing stock, following The Cavity Wall Insulation report, produced jointly by South Eastern Regional College and the NI Housing Executive, published in March 2014.

(AQW 8352/16-21)

Mr Givan: The survey methodology that was adopted was consistent with both custom and practice and the objectives for the commission that were agreed between Department for Social Development and the Housing Executive at the time.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities to outline how many of the 135 houses identified in severe or grave need of a repair in the The Cavity Wall Insulation report, produced jointly by South Eastern Regional College and the NI Housing Executive, published in March 2014, have had the defective issues repaired.

(AQW 8353/16-21)

Mr Givan: The position on existing CWI throughout Housing Executive stock will be established through its future External Cyclical Maintenance (ECM) programmes by undertaking a representative sample of cavity inspections to determine if the cavity has been filled and, if it has, what condition it is in.

Where dwellings which have already been insulated through cavity wall work and have specific problems associated with this work, the resulting issues will be addressed on a case by case basis. The Housing Executive has advised that it has no current plans to isolate the specific properties contained within the SERC/ NIHE Report from the remainder of its stock.

The Housing Executive will bring forward programmes of work related to insulation for properties which have been identified by its recent stock condition survey as in most need. This work will focus on the significant number of properties which have, to date, not benefited from any insulation work.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities to outline the actions (i) he; and (ii) the NIHE have taken following the recommendations made by The Cavity Wall Insulation report, produced jointly by South Eastern Regional College and the NI Housing Executive, published in March 2014.

(AQW 8354/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that the research report, produced by South Eastern Regional College and the Housing Executive, pointed to problems that are now arising in some of the housing stock due to the age of properties and the quality of the cavity wall insulation. However, the research was based on a small sample of properties and its findings are therefore generic in nature and could not be used for the purposes of developing a work programme.

Consequently, the position on cavity wall insulation throughout the Housing Executive's stock is being established via its External Cyclical Maintenance programme in which representative samples of cavity inspections will be undertaken to determine if the cavity has been filled and, if it has been filled, what condition it is in. Where specific problems are identified these are being addressed on a case-by-case basis either through the Housing Executive's response maintenance service or planned schemes.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment on the recommendations contained within The Cavity Wall Insulation report, produced jointly by South Eastern Regional College and the NI Housing Executive, published in March 2014.

(AQW 8355/16-21)

Mr Givan: The SERC/Housing Executive report, on cavity wall insulation, was published in full in February 2016. The report was commissioned by the Housing Executive and my Department has made no assessment of the recommendations made within it.

The Housing Executive has advised that it will review the recommendations as part of the development of the new Energy & Sustainability Strategy for its housing stock.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Communities to outline the funding available through his Department for community and voluntary organisations in East Derry.

(AQW 8357/16-21)

Mr Givan: Under its programmes to tackle deprivation, the Neighbourhood Renewal, Areas at Risk and Small Pockets of Deprivation initiatives, the Department is able to provide funding to community groups to deliver a range of activities.

Applications for funding are considered and assessed against how effectively they meet the needs, aims and objectives of the Tackling Deprivation Programmes with support only being made available following the successful outcome of an assessment and appraisal process in line with the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure, Appraisal and Evaluation and Managing Public Money NI.

NICVA is a body that is funded by the Department to support organisations in the voluntary and community sector. NICVA maintain a 'grant tracker' software package that includes details of all funding streams available at any given time. This is a useful resource for community groups trying to identify potential funding streams. This grant tracker can be found at www.grant-tracker.org/

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) the membership of his Departmental Modernisation Board; and (ii) the number of times it has met.

(AQW 8361/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department for Communities does not have a Departmental Modernisation Board.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Communities whether he will publish the business case considered by his departmental Modernisation Board and the Department of Finance concerning the future of jobs and benefits offices.

(AQW 8367/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department for Communities is committed to the network of local Jobs & Benefits offices located across Northern Ireland and a business case for the new North Belfast Jobs & Benefits office is currently under consideration by the Department of Finance.

A business case is also being developed for a new Jobs & Benefits office in Rathkeltair House, Downpatrick. However, the Department does not routinely publish business cases.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Communities given that it has the telephony system in place, to outline why Omagh Jobs and Benefits Office did not meet the criteria for Social Security jobs.

(AQW 8368/16-21)

Mr Givan: I am committed to the Department for Communities being a regional organisation which ensures its jobs are spread across Northern Ireland and are not Belfast centric. In implementing Universal Credit, the new Discretionary Support and other significant benefit changes there is a balance to be achieved between locating new services in rural towns close to where some staff live and the efficient running of the business ensuring best use of public resources.

The three service centre model for Universal Credit and the 2 service centre model for Discretionary Support represent a positive response to the need to locate jobs across Northern Ireland and also takes account of the provision of face to face services in most local towns through the network of Jobs & Benefits offices.

I am pursuing a strategy of basing work in towns across Northern Ireland as evidenced by my recent announcement of an additional 14 telephony jobs being located in the Omagh Jobs & Benefits office.

I remain committed to continually reviewing services and seeking opportunities to locate jobs in rural towns where they can be shown to be sustainable and which meet business needs.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Communities whether he will publish the rural proofing exercise carried out concerning the future of jobs and benefits offices.

(AQW 8369/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department for Communities is a regional organisation and is committed to the network of local Jobs & Benefits offices located across Northern Ireland. These offices play an important role in supporting unemployed claimants to get into work and provide them with benefit information and advice and will be at the core of the delivery of the new Universal Credit and new Discretionary Support Service.

As the Department has no proposals to close any Jobs & Benefits offices there has been no requirement to carry out a rural proofing exercise. However, the Department has published a Rural Impact Assessment Screening document on the proposed closure of the 4 Social Security Offices and JobCentres.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Communities to outline the extent of Equality Impact assessments carried out concerning the future of jobs and benefits offices.

(AQW 8370/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department for Communities is a regional organisation and is committed to the network of local Jobs & Benefits offices located across Northern Ireland. These offices play an important role in supporting unemployed claimants to get into work and provide them with benefit information and advice and will be at the core of the delivery of the new Universal Credit and new Discretionary Support Service.

As the Department has no proposals to close any Jobs & Benefits offices there has been no requirement to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment.

However, the Department has published an Equality Impact Assessment on the proposed closure of the 4 Social Security Offices and JobCentres.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister for Communities to detail the number of people awaiting housing in the Taghenvan ward of Upper Bann.

(AQW 8389/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that they do not collect waiting list data at ward level. The number of people awaiting housing in the Taghnevan Common Landlord area is 143.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline the Housing Executive maintenance schemes planned for the Jubilee area of Bangor, over the next two financial years.

(AQW 8393/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that 33 properties in Jubilee Court are included in an External Cyclical Maintenance scheme programmed for 2017/18. Other than this there are no maintenance schemes planned for the Jubilee area.

Schemes from 2018/19 onwards will be programmed as part of the development of the Housing Executive's new 10 Year Investment Plan.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Communities to outline why Lisburn Jobs and Benefits Office was selected to provide social fund services.

(AQW 8455/16-21)

Mr Givan: Lisburn Jobs & Benefits Office has been selected as the location for the delivery of network Regulated Social Fund and Budgeting Loans because there is a critical mass of experienced Social Fund staff within the greater Belfast area and because there is sufficient accommodation capacity on site to facilitate the circa 90 staff needed for new centralised team.

Centralisation of Regulated Social Fund provision and Budgeting Loans is necessary because of the implementation of Discretionary Support which replaced Crisis Loans and Community Care grants from the 28th November 2016. Centralisation of the delivery of remaining Sure Start Maternity Grants, Funeral Payments and Budgeting Loan services will allow the Working Age Service to consolidate and make best use of the remaining Social Fund processing staff resource and to maintain these services for claimants.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Communities to detail the number of staff transferring from Omagh to Dungannon Jobs and Benefits Office.

(AQW 8456/16-21)

Mr Givan: Omagh With the introduction of the new Discretionary Support on 28 November 2016 and the setting up of the Discretionary Support Service Centres in Antrim and Dungannon Jobs & Benefits offices, an expression of interest booklet

was issued to all Department for Communities staff at Administrative Officer to Staff Officer grade inviting them to express their interest in opportunities in the Service Centres.

Four EO2s from the Omagh Jobs & Benefits office applied for the opportunities in the Dungannon Service Centre and were selected.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Communities whether Omagh Jobs and Benefits Office was considered for regional services, following the implementation of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016.

(AQW 8458/16-21)

Mr Givan: I am committed to the Department for Communities being a regional organisation which ensures its jobs are spread across Northern Ireland and I am pursuing a strategy of basing work in towns across Northern Ireland.

My Department is continually reviewing services and seeking opportunities to locate jobs in rural towns where they can be shown to be sustainable and which meet business needs. This includes consideration of additional work for the Omagh Jobs & Benefits office as evidenced by my recent announcement of an additional 14 telephony jobs.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Communities to outline the (i) funding opportunities to assist the celebration of the 500th anniversary of The Protestant Reformation in 2017; and (ii) plans his Department has to mark this.

(AQW 8471/16-21)

Mr Givan: I refer the Member to my response to AQW 8227/16-21 on the same subject.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Communities to outline the reasons for slippage in Northern Ireland Housing Executive capital works schemes in the Banbridge area, in each of the last two years.

(AQW 8488/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that the Huntley Bungalow Scheme is the only significant capital works scheme in the Banbridge area over the last two years. The delays in this scheme were of a technical nature and have now been resolved with planning permission approved on 19th November 2016.

The Housing Executive has advised that other capital works within the Banbridge area are mainly individual dwelling adaptations for people with disabilities. Due to the specific and individual requirements of each occupant, delays in these cases can be specific but generally would include planning issues, the complex changing needs of the occupant and procurement and delivery issues.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) how many people have had their registration to the Construction Skills Register funded, in each of the last three years; and (ii) whether this process is available to current recipients of means tested benefits.

(AQW 8489/16-21)

Mr Givan: Departmental records show the number of people who have had their registration to the Construction Skills Register (CSR) funded, in each of the last three years is as follows:

Time Period	Numbers Funded
October 2013 to September 2014	1547
October 2014 to September 2015	1345
October 2015 to September 2016	628

The figure for October 2015 to September 2016 is expected to increase to reflect that of the previous two years once the Department has been fully invoiced for all of our clients who have been referred to participate in a CSR training provision.

CSR training is available to clients in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support (IS) and those who are not in receipt of benefits, provided they are not currently participating on the Department's main employment programme, Steps 2 Success.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to outline the (i) function; and (ii) use for the Interim Investment Priorities Programme.

(AQW 8505/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) The Interim Investment Priorities (IIP) Programme is a two year capital investment programme for 2015/16 and 2016/17.
- (ii) The IIP Programme is structured around eight key investment themes as follows:
 - Non Traditional stock
 - Thermal Efficiency
 - Multi Story Blocks
 - Multi-Element Improvements

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| ■ Internal Upgrading | ■ Health & Safety Compliance |
| ■ Roof/External Works | ■ Environmental Improvements |

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Communities to detail how many homes were boroscoped during the ESM Kilcooley Phase 1 scheme to determine the state or lack of cavity wall insulation.

(AQW 8506/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive advised that the Kilcooley Phase 1 scope of works brief was issued to the consultant before the introduction of the cavity wall inspections into the ECM programmes. Therefore, there were no inspections undertaken.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities (i) whether he received contrary evidence to the answers of AQW's 821/16-21 and as revised in AQW 2220/16-21, and to outline his rationale in concluding the evidence was incorrect; (ii) whether other evidence was considered to the contrary of the evidence received by his Department; and (iii) how orders released by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland included named directors which were not included in his answers.

(AQW 8522/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) AQW 2220/16-21 indicated that an administrative error caused an incorrect answer to be provided to part (ii) of AQW 821/16-21.
- (ii) The only relevant information was the administrative error.
- (iii) Only directors who resigned were recorded.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities whether (i) the Voluntary Exit Scheme will be available to staff members of the Charity Commission NI; (ii) he is aware that misconduct allegations were made against CCNI staff; and (iii) any staff member against whom allegations were made will be ineligible for VES whilst being investigated.

(AQW 8523/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) A bid has been made for funding from the Public Sector Transformation Fund to support a Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) for the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland in 2017/18.
- (ii) The Department is aware that allegations have been made about some CCNI staff but as the Department is not the employer of CCNI staff, such allegations are a matter for the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland to consider.
- (iii) If the bid for a VES by the Charity Commission is successful the operation of the scheme is a matter for the Commission, subject to their following the relevant guidance. As there is no VES in place the issue of selection criteria has yet to be considered by the Charity Commission.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) when AQW 6790/16-21 will be answered; (ii) whether his Department drafted the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008; and (iii) the qualifications the drafters of the Act possessed.

(AQW 8524/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) An issue raised by AQW6790/16-21 requires further consideration and an answer will be provided in due course.
- (ii) The Department for Social Development brought forward the Charities Bill (Northern Ireland) 2007 which became the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 following Royal Assent.
- (iii) The Bill was drafted by the Office of Legislative Counsel whose staff are qualified to undertake such work.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities (i) whether the Charity Tribunal is bound to comment on the Charity Commission's procedures or guidance, under the Charities Act (NI) 2008; (ii) if not, why the CCNI and his Department claim that such procedures and guidance were adjudicated on by the Charity Tribunal; and (iii) on how many occasions have the CCNI written to government Department's and MLA's stating that the Charity Tribunal adjudicated on its policies and processes.

(AQW 8525/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) The Charity Tribunal considers evidence presented in respect of those issues set out in the table of reviewable and appealable matters in Schedule 3 of the Charities Act (NI) 2008. In considering the actions of the Commission the Tribunal may consider and comment on how they have applied their procedures or guidance to those actions.
- (ii) The Tribunal may consider and comment on the Commission's procedures and guidance if relevant to the evidence presented before them.

- (iii) The Commission has been unable to locate any correspondence to Government Departments or MLAs in which it has stated that the Charity Tribunal “adjudicated on its policies and processes” although it would have stated that matters raised had been considered as part of the evidence presented to the Tribunal.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment on the utility of photovoltaic panels on NIHE housing stock. (AQW 8526/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that to date it has completed the installation of solar photovoltaic systems to 1,000 properties.

From the outset the key objective for the Housing Executive was to use solar photovoltaic systems to deliver a significant reduction in fuel poverty for householders.

Initial findings would indicate there are significant potential savings to the householder which the Housing Executive will only be able to identify in detail after full analysis of the utility bills for the first year. The NIHE is hopeful that this project will achieve the savings for tenants predicted in the business plan.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Communities to outline his Department and the NIHE's plans to promote the use of photovoltaic panels on NIHE homes. (AQW 8527/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that with the completion of the initial photovoltaic panel scheme for 1,000 households, and the impending closure of the Northern Ireland Renewable Obligation, it will explore other renewable solutions that are currently in existence in the market place.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Communities to detail the average waiting time for an individual on the NIHE waiting list, broken down by (i) Northern Ireland as a whole; and (ii) constituency, over the past five years. (AQW 8528/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that when a question of “average waiting time” is asked MEAN and MEDIAN averages are provided. They have also advised that archive data is only available for the last 3 years.

The table below details the average waiting time for Northern Ireland over the last 3 years.

	Mean Average Months on Waiting List	Median Average Months on Waiting List
As at 30/09/ 2014	33.1	18
As at 30/09/ 2015	35.1	20
As at 30/09/ 2016	36.9	21

The table below details the average waiting time broken down by constituency over the last 3 years.

Parliamentary Constituency	At 30/09/14		At 30/09/15		At 30/09/16	
	Mean Average	Median Average	Mean Average	Median Average	Mean Average	Median Average
Belfast East	35.5	19	36.4	17	36.1	18
Belfast East/South	46	23	53.4	27	48.1	25
Belfast North	32	17	33.2	18	34.7	20
Belfast South	31.3	19	35.7	22	37.5	25
Belfast South/Strangford	25.4	13	26.9	17	32.4	24
Belfast West	33.7	21	35.4	21	40.9	26
Belfast West/North	43.2	22.5	41.1	20	48.3	25
Belfast West/South	40.4	27	42.6	28	30.2	18
East Antrim	38	18	38.8	17	39	18
East Londonderry	31.1	15	37.9	21	41.3	26
Fermanagh South Tyrone	29.5	15	30.2	15	31.7	17
Foyle	30.4	19	33.1	21	35.1	23
Lagan Valley	33.4	15	34.6	17	33.8	17

Parliamentary Constituency	At 30/09/14		At 30/09/15		At 30/09/16	
	Mean Average	Median Average	Mean Average	Median Average	Mean Average	Median Average
Mid Ulster	31.7	18	32.6	19	33.6	19
Newry& Armagh	32.9	18	35.8	20	41.3	27
North Antrim	34.3	19	36.9	21	39.4	23
North Down	39.1	21	39.1	20	41.6	23
South Antrim	29.4	17	29.6	16	31.6	18
South Down	33.6	20	36.2	21	39.7	26
Strangford	33.3	18	36	20	37.9	21
Upper Bann	29.7	14	30.2	14	31.3	13
West Tyrone	28.4	14	30.3	16	32.3	18.5

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Communities what funding is available to renovate buildings of historical value which are partially privately owned and partially publicly owned, such as Hilden House.

(AQW 8538/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Repair Stream of the Historic Environment Fund, which I launched in September, is the principal route by which my Department supports work to renovate historic buildings. Applications for support this year closed on 10 October but, subject to available funding, I hope to be in a position to open the Fund again next spring for work in the financial year 2017/18.

I understand that Hilden House is fully privately owned. Its owners would therefore be eligible to apply for support from the Fund.

In any case where a building might be partly publicly and partly privately owned, because public bodies are not eligible for support from the Fund, a decision would have to be made based upon the circumstances presented. It is likely that the Department would seek to understand the nature of the ownership and would then consider the part that was privately owned eligible for support.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities whether the £125m to be spent addressing welfare fraud and error, as part of the Fresh Start Agreement, will not exceed the savings generated.

(AQW 8550/16-21)

Mr Givan: The funding represents an annual investment of £25m per year over a 5 year period. I can confirm that this investment will detect fraud and enable key interventions to protect Annually Managed Expenditure and will not exceed the savings generated.

Mr Allen asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 7820/16-21, to outline why he cannot provide the information requested, given the Personal Independence Payment was introduced 24 weeks ago.

(AQW 8551/16-21)

Mr Givan: My Department currently publishes a quarterly Benefit Statistics Summary which is designated as a National Statistic.

This incorporates data breakdowns of all the existing major benefits and any new benefits and is published in line with the Statistics Code of Practice as set down by the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) which has 8 different principles and 3 protocols which must be met before anything is published.

My Department is working to these guidelines set by the UKSA to ensure we can publish statistics on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) that meet high quality standards at the earliest opportunity.

There is currently no fixed schedule for the release of PIP statistics, however their publication will be pre- announced in accordance with UKSA release protocols. PIP was introduced in Great Britain in April 2013 and the first release of published PIP statistics by the Department for Work and Pension was in June 2014.

Mr Smith asked the Minister for Communities to detail each budgetary pressure that (i) his Department; and each (ii) of its arm's-length bodies were facing at 1 December 2016.

(AQW 8565/16-21)

Mr Givan: My Department continues to manage its in-year financial position within the resources that have been allocated to us.

Ms Ruane asked the Minister for Communities for a breakdown of (i) capital; and (ii) resource funding in relation to arts and culture in between May 2011 and March 2016.

(AQW 8585/16-21)

Mr Givan: The following table details the capital and resource funding figures in relation to arts and culture as recorded by the former Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure.

Total Accrued Spend Figures for 2011-2016 for Culture and Arts

Department and ALB - Resource	£k
2011/12	24,176
2012/13	29,724
2013/14	32,124
2014/15	22,257
2015/16	20,463
Total	128,744
Department and ALB - Capital	
2011/12	4,143
2012/13	824
2013/14	1,280
2014/15	2,902
2015/16	3,018
Total	12,167

Ms Ruane asked the Minister for Communities to outline his anticipated budget allocation towards (i) capital; and (ii) resource funding in relation to arts and culture for May 2016 to March 2021.

(AQW 8586/16-21)

Mr Givan: For 2016/17, at the time of writing, a budget of £19.417m in resource and £2.278m in capital has been allocated to arts and culture.

Budget Proposals for 2017/18 onwards are still being developed. Funding allocations will be made following Executive agreement of the Budget.

Ms Ruane asked the Minister for Communities for (i) an update on the Strategy for Culture & Arts 2016-2026; and (ii) a timeline for implementation.

(AQW 8587/16-21)

Mr Givan: The public consultation on proposals for a Culture and Arts Strategy amassed more than 1700 responses which is a significant response. Officials have been analysing the detailed responses and a report on the Consultation analysis is nearing completion.

On consideration of the analysis I will take a decision on the way forward for the strategy.

Ms Ruane asked the Minister for Communities to list the arts and culture projects funded in (i) 2011; (ii) 2012; (iii) 2013; (iv) 2014; (v) 2015; and (vi) 2016, broken down by county.

(AQW 8588/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department does not currently hold this information in the format requested, and to obtain it would involve disproportionate costs to the Department and its Arms Length Bodies.

However, details of all Government funding awarded are contained within the Government Funding Database, which can be accessed at the following address:

<https://govfundingpublic.nics.gov.uk/>

Department for Communities (DfC) funding listed on the database includes that issued by the former Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, (DCAL) and can be accessed at branch level for clarity. A number of branches within the Department have funded projects in relation to arts and culture.

Awards made by DCAL / DfC's relevant Arms Length Bodies, such as the Arts Council, Ulster-Scots Agency and Northern Ireland Screen, can also be reviewed on the Database. Northern Ireland Screen awards in relation to After Schools Film Club, Creative Learning Centres and Exhibitions relate to DCAL / DfC funding although they will be listed under the new sponsor Department, DfE.

Community Festivals Fund awards are match-funded and administered by each local Council and are listed by Council area. Community Festivals funding from my Department will be included in any data provided by the Council.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Communities whether he plans to issue a press release or statement advising and highlighting the options available to facilitate people that have benefits paid into a Post Office account, to provide assurance on the legitimacy of correspondence sent by the Department of Work & Pensions seeking them to provide details of and/or switch to a bank account.

(AQW 8590/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department for Communities (DfC) issued a statement to the Belfast Telegraph on 5 December 2016 to reassure claimants that a recent correspondence from DfC about switching payment accounts, is genuine. A statement was also released on the Department's Twitter account, the Department's website and NI Direct website on 9 December 2016.

Post Office card accounts continue to be a method of payment for Department for Communities customers and the Department has a contract with Post Office Limited to provide card accounts until 30th November 2021, with an option to extend for a further 3 years.

The Department is committed to battling financial exclusion and helping more people to move towards, and benefit from mainstream banking. Direct Payment into a bank, building society or credit union account is the most efficient, secure and reliable way of making payments and is the preferred way to make pension and benefit payments.

We want our customers to have access to an account that prepares them for job readiness as well as other changes that Universal Credit will introduce, such as monthly payments, responsibility for payment of housing costs and managing a household budget.

Post Office card account is not a transactional account and does not support our ambitions for the majority of working age benefit claimants. For this reason, the Department of Work and Pensions are currently writing to Post Office card account users on behalf of the Department for Communities in phases up to March 2018 about switching to a bank, building society or credit union account.

Those moving to another account can continue to access their money and other services at their local Post Office and importantly sub-postmasters will continue to receive revenue from those transactions while maintaining footfall.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities to detail (i) the spending in the Waterside Neighbourhood Renewal areas of (a) Currynierin; (b) Tullyally; and (c) Caw/ Nelson Drive in 2016 to date; and for the past five years under the former Development; and (ii) the organisations funded with details of salaries and running costs funded through (a) his Department; and (ii) the former Department in these areas.

(AQW 8604/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) The table below shows the spending in the Waterside Neighbourhood Renewal areas of (a) Currynierin; (b) Tullyally; and (c) Caw/ Nelson Drive from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2017.

	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017
Currynierin	£111,204.24	£110,491.79	£59,432.74	£42,209.23	£54,566.48	-
Tullyally	£105,316.61	-	£11,522.48	£230,118.30	£36,586.65	28,664.82
Caw/Nelson Drive	£163,339.24	£58,951.32	£86,903.66	£74,806.81	£83,548.56	£85,313.33

Notes:

Figures in table above refer to total allocation to these areas, including revenue (salaries, running costs, programme costs) and capital costs

2016/17 reports the contract allocation for the year

- (ii) The table below shows organisations funded by the Department detailing allocation for salaries and running costs, from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2017.

		2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017
Currynierin Community Association (CCA)	Salaries	£97,425.30	£98,064.55	£51,378.45	£8,354.39	-	-
	Running Costs	£13,778.94	£12,427.24	£8,054.29	-	-	-

		2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017
Tullyally & District Development Group (T&DDG)	Salaries	£72,412.08	-	-	-	-	-
	Running Costs	£32,904.53	-	-	-	-	-
Caw Nelson Drive Action Group (CNDAG)	Salaries	£42,784.44	£49,646.43	£56,455.34	£62,664.36	£62,462.28	£62,462.28
	Running Costs	£6,126.53	£9,304.89	£8,324.05	£8,324.05	£8,324.05	£8,324.05
Waterside Neighbourhood Partnership facilitating Curryrierin and Tullyally	Salaries	-	-	£11,019.12	£26,949.12	£44,762.61	£26,927.64
	Running Costs	-	-	£84.37	£10,617.37	£7,557.18	£1,737.18
Inner City Trust (ICT) facilitating Tullyally	Salaries	-	-	-	£684.52	£8,487.90	£8,477.16
	Running Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Communities whether a survey was carried out for any (i) ancient monuments; or (ii) burying grounds at the Keady Mountain quarry site near Limavady.

(AQW 8611/16-21)

Mr Givan: A single historic monument is recorded adjacent to the quarry on Keady Mountain. It was recorded in 1838 as part of the Ordnance Survey Memoir project and shown on subsequent six-inch maps.

The monument was more recently recorded by Departmental archaeologists in 1975 and 1990 and interpreted as a probable prehistoric burial cairn set within a stone-faced enclosure. Given the unusual nature of the monument and its proximity to the quarry, it was scheduled for protection in 1992.

Since then, it has been visited on a number of occasions by the Department's Field Monument Wardens as part of their inspection programme. The most recent visit was on 24 November 2016 after a member of the public reported blasting at the quarry. Inspection showed that the monument was undamaged and that there was no evidence of recent quarry operations in the vicinity of the monument. Discussion with the owner suggested that he has no plans for quarrying adjacent to the site.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Communities to detail how many people currently on the NIHE waiting list are registered as disabled.

(AQW 8613/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that information such as whether or not an applicant is registered as disabled is not held.

However, there are some indicators which may highlight if an applicant or a member of the applicant's household may have a disability. The indicators are;

- The Wheelchair user indicator;
- Health & Social Wellbeing indicator;
- Complex Needs indicator; and
- The Functionality Matrix indicator.

The waiting list as at 30 September 2016 for applicants with these indicators totals 13,866.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Communities to detail how many homes he plans to build that are adapted for people with disabilities by March 2021.

(AQW 8614/16-21)

Mr Givan: Information relating to plans for homes that are adapted for people with disabilities is only available for the current programme year as the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) is formulated on a 3-year basis and the housing mixes are not currently finalised for future years.

There are currently 102 Wheelchair Standard social housing units under construction as part of the SHDP with a further 43 units programmed to start in 2016/17.

To increase the provision of wheelchair standard accommodation and address the current waiting list, my Department has recently introduced new wheelchair design housing standards which came into effect from November 2016 and will be fully

introduced as part of the Social Housing Development Programme from next year. Housing Associations will be encouraged to include more generic wheelchair units within their new build housing schemes to meet demand.

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister for Communities whether he plans to introduce legislation to require landlords of residential rental properties experiencing damp to take remedial action to alleviate this issue, in line with other parts of the United Kingdom.

(AQW 8649/16-21)

Mr Givan: There are no plans to introduce legislation specifically regarding this issue however the Department is aware that council environmental health officers give advice to both landlords and tenants on the prevention of damp.

The housing fitness standard, which sets the minimum condition which all dwellings must meet to be considered fit for human habitation, requires that every dwelling must be free from dampness prejudicial to the health of the occupant. Legislation provides powers for councils to intervene in private rented properties to address this.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Communities whether he will ensure the Women's Centres Childcare Fund will continue to be funded through his Department, in financial year April 2017 to March 2018.

(AQW 8650/16-21)

Mr Givan: It is proposed that the provision of childcare in Women's Centres, as provided under the Women's Centre Childcare Fund, will be taken forward through the Childcare Strategy, currently being considered by the Department of Education. Department of Education officials have advised that the alternative funding measure being brought forward under the Strategy is unlikely to be in place before April 2017.

No decisions have yet been taken regarding funding commitments by the Department for 2017/18.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Communities whether there are any plans to introduce a minimum energy efficiency standard for the private rented housing sector.

(AQW 8658/16-21)

Mr Givan: My Department is currently carrying out a review of the role and regulation of the private rented sector. The standard of properties, including plans to introduce a minimum energy efficiency standard for the private rented housing sector, is within the scope of the review. Proposals for change resulting from the review will be published for consultation in January 2017.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for Communities to outline the organisations that are (i) currently represented on; or (ii) members of the Safety Technical Group involved in the development of Casement Park.

(AQW 8659/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Safety Technical Group (STG) consists of an Independent Chair and two representatives of each of the following organisations:-

- Sport NI (SNI)
- Belfast City Council (BCC)
- Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)
- Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS)
- Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS)
- Governing Body Safety/ Ground Safety Management

In addition, a representative from the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) attends meetings of the STG as an advisor.

The Independent Chair is supported by a Secretariat provided by Departmental officials.

The STG may invite other representatives, through the Chair, to meetings if it is deemed necessary.

The STG may source and commission other input from relevant specialists to build additional capability and expertise.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for Communities given recommendation 10 of the casement Park Project Assessment Review states that there should be agreement between the STG and the design team on a viable plan to support capacity ahead of GAA submitting a revised planning application, to outline (i) how his Department will decide that such agreement has been reached; and (ii) whether that will be by (a) majority vote of the STG members; or (b) consensus.

(AQW 8676/16-21)

Mr Givan: To provide assurance to the Department, the STG is required to advise the Department on the level of safety compliance for the stadium prior to key stage milestones, such as planning submission. This assurance is required to reflect the ability of the design to meet the required capacity.

In providing this assurance, STG stakeholders' concerns, issues or risks will have been recorded and managed, and the individual rights and ethos of stakeholders respected at all stages in the process.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for Communities to outline the role of Belfast City Council on the Casement Park Development Safety Technical Group.
(AQW 8677/16-21)

Mr Givan: Belfast City Council is represented on the Safety Technical Group along with Sport NI (SNI), Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS), Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) and Governing Body Safety/ Ground Safety Management, to provide specialist advice regarding spectator safety aspects of the design.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for Communities given the Project Assessment Review recommendation number 2 in relation to the Casement Park redevelopment states an independent person should be appointed to the Chair, for his assessment of whether it is appropriate for a Strategic Investment Board member to serve as the Chair of the Safety Technical Group as the SIB was involved in the development of the Stadia programme,
(AQW 8678/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Chair of the Safety Technical Group (STG) was appointed following a Ministerial Public Appointment Competition in November 2015. This process was subject to The Seven Principles of Public Life established in 1995, by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, which underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way. The Chair's ongoing appointment is subject to the same Principles.

The Chair, since his appointment as a Non-Executive Director of SIB, has recorded a declaration of interests at the beginning of each STG meeting.

Mr Carroll asked the Minister for Communities whether (i) the PSNI, NIFRS and NIAS are currently members of the Casement Park Development Safety Technical Group; or are they acting in some other role, such as observers.
(AQW 8679/16-21)

Mr Givan: The PSNI, NIFRS and NIAS are currently members of the Regional Stadia Programme Safety Technical Group (STG). All three organisations have been members since STG was established in 2012.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the outcome of the meeting with CLIC Sargent and Department for Work and Pension officials on CLIC Sargent's 'Cancer Costs' report, highlighting the financial implications of cancer on children young people and their families.
(AQW 8680/16-21)

Mr Givan: CLIC Sargent representatives met with officials from the Department for Work and Pensions in London and officials from my Department took part in the meeting. The issues raised in the report were discussed and the Department for Work and Pensions undertook to give further consideration to a number of areas. Officials in Northern Ireland will continue to liaise with their colleagues in Great Britain on these matters.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister for Communities whether he has held any discussions with the Minister for Infrastructure on the alignment of reassessments for the new benefits system with reassessments for the Blue Badge Scheme.
(AQW 8694/16-21)

Mr Givan: I have not held any discussions with the Minister for Infrastructure on this specific matter. The reassessment process for new benefits such as Personal Independence Payment is designed to enable a decision – maker in my Department determine eligibility to the benefit. The criteria and processes for determining eligibility for the Blue Badge Scheme are a completely separate matter for the Department for Infrastructure.

Prior to the introduction of Personal Independence Payment in Northern Ireland in June this year, officials from my Department were in contact with policy officials from the former Department for Regional Development, who were then responsible for the Blue Badge Scheme to ensure they were aware of this particular change.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister for Communities for her assessment on the creation of an advice portal for families with children and young people with disabilities, to advise them of the benefits and financial help available.
(AQW 8707/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department's strategy for the provision of generalist advice across seeks to ensure that good quality advice services are available to those who need them, that such services are readily available and to increasing and promoting the use of high quality digital and telephony services as key delivery channels.

In 2016/17 the Department allocated £1.6M to councils to support frontline independent advice services across Northern Ireland. The eleven local councils provided an additional £1.9M. This joint funding supports face to face, telephone and online advice services for families, including those with children and young people with disabilities, on a wide range of issues including benefits. In September 2016 I announced further funding of £2.5M to provide face to face and telephone services to advise and support people affected by welfare changes.

NI Direct provides online information about benefits and other sources of financial help or support for citizens. NI Direct is updated regularly to ensure the information available is current. My officials engage with councils and the advice sector to ensure that the services provided meet the needs of clients. The Department has no plans for a portal for a specific group.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment on why the board minutes of the Charity Commission Northern Ireland on 11 November 2013 tasked its Head of Compliance and Enquiries to implement a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) which was deemed on 9 November 2015, as completed by the HCE, when a freedom of information request to RQIA revealed no such MOU has existed or been progressed.

(AQW 8716/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Charity Commission have advised that in November 2013, the Head of Compliance and Enquiries (HCE) was tasked with contacting the Regulator of Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) to develop an MOU. The HCE did indeed contact RQIA and as a result the MOU is currently under development. The minutes of the Commission are a matter for the Commission and their assessment was that the matter had been actioned appropriately and was therefore recorded as such on 9 November 2015.

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Communities to detail the funding available through his Department for putting on exhibits of war history.

(AQW 8718/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Heritage Lottery Fund is the main source of funding for putting on historical exhibits, including exhibits of war history, rather than my Department. Nevertheless, the Northern Ireland Museums Council (NIMC), which is a Non-Departmental Public Body of DfC, runs an Accredited Museums Grant Programme through which accredited local museums can seek funding for projects, such as exhibitions, which help promote education and learning and develop more local museum audiences. NIMC is also a Lottery distributor and has provided a range of Heritage Lottery support over the last 5 years for war history related exhibitions and projects at various local museums including Inniskillings Museum, Mid-Antrim Museum, Ballymoney Museum and the US Rangers Gallery.

My Department also currently provides £30,000 per annum to the Somme Association which runs the Somme Heritage Centre at Conlig in Co. Down. This Centre contains a range of exhibits on Ireland's contribution to the First World War with particular reference to the Battle of the Somme. The grant given by my Department is used by the Association both to support its operational costs and provide public access to educational material etc relating to this aspect of war history.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities for his assessment on how the Savill report regards housing can be considered as a formidable body of evidence and a comprehensive survey, given the South Eastern Regional College report highlights defective cavity wall insulation, the biggest source of heat loss in a property.

(AQW 8738/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Stock Condition Survey conducted by Savills can be considered as a formidable body of evidence and a comprehensive survey of the entire NIHE portfolio because it was based on a structured sample of 25% (22,400 homes) of the NIHE's dwellings that was selected to reflect accurately the condition of the NIHE portfolio as a whole. It was also based on specialist investigation into the structural condition of the Tower Blocks. Furthermore, it was a multi-element survey recording the condition and likely next replacement date of the building components. A full report on this wide-ranging and comprehensive survey was published on the DfC and NIHE websites in March 2016.

The survey's findings are being used by DfC to inform its Social Housing Reform Programme as it provides evidence of NIHE's investment requirement over thirty years. The findings are also being used by the NIHE to inform the management of their stock portfolio - to inform what it needs to do to maintain properties and for investment planning purposes. The survey findings underpin a new Asset Management Strategy – operational since January 2016 – that sets out the long term investment approach. In other words, the survey was commissioned to have significant operational utility and to guide long-term investment. Consistent with this, Savills have warranted that the overall investment requirements identified within the survey are sufficient to maintain the NIHE properties to agreed standards.

The SERC Report is an investigation of the single element of cavity walls in 206 properties. It does not compare with, much less challenge, the Savills' survey as a basis for NIHE's investment.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities to outline how the Savill housing condition survey report considered the quality of loft insulation.

(AQW 8745/16-21)

Mr Givan: Savills' surveyors inspected lofts in 22,400 homes (25% of NIHE stock) with regard to (a) if loft insulation was present, and (b) if it was present, whether it was greater or less than 250mm in depth.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister for Communities in relation to the High Court judgement dated 06 December 2016, (i) when he plans to reinstate Special Needs Management Allowance payments; and (ii) whether he will backdate the payments.

(AQW 8786/16-21)

Mr Givan: I note the fact that the Court has given its judgement on this issue. My officials are examining the judgement in detail and considering how to proceed in consultation with our legal advisers. As the legal process is not yet complete, no decisions can be made around Special Needs Management Allowance payments at this point.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister for Communities to detail the costs to date incurred by the Department from the court case relating to the ending of Special Needs Management Allowance payments.
(AQW 8787/16-21)

Mr Givan: As the legal process is not yet complete relating to the Judicial Review I cannot provide any detail on legal costs incurred.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister for Communities to outline the assessment on the implications of the High Court judgement of 06 December 2016, regarding the ending of Special Needs Management Allowance payments.
(AQW 8788/16-21)

Mr Givan: I note the fact that the Court has given its judgement on this issue. My officials are examining the judgement in detail and considering its implications in consultation with the Department's legal advisers.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Communities to detail the service charges applied to monies paid to parents with care.
(AQW 8807/16-21)

Mr Givan: As part of our programme to reform Child Maintenance, we introduced collection and enforcement charges in August 2014 to encourage parents to take greater financial responsibility for their children.

The collection charge for receiving parents is 4% and this is deducted from each payment the Child Maintenance Service has to collect on their behalf.

However clients on the new Statutory Scheme can avoid all charges by using the 'Direct Payment' option provided by the Child Maintenance Service. I am pleased that over 65% of clients are currently making use of this facility and avoiding all charges entirely.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Communities to detail the service charges the Child Maintenance Service applies to monies collected from paying parents.
(AQW 8808/16-21)

Mr Givan: As part of our programme to reform Child Maintenance, we introduced collection and enforcement charges in August 2014 to encourage parents to take greater financial responsibility for their children.

The collection charge for paying parents is 20% of the child maintenance liability and this is added to each payment the Child Maintenance Service has to collect from a paying parent.

In addition, if enforcement action is necessary, the following one-off charges are applied:

- £300 if the Child Maintenance Service has to apply for a Liability Order.
- £200 if the Child Maintenance Service take out a Lump Sum Deduction Order.
- £50 if the Child Maintenance Service take out a Regular Deduction Order.
- £50 if the Child Maintenance Service has to make a Deduction from Earnings Order.

However clients on the new Statutory Scheme can avoid all charges by using the 'Direct Payment' option provided by the Child Maintenance Service. I am pleased that over 65% of clients are currently making use of this facility and avoiding all charges entirely.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Communities what they are doing to address the concern expressed in the November 2016 Independence of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in Northern Ireland report that distribution of resources is politically driven.
(AQW 8827/16-21)

Mr Givan: Government values the independence of the sector and recognises that the Concordat agreement between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Northern Ireland Government needs to be reflective of a continually developing partnership. Following the publication of this report and a recent independent evaluation of the Concordat it was recommended that it should be 'refreshed' and made fit for purpose for the challenging environment we are now in. This will be an important task for my officials and representatives from the

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Communities to detail the numbers of unanswered calls to all Jobs and Benefits Offices, in each of the last three years.
(AQW 8843/16-21)

Mr Givan: Telephone services across the Jobs and Benefits offices are organised into three service lines, one for Social Fund enquiries, one for Income Support enquiries and one for Jobseeker Allowance enquiries. All three service lines are accessed via the freephone 0800 022 2450 number and answered by staff located in nine Telephone Support Units. The table below sets out details of total calls received and total calls unanswered on this number over the last three financial years, 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16.

	Total calls received	Total unanswered calls
01 April 13 to 31 March 14	978,628	101,659
01 April 14 to 31 March 15	863,332	93,166
01 April 15 to 31 March 16	771,504	101,901

Mr Chambers asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 6571/16-21, to outline (i) the measures taken to ensure that eligible organisations do register; and (ii) whether any awareness campaign has been carried out to alert organisations to their responsibility.

(AQW 8851/16-21)

Mr Givan:

- (i) The Commission has produced a range of guidance and held workshops to support organisations in understanding registration requirements. They have also distributed postcards to every library in NI to advise organisations of the requirement to register, published a list on their website of those organisations that have failed to apply for public scrutiny, called forward approximately 7000 organisations registered for charitable tax purposes with HMRC, created an Expression of Intent list which resulted in 3,591 organisations making themselves known to the Commission and implemented a failure to apply process which is currently being piloted.
- (ii) The Commission has been and is engaged in various campaigns promoting awareness of registration through the press, through 25 helper groups and through a series of roadshows in partnership with councils and the Developing Governance Group.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Communities pursuant to AQW 7948/16-21, to publish the Memorandum of Understanding's between the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, PSNI and the Charity Commission for England and Wales, as Freedom of Information request searches with both bodies in October and November 2016 clearly state that no MOU's exist.

(AQW 8853/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Department is not the owner of the documents referred to in AQW 7948-16-2. Your request for publication of these documents should be addressed to the Charity Commission NI (CCNI).

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Communities to outline (i) the progress of his Department's Review of the Role and Regulation of the Private Rented Sector; and (ii) whether the Review recommends mandatory electrical checks on Landlord's property during transitions in tenancy.

(AQW 8911/16-21)

Mr Givan: A set of proposals for change resulting from the Review of the Role and Regulation of the Private Rented Sector will be published for consultation in January 2017.

The standard of properties, including electrical safety checks, is within the scope of the review.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Communities what they are doing to address the concern expressed in the November 2016 Independence of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in Northern Ireland report that there has been a failing in the levels of transparency, and certainly the dominant narrative of trust based relationships between government and the sector has become meaningless rhetoric for some.

(AQW 9007/16-21)

Mr Givan: Government values the independence of the sector and recognises that the "Concordat agreement between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Northern Ireland Government" needs to be reflective of a continually developing partnership. Following the publication of this report and a recent independent evaluation of the Concordat it was recommended that it should be 'refreshed' and made fit for purpose for the challenging environment we are now in. This will be an important task for my officials and representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector to take forward.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Communities to outline the (i) extent; and (ii) nature of defects to insulation fitted during the 1980's.

(AQW 9009/16-21)

Mr Givan: The Housing Executive has advised that a recent research report on cavity wall insulation in their housing stock by South Eastern Regional College in 2014 pointed to problems that are now arising due to the age of properties and the quality

of the cavity wall insulation. However, the research was based on a small sample of properties and its findings are therefore generic in nature and could not be used for the purposes of developing a work programme.

Consequently, the position on cavity wall insulation throughout the Housing Executive's stock is being established via its External Cyclical Maintenance programme, in which representative samples of cavity inspections will be undertaken to determine if the cavity has been filled and, if it has been filled, what condition it is in.

triable only on indictment must always be heard in the Crown Court.

Where there is a choice as to which court tier is to hear the trial it is possible (but rare) for the venue to change once the mode of trial has been determined.

Department for the Economy

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for the Economy how his Department will help ensure the future of City of Derry Airport.
(AQW 3303/16-21)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister for the Economy): On 19 September 2016, the Executive announced a £7 million package for the North-West to assist development and growth around City of Derry Airport, including up to £4.5 million investment in capital works and up to £2.5 million in relation to route development. This package of support is to help ensure the future sustainability of the airport, through the potential creation of high value jobs and the identification of new route opportunities for the airport.

My Department will be involved in discussions with other stakeholders, including Derry and Strabane District Council and the City of Derry Airport, on how the support package will be utilised.

Mr Smith asked the Minister for the Economy to outline (i) how many departmental bids have been made to the EU Investment Bank; (ii) how many bids are currently being prepared; and (iii) how many ongoing departmental projects are reliant on EU funding.

(AQW 3569/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: No bids have been made and none are currently being prepared.

There are 288 ERDF and 66 ESF projects ongoing.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for the Economy whether he plans to put a strategy in place to help and to promote small and medium sized enterprises in rural areas.

(AQW 6115/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: SMEs form the backbone of the Northern Ireland economy and I am committed to ensuring all SMEs, wherever they are in Northern Ireland, achieve their full potential.

The Executive's new Economic Strategy will reflect this aspiration through an ambitious, long-term vision of how our economy will look in 2030 and beyond.

Achieving a regionally balanced economy is one of the proposed outcomes of the draft Programme for Government and through delivery of this outcome the Executive is committed to improving economic prosperity across Northern Ireland.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for the Economy in relation to the Minister for Finance's October Monitoring Round statement to the Assembly, to outline whether the £2.2m of Resources DEL allocated to Route Development at the City of Derry Airport is in addition to the funding announced by the Executive on 15 September 2016.

(AQW 6278/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The £2.5 million Resource DEL allocation to my Department in October 2016 Monitoring Round for route development at the airport is not in addition to the funding announced by the Executive.

The October 2016 Monitoring Round allocated the £2.5 million Resource DEL funding announced by the Executive to my Department.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for the Economy whether his Department will explore the potential of film-making locations in County Tyrone so the area can share or experience the dividend from this growth area in terms of employment, marketing and general economic uplift.

(AQW 6474/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department, through Northern Ireland Screen, endeavours to spread the benefits of film-making as widely as possible across all of Northern Ireland. Film-making is a creative process and while factors such as budget, schedule and travel times all play a part, ultimately the decision where to shoot a particular scene rests with the creative vision of the director.

Northern Ireland Screen has facilitated a number of familiarisation visits for Studio Executives to County Tyrone, specifically to Baronscourt in Omagh and The Argory in Dungannon. These stately homes have the potential to match the criteria sought by a director and Northern Ireland Screen will continue to encourage such visits to County Tyrone where a production's stated requirements might be met.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister for the Economy what measures, other than lowering cooperation tax, is he examining to drive job creation.

(AQW 6551/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The new Economic Strategy, which will shortly be issued for consultation, will set out our ambitious, long term vision to transform Northern Ireland into a globally competitive economy that works for everyone.

The Strategy will establish a framework for growth and identify the economic priorities that will help deliver this vision.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for the Economy to outline the social programmes for 16-21 year olds that are deaf, in Fermanagh and South Tyrone.

(AQW 6949/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: South West College provides the following social programmes for 16-21 year olds including those who may be deaf:

- Step up to Sustainable Employment+ (SUSE +)
- Going Places (Enniskillen, Omagh, Dungannon and Strabane)
- Youth Programme

South West College has developed two bespoke classes in ICT and Literacy provided in collaboration with Action on Hearing Loss for a group of deaf learners for the last two academic years.

Mr Butler asked the Minister for the Economy to detail his legislative programme for this mandate.

(AQW 7038/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department's legislative proposals for this mandate will reflect and support the priorities in the Programme for Government.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for the Economy what outreach programmes his Department has for people with a learning disability in rural East Antrim.

(AQW 7105/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Northern Regional College proactively works with partners such as the Northern Trust and community outreach centres to gauge the requirements for special needs provision in this area. The college will facilitate where feasible, to provide a provision to meet demand.

Further Education colleges including Northern Regional College (NRC) provide a range of opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with additional support provided where required to help students participate and complete their studies.

Through its Training for Success programme, the Department for the Economy provides a guarantee of a training place for all 16 to 17 year olds who are not in education or full time employment. Programme eligibility is extended to 22 years for participants with a disability and 24 years for participants from an "in care" background. Programme duration is 104 weeks and 156 weeks for participants with a disability requiring extra time. There are three training suppliers contracted to deliver Training for Success in the East Antrim area.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for the Economy what outreach programmes his Department has for people with a learning disability in rural North Antrim.

(AQW 7106/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Northern Regional College proactively works with partners such as the Northern Trust and community outreach centres to gauge the requirements for special needs provision this area. The college will facilitate where feasible, to provide a provision to meet demand.

Further Education colleges, including Northern Regional College, provide a range of further education opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Through the Training for Success programme, the Department for the Economy provides a guarantee of a training place for all 16 to 17 year olds who are not in education or full time employment. Programme eligibility is extended to 22 years for participants with a disability and 24 years for participants from an "in care" background. Programme duration is 104 weeks and 156 weeks for participants with a disability requiring extra time. There are four training suppliers contracted to deliver Training for Success in the North Antrim area.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister for the Economy how many jobs have been created in Upper Bann in each of the last five years.
(AQW 7193/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The table below details the number of jobs that Invest NI has helped to create in the Upper Bann constituency in each of the last five financial years.

Year	Jobs Created
2011-12	476
2012-13	252
2013-14	482
2014-15	1,079
2015-16	779

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for the Economy to outline whether he intends to bring forward an Energy Bill, including the timescale.

(AQW 7390/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Decisions on any future legislative proposals will be taken in the context of the Department's future energy priorities and longer term energy strategy.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister for the Economy what work has been undertaken on ensuring the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland are recognised within future negotiations between the UK and the World Trade Organisation.

(AQW 7527/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is continuing to carry out detailed analysis of the potential impact of the UK leaving the European Union and the issues that will affect us locally, including any future relationship with the World Trade Organisation. The Joint Ministerial Council (Europe Negotiations) is the main mechanism under which discussions with the Government are taking place on the UK's approach to and objectives for negotiations with the European Union. The First Minister and deputy First Minister are leading discussions on behalf of the Executive, setting out the key priorities for Northern Ireland.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister for the Economy what discussions have been held with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Tourism Ireland in light of the EU referendum result.

(AQW 7638/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Departmental officials are continually engaged in discussions with both organisations around delivering the best possible Tourism outcome for Northern Ireland. The UK's withdrawal from the EU will feed into these discussions as we go forward.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for the Economy to publish the full sectoral audit conducted by his Department identifying possible impacts, risks, opportunities and contingencies which may arise from Brexit; and whether he has approved same.

(AQW 7698/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Department continues to carry out a detailed analysis of the potential impact of Brexit and the issues that will affect us locally. It would not be appropriate to share the results of this analysis as it will be used to inform the Northern Ireland Executive's input to the UK Government's negotiation position.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister for the Economy what discussion he has had with representatives of the television and film industry regarding the impact on their profession of Brexit.

(AQW 7755/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: My Department, through Invest Northern Ireland, has sought feedback from its Northern Ireland customers in the TV and Film industry regarding the short, medium and longer term impact of withdrawal from the European Union on their operations. This feedback will be valuable in planning for the future.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for the Economy pursuant to AQO 189/16-21, to list the businesses in receipt of the £29 million.
(AQW 7857/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The businesses are listed below. It should be noted that some names have been removed for data protection reasons (sole traders, partnerships etc.).

Name

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ■ Achieve Enterprises Limited | ■ Aepona Limited |
| ■ Acksen Limited | ■ Agrarian Organics EU Limited |

- All Electrical Recycling Limited
- Allen & Overy
- Alpha Consulting & Design Limited
- Amt-Sybex (NI) Limited
- Anderson Interiors Limited
- Anson McCade Limited
- Aria Clothing Limited
- Arroll Limited
- Arts Ekta
- Ashdale Engineering Limited
- Ashton Community Trust
- Atlas Fire & Security (NI) Limited
- Bailies Coffee Co. Limited
- Bee VM Limited
- Belfast Community Acupuncture
- Belfast Harbour
- Belfast Ship Stores
- Big Motive Limited
- Bio Search NI Limited
- Blacknorth Studio Limited
- Blacks Wines Limited
- Bodibase Limited
- Boxpak Limited
- Brenntag UK Limited
- Brewbot Limited
- Brian Mccance (Steel) Limited
- BSS Group
- Cahoots NI
- Canderblinks (Vibes) Limited
- Capita Business Services Limited
- Capita Life & Pensions Regulated Services Limited
- Capita Managed IT Solutions Limited
- Car Park Services
- Castlevue Nursing Home
- Cathedral Eye Clinic Limited
- Certus Intelligent Solutions Limited
- Champion Sound Music
- Cimpina Limited
- Clinty Chemicals Limited
- Clinty Re-Gen Limited
- Concentrix Europe Limited
- Contact (Northern Ireland)
- Copius (NI) Limited
- Copius Communications
- Coral Environmental Limited
- Core Electrical Distributors (N.I.) Limited
- Core Systems (NI) Limited
- Cullen Transport & Trailer Services Limited
- Custom Connect Limited
- Dale Farm Limited
- Data City Exchange Holdings
- Delegate Recruitment Limited
- Devenish Nutrition Limited
- Diaceutics Limited
- Digitirl Limited
- Disability Needs Limited
- Donard Homes Limited
- Donnelly O'Neill Architects Limited
- Doyle Shipping Group (Belfast) Limited
- Dunadry Enterprises Limited
- EA Davies & Co Limited
- Edwards & Co
- Effective Offshore (NI) Limited
- Environmental Street Furniture Limited
- Eurocables (Belfast) Limited
- Export Technologies Limited
- F O I S Limited
- Fathom
- Ferris Entertainment
- FiltaCool
- Flaxfox Designs
- Focus Security Solutions (NI) Limited
- Fooddoodle Limited
- Footcare (N.I.) Limited
- Fortwilliam Golf Club
- Gaelectric Developments Limited
- Garment Graphixs Limited
- Gateway (NI) Property & Estate Management Limited
- Get Invited Limited
- Glengormley Sportsbowl Limited
- Golf Holdings Limited
- Gordon Fan Services
- Gracemount Enterprises Limited
- Grant Thornton UK
- Greenfields Ireland Limited
- Groundwork Northern Ireland Limited
- Grove Housing Association Limited
- Guardian MPS Tech Limited
- H McCambridge Limited
- Harvey Group PLC
- Heyn Engineering (NI) Limited
- How Good Is Your Governance Limited
- Hughes Chimney Products
- Hyperduck Soundworks
- Hyperoo Limited
- I3 Digital Limited
- IJK Timber Group Limited
- Impro Printing Limited
- Industrial Floorcare Machines Limited
- Instil Software Limited
- Integrated Services Design Limited
- Intelligent Site Technologies Limited
- IrishofCourse.com Limited
- I've Read That Limited
- JAR Technologies Limited

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Jesroe (Services) Limited ■ Jigsaw Community Counselling Centre ■ John J. Doyle Limited ■ John Thompson & Sons, Limited ■ JRD Medical Limited ■ Kabosh Theatre ■ Kanisi Limited ■ Knight Industries Limited ■ Komodo Learning Limited ■ Label One Limited ■ Lagan (Civils) Limited ■ Larsen (Manufacturing) Limited ■ Larsen Contracts Limited ■ Laser Spoke Technology Limited ■ Learning Support Services (NI) Limited ■ Level Logistics ■ LF Fasthouse Limited ■ Libra Clothing Limited ■ Linen Room Leisure Limited ■ Loud Mouth Media Limited ■ M & M Contractors (Europe) Limited ■ Mammoth Design Consultants Limited ■ Marceng Limited ■ MaryRose McGrath Designs ■ MCA Design & Print Limited ■ McDowell & Service Dental Laboratory Limited ■ McNally Associates - NI ■ McStravick i Limited ■ MEA (NI) Limited ■ Meadow ■ Merchant Hotel Limited ■ Merchant Warehouse (NI) Limited ■ Mette Limited ■ Micheal O'Kane ■ Missglam Clothing Limited ■ Monea Software Limited ■ Musgrave Distribution Limited ■ Musgrave Retail Partners Ni Limited ■ Mytime Furniture Limited ■ NIICE Limited ■ Northern Ireland Electricity PLC ■ Northern Regional College ■ Northside Graphics Limited ■ Oh Yeah Music Centre Limited ■ OMG Software Limited ■ Openwave Mobility Inc ■ Openwave Systems (N.I.) Limited ■ Opus Retail Solutions Limited ■ Orca Money Limited ■ Ostick & Williams Limited ■ Parity Digital Solutions Limited ■ Parkelect Limited ■ Petruzzi's Family Recipes Limited | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pharma Premier Logistics ■ Pharmedlink Consulting Operations Limited ■ Pips Suicide Prevention Programmes CIC ■ Play Resource Warehouse Limited ■ Podium 4 Sport Limited ■ Proano Limited ■ Production Services Ireland Limited ■ Profile Tree ■ ProProject ■ Quigg Golden Limited ■ Quinns Belfast (2009) Limited ■ R.W Pierce Group Limited ■ Real Music Club ■ Real-Time Editing & Design (NI) Limited ■ Red Door Rentals Limited ■ Resource NI Limited ■ Retain Solutions Limited ■ RIIS (N.I.) Limited ■ Risk & Resilience Limited ■ RMC Building Services Limited ■ Roadliner International ■ Robinson McIlwaine ■ Rubber & Plastic Products (NI) Limited ■ Rudimentary Limited ■ Rumble Labs Limited ■ Score Draw Music ■ Sector Matters Limited ■ Seimetrix Limited ■ Sensei Learning and Performance ■ Shane Braniff ■ Sharman D. Neill Limited ■ Shine Productions Limited ■ Short Brothers PLC ■ Site Beacon ■ Skyline Direct Limited ■ Smalltown America Limited ■ Sonic Machine Limited ■ Soon Interior Design Limited ■ Springboard Opportunities Limited ■ Teletech UK Limited ■ Tern Television Productions Limited ■ The Cotton Mill (NI) Limited ■ The Design Zoo Limited ■ The Lava Group (NI) Limited ■ The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children ■ The Pierce Partnership Limited ■ Third Bar ■ Todd Architects Limited ■ Totalmobile Solutions Limited ■ Tradewood & Co ■ Treatticket Limited ■ Tughans Solicitors |
|--|--|

- | | |
|---|--|
| ■ Turf Labs Limited | ■ Willis & Company (Insurance Brokers) Limited |
| ■ Ulster Supported Employment Limited | ■ Wilson Salt Limited |
| ■ United Dairy Farmers Limited | ■ Wine Inns Limited |
| ■ United Feeds Limited | ■ Wineflair (Belfast) Limited |
| ■ Vector Environmental Services Limited | ■ Winemark The Winemerchants Limited |
| ■ Velocity Worldwide Limited | ■ World Wide Wall |
| ■ W.F.B Baird & Co Limited | ■ WorldDesk Limited |
| ■ Wasp Solutions Limited | ■ Yarra Software Limited |
| ■ White Ink Architects Limited | ■ Yours Florally Limited |
| ■ Whitestar Prestige Services Limited | |

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for the Economy what consideration he has given to securing access to the EU-funded pledges to uninterrupted 5G access on all road and rail networks by 2025.

(AQW 7879/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The detail of the EU 5G Action Plan and mechanisms for implementation are being considered at a national level by officials in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in London.

This work will be taken forward in conjunction with the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, which contained a priority for a World Class Digital Infrastructure, with an ambition to invest over £1billion, including £740 million through the National Productivity Investment Fund, for a coordinated programme of integrated fibre and 5G trials. Further detail will be set out at Budget 2017 as part of the government's 5G strategy.

I will work to ensure that Northern Ireland maximises the benefits of participation in this national programme.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for the Economy what consideration he has given to securing access to the EU-funded pledges to equip all public places throughout the EU with free wireless internet access by 2020.

(AQW 7880/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The WiFi4EU scheme is expected to be approved by the European Parliament in 2017. It aims to promote free Wi-Fi in areas which do not offer such connectivity.

The €120 million fund will run from 2017-2019. While it is not clear if and how the negotiations around the UK leaving the EU will impact on this scheme, I would encourage local councils and other relevant organisations in Northern Ireland to explore this funding opportunity and, if appropriate, apply as soon as the first call for projects is launched, as projects will be selected on a first- come, first-served basis.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for the Economy (i) what consideration he has given to ensuring Northern Ireland remains on par with the European Union in its provision of employment rights; and (ii) how he will ensure that people working in Northern Ireland can enjoy the same protections as workers employed in the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 7885/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: I intend to maintain an employment legislation framework in Northern Ireland that meets the needs of business and the economy and protects the rights of employees.

It remains too early to speculate on the precise nature of the impact on Northern Ireland's employment legislation framework of the UK decision to leave the European Union.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for the Economy pursuant to AQW 43092/11-15, why the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project has not addressed poor rural broadband services in Loughbrickland; and what steps he is taking to address this situation.

(AQW 7891/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The intervention areas for my Department's projects are identified through complex engineering models prepared by BT under their contracts with DfE. The aim is always to ensure value for money while maximising the number of premises that benefit from the funding available. It is not possible to prioritise specific geographical areas or individual premises without impacting on the operational delivery of the projects.

However improvements have already been made to broadband access in the Loughbrickland area under my Department's Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project. BT has reported, at 30 June 2016, that some 110 premises in the area can now benefit from upgrades to superfast broadband services. Upgrades are now available at the following post codes:

- Church Drive BT32 3RB 11 premises
- Woodside Park BT32 3NL 51 premises
- Lisnaweelan Court BT32 3QP 4 premises
- Greenan Court BT32 3XW 17 premises

- Greenan Drive BT32 3YD 12 premises
 - Woodvale BT32 3RT 15 premises

It is important to recognise that, where a fixed line solution is not available, there are alternative technologies that can be used to deliver broadband services. The Department provides support under the Better Broadband Scheme, with the cost of installing a basic broadband service (using satellite or wireless technology), from a list of registered suppliers. Aimed at premises that cannot access services greater than 2Megabits per second, this scheme ensures that no eligible household or business need pay more than £400 to access a basic broadband scheme, over a 12 month period. Further details can be found on DfE's website at:

<http://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-better-broadband-scheme>

The Executive's draft Programme for Government (PfG) includes an Indicator to improve internet connectivity. The outcome of the PfG and related budget discussions will dictate the nature and scale of DfE's future telecommunications intervention. Whilst telecoms is a reserved matter, I will also work to ensure that Northern Ireland benefits as much as possible from the additional funding announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for the Economy what analysis his Department has undertaken on the impact of Brexit on Ulster University, Coleraine.

(AQW 7927/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: It is too early to make an assessment of any impact on the Coleraine Campus of Ulster University arising from the UK's withdrawal from the EU. This will largely depend on the terms of the relationship between the UK and the EU which are ultimately agreed.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister for the Economy for a breakdown of spend on the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme, by council area.

(AQW 8161/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) is operated by the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation. The Utility Regulator has advised that information on NISEP programme spend is not held by council area.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister for the Economy to detail (i) the number of times Invest NI officials have visited Fermanagh and South Tyrone, in the last three years; and (ii) the nature of the visit.

(AQW 8362/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Invest NI has no central database or system from which to generate, collate and present a conclusive list of all staff travel within Northern Ireland and the rationale for that travel.

The Fermanagh and South Tyrone constituency is served predominantly by Invest NI's Regional Offices in both Omagh and Enniskillen. These Offices act as focal points for the agency's activity in the Western Region, including offering advice and support to businesses in the area.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister for the Economy to define (i) jobs created; and (ii) jobs promoted by Invest NI.

(AQW 8411/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: Jobs created are jobs that companies have actually filled at that point in time.

Jobs promoted are jobs that companies expect to create in the future. These jobs are normally created within 3-5 years.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister for the Economy to detail the number of Foreign Direct Investment visits or clients Invest NI has hosted or taken to each constituency in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8463/16-21)

Mr Hamilton: The table below shows the number of visits by potential inward investors to constituency areas hosted by Invest NI in each of the years between 2011-12 and 2015-16.

Invest NI Visits to PCAs by Potential Inward Investors (2011-12 to 2015-16)

Parliamentary Constituency Area	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
Belfast East	51	53	56	24	42
Belfast North	25	36	35	23	40
Belfast South	62	63	87	61	112
Belfast West	7	9	14	13	14
East Antrim	14	16	13	11	8

Parliamentary Constituency Area	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
East Londonderry	3	3	3	5	3
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	0	0	4	2	2
Foyle	7	4	8	11	12
Lagan Valley	1	7	23	3	0
Mid Ulster	1	0	0	2	1
Newry & Armagh	3	3	3	2	3
North Antrim	1	4	1	0	1
North Down	0	1	3	2	6
South Antrim	0	5	2	2	2
South Down	0	1	1	1	4
Strangford	1	0	1	1	2
Upper Bann	2	0	1	4	1
West Tyrone	0	0	3	2	3

Department of Education

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) how many breaches of the statutory time period of 26 weeks for the issue of final statements of special educational need occurred in each of the last five years; and (ii) what percentage of statements this constituted.

(AQW 4545/16-21)

Mr Weir (The Minister of Education): In recognition that circumstances may arise where it is impractical for the Education Authority (EA) to meet the 26-week timeframe for the completion of the full statutory assessment process, the Education (Special Educational Needs) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 provide for certain exceptions where the EA need not comply with the statutory timeframe.

Figures, based on the number of statements issued outside the 26 week timeframe without a valid exception, are as follows:

Financial Year	Total number of statements issued	Number of statements issued outside 26 weeks without a valid exception	Percentage of statements issued outside the 26 weeks without a valid exception
2015/16	1,989	143	7.2
2014/15	2,473	180	7.3
2013/14	2,383	88	3.7
2012/13	1,947	109	5.6
2011/12	1,860	93	5.0

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education how many referrals to educational psychologists have been made as part of the special educational needs statutory assessment process in each year since 2010.

(AQW 5327/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority will make referrals to educational psychologists for advice as part of the statutory assessment process at Stage 4 of the Code of Practice and may also make such referrals as part of the statutory annual review of statements.

The numbers of referrals are as follows:

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Stage 4 Statutory Advice	1861	2062	2372	2558	2574	2329
Statutory Review	1496	1552	1674	1487	1795	1963

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Education how many children were assessed for special educational need for each of the last five years.

(AQW 6798/16-21)

Mr Weir: Given your reference to allocation of time from Education Psychologists to schools in AQW 6800/16-21, the Department is interpreting this question as relating to assessments at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

The Education Authority (EA) has advised that recent changes to its Education Management System appear to be impacting on the accuracy/robustness of reports being generated. As such, the EA is unable, at present, to provide the information requested.

The Authority has confirmed that it is endeavouring to rectify the situation and that it expects to have the information available at a future date.

I will write to the Member when the information is received from the EA.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Education how many children were not assessed because the school had used their allocation of time for the Educational Psychologist as given by the Education Authority for each of the last five years.

(AQW 6800/16-21)

Mr Weir: The allocation of time from the Education Psychologist to the school is the guaranteed minimum time for stage 3 assessments. If cases where a school has a serious concern and has used their time allocation the Education Psychologist Service (EPS) will still endeavour to arrange for the child to be assessed. Statutory work is also provided over and above the allocation.

Information on the number of children not assessed in any given year would only be held by individual schools.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail the running costs of the Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre for each of the last four years.

(AQW 7411/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has provided the following information on the running costs of the Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre for each of the last four years.

Bushmills OEC	2012-2013 £'s	2013-2014 £'s	2014-2015 £'s	2015-2016 £'s
Total Recurrent Expenditure including Maintenance	557,659	605,645	585,653	569,219
Public Liability & Legal - Variable Claims - Self Insured	17,428	73,500	-29,604	10,865
Income Generation	-184,906	-231,651	-210,727	-201,874
Net In-Year Cost	390,181	447,494	345,322	378,210

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to detail how many young people with Special Educational Needs have attended Outdoor Education Centres in each of the last five years.

(AQW 7578/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority has advised that its Youth Service does not hold this information.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Education whether he plans to reform the regulation of youth clubs.

(AQW 7912/16-21)

Mr Weir: I currently have no plans to reform the regulation of youth clubs.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Education to outline who monitors vetting for (i) staff members; and (ii) volunteers of youth clubs.

(AQW 7913/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority (EA) has confirmed that, in the statutory sector, vetting of all staff and volunteers is monitored through the recruitment/selection procedures put in place by the EA Human Resources Department.

In the voluntary sector, Voluntary Management Committees are supported to vet their staff and volunteers through the Volunteer Now Organisation, which has a Service Level Agreement with the EA to fulfil this duty until 31st March 2017.

Youth Wings in schools are managed by the Youth Tutor, who reports to the Principal. Vetting is monitored by the Principal on behalf of the Board of Governors.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Education to outline how youth clubs are held accountable by (i) his Department; (ii) the Education Authority; and (iii) the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

(AQW 7914/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Department does not directly fund youth clubs, and is not the employer of youth workers in Education Authority (EA) funded youth clubs, and therefore has no direct accountability role in relation to individual youth clubs.

The EA have advised that in the statutory youth sector, the more significantly-funded youth clubs submit a Controlled Delivery Agreement to the EA, which is their annual work plan agreed with the Area Youth Officer. The achievement of the work plan targets is monitored through quarterly reports, a target monitor and through regular supervision with their line manager. In addition, a monthly return detailing the attendance at each session is submitted. Each youth unit receives a moderation visit a minimum of 4 times per year to ensure quality of delivery.

In major Voluntary Youth Clubs, funded through the EA, the Management Committee receive a Service Level Agreement from the EA which outlines their Terms and Conditions of Grant-Aid with which they must comply, and includes an annual work plan agreed with the Area Youth Officer. Voluntary Youth Clubs make annual financial returns to account for the funding they receive, under the budget headings agreed. In addition quarterly review meetings are held with the Management Committee and EA Officers to review budgets and monitor progress against targets. Each youth unit receives a moderation visit a minimum of 4 times per year to ensure quality of delivery.

Smaller voluntary sector youth clubs, in receipt of EA funding, are required to submit an annual registration form, and to submit receipts and a statement of income and expenditure each year.

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) does not have a statutory role in relation to the provision of youth services. The EA therefore does not have a direct accountability relationship with CCMS with regards youth clubs in maintained schools.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Education to outline how youth clubs are governed by (i) his Department; (ii) the Education Authority; and (iii) the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

(AQW 7915/16-21)

Mr Weir: As set out in Article 37 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 the Education Authority (EA) has responsibility for the provision of adequate facilities for recreational, social, physical, cultural and youth service activities. Therefore, the planning, funding and delivery of youth work is based on the EA assessment of the needs of young people aligned to the Department's priorities as set out in 'Priorities for Youth'.

The Department does not directly fund youth clubs and is not the employer of youth workers in EA funded youth clubs. The EA has advised that Voluntary youth clubs are governed by Management Committees and, in order to be a registered group and receive funding, youth clubs have to demonstrate good governance to the Education Authority (EA) in terms of constitution, policies, procedures, compliance, internal controls, insurance, finance, and management of staff and volunteers.

In the controlled sector youth clubs are managed by a Youth Worker-in-Charge, reporting to the Area Youth Officer or his/her delegate. Controlled Youth clubs normally have an Advisory Committee which provides advice to support the development and implementation of the youth club programme and the use of club funds.

Youth Clubs in schools are governed by the Board of Governors of the school.

The EA youth service does not have a direct governance relationship with CCMS about youth clubs in maintained schools.

As part of the 2016-17 Regional Youth Development Plan, the EA has established a Practice Development Group including stakeholders to consider the training requirements of the EA funded youth sector to strengthen governance and accountability arrangements. This will include the provision of advice on governance, legal and regulatory requirements.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education to list (i) every school building; and (ii) every piece of school land currently under the ownership of (a) his Department; (b) the Education Authority; (c) the CCMS; (d) protestant churches; (e) voluntary grammar schools; and (f) all other owners.

(AQW 8021/16-21)

Mr Weir: I have arranged for the information requested to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education in considering the position of individuals that apply for voluntary exit from the Education Authority; to detail which (i) public sector positions; and (ii) organisations are eligible for the purpose of assessing continuity of service.

(AQW 8023/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employment in Local Government, etc.) (Modification) Order (Northern Ireland) 1999 modifies certain provisions of the Employment Rights (NI) Order 1996 so that persons employed by certain local government and other public sector employers may have service with two or more such employers treated as continuous for the purpose of calculating a redundancy payment.

For the purpose of the Education Authority Voluntary Exit Scheme, employment in any organisation specified in Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 of the Modification Order is counted for continuity of service.

Mr Aiken asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) every Outdoor Education Centre; (ii) all schools; and (iii) all organisations who have attended each Outdoor Education Centre in the last three years.

(AQW 8024/16-21)

Mr Weir: I can confirm that the detail requested at (i) was provided in my recent response to AQW 7164/16-21.

I have arranged for the information at (ii) and (iii) with regards schools and organisations who have attended Outdoor Education Centres in the last three years to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Education to list all formal communications that have been made by (i) the Minister; (ii) his Department; and; (iii) the Education Authority to schools in relation to the status of their three-year budget plans.

(AQW 8026/16-21)

Mr Weir:

- (i) In line with current processes, I have had no formal communication with schools in relation to the status of their three-year plans. That said, on the 31 October I formally announced an additional £14 million of increased spending power for schools, this was published on the Department's website and was communicated via local media. As previously advised in response to AQO 720/16-21, this will inevitably impact on schools three year plans.
- (ii) Details of formal communications from my Department are listed below:
 - On 18 October 2016 my Department, as funding authority for Voluntary Grammar and Grant Maintained schools wrote to each of the 50 Voluntary Grammar schools and 38 Grant Maintained Integrated schools, requesting submission of their three-year financial plans.
 - The Department's Director of Finance wrote to the Chairpersons of all grant-aided schools on 31 October 2016 to inform them of my announcement regarding an additional £14 million of increased spending power for schools, this was also published on the Department's website on 31 October.
- (iii) The Education Authority (EA) as funding authority for controlled and maintained schools advise of the following formal communications:
 - On 16 March 2016 the EA wrote to schools requesting submission of schools three year plan.
 - Staff from the EA's Local Management of Schools section met with a large number of schools to draw up financial plans, however these plans will need to be reconsidered in light of the recent announcement on additional spending power.
 - In April 2016 a letter issued to schools which provided information on the budget impacts for 2016-17 including an update on the contingency funding for schools.
 - From May 2016 the EA has been hosting school roadshows which have also been used to provide an update to schools on the challenging budget situation and the EA strategy.

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Education to outline (i) the training or advice provided to officials within his Department and each of its Arm's Length Bodies in relation to outcomes-based accountability; (ii) who delivered the training; (iii) an overview of each session including the number of people in attendance and themes covered; (iv) the total paid to each individual or organisation involved in the delivery of training up to 28 November 2016; and (v) the projected costs to be paid to each individual or organisation involved in the delivery training in 2016/17.

(AQW 8034/16-21)

Mr Weir: Outcome based accountability training has been provided to NISRA statisticians in all Executive Departments, to Programme for Government Senior Responsible Officers and their teams, and to policy officials with a particular identified requirement.

In addition, OBA familiarisation sessions have been provided, focusing on specific areas of outcomes-focused practice, at meetings of senior officials involved in Programme for Government implementation across Departments.

All of this training has been provided - at no cost to Departments - by NISRA statisticians seconded to the Executive Office.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Education (i) whether schools that have a more than ten per cent increase in pupils in one year will receive extra funding; and (ii) how much is available to these schools.

(AQW 8051/16-21)

Mr Weir: Guidelines on the use of Contingency Funding for schools are outlined in the 2016-17 Common Funding Scheme, paragraphs 6.26 to 6.35. Contingency funding for in-year growth is considered where the number of children enrolled in a school increases by 5% of the original enrolment or by 10 pupils whichever threshold is the lesser. Allocations will be calculated for any growth beyond the qualifying threshold and will normally be based solely on the relevant Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) cash value and weightings as detailed at paragraph 6.31 of the Scheme.

The Funding Authority will take into account the individual circumstances of the school, and its responsibilities to other schools in its area, in determining allocations from Contingency.

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Education what funding is available for classroom assistants for children with Special Educational Needs in (i) private; and (ii) public pre-schools.

(AQW 8310/16-21)

Mr Weir: It is the Education Authority (EA), through the statutory assessment process, that determines if a child will require a formal statement. The statement will identify the child's individual needs and the range of provision to be made, including provision of a classroom assistant, if required.

The Education Authority which is the funding authority for controlled and maintained schools and the Department which is the funding authority for Voluntary Grammar and Grant Maintained Integrated schools provide funding for classroom assistance support, if this is detailed in a child's statement of special educational needs.

Should the EA determine that a private nursery setting is an appropriate placement for a child with a statement of SEN, the EA will provide funding for classroom assistance support, if this is detailed in the child's statement.

Nurseries and pre-school settings may appoint additional staff from their own budgets to support children with SEN. Some nurseries and pre-school settings can also access short term targeted support from classroom assistants attached to the SEN early years inclusion service or other EA funded SEN services.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Education for an update on the status of any legal proceedings in relation to Clintyclay Primary School.

(AQW 8312/16-21)

Mr Weir: The judicial review proceedings in relation to Clintyclay Primary School are ongoing in the High Court.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education whether he will be reviewing the process of Special Educational Needs statementing.

(AQW 8373/16-21)

Mr Weir: My priority is to ensure that children and young people with SEN, and their families, have timely access to the SEN provision they need and that the entire process is underpinned by easily accessible and clear information.

In 2012 the Executive agreed that changes needed to be made to the SEN Framework. The new Framework will be made up of four key building blocks and will result in changes being made to the statutory assessment and statementing process.

The four elements of the new Framework are the SEND Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, SEN Regulations, a Code of Practice and training. The Act has received Royal Assent and the next stage will involve finalising the SEN Regulations, followed by a consultation on the new Code and training.

The implementation of the new Framework will involve the Education Authority (EA) having to make changes to their processes. For example the EA will have a duty to ensure they take into account the views of the child. There will also be changes to the format of statements and new timescales within the statutory assessment and statementing process. The new SEN Framework is to be brought in during 2017/18.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education to detail the appeals process for Special Educational Needs statementing.

(AQW 8374/16-21)

Mr Weir: The formal appeals process for Special Educational Needs statementing is set in special education legislation, and gives parents the right, under certain circumstances, to appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST) about Education Authority (EA) decisions on SEN provision during the assessment and statementing process.

The Northern Ireland Courts Service and Tribunal Service is responsible for the SENDIST. An appeal to the Tribunal must be made within two months of any disputed decision and may be made by application to the Tribunal in writing to 2nd Floor, Royal Courts of Justice, Chichester Street, Belfast BT1 3JF, by telephone at 0300 200 7812 or by Email at tribunalsunit@courtsni.gov.uk.

Guidance for parents can be found in "The Special Education Needs and Disability Tribunal – "How To Appeal" booklet which is provided by SENDIST and can be found on its website:

<https://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Tribunals/SpecialEduNeedsnDisability/Documents/SENDIST-How-to-Appeal.pdf>

The Education Authority also offers an informal route for dispute resolution in regard to provision being made for children with Special Educational Needs. The Dispute Avoidance and Resolution Service (DARS) provides an opportunity to resolve areas of disagreement between parents and schools and/or the EA. The DARS is an independent, confidential and informal service designed to provide an opportunity for identifying points of disagreement and finding ways forward that all parties are willing to accept. There is a DARS contact in the EA offices, independent of its Special Education section.

Lodging an appeal to the Tribunal does not prevent a parent from making a referral to DARS and vice versa.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education what rural proofing has been carried out for rural schools so pupils with Special Educational Needs will not be impacted adversely.

(AQW 8375/16-21)

Mr Weir: My officials sought clarification on the question and I understand that rural proofing was in regards to looking at special educational needs provision and the transport that is provided.

The statutory responsibility for securing provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) rests with schools, and the Education Authority (EA) which is responsible under legislation for identifying, assessing and making provision for children with SEN. Support for pupils with SEN is based on the individual needs of the child.

Where the Education Authority maintains a statement of special educational needs for a pupil, the decision about where a child is placed, including whether they should be provided with transport assistance will be considered as part of the statementing process.

Where a specific need for transport assistance is identified as part of this process, transport assistance will be provided. Where a specific need for transport is not identified as part of this process, or where a child does not have a statement of SEN, normal eligibility rules apply.

The SEN policy and legislative framework, supported by a statutory code of practice provides access to special educational provision and supports, in exactly the same way to children in rural areas as it does to those in urban areas.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Education for an update on his discussions with the Secretary of State in relation to allowing the allocation of Fresh Start Agreement money for the maintenance of schools.

(AQW 8377/16-21)

Mr Weir: The first tranche of Fresh Start funding, announced in March 16, is for the provision of new schools in the shared and integrated education sectors. My most recent discussions with the Secretary of State have been in relation to maximising the impact of the funding going forward.

There are no proposals to apply Fresh Start funding to school maintenance activities. Maintenance is funded from the resource budget; the Fresh Start funding available is in the form of capital and would not therefore be applicable to maintenance activities.

Maintenance of schools in the Controlled, Voluntary Maintained and Irish Medium sectors is the responsibility of the Education Authority (EA), while maintenance of schools in the Voluntary Grammar and Grant Maintained Integrated (GMI) sectors is the direct responsibility of the schools themselves.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Education whether he has any plans to bring provisions allowing pupils over 16 to choose to withdraw from religious or collective worship in line with the rest of the United Kingdom.

(AQW 8397/16-21)

Mr Weir: It is for Boards of Governors, in consultation with the school trustees and the principal, to decide the arrangements for collective worship, having regard to the ethos of the school and its registered pupils. Parental consent is required for a pupil to withdraw from religious education or collective worship, or from both, and I have no plans to change this.

Ms Seeley asked the Minister of Education to outline what action his Department is taking to implement the policy priorities and recommendations to advance gender equality as issued by the Equality Commission.

(AQW 8427/16-21)

Mr Weir: My top priority is raising standards for all children and helping them reach their full potential.

Since I have come to office, I have been focusing on policies that are driving forward educational improvement including "Every School a Good School" – our school improvement policy, "Count, read: succeed" - the literacy and numeracy strategy, the curriculum, the "Learning to Learn" Framework and the Teachers Professional Learning Strategy. Over the coming months I will be taking stock of challenges and how best these can be overcome.

As I have previously announced, I intend to progress a further review of the statutory curriculum during this mandate. This is likely to focus on provision from 14-19, although the final detail of this review has yet to be determined.

The Equality Commission has recently restated its concerns around continuing gender, sexuality and gender-identity based bullying in education. Each of these is recognised as a potential motivating factor within the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016. The Act will introduce a duty for schools to record all incidents of bullying and will strengthen the ongoing role of school Governors in ensuring effective anti-bullying policies are in place and are being properly observed within each school.

The Act will increase the protection provided to all pupils experiencing any form of bullying and my officials are currently undertaking the necessary preparatory work to allow for the commencement of these new provisions. We currently expect the Act to enter into force in time for the commencement of the 2017-18 academic year.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the standardised score system and whether it adequately assesses those children on the autistic spectrum (i) if statemented; and (ii) if awaiting assessment.

(AQW 8436/16-21)

Mr Weir: The statutory responsibility for securing provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) rests with schools, and the Education Authority (EA) which is responsible under legislation for identifying, assessing and making provision for children with SEN. Support for pupils with SEN is based on the individual needs of the child.

The overarching framework of assessment used with any child should be comprehensive, functional and relevant. This includes the utilisation of standardised assessment tools. Children on the autism spectrum present differently and do not form a homogenous diagnostic group.

The EA has advised that standardised testing is an important part of the teaching process and should aim to provide a representative picture of the child's profile and functioning. Appropriate adaptations help to provide an accurate estimate of a child's functioning and, as with any child, it is important for teachers to be aware of the factors that may influence any child's performance.

Access arrangements for any child, including those with ASD, need to be put in place at the discretion of the school, and in consultation with parents and relevant professionals. Standardised scores obtained by children with autism have the same properties as those of other typically developing and special needs children and are reliable.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education how his Department provides support (i) to families of children with autism; and (ii) to specific groups that support those parents.

(AQW 8437/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority, through the autism advisory and intervention service and the Middletown Centre for Autism, and in collaboration with local health trusts, provides a range of support services for children with autism, their families and specific groups that support parents. Support for families includes training programmes and workshops which are provided at various times and in various locations throughout the regions to accommodate, where possible, parental preferences. Topics include:

- Autism awareness
- Appropriate and effective home interventions
- Autism and relationships
- Study skills
- Social Skills
- Transition to post-primary school
- Sensory processing difficulties
- Personal independence skills
- Life Skills and transition to adulthood

Targeted support and advice may also be provided to parents. The autism advisory and intervention service also provides autism-specific training and advice to local support groups such as voluntary organisations, youth centres, leisure centres and sporting organisations.

In addition, my Department provides funding to MCA, which has enabled it to expand its programme of direct support and intervention to children with complex autism who are referred by the Education Authority; and to provide professional and parental training, and research services.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education what meetings have occurred in relation to the Draft Area Plan (i) between himself and trade unions; (ii) between the Education Authority and trade unions; and (iii) his Department and trade unions.

(AQW 8446/16-21)

Mr Weir: Consultation on the draft Area Plan is being led by the Education Authority. My officials and I are not therefore engaging directly with trade unions on its content.

I am advised that the EA held a consultation meeting with teaching and non teaching trade union representatives on 25 November 2016. While there was a widespread response from Unions who nominated officials to attend on the day, only UTU and GMB representatives actually attended the meeting.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education how he will support community childcare providers in Fermanagh and Tyrone as the most cost-effective childcare option.

(AQW 8449/16-21)

Mr Weir: The affordability of childcare has been recognised as a key issue for families during the development of the Childcare Strategy. The first phase of the Strategy led to the establishment of the Bright Start School Age Childcare (SAC) Grant Scheme, which financially supports low cost childcare places and has, to date, supported some 3,000 low cost childcare places across Northern Ireland, of which around 1,500 are in rural areas.

At a local level the Childcare Partnerships (CCPs) have a role in identifying the need for childcare services in their respective areas, which should enable them to build a comprehensive picture of supply and demand in local areas. The CCPs have also acted as the Managing Agents in delivering the SAC Grant Scheme and offer information and support to childcare providers, parents and employers. The CCPs aim is to increase the number of childcare places and to ensure high quality affordable childcare for parents across Northern Ireland.

The first phase of the Childcare Strategy has sought to promote and encourage uptake of financial assistance available to help parents meet the costs of childcare, principally, childcare vouchers and the childcare element of Working Families' Tax Credit. This is something I hope to build on in the future as HMRC introduces the Tax-Free Childcare scheme.

I am aware of the recent report 'Northern Ireland Childcare Cost Survey 2016', issued by Employers for Childcare, which highlighted a number of issues with the costs of childcare including the cost variations across areas, different types of settings and for different services such as summer schemes, breakfast clubs and afterschool clubs.

The forthcoming Childcare Strategy will seek to address accessibility and affordability issues. I hope to bring forward the full version of the Childcare Strategy to my Executive colleagues in the coming months, having taken account of the many consultation responses received, the Programme for Government and the new opportunities that now exist to align childcare and Early Years initiatives. The Childcare Strategy, when agreed by the Executive, may include further opportunities for a wider range of childcare provision to be supported.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education how he will address (i) the increasing cost of childcare in Fermanagh and Tyrone; and (ii) the greater lack of childcare provision in Fermanagh and Tyrone compared with the rest of Northern Ireland.

(AQW 8450/16-21)

Mr Weir: The affordability of childcare has been recognised as a key issue for families during the development of the Childcare Strategy. The first phase of the Strategy led to the establishment of the Bright Start School Age Childcare (SAC) Grant Scheme, which financially supports low cost childcare places and has, to date, supported some 3,000 low cost childcare places across Northern Ireland, of which around 1,500 are in rural areas.

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Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education how he will increase awareness of (i) the new Tax-Free Childcare scheme which will be introduced in 2017; and (ii) existing family benefits and entitlements available to parents related to childcare.

(AQW 8451/16-21)

Mr Weir: The affordability of childcare has been recognised as a key issue for families during the development of the Childcare Strategy. The first phase of the Strategy led to the establishment of the Bright Start School Age Childcare (SAC) Grant Scheme, which financially supports low cost childcare places and has, to date, supported some 3,000 low cost childcare places across Northern Ireland, of which around 1,500 are in rural areas.

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Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Education how he will address the increasing cost of (i) breakfast clubs; (ii) afterschool clubs; and (iii) summer schemes.

(AQW 8452/16-21)

Mr Weir: The affordability of childcare has been recognised as a key issue for families during the development of the Childcare Strategy. The first phase of the Strategy led to the establishment of the Bright Start School Age Childcare (SAC) Grant Scheme, which financially supports low cost childcare places and has, to date, supported some 3,000 low cost childcare places across Northern Ireland, of which around 1,500 are in rural areas.

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Mr Allen asked the Minister of Education how he will support community childcare providers in Belfast as the most cost effective childcare option.

(AQW 8453/16-21)

Mr Weir: The affordability of childcare has been recognised as a key issue for families during the development of the Childcare Strategy. The first phase of the Strategy led to the establishment of the Bright Start School Age Childcare (SAC) Grant Scheme, which financially supports low cost childcare places and has, to date, supported some 3,000 low cost childcare places across Northern Ireland.

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Mr Allen asked the Minister of Education how he will reduce the cost of childcare in (i) Antrim; and (ii) Down as the counties with the highest average cost of full-time childcare.

(AQW 8454/16-21)

Mr Weir: The affordability of childcare has been recognised as a key issue for families during the development of the Childcare Strategy. The first phase of the Strategy led to the establishment of the Bright Start School Age Childcare (SAC) Grant Scheme, which financially supports low cost childcare places and has, to date, supported some 3,000 low cost childcare places across Northern Ireland.

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Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister of Education to detail where parents in Mid Ulster can seek additional advice and help in regard to the statementing process.

(AQW 8529/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs outlines the Education Authority's (EA's) arrangements for advising parents of information, advice and support relating to their special educational needs (SEN) or disability.

The EA's website www.education-support.org.uk has a parents section which contains information on a range of EA services including special education. This site also provides links to other useful internet sites.

The EA also has a dedicated information and advice line, telephone number 028 2566 1319, which parents can call for general advice on the statutory assessment process. For those parents who have a child who is going through the statutory assessment process they will have been notified of the contact details for the named officer, from special education branch, assigned to their child's case and this person will be happy to assist with any queries that they may have.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Education for an update on that action being taken by schools in relation to (i) suicide prevention; and (ii) raising awareness of mental health.

(AQW 8691/16-21)

Mr Weir: My reply to your previous question (AQW 6202/16-21 refers) outlined the actions taken by DE to help schools to respond appropriately to pupils who may present with suicide ideation or other mental health concerns.

Boards of Governors have a statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils attending the school and it is a matter for each individual school to incorporate guidance provided by the Department into their child protection policy.

Teachers should continue to refer any concerns to the school designated teacher (DT) or deputy designated teacher (DDT) for child protection who have received specific training to perform this role. DT's/DDT's may respond in different ways depending upon the needs of their pupils and may avail of the service provided by the Education Authority Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS) or other statutory and voluntary agencies.

Mr Allen asked the Minister of Education for an update on the future plans for Fleming Fulton School.

(AQW 8719/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority (EA) consultation on the "Providing Pathways" draft strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland closed on 12 December 2016.

The draft Area Plan took cognisance of the recommendations from the Ministerial Review of Special Schools Provision in Northern Ireland.

The EA will now consider consultee responses, finalise the Area Plan and present an Annual Action Plan to me in the New Year.

The EA, as Managing Authority for Fleming Fulton School, has confirmed their intention to engage with the Board of Governors of Fleming Fulton School in early 2017.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Education to outline how youth groups can access World War 1 battlefield tours.

(AQW 9014/16-21)

Mr Weir: The Education Authority (EA) is currently inviting expressions of interest in the Battlefields Project from post-primary schools.

Youth groups registered with the EA will also be given the opportunity to apply for places on the scheme. The EA will write out to youth groups in due course, to enable them to register their interest in participating.

Department of Finance

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Finance for an update on the 2016-17 Change Fund.
(AQW 7296/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir (The Minister of Finance): A total of £7.1million was allocated for the 2016-17 Change Fund, which has been a significant lever in facilitating change in the public sector through innovative thinking and practice.

The Change Fund has continued to facilitate the work started in 2015-16 through the Cross-Cutting Reform Programme (CCRP) with an allocation of £4.5million in 2016-17. This CCRP currently consist of 28 projects with a further 2 projects closed, the Change Fund has enabled the cross-cutting projects to progress through feasibility to determine the scale of efficiency generation and service improvement across the NICS.

The Change Fund also allocated £1.1million for a Small Business Research Initiative (SRBI) Challenge Fund which was jointly managed by my Department and the Department for the Economy. The aim of the SRBI Challenge Fund is to stimulate and develop innovative products and services to meet service priorities. A call for applications from departments took place in February 2016, five (5) projects were selected for funding and are currently underway.

A further £1.5million fund to develop estate rationalisation projects was allocated to the Reform of Property Management Programme team within my Department in the June Monitoring round. The funds are being used to continue the development of 'Invest to Save' projects intended to achieve the Executive's Asset Management Strategy target of rationalising the Central Government Office Estate. Specifically, the funds are being used to develop Outline Business Cases for office consolidation projects for geographic areas.

Ms Bunting asked the Minister of Finance how Land and Property Services pursues outstanding rates payments.
(AQW 7751/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Land & Property Services (LPS) rigorously pursues all rating debt and has undertaken a number of initiatives to improve collection and tackle debt.

These include improvements to:

- IT systems to make work with the Magistrates' Courts and the Enforcement of Judgments Office more efficient with built-in data quality checking;
- customer segmentation based on ratepayer type, payment history and a Propensity to Pay score, this information is used to determine the most appropriate action to take on debt; and
- data quality and investigative work, using information from credit reference and specialist tracing companies, where there are issues regarding liability for rates or debtors who are hard to trace.

LPS monitors rates accounts to ensure that payments are up-to-date; when payments are missed they take immediate action to contact ratepayers to pursue payment, using early intervention tools such as letters, telephone contact, e-mail and text messages.

When a ratepayer is in default of their payment plan, LPS issues a 'final notice' which clearly sets out the consequence of non-payment. This notice demands that the outstanding rates must be paid within 10 days or alternatively that contact is made with LPS to discuss a mutually agreeable payment arrangement.

All recovery correspondence issued by LPS informs ratepayers of the serious consequences of non-payment and is designed to prompt contact with LPS to negotiate a payment arrangement to clear arrears.

When payment is not made, LPS takes legal recovery action through the Court, using all the legal powers available to collect debt including the Enforcement of Judgments Office and initiating insolvency proceedings.

Rating debt levels are at their lowest point in seven years (£142.7 million* as at 31st March 2016). This has provided additional income that can be invested in critical front line services such as health and education.

*2015/16 Figure subject to audit assurance

Mr Attwood asked the Minister of Finance whether his Department will commit to enshrine in law those protections that derive from judgements of the European Court of Justice.
(AQW 7874/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The matter is still under consideration and it is too early to say. However, the Member should be aware of my resolve to ensure that I do everything in my power to mitigate against the negative effects of a Brexit.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance pursuant to AQW 6512/16-21, (i) what discussions he had with the Minister for the Economy regarding a subsidy for United Airlines prior to this being announced; and (ii) whether he allowed an exemption from the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation for this decision.
(AQW 8007/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I had no discussions with the Minister for the Economy regarding a subsidy for United Airlines prior to this being announced.

Such an exemption was not requested and therefore the question of whether it was 'allowed' does not arise.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Finance to detail the suicide rate for East Derry in each of the last ten years.
(AQW 8190/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The attached table details the number and rate of deaths registered due to suicide in East Derry between 2006 and 2015, the latest year for which finalised figures are available.

Table 1: Number and Rate¹ of Deaths from Suicide² Registered³ in East Derry⁴, 2006-2015

Registration Year	Number of Suicides	Suicide rate per 100,000 population
2006	14	14.3
2007	12	12.2
2008	14	14.2
2009	16	16.2
2010	19	19.2
2011	12	12.0
2012	21	21.0
2013	16	16.0
2014	8	8.0
2015	11	10.9

- 1 The suicide rate is calculated using the unrounded total population in East Derry at the 30th of June for the relevant year.
- 2 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'. The ICD codes used for 'Suicide and self-inflicted injury' are X60-X84 and Y87.0 (ICD9 E950-E959), and the ICD codes used for 'Undetermined injury' are Y10-Y34 and Y87.2 (ICD9 E980-E989).
- 3 All deaths data are based on the year of registration rather than the year of occurrence unless otherwise stated. Events such as suicide, which are likely to be referred to the coroner and can take time to be investigated, may have occurred prior to the registration year.
- 4 This area is based on the 2008 Westminster Parliamentary Constituency boundaries.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance for an update on the membership of the Independent Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland.
(AQW 8251/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Work to establish the Fiscal Council is currently ongoing. Therefore, it is not possible to provide details of membership at this time.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Finance what assessments the Independent Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland have undertaken to date.
(AQW 8252/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The Fiscal Council has not yet been established.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Finance to outline the costs of administering his proposed investment in small businesses scheme.
(AQW 8262/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: As outlined to the Assembly on 22nd November, when I laid out my Rates Rethink proposals, the specific detail of those policies will not be finalised until after my Department has undertaken further consultation work on the package of measures.

It is my intention to keep administrative costs for both LPS and claimants to a minimum by requiring eligible businesses to apply online.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Finance to outline the progress made by the Executive Apartments Interdepartmental Implementation Group, established on January 16 2014, on the consideration of the The Northern Ireland Law Commission report recommendations of May 2013 to develop a scheme for the licensing/registration of management agents, a dispute resolution scheme and an advisory service for apartment owners and on the introduction of legislation with regards to the regulation of apartment management.

(AQW 8392/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I am pleased to report that the Executive has agreed to the introduction of a Managing Agents Bill in order to implement the Northern Ireland Law Commission's recommendation with regard to the introduction of a register of managing agents. My officials will continue to work with officials in other relevant departments on the detail of the Law Commission's other recommendations with a view to formulating further policy recommendations in this area and, if appropriate, to bring forward further reforms.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Finance to detail each budgetary pressure that (i) his Department; and each (ii) of its arm's-length bodies were facing at 1 December 2016.

(AQW 8541/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: My Department and its arm's-length bodies were not facing any strategic pressures at 1st December 2016.

Mr Ford asked the Minister of Finance further to his written statement to the Assembly, Fresh Start – 2016, what processes are in place to reach agreement between the Executive and the UK Government to access the potential funding earmarked for Tackling Paramilitary Activity for 2018-19 onwards.

(AQW 8560/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The British Government committed in the Fresh Start Agreement to providing £25 million of additional funding over five years to tackle continuing paramilitary activity. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury has now advised that some £5 million/ £5 million/ £7.5 million /£7.5million will be available from 2018-19 onwards.

Discussions will be had with Treasury/NIO should the actual requirements differ from this.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Finance pursuant to AQW 7204/16-21, to detail the exact amount of money to be received; and where he intends to allocate this additional funding.

(AQW 8593/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The project will not be fully operational until 2033 and it is not therefore possible to know the exact amount of funding that will be received as a Barnett Consequential in future years.

It will be for the Executive to decide on how any additional funding is allocated.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Finance how much the decision to de-rate Orange Halls has saved the institution since its inception.

(AQW 8600/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Since its inception, the decision to de-rate Orange Halls has provided rates support to the Orange Institution of £8.12 million.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Finance pursuant to AQW 4769/16-21, (i) on what basis is the appropriateness of constituency visits decided; and (ii) who makes this decision.

(AQW 8634/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I would refer the Member to the copy of the procedures referred to in AQW 4769/16-21, which is available in the Assembly Library and to which my Private Office staff adhere.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Finance for an update on the utilisation of funds received from dormant bank accounts.

(AQW 8640/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: In February 2016 the Executive noted the intention of the former Finance Minister, Mervyn Storey, MLA to establish a scheme to utilise Dormant Accounts monies under Section 22 of the Dormant Bank and Building Society Accounts Act 2008. This allows the Department of Finance to direct the Big Lottery to establish a scheme here.

I now intend to seek further Executive approval for the parameters of Directions to the Big Lottery. Subject to consultation with the Big Lottery these Directions will in turn inform a Strategic Plan for the use of the Dormant Accounts monies here.

The Strategic Plan will be laid before the Assembly as required by the Act, and will include details of how the scheme will operate. It is expected that the scheme will be open to applications in the new Financial Year.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Finance to detail the current population of each Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 8734/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The attached table details the estimated population of each of the five Health and Social Care Trust as of mid-2015. More detailed figures are available on the NISRA website.

Table 1: Estimated Population of each Health and Social Care Trust (mid-2015)

Health and Social Care Trust	Estimated Population (mid- 2015)
Belfast	353,778
Northern	471,188
South Eastern	354,651
Southern	372,976
Western	299,028
Total	1,851,621

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Finance for an update on the £500m of capital funding that was secured in the Stormont House Agreement, including a breakdown of all expenditure incurred to date.

(AQW 8781/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The 'Fresh Start Agreement' provided for up to £500 million of additional Capital expenditure over a ten year period for investment in integrated and shared education; and shared housing. The previous Secretary of State, Theresa Villiers MP, announced the first tranche of shared / integrated education projects on 23 March 2016. Spend to date on these projects is only available from the Department of Education.

It is anticipated that further projects to be funded from this facility will be agreed with the British Government once the Executive has finalised its next Budget.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Finance to detail the assets that have been sold since March 2015, including (i) the nature of each asset; (ii) the date sold; and (iii) the monetary value of the receipt received.

(AQW 8782/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: The following assets were sold in financial year 2015/16:

(i) the nature of each asset	(ii) the date sold	(iii) receipt £'000
Rosepark House Upper Newtownards Road	01/03/2016	3,100
Bridgeview, Glenville Road Newtownabbey	30/06/2015	560
Vehicles (x5)	24/06/2015	35
Various plant & equipment	24/06/2015	22
Vehicles (x3)	01/06/2015	3
		3,720

This response is for the Department of Finance only.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Finance whether his Department has been contacted by Her Majesty's Treasury, or any other representative of Her Majesty's Government, regarding the delay to the establishment of the Independent Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland.

(AQW 8783/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Discussions are ongoing between British Government officials and my officials on finalising the establishment of the Independent Fiscal Council.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Finance whether his Department has adopted and implemented the diversity initiative as promoted by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

(AQW 8797/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: My Department ensures that it complies with the Commissioner for Public Appointments Code of Practice and implements the diversity measures outlined within it. This includes consideration of diversity issues at the outset of Public Appointment competitions and the inclusion of a 'diversity section' in appointment plans which set out the steps to be taken to achieve the best possible spread of applicants and, ultimately, appointees.

In addition, the Executive Office is leading on the development of a cross departmental strategic action plan which will underpin the delivery of Executive diversity targets and commitments which were agreed in February 2016. Consultation on the draft strategic action plan is expected to commence in the near future.

My officials will work with the Commissioner's Office, both directly and through the inter-departmental Public Appointments Forum, to ensure the strategic action plan is implemented in my Department.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Finance to detail the total number of staff that left the Northern Ireland Civil Service under the Voluntary Exit Scheme, broken down by (i) grade; (ii) gender; and (iii) community background.

(AQW 8997/16-21)

Mr Ó Muilleoir: A full analysis of the voluntary exit scheme, including the grade, gender and community background of leavers, has been published on the Scheme website at http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/nics_voluntary_exit_scheme

Department of Health

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, pursuant to AQW 1967/16-21, to address part ii of the question.

(AQW 3009/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Health): I give consideration to all invites to visits in light of my other diary commitments and competing pressures.

I have not received any invitation from Oakridge Social Education Centre at present, but would be happy to consider if invited.

Dr Farry asked the Minister of Health to outline how the process of formulating policy advice to Ministers by the working group on abortion is different from the usual process through which officials provide advice.

(AQW 3014/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The advantage of a Working Group arrangement is that it enables advice to be drawn from a number of professional and policy sources, in the case of FFA Working Group, from three departments. It also provides a mechanism to facilitate external engagement.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health how many urgent breast cancer referrals were (i) seen; and (ii) not seen within the 14 day Ministerial target in each Health and Social Care Trusts in each of the last 12 months.

(AQW 3745/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on breast cancer waiting times in relation to the 14 day Ministerial target is published quarterly on the Department's website: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/cancer-waiting-times>

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of nursing vacancies in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 4046/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the current number of nursing vacancies in each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust is detailed in the table below.

HSC Trust	Nursing Vacancies
Belfast	255
Northern	208
South Eastern	171
Southern	180
Western	106
Northern Ireland	920

Source: HSC Trusts

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to list the Ministerial visits she has undertaken since taking up office, including the (i) date; (ii) purpose; and (iii) parliamentary constituency visited.

(AQW 4353/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I have made 34 visits since taking up office. I have provided the details in the table below. The table does not include the large number of meetings which are held in my office in Stormont.

Date	Purpose	Constituency
27/05/2016	Visit to Craigavon Hospital	Upper Bann
01/06/2016	Visit to the New NI Hospice	Belfast North
02/06/2016	Visit/Meeting with The Rainbow Project	Belfast North
10/06/2016	Visit to Ravenhill Centre (Fallswater Learning Disability Day Centre)	Belfast South
30/06/2016	Visit/Meeting with North & West Belfast Protect Life	Belfast North
30/06/2016	Visit a number of Organisations in Derry - Addiction Taskforce, Disability Sector, Healthy Living Alliance & Northland Centre	Derry
04/07/2016	Visit to Our Lady's Children's Hospital to announce new investment in the All-island Congenital Heart Disease Network and mark the opening of the new Catherisation Lab	Dublin
19/07/2016	Visit to Royal Victoria Hospital	Belfast West
22/07/2016	Visit to the Agewell Project in Mid Ulster	Mid Ulster
12/08/2016	NI Ambulance Service Visit	Belfast South
07/09/2016	Visit/Meeting with Women's Aid Federation	Belfast South
07/09/2016	Visit/Meeting with Disability Action	Belfast East
14/09/2016	Visit to Cooper's Pharmacy	Belfast West
14/09/2016	Visit to Springfield Surgery	Belfast West
27/09/2016	Joint visit with DOJ to Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre & Prison	Belfast South
28/09/2016	Visit to Desertcreat	Mid Ulster
28/09/2016	Visit to Primate Dixon Primary School to launch Happy Smiles	Mid Ulster
19/10/2016	Visit to AgeNI	Mid Ulster
19/10/2016	Opening of MRI Scanner at the Royal Belfast Children's Hospital	Belfast West
19/10/2016	Visit to Royal ED	Belfast West
19/10/2016	Visit to Mater ED	Belfast North
27/10/2016	Visit to Craigavon Area Hospital for Staff Engagement Meeting	Upper Bann
2/11/2016	Visit to the Telemonitoring NI Centre	North Down
3/11/2016	Official Opening of Old See House, Belfast	Belfast North
10/11/2016	Visit to NI Medical & Dental Training Agency	Belfast South
17/11/2016	Official Opening of the Macmillan Cancer Information Service	Fermanagh & South Tyrone
17/11/2016	Staff Engagement Meeting at South West Acute Hospital	Fermanagh & South Tyrone
17/11/2016	Visit to the New Omagh Hospital & Primary Care Complex Site	West Tyrone
21/11/2016	Visit to the New Cancer Centre at Altnagelvin Hospital	Foyle
24/11/2016	Visit to the Cancer Centre	Belfast South
30/11/2016	Visit to Dalriada Hospital	North Antrim
30/11/2016	Visit to East Antrim Constituency	East Antrim
1/12/2016	Visit to Mid Ulster Council re presentation on Desertcreat and Healthcare in area	Fermanagh & South Tyrone
5/12/2016	All Ireland Chief Nursing Officers' Conference	Dublin

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health what consideration has been given to the absence of a facility such as The State Hospital, Carstairs contributing to the continued issues around the treatment and accommodating of mentally ill prisoners. (AQW 4522/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The State Hospital, Carstairs, provides treatment and accommodation of mentally ill prisoners through the provision of a service for both Scotland and the north of Ireland. It is only one part of the pathway of care available for those

with secure care needs with treatment and accommodation of mentally ill prisoners in the north of Ireland also provided through Shannon Clinic (medium secure provision male and female) and Rampton High Secure Hospital in England (high secure provision females only). Only one prisoner with mental health issues has transferred to Carstairs in the last five years. To develop a similar separate service here would not be appropriate given the current longstanding and advantageous arrangements with Scotland.

My Department is currently working with the Department of Justice in the development of a joint healthcare and criminal justice strategy and action plan which includes taking steps to improve access to low and medium secure mental health facilities for adults requiring treatment in such settings (including personality disorder).

Recently the Justice Minister and I have agreed to undertake an urgent review of vulnerable people in custody. Officials from both Departments are now working together to determine the structure, scope and timeframe of the Review.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to detail the patient waiting times for an appointment with a consultant at the gastroenterology department at the Belfast City Hospital for (i) urgent cases; and (ii) non-urgent appointments.

(AQW 4566/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of patients waiting as at 6th October 2016 for urgent and routine first consultant led outpatient appointments in the gastroenterology specialty at Belfast City Hospital, is shown in the table below.

	Weeks waiting						
	0-6	>6-9	>9-12	>12-15	>15-18	>18-52	>52
Urgent	69	33	26	39	39	7	0
Routine	36	24	26	34	27	186	>5

Source: Belfast HSC Trust

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health what budget commitment would be required to make residential care homes free to all residents.

(AQW 4584/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: It is difficult to estimate the level of budget commitment required to make residential care and nursing homes free to all residents as the provision of services free to all residents is likely to significantly increase demand. Based on 2014/15 levels of demand and costs, the indicative budget requirement would likely be in excess of £140m per annum.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health to detail the most recent breast cancer urgent referral waiting times.

(AQW 4674/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on breast cancer waiting times in relation to the 14 day Ministerial target is published quarterly on the Department's website: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/cancer-waiting-times>

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health to detail the breast cancer urgent referral waiting times, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, for the last five years.

(AQW 4675/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on breast cancer waiting times in relation to the 14 day Ministerial target, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, is published quarterly on the Department's website: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/cancer-waiting-times>

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health to outline (i) the reasons behind the 58.4 per cent performance year to date, measureable against the 31 day waiting list target, in treating breast cancer in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust; and (ii) how this issue is being address.

(AQW 4677/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Northern HSC Trust has advised that the main issue behind the level of underperformance was the number of patients coming through with confirmed Breast Cancer requiring surgical treatment, and the capacity to deal with these patients both in operator numbers and in access to theatres.

There has also been an impact from the arrangements that have been put in place to assist with the issues in the Southern Trust regarding Breast Cancer services.

Performance against the target for patients diagnosed with any type of cancer to commence treatment within 31 days has historically been strong. Even allowing for the dip in performance in respect of breast cancer, provisional information indicates that the Northern Trust still averages 88% performance against this target overall for the first seven months of 2016/17, with performance in the month of October 2016 at 95%.

To secure longer term, sustainable breast services across the north, a multi -agency workshop was held on 26 October bringing together breast cancer specialists from across the north to identify options for delivering breast cancer services in the future. From this, a working group is being established, involving all disciplines, representing all Trusts and service users to develop a future service model.

More generally, I am firmly of the view that the current elective waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health (i) whether there is a Ministerial working or advisory group on waiting times within her Department; (ii) to detail its membership and terms of reference; (iii) whether its findings or recommendations are discussed at Departmental Management Board level and how often; and (iv) what relations and interaction does the group have with other interested parties across Health and Social Care (NI).

(AQW 4694/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has set standards for the level of service that must be delivered across a range of health and social care services. The Health and Social Care Board has operational responsibility for the commissioning of health and social care services, and for ensuring that available resources are targeted to deliver the maximum benefit for patients and clients.

The Health and Social Care Performance Unit within my Department is responsible for monitoring performance across the range of Health and Social Care services. This unit liaises closely with colleagues in the HSCB, the Health Trusts and other stakeholders to help identify and understand any issues in the system, including the important issue of waiting lists. The Unit reports on a monthly basis to the Departmental Board, so any issues are escalated to the highest levels in the Department.

The Health service here will continue to do its utmost, within the resources it has available to it, to ensure the clinical needs of patients are met, that patient safety is maintained and that patients do not wait any longer than they have to. Patients are treated on the basis of clinical urgency, with patients of equal clinical priority being seen in chronological order.

However, I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. Unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

I will publish a plan in January 2017 setting out the approach for addressing waiting lists as referred to in Delivering Together. This will address not only what will be done in the short term to improve current waiting times, but also what will happen to transform the system so that the HSC is able to meet the future demand for elective care.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health (i) whether the Health and Social Care Board has presented its plan to cope with demand going forward and to stabilise waiting times on a sustainable basis; and (ii) if so, whether she will make it available to the Assembly.

(AQW 4695/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The future model for health and social care that I have set out in Health and Wellbeing 2026 Delivering Together cannot succeed if we continue with unacceptable waiting lists. Sustained action is therefore required to bring these under control.

Tackling the waiting lists will certainly require some short term investment and this is likely to take the form of increased in-house activity and also some use of the independent sector. Despite significant financial pressures across the health and social care sector, I have identified £4 million to invest in elective care this year. This funding will ensure more rapid care for 10,000 people and shows the Executive's commitment to making a positive difference to people's lives. But I should be clear

that these are short-term measures to bring down waiting times and allow people to be treated and to receive the care that they need.

Ultimately, I want to get to the point where we have the capacity within the HSC to deliver the services patients need. But my overriding concern is ensuring that patients receive their treatment in a timely manner. I will therefore bring forward a plan, by January that will set out how, over the next five years, we will address waiting lists.

Key areas of innovation that we are considering for the plan, subject to securing the required investment, include: the further development of Ambulatory Assessment and Treatment Centres which will allow patients to be assessed diagnosed and if required receive a treatment or procedure all on one day. I recently visited similar facilities in Royal Victoria Hospital and in the Mater, and I was impressed to see the positive impact that they have on the experience for patients, and for staff.

Elective Care Centres will also be established for less complex planned treatment. The centres will be a resource for the region and the way they operate will be designed around patients. However Elective Care Centres are not the solution to the unacceptable delays currently faced by patients but part of a holistic approach to patient centred care for the future.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail how many suspected breast cancer patients that were not seen within the target of 14 days in each month of 2016 to date were subsequently given a breast cancer diagnosis, broken down by Health and Social care Trust.

(AQW 4704/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of patients with an urgent referral for suspected breast cancer that were not seen within 14 days, and subsequently given a breast cancer diagnosis, between January and June 2016 is detailed in the table below.

	Belfast¹	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western
January	2	6	0	3	0
February	5	0	0	0	0
March	5	3	4	0	0
April	11	2	4	3	0
May	7	0	13	11	0
June	3	0	9	12	0

Source: HSC Trusts

- 1 Some patients waiting longer than 14 days may have chosen to delay their appointment after being offered an earlier appointment date.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of vacant nursing posts broken down by (i) Health and Social Care Trust; and (ii) speciality.

(AQW 4850/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the current number of vacant nursing posts in each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust, broken down by speciality is detailed below.

Belfast HSC Trust

Nursing Specialty	Vacancies (Band 5)
Adult	170
Children's	15
Mental Health	14

Nursing Specialty	Vacancies (Band 5)
Learning Disability	20
Total	219

Note, this information relates only to Band 5 nursing vacancies. The Belfast HSC Trust were unable to provide a breakdown by specialty of Band 6 and above nursing vacancies.

Northern HSC Trust

Nursing Specialty	Vacancies
Acute	126
Cancer Services	2
Community	12
Learning Disability	3
Mental Health	13
Mental Health & Learning Disability	1
Public Health	7
Women & Children	34
Health Visiting	7
Total	205

South Eastern HSC Trust

Nursing Specialty	Vacancies	
	Headcount	WTE
General Medicine	75	71.10
General Surgery	28	27.70
Emergency Medicine	5	3.80
Women and Child Health	15	12.66
ATICS (Theatres/ICU)	0	0.00
Mental Health	7	7.00
Community Nursing	2	1.48
Prison	13	12.60
GP Wards	2	2.00
Total	147	138.34

Southern HSC Trust

Nursing Specialty	Vacancies (Headcount)*
Acute	16
Acute Care at Home	9
Cancer Services	2
Children's	28
Community Nursing/Treatment Room	14
Emergency Medicine	18
Health Visiting	8
Intermediate Care	6
Learning Disability	12

Nursing Specialty	Vacancies (Headcount)*
Medicine	16
Mental Health	57
Older People	34
Promoting Health & Wellbeing	2
Specialist Nursing	12
Surgery	15
Theatres/Recovery	25
Total	274

*Southern HSC have included 94 posts already offered to candidate but who have not taken up post yet.

Western HSC Trust

Nursing Specialty	Vacancies	
	Headcount	WTE
Adult	94	93.04
Children's	3	2.38
Mental Health	8	8.00
Learning Disability	1	1.00
Total	106	104.42

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail each of the (i) target; and (ii) actual patient waiting time for (a) pain clinic or service; (b) pain psychology services; and (c) each musculoskeletal service in each of the last 5 years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 4861/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department's target for outpatient waiting times has changed a number of times over the last five years, with the target for each year shown in the following table.

Year	Ministerial Outpatient Waiting Times Target
2016/17	By March 2017, 50% of patients wait no longer than 9 weeks for an outpatient appointment; with no patient waiting longer than 52 weeks.
2015/16	From April 2015, that at least 60% of patients wait no longer than 9 weeks for their first outpatient appointment and no patient waits longer than 18 weeks.
2014/15	From April 2014, at least 80% of patients wait no longer than 9 weeks for their first outpatient appointment and no patient waits longer than 15 weeks.
2013/14	From April 2013, at least 70% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a first outpatient appointment and no patient should wait longer than 18 weeks, increasing to 80% by March 2014 and no patient waiting longer than 15 weeks.
2012/13	From April 2012, at least 50% of patients wait no longer than 9 weeks for their first outpatient appointment with no patient waiting longer than 21 weeks, increasing to 60% by March 2013 and no one waiting longer than 18 weeks.

Information relating to outpatient waiting times for a first consultant led outpatient appointment is not available for pain services, psychology services and musculoskeletal services. However information is collected and reported on the basis of the specialty of the consultant.

Information on the number of patients waiting for a first consultant led outpatient appointment within the Pain Management specialty, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust is published quarterly and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-waiting-times-september-2016>

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the average whole journey waiting time standard from initial referral to the start of treatment, for each area of treatment, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 4862/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: HSC Trusts currently use an extensive list of administrative systems to record elements of a patient's pathway. Due to the disparity in reporting systems, it is not possible to collect information on referral to treatment times.

As a consequence current targets for elective care are based on waiting times for first consultant led outpatient appointments, diagnostic tests and inpatient/day case treatment.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health whether she will adopt an 18 weeks referral to treatment standard.

(AQW 4863/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The 18 week referral to treatment standard is contained within the NHS Constitution for England. It does not apply here, as health and social care policy is a devolved matter.

The Health service here will continue to do its utmost, within the resources it has available to it, to ensure the clinical needs of patients are met, that patient safety is maintained and that patients do not wait any longer than they have to.

Nonetheless, I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. Unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together. It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients. That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail each of the (i) target; and (ii) actual patient waiting times for starting treatment at Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in each of the last five years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 4864/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Commissioning Plan Direction Target 4.13 states that no patient should wait longer than nine weeks to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Waiting times are calculated from the date of acceptance of the referral to the time the patient is seen and assessed at their first appointment.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health and Social Care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Figures in Tables 1 – 5, overleaf, detail waiting times for patients at 31 August to access CAMHS in each of the last five years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

Table 1

HSC Trust	Waiting time (weeks) at 31 August 2012 ^{1, 2}				Total
	0 – 3	>3 – 6	>6 – 9	>9	
Belfast	58	45	30	30	163
Northern	41	37	29	3	110
South Eastern ³					
Southern	28	21	5	0	54

HSC Trust	Waiting time (weeks) at 31 August 2012 ^{1, 2}				Total
	0 – 3	>3 – 6	>6 – 9	>9	
Western	34	37	17	27	115
Total	161	140	81	60	442

Source: Health and Social Care Board

- 1 Waiting times are for CAMHS Step 3 only
- 2 Due to reporting requirements during this period the Friday closest to month end has been used to supply the above figures
- 3 Please note that the South Eastern HSC Trust CAMHS waiting times are managed by, and reported under the Belfast HSC Trust.

Table 2

HSC Trust	Waiting time (weeks) at 31 August 2013 ^{1, 2}				Total
	0 – 3	>3 – 6	>6 – 9	>9	
Belfast	53	45	26	8	132
Northern	59	50	31	37	177
South Eastern ³					
Southern	22	19	7	0	48
Western	54	50	30	11	145
Total	188	164	94	56	502

Source: Health and Social Care Board

- 1 Waiting times are for CAMHS Step 3 only
- 2 Due to reporting requirements during this period the Friday closest to month end has been used to supply the above figures
- 3 Please note that the South Eastern HSC Trust CAMHS waiting times are managed by, and reported under the Belfast HSC Trust.

Table 3

HSC Trust	Waiting time (weeks) at 31 August 2014 ^{1, 2}				Total
	0 – 3	>3 – 6	>6 – 9	>9	
Belfast	80	35	14	2	131
Northern	64	51	34	53	202
South Eastern ³					
Southern	31	15	3	0	49
Western	48	39	10	0	97
Total	223	140	61	55	479

Source: Health and Social Care Board

- 1 Waiting times are for CAMHS Step 3 only
- 2 Due to reporting requirements during this period the Friday closest to month end has been used to supply the above figures
- 3 Please note that the South Eastern HSC Trust CAMHS waiting times are managed by, and reported under the Belfast HSC Trust.

Table 4

HSC Trust	Waiting time (weeks) at 31 August 2015 ¹				Total
	0 – 3	>3 – 6	>6 – 9	>9	
Belfast	66	42	13	0	121
Northern	35	22	16	20	93
South Eastern ²					
Southern	19	9	3	0	31
Western	48	51	35	60	194
Total	168	124	67	80	439

Source: Health and Social Care Board

- 1 Waiting times are for CAMHS Step 3 only
- 2 Please note that the South Eastern HSC Trust CAMHS waiting times are managed by, and reported under the Belfast HSC Trust.

Table 5

HSC Trust	Waiting time (weeks) at 31 August 2016 ¹				Total
	0 – 3	>3 – 6	>6 – 9	>9	
Belfast	98	64	35	58	255
Northern	33	21	3	0	57
South Eastern ²					
Southern	26	16	4	0	46
Western	39	40	41	72	192
Total	196	141	83	130	550

Source: Health and Social Care Board

- 1 Waiting times are for CAMHS Step 3 only
- 2 Please note that the South Eastern HSC Trust CAMHS waiting Times are managed by, and reported under the Belfast HSC Trust.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of doctor and nursing posts in each hospital, broken down by speciality; and the number of posts that are (i) filled; (ii) temporarily filled; (iii) vacant; and (iv) vacant for longer than six months. (AQW 5038/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

Belfast HSC Trust

Medical posts by Department, Job Description and Contract Type*

*Doctors in training (registrars and foundation doctors) are listed as temporary as they are on planned 6 month rotations.

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Accident & Emergency Services	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	20	1	21
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	16	16
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor	7	0	7

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
	Specialty Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	15	15
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1
Anaesthetics	Associate Specialist	3	0	3
	Consultant	100	23	123
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	1	1
	Locum	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	20	20
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	54	54
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1
Blood Transfusion Services	Consultant	1	0	1
	Medical Practitioner	0	1	1
Brain Injury Services	Consultant	1	0	1
Cancer Services	Consultant	8	1	9
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3
Cardiac Surgery	Consultant	3	0	3
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	6	6
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	3	3
	Trust Appointment for Service	0	2	2
Cardiology	Associate Specialist	5	0	5
	Clinical Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	20	2	22
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	5	5
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	7	7
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	11	11
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	10	10
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1
Chemical Pathology	Specialty Registrar (STR)	0	1	1
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant	14	2	16
	Specialist Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2
	Staff Grade Practitioner	0	1	1

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Clinic Electrophysiology	Specialist Registrar	0	2	2
Clinical Chemistry	Consultant	4	0	4
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full		1	1
Clinical Neuro-Physiology	Consultant	2	0	2
Cytopathology	Consultant	2	0	2
Dental Services - Hospital	Consultant	4	0	4
	Dental Practitioner	5	0	5
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	1	1
	Hospital Practitioner	2	0	2
	Specialty Doctor	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	4	4
	Year 2 Dentist	0	9	9
Dental Services -Community	Dental Officer	13	0	13
	Senior Dental Officer	4	0	4
Dental Surgery	Consultant	1	0	1
	Consultant NC	1	0	1
	Speciality Registrar	0	1	1
Dental/Paed & Prevent	Consultant	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
Dentistry - Restorative	Specialty Doctor	0	2	2
Dermatology	Associate Specialist	1		1
	Consultant	9	1	10
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	3	3
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	6	6
Elderly Programme Of Care	Consultant	2	0	2
	Visiting Medical Officer	1	0	1
Endocrinology & Diabetes	Consultant	6	0	6
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	1	4	5
ENT - Otolaryngology	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	7	1	8
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	2	2
	Medical Practitioner	1	0	1
	Speciality Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	5	5
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	5	5

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Family Planning Services	Associate Specialist	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor	5	1	6
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	1	2
Fractures & Orthopaedics	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	4	4
General Medicine	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	39	6	45
	Consultant Locum	1	0	1
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	2	2
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	36	36
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	36	36
	Hospital Practitioner	1	0	1
	Locum	0	3	3
	Specialty Registrar	0	3	3
	Specialty Doctor	8	1	9
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	14	14
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	1	44	45
General Practitioner Services	Consultant	0	1	1
	General Med practitioner/GP	9	27	36
General Surgery	Clinical Fellow	0	3	3
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	22	1	23
	Consultant Locum	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	28	28
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	9	9
	Locum	0	2	2
	Locum Appt for Training	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	15	15
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	11	11
Genito-Urinary Medicine	Clinical Research Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	4	0	4
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2
	Staff Grade	1	1	2

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Geriatric Medicine	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	13	1	14
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	8	8
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	4	4
	Specialty Doctor	5	1	6
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	5	5
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	7	7
Haematology	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	8	1	9
	Consultant Locum	2	0	2
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	11	11
Histopathology	Consultant	16	1	17
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	18	18
Immuno Pathology	Consultant	3	1	4
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	1	1
Infectious Diseases	Consultant	3	0	3
Learning Disability -Hospital	Core Trainee (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	3	3
Mammography	Consultant	4	0	4
Medical Genetics	Consultant	5	0	5
Medical Oncology	Consultant	7	0	7
Mental Health - Hospital	Specialty Registrar	1	0	1
Microbiology	Consultant	10	0	10
	Locum	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	7	7
Nephrology	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	10	3	13
	Consultant Locum	2	1	3
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	3	3
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	1	1
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	7	7

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Neuro Surgery	Consultant	10	1	11
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	5	5
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	3	3
Neurology	Consultant	10	2	12
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	4	4
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	2	1	3
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	8	8
Neuropathology	Consultant	1	0	1
Not assigned	Consultant	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
Nursing Community	Consultant (Macmillan GP Facilitator)	2	0	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Associate Specialist	3	0	3
	Consultant	27	4	31
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	4	4
	Locum	0	5	5
	Specialist Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	0	3	3
	Specialty Doctor	5	0	5
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	37	37
Occupational Health Services	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	1	0	1
	Director	1	0	1
	Hospital Practitioner	1	0	1
	Medical Practitioner	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	1	1	2
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Ophthalmology Services	Associate Specialist	4	1	5
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	25	2	27
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	3	3
	Medical Practitioner	1	0	1
	Speciality Doctor	2	0	2
	Speciality Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	11	11
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1
Orthodontics	Consultant	1	0	1
Orthopaedic Surgery	Associate Specialist	2	0	2
	Clinical Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	33	6	39
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	8	8
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	3	3
	Locum	0	1	1
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Speciality Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor	4	0	4
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	5	5
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	15	15
	Staff Grade Practitioner	0	1	1
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	5	0	5
	Specialty Doctor	2	0	2
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Associate Specialist	2	0	2
	Clinical Fellow	0	3	3
	Consultant	44	2	46
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	3	3
	Locum Appt for Training	0	2	2
	Medical Practitioner	4	0	4
	Speciality Doctor	1	0	1
	Speciality Registrar	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	1	57	58
	Trust Appt for Services	0	2	2
Paediatric Surgery	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Plastic Surgery	Consultant	4	0	4
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	Associate Specialist	4	0	4
	Consultant	37	13	50
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	2	2
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	6	6
	Hospital Practitioner	1	0	1
	Locum Consultant	1	0	1
	Speciality Doctor	4	0	4
	Speciality Registrar (STR)	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	11	11
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	14	14
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1
Radiography (Diagnostic)	Consultant	1	0	1
Radiology	Consultant	41	7	48
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	29	29
Radiotherapy	Associate Specialist	3	0	3
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	19	3	22
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	2	2
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	5	5
	Associate Specialist	1	2	3
	Clinical Research Fellow	2	0	2
	Consultant	0	4	4
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	22	22
Renal Failure Surgery	Consultant	0	1	1
Respiratory Investigation	Consultant	4	0	4
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	Consultant	11	0	11
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	3	3
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	7	7

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Thor/Cardiac Surgery	Clinical Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	4	2	6
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	2	2
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	3	3
	Locum Appt for Training	0	2	2
Thoracic Medicine	Consultant	5	0	5
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
Thoracic Surgery	Clinical Fellow	0	3	3
	Consultant	4	0	4
Urology	Clinical Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	8	1	9
	Locum	0	2	2
	Speciality Doctor	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	1	1
Vascular Surgery	Consultant	6	1	7
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Speciality Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	5	5
	Trust Appointment for Service	1	0	1
Other	Specialty Doctor	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2
Total		839	997	1,836

Nursing & Midwifery posts

The Belfast HSC Trust were unable to provide this information by specialty in the timeframe required, however have 7,418 employed in the Nursing & Midwifery staff group (including support) in total, 181 temporary.

Medical vacancies by Specialty and Grade

Grade	Specialty / Sub specialty	Vacancies (WTE)
Paediatric Consultant	ENT	1
	Allergy	1
	Emergency Medicine	1
	Community and General	1
	Gastroenterology	1
	Radiology	2.75

Grade	Specialty / Sub specialty	Vacancies (WTE)
Consultant	Care of the Elderly	1
	Stroke Medicine	1
	Occupational Medicine	1
	Neonatalology	1.6
	Urogynaecology	1
	Gynae Oncology	1
	GUM & HIV	1
	Oral Medicine	1
	Restorative Dentistry	1
	Vascular Surgery	1
	Thoracic Surgery	1
	Cellular Pathology	0.5
	Histopathology	1
	Acute and General	3
	Neurology	1
	Clinical Genetics	1
	Clinical Oncology	1
	Anaesthetics (Cardiac)	2
	Radiology (Interventional)	1
	Intensive Care	5
	Emergency Medicine	2
	Locum Consultant in Psychiatry	1
Specialty Doctor	Care of the Elderly	1
	Community Paediatrics	1
	Orthomedicine	1
	Rehabilitation	1
	Nephrology	1
	Oncology	1
	Rheumatology	1
	Breast Surgery	1
	Anaesthetics	2
	Medicine	1
	Ambulatory Care	1
	Neurosurgery	1
Clinical Fellow	Care of the Elderly	1
	Trauma & Orthopaedics	1
	Paediatric Cardiology	1
	Acute Medicine /CAU	7
	Adult Congenital Heart Disease	1
	Neurosurgery	1
	Interventional Cardiology	1

Grade	Specialty / Sub specialty	Vacancies (WTE)
Doctors in Training	Anaesthetics	2
	Cardiothoracic Surgery	2
	Emergency Medicine	1
	General Surgery (HST)	3
	Histopathology	1
	Medical Oncology	4
	Haematology	1
	Genetics	2
	Clinical Oncology	2
	Haematology	1
	General Medicine ACCS	1
	Geriatrics	1
	Gastroenterology	1
	Microbiology	1
	Pathology	1
	Cardiology	1
	Immunology	1
	Rheumatology	2
	Obs & Gynae	8
	Paediatrics	4
	Psychiatry	10
	Radiology	4
Total		117.85

The Belfast HSC Trust were unable to provide a breakdown by length of time vacant.

Nursing vacancies

Of the 219 Band 5 nursing vacancies in the Belfast HSC Trust, 170 are adult nursing, 15 children's nursing, 14 mental health nursing and 20 learning disability nursing). Of the adult nursing vacancies, 20 of these have been vacant since September 2014/September 2015, 1 has been vacant since September 2013/September 2014 and 1 vacant since January 2013.

Northern HSC Trust

Hospital only Doctor posts by Hospital, Department and Contract Type

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Antrim Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	26	0	26
Anaesthetics	37	2	39
Cancer Services	2	3	5
Cardiology	4	0	4
Chair/Non Executive	1	0	1
Dental Surgery	1	0	1
Dermatology	7	0	7
ENT - Otolaryngology	11	0	11

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
General Administration	1	0	1
General Medicine	95	1	96
General Surgery	32	2	34
Haematology	3	0	3
Histopathology	1	1	2
Integrated Primary Care	1	0	1
Medical Management	0	1	1
Nephrology	2	0	2
Neurology	1	0	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	27	5	32
Paediatric Services - Hospital	37	0	37
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	3	2	5
Radiology	21	0	21
Renal	6	1	7
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	6	1	7
Surgical Gastroenterology	0	1	1
Antrim Hospital Total	325	20	345
Antrim Hospital: Alder House			
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	2	0	2
Antrim Hospital: Alder House Total	2	0	2
Antrim Hospital: Laboratory			
Clinical Chemistry	3	0	3
Haematology	2	0	2
Histo/Cyto	1	0	1
Histopathology	5	0	5
Microbiology	3	1	4
Antrim Hospital: Laboratory Total	14	1	15
Antrim Hospital: The Rowan			
Specialist Services	3	0	3
Antrim Hospital: The Rowan Total	3	0	3
Causeway Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	5	0	5
Anaesthetics	14	1	15
Cardiology	1	0	1
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	1	1	2
Dermatology	1	0	1
General Medicine	29	3	32
General Surgery	24	1	25

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Genito-Urinary Medicine	1	1	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	14	2	16
Paediatric Services - Hospital	8	1	9
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	9	0	9
Radiology	3	0	3
Causeway Hospital Total	110	10	120
Dalriada Hospital			
Community Medicine	2	0	2
Dalriada Hospital Total	2	0	2
Holywell Hospital			
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	50	1	51
Holywell Hospital Total	50	1	51
Mid Ulster Hospital			
Dermatology ICATS	1	0	1
General Medicine	2	0	2
Ophthalmology Services	1	0	1
Mid Ulster Hospital Total	4	0	4
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Community Svc Centre			
Paediatric Services - Community	1	0	1
Moyle Community Svc Centre Total	1	0	1
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Medical Centre			
General Medicine	1	0	1
Moyle Hospital: Medical Centre Total	1	0	1
Robinson Hospital			
Paediatric Services - Hospital	2	0	2
Robinson Hospital Total	2	0	2
Route Hospital			
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	1	0	1
Route Hospital Total	1	0	1
Whiteabbey Hospital			
Dermatology	1	0	1
General Medicine		1	1
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	3	0	3
Whiteabbey Hospital Total	4	1	5
Total	519	33	552

All Doctor posts by Department, Job Description and Contract Type

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Accident & Emergency	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant	9	0	9
	Foundation House Officer 2	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	14	0	14
Anaesthetics	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant	25	3	28
	Core Trainee (CT)	8	0	8
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	8	0	8
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	7	0	7
Cancer Services	Consultant	1	1	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	2	3
Cardiology	Consultant	2	0	2
	Core Trainee (CT)	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	1	0	1
Chair/Non Executive	Consultant	1	0	1
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant	5	1	6
	Core Trainee (CT)	1		1
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment		1	1
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	1	0	1
Clinical Chemistry	Consultant	3	0	3
Community Medicine	GP Sessions	1	1	2
	P/T Med Pract (Sessions)	1	0	1
Dental Surgery	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Dermatology	Consultant	4	0	4
	Core Trainee (CT)	1	0	1
	Hosp Pract (Sessions)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
Dermatology ICATS	GP Sessions	1	0	1
ENT - Otolaryngology	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant	5	0	5
	Core Trainee (CT)	2	0	2
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	1	0	1

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Family Planning Services	GP SESSIONS	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	9	1	10
General Administration	Consultant	1	0	1
General Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	6	0	6
	Consultant	36	1	37
	Core Trainee (CT)	11	0	11
	Foundation House Officer 1	25	0	25
	Foundation House Officer 2	23	0	23
	HOSP PRACT (SESSIONS)	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	11	2	13
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	18	0	18
General Surgery	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant	16	1	17
	Core Trainee (CT)	11	0	11
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment		1	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	12	0	12
	Foundation House Officer 2	6	0	6
	P/T Med Pract (Sessions)	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	7	0	7
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	2	0	2
Genito-Urinary Medicine	GP Sessions	1	0	1
	P/T Med Pract (Sessions)	0	1	1
Haematology	Consultant	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Histo/Cyto	Consultant	1	0	1
Histopathology	Consultant	6	1	7
Integrated Primary Care	Consultant	1	0	1
Medical Management	Consultant	0	1	1
Microbiology	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant	2	1	3
Nephrology	Core Trainee (CT)	2	0	2
Neurology	Consultant	1	0	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant	13	3	16
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	1	2	3
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	5	2	7
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	21	0	21

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Ophthalmology Services	GP Sessions	1	0	1
Orthodontics	Consultant	1	0	1
Orthopaedic ICATS	GP Sessions	5	0	5
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	1	3
	Consultant	2	0	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Associate Specialist (NC)	6	0	6
	Consultant	14	0	14
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 2	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	21	0	21
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant	29	3	32
	Core Trainee (CT)	9	0	9
	Foundation House Officer 2	6	0	6
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	13	0	13
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	14	0	14
Radiology	Consultant	19	0	19
	P/T Med Pract (Sessions)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	4	0	4
Renal	Consultant	4	0	4
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1	2
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	1	0	1
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	Consultant	4	0	4
	Core Trainee (CT)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1	2
Specialist Services	Consultant	2	0	2
	GP Sessions	1	0	1
Surgical Gastroenterology	Consultant	0	1	1
Total		554	37	591

Hospital Nursing posts by Hospital and Contract Type

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Antrim Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	84	0	84
Anaesthetics	4	0	4

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Cancer Services	41	2	43
Child & Family Care Mgmt	1	0	1
Coronary Care	53	0	53
Day Procedures Services	32	0	32
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	17	2	19
Endocrinology & Diabetes	3	0	3
General Administration	1	0	1
General Medicine	199	3	202
General Surgery	103	4	107
Haematology	4	0	4
Infection Control	1	0	1
Integrated Primary Care	1	0	1
Intensive Care / HDU	53	0	53
Mental Health - Community	9	0	9
Mental Health - Mgt	3	0	3
Midwifery Services - Hospital	94	3	97
Nursing Administration	9	0	9
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	6	0	6
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	31	0	31
Outpatient Services	18	0	18
Paediatric Services - Community	1	0	1
Paediatric Services - Hospital	89	1	90
Patient Flow Services	10	0	10
Radiography (Diagnostic)	5	0	5
Rehab/Stroke Services - Community	1	0	1
Renal	36	0	36
Respiratory Investigation	2	1	3
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	5	0	5
Theatres	60	0	60
Training & Development	1	0	1
Antrim Hospital Total	977	16	993
Antrim Hospital: Alder House			
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	10	0	10
Health Visiting	7	0	7
Paediatric Services - Community	4	0	4
Antrim Hospital: Alder House Total	21	0	21
Antrim Hospital: Bush House			
Bereavement Services	1	0	1
Coronary Care	1	0	1

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Governance/Audit	0	2	2
Governance Cli/Social Care	2	0	2
Nursing Mgt (Multi-Services)	1	0	1
Training & Development	1	0	1
Antrim Hospital: Bush House Total	6	2	8
Antrim Hospital Site: Fern House			
Cancer Services	1	0	1
Coronary Care	2	0	2
General Surgery	1	1	2
Midwifery Services - Hospital	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt (Multi-Services)	1	0	1
Respiratory Investigation	1	0	1
Antrim Hospital: Fern House Total	7	1	8
Antrim Hospital Site: Laboratory			
Infection Control	5	0	5
Antrim Hospital: Laboratory Total	5	0	5
Antrim Hospital Site: The Rowan			
Specialist Services	5	0	5
Antrim Hospital: The Rowan Total	5	0	5
Antrim Hospital: Willow House			
Occupational Health Services	7	0	7
Antrim Hospital: Willow House Total	7	0	7
Causeway Hospital: Laboratory			
Infection Control	1	0	1
Causeway Hospital: Laboratory Total	1	0	1
Causeway Hospital: Main Building			
Accident & Emergency	35	4	39
Cancer Services	4	0	4
Coronary Care	28	0	28
Day Procedures Services	29	1	30
Dermatology ICATS	3	0	3
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	34	0	34
Endocrinology & Diabetes	2	0	2
General Medicine	54	2	56
General Surgery	57	0	57
Infection Control	2	0	2
Intensive Care / HDU	22	0	22

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Mental Health - Community	2	0	2
Mental Health - Hospital	21	0	21
Midwifery Services - Hospital	47	2	49
Midwifery Services - Community	1	0	1
Nursing Administration	3	0	3
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt (Multi-Services)	2	0	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	17	1	18
Ophthalmology Services	2	0	2
Outpatient Services	17	0	17
Paediatric Services - Community	5	0	5
Paediatric Services - Hospital	20	0	20
Patient Flow Services	6	0	6
Rehab/Stroke Services - Community	1	0	1
Respiratory Investigation	1	0	1
Theatres	38	0	38
Causeway Hospital: Main Building Total	454	10	464
Dalriada Hospital Site			
Community Medicine	22	0	22
Integrated Primary Care	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	1	0	1
Dalriada Hospital Total	24	0	24
Holywell Hospital			
Addictions Services/Community	1	0	1
Dementia Services	3	0	3
Eating Disorder Services	6	0	6
Health And Safety	2	0	2
Home Treatment/Crisis Res Services	24	0	24
Human Resources	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	22	0	22
Mental Health - Hospital	135	0	135
Mental Health - Mgt	5	0	5
Midwifery Services - Hospital	1	0	1
Nurse Bank Relief	1	0	1
Holywell Hospital Site	201	0	201
Mid Ulster Hospital: Main Building			
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	19	0	19
Endocrinology & Diabetes	1	0	1

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
General Surgery	9	0	9
Infection Control	2	0	2
Integrated Primary Care	1	0	1
Midwifery Services - Community	11	2	13
Minor Injuries Hospital (MIH)	2	0	2
Nursing Community	2	0	2
Outpatient Services	7	0	7
Paediatric Services - Community	10	0	10
Paediatric Services - Hospital	6	0	6
Respiratory Investigation	3	0	3
Surestart Services	1	0	1
Theatres	11	0	11
Training & Development	5	0	5
Mid Ulster Hospital: Main Building Total	90	2	92
Moyle Hospital			
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	15	0	15
Integrated Primary Care	2	0	2
Mental Health - Community	1	0	1
Midwifery Services - Community	3	1	4
Nursing Community	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	3	0	3
Rehab/Stroke Services - Community	2	0	2
Respiratory Investigation	1	0	1
Moyle Hospital Total	28	1	29
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Com Svc Centre			
Integrated Primary Care	2	0	2
Nursing Mgt - Community	1	0	1
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Com Svc Centre Total	3	0	3
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Medical Centre			
Health Visiting	2	0	2
Integrated Primary Care	6	0	6
Mental Health - Community	2	0	2
Nursing Community	3	0	3
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Medical Centre Total	13	0	13
Robinson Hospital			
Acute Care At Home	6	0	6
Cancer Services	1	0	1
Community Medicine	18	0	18

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Nursing Community	2	0	2
Robinson Hospital Total	27	0	27
Route Hospital			
Acute Care At Home	1	0	1
Community Medicine	1	0	1
Elderly Programme Of Care	3	0	3
Health And Safety	2	0	2
Nursing Administration	1	0	1
Nursing Community	8	0	8
Nursing Mgt - Community	2	0	2
Paediatric Services - Community	1	0	1
Respiratory Investigation	1	0	1
School Health Services	1	0	1
Training & Development	2	0	2
Route Hospital Total	23	0	23
Whiteabbey Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	1	0	1
Acute Care At Home	11	0	11
Coronary Care	2	0	2
Day Procedures Services	23	0	23
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	31	0	31
Endocrinology & Diabetes	2	0	2
General Administration	2	0	2
Health Promotion	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	12	0	12
Mental Health - Hospital	5	0	5
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	1	0	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	13	0	13
Respiratory Investigation	2	0	2
Training & Development	2	0	2
Whiteabbey Hospital Total	109	0	109
Grand Total	2,001	32	2,033

All Registered Nursing & Midwifery posts by Department and Job Band

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Accident & Emergency	5	89	3	92
	6	14	0	14
	7	15	1	16
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
Acute Care At Home	5	33	0	33
	6	3	0	3
Addictions Services/ Community	6	2	1	3
	7	6	0	6
	8A	2	0	2
Anaesthetics	6	1	0	1
	8A	2	0	2
	8B	1	0	1
Autism Services	6	1	0	1
Bereavement Services	8A	1	0	1
Brain Injury Services	7	1	0	1
Cancer Services	5	29	0	29
	6	6	1	7
	7	9	1	10
	8A	2	0	2
	8B	1	0	1
Child & Family Care	5	1	0	1
	6	1	0	1
Child & Family Care Mgmt	8C	1	0	1
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	7	14	0	14
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
Community Medicine	5	37	0	37
	6	2	0	2
	7	2	0	2
Condition Management	6	1	0	1
Continence Services	5	1	0	1
	6	3	0	3
	7	2	0	2
Coronary Care	5	57	0	57
	6	18	1	19
	7	13	0	13
	8A	1	0	1

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Day Procedures Services	5	69	1	70
	6	8	0	8
	7	7	0	7
Dementia Services	6	19	0	19
	7	4	0	4
Dermatology	6	1	0	1
Dermatology ICATS	7	3	0	3
District Nursing Services	5	2	0	2
Domiciliary Care Specia.	5	1	0	1
Eating Disorder Services	7	5	0	5
	8A	1	0	1
Elderly Programme Of Care	6	8	0	8
	7	1	0	1
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	5	102	2	104
	6	9	0	9
	7	5	0	5
Endocrinology & Diabetes	6	6	0	6
	7	5	0	5
Falls Prevention Services	6	1	0	1
Family Planning Services	5	12	1	13
	6	1	2	3
	7	2	0	2
	8A	2	0	2
General Administration	8A	2	0	2
	8B	1	0	1
General Medicine	5	212	1	213
	6	26	4	30
	7	13	0	13
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
General Surgery	5	145	0	145
	6	12	3	15
	7	10	1	11
	8A	2	1	3
	8B	1	0	1
Genito-Urinary Medicine	6	2	0	2
	8A	1	0	1
Governance/Audit	6	0	2	2
Governance Cli/Social Care	7	2	0	2
Haematology	7	4	0	4

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Health And Safety	6	2	0	2
	7	2	0	2
Health Promotion	6	3	0	3
	7	1	0	1
Health Visiting	5	38	2	40
	6	109	1	110
	7	31	0	31
	8A	5	0	5
Home Treatment/Crisis Response Services	6	6	0	6
	7	18	0	18
Human Resources	5	1	0	1
Infection Control	6	7	0	7
	7	3	0	3
	8A	2	0	2
Integrated Primary Care	5	167	2	169
	6	22	0	22
	7	23	0	23
Intensive Care / HDU	5	63	0	63
	6	10	0	10
	7	2	0	2
Learning Disability-Community	5	7	2	9
	6	13	0	13
	7	15	0	15
	8B	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	5	8	0	8
	6	49	0	49
	7	25	0	25
	8A	3	0	3
Mental Health - Hospital	5	137	0	137
	6	14	0	14
	7	20	0	20
	8A	1	0	1
Mental Health - Mgt	7	3	0	3
	8A	2	0	2
	8B	3	0	3
Midwifery Services - Hospital	5	11	4	15
	6	109	1	110
	7	18	0	18
	8A	3	0	3
	8B	2	0	2

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Midwifery Services - Community	6	66	6	72
	7	2	0	2
Minor Injuries Hosp (MIH)	7	2	0	2
Nurse Bank Relief	7	1	0	1
Nursing Administration	7	8	0	8
	8A	2	0	2
	8C	3	0	3
Nursing Community	5	93	1	94
	6	11	0	11
	7	8	0	8
Nursing Mgt - Community	7	1	0	1
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
	8C	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	6	5	0	5
	7	1	0	1
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt (Multi-Services)	6	1	0	1
	7	1	0	1
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
	8C	2	0	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	5	34	1	35
	6	10	0	10
	7	5	0	5
Occupational Health Services	5	1	0	1
	6	5	0	5
	7	1	0	1
Ophthalmology Services	7	2	0	2
Outpatient Services	5	51	0	51
	6	11	0	11
	7	4	0	4
	8A	1	0	1
Paediatric Services - Community	5	24	0	24
	6	5	0	5
	7	15	0	15
	8A	4	0	4
	8B	2	0	2

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Paediatric Services - Hospital	5	95	0	95
	6	10	0	10
	7	9	1	10
	8A	1	0	1
Patient Flow Services	7	16	0	16
Radiography (Diagnostic)	5	1	0	1
	6	2	0	2
	7	2	0	2
Rehab/Stroke Services - Community	5	3	0	3
	6	6	1	7
	7	5	0	5
	8A	1	0	1
Renal	5	28	0	28
	6	5	0	5
	7	3	0	3
Respiratory Investigation	6	12	0	12
	7	3	0	3
	8A		1	1
Rheumatology & Rehabilit.	7	5	0	5
School Health Services	5	10	0	10
	6	6	0	6
	7	1	0	1
Specialist Services	5	4	0	4
	7	1	0	1
Surestart Services	5	4	0	4
	6	7	1	8
Theatres	5	90	0	90
	6	15	0	15
	7	4	0	4
Tissue Viability Services	6	2	0	2
Training & Development	7	10	0	10
	8A	2	0	2
Total		2,797	50	2,847

Doctors vacancies by Grade

Grade	Current Vacancies		Of which: Long-term Vacancies	
	Headcount	WTE	Headcount	WTE
Consultant	18	17.92	9	9.00
Specialty Doctor	15	14.21	4	4.00
Foundation House Officer 1	1	1.00	-	-

Grade	Current Vacancies		Of which: Long-term Vacancies	
	Headcount	WTE	Headcount	WTE
Total	34	33.13	13	13.00

Registered Nursing vacancies by Grade and length of time vacant

Job Description	Vacant	Of which: Vacant more than 6 months
Band 5	127	45
Band 5/6	6	0
Band 6	47	9
Band 7	18	7
Band 8a	3	0
Band 8b	2	0
Band 8c	2	0
Total	205	61

South Eastern HSC Trust

Doctors posts by Location, Department and Contract Type

Doctors in training (registrars and foundation doctors) are included as temporary as they are on planned 6 month rotations.

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent Filled	Temporary Filled	
Ulster Hospital			
Accident & Emergency Services	22	27	49
Anaesthetics	29	26	55
Cardiology	6	7	13
Dental Services - Hospital	0	6	6
Dental Services - Community	4	0	4
Dental Surgery/OMFS	10	1	11
ENT - Otolaryngology	6	2	8
Fractures & Orthopaedics	12	6	18
Medical Specialities	82	75	157
General Surgery	17	29	46
Intensive Care / HDU	0	10	10
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	16	18	34
Paediatric Service	14	20	34
Plastic Surgery	7	16	23
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	2	6	8
Radiology	18	7	25
Urology	1	0	1
Ulster Hospital Total	246	256	502
Downshire Hospital			
Addictions Services	1	0	1

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent Filled	Temporary Filled	
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	10	0	10
Downshire Hospital Total	11	0	11
Ards Community Hospital			
General Practitioner Service	6	0	6
Paediatric Service	2	0	2
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	8	3	11
Ards Community Hospital Total	16	3	19
Lagan Valley Hospital			
Accident & Emergency Services	3	5	8
Anaesthetics	4	0	4
Cardiology	1	0	1
Community Medicine	1	0	1
Medical Specialities	14	16	30
General Surgery	3	1	4
General Practitioner Services	1	0	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	3	0	3
Plastic Surgery	1	0	1
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	9	4	13
Radiography (Diagnostic)	0	1	1
Radiology	2	1	3
Lagan Valley Hospital Total	42	28	70
Downe Hospital			
Accident & Emergency Services	5	1	6
Anaesthetics	1	1	2
Dental Services - Community	5	0	5
Medical Specialities	12	14	26
General Practitioner Service	1	0	1
General Surgery	1	0	1
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	1	6	7
Downe Hospital Total	26	22	48
Total	341	309	650

Hospital only Nursing & Midwifery posts by Hospital, Department and Contract Type

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
Ards Community Hospital			
Bank Mgt	1	0	1
Business/Service Planning/Cont	1	0	1

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
Child & Family Care	1	0	1
Child Health	6	0	6
Community Medicine	10	0	10
Day Procedures Services	2	0	2
Elderly Programme Of Care	2	0	2
Elderly - Hospital Nursing	1	0	1
General Administration	1	0	1
General Medicine	8	0	8
General Surgery	2	0	2
Health Visiting	8	1	9
Learning Disability- Community	3	0	3
Mental Health - Community	23	0	23
Mental Health - Hospital	8	0	8
Midwifery Services - Community	1	0	1
Minor Injuries Hospital (MIH)	1	0	1
Nursing Community	25	2	27
Nursing Mgt - Community	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	8	0	8
Paediatric Services - Community	3	0	3
Prison Services	1	0	1
School Health Services	2	0	2
Theatres	29	0	29
Ards Community Hospital Total	149	3	152
Downshire Hospital			
Bank Mgt	2	0	2
Child Health	1	0	1
Elderly Programme Of Care	2	0	2
General Medicine	1	0	1
Learning Disability - Community	4	0	4
Mental Health - Community	13	1	14
Mental Health - Hospital	51	0	51
Mental Health - Management	1	0	1
Nursing Community	7	0	7
Nursing Mgt - Community	1	0	1
Occupational Health Services	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	1	0	1
Downshire Hospital Total	85	1	86
Ulster Hospital			

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
Accident & Emergency / MAU	95	0	95
Assistant Director	1	0	1
Audiology	1	0	1
Bank Mgt	1	0	1
Cancer Services	41	2	43
Cardiology	1	0	1
Child Health	15	0	15
Elderly Programme Of Care	2	1	3
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	86	0	86
General Administration	2	0	2
General Medicine	303	2	305
General Surgery	101	1	102
Governance/Audit	4	0	4
Health/Medical Records	0	1	1
Hotel/Support Services	1	0	1
Infection Control	4	0	4
Intensive Care / HDU	52	1	53
Learning Disability - Community	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	6	0	6
Mental Health – Hospital	27	1	28
Midwifery Services - Hospital	192	3	195
Midwifery Services - Community	3	0	3
Not assigned	1	0	1
Nurse Bank Relief	1	0	1
Nursing Administration	4	0	4
Nursing Community	6	0	6
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	6	0	6
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	21	0	21
Occupational Health Services	5	0	5
Occupational Therapy	1	0	1
Orthopaedic Surgery	26	0	26
Outpatient Services	34	0	34
Paediatric Services - Hospital	65	0	65
Plastic Surgery	34	0	34
Radiography (Diagnostic)	1	0	1
Renal	5	0	5
Theatres	156	0	156
Ulster Hospital Total	1,305	12	1,317
Bangor Community Hospital			

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
Community Medicine	5	0	5
Health Visiting	3	0	3
Nursing Community	7	0	7
Outpatient Services	8	0	8
Bangor Community Hospital Total	23	0	23
Downe Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	17	0	17
Cardiology	8	0	8
Care Mgmt	1	0	1
Child Health	3	0	3
Day Procedures Services	5	0	5
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	1	0	1
General Medicine	44	0	44
General Surgery	15	0	15
Health Visiting	3	0	3
Learning Disability - Community	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	3	0	3
Mental Health - Hospital	10	0	10
Midwifery Services - Hospital	20	0	20
Not assigned	2	0	2
Nursing Community	12	0	12
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	8	0	8
School Health Services	5	0	5
Theatres	17	0	17
Downe Hospital Total	176	0	176
Lagan Valley Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	20	0	20
Bank	2	0	2
Cancer Services	1	0	1
Care Mgmt	1	0	1
Child Health	1	0	1
Day Procedures Services	17	1	18
Elderly Programme Of Care	3	0	3
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	17	0	17
General Medicine	90	0	90
General Surgery	9	0	9
Infection Control	2	0	2
Mental Health - Community	4	0	4

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
Mental Health - Hosp	21	0	21
Midwifery Services - Hospital	28	0	28
Midwifery Services - Community	2	0	2
Nursing Community	10	1	11
Nursing Mgt - Community	2	0	2
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	3	0	3
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	5	0	5
Occupational Health Services	2	0	2
Orthopaedic Surgery	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	11	0	11
Prison Services	1	0	1
Theatres	24	0	24
Lagan Valley Hospital Total	277	2	279
Total	2,015	18	2,033

Doctor vacancies by Location, Department and length of time vacant

Location & Department	Vacant	Of which: Vacant Longer Than 6 Months
Ulster Hospital		
Accident & Emergency Services	1	-
Medical Specialities	11	2
Urology	1	-
Ulster Hospital Total	13	2

The South Eastern HSC Trust have no medical posts vacant longer than 1 year.

Band 5 Nursing & Midwifery vacancies * by Location, Department and length of time vacant

Location & Department	Vacant	Of which: Vacant longer than 6 months
Ards Community Hospital		
Minor Injuries Hospital (MIH)	2	2
Ards Community Hospital Total	2	2
Ulster Hospital		
Accident & Emergency Services/MAU	4	3
Cardiology	2	0
Elderly Programme Of Care	14	4
General Medicine - Haematology/Diabetes/GI	5	3
General Surgery- Women and Men Elective/Non-Elective	7	0

Location & Department	Vacant	Of which: Vacant longer than 6 months
General Medicine- Not Assigned	36	0
Mental Health - Hospital	2	0
Midwifery Services - Hospital	5	0
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	1	0
Orthopaedic Surgery	14	0
Outpatient Services	1	1
Plastic Surgery	2	0
Respiratory Investigation	10	4
Ulster Hospital Total	103	15
Downe Hospital		
Accident & Emergency Services/MAU	1	0
General Medicine	2	0
Midwifery Services - Hospital	5	1
Downe Hospital Total	8	1
Lagan Valley Hospital		
Accident & Emergency Services/MAU	4	0
Elderly Programme Of Care	2	0
General Medicine	2	0
Mental Health - Hospital	4	0
Midwifery Services - Hospital	3	0
Lagan Valley Hospital Total	15	0
Total	128	18

* Band 5 only, no vacancies at Band 6 and above

Southern HSC Trust

Doctor posts by Location, Department, Job Description and Contract Type*

*Doctors in training (registrars and foundation doctors) are included as temporary as they are on planned 6 month rotations.

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Craigavon Area Hospital				
Accident & Emergency Services	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	7	0	7
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	6	6
	GP Sessions	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	8	8
	Trust Appointment For Services	0	1	1

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Anaesthetics	Consultant (NC)	26	1	27
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	3	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	17	17
Cancer Services	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
	GP Sessions	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Cardiology	Assoc Specialist (Old Contract)	1	0	1
	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	5	0	5
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	1	3
Dermatology	Assoc Specialist (Old Contract)	3	0	3
	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
	GP Sessions	0	5	5
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Director's Office	Consultant (NC)	1	1	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
ENT - Otolaryngology	Consultant (NC)	7	1	8
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	5	5
General Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	16	1	17
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	12	12
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	9	9
	Hosp Pract (Sessions)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	6	0	6
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	25	25
General Surgery	Associate Specialist (NC)	3	0	3
	Consultant (NC)	7	0	7
	Consultant (Sessions)	1	0	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	11	11
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	9	9

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Geriatric Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	4	0	4
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Histo/Cyto	Consultant (NC)	0	1	1
Learning Disability-Hosp	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
Mental Health - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	7	3	10
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	4	4
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	8	8
	Trust Appointment For Services	0	1	1
Neurology	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant (NC)	10	1	11
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	15	15
Orthodontics	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
Orthopaedic Surgery	Consultant (NC)	9	0	9
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	3	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	4	2	6
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	3	3
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	11	0	11
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	8	0	8
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	2	2
	GP Sessions	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	7	0	7
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	14	14
Pathology	Consultant (NC)	11	1	12
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Radiology	Consultant (NC)	16	1	17
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	5	5
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Urology	Consultant (NC)	6	0	6
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
Craigavon Area Hospital Total		216	193	409

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Daisy Hill Hospital				
Accident & Emergency Services	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	3	3
	GP Sessions	5	0	5
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	2	2
Anaesthetics	Consultant (NC)	7	0	7
	GP Sessions	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	5	0	5
Day Care Services	Consultant (NC)	4	0	4
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
General Medicine	Consultant (NC)	5	3	8
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	8	8
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	4	4
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	5	0	5
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	9	9
	Staff Grade (Old Contract)	1	0	1
General Surgery	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	7	1	8
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	4	4
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	3	3
GUM	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
Geriatric Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
Mental Health - Hospital	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant (NC)	7	1	8
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	5	0	5
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	4	4
	Staff Grade (Old Contract)	1	0	1
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	15	0	15

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	4	0	4
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	GP Sessions	0	2	2
	GP With Specialist Interest	2	1	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	7	0	7
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	7	7
	Trust Appointment For Services	0	1	1
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
Radiology	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
Renal	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Daisy Hill Hospital Total		101	62	163
Lurgan Hospital				
Geriatric Medicine	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
Older People Services-Hosp	GP Sessions	0	1	1
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	1	3
Lurgan Hospital Total		8	2	10
South Tyrone Hospital				
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Trust Appointment For Services	0	1	1
General Surgery	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Geriatric Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	2	0	2
South Tyrone Hospital Total		10	1	11

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
St. Luke's Hospital				
Geriatric Medicine	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Home Treatment/ Crisis Response	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
Learning Disability- Hosp	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
Mental Health - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	2	2
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	2	0	2
St. Luke's Hospital Total		15	4	19
Tower Hill Hospital				
Mental Health - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	GP Sessions	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1	2
Tower Hill Hospital Total		4	2	6
Other Sites				
Bank	GP ICATS	1	0	1
Child &Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant (NC)	5	0	5
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Eating Disorder Services	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
Family Planning	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
GUM	GP Sessions	0	1	1
Orthopaedic Services	GP ICATS	6	0	6
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	GP Sessions	0	1	1
Paediatric Services - Hosp	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
Other Sites Total		22	3	25
Total		376	267	643

Registered Nursing posts by Location, Department, Job Description and Contract Type

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Craigavon Area Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Deputy Wd Sr/CN (6)	14	0	14
	Acute Nurse (5)	702	10	712
	Acute Nurse (6)	108	4	112
	Acute Nurse (7)	46	0	46
	Acute Nurse (8A)	3	0	3
	Acute Wd Sr/CN (6)	2	0	2
	Acute Wd Sr/CN (7)	14	0	14
Learning Disability	Learn Dis Deputy Wd Sr/ CN (6)	1	0	1
	Learn Disability Wd Sr/ CN (7)	1	0	1
	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	6	1	7
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	1	0	1
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	67	0	67
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	13	0	13
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	3	0	3
	Mental Health Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
	Mental Health Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
	Mental Health Wd Sr/CN (7)	5	0	5
	Mental Hth Dep Wd Sr/ CN (6)	1	0	1
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager(8A)	1	0	1
	Multiservice Nurse Manager(8B)	5	0	5
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (7)	11	0	11
	Nurse Manager (8A)	5	0	5
	Nurse Manager (8B)	5	0	5
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Dep Wd Sr/CN (6)	5	0	5
	Paediatric Nurse (5)	56	1	57
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	8	0	8
	Paediatric Nurse (7)	5	0	5
	Paediatric Wd Sr/CN (7)	1	0	1
Researcher	Researcher (6)	2	1	3
	Researcher (7)	1	0	1
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (7)	3	0	3

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Treatment Room Nursing	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (6)	1	0	1
	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (7)	2	0	2
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	8	1	9
	Specialist Nurse (7)	43	0	43
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	1	1	2
Craigavon Area Hospital Total		1,152	19	1,171
Daisy Hill Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Deputy Wd Sr/CN (6)	10	0	10
	Acute Nurse (5)	316	0	316
	Acute Nurse (6)	18	0	18
	Acute Nurse (7)	8	0	8
	Acute Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
	Acute Nurse Support (3)	1	0	1
	Acute Wd Sr/CN (7)	11	0	11
District Nursing	District Nurse (6)	0	1	1
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	11	1	12
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	18	0	18
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	4	0	4
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (7)	1	1	2
	Nurse Manager (8A)	1	0	1
	Nurse Manager (8B)	2	0	2
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Dep Wd Sr/CN (6)	2	0	2
	Paediatric Nurse (5)	31	1	32
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	5	0	5
	Paediatric Nurse (7)	2	0	2
	Paediatric Wd Sr/CN (7)	3	0	3
Researcher	Researcher (6)	1	0	1
Treatment Room Nursing	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (7)	1	0	1
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (5)	1	0	1
	Specialist Nurse (6)	3	0	3
	Specialist Nurse (7)	16	0	16
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	2	0	2
Daisy Hill Hospital Total		469	4	473
Lurgan Hospital				

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	67	8	75
	Acute Nurse (6)	6	1	7
	Acute Nurse (7)	1	0	1
District Nursing	District Nurse (6)	14	0	14
	District Nurse (7)	1	0	1
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	9	0	9
	Health Visitor (7)	1	0	1
	Student Health Visitor (5)	2	0	2
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (6)	1	0	1
Non Acute	Non-Acute Wd Sr/CN (7)	4	0	4
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (8A)	1	0	1
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	1	0	1
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	1	0	1
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (7)	1	0	1
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	5	0	5
	Specialist Nurse (7)	13	1	14
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
	Specialist Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
Lurgan Hospital Total		130	10	140
South Tyrone Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	82	2	84
	Acute Nurse (6)	4	0	4
	Acute Nurse (7)	12	0	12
District Nursing	District Nurse (6)	7	0	7
	District Nurse (7)	1	0	1
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	9	0	9
	Health Visitor (7)	1	0	1
	Student Health Visitor (5)	1	0	1
Learning Disability	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	11	0	11
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	1	0	1
	Learning Disability Nurse (7)	2	0	2
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	3	0	3
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	6	0	6
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	3	0	3
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	2	0	2
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	1	0	1

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (7)	2	0	2
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	3	0	3
	Specialist Nurse (7)	9	0	9
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
South Tyrone Hospital Total		161	2	163
St. Luke's Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	4	1	5
	Acute Nurse (6)	7	0	7
	Acute Nurse (7)	1	1	2
District Nursing	District Nurse (7)	1	0	1
Family Planning	Family Planning Nurse (6)	2	0	2
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (7)	4	0	4
	Health Visitor (8A)	2	0	2
Learning Disability	Learn Dis Deputy Wd Sr/ CN (6)	1	0	1
	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	3	1	4
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	5	0	5
	Learning Disability Nurse (7)	5	0	5
	Learning Disability Nurse (8A)	2	0	2
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	24	2	26
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	20	0	20
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	19	0	19
	Mental Health Nurse (8A)	4	0	4
	Mental Health Wd Sr/CN (7)	1	0	1
	Mental Hth Dep Wd Sr/ CN (6)	2	0	2
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (6)	1	0	1
	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	0	1
School Nursing	School Nurse (5)	6	0	6
	School Nurse (6)	1	0	1
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (5)	1	0	1
	Teacher/Trainer (6)	2	0	2
	Teacher/Trainer (7)	4	0	4

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	6	0	6
	Specialist Nurse (7)	18	0	18
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	2	0	2
	Specialist Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
St. Luke's Hospital Total		150	5	155
Tower Hill Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	3	0	3
District Nursing	District Nurse (5)	1	0	1
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	2	0	2
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	11	0	11
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	2	0	2
Tower Hill Hospital Total		19	0	19
Other Sites				
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	119	2	121
	Acute Nurse (6)	1	0	1
	Acute Nurse (7)	2	0	2
District Nursing	District Nurse (5)	3	0	3
	District Nurse (6)	47	1	48
	District Nurse (7)	8	0	8
Family Planning	Family Planning Nurse (6)	1	0	1
	Family Planning Nurse (7)	1	0	1
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	83	0	83
	Health Visitor (7)	8	0	8
	Student Health Visitor (5)	5	2	7
Learning Disability	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	38	1	39
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	17	0	17
	Learning Disability Nurse (7)	8	0	8
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	26	1	27
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	48	1	49
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	17	0	17
	Mental Health Nurse (8A)	5	0	5
	Mental Health Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (6)	2	0	2
	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	0	1

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (6)	1	0	1
	Nurse Manager (7)	4	0	4
	Nurse Manager (8A)	2	0	2
	Nurse Manager (8B)	3	0	3
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	10	0	10
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	6	0	6
	Paediatric Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
Researcher	Researcher (8A)	1	0	1
School Nursing	School Nurse (5)	20	0	20
	School Nurse (6)	4	0	4
	School Nurse (7)	2	0	2
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (6)	1	0	1
	Teacher/Trainer (7)	13	0	13
Treatment Room Nursing	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (5)	21	2	23
	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (6)	1	0	1
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	6	0	6
	Specialist Nurse (7)	18	0	18
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
	Specialist Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
Other Sites Total		557	10	567
Total		2,638	50	2,688

Doctor vacancies by Location, Department, Job Description and length of time vacant

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Craigavon Area Hospital			
Accident & Emergency Services	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0
	Consultant (NC)	4	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	2
	Trust Appointment For Services	2	0
Anaesthetics	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0
Cancer Services	Consultant (NC)	1	1
General Medicine	Consultant (NC)	3	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0
General Surgery	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0
	Consultant (NC)	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	1	0

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Geriatric Medicine	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0
Histo/Cyto	Consultant (NC)	1	1
Mental Health - Hosp	Consultant (NC)	1	0
Neurology	Consultant (NC)	1	0
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0
Orthopaedic Surgery	Consultant (NC)	2	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	2	0
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	Foundation House Officer 2	2	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1
Pathology	Consultant (NC)	1	0
Radiology	Consultant (NC)	4	4
Urology	Specialty Registrar (Str)	2	1
Craigavon Area Hospital Total		44	15
Daisy Hill Hospital			
Accident & Emergency Services	Consultant (NC)	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	6	5
Anaesthetics	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	1
General Medicine	Consultant (NC)	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	3
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	1	1
General Surgery	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	1
Paediatric Services - Hosp	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0
Daisy Hill Hospital Total		21	14
Lurgan Hospital			
Geriatric Medicine	Consultant (NC)	4	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	6	3
Paediatric Serv - Comm	Consultant (NC)	1	0
Lurgan Hospital Total		11	4
South Tyrone Hospital			
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	1	0
South Tyrone Hospital Total		1	0

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Tower Hill Hospital			
Paediatric Serv - Community	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	GP Sessions	1	1
Tower Hill Hospital Total		2	1
Other Sites			
Paediatric Serv - Community	Consultant (NC)	4	1
Other Sites Total		4	1
Total		83	35

Registered Nursing vacancies by Location, Department, Job Description and length of time vacant

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Craigavon Area Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	60	7
	Acute Nurse (6)	5	1
	Acute Nurse (7)	1	0
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	16	10
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	2	0
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (7)	4	2
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	6	2
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	1	0
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	4	0
Craigavon Area Hospital Total		99	22
Daisy Hill Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Deputy Wd Sr/CN (6)	2	0
	Acute Nurse (5)	18	5
	Acute Nurse (7)	2	1
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	2	0
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	3	0
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (7)	2	0
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Dep Wd Sr/CN (6)	1	0
	Paediatric Nurse (5)	7	0
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (7)	2	1
Daisy Hill Hospital Total		39	7
Lurgan Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	31	8
District Nursing	District Nurse (7)	1	1

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	5	0
	Specialist Nurse (7)	3	0
Lurgan Hospital Total		40	9
South Tyrone Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	13	9
	Acute Nurse (6)	2	1
	Acute Nurse (7)	1	0
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	2	0
Learning Disability	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	2	0
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	1	0
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	1
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	1	1
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (7)	2	1
South Tyrone Hospital Total		25	13
St. Luke's Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	2	0
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	8	0
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	8	2
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	1	0
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	0
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	4	2
	Specialist Nurse (7)	2	0
St. Luke's Hospital Total		26	4
Tower Hill Hospital			
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (7)	2	1
Tower Hill Hospital Total		2	2
Other Sites			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (6)	1	0
District Nursing	District Nurse (6)	1	1
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	6	2
	Student Health Visitor (5)	1	0
Learning Disability	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	2	0
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	8	0
	Learning Disability Nurse (7)	1	0
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	5	1
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	7	1
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	2	0
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	0

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	3	1
Treatment Room Nursing	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (5)	7	2
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	3	0
	Specialist Nurse (7)	1	0
Other Sites Total		49	8
Total		280	64

Western HSC Trust

Medical posts by Location, Department and Contract Type

***Doctors in training are included as temporary as they are on planned 6 month rotations.**

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Altnagelvin Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	11	12	23
Acute Medical Unit	2	4	6
Anaesthetics	29	19	48
Biochemistry	1	0	1
Cardiology Alt. Medi	9	2	11
CDU	0	2	2
COTE Medical	2	4	6
Dermatology	2	0	2
Diabetic Consultants	2	0	2
E.N.T.	11	6	17
G.U.M. Clinic	2	0	2
Gastro Specialty Medicine	3	2	5
General Medicine Training	2	33	35
General Surgery	7	24	31
Gynaecology	0	1	1
Haematology	2	1	3
Histopathology	7	1	8
ICATS ENT	1	0	1
ICATS Ophthalmology	1	0	1
ICATS Orthopaedics	1	0	1
Juniors	0	2	2
Microbiology	2	0	2
Neurology	3	0	3
Obstetrics	11	17	28
Occupational Health	0	1	1
Office of Medical Director	0	1	1
Ophthalmology	10	3	13

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Oral Surgery	4	10	14
Orthodontics – Medical	2	1	3
Orthopaedics	13	17	30
Paediatrics Medical	11	15	26
Palliative care	2	1	3
Radio CTR – General In	7	2	9
Renal Alt. Medical	2	0	2
Respiratory Alt. Medicine	4	1	5
Rheumatology	2	1	3
Sperrin Ward 43 – AL	1	0	1
SPRUCE Y.C.SICK	0	1	1
Stroke Services	1	0	1
SWH – General Medicine	0	1	1
Urology Department	7	3	10
Respiratory	0	2	2
Ward 44 SW Alt	0	2	2
WH&SST	2	0	2
X-Ray Department	10	9	19
Altnagelvin Hospital Total	189	201	390
Grangewood			
Psychiatry	2	0	2
Juniors	1	8	9
Medical	2	0	2
Grangewood Total	5	8	13
South West Acute Hospital			
Accident & Emergency / ED	4	2	6
Anaesthetics	8	1	9
Cardiology	1	0	1
COTE	2	0	2
Gynae Ward	5	3	8
ICATS Orthopaedics	0	1	1
Juniors	0	1	1
Medi & Surg Assessment Unit	1	0	1
Medical Staff	3	0	3
MSAU Medical	1	1	2
Oral Surgery	1	0	1
Palliative Care	0	1	1
Rheumatology	1	0	1
School Health SER. M	2	0	2

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Stroke Services	1	0	1
Surgical Specialty	10	7	17
Surgical Ward	0	7	7
Paediatric Medicine	5	5	10
General Medicine	7	18	25
X-Ray Dept SWAH	6	0	6
South West Acute Total	58	47	105
Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital			
Child & Adol. Mental Health	3	0	3
Psychiatry	3	0	3
Elderly	1	0	1
Juniors	0	10	10
Medical	2	0	2
Tyrone & Fermanagh Total	9	10	19
Tyrone County Hospital			
Anaesthetics	1	0	1
ICATS ENT	1	0	1
ICATS Orthopaedics	1	0	1
Palliative Care	1	0	1
Renal	4	3	7
Surgical Specialty	1	1	2
General Medicine	1	0	1
Tyrone County Total	10	4	14
Waterside Hospital			
Acute care at Home	1	0	1
Dental	1	0	1
Waterside Hospital Total	2	0	2
Total	274	270	544

Hospital Nursing posts by Location, Department and Contract Type

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Altnagelvin	1,111	33	1,144
Grangewood	54	1	55
Lakeview	32	0	32
South West Acute	486	12	498
Tyrone & Fermanagh	128	4	132
Tyrone County	144	5	149
Waterside	70	3	73

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Total	2,025	58	2,083

Medical vacancies (WTE) by Location, Department and Job Description

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant
Altnagelvin Hospital		
Accident & Emergency	Consultant	4
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	5
Anaesthetics	Consultant	3
Dermatology	Consultant	1
Ophthalmology	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade/ Hospital Practitioner/GPI CATS	1 Temp
Otolaryngology	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade/ Trust Dr/GPI CATS	1 Temp
General Medicine	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	4
	F1	2
General Medicine (Ward 1) Gastroenterology	Consultant	2
General Medicine (Ward 3) Respiratory	Consultant	1
General Medicine (Ward 20/42) Care of the Elderly/ Stroke	Consultant	2
General Medicine (Ward 20/42) Care of the Elderly (Opal Service)	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	1
	StR3+	1.4
Acute Medical Unit (Ward 41)	Consultant	2
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade/ Trust Doctor	3
Orthodontics	Consultant	1
General Surgery	Consultant	1
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant	2
	StR3 + (Registrar level)	2
Paediatrics	Consultant	2.5
	StR3 + (Registrar level)	1
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	1.4
Neuro-Rehabilitation	Consultant	1
Haematology	Consultant	2
Radiology	Consultant	6
Oncology	Consultant	5
	Specialty Doctor	1
Altnagelvin Hospital Total		59.3
Bridgeview		
Community Paediatrics	Consultant	1
Bridgeview Total		1

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant
Grangewood		
Psychiatry - General Adult	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	0.2
Psychiatry - Old Age	Consultant	1
Grangewood Total		2.2
Woodlea House		
Psychiatry - Child & Adolescent	Consultant	0.4
Woodlea House Total		0.4
Lakeview		
Psychiatry - Learning Disability	Consultant	1
Lakeview Total		1
South West Acute Hospital		
Accident & Emergency	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	15
	GP Trainee	1
Anaesthetics	Consultant	2
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	4
General Medicine	Consultant	2
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	4
Palliative Medicine	Consultant	1
Radiology	Consultant	1
General Surgery	Consultant	1
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	2
Paediatrics	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	1
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	4
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Reg Level	6
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	5
Occupational Health	Specialty Doctor	1
South West Acute Hospital Total		53
Tyrone County Hospital		
Geriatrics	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	3
OPAL	Specialty Doctor	1
Tyrone County Hospital Total		5
Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital		

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant
Addictions	Consultant	0.5
Old Age Psychiatry	Consultant	2
Community Psychiatry	Consultant	1
Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital Total		3.5
Omagh Health Centre		
Community Paediatrics (Omagh Health Centre)	Associate Specialist/Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	1.5
Community Paediatrics (Enniskillen Health Centre)	Associate Specialist/Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	1
Omagh Health Centre Total		2.5
Total		127.9

The Western HSC Trust were unable to provide a breakdown by length of time vacant.

Nursing vacancies

There are currently 110 Band 5 and above nursing posts which are actively being recruited.

A breakdown by duration of medical or nursing vacancies cannot be provided.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of doctor and nursing posts in each Health and Social Care Trust, broken down by speciality and grade; and what number and proportion are currently vacant in each speciality.
(AQW 5039/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

Belfast HSC Trust

Medical posts by Department, Job Description and Contract Type*

*Doctors in training (registrars and foundation doctors) are listed as temporary as they are on planned 6 month rotations.

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Accident & Emergency Services	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	20	1	21
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	16	16
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor	7	0	7
	Specialty Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	15	15
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1
Anaesthetics	Associate Specialist	3	0	3
	Consultant	100	23	123
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	1	1
	Locum	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	20	20
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	54	54
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1
Blood Transfusion Services	Consultant	1	0	1
	Medical Practitioner	0	1	1
Brain Injury Services	Consultant	1	0	1
Cancer Services	Consultant	8	1	9
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3
Cardiac Surgery	Consultant	3	0	3
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	6	6
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	3	3
	Trust Appointment for Service	0	2	2
Cardiology	Associate Specialist	5	0	5
	Clinical Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	20	2	22
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	5	5
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	7	7
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	11	11
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	10	10
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1
Chemical Pathology	Specialty Registrar (STR)	0	1	1
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant	14	2	16
	Specialist Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2
	Staff Grade Practitioner	0	1	1
Clinic Electrophysiology	Specialist Registrar	0	2	2
Clinical Chemistry	Consultant	4	0	4
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full		1	1
Clinical Neuro-Physiology	Consultant	2	0	2
Cytopathology	Consultant	2	0	2
Dental Services - Hospital	Consultant	4	0	4
	Dental Practitioner	5	0	5
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	1	1
	Hospital Practitioner	2	0	2
	Specialty Doctor	2	0	2

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	4	4
	Year 2 Dentist	0	9	9
Dental Services -Community	Dental Officer	13	0	13
	Senior Dental Officer	4	0	4
Dental Surgery	Consultant	1	0	1
	Consultant NC	1	0	1
	Speciality Registrar	0	1	1
Dental/Paed & Prevent	Consultant	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
Dentistry - Restorative	Specialty Doctor	0	2	2
Dermatology	Associate Specialist	1		1
	Consultant	9	1	10
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	3	3
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	6	6
Elderly Programme Of Care	Consultant	2	0	2
	Visiting Medical Officer	1	0	1
Endocrinology & Diabetes	Consultant	6	0	6
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	1	4	5
ENT - Otolaryngology	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	7	1	8
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	2	2
	Medical Practitioner	1	0	1
	Speciality Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	5	5
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	5	5
Family Planning Services	Associate Specialist	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor	5	1	6
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	1	2
Fractures & Orthopaedics	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	4	4

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
General Medicine	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	39	6	45
	Consultant Locum	1	0	1
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	2	2
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	36	36
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	36	36
	Hospital Practitioner	1	0	1
	Locum	0	3	3
	Specialty Registrar	0	3	3
	Specialty Doctor	8	1	9
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	14	14
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	1	44	45
General Practitioner Services	Consultant	0	1	1
	General Med practitioner/GP	9	27	36
General Surgery	Clinical Fellow	0	3	3
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	22	1	23
	Consultant Locum	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	28	28
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	9	9
	Locum	0	2	2
	Locum Appt for Training	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	15	15
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	11	11
Genito-Urinary Medicine	Clinical Research Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	4	0	4
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2
	Staff Grade	1	1	2
Geriatric Medicine	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	13	1	14
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	8	8
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	4	4
	Specialty Doctor	5	1	6
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	5	5
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	7	7

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Haematology	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	8	1	9
	Consultant Locum	2	0	2
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	11	11
Histopathology	Consultant	16	1	17
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	18	18
Immuno Pathology	Consultant	3	1	4
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	1	1
Infectious Diseases	Consultant	3	0	3
Learning Disability -Hospital	Core Trainee (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	3	3
Mammography	Consultant	4	0	4
Medical Genetics	Consultant	5	0	5
Medical Oncology	Consultant	7	0	7
Mental Health - Hospital	Specialty Registrar	1	0	1
Microbiology	Consultant	10	0	10
	Locum	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	7	7
Nephrology	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	10	3	13
	Consultant Locum	2	1	3
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	3	3
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	1	1
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	7	7
Neuro Surgery	Consultant	10	1	11
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	5	5
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	3	3
Neurology	Consultant	10	2	12
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	4	4
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	2	1	3

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	8	8
Neuropathology	Consultant	1	0	1
Not assigned	Consultant	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Speciality Registrar (STR)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
Nursing Community	Consultant (Macmillan GP Facilitator)	2	0	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Associate Specialist	3	0	3
	Consultant	27	4	31
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	4	4
	Locum	0	5	5
	Specialist Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	0	3	3
	Specialty Doctor	5	0	5
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	37	37
Occupational Health Services	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	1	0	1
	Director	1	0	1
	Hospital Practitioner	1	0	1
	Medical Practitioner	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	1	1	2
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2
Ophthalmology Services	Associate Specialist	4	1	5
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	25	2	27
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	3	3
	Medical Practitioner	1	0	1
	Speciality Doctor	2	0	2
	Speciality Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	11	11
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1
Orthodontics	Consultant	1	0	1
Orthopaedic Surgery	Associate Specialist	2	0	2
	Clinical Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	33	6	39
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	8	8
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	3	3

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
	Locum	0	1	1
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Speciality Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor	4	0	4
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	5	5
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	15	15
	Staff Grade Practitioner	0	1	1
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	5	0	5
	Specialty Doctor	2	0	2
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Associate Specialist	2	0	2
	Clinical Fellow	0	3	3
	Consultant	44	2	46
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	3	3
	Locum Appt for Training	0	2	2
	Medical Practitioner	4	0	4
	Speciality Doctor	1	0	1
	Speciality Registrar	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	1	57	58
	Trust Appt for Services	0	2	2
Paediatric Surgery	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2
Plastic Surgery	Consultant	4	0	4
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	Associate Specialist	4	0	4
	Consultant	37	13	50
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	2	2
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	6	6
	Hospital Practitioner	1	0	1
	Locum Consultant	1	0	1
	Speciality Doctor	4	0	4
	Speciality Registrar (STR)	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	11	11
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	14	14
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1
Radiography (Diagnostic)	Consultant	1	0	1
Radiology	Consultant	41	7	48
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	29	29

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Radiotherapy	Associate Specialist	3	0	3
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	19	3	22
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	2	2
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	5	5
	Associate Specialist	1	2	3
	Clinical Research Fellow	2	0	2
	Consultant	0	4	4
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	22	22
Renal Failure Surgery	Consultant	0	1	1
Respiratory Investigation	Consultant	4	0	4
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	Consultant	11	0	11
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	3	3
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	7	7
Thor/Cardiac Surgery	Clinical Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	4	2	6
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	2	2
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	3	3
	Locum Appt for Training	0	2	2
Thoracic Medicine	Consultant	5	0	5
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
Thoracic Surgery	Clinical Fellow	0	3	3
	Consultant	4	0	4
Urology	Clinical Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	8	1	9
	Locum	0	2	2
	Speciality Doctor	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	1	1
Vascular Surgery	Consultant	6	1	7
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Speciality Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	5	5

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
	Trust Appointment for Service	1	0	1
Other	Specialty Doctor	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2
Total		839	997	1,836

Nursing & Midwifery posts

The Belfast HSC Trust were unable to provide this information by specialty in the timeframe required, however have 7,418 employed in the Nursing & Midwifery staff group (including support) in total, 181 temporary.

Medical vacancies by Specialty and Grade

Grade	Specialty / Sub specialty	Vacancies (WTE)
Paediatric Consultant	ENT	1
	Allergy	1
	Emergency Medicine	1
	Community and General	1
	Gastroenterology	1
	Radiology	2.75
Consultant	Care of the Elderly	1
	Stroke Medicine	1
	Occupational Medicine	1
	Neonatalology	1.6
	Urogynaecology	1
	Gynae Oncology	1
	GUM & HIV	1
	Oral Medicine	1
	Restorative Dentistry	1
	Vascular Surgery	1
	Thoracic Surgery	1
	Cellular Pathology	0.5
	Histopathology	1
	Acute and General	3
	Neurology	1
	Clinical Genetics	1
	Clinical Oncology	1
	Anaesthetics (Cardiac)	2
	Radiology (Interventional)	1
	Intensive Care	5
	Emergency Medicine	2
	Locum Consultant in Psychiatry	1
Specialty Doctor	Care of the Elderly	1
	Community Paediatrics	1
	Orthomedicine	1

Grade	Specialty / Sub specialty	Vacancies (WTE)
	Rehabilitation	1
	Nephrology	1
	Oncology	1
	Rheumatology	1
	Breast Surgery	1
	Anaesthetics	2
	Medicine	1
	Ambulatory Care	1
	Neurosurgery	1
Clinical Fellow	Care of the Elderly	1
	Trauma & Orthopaedics	1
	Paediatric Cardiology	1
	Acute Medicine /CAU	7
	Adult Congenital Heart Disease	1
	Neurosurgery	1
	Interventional Cardiology	1
Doctors in Training	Anaesthetics	2
	Cardiothoracic Surgery	2
	Emergency Medicine	1
	General Surgery (HST)	3
	Histopathology	1
	Medical Oncology	4
	Haematology	1
	Genetics	2
	Clinical Oncology	2
	Haematology	1
	General Medicine ACCS	1
	Geriatrics	1
	Gastroenterology	1
	Microbiology	1
	Pathology	1
	Cardiology	1
	Immunology	1
	Rheumatology	2
	Obs & Gynae	8
	Paediatrics	4
	Psychiatry	10
	Radiology	4
Total		117.85

The Belfast HSC Trust were unable to provide a breakdown by length of time vacant.

Nursing vacancies

Of the 219 Band 5 nursing vacancies in the Belfast HSC Trust, 170 are adult nursing, 15 children's nursing, 14 mental health nursing and 20 learning disability nursing). Of the adult nursing vacancies, 20 of these have been vacant since September 2014/September 2015, 1 has been vacant since September 2013/September 2014 and 1 vacant since January 2013.

Northern HSC Trust**Hospital only Doctor posts by Hospital, Department and Contract Type**

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Antrim Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	26	0	26
Anaesthetics	37	2	39
Cancer Services	2	3	5
Cardiology	4	0	4
Chair/Non Executive	1	0	1
Dental Surgery	1	0	1
Dermatology	7	0	7
ENT - Otolaryngology	11	0	11
General Administration	1	0	1
General Medicine	95	1	96
General Surgery	32	2	34
Haematology	3	0	3
Histopathology	1	1	2
Integrated Primary Care	1	0	1
Medical Management	0	1	1
Nephrology	2	0	2
Neurology	1	0	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	27	5	32
Paediatric Services - Hospital	37	0	37
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	3	2	5
Radiology	21	0	21
Renal	6	1	7
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	6	1	7
Surgical Gastroenterology	0	1	1
Antrim Hospital Total	325	20	345
Antrim Hospital: Alder House			
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	2	0	2
Antrim Hospital: Alder House Total	2	0	2
Antrim Hospital: Laboratory			
Clinical Chemistry	3	0	3
Haematology	2	0	2
Histo/Cyto	1	0	1

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Histopathology	5	0	5
Microbiology	3	1	4
Antrim Hospital: Laboratory Total	14	1	15
Antrim Hospital: The Rowan			
Specialist Services	3	0	3
Antrim Hospital: The Rowan Total	3	0	3
Causeway Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	5	0	5
Anaesthetics	14	1	15
Cardiology	1	0	1
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	1	1	2
Dermatology	1	0	1
General Medicine	29	3	32
General Surgery	24	1	25
Genito-Urinary Medicine	1	1	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	14	2	16
Paediatric Services - Hospital	8	1	9
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	9	0	9
Radiology	3	0	3
Causeway Hospital Total	110	10	120
Dalriada Hospital			
Community Medicine	2	0	2
Dalriada Hospital Total	2	0	2
Holywell Hospital			
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	50	1	51
Holywell Hospital Total	50	1	51
Mid Ulster Hospital			
Dermatology ICATS	1	0	1
General Medicine	2	0	2
Ophthalmology Services	1	0	1
Mid Ulster Hospital Total	4	0	4
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Community Svc Centre			
Paediatric Services - Community	1	0	1
Moyle Community Svc Centre Total	1	0	1
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Medical Centre			
General Medicine	1	0	1
Moyle Hospital: Medical Centre Total	1	0	1

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Robinson Hospital			
Paediatric Services - Hospital	2	0	2
Robinson Hospital Total	2	0	2
Route Hospital			
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	1	0	1
Route Hospital Total	1	0	1
Whiteabbey Hospital			
Dermatology	1	0	1
General Medicine		1	1
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	3	0	3
Whiteabbey Hospital Total	4	1	5
Total	519	33	552

All Doctor posts by Department, Job Description and Contract Type

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Accident & Emergency	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant	9	0	9
	Foundation House Officer 2	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	14	0	14
Anaesthetics	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant	25	3	28
	Core Trainee (CT)	8	0	8
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	8	0	8
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	7	0	7
Cancer Services	Consultant	1	1	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	2	3
Cardiology	Consultant	2	0	2
	Core Trainee (CT)	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	1	0	1
Chair/Non Executive	Consultant	1	0	1
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant	5	1	6
	Core Trainee (CT)	1		1
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment		1	1
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	1	0	1
Clinical Chemistry	Consultant	3	0	3

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Community Medicine	GP Sessions	1	1	2
	P/T Med Pract (Sessions)	1	0	1
Dental Surgery	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Dermatology	Consultant	4	0	4
	Core Trainee (CT)	1	0	1
	Hosp Pract (Sessions)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
Dermatology ICATS	GP Sessions	1	0	1
ENT - Otolaryngology	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant	5	0	5
	Core Trainee (CT)	2	0	2
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	1	0	1
Family Planning Services	GP SESSIONS	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	9	1	10
General Administration	Consultant	1	0	1
General Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	6	0	6
	Consultant	36	1	37
	Core Trainee (CT)	11	0	11
	Foundation House Officer 1	25	0	25
	Foundation House Officer 2	23	0	23
	HOSP PRACT (SESSIONS)	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	11	2	13
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	18	0	18
General Surgery	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant	16	1	17
	Core Trainee (CT)	11	0	11
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment		1	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	12	0	12
	Foundation House Officer 2	6	0	6
	P/T Med Pract (Sessions)	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	7	0	7
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	2	0	2
Genito-Urinary Medicine	GP Sessions	1	0	1
	P/T Med Pract (Sessions)	0	1	1
Haematology	Consultant	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Histo/Cyto	Consultant	1	0	1
Histopathology	Consultant	6	1	7

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Integrated Primary Care	Consultant	1	0	1
Medical Management	Consultant	0	1	1
Microbiology	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant	2	1	3
Nephrology	Core Trainee (CT)	2	0	2
Neurology	Consultant	1	0	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant	13	3	16
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	1	2	3
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	5	2	7
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	21	0	21
Ophthalmology Services	GP Sessions	1	0	1
Orthodontics	Consultant	1	0	1
Orthopaedic ICATS	GP Sessions	5	0	5
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	1	3
	Consultant	2	0	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Associate Specialist (NC)	6	0	6
	Consultant	14	0	14
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 2	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	21	0	21
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant	29	3	32
	Core Trainee (CT)	9	0	9
	Foundation House Officer 2	6	0	6
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	13	0	13
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	14	0	14
Radiology	Consultant	19	0	19
	P/T Med Pract (Sessions)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	4	0	4
Renal	Consultant	4	0	4
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1	2
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	1	0	1
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	Consultant	4	0	4
	Core Trainee (CT)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1	2

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Specialist Services	Consultant	2	0	2
	GP Sessions	1	0	1
Surgical Gastroenterology	Consultant	0	1	1
Total		554	37	591

Hospital Nursing posts by Hospital and Contract Type

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Antrim Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	84	0	84
Anaesthetics	4	0	4
Cancer Services	41	2	43
Child & Family Care Mgmt	1	0	1
Coronary Care	53	0	53
Day Procedures Services	32	0	32
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	17	2	19
Endocrinology & Diabetes	3	0	3
General Administration	1	0	1
General Medicine	199	3	202
General Surgery	103	4	107
Haematology	4	0	4
Infection Control	1	0	1
Integrated Primary Care	1	0	1
Intensive Care / HDU	53	0	53
Mental Health - Community	9	0	9
Mental Health - Mgt	3	0	3
Midwifery Services - Hospital	94	3	97
Nursing Administration	9	0	9
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	6	0	6
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	31	0	31
Outpatient Services	18	0	18
Paediatric Services - Community	1	0	1
Paediatric Services - Hospital	89	1	90
Patient Flow Services	10	0	10
Radiography (Diagnostic)	5	0	5
Rehab/Stroke Services - Community	1	0	1
Renal	36	0	36
Respiratory Investigation	2	1	3
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	5	0	5
Theatres	60	0	60

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Training & Development	1	0	1
Antrim Hospital Total	977	16	993
Antrim Hospital: Alder House			
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	10	0	10
Health Visiting	7	0	7
Paediatric Services - Community	4	0	4
Antrim Hospital: Alder House Total	21	0	21
Antrim Hospital: Bush House			
Bereavement Services	1	0	1
Coronary Care	1	0	1
Governance/Audit	0	2	2
Governance Cli/Social Care	2	0	2
Nursing Mgt (Multi-Services)	1	0	1
Training & Development	1	0	1
Antrim Hospital: Bush House Total	6	2	8
Antrim Hospital Site: Fern House			
Cancer Services	1	0	1
Coronary Care	2	0	2
General Surgery	1	1	2
Midwifery Services - Hospital	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt (Multi-Services)	1	0	1
Respiratory Investigation	1	0	1
Antrim Hospital: Fern House Total	7	1	8
Antrim Hospital Site: Laboratory			
Infection Control	5	0	5
Antrim Hospital: Laboratory Total	5	0	5
Antrim Hospital Site: The Rowan			
Specialist Services	5	0	5
Antrim Hospital: The Rowan Total	5	0	5
Antrim Hospital: Willow House			
Occupational Health Services	7	0	7
Antrim Hospital: Willow House Total	7	0	7
Causeway Hospital: Laboratory			
Infection Control	1	0	1
Causeway Hospital: Laboratory Total	1	0	1
Causeway Hospital: Main Building			

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Accident & Emergency	35	4	39
Cancer Services	4	0	4
Coronary Care	28	0	28
Day Procedures Services	29	1	30
Dermatology ICATS	3	0	3
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	34	0	34
Endocrinology & Diabetes	2	0	2
General Medicine	54	2	56
General Surgery	57	0	57
Infection Control	2	0	2
Intensive Care / HDU	22	0	22
Mental Health - Community	2	0	2
Mental Health - Hospital	21	0	21
Midwifery Services - Hospital	47	2	49
Midwifery Services - Community	1	0	1
Nursing Administration	3	0	3
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt (Multi-Services)	2	0	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	17	1	18
Ophthalmology Services	2	0	2
Outpatient Services	17	0	17
Paediatric Services - Community	5	0	5
Paediatric Services - Hospital	20	0	20
Patient Flow Services	6	0	6
Rehab/Stroke Services - Community	1	0	1
Respiratory Investigation	1	0	1
Theatres	38	0	38
Causeway Hospital: Main Building Total	454	10	464
Dalriada Hospital Site			
Community Medicine	22	0	22
Integrated Primary Care	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	1	0	1
Dalriada Hospital Total	24	0	24
Holywell Hospital			
Addictions Services/Community	1	0	1
Dementia Services	3	0	3
Eating Disorder Services	6	0	6
Health And Safety	2	0	2
Home Treatment/Crisis Res Services	24	0	24

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Human Resources	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	22	0	22
Mental Health - Hospital	135	0	135
Mental Health - Mgt	5	0	5
Midwifery Services - Hospital	1	0	1
Nurse Bank Relief	1	0	1
Holywell Hospital Site	201	0	201
Mid Ulster Hospital: Main Building			
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	19	0	19
Endocrinology & Diabetes	1	0	1
General Surgery	9	0	9
Infection Control	2	0	2
Integrated Primary Care	1	0	1
Midwifery Services - Community	11	2	13
Minor Injuries Hospital (MIH)	2	0	2
Nursing Community	2	0	2
Outpatient Services	7	0	7
Paediatric Services - Community	10	0	10
Paediatric Services - Hospital	6	0	6
Respiratory Investigation	3	0	3
Surestart Services	1	0	1
Theatres	11	0	11
Training & Development	5	0	5
Mid Ulster Hospital: Main Building Total	90	2	92
Moyle Hospital			
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	15	0	15
Integrated Primary Care	2	0	2
Mental Health - Community	1	0	1
Midwifery Services - Community	3	1	4
Nursing Community	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	3	0	3
Rehab/Stroke Services - Community	2	0	2
Respiratory Investigation	1	0	1
Moyle Hospital Total	28	1	29
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Com Svc Centre			
Integrated Primary Care	2	0	2
Nursing Mgt - Community	1	0	1
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Com Svc Centre Total	3	0	3

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Medical Centre			
Health Visiting	2	0	2
Integrated Primary Care	6	0	6
Mental Health - Community	2	0	2
Nursing Community	3	0	3
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Medical Centre Total	13	0	13
Robinson Hospital			
Acute Care At Home	6	0	6
Cancer Services	1	0	1
Community Medicine	18	0	18
Nursing Community	2	0	2
Robinson Hospital Total	27	0	27
Route Hospital			
Acute Care At Home	1	0	1
Community Medicine	1	0	1
Elderly Programme Of Care	3	0	3
Health And Safety	2	0	2
Nursing Administration	1	0	1
Nursing Community	8	0	8
Nursing Mgt - Community	2	0	2
Paediatric Services - Community	1	0	1
Respiratory Investigation	1	0	1
School Health Services	1	0	1
Training & Development	2	0	2
Route Hospital Total	23	0	23
Whiteabbey Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	1	0	1
Acute Care At Home	11	0	11
Coronary Care	2	0	2
Day Procedures Services	23	0	23
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	31	0	31
Endocrinology & Diabetes	2	0	2
General Administration	2	0	2
Health Promotion	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	12	0	12
Mental Health - Hospital	5	0	5
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	1	0	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	1	0	1

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Outpatient Services	13	0	13
Respiratory Investigation	2	0	2
Training & Development	2	0	2
Whiteabbey Hospital Total	109	0	109
Grand Total	2,001	32	2,033

All Registered Nursing & Midwifery posts by Department and Job Band

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Accident & Emergency	5	89	3	92
	6	14	0	14
	7	15	1	16
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
Acute Care At Home	5	33	0	33
	6	3	0	3
Addictions Services/ Community	6	2	1	3
	7	6	0	6
	8A	2	0	2
Anaesthetics	6	1	0	1
	8A	2	0	2
	8B	1	0	1
Autism Services	6	1	0	1
Bereavement Services	8A	1	0	1
Brain Injury Services	7	1	0	1
Cancer Services	5	29	0	29
	6	6	1	7
	7	9	1	10
	8A	2	0	2
	8B	1	0	1
Child & Family Care	5	1	0	1
	6	1	0	1
Child & Family Care Mgmt	8C	1	0	1
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	7	14	0	14
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
Community Medicine	5	37	0	37
	6	2	0	2
	7	2	0	2
Condition Management	6	1	0	1

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Continence Services	5	1	0	1
	6	3	0	3
	7	2	0	2
Coronary Care	5	57	0	57
	6	18	1	19
	7	13	0	13
	8A	1	0	1
Day Procedures Services	5	69	1	70
	6	8	0	8
	7	7	0	7
Dementia Services	6	19	0	19
	7	4	0	4
Dermatology	6	1	0	1
Dermatology ICATS	7	3	0	3
District Nursing Services	5	2	0	2
Domiciliary Care Specia.	5	1	0	1
Eating Disorder Services	7	5	0	5
	8A	1	0	1
Elderly Programme Of Care	6	8	0	8
	7	1	0	1
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	5	102	2	104
	6	9	0	9
	7	5	0	5
Endocrinology & Diabetes	6	6	0	6
	7	5	0	5
Falls Prevention Services	6	1	0	1
Family Planning Services	5	12	1	13
	6	1	2	3
	7	2	0	2
	8A	2	0	2
General Administration	8A	2	0	2
	8B	1	0	1
General Medicine	5	212	1	213
	6	26	4	30
	7	13	0	13
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
General Surgery	5	145	0	145
	6	12	3	15
	7	10	1	11

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
	8A	2	1	3
	8B	1	0	1
Genito-Urinary Medicine	6	2	0	2
	8A	1	0	1
Governance/Audit	6	0	2	2
Governance Cli/Social Care	7	2	0	2
Haematology	7	4	0	4
Health And Safety	6	2	0	2
	7	2	0	2
Health Promotion	6	3	0	3
	7	1	0	1
Health Visiting	5	38	2	40
	6	109	1	110
	7	31	0	31
	8A	5	0	5
Home Treatment/Crisis Response Services	6	6	0	6
	7	18	0	18
Human Resources	5	1	0	1
Infection Control	6	7	0	7
	7	3	0	3
	8A	2	0	2
Integrated Primary Care	5	167	2	169
	6	22	0	22
	7	23	0	23
Intensive Care / HDU	5	63	0	63
	6	10	0	10
	7	2	0	2
Learning Disability-Community	5	7	2	9
	6	13	0	13
	7	15	0	15
	8B	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	5	8	0	8
	6	49	0	49
	7	25	0	25
	8A	3	0	3
Mental Health - Hospital	5	137	0	137
	6	14	0	14
	7	20	0	20
	8A	1	0	1

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Mental Health - Mgt	7	3	0	3
	8A	2	0	2
	8B	3	0	3
Midwifery Services - Hospital	5	11	4	15
	6	109	1	110
	7	18	0	18
	8A	3	0	3
	8B	2	0	2
Midwifery Services - Community	6	66	6	72
	7	2	0	2
Minor Injuries Hosp (MIH)	7	2	0	2
Nurse Bank Relief	7	1	0	1
Nursing Administration	7	8	0	8
	8A	2	0	2
	8C	3	0	3
Nursing Community	5	93	1	94
	6	11	0	11
	7	8	0	8
Nursing Mgt - Community	7	1	0	1
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
	8C	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	6	5	0	5
	7	1	0	1
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt (Multi-Services)	6	1	0	1
	7	1	0	1
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
	8C	2	0	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	5	34	1	35
	6	10	0	10
	7	5	0	5
Occupational Health Services	5	1	0	1
	6	5	0	5
	7	1	0	1
Ophthalmology Services	7	2	0	2

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Outpatient Services	5	51	0	51
	6	11	0	11
	7	4	0	4
	8A	1	0	1
Paediatric Services - Community	5	24	0	24
	6	5	0	5
	7	15	0	15
	8A	4	0	4
	8B	2	0	2
Paediatric Services - Hospital	5	95	0	95
	6	10	0	10
	7	9	1	10
	8A	1	0	1
Patient Flow Services	7	16	0	16
Radiography (Diagnostic)	5	1	0	1
	6	2	0	2
	7	2	0	2
Rehab/Stroke Services - Community	5	3	0	3
	6	6	1	7
	7	5	0	5
	8A	1	0	1
Renal	5	28	0	28
	6	5	0	5
	7	3	0	3
Respiratory Investigation	6	12	0	12
	7	3	0	3
	8A		1	1
Rheumatology & Rehabilit.	7	5	0	5
School Health Services	5	10	0	10
	6	6	0	6
	7	1	0	1
Specialist Services	5	4	0	4
	7	1	0	1
Surestart Services	5	4	0	4
	6	7	1	8
Theatres	5	90	0	90
	6	15	0	15
	7	4	0	4
Tissue Viability Services	6	2	0	2

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Training & Development	7	10	0	10
	8A	2	0	2
Total		2,797	50	2,847

Doctors vacancies by Grade

Grade	Current Vacancies		Of which: Long-term Vacancies	
	Headcount	WTE	Headcount	WTE
Consultant	18	17.92	9	9.00
Specialty Doctor	15	14.21	4	4.00
Foundation House Officer 1	1	1.00	-	-
Total	34	33.13	13	13.00

Registered Nursing vacancies by Grade and length of time vacant

Job Description	Vacant	Of which: Vacant more than 6 months
Band 5	127	45
Band 5/6	6	0
Band 6	47	9
Band 7	18	7
Band 8a	3	0
Band 8b	2	0
Band 8c	2	0
Total	205	61

South Eastern HSC Trust

Doctors posts by Location, Department and Contract Type

Doctors in training (registrars and foundation doctors) are included as temporary as they are on planned 6 month rotations.

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent Filled	Temporary Filled	
Ulster Hospital			
Accident & Emergency Services	22	27	49
Anaesthetics	29	26	55
Cardiology	6	7	13
Dental Services - Hospital	0	6	6
Dental Services - Community	4	0	4
Dental Surgery/OMFS	10	1	11
ENT - Otolaryngology	6	2	8
Fractures & Orthopaedics	12	6	18
Medical Specialities	82	75	157

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent Filled	Temporary Filled	
General Surgery	17	29	46
Intensive Care / HDU	0	10	10
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	16	18	34
Paediatric Service	14	20	34
Plastic Surgery	7	16	23
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	2	6	8
Radiology	18	7	25
Urology	1	0	1
Ulster Hospital Total	246	256	502
Downshire Hospital			
Addictions Services	1	0	1
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	10	0	10
Downshire Hospital Total	11	0	11
Ards Community Hospital			
General Practitioner Service	6	0	6
Paediatric Service	2	0	2
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	8	3	11
Ards Community Hospital Total	16	3	19
Lagan Valley Hospital			
Accident & Emergency Services	3	5	8
Anaesthetics	4	0	4
Cardiology	1	0	1
Community Medicine	1	0	1
Medical Specialities	14	16	30
General Surgery	3	1	4
General Practitioner Services	1	0	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	3	0	3
Plastic Surgery	1	0	1
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	9	4	13
Radiography (Diagnostic)	0	1	1
Radiology	2	1	3
Lagan Valley Hospital Total	42	28	70
Downe Hospital			
Accident & Emergency Services	5	1	6
Anaesthetics	1	1	2
Dental Services - Community	5	0	5
Medical Specialities	12	14	26
General Practitioner Service	1	0	1

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent Filled	Temporary Filled	
General Surgery	1	0	1
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	1	6	7
Downe Hospital Total	26	22	48
Total	341	309	650

Hospital only Nursing & Midwifery posts by Hospital, Department and Contract Type

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
Ards Community Hospital			
Bank Mgt	1	0	1
Business/Service Planning/Cont	1	0	1
Child & Family Care	1	0	1
Child Health	6	0	6
Community Medicine	10	0	10
Day Procedures Services	2	0	2
Elderly Programme Of Care	2	0	2
Elderly - Hospital Nursing	1	0	1
General Administration	1	0	1
General Medicine	8	0	8
General Surgery	2	0	2
Health Visiting	8	1	9
Learning Disability- Community	3	0	3
Mental Health - Community	23	0	23
Mental Health - Hospital	8	0	8
Midwifery Services - Community	1	0	1
Minor Injuries Hospital (MIH)	1	0	1
Nursing Community	25	2	27
Nursing Mgt - Community	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	8	0	8
Paediatric Services - Community	3	0	3
Prison Services	1	0	1
School Health Services	2	0	2
Theatres	29	0	29
Ards Community Hospital Total	149	3	152
Downshire Hospital			
Bank Mgt	2	0	2
Child Health	1	0	1
Elderly Programme Of Care	2	0	2

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
General Medicine	1	0	1
Learning Disability - Community	4	0	4
Mental Health - Community	13	1	14
Mental Health - Hospital	51	0	51
Mental Health - Management	1	0	1
Nursing Community	7	0	7
Nursing Mgt - Community	1	0	1
Occupational Health Services	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	1	0	1
Downshire Hospital Total	85	1	86
Ulster Hospital			
Accident & Emergency / MAU	95	0	95
Assistant Director	1	0	1
Audiology	1	0	1
Bank Mgt	1	0	1
Cancer Services	41	2	43
Cardiology	1	0	1
Child Health	15	0	15
Elderly Programme Of Care	2	1	3
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	86	0	86
General Administration	2	0	2
General Medicine	303	2	305
General Surgery	101	1	102
Governance/Audit	4	0	4
Health/Medical Records	0	1	1
Hotel/Support Services	1	0	1
Infection Control	4	0	4
Intensive Care / HDU	52	1	53
Learning Disability - Community	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	6	0	6
Mental Health – Hospital	27	1	28
Midwifery Services - Hospital	192	3	195
Midwifery Services - Community	3	0	3
Not assigned	1	0	1
Nurse Bank Relief	1	0	1
Nursing Administration	4	0	4
Nursing Community	6	0	6
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	6	0	6
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	21	0	21

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
Occupational Health Services	5	0	5
Occupational Therapy	1	0	1
Orthopaedic Surgery	26	0	26
Outpatient Services	34	0	34
Paediatric Services - Hospital	65	0	65
Plastic Surgery	34	0	34
Radiography (Diagnostic)	1	0	1
Renal	5	0	5
Theatres	156	0	156
Ulster Hospital Total	1,305	12	1,317
Bangor Community Hospital			
Community Medicine	5	0	5
Health Visiting	3	0	3
Nursing Community	7	0	7
Outpatient Services	8	0	8
Bangor Community Hospital Total	23	0	23
Downe Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	17	0	17
Cardiology	8	0	8
Care Mgmt	1	0	1
Child Health	3	0	3
Day Procedures Services	5	0	5
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	1	0	1
General Medicine	44	0	44
General Surgery	15	0	15
Health Visiting	3	0	3
Learning Disability - Community	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	3	0	3
Mental Health - Hospital	10	0	10
Midwifery Services - Hospital	20	0	20
Not assigned	2	0	2
Nursing Community	12	0	12
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	8	0	8
School Health Services	5	0	5
Theatres	17	0	17
Downe Hospital Total	176	0	176

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
Lagan Valley Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	20	0	20
Bank	2	0	2
Cancer Services	1	0	1
Care Mgmt	1	0	1
Child Health	1	0	1
Day Procedures Services	17	1	18
Elderly Programme Of Care	3	0	3
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	17	0	17
General Medicine	90	0	90
General Surgery	9	0	9
Infection Control	2	0	2
Mental Health - Community	4	0	4
Mental Health - Hosp	21	0	21
Midwifery Services - Hospital	28	0	28
Midwifery Services - Community	2	0	2
Nursing Community	10	1	11
Nursing Mgt - Community	2	0	2
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	3	0	3
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	5	0	5
Occupational Health Services	2	0	2
Orthopaedic Surgery	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	11	0	11
Prison Services	1	0	1
Theatres	24	0	24
Lagan Valley Hospital Total	277	2	279
Total	2,015	18	2,033

Doctor vacancies by Location, Department and length of time vacant

Location & Department	Vacant	Of which: Vacant Longer Than 6 Months
Ulster Hospital		
Accident & Emergency Services	1	-
Medical Specialities	11	2
Urology	1	-
Ulster Hospital Total	13	2

The South Eastern HSC Trust have no medical posts vacant longer than 1 year.

Band 5 Nursing & Midwifery vacancies * by Location, Department and length of time vacant

Location & Department	Vacant	Of which: Vacant longer than 6 months
Ards Community Hospital		
Minor Injuries Hospital (MIH)	2	2
Ards Community Hospital Total	2	2
Ulster Hospital		
Accident & Emergency Services/MAU	4	3
Cardiology	2	0
Elderly Programme Of Care	14	4
General Medicine - Haematology/Diabetes/GI	5	3
General Surgery- Women and Men Elective/Non-Elective	7	0
General Medicine- Not Assigned	36	0
Mental Health - Hospital	2	0
Midwifery Services - Hospital	5	0
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	1	0
Orthopaedic Surgery	14	0
Outpatient Services	1	1
Plastic Surgery	2	0
Respiratory Investigation	10	4
Ulster Hospital Total	103	15
Downe Hospital		
Accident & Emergency Services/MAU	1	0
General Medicine	2	0
Midwifery Services - Hospital	5	1
Downe Hospital Total	8	1
Lagan Valley Hospital		
Accident & Emergency Services/MAU	4	0
Elderly Programme Of Care	2	0
General Medicine	2	0
Mental Health - Hospital	4	0
Midwifery Services - Hospital	3	0
Lagan Valley Hospital Total	15	0
Total	128	18

* Band 5 only, no vacancies at Band 6 and above

Southern HSC Trust

Doctor posts by Location, Department, Job Description and Contract Type*

*Doctors in training (registrars and foundation doctors) are included as temporary as they are on planned 6 month rotations.

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Craigavon Area Hospital				
Accident & Emergency Services	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	7	0	7
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	6	6
	GP Sessions	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	8	8
	Trust Appointment For Services	0	1	1
Anaesthetics	Consultant (NC)	26	1	27
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	3	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	17	17
Cancer Services	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
	GP Sessions	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Cardiology	Assoc Specialist (Old Contract)	1	0	1
	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	5	0	5
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	1	3
Dermatology	Assoc Specialist (Old Contract)	3	0	3
	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
	GP Sessions	0	5	5
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Director's Office	Consultant (NC)	1	1	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
ENT - Otolaryngology	Consultant (NC)	7	1	8
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	5	5
General Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	16	1	17
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	12	12
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	9	9
	Hosp Pract (Sessions)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	6	0	6
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	25	25

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
General Surgery	Associate Specialist (NC)	3	0	3
	Consultant (NC)	7	0	7
	Consultant (Sessions)	1	0	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	11	11
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	9	9
Geriatric Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	4	0	4
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Histo/Cyto	Consultant (NC)	0	1	1
Learning Disability-Hosp	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
Mental Health - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	7	3	10
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	4	4
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	8	8
	Trust Appointment For Services	0	1	1
Neurology	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant (NC)	10	1	11
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	15	15
Orthodontics	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
Orthopaedic Surgery	Consultant (NC)	9	0	9
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	3	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	4	2	6
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	3	3
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	11	0	11
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	8	0	8
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	2	2
	GP Sessions	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	7	0	7
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	14	14
Pathology	Consultant (NC)	11	1	12
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Radiology	Consultant (NC)	16	1	17
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	5	5

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Urology	Consultant (NC)	6	0	6
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
Craigavon Area Hospital Total		216	193	409
Daisy Hill Hospital				
Accident & Emergency Services	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	3	3
	GP Sessions	5	0	5
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	2	2
Anaesthetics	Consultant (NC)	7	0	7
	GP Sessions	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	5	0	5
Day Care Services	Consultant (NC)	4	0	4
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
General Medicine	Consultant (NC)	5	3	8
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	8	8
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	4	4
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	5	0	5
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	9	9
	Staff Grade (Old Contract)	1	0	1
General Surgery	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	7	1	8
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	4	4
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	3	3
GUM	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
Geriatric Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
Mental Health - Hospital	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant (NC)	7	1	8
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	5	0	5
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	4	4
	Staff Grade (Old Contract)	1	0	1

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	15	0	15
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	4	0	4
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	GP Sessions	0	2	2
	GP With Specialist Interest	2	1	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	7	0	7
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	7	7
	Trust Appointment For Services	0	1	1
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
Radiology	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
Renal	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Daisy Hill Hospital Total		101	62	163
Lurgan Hospital				
Geriatric Medicine	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
Older People Services- Hosp	GP Sessions	0	1	1
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	1	3
Lurgan Hospital Total		8	2	10
South Tyrone Hospital				
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Trust Appointment For Services	0	1	1
General Surgery	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Geriatric Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	2	0	2
South Tyrone Hospital Total		10	1	11
St. Luke's Hospital				
Geriatric Medicine	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Home Treatment/Crisis Response	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Learning Disability-Hosp	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
Mental Health - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	2	2
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	2	0	2
St. Luke's Hospital Total		15	4	19
Tower Hill Hospital				
Mental Health - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	GP Sessions	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1	2
Tower Hill Hospital Total		4	2	6
Other Sites				
Bank	GP ICATS	1	0	1
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant (NC)	5	0	5
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Eating Disorder Services	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
Family Planning	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
GUM	GP Sessions	0	1	1
Orthopaedic Services	GP ICATS	6	0	6
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	GP Sessions	0	1	1
Paediatric Services - Hosp	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
Other Sites Total		22	3	25
Total		376	267	643

Registered Nursing posts by Location, Department, Job Description and Contract Type

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Craigavon Area Hospital				

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Acute Nursing	Acute Deputy Wd Sr/CN (6)	14	0	14
	Acute Nurse (5)	702	10	712
	Acute Nurse (6)	108	4	112
	Acute Nurse (7)	46	0	46
	Acute Nurse (8A)	3	0	3
	Acute Wd Sr/CN (6)	2	0	2
	Acute Wd Sr/CN (7)	14	0	14
Learning Disability	Learn Dis Deputy Wd Sr/CN (6)	1	0	1
	Learn Disability Wd Sr/CN (7)	1	0	1
	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	6	1	7
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	1	0	1
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	67	0	67
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	13	0	13
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	3	0	3
	Mental Health Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
	Mental Health Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
	Mental Health Wd Sr/CN (7)	5	0	5
	Mental Hth Dep Wd Sr/CN (6)	1	0	1
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager(8A)	1	0	1
	Multiservice Nurse Manager(8B)	5	0	5
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (7)	11	0	11
	Nurse Manager (8A)	5	0	5
	Nurse Manager (8B)	5	0	5
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Dep Wd Sr/CN (6)	5	0	5
	Paediatric Nurse (5)	56	1	57
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	8	0	8
	Paediatric Nurse (7)	5	0	5
	Paediatric Wd Sr/CN (7)	1	0	1
Researcher	Researcher (6)	2	1	3
	Researcher (7)	1	0	1
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (7)	3	0	3
Treatment Room Nursing	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (6)	1	0	1
	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (7)	2	0	2
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	8	1	9
	Specialist Nurse (7)	43	0	43
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	1	1	2
Craigavon Area Hospital Total		1,152	19	1,171
Daisy Hill Hospital				

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Acute Nursing	Acute Deputy Wd Sr/CN (6)	10	0	10
	Acute Nurse (5)	316	0	316
	Acute Nurse (6)	18	0	18
	Acute Nurse (7)	8	0	8
	Acute Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
	Acute Nurse Support (3)	1	0	1
	Acute Wd Sr/CN (7)	11	0	11
District Nursing	District Nurse (6)	0	1	1
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	11	1	12
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	18	0	18
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	4	0	4
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (7)	1	1	2
	Nurse Manager (8A)	1	0	1
	Nurse Manager (8B)	2	0	2
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Dep Wd Sr/CN (6)	2	0	2
	Paediatric Nurse (5)	31	1	32
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	5	0	5
	Paediatric Nurse (7)	2	0	2
	Paediatric Wd Sr/CN (7)	3	0	3
Researcher	Researcher (6)	1	0	1
Treatment Room Nursing	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (7)	1	0	1
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (5)	1	0	1
	Specialist Nurse (6)	3	0	3
	Specialist Nurse (7)	16	0	16
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	2	0	2
Daisy Hill Hospital Total		469	4	473
Lurgan Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	67	8	75
	Acute Nurse (6)	6	1	7
	Acute Nurse (7)	1	0	1
District Nursing	District Nurse (6)	14	0	14
	District Nurse (7)	1	0	1
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	9	0	9
	Health Visitor (7)	1	0	1
	Student Health Visitor (5)	2	0	2
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (6)	1	0	1
Non Acute	Non-Acute Wd Sr/CN (7)	4	0	4
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (8A)	1	0	1

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	1	0	1
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	1	0	1
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (7)	1	0	1
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	5	0	5
	Specialist Nurse (7)	13	1	14
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
	Specialist Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
Lurgan Hospital Total		130	10	140
South Tyrone Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	82	2	84
	Acute Nurse (6)	4	0	4
	Acute Nurse (7)	12	0	12
District Nursing	District Nurse (6)	7	0	7
	District Nurse (7)	1	0	1
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	9	0	9
	Health Visitor (7)	1	0	1
	Student Health Visitor (5)	1	0	1
Learning Disability	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	11	0	11
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	1	0	1
	Learning Disability Nurse (7)	2	0	2
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	3	0	3
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	6	0	6
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	3	0	3
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	2	0	2
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	1	0	1
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (7)	2	0	2
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	3	0	3
	Specialist Nurse (7)	9	0	9
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
South Tyrone Hospital Total		161	2	163
St. Luke's Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	4	1	5
	Acute Nurse (6)	7	0	7
	Acute Nurse (7)	1	1	2
District Nursing	District Nurse (7)	1	0	1
Family Planning	Family Planning Nurse (6)	2	0	2
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (7)	4	0	4
	Health Visitor (8A)	2	0	2

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Learning Disability	Learn Dis Deputy Wd Sr/CN (6)	1	0	1
	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	3	1	4
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	5	0	5
	Learning Disability Nurse (7)	5	0	5
	Learning Disability Nurse (8A)	2	0	2
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	24	2	26
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	20	0	20
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	19	0	19
	Mental Health Nurse (8A)	4	0	4
	Mental Health Wd Sr/CN (7)	1	0	1
	Mental Hth Dep Wd Sr/CN (6)	2	0	2
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (6)	1	0	1
	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	0	1
School Nursing	School Nurse (5)	6	0	6
	School Nurse (6)	1	0	1
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (5)	1	0	1
	Teacher/Trainer (6)	2	0	2
	Teacher/Trainer (7)	4	0	4
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	6	0	6
	Specialist Nurse (7)	18	0	18
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	2	0	2
	Specialist Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
St. Luke's Hospital Total		150	5	155
Tower Hill Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	3	0	3
District Nursing	District Nurse (5)	1	0	1
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	2	0	2
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	11	0	11
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	2	0	2
Tower Hill Hospital Total		19	0	19
Other Sites				
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	119	2	121
	Acute Nurse (6)	1	0	1
	Acute Nurse (7)	2	0	2
District Nursing	District Nurse (5)	3	0	3
	District Nurse (6)	47	1	48
	District Nurse (7)	8	0	8

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Family Planning	Family Planning Nurse (6)	1	0	1
	Family Planning Nurse (7)	1	0	1
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	83	0	83
	Health Visitor (7)	8	0	8
	Student Health Visitor (5)	5	2	7
Learning Disability	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	38	1	39
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	17	0	17
	Learning Disability Nurse (7)	8	0	8
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	26	1	27
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	48	1	49
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	17	0	17
	Mental Health Nurse (8A)	5	0	5
	Mental Health Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (6)	2	0	2
	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	0	1
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (6)	1	0	1
	Nurse Manager (7)	4	0	4
	Nurse Manager (8A)	2	0	2
	Nurse Manager (8B)	3	0	3
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	10	0	10
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	6	0	6
	Paediatric Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
Researcher	Researcher (8A)	1	0	1
School Nursing	School Nurse (5)	20	0	20
	School Nurse (6)	4	0	4
	School Nurse (7)	2	0	2
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (6)	1	0	1
	Teacher/Trainer (7)	13	0	13
Treatment Room Nursing	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (5)	21	2	23
	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (6)	1	0	1
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	6	0	6
	Specialist Nurse (7)	18	0	18
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
	Specialist Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
Other Sites Total		557	10	567
Total		2,638	50	2,688

Doctor vacancies by Location, Department, Job Description and length of time vacant

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Craigavon Area Hospital			

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Accident & Emergency Services	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0
	Consultant (NC)	4	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	2
	Trust Appointment For Services	2	0
Anaesthetics	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0
Cancer Services	Consultant (NC)	1	1
General Medicine	Consultant (NC)	3	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0
General Surgery	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0
	Consultant (NC)	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	1	0
Geriatric Medicine	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0
Histo/Cyto	Consultant (NC)	1	1
Mental Health - Hosp	Consultant (NC)	1	0
Neurology	Consultant (NC)	1	0
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0
Orthopaedic Surgery	Consultant (NC)	2	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	2	0
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	Foundation House Officer 2	2	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1
Pathology	Consultant (NC)	1	0
Radiology	Consultant (NC)	4	4
Urology	Specialty Registrar (Str)	2	1
Craigavon Area Hospital Total		44	15
Daisy Hill Hospital			
Accident & Emergency Services	Consultant (NC)	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	6	5
Anaesthetics	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	1
General Medicine	Consultant (NC)	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	3
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	1	1
General Surgery	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	1

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Paediatric Services - Hosp	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0
Daisy Hill Hospital Total		21	14
Lurgan Hospital			
Geriatric Medicine	Consultant (NC)	4	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	6	3
Paediatric Serv - Comm	Consultant (NC)	1	0
Lurgan Hospital Total		11	4
South Tyrone Hospital			
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	1	0
South Tyrone Hospital Total		1	0
Tower Hill Hospital			
Paediatric Serv - Community	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	GP Sessions	1	1
Tower Hill Hospital Total		2	1
Other Sites			
Paediatric Serv - Community	Consultant (NC)	4	1
Other Sites Total		4	1
Total		83	35

Registered Nursing vacancies by Location, Department, Job Description and length of time vacant

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Craigavon Area Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	60	7
	Acute Nurse (6)	5	1
	Acute Nurse (7)	1	0
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	16	10
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	2	0
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (7)	4	2
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	6	2
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	1	0
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	4	0
Craigavon Area Hospital Total		99	22
Daisy Hill Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Deputy Wd Sr/CN (6)	2	0
	Acute Nurse (5)	18	5
	Acute Nurse (7)	2	1

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	2	0
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	3	0
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (7)	2	0
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Dep Wd Sr/CN (6)	1	0
	Paediatric Nurse (5)	7	0
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (7)	2	1
Daisy Hill Hospital Total		39	7
Lurgan Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	31	8
District Nursing	District Nurse (7)	1	1
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	5	0
	Specialist Nurse (7)	3	0
Lurgan Hospital Total		40	9
South Tyrone Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	13	9
	Acute Nurse (6)	2	1
	Acute Nurse (7)	1	0
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	2	0
Learning Disability	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	2	0
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	1	0
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	1
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	1	1
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (7)	2	1
South Tyrone Hospital Total		25	13
St. Luke's Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	2	0
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	8	0
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	8	2
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	1	0
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	0
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	4	2
	Specialist Nurse (7)	2	0
St. Luke's Hospital Total		26	4
Tower Hill Hospital			
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (7)	2	1
Tower Hill Hospital Total		2	2
Other Sites			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (6)	1	0

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
District Nursing	District Nurse (6)	1	1
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	6	2
	Student Health Visitor (5)	1	0
Learning Disability	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	2	0
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	8	0
	Learning Disability Nurse (7)	1	0
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	5	1
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	7	1
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	2	0
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	0
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	3	1
Treatment Room Nursing	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (5)	7	2
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	3	0
	Specialist Nurse (7)	1	0
Other Sites Total		49	8
Total		280	64

Western HSC Trust

Medical posts by Location, Department and Contract Type

*Doctors in training are included as temporary as they are on planned 6 month rotations.

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Altnagelvin Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	11	12	23
Acute Medical Unit	2	4	6
Anaesthetics	29	19	48
Biochemistry	1	0	1
Cardiology Alt. Medi	9	2	11
CDU	0	2	2
COTE Medical	2	4	6
Dermatology	2	0	2
Diabetic Consultants	2	0	2
E.N.T.	11	6	17
G.U.M. Clinic	2	0	2
Gastro Specialty Medicine	3	2	5
General Medicine Training	2	33	35
General Surgery	7	24	31
Gynaecology	0	1	1
Haematology	2	1	3
Histopathology	7	1	8
ICATS ENT	1	0	1

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
ICATS Ophthalmology	1	0	1
ICATS Orthopaedics	1	0	1
Juniors	0	2	2
Microbiology	2	0	2
Neurology	3	0	3
Obstetrics	11	17	28
Occupational Health	0	1	1
Office of Medical Director	0	1	1
Ophthalmology	10	3	13
Oral Surgery	4	10	14
Orthodontics – Medical	2	1	3
Orthopaedics	13	17	30
Paediatrics Medical	11	15	26
Palliative care	2	1	3
Radio CTR – General In	7	2	9
Renal Alt. Medical	2	0	2
Respiratory Alt. Medicine	4	1	5
Rheumatology	2	1	3
Sperrin Ward 43 – AL	1	0	1
SPRUCE Y.C.SICK	0	1	1
Stroke Services	1	0	1
SWH – General Medicine	0	1	1
Urology Department	7	3	10
Respiratory	0	2	2
Ward 44 SW Alt	0	2	2
WH&SST	2	0	2
X-Ray Department	10	9	19
Altnagelvin Hospital Total	189	201	390
Grangewood			
Psychiatry	2	0	2
Juniors	1	8	9
Medical	2	0	2
Grangewood Total	5	8	13
South West Acute Hospital			
Accident & Emergency / ED	4	2	6
Anaesthetics	8	1	9
Cardiology	1	0	1
COTE	2	0	2
Gynae Ward	5	3	8

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
ICATS Orthopaedics	0	1	1
Juniors	0	1	1
Medi & Surg Assessment Unit	1	0	1
Medical Staff	3	0	3
MSAU Medical	1	1	2
Oral Surgery	1	0	1
Palliative Care	0	1	1
Rheumatology	1	0	1
School Health SER. M	2	0	2
Stroke Services	1	0	1
Surgical Specialty	10	7	17
Surgical Ward	0	7	7
Paediatric Medicine	5	5	10
General Medicine	7	18	25
X-Ray Dept SWAH	6	0	6
South West Acute Total	58	47	105
Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital			
Child & Adol. Mental Health	3	0	3
Psychiatry	3	0	3
Elderly	1	0	1
Juniors	0	10	10
Medical	2	0	2
Tyrone & Fermanagh Total	9	10	19
Tyrone County Hospital			
Anaesthetics	1	0	1
ICATS ENT	1	0	1
ICATS Orthopaedics	1	0	1
Palliative Care	1	0	1
Renal	4	3	7
Surgical Specialty	1	1	2
General Medicine	1	0	1
Tyrone County Total	10	4	14
Waterside Hospital			
Acute care at Home	1	0	1
Dental	1	0	1
Waterside Hospital Total	2	0	2
Total	274	270	544

Hospital Nursing posts by Location, Department and Contract Type

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Altnagelvin	1,111	33	1,144
Grangewood	54	1	55
Lakeview	32	0	32
South West Acute	486	12	498
Tyrone & Fermanagh	128	4	132
Tyrone County	144	5	149
Waterside	70	3	73
Total	2,025	58	2,083

Medical vacancies (WTE) by Location, Department and Job Description

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant
Altnagelvin Hospital		
Accident & Emergency	Consultant	4
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	5
Anaesthetics	Consultant	3
Dermatology	Consultant	1
Ophthalmology	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade/ Hospital Practitioner/ GPI CATS	1 Temp
Otolaryngology	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade/ Trust Dr/GPI CATS	1 Temp
General Medicine	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	4
	F1	2
General Medicine (Ward 1) Gastroenterology	Consultant	2
General Medicine (Ward 3) Respiratory	Consultant	1
General Medicine (Ward 20/42) Care of the Elderly/ Stroke	Consultant	2
General Medicine (Ward 20/42) Care of the Elderly (Opal Service)	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	1
	StR3+	1.4
Acute Medical Unit (Ward 41)	Consultant	2
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade/ Trust Doctor	3
Orthodontics	Consultant	1
General Surgery	Consultant	1
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant	2
	StR3 + (Registrar level)	2
Paediatrics	Consultant	2.5
	StR3 + (Registrar level)	1
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	1.4
Neuro-Rehabilitation	Consultant	1
Haematology	Consultant	2
Radiology	Consultant	6

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant
Oncology	Consultant	5
	Specialty Doctor	1
Altnagelvin Hospital Total		59.3
Bridgeview		
Community Paediatrics	Consultant	1
Bridgeview Total		1
Grangewood		
Psychiatry - General Adult	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	0.2
Psychiatry - Old Age	Consultant	1
Grangewood Total		2.2
Woodlea House		
Psychiatry - Child & Adolescent	Consultant	0.4
Woodlea House Total		0.4
Lakeview		
Psychiatry - Learning Disability	Consultant	1
Lakeview Total		1
South West Acute Hospital		
Accident & Emergency	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	15
	GP Trainee	1
Anaesthetics	Consultant	2
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	4
General Medicine	Consultant	2
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	4
Palliative Medicine	Consultant	1
Radiology	Consultant	1
General Surgery	Consultant	1
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	2
Paediatrics	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	1
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	4
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Reg Level	6
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	5
Occupational Health	Specialty Doctor	1
South West Acute Hospital Total		53

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant
Tyrone County Hospital		
Geriatrics	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	3
OPAL	Specialty Doctor	1
Tyrone County Hospital Total		5
Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital		
Addictions	Consultant	0.5
Old Age Psychiatry	Consultant	2
Community Psychiatry	Consultant	1
Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital Total		3.5
Omagh Health Centre		
Community Paediatrics (Omagh Health Centre)	Associate Specialist/Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	1.5
Community Paediatrics (Enniskillen Health Centre)	Associate Specialist/Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	1
Omagh Health Centre Total		2.5
Total		127.9

The Western HSC Trust were unable to provide a breakdown by length of time vacant.

Nursing vacancies

There are currently 110 Band 5 and above nursing posts which are actively being recruited.

A breakdown by duration of medical or nursing vacancies cannot be provided.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to list the medical posts in each hospital that have been vacant for (i) one to two years; (ii) two to three years; (iii) three to four years; (iv) four to five years; and (v) more than five years, broken down by speciality.
(AQW 5040/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

Belfast HSC Trust

Medical posts by Department, Job Description and Contract Type*

*Doctors in training (registrars and foundation doctors) are listed as temporary as they are on planned 6 month rotations.

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Accident & Emergency Services	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	20	1	21
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	16	16
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor	7	0	7
	Specialty Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	15	15
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Anaesthetics	Associate Specialist	3	0	3
	Consultant	100	23	123
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	1	1
	Locum	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	20	20
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	54	54
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1
Blood Transfusion Services	Consultant	1	0	1
	Medical Practitioner	0	1	1
Brain Injury Services	Consultant	1	0	1
Cancer Services	Consultant	8	1	9
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3
Cardiac Surgery	Consultant	3	0	3
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	6	6
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	3	3
	Trust Appointment for Service	0	2	2
Cardiology	Associate Specialist	5	0	5
	Clinical Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	20	2	22
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	5	5
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	7	7
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	11	11
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	10	10
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1
Chemical Pathology	Specialty Registrar (STR)	0	1	1
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant	14	2	16
	Specialist Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2
	Staff Grade Practitioner	0	1	1
Clinic Electrophysiology	Specialist Registrar	0	2	2
Clinical Chemistry	Consultant	4	0	4
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full		1	1
Clinical Neuro-Physiology	Consultant	2	0	2

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Cytopathology	Consultant	2	0	2
Dental Services - Hospital	Consultant	4	0	4
	Dental Practitioner	5	0	5
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	1	1
	Hospital Practitioner	2	0	2
	Specialty Doctor	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	4	4
	Year 2 Dentist	0	9	9
Dental Services -Community	Dental Officer	13	0	13
	Senior Dental Officer	4	0	4
Dental Surgery	Consultant	1	0	1
	Consultant NC	1	0	1
	Speciality Registrar	0	1	1
Dental/Paed & Prevent	Consultant	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
Dentistry - Restorative	Specialty Doctor	0	2	2
Dermatology	Associate Specialist	1		1
	Consultant	9	1	10
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	3	3
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	6	6
Elderly Programme Of Care	Consultant	2	0	2
	Visiting Medical Officer	1	0	1
Endocrinology & Diabetes	Consultant	6	0	6
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	1	4	5
ENT - Otolaryngology	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	7	1	8
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	2	2
	Medical Practitioner	1	0	1
	Speciality Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	5	5
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	5	5
Family Planning Services	Associate Specialist	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor	5	1	6
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	1	2

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Fractures & Orthopaedics	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	4	4
General Medicine	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	39	6	45
	Consultant Locum	1	0	1
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	2	2
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	36	36
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	36	36
	Hospital Practitioner	1	0	1
	Locum	0	3	3
	Specialty Registrar	0	3	3
	Specialty Doctor	8	1	9
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	14	14
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	1	44	45
General Practitioner Services	Consultant	0	1	1
	General Med practitioner/GP	9	27	36
General Surgery	Clinical Fellow	0	3	3
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	22	1	23
	Consultant Locum	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	28	28
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	9	9
	Locum	0	2	2
	Locum Appt for Training	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	15	15
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	11	11
Genito-Urinary Medicine	Clinical Research Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	4	0	4
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2
	Staff Grade	1	1	2

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Geriatric Medicine	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	13	1	14
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	8	8
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	4	4
	Specialty Doctor	5	1	6
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	5	5
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	7	7
Haematology	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	8	1	9
	Consultant Locum	2	0	2
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	11	11
Histopathology	Consultant	16	1	17
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	18	18
Immuno Pathology	Consultant	3	1	4
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	1	1
Infectious Diseases	Consultant	3	0	3
Learning Disability -Hospital	Core Trainee (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	3	3
Mammography	Consultant	4	0	4
Medical Genetics	Consultant	5	0	5
Medical Oncology	Consultant	7	0	7
Mental Health - Hospital	Specialty Registrar	1	0	1
Microbiology	Consultant	10	0	10
	Locum	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	7	7
Nephrology	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	1	1
	Consultant	10	3	13
	Consultant Locum	2	1	3
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	3	3
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	1	1
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	7	7

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Neuro Surgery	Consultant	10	1	11
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	5	5
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	3	3
Neurology	Consultant	10	2	12
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	4	4
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	2	1	3
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	8	8
Neuropathology	Consultant	1	0	1
Not assigned	Consultant	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
Nursing Community	Consultant (Macmillan GP Facilitator)	2	0	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Associate Specialist	3	0	3
	Consultant	27	4	31
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	4	4
	Locum	0	5	5
	Specialist Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	0	3	3
	Specialty Doctor	5	0	5
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	37	37
Occupational Health Services	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	1	0	1
	Director	1	0	1
	Hospital Practitioner	1	0	1
	Medical Practitioner	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	1	1	2
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Ophthalmology Services	Associate Specialist	4	1	5
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	25	2	27
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	3	3
	Medical Practitioner	1	0	1
	Speciality Doctor	2	0	2
	Speciality Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	11	11
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1
Orthodontics	Consultant	1	0	1
Orthopaedic Surgery	Associate Specialist	2	0	2
	Clinical Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	33	6	39
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	8	8
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	3	3
	Locum	0	1	1
	Locum Appt for Training	0	1	1
	Speciality Registrar	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor	4	0	4
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	5	5
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	15	15
	Staff Grade Practitioner	0	1	1
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist	1	0	1
	Consultant	5	0	5
	Specialty Doctor	2	0	2
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Associate Specialist	2	0	2
	Clinical Fellow	0	3	3
	Consultant	44	2	46
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	3	3
	Locum Appt for Training	0	2	2
	Medical Practitioner	4	0	4
	Speciality Doctor	1	0	1
	Speciality Registrar	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	1	57	58
	Trust Appt for Services	0	2	2
Paediatric Surgery	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Plastic Surgery	Consultant	4	0	4
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	Associate Specialist	4	0	4
	Consultant	37	13	50
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	2	2
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	6	6
	Hospital Practitioner	1	0	1
	Locum Consultant	1	0	1
	Speciality Doctor	4	0	4
	Speciality Registrar (STR)	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	11	11
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	14	14
	Staff Grade Practitioner	1	0	1
Radiography (Diagnostic)	Consultant	1	0	1
Radiology	Consultant	41	7	48
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	29	29
Radiotherapy	Associate Specialist	3	0	3
	Clinical Research Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	19	3	22
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	2	2
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	5	5
	Associate Specialist	1	2	3
	Clinical Research Fellow	2	0	2
	Consultant	0	4	4
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	22	22
Renal Failure Surgery	Consultant	0	1	1
Respiratory Investigation	Consultant	4	0	4
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	Consultant	11	0	11
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	3	3
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	7	7

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Thor/Cardiac Surgery	Clinical Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	4	2	6
	Core Trainee (CT)	0	1	1
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	2	2
	Foundation H/Officer 2 (F2)	0	3	3
	Locum Appt for Training	0	2	2
Thoracic Medicine	Consultant	5	0	5
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
Thoracic Surgery	Clinical Fellow	0	3	3
	Consultant	4	0	4
Urology	Clinical Fellow	0	2	2
	Consultant	8	1	9
	Locum	0	2	2
	Speciality Doctor	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (CT)	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	1	1
Vascular Surgery	Consultant	6	1	7
	Foundation H/Officer 1 (F1)	0	1	1
	Speciality Registrar	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	5	5
	Trust Appointment for Service	1	0	1
Other	Specialty Doctor	0	1	1
	Specialty Registrar (StR) Full	0	2	2
Total		839	997	1,836

Nursing & Midwifery posts

The Belfast HSC Trust were unable to provide this information by specialty in the timeframe required, however have 7,418 employed in the Nursing & Midwifery staff group (including support) in total, 181 temporary.

Medical vacancies by Specialty and Grade

Grade	Specialty / Sub specialty	Vacancies (WTE)
Paediatric Consultant	ENT	1
	Allergy	1
	Emergency Medicine	1
	Community and General	1
	Gastroenterology	1
	Radiology	2.75

Grade	Specialty / Sub specialty	Vacancies (WTE)
Consultant	Care of the Elderly	1
	Stroke Medicine	1
	Occupational Medicine	1
	Neonatalology	1.6
	Urogynaecology	1
	Gynae Oncology	1
	GUM & HIV	1
	Oral Medicine	1
	Restorative Dentistry	1
	Vascular Surgery	1
	Thoracic Surgery	1
	Cellular Pathology	0.5
	Histopathology	1
	Acute and General	3
	Neurology	1
	Clinical Genetics	1
	Clinical Oncology	1
	Anaesthetics (Cardiac)	2
	Radiology (Interventional)	1
	Intensive Care	5
	Emergency Medicine	2
	Locum Consultant in Psychiatry	1
Specialty Doctor	Care of the Elderly	1
	Community Paediatrics	1
	Orthomedicine	1
	Rehabilitation	1
	Nephrology	1
	Oncology	1
	Rheumatology	1
	Breast Surgery	1
	Anaesthetics	2
	Medicine	1
	Ambulatory Care	1
	Neurosurgery	1
Clinical Fellow	Care of the Elderly	1
	Trauma & Orthopaedics	1
	Paediatric Cardiology	1
	Acute Medicine /CAU	7
	Adult Congenital Heart Disease	1
	Neurosurgery	1
	Interventional Cardiology	1

Grade	Specialty / Sub specialty	Vacancies (WTE)
Doctors in Training	Anaesthetics	2
	Cardiothoracic Surgery	2
	Emergency Medicine	1
	General Surgery (HST)	3
	Histopathology	1
	Medical Oncology	4
	Haematology	1
	Genetics	2
	Clinical Oncology	2
	Haematology	1
	General Medicine ACCS	1
	Geriatrics	1
	Gastroenterology	1
	Microbiology	1
	Pathology	1
	Cardiology	1
	Immunology	1
	Rheumatology	2
	Obs & Gynae	8
	Paediatrics	4
	Psychiatry	10
	Radiology	4
Total		117.85

The Belfast HSC Trust were unable to provide a breakdown by length of time vacant.

Nursing vacancies

Of the 219 Band 5 nursing vacancies in the Belfast HSC Trust, 170 are adult nursing, 15 children's nursing, 14 mental health nursing and 20 learning disability nursing). Of the adult nursing vacancies, 20 of these have been vacant since September 2014/September 2015, 1 has been vacant since September 2013/September 2014 and 1 vacant since January 2013.

Northern HSC Trust

Hospital only Doctor posts by Hospital, Department and Contract Type

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Antrim Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	26	0	26
Anaesthetics	37	2	39
Cancer Services	2	3	5
Cardiology	4	0	4
Chair/Non Executive	1	0	1
Dental Surgery	1	0	1
Dermatology	7	0	7
ENT - Otolaryngology	11	0	11

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
General Administration	1	0	1
General Medicine	95	1	96
General Surgery	32	2	34
Haematology	3	0	3
Histopathology	1	1	2
Integrated Primary Care	1	0	1
Medical Management	0	1	1
Nephrology	2	0	2
Neurology	1	0	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	27	5	32
Paediatric Services - Hospital	37	0	37
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	3	2	5
Radiology	21	0	21
Renal	6	1	7
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	6	1	7
Surgical Gastroenterology	0	1	1
Antrim Hospital Total	325	20	345
Antrim Hospital: Alder House			
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	2	0	2
Antrim Hospital: Alder House Total	2	0	2
Antrim Hospital: Laboratory			
Clinical Chemistry	3	0	3
Haematology	2	0	2
Histo/Cyto	1	0	1
Histopathology	5	0	5
Microbiology	3	1	4
Antrim Hospital: Laboratory Total	14	1	15
Antrim Hospital: The Rowan			
Specialist Services	3	0	3
Antrim Hospital: The Rowan Total	3	0	3
Causeway Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	5	0	5
Anaesthetics	14	1	15
Cardiology	1	0	1
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	1	1	2
Dermatology	1	0	1
General Medicine	29	3	32
General Surgery	24	1	25

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Genito-Urinary Medicine	1	1	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	14	2	16
Paediatric Services - Hospital	8	1	9
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	9	0	9
Radiology	3	0	3
Causeway Hospital Total	110	10	120
Dalriada Hospital			
Community Medicine	2	0	2
Dalriada Hospital Total	2	0	2
Holywell Hospital			
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	50	1	51
Holywell Hospital Total	50	1	51
Mid Ulster Hospital			
Dermatology ICATS	1	0	1
General Medicine	2	0	2
Ophthalmology Services	1	0	1
Mid Ulster Hospital Total	4	0	4
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Community Svc Centre			
Paediatric Services - Community	1	0	1
Moyle Community Svc Centre Total	1	0	1
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Medical Centre			
General Medicine	1	0	1
Moyle Hospital: Medical Centre Total	1	0	1
Robinson Hospital			
Paediatric Services - Hospital	2	0	2
Robinson Hospital Total	2	0	2
Route Hospital			
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	1	0	1
Route Hospital Total	1	0	1
Whiteabbey Hospital			
Dermatology	1	0	1
General Medicine		1	1
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	3	0	3
Whiteabbey Hospital Total	4	1	5
Total	519	33	552

All Doctor posts by Department, Job Description and Contract Type

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Accident & Emergency	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant	9	0	9
	Foundation House Officer 2	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	14	0	14
Anaesthetics	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant	25	3	28
	Core Trainee (CT)	8	0	8
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	8	0	8
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	7	0	7
Cancer Services	Consultant	1	1	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	2	3
Cardiology	Consultant	2	0	2
	Core Trainee (CT)	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	1	0	1
Chair/Non Executive	Consultant	1	0	1
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant	5	1	6
	Core Trainee (CT)	1		1
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment		1	1
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	1	0	1
Clinical Chemistry	Consultant	3	0	3
Community Medicine	GP Sessions	1	1	2
	P/T Med Pract (Sessions)	1	0	1
Dental Surgery	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Dermatology	Consultant	4	0	4
	Core Trainee (CT)	1	0	1
	Hosp Pract (Sessions)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
Dermatology ICATS	GP Sessions	1	0	1
ENT - Otolaryngology	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant	5	0	5
	Core Trainee (CT)	2	0	2
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	1	0	1
Family Planning Services	GP SESSIONS	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	9	1	10
General Administration	Consultant	1	0	1

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
General Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	6	0	6
	Consultant	36	1	37
	Core Trainee (CT)	11	0	11
	Foundation House Officer 1	25	0	25
	Foundation House Officer 2	23	0	23
	HOSP PRACT (SESSIONS)	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	11	2	13
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	18	0	18
General Surgery	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant	16	1	17
	Core Trainee (CT)	11	0	11
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment		1	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	12	0	12
	Foundation House Officer 2	6	0	6
	P/T Med Pract (Sessions)	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	7	0	7
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	2	0	2
Genito-Urinary Medicine	GP Sessions	1	0	1
	P/T Med Pract (Sessions)	0	1	1
Haematology	Consultant	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Histo/Cyto	Consultant	1	0	1
Histopathology	Consultant	6	1	7
Integrated Primary Care	Consultant	1	0	1
Medical Management	Consultant	0	1	1
Microbiology	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant	2	1	3
Nephrology	Core Trainee (CT)	2	0	2
Neurology	Consultant	1	0	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant	13	3	16
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	1	2	3
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	5	2	7
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	21	0	21
Ophthalmology Services	GP Sessions	1	0	1
Orthodontics	Consultant	1	0	1
Orthopaedic ICATS	GP Sessions	5	0	5
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	1	3
	Consultant	2	0	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3

Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Associate Specialist (NC)	6	0	6
	Consultant	14	0	14
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 2	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	21	0	21
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant	29	3	32
	Core Trainee (CT)	9	0	9
	Foundation House Officer 2	6	0	6
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	13	0	13
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	14	0	14
Radiology	Consultant	19	0	19
	P/T Med Pract (Sessions)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	4	0	4
Renal	Consultant	4	0	4
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1	2
	Specialty Registrar (STR)	1	0	1
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	Consultant	4	0	4
	Core Trainee (CT)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1	2
Specialist Services	Consultant	2	0	2
	GP Sessions	1	0	1
Surgical Gastroenterology	Consultant	0	1	1
Total		554	37	591

Hospital Nursing posts by Hospital and Contract Type

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Antrim Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	84	0	84
Anaesthetics	4	0	4
Cancer Services	41	2	43
Child & Family Care Mgmt	1	0	1
Coronary Care	53	0	53
Day Procedures Services	32	0	32
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	17	2	19
Endocrinology & Diabetes	3	0	3
General Administration	1	0	1
General Medicine	199	3	202

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
General Surgery	103	4	107
Haematology	4	0	4
Infection Control	1	0	1
Integrated Primary Care	1	0	1
Intensive Care / HDU	53	0	53
Mental Health - Community	9	0	9
Mental Health - Mgt	3	0	3
Midwifery Services - Hospital	94	3	97
Nursing Administration	9	0	9
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	6	0	6
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	31	0	31
Outpatient Services	18	0	18
Paediatric Services - Community	1	0	1
Paediatric Services - Hospital	89	1	90
Patient Flow Services	10	0	10
Radiography (Diagnostic)	5	0	5
Rehab/Stroke Services - Community	1	0	1
Renal	36	0	36
Respiratory Investigation	2	1	3
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	5	0	5
Theatres	60	0	60
Training & Development	1	0	1
Antrim Hospital Total	977	16	993
Antrim Hospital: Alder House			
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	10	0	10
Health Visiting	7	0	7
Paediatric Services - Community	4	0	4
Antrim Hospital: Alder House Total	21	0	21
Antrim Hospital: Bush House			
Bereavement Services	1	0	1
Coronary Care	1	0	1
Governance/Audit	0	2	2
Governance Cli/Social Care	2	0	2
Nursing Mgt (Multi-Services)	1	0	1
Training & Development	1	0	1
Antrim Hospital: Bush House Total	6	2	8
Antrim Hospital Site: Fern House			
Cancer Services	1	0	1

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Coronary Care	2	0	2
General Surgery	1	1	2
Midwifery Services - Hospital	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt (Multi-Services)	1	0	1
Respiratory Investigation	1	0	1
Antrim Hospital: Fern House Total	7	1	8
Antrim Hospital Site: Laboratory			
Infection Control	5	0	5
Antrim Hospital: Laboratory Total	5	0	5
Antrim Hospital Site: The Rowan			
Specialist Services	5	0	5
Antrim Hospital: The Rowan Total	5	0	5
Antrim Hospital: Willow House			
Occupational Health Services	7	0	7
Antrim Hospital: Willow House Total	7	0	7
Causeway Hospital: Laboratory			
Infection Control	1	0	1
Causeway Hospital: Laboratory Total	1	0	1
Causeway Hospital: Main Building			
Accident & Emergency	35	4	39
Cancer Services	4	0	4
Coronary Care	28	0	28
Day Procedures Services	29	1	30
Dermatology ICATS	3	0	3
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	34	0	34
Endocrinology & Diabetes	2	0	2
General Medicine	54	2	56
General Surgery	57	0	57
Infection Control	2	0	2
Intensive Care / HDU	22	0	22
Mental Health - Community	2	0	2
Mental Health - Hospital	21	0	21
Midwifery Services - Hospital	47	2	49
Midwifery Services - Community	1	0	1
Nursing Administration	3	0	3
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt (Multi-Services)	2	0	2

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	17	1	18
Ophthalmology Services	2	0	2
Outpatient Services	17	0	17
Paediatric Services - Community	5	0	5
Paediatric Services - Hospital	20	0	20
Patient Flow Services	6	0	6
Rehab/Stroke Services - Community	1	0	1
Respiratory Investigation	1	0	1
Theatres	38	0	38
Causeway Hospital: Main Building Total	454	10	464
Dalriada Hospital Site			
Community Medicine	22	0	22
Integrated Primary Care	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	1	0	1
Dalriada Hospital Total	24	0	24
Holywell Hospital			
Addictions Services/Community	1	0	1
Dementia Services	3	0	3
Eating Disorder Services	6	0	6
Health And Safety	2	0	2
Home Treatment/Crisis Res Services	24	0	24
Human Resources	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	22	0	22
Mental Health - Hospital	135	0	135
Mental Health - Mgt	5	0	5
Midwifery Services - Hospital	1	0	1
Nurse Bank Relief	1	0	1
Holywell Hospital Site	201	0	201
Mid Ulster Hospital: Main Building			
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	19	0	19
Endocrinology & Diabetes	1	0	1
General Surgery	9	0	9
Infection Control	2	0	2
Integrated Primary Care	1	0	1
Midwifery Services - Community	11	2	13
Minor Injuries Hospital (MIH)	2	0	2
Nursing Community	2	0	2
Outpatient Services	7	0	7

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Paediatric Services - Community	10	0	10
Paediatric Services - Hospital	6	0	6
Respiratory Investigation	3	0	3
Surestart Services	1	0	1
Theatres	11	0	11
Training & Development	5	0	5
Mid Ulster Hospital: Main Building Total	90	2	92
Moyle Hospital			
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	15	0	15
Integrated Primary Care	2	0	2
Mental Health - Community	1	0	1
Midwifery Services - Community	3	1	4
Nursing Community	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	3	0	3
Rehab/Stroke Services - Community	2	0	2
Respiratory Investigation	1	0	1
Moyle Hospital Total	28	1	29
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Com Svc Centre			
Integrated Primary Care	2	0	2
Nursing Mgt - Community	1	0	1
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Com Svc Centre Total	3	0	3
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Medical Centre			
Health Visiting	2	0	2
Integrated Primary Care	6	0	6
Mental Health - Community	2	0	2
Nursing Community	3	0	3
Moyle Hospital: Moyle Medical Centre Total	13	0	13
Robinson Hospital			
Acute Care At Home	6	0	6
Cancer Services	1	0	1
Community Medicine	18	0	18
Nursing Community	2	0	2
Robinson Hospital Total	27	0	27
Route Hospital			
Acute Care At Home	1	0	1
Community Medicine	1	0	1
Elderly Programme Of Care	3	0	3

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Health And Safety	2	0	2
Nursing Administration	1	0	1
Nursing Community	8	0	8
Nursing Mgt - Community	2	0	2
Paediatric Services - Community	1	0	1
Respiratory Investigation	1	0	1
School Health Services	1	0	1
Training & Development	2	0	2
Route Hospital Total	23	0	23
Whiteabbey Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	1	0	1
Acute Care At Home	11	0	11
Coronary Care	2	0	2
Day Procedures Services	23	0	23
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	31	0	31
Endocrinology & Diabetes	2	0	2
General Administration	2	0	2
Health Promotion	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	12	0	12
Mental Health - Hospital	5	0	5
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	1	0	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	13	0	13
Respiratory Investigation	2	0	2
Training & Development	2	0	2
Whiteabbey Hospital Total	109	0	109
Grand Total	2,001	32	2,033

All Registered Nursing & Midwifery posts by Department and Job Band

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Accident & Emergency	5	89	3	92
	6	14	0	14
	7	15	1	16
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
Acute Care At Home	5	33	0	33
	6	3	0	3

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Addictions Services/ Community	6	2	1	3
	7	6	0	6
	8A	2	0	2
Anaesthetics	6	1	0	1
	8A	2	0	2
	8B	1	0	1
Autism Services	6	1	0	1
Bereavement Services	8A	1	0	1
Brain Injury Services	7	1	0	1
Cancer Services	5	29	0	29
	6	6	1	7
	7	9	1	10
	8A	2	0	2
	8B	1	0	1
Child & Family Care	5	1	0	1
	6	1	0	1
Child & Family Care Mgmt	8C	1	0	1
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	7	14	0	14
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
Community Medicine	5	37	0	37
	6	2	0	2
	7	2	0	2
Condition Management	6	1	0	1
Continence Services	5	1	0	1
	6	3	0	3
	7	2	0	2
Coronary Care	5	57	0	57
	6	18	1	19
	7	13	0	13
	8A	1	0	1
Day Procedures Services	5	69	1	70
	6	8	0	8
	7	7	0	7
Dementia Services	6	19	0	19
	7	4	0	4
Dermatology	6	1	0	1
Dermatology ICATS	7	3	0	3
District Nursing Services	5	2	0	2
Domiciliary Care Specia.	5	1	0	1

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Eating Disorder Services	7	5	0	5
	8A	1	0	1
Elderly Programme Of Care	6	8	0	8
	7	1	0	1
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	5	102	2	104
	6	9	0	9
	7	5	0	5
Endocrinology & Diabetes	6	6	0	6
	7	5	0	5
Falls Prevention Services	6	1	0	1
Family Planning Services	5	12	1	13
	6	1	2	3
	7	2	0	2
	8A	2	0	2
General Administration	8A	2	0	2
	8B	1	0	1
General Medicine	5	212	1	213
	6	26	4	30
	7	13	0	13
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
General Surgery	5	145	0	145
	6	12	3	15
	7	10	1	11
	8A	2	1	3
	8B	1	0	1
Genito-Urinary Medicine	6	2	0	2
	8A	1	0	1
Governance/Audit	6	0	2	2
Governance Cli/Social Care	7	2	0	2
Haematology	7	4	0	4
Health And Safety	6	2	0	2
	7	2	0	2
Health Promotion	6	3	0	3
	7	1	0	1
Health Visiting	5	38	2	40
	6	109	1	110
	7	31	0	31
	8A	5	0	5

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Home Treatment/Crisis Response Services	6	6	0	6
	7	18	0	18
Human Resources	5	1	0	1
Infection Control	6	7	0	7
	7	3	0	3
	8A	2	0	2
Integrated Primary Care	5	167	2	169
	6	22	0	22
	7	23	0	23
Intensive Care / HDU	5	63	0	63
	6	10	0	10
	7	2	0	2
Learning Disability-Community	5	7	2	9
	6	13	0	13
	7	15	0	15
	8B	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	5	8	0	8
	6	49	0	49
	7	25	0	25
	8A	3	0	3
Mental Health - Hospital	5	137	0	137
	6	14	0	14
	7	20	0	20
	8A	1	0	1
Mental Health - Mgt	7	3	0	3
	8A	2	0	2
	8B	3	0	3
Midwifery Services - Hospital	5	11	4	15
	6	109	1	110
	7	18	0	18
	8A	3	0	3
	8B	2	0	2
Midwifery Services - Community	6	66	6	72
	7	2	0	2
Minor Injuries Hosp (MIH)	7	2	0	2
Nurse Bank Relief	7	1	0	1
Nursing Administration	7	8	0	8
	8A	2	0	2
	8C	3	0	3

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Nursing Community	5	93	1	94
	6	11	0	11
	7	8	0	8
Nursing Mgt - Community	7	1	0	1
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
	8C	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	6	5	0	5
	7	1	0	1
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt (Multi-Services)	6	1	0	1
	7	1	0	1
	8A	1	0	1
	8B	1	0	1
	8C	2	0	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	5	34	1	35
	6	10	0	10
	7	5	0	5
Occupational Health Services	5	1	0	1
	6	5	0	5
	7	1	0	1
Ophthalmology Services	7	2	0	2
Outpatient Services	5	51	0	51
	6	11	0	11
	7	4	0	4
	8A	1	0	1
Paediatric Services - Community	5	24	0	24
	6	5	0	5
	7	15	0	15
	8A	4	0	4
	8B	2	0	2
Paediatric Services - Hospital	5	95	0	95
	6	10	0	10
	7	9	1	10
	8A	1	0	1
Patient Flow Services	7	16	0	16
Radiography (Diagnostic)	5	1	0	1
	6	2	0	2
	7	2	0	2

Department	Job Band	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Rehab/Stroke Services - Community	5	3	0	3
	6	6	1	7
	7	5	0	5
	8A	1	0	1
Renal	5	28	0	28
	6	5	0	5
	7	3	0	3
Respiratory Investigation	6	12	0	12
	7	3	0	3
	8A		1	1
Rheumatology & Rehabilit.	7	5	0	5
School Health Services	5	10	0	10
	6	6	0	6
	7	1	0	1
Specialist Services	5	4	0	4
	7	1	0	1
Surestart Services	5	4	0	4
	6	7	1	8
Theatres	5	90	0	90
	6	15	0	15
	7	4	0	4
Tissue Viability Services	6	2	0	2
Training & Development	7	10	0	10
	8A	2	0	2
Total		2,797	50	2,847

Doctors vacancies by Grade

Grade	Current Vacancies		Of which: Long-term Vacancies	
	Headcount	WTE	Headcount	WTE
Consultant	18	17.92	9	9.00
Specialty Doctor	15	14.21	4	4.00
Foundation House Officer 1	1	1.00	-	-
Total	34	33.13	13	13.00

Registered Nursing vacancies by Grade and length of time vacant

Job Description	Vacant	Of which: Vacant more than 6 months
Band 5	127	45

Job Description	Vacant	Of which: Vacant more than 6 months
Band 5/6	6	0
Band 6	47	9
Band 7	18	7
Band 8a	3	0
Band 8b	2	0
Band 8c	2	0
Total	205	61

South Eastern HSC Trust

Doctors posts by Location, Department and Contract Type

Doctors in training (registrars and foundation doctors) are included as temporary as they are on planned 6 month rotations.

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent Filled	Temporary Filled	
Ulster Hospital			
Accident & Emergency Services	22	27	49
Anaesthetics	29	26	55
Cardiology	6	7	13
Dental Services - Hospital	0	6	6
Dental Services - Community	4	0	4
Dental Surgery/OMFS	10	1	11
ENT - Otolaryngology	6	2	8
Fractures & Orthopaedics	12	6	18
Medical Specialities	82	75	157
General Surgery	17	29	46
Intensive Care / HDU	0	10	10
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	16	18	34
Paediatric Service	14	20	34
Plastic Surgery	7	16	23
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	2	6	8
Radiology	18	7	25
Urology	1	0	1
Ulster Hospital Total	246	256	502
Downshire Hospital			
Addictions Services	1	0	1
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	10	0	10
Downshire Hospital Total	11	0	11
Ards Community Hospital			
General Practitioner Service	6	0	6
Paediatric Service	2	0	2

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent Filled	Temporary Filled	
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	8	3	11
Ards Community Hospital Total	16	3	19
Lagan Valley Hospital			
Accident & Emergency Services	3	5	8
Anaesthetics	4	0	4
Cardiology	1	0	1
Community Medicine	1	0	1
Medical Specialities	14	16	30
General Surgery	3	1	4
General Practitioner Services	1	0	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	3	0	3
Plastic Surgery	1	0	1
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	9	4	13
Radiography (Diagnostic)	0	1	1
Radiology	2	1	3
Lagan Valley Hospital Total	42	28	70
Downe Hospital			
Accident & Emergency Services	5	1	6
Anaesthetics	1	1	2
Dental Services - Community	5	0	5
Medical Specialities	12	14	26
General Practitioner Service	1	0	1
General Surgery	1	0	1
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	1	6	7
Downe Hospital Total	26	22	48
Total	341	309	650

Hospital only Nursing & Midwifery posts by Hospital, Department and Contract Type

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
Ards Community Hospital			
Bank Mgt	1	0	1
Business/Service Planning/Cont	1	0	1
Child & Family Care	1	0	1
Child Health	6	0	6
Community Medicine	10	0	10
Day Procedures Services	2	0	2
Elderly Programme Of Care	2	0	2
Elderly - Hospital Nursing	1	0	1

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
General Administration	1	0	1
General Medicine	8	0	8
General Surgery	2	0	2
Health Visiting	8	1	9
Learning Disability- Community	3	0	3
Mental Health - Community	23	0	23
Mental Health - Hospital	8	0	8
Midwifery Services - Community	1	0	1
Minor Injuries Hospital (MIH)	1	0	1
Nursing Community	25	2	27
Nursing Mgt - Community	1	0	1
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	8	0	8
Paediatric Services - Community	3	0	3
Prison Services	1	0	1
School Health Services	2	0	2
Theatres	29	0	29
Ards Community Hospital Total	149	3	152
Downshire Hospital			
Bank Mgt	2	0	2
Child Health	1	0	1
Elderly Programme Of Care	2	0	2
General Medicine	1	0	1
Learning Disability - Community	4	0	4
Mental Health - Community	13	1	14
Mental Health - Hospital	51	0	51
Mental Health - Management	1	0	1
Nursing Community	7	0	7
Nursing Mgt - Community	1	0	1
Occupational Health Services	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	1	0	1
Downshire Hospital Total	85	1	86
Ulster Hospital			
Accident & Emergency / MAU	95	0	95
Assistant Director	1	0	1
Audiology	1	0	1
Bank Mgt	1	0	1
Cancer Services	41	2	43
Cardiology	1	0	1

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
Child Health	15	0	15
Elderly Programme Of Care	2	1	3
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	86	0	86
General Administration	2	0	2
General Medicine	303	2	305
General Surgery	101	1	102
Governance/Audit	4	0	4
Health/Medical Records	0	1	1
Hotel/Support Services	1	0	1
Infection Control	4	0	4
Intensive Care / HDU	52	1	53
Learning Disability - Community	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	6	0	6
Mental Health – Hospital	27	1	28
Midwifery Services - Hospital	192	3	195
Midwifery Services - Community	3	0	3
Not assigned	1	0	1
Nurse Bank Relief	1	0	1
Nursing Administration	4	0	4
Nursing Community	6	0	6
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	6	0	6
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	21	0	21
Occupational Health Services	5	0	5
Occupational Therapy	1	0	1
Orthopaedic Surgery	26	0	26
Outpatient Services	34	0	34
Paediatric Services - Hospital	65	0	65
Plastic Surgery	34	0	34
Radiography (Diagnostic)	1	0	1
Renal	5	0	5
Theatres	156	0	156
Ulster Hospital Total	1,305	12	1,317
Bangor Community Hospital			
Community Medicine	5	0	5
Health Visiting	3	0	3
Nursing Community	7	0	7
Outpatient Services	8	0	8
Bangor Community Hospital Total	23	0	23
Downe Hospital			

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
Accident & Emergency	17	0	17
Cardiology	8	0	8
Care Mgmt	1	0	1
Child Health	3	0	3
Day Procedures Services	5	0	5
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	1	0	1
General Medicine	44	0	44
General Surgery	15	0	15
Health Visiting	3	0	3
Learning Disability - Community	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	3	0	3
Mental Health - Hospital	10	0	10
Midwifery Services - Hospital	20	0	20
Not assigned	2	0	2
Nursing Community	12	0	12
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	8	0	8
School Health Services	5	0	5
Theatres	17	0	17
Downe Hospital Total	176	0	176
Lagan Valley Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	20	0	20
Bank	2	0	2
Cancer Services	1	0	1
Care Mgmt	1	0	1
Child Health	1	0	1
Day Procedures Services	17	1	18
Elderly Programme Of Care	3	0	3
Elderly-Hospital Nursing	17	0	17
General Medicine	90	0	90
General Surgery	9	0	9
Infection Control	2	0	2
Mental Health - Community	4	0	4
Mental Health - Hosp	21	0	21
Midwifery Services - Hospital	28	0	28
Midwifery Services - Community	2	0	2
Nursing Community	10	1	11
Nursing Mgt - Community	2	0	2
Nursing Mgt - Hospital	3	0	3

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	5	0	5
Occupational Health Services	2	0	2
Orthopaedic Surgery	1	0	1
Outpatient Services	11	0	11
Prison Services	1	0	1
Theatres	24	0	24
Lagan Valley Hospital Total	277	2	279
Total	2,015	18	2,033

Doctor vacancies by Location, Department and length of time vacant

Location & Department	Vacant	Of which: Vacant Longer Than 6 Months
Ulster Hospital		
Accident & Emergency Services	1	-
Medical Specialities	11	2
Urology	1	-
Ulster Hospital Total	13	2

The South Eastern HSC Trust have no medical posts vacant longer than 1 year.

Band 5 Nursing & Midwifery vacancies * by Location, Department and length of time vacant

Location & Department	Vacant	Of which: Vacant longer than 6 months
Ards Community Hospital		
Minor Injuries Hospital (MIH)	2	2
Ards Community Hospital Total	2	2
Ulster Hospital		
Accident & Emergency Services/MAU	4	3
Cardiology	2	0
Elderly Programme Of Care	14	4
General Medicine - Haematology/Diabetes/GI	5	3
General Surgery- Women and Men Elective/Non-Elective	7	0
General Medicine- Not Assigned	36	0
Mental Health - Hospital	2	0
Midwifery Services - Hospital	5	0
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	1	0
Orthopaedic Surgery	14	0
Outpatient Services	1	1
Plastic Surgery	2	0
Respiratory Investigation	10	4
Ulster Hospital Total	103	15
Downe Hospital		

Location & Department	Vacant	Of which: Vacant longer than 6 months
Accident & Emergency Services/MAU	1	0
General Medicine	2	0
Midwifery Services - Hospital	5	1
Downe Hospital Total	8	1
Lagan Valley Hospital		
Accident & Emergency Services/MAU	4	0
Elderly Programme Of Care	2	0
General Medicine	2	0
Mental Health - Hospital	4	0
Midwifery Services - Hospital	3	0
Lagan Valley Hospital Total	15	0
Total	128	18

* Band 5 only, no vacancies at Band 6 and above

Southern HSC Trust

Doctor posts by Location, Department, Job Description and Contract Type*

*Doctors in training (registrars and foundation doctors) are included as temporary as they are on planned 6 month rotations.

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Craigavon Area Hospital				
Accident & Emergency Services	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	7	0	7
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	6	6
	GP Sessions	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	8	8
	Trust Appointment For Services	0	1	1
Anaesthetics	Consultant (NC)	26	1	27
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	3	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	17	17
Cancer Services	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
	GP Sessions	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Cardiology	Assoc Specialist (Old Contract)	1	0	1
	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	5	0	5
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	1	3

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Dermatology	Assoc Specialist (Old Contract)	3	0	3
	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
	GP Sessions	0	5	5
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Director's Office	Consultant (NC)	1	1	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
ENT - Otolaryngology	Consultant (NC)	7	1	8
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	5	5
General Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	16	1	17
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	12	12
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	9	9
	Hosp Pract (Sessions)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	6	0	6
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	25	25
General Surgery	Associate Specialist (NC)	3	0	3
	Consultant (NC)	7	0	7
	Consultant (Sessions)	1	0	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	11	11
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	9	9
Geriatric Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	4	0	4
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Histo/Cyto	Consultant (NC)	0	1	1
Learning Disability-Hosp	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
Mental Health - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	7	3	10
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	4	4
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	8	8
	Trust Appointment For Services	0	1	1
Neurology	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant (NC)	10	1	11
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	15	15

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Orthodontics	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
Orthopaedic Surgery	Consultant (NC)	9	0	9
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	3	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	4	2	6
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	3	3
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	11	0	11
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	8	0	8
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	2	2
	GP Sessions	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	7	0	7
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	14	14
Pathology	Consultant (NC)	11	1	12
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Radiology	Consultant (NC)	16	1	17
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	5	5
Rheumatology & Rehabilitation	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Urology	Consultant (NC)	6	0	6
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	2	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
Craigavon Area Hospital Total		216	193	409
Daisy Hill Hospital				
Accident & Emergency Services	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	3	3
	GP Sessions	5	0	5
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	2	2
Anaesthetics	Consultant (NC)	7	0	7
	GP Sessions	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	5	0	5
Day Care Services	Consultant (NC)	4	0	4
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
General Medicine	Consultant (NC)	5	3	8
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	8	8
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	4	4
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	5	0	5
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	9	9
	Staff Grade (Old Contract)	1	0	1

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
General Surgery	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	7	1	8
	Foundation House Officer 1	0	4	4
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	3	3
GUM	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
Geriatric Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
Mental Health - Hospital	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant (NC)	7	1	8
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	2	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	5	0	5
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	4	4
	Staff Grade (Old Contract)	1	0	1
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	15	0	15
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	4	0	4
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	GP Sessions	0	2	2
	GP With Specialist Interest	2	1	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	7	0	7
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	7	7
	Trust Appointment For Services	0	1	1
Psychiatry (Medic Staff)	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	1	1
Radiology	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
Renal	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Daisy Hill Hospital Total		101	62	163
Lurgan Hospital				
Geriatric Medicine	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
Older People Services- Hosp	GP Sessions	0	1	1
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	1	3
Lurgan Hospital Total		8	2	10

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
South Tyrone Hospital				
Child &Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
	Trust Appointment For Services	0	1	1
General Surgery	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Geriatric Medicine	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Mental Health - Community	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	2	0	2
South Tyrone Hospital Total		10	1	11
St. Luke's Hospital				
Geriatric Medicine	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Home Treatment/Crisis Response	Consultant (NC)	2	0	2
Learning Disability-Hosp	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
Mental Health - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
	Foundation House Officer 2	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0	3
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	0	2	2
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	2	0	2
St. Luke's Hospital Total		15	4	19
Tower Hill Hospital				
Mental Health - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0	1
	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	GP Sessions	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1	2
Tower Hill Hospital Total		4	2	6
Other Sites				
Bank	GP ICATS	1	0	1
Child &Adolescent Mental Health	Consultant (NC)	5	0	5
	Fixed Term Spec Appointment	0	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0	2
Eating Disorder Services	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
Family Planning	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0	1

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
GUM	GP Sessions	0	1	1
Orthopaedic Services	GP ICATS	6	0	6
Paediatric Services - Community	Associate Specialist (NC)	2	0	2
	Consultant (NC)	1	0	1
	GP Sessions	0	1	1
Paediatric Services - Hosp	Consultant (NC)	3	0	3
Other Sites Total		22	3	25
Total		376	267	643

Registered Nursing posts by Location, Department, Job Description and Contract Type

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Craigavon Area Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Deputy Wd Sr/CN (6)	14	0	14
	Acute Nurse (5)	702	10	712
	Acute Nurse (6)	108	4	112
	Acute Nurse (7)	46	0	46
	Acute Nurse (8A)	3	0	3
	Acute Wd Sr/CN (6)	2	0	2
	Acute Wd Sr/CN (7)	14	0	14
Learning Disability	Learn Dis Deputy Wd Sr/CN (6)	1	0	1
	Learn Disability Wd Sr/CN (7)	1	0	1
	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	6	1	7
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	1	0	1
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	67	0	67
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	13	0	13
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	3	0	3
	Mental Health Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
	Mental Health Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
	Mental Health Wd Sr/CN (7)	5	0	5
	Mental Hth Dep Wd Sr/CN (6)	1	0	1
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager(8A)	1	0	1
	Multiservice Nurse Manager(8B)	5	0	5
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (7)	11	0	11
	Nurse Manager (8A)	5	0	5
	Nurse Manager (8B)	5	0	5

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Dep Wd Sr/CN (6)	5	0	5
	Paediatric Nurse (5)	56	1	57
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	8	0	8
	Paediatric Nurse (7)	5	0	5
	Paediatric Wd Sr/CN (7)	1	0	1
Researcher	Researcher (6)	2	1	3
	Researcher (7)	1	0	1
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (7)	3	0	3
Treatment Room Nursing	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (6)	1	0	1
	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (7)	2	0	2
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	8	1	9
	Specialist Nurse (7)	43	0	43
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	1	1	2
Craigavon Area Hospital Total		1,152	19	1,171
Daisy Hill Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Deputy Wd Sr/CN (6)	10	0	10
	Acute Nurse (5)	316	0	316
	Acute Nurse (6)	18	0	18
	Acute Nurse (7)	8	0	8
	Acute Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
	Acute Nurse Support (3)	1	0	1
	Acute Wd Sr/CN (7)	11	0	11
District Nursing	District Nurse (6)	0	1	1
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	11	1	12
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	18	0	18
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	4	0	4
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (7)	1	1	2
	Nurse Manager (8A)	1	0	1
	Nurse Manager (8B)	2	0	2
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Dep Wd Sr/CN (6)	2	0	2
	Paediatric Nurse (5)	31	1	32
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	5	0	5
	Paediatric Nurse (7)	2	0	2
	Paediatric Wd Sr/CN (7)	3	0	3
Researcher	Researcher (6)	1	0	1
Treatment Room Nursing	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (7)	1	0	1

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (5)	1	0	1
	Specialist Nurse (6)	3	0	3
	Specialist Nurse (7)	16	0	16
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	2	0	2
Daisy Hill Hospital Total		469	4	473
Lurgan Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	67	8	75
	Acute Nurse (6)	6	1	7
	Acute Nurse (7)	1	0	1
District Nursing	District Nurse (6)	14	0	14
	District Nurse (7)	1	0	1
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	9	0	9
	Health Visitor (7)	1	0	1
	Student Health Visitor (5)	2	0	2
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (6)	1	0	1
Non Acute	Non-Acute Wd Sr/CN (7)	4	0	4
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (8A)	1	0	1
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	1	0	1
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	1	0	1
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (7)	1	0	1
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	5	0	5
	Specialist Nurse (7)	13	1	14
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
	Specialist Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
Lurgan Hospital Total		130	10	140
South Tyrone Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	82	2	84
	Acute Nurse (6)	4	0	4
	Acute Nurse (7)	12	0	12
District Nursing	District Nurse (6)	7	0	7
	District Nurse (7)	1	0	1
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	9	0	9
	Health Visitor (7)	1	0	1
	Student Health Visitor (5)	1	0	1
Learning Disability	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	11	0	11
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	1	0	1
	Learning Disability Nurse (7)	2	0	2

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	3	0	3
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	6	0	6
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	3	0	3
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	2	0	2
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	1	0	1
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (7)	2	0	2
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	3	0	3
	Specialist Nurse (7)	9	0	9
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
South Tyrone Hospital Total		161	2	163
St. Luke's Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	4	1	5
	Acute Nurse (6)	7	0	7
	Acute Nurse (7)	1	1	2
District Nursing	District Nurse (7)	1	0	1
Family Planning	Family Planning Nurse (6)	2	0	2
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (7)	4	0	4
	Health Visitor (8A)	2	0	2
Learning Disability	Learn Dis Deputy Wd Sr/CN (6)	1	0	1
	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	3	1	4
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	5	0	5
	Learning Disability Nurse (7)	5	0	5
	Learning Disability Nurse (8A)	2	0	2
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	24	2	26
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	20	0	20
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	19	0	19
	Mental Health Nurse (8A)	4	0	4
	Mental Health Wd Sr/CN (7)	1	0	1
	Mental Hth Dep Wd Sr/CN (6)	2	0	2
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (6)	1	0	1
	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	0	1
School Nursing	School Nurse (5)	6	0	6
	School Nurse (6)	1	0	1
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (5)	1	0	1
	Teacher/Trainer (6)	2	0	2
	Teacher/Trainer (7)	4	0	4

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	6	0	6
	Specialist Nurse (7)	18	0	18
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	2	0	2
	Specialist Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
St. Luke's Hospital Total		150	5	155
Tower Hill Hospital				
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	3	0	3
District Nursing	District Nurse (5)	1	0	1
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	2	0	2
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	11	0	11
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	2	0	2
Tower Hill Hospital Total		19	0	19
Other Sites				
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	119	2	121
	Acute Nurse (6)	1	0	1
	Acute Nurse (7)	2	0	2
District Nursing	District Nurse (5)	3	0	3
	District Nurse (6)	47	1	48
	District Nurse (7)	8	0	8
Family Planning	Family Planning Nurse (6)	1	0	1
	Family Planning Nurse (7)	1	0	1
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	83	0	83
	Health Visitor (7)	8	0	8
	Student Health Visitor (5)	5	2	7
Learning Disability	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	38	1	39
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	17	0	17
	Learning Disability Nurse (7)	8	0	8
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	26	1	27
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	48	1	49
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	17	0	17
	Mental Health Nurse (8A)	5	0	5
	Mental Health Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (6)	2	0	2
	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	0	1
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (6)	1	0	1
	Nurse Manager (7)	4	0	4
	Nurse Manager (8A)	2	0	2
	Nurse Manager (8B)	3	0	3

Location & Department	Job Description	Contract Type		Total
		Perm	Temp	
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	10	0	10
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	6	0	6
	Paediatric Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
Researcher	Researcher (8A)	1	0	1
School Nursing	School Nurse (5)	20	0	20
	School Nurse (6)	4	0	4
	School Nurse (7)	2	0	2
Teacher/Trainer	Teacher/Trainer (6)	1	0	1
	Teacher/Trainer (7)	13	0	13
Treatment Room Nursing	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (5)	21	2	23
	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (6)	1	0	1
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	6	0	6
	Specialist Nurse (7)	18	0	18
	Specialist Nurse (8A)	1	0	1
	Specialist Nurse (8B)	1	0	1
Other Sites Total		557	10	567
Total		2,638	50	2,688

Doctor vacancies by Location, Department, Job Description and length of time vacant

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Craigavon Area Hospital			
Accident & Emergency Services	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0
	Consultant (NC)	4	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	2
	Trust Appointment For Services	2	0
Anaesthetics	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0
Cancer Services	Consultant (NC)	1	1
General Medicine	Consultant (NC)	3	2
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0
General Surgery	Associate Specialist (NC)	1	0
	Consultant (NC)	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 1	1	0
Geriatric Medicine	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0
Histo/Cyto	Consultant (NC)	1	1
Mental Health - Hosp	Consultant (NC)	1	0
Neurology	Consultant (NC)	1	0
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	0

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Orthopaedic Surgery	Consultant (NC)	2	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	0
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	2	0
Paediatric Services - Hospital	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	Foundation House Officer 2	2	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1
Pathology	Consultant (NC)	1	0
Radiology	Consultant (NC)	4	4
Urology	Specialty Registrar (Str)	2	1
Craigavon Area Hospital Total		44	15
Daisy Hill Hospital			
Accident & Emergency Services	Consultant (NC)	1	1
	Foundation House Officer 2	1	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	6	5
Anaesthetics	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	1
General Medicine	Consultant (NC)	1	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	3	3
	Specialty Registrar (Str)	1	1
General Surgery	Specialty Doctor (NC)	1	1
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	1
Paediatric Services - Hosp	Specialty Doctor (NC)	2	0
Daisy Hill Hospital Total		21	14
Lurgan Hospital			
Geriatric Medicine	Consultant (NC)	4	1
	Specialty Doctor (NC)	6	3
Paediatric Serv - Comm	Consultant (NC)	1	0
Lurgan Hospital Total		11	4
South Tyrone Hospital			
Out Of Hours	GP Out Of Hours	1	0
South Tyrone Hospital Total		1	0
Tower Hill Hospital			
Paediatric Serv - Community	Consultant (NC)	1	0
	GP Sessions	1	1
Tower Hill Hospital Total		2	1
Other Sites			
Paediatric Serv - Community	Consultant (NC)	4	1

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Other Sites Total		4	1
Total		83	35

Registered Nursing vacancies by Location, Department, Job Description and length of time vacant

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Craigavon Area Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	60	7
	Acute Nurse (6)	5	1
	Acute Nurse (7)	1	0
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	16	10
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	2	0
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (7)	4	2
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	6	2
	Paediatric Nurse (6)	1	0
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	4	0
Craigavon Area Hospital Total		99	22
Daisy Hill Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Deputy Wd Sr/CN (6)	2	0
	Acute Nurse (5)	18	5
	Acute Nurse (7)	2	1
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	2	0
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	3	0
Nurse Manager	Nurse Manager (7)	2	0
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Dep Wd Sr/CN (6)	1	0
	Paediatric Nurse (5)	7	0
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (7)	2	1
Daisy Hill Hospital Total		39	7
Lurgan Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	31	8
District Nursing	District Nurse (7)	1	1
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	5	0
	Specialist Nurse (7)	3	0
Lurgan Hospital Total		40	9
South Tyrone Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	13	9
	Acute Nurse (6)	2	1
	Acute Nurse (7)	1	0
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	2	0

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Learning Disability	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	2	0
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	1	0
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	1
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	1	1
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (7)	2	1
South Tyrone Hospital Total		25	13
St. Luke's Hospital			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (5)	2	0
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	8	0
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	8	2
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	1	0
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	0
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	4	2
	Specialist Nurse (7)	2	0
St. Luke's Hospital Total		26	4
Tower Hill Hospital			
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (7)	2	1
Tower Hill Hospital Total		2	2
Other Sites			
Acute Nursing	Acute Nurse (6)	1	0
District Nursing	District Nurse (6)	1	1
Health Visiting	Health Visitor (6)	6	2
	Student Health Visitor (5)	1	0
Learning Disability	Learning Disability Nurse (5)	2	0
	Learning Disability Nurse (6)	8	0
	Learning Disability Nurse (7)	1	0
Mental Health	Mental Health Nurse (5)	5	1
	Mental Health Nurse (6)	7	1
	Mental Health Nurse (7)	2	0
Multiservice Nursing	Multiservice Nurse Manager (7)	1	0
Paediatric Nursing	Paediatric Nurse (5)	3	1
Treatment Room Nursing	Treat Room/Practice Nurse (5)	7	2
Specialist Nursing	Specialist Nurse (6)	3	0
	Specialist Nurse (7)	1	0
Other Sites Total		49	8
Total		280	64

Western HSC Trust**Medical posts by Location, Department and Contract Type**

*Doctors in training are included as temporary as they are on planned 6 month rotations.

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Altnagelvin Hospital			
Accident & Emergency	11	12	23
Acute Medical Unit	2	4	6
Anaesthetics	29	19	48
Biochemistry	1	0	1
Cardiology Alt. Medi	9	2	11
CDU	0	2	2
COTE Medical	2	4	6
Dermatology	2	0	2
Diabetic Consultants	2	0	2
E.N.T.	11	6	17
G.U.M. Clinic	2	0	2
Gastro Specialty Medicine	3	2	5
General Medicine Training	2	33	35
General Surgery	7	24	31
Gynaecology	0	1	1
Haematology	2	1	3
Histopathology	7	1	8
ICATS ENT	1	0	1
ICATS Ophthalmology	1	0	1
ICATS Orthopaedics	1	0	1
Juniors	0	2	2
Microbiology	2	0	2
Neurology	3	0	3
Obstetrics	11	17	28
Occupational Health	0	1	1
Office of Medical Director	0	1	1
Ophthalmology	10	3	13
Oral Surgery	4	10	14
Orthodontics – Medical	2	1	3
Orthopaedics	13	17	30
Paediatrics Medical	11	15	26
Palliative care	2	1	3
Radio CTR – General In	7	2	9
Renal Alt. Medical	2	0	2
Respiratory Alt. Medicine	4	1	5
Rheumatology	2	1	3

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Sperrin Ward 43 – AL	1	0	1
SPRUCE Y.C.SICK	0	1	1
Stroke Services	1	0	1
SWH – General Medicine	0	1	1
Urology Department	7	3	10
Respiratory	0	2	2
Ward 44 SW Alt	0	2	2
WH&SST	2	0	2
X-Ray Department	10	9	19
Altnagelvin Hospital Total	189	201	390
Grangewood			
Psychiatry	2	0	2
Juniors	1	8	9
Medical	2	0	2
Grangewood Total	5	8	13
South West Acute Hospital			
Accident & Emergency / ED	4	2	6
Anaesthetics	8	1	9
Cardiology	1	0	1
COTE	2	0	2
Gynae Ward	5	3	8
ICATS Orthopaedics	0	1	1
Juniors	0	1	1
Medi & Surg Assessment Unit	1	0	1
Medical Staff	3	0	3
MSAU Medical	1	1	2
Oral Surgery	1	0	1
Palliative Care	0	1	1
Rheumatology	1	0	1
School Health SER. M	2	0	2
Stroke Services	1	0	1
Surgical Specialty	10	7	17
Surgical Ward	0	7	7
Paediatric Medicine	5	5	10
General Medicine	7	18	25
X-Ray Dept SWAH	6	0	6
South West Acute Total	58	47	105

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital			
Child & Adol. Mental Health	3	0	3
Psychiatry	3	0	3
Elderly	1	0	1
Juniors	0	10	10
Medical	2	0	2
Tyrone & Fermanagh Total	9	10	19
Tyrone County Hospital			
Anaesthetics	1	0	1
ICATS ENT	1	0	1
ICATS Orthopaedics	1	0	1
Palliative Care	1	0	1
Renal	4	3	7
Surgical Specialty	1	1	2
General Medicine	1	0	1
Tyrone County Total	10	4	14
Waterside Hospital			
Acute care at Home	1	0	1
Dental	1	0	1
Waterside Hospital Total	2	0	2
Total	274	270	544

Hospital Nursing posts by Location, Department and Contract Type

Location & Department	Contract Type		Total
	Perm	Temp	
Altnagelvin	1,111	33	1,144
Grangewood	54	1	55
Lakeview	32	0	32
South West Acute	486	12	498
Tyrone & Fermanagh	128	4	132
Tyrone County	144	5	149
Waterside	70	3	73
Total	2,025	58	2,083

Medical vacancies (WTE) by Location, Department and Job Description

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant
Altnagelvin Hospital		
Accident & Emergency	Consultant	4
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	5

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant
Anaesthetics	Consultant	3
Dermatology	Consultant	1
Ophthalmology	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade/ Hospital Practitioner/ GPI CATS	1 Temp
Otolaryngology	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade/ Trust Dr/GPI CATS	1 Temp
General Medicine	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	4
	F1	2
General Medicine (Ward 1) Gastroenterology	Consultant	2
General Medicine (Ward 3) Respiratory	Consultant	1
General Medicine (Ward 20/42) Care of the Elderly/ Stroke	Consultant	2
General Medicine (Ward 20/42) Care of the Elderly (Opal Service)	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	1
	StR3+	1.4
Acute Medical Unit (Ward 41)	Consultant	2
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade/ Trust Doctor	3
Orthodontics	Consultant	1
General Surgery	Consultant	1
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant	2
	StR3 + (Registrar level)	2
Paediatrics	Consultant	2.5
	StR3 + (Registrar level)	1
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	1.4
Neuro-Rehabilitation	Consultant	1
Haematology	Consultant	2
Radiology	Consultant	6
Oncology	Consultant	5
	Specialty Doctor	1
Altnagelvin Hospital Total		59.3
Bridgeview		
Community Paediatrics	Consultant	1
Bridgeview Total		1
Grangewood		
Psychiatry - General Adult	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	0.2
Psychiatry - Old Age	Consultant	1
Grangewood Total		2.2
Woodlea House		
Psychiatry - Child & Adolescent	Consultant	0.4
Woodlea House Total		0.4

Location & Department	Job Description	Vacant
Lakeview		
Psychiatry - Learning Disability	Consultant	1
Lakeview Total		1
South West Acute Hospital		
Accident & Emergency	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	15
	GP Trainee	1
Anaesthetics	Consultant	2
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	4
General Medicine	Consultant	2
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	4
Palliative Medicine	Consultant	1
Radiology	Consultant	1
General Surgery	Consultant	1
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	2
Paediatrics	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	1
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	4
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Reg Level	6
	STR1/2, CT1/2, F2 (SHO Level)	5
Occupational Health	Specialty Doctor	1
South West Acute Hospital Total		53
Tyrone County Hospital		
Geriatrics	Consultant	1
	Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	3
OPAL	Specialty Doctor	1
Tyrone County Hospital Total		5
Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital		
Addictions	Consultant	0.5
Old Age Psychiatry	Consultant	2
Community Psychiatry	Consultant	1
Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital Total		3.5
Omagh Health Centre		
Community Paediatrics (Omagh Health Centre)	Associate Specialist/Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	1.5
Community Paediatrics (Enniskillen Health Centre)	Associate Specialist/Specialty Doctor/Staff Grade	1
Omagh Health Centre Total		2.5
Total		127.9

The Western HSC Trust were unable to provide a breakdown by length of time vacant.

Nursing vacancies

There are currently 110 Band 5 and above nursing posts which are actively being recruited.

A breakdown by duration of medical or nursing vacancies cannot be provided.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health what is the waiting time for a gall bladder operation in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 5094/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the waiting time for a gall bladder operation in the Western HSC Trust, as at 30th September 2016, the most recent quarter for which official statistics are available, is shown in the table below.

HSC Trust	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Western	42	48	57	15	140	192

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

Gall bladder operations have been identified using the following Office of Population Censuses and Surveys Classification of Intervention and Procedures (OPCS – 4.7) codes J19 – J26.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Health how many people in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area are on a waiting list for a hip replacement; and what her Department is doing to reduce these waiting lists.

(AQW 5231/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of people waiting for hip replacement operations (including revisions) in the Western HSC Trust at 30th September 2016 is shown below. This is the most recent date for which official statistics are available.

	Weeks waiting						
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52	Total
Western	42	67	74	55	212	268	718

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the current waiting times for (i) hip replacement; (ii) cataract removal; (iii) circumcision; (iv) a colonoscopy; (v) cruciate ligament repair; (vi) gall bladder removal; (vii) Reduction Mammoplasty; (viii) hernia repair; (ix) breast lump removal; (x) hysterectomy; and (xi) prostate surgery, in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 5237/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative

impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

Waiting times for services requested are detailed in tables (i) – (xi) for the position at 30th September 2016, the most recent quarter for which official statistics are available.

(i) Waiting times for hip replacement admissions at 30th September 2016

HSC Trust	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Belfast	44	227	283	186	574	185
South Eastern	<5	<5	0	0	0	0
Southern	32	31	47	31	107	24
Western	42	67	74	55	212	268

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

*Cell sizes have been masked to protect patient confidentiality.

(ii) Waiting times for cataract removal admissions at 30th September 2016

HSC Trust	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Belfast	30	77	46	<5	<5	0
South Eastern	81	97	47	0	<5	0
Southern	0	<5	0	0	0	0
Western	22	18	11	10	<5	0

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

* Cell sizes have been masked to protect patient confidentiality.

(iii) Waiting times for circumcision admissions at 30th September 2016

HSC Trust	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Belfast	27	27	37	11	84	69
Northern	6	10	<5	0	<5	<5
South Eastern	15	4	8	5	14	11
Southern	27	13	11	8	29	11
Western	31	32	60	37	61	9

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

* Cell sizes have been masked to protect patient confidentiality.

(iv) Waiting times for colonoscopy admissions at 30th September 2016

HSC Trust	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Belfast	318	214	248	197	303	52
Northern	391	210	133	57	8	0
South Eastern	233	126	95	28	157	177
Southern	293	151	40	23	111	<5

HSC Trust	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Western	402	162	37	13	28	0

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

*Cell sizes have been masked to protect patient confidentiality.

- (v) Waiting times for cruciate ligament repair admissions at 30th September 2016

HSC Trust	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Belfast	0	0	<5	5	<5	0
South Eastern	<5	0	0	0	0	0
Southern	5	8	<5	9	22	14
Western	6	<5	<5	5	9	19

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

* Cell sizes have been masked to protect patient confidentiality.

- (vi) Waiting times for gall bladder removal admissions at 30th September 2016

HSC Trust	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Belfast	70	67	97	55	160	133
Northern	50	61	63	29	70	12
South Eastern	44	31	23	20	56	7
Southern	79	33	30	18	18	5
Western	42	48	57	15	140	192

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

- (vii) Waiting times for mammoplasty reduction admissions at 30th September 2016

HSC Trust	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Belfast	15	14	29	13	49	74
Northern	0	<5	<5	0	6	<5
South Eastern	0	5	<5	<5	8	<5
Southern	<5	0	0	0	0	0
Western	<5	0	<5	0	0	0

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

* Cell sizes have been masked to protect patient confidentiality.

- (viii) Waiting times for hernia repair admissions at 30th September 2016

HSC Trust	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Belfast	89	98	113	52	177	139
Northern	78	49	64	25	55	<5
South Eastern	60	34	35	19	47	13
Southern	84	48	22	10	22	<5

HSC Trust	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Western	78	51	64	46	177	95

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

* Cell sizes have been masked to protect patient confidentiality.

(ix) Waiting times for breast lump removal admissions at 30th September 2016

HSC Trust	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Belfast	9	<5	0	0	5	0
Northern	6	<5	0	0	<5	0
South Eastern	0	<5	0	0	0	0
Southern	7	0	0	0	0	0
Western	13	<5	9	<5	14	16

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

* Cell sizes have been masked to protect patient confidentiality.

These figures are for excision of a breast lump only. Total mastectomies or quadrantectomies are not included as only lesion removal figures were requested.

(x) Waiting times for hysterectomy admissions at 30th September 2016

HSC Trust	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Belfast	52	34	38	27	56	9
Northern	43	31	30	15	40	0
South Eastern	27	22	26	12	53	46
Southern	33	12	8	<5	6	0
Western	36	23	33	14	35	22

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

* Cell sizes have been masked to protect patient confidentiality.

(xi) Waiting times for prostate surgery admissions at 30th September 2016

HSC Trust	Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26-52	>52
Belfast	85	26	9	<5	36	23
South Eastern	22	<5	5	<5	9	14
Southern	22	25	18	14	53	97
Western	88	22	26	23	45	5

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

* Cell sizes have been masked to protect patient confidentiality.

I would like to recognize the efforts of staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Health how many breast cancer patients have been seen within the target consultation times in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, within each of the last five years.

(AQW 5343/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of patients in the South Eastern HSC Trust, seen for the first time by a breast cancer specialist, within 14 days of an urgent referral for suspect cancer, is detailed in the table below for each of the last five years.

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Seen within 14 days	1,498	1,460	1,199	1,395	1,537

Source: SDR2 Information Return

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Smith asked the Minister of Health what plans are in place to cut patient waiting times with regard to breast cancer consultations; and what actions she proposes to build confidence within the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.
(AQW 5344/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Latest provisional information available shows that performance against the 14 day target for urgent GP referrals for suspected breast cancer improved to 99% in October 2016 with Northern, South Eastern and Western HSC Trusts fully achieving the target and the remaining Trusts sitting just below the target at 98%.

I acknowledge that South Eastern Trust had issues with performance against the 14 day target earlier this year, with performance dipping to 14% in May 2016 as a result of scheduling issues for breast cancer clinics. Additional clinics held to make up for the reduction in service have reduced waiting times with performance improving since July 2016 and provisional information for October 2016 indicates 100% performance is now being achieved.

More recently, there have been well-publicised issues with the breast cancer service in the Southern Trust. While initial action taken to address performance issues have been effective, experiences in both South Eastern and Southern HSC Trusts evidence a need to put breast cancer services on a more sustainable footing for the future.

To secure longer term, sustainable breast services across the north, a multi -agency workshop was held on 26 October bringing together breast cancer specialists from across the north to identify options for delivering breast cancer services in the future. From this, a working group is being established, involving all disciplines, representing all Trusts and service users to develop a future service model.

More generally, I am firmly of the view that the current elective waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together. It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health (i) what are the red flag referral times for each cancer; (ii) to detail the current performance against each; and (iii) how this performance compares to each of the last five years.
(AQW 5416/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: (i) All GP referrals for suspect cancer are classified as red flag referrals. My Departments target on cancer waiting times states that at least 95% of patients urgently referred with a suspected cancer should begin their first definitive treatment within 62 days.

(ii) & (iii) Information on the number of patients who commenced treatment, within 62 days of referral, by tumour site, in each of five years is detailed in the following table.

Cancer Type	% Treated within 62 days				
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Brain/Central Nervous System	100.0%	100.0%	50.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Cancer Type	% Treated within 62 days				
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Breast Cancer	99.9%	98.2%	99.1%	97.5%	96.0%
Gynae Cancers	82.1%	74.3%	79.2%	70.3%	68.1%
Haematological Cancers	90.1%	87.2%	86.8%	85.8%	85.3%
Head/Neck Cancer	73.5%	69.0%	73.6%	60.0%	55.0%
Lower Gastrointestinal Cancer	63.3%	67.2%	71.0%	66.1%	47.4%
Lung Cancer	76.8%	74.8%	75.8%	71.3%	68.3%
Other	84.1%	76.0%	74.1%	70.5%	56.7%
Sarcomas	100.0%	50.0%	88.2%	77.8%	83.3%
Skin Cancers	94.1%	90.8%	87.9%	77.7%	76.9%
Upper Gastrointestinal Cancer	58.3%	59.3%	59.0%	57.4%	47.6%
Urological Cancer	68.7%	78.4%	75.5%	56.1%	62.6%

Source: Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS)

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of residents in each council ward in East Antrim who have been waiting for (i) between one and three months; and (ii) more than three months for a home care package from the Northern Health and Social Care Trust or a non-statutory provider.

(AQW 5430/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested is not held centrally and was requested from the Northern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust. Their response can be found below. Information is not provided by council ward due to the small numbers involved.

At the 6th October 2016 there were (i) 8 service users waiting less than 3 months and (ii) 5 service users waiting more than 3 months for a full domiciliary care package in East Antrim.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together. It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients. That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the current waiting times for routine spinal appointments.

(AQW 5718/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of people waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient spinal appointment following a routine referral, as at 27th September 2016, is shown in the table below.

	Weeks waiting							Total
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 -18	>18 - 52	> 52	
Number	328	199	179	256	197	2,502	4,250	7,911

Source: Belfast HSC Trust

*Spinal appointments are only carried out in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health how many day surgery procedures and elective lists in each hospital in the Western Health and Social Care Trust have been cancelled in the last 3 months, broken down by specialty.[R]
(AQW 5804/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: It is assumed that this question refers to the number of planned elective operations cancelled by the Hospital.

Information on the number of operations cancelled for non-clinical reasons, in each hospital in the Western HSC Trust from July to September 2016, broken down by specialty, is provided in the table below.

	Altnagelvin	South West Acute	Tyrone County
Endoscopy	7	18	12
ENT	15	0	0
Gynaecology	1	15	0
Oral Surgery	5	0	0
Ophthalmology	11	0	0
Orthopaedics	55	0	0
Respiratory	0	2	0
General Surgery	8	30	4
Urology	7	0	1

Source: Western HSC Trust

- 1 Includes only elective operations which were cancelled on the day of, or up to two days prior to, the planned operation for non-clinical reasons.
- 2 Includes both Inpatient and Daycase elective procedures.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health how many patients in each Health and Social Care Trust are on (i) the priority; and (ii) standard waiting lists for orthopaedic surgery. [R]
(AQW 5806/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of patients' waiting for admission in the Trauma and Orthopaedic specialty as at 30th September 2016, the most recent quarter for which official statistics are available, is provided in the following table by HSC Trust and priority of admission.

HSC Trust	Total Number Waiting	
	Urgent	Routine
Belfast	1,030	6,109
South Eastern	10	35
Southern	191	1,418
Western	710	2,718

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

*Trauma and Orthopaedic surgery is not carried out in Northern HSC Trust

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health why there is no plan in place to address waiting times now rather than January 2017. (AQW 6151/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Health and Social Care Board and the Health and Social Care Trusts have been and continue to work to minimise waiting times for elective care. However the plan which I intend to publish in January 2017 relates to the comprehensive approach for addressing waiting lists referred to in Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together and will address not only what will be done in the short term to improve current waiting times, but also what must happen to transform the system so that the HSC is able to meet the future demand for elective care.

Current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

Only by transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that will we be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

I would like to recognise the efforts of the staff across the health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister of Health for a breakdown of the waiting times for audiology services by referral to assessment; and assessment to treatment. (AQW 6344/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The 2015/16 Ministerial diagnostic waiting time target states that by March 2017, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together. It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients. That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

The latest information available on the number of patients waiting for a diagnostic pure tone audiometry test can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic pure tone audiometry test, by weeks waiting, at 30th June 2016.

	0-6 Weeks	>6-9 Weeks	>9-13 Weeks	>13-21 Weeks	>21-26 Weeks	>26 Weeks	Total Waiting
Pure tone audiometry	1,724	659	493	693	341	43	3,953

Source: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/hs-ni-wts-diagnostic-waiting-times-q1-16-17.pdf>

Information on completed waits for people waiting for a hearing aid is collected by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB). The latest available information can be found in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Completed Waits – Length of time waiting for a hearing aid following assessment (September 2016).

0-3 Weeks	>3-6 Weeks	>6-9 Weeks	>9-13 Weeks	>13 Weeks	Total Completed Waits
315	259	289	289	542	1,694

Source: Health and Social Care Board October Monitoring Round

Ms Hanna asked the Minister of Health to detail the engagement that she had with the Minister of Finance in relation to the October Monitoring Round, prior to his statement to the Assembly on Tuesday 25 October 2016.

(AQW 6459/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Prior to his statement to the Assembly on Tuesday 25 October 2016, I fully engaged with the Minister of Finance in relation to the October Monitoring Round. This engagement was for the purpose of informing the Executive's deliberations in reaching an agreed Monitoring round outcome and as such details are not disclosed.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to detail the longest waiting time for an allergy appointment with the Immunology Department in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust; and how many patients are currently on the waiting list.

(AQW 6518/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: At 3rd November 2016 there were 2,471 patients on the Immunology Allergy waiting list and 163 patients on the Paediatric Allergy waiting list in the Belfast Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust.

The longest waiting time on each of these waiting lists was 128 weeks and 69 weeks respectively.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health to detail the average waiting time for hip replacements in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 6530/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the average waiting time for a hip replacement operations (including revisions) at 30th September 2016, the most recent quarter for which official statistics are available, is shown in the table below.

HSC Trust	Average Weeks Waiting
Belfast	29.8
South Eastern	3.8
Southern	27.1
Western	44.5

Source: DoH Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

Hip replacement operations are not carried out within the Northern HSC Trust and only revision surgery is carried out within South Eastern HSC Trust.

Hip replacement procedures were identified using the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys tabular list of operations and procedures (OPCS – 4.7) codes W37, W38, W39, W46, W47, W48, W93, W94 and W95.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The long term solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the Health & social care sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health which social work services currently make use of caseload weighting tools to manage staff workload.

(AQW 6836/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The regional Caseload weighting Guidance was developed for Children's Services in 2008 and revised in October 2013, and put in place the process for caseload management within community fieldwork settings. Within Adult services a number of teams are using caseload weighting tools and this is being rolled out further across the five trusts.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the research finding published by the Northern Ireland Association of Social Workers that an additional 330 full time social work posts are required in the statutory Health and Social Care sector and an additional 50 full time social work posts are required in the voluntary sector to meet the demand on services.

(AQW 6837/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I welcome the Workload Survey Report provided by NIASW and agree with the report's recommendation for employers to conduct an audit of social work vacancies in HSC. This will establish an accurate assessment of the scale of the problem and ensure employers' compliance with Human Resource policies in regard to vacancy management.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health how many cases of suspected deprivation of assets (i) her Department; (ii) the Health and Social Care Board; and (iii) each Health and Social Care Trust has investigated over each of the last five years.

(AQW 6853/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: It is the responsibility of Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts to assess a person's ability to contribute to the cost of their residential care accommodation. Neither my Department, nor the Health and Social Care Board have any involvement in the financial assessment process.

The information you have requested is not held in a reportable format. This would require a significant manual exercise which would be at a disproportionate cost to the HSC Trusts.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 3934/16-21, for a breakdown of the additional costs.

(AQW 6883/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

Legal and associated costs in relation to the 17 month legal challenge	£1.065m
Removal of contaminated ground costs	£1.15m
Prolongation costs associated with suspension of work due to the removal of contaminated ground	£2.66m
Increased Trust project management fees due to delays associated with legal challenges and site condition delays	£0.468m

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health, given that the survival rate has remained low over the last thirty years as a result of the lack of early detection, to outline her commitment to invest in further research into pancreatic cancer.

(AQW 6889/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department funds core staff and facilities of the Cancer Centre and Network (NICTN) through the regional HSC R&D Fund. This support enables Trusts to benefit from research funds provided e.g. by research funders, cancer charities or industry. Use of the HSC R&D Fund does not specify the types of cancer on which research can be conducted so, although the predominant cancers studied in Belfast are genitourinary, breast, haematology and gastrointestinal (reflecting the expertise / experience of our researchers in the North of Ireland), clinical studies involve many different types of cancer.

Recent NICTN clinical trial activity in pancreatic cancer has been limited, with a small number of interventional clinical trials open but in some cases failing to recruit participants. Currently two studies are in set-up with plans to open to recruitment in early 2017. Both studies will be evaluating new drug combinations in patients with locally advanced, inoperable ductal pancreatic adenocarcinoma and patients with metastatic pancreatic carcinoma.

My Department is also contributing funding to a US-Ireland partnership involving researchers at Queen's University Belfast to develop new treatments for pancreatic cancer. This £2.9m grant has been awarded under the US-Ireland Research and Development Partnership Programme. It will bring together world-leading experts in drug delivery and cancer research at Queen's, Dublin City University and the State University of New York at Buffalo. It is a five-year programme which will focus on the development of 'nanomedicine' (miniscule technology aimed at delivering cancer drugs directly to cancer sites) in the treatment of pancreatic cancer, for which current treatment options are limited.

Also, the fundamental discovery research led by academics and funded from a wide variety of sources is relevant to all cancers and their prevention. All Trusts can interact with public or private research funders to attract additional funding.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health whether it is her intention that the Government of the Republic of Ireland will have any involvement in the outworkings of Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together.

(AQW 6899/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: In securing better health outcomes for people in the North of Ireland it makes sense to continue to seize opportunities where the evidence shows that all-island collaboration is the best approach to providing services. We have already committed together to deliver congenital heart disease services, through an all-island network, and radiotherapy services in Derry for cancer patients.

I have also proposed a number of areas where there is potential for further all-island collaboration in health and social care. These include human organ transplantation; rare diseases; genomic medicine; deep brain stimulation; stem cell and regenerative medicine; major trauma; acute

hospital service provision; eating disorders; perinatal mental health services; and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

I will consider other areas where there is potential for all-Ireland approaches to health and social care on an ongoing basis.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of mental health care provision in prisons.

(AQW 6939/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The provision of mental healthcare in prisons is extremely challenging and complex with the most significant challenges often related to the impact of the prison environment. Lock down of prisoners and restriction of access to a meaningful and working day can directly impact on health and well being.

Mental health services in prisons are developed in line with regional mental health pathways and best practice with an ethos underpinned by recovery based practice. Despite the undoubted challenges we face, our healthcare staff who work with prisoners do so because they are motivated to do their best to improve health outcomes for their patients.

It is clear to see from recent Prisoner Ombudsman's reports and RQIA inspections that significant improvements have been made across all areas of healthcare provision with particular improvements noted in the provision of Mental Health Services.

However, there is further improvement needed and this is why the Justice Minister and I have recently agreed to the commissioning of an urgent review of vulnerable people in prison custody. Officials from both Departments are now working together to determine the structure, scope and timeframe of this review.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Health to explain the rationale behind the reduction in Community Care Teams in the Northern Health Trust area, specifically the Mid Ulster region; and how she proposes to meet the care demands in Mid Ulster.

(AQW 6942/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There will be no reduction to the number of community care teams in the Mid Ulster area. Under the Northern Trust's reform and modernisation programme it is reducing the number of teams that provide long term care and increasing the number of teams working in the re-ablement service.

Mr Middleton asked the Minister of Health what support her Department gives to children born with a cleft.

(AQW 7004/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Cleft Lip and Palate Multidisciplinary Team is a well-developed service based at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children which links patients' care across hospital and community services in the North and to specialist centres in Britain, if and when required.

The role of the Cleft Lip and Palate Multidisciplinary Team begins as soon as the diagnosis is made, often before birth, and follows the patient and family through their clinical pathway and follow-up care. This may take many years and is likely to include speech and language therapy, paediatric and adult dentistry, orthodontics, clinical psychology, plastic and maxillofacial surgeons. The Cleft Team Orthodontist, Maxillofacial Surgeon and Plastic Surgeon work together to determine the best treatment plan for each individual patient.

The service ensures dedicated time on a weekly basis for patient and family education, home visits, telephone consultations, remote tele-monitoring, psychological support and other duties.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health which of the 18 actions contained in Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together were already budgeted for in the 2016/17 health budget; and for the estimated cost for each action.

(AQW 7007/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The bulk of the actions set out in Delivering Together will be taken forward in 2016/17 within existing resources, largely through reprioritisation of staff resource.

While it is not possible to detail the exact cost of taking forward each of the individual actions, you will be aware that I have committed to bring forward a strategy to reduce waiting lists early in the New Year which will have an associated cost.

In this financial year, I increased GP training places from 65 to 85 places at an additional cost of £1.2m, and have commissioned 5 training places on the Advanced Nurse Practitioner programme at a cost of approximately £47,000. I have also committed to continuing investment in Practice Based Pharmacists with 54 currently in post, rising to 61 by March 2017 at a cost of £1.7m.

At this point, it is not possible to be definitive about the cost of the overall programme of work. The detailed design of HSC services moving forward will be developed through a process of co-production. Once the process of design and co-production has started financial requirements will become clearer.

In endorsing the vision set out in Delivering Together, the Executive have recognised that there is a need for additional funding. I will continue to engage with the Department of Finance on funding of the transformation programme outlined in Delivering Together but cannot pre-empt the outcome of the budgetary process.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of proper nutritional screening in allowing for earlier intervention and easing the pressures on GP surgeries and hospitals; and whether she will ensure that proper nutritional screening takes place in all GP surgeries, nursing homes and outpatient clinics.

(AQW 7068/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Nutritional screening will identify those patients who are at risk of malnutrition and allow for the provision of early interventions to prevent or treat this condition.

Nutritional screening already takes place in all statutory residential and nursing homes. The care standards for nursing homes requires that "nutritional screening takes place to identify patients who may be at risk of malnutrition and underweight or overweight and each resident has an appropriate nutritional care plan in place".

Work is currently underway to implement nutritional screening for those receiving services in community settings including the client's own homes, day centres, independent residential and nursing home settings, supported living facilities and primary care including GP surgeries.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health whether any staff have suffered injury as a result of a chemical mixture in the Renal Unit of Antrim Area Hospital, over the last 3 years; and if so, how many have been affected.

(AQW 7094/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: In the last 3 years a total of 6 staff members and no patients have been injured during the disinfection and processing of renal waste using a commercially available product called STERI-CID II (also known as Kirkstart). My Department has no further detail surrounding the specific instances of injury to staff however the Trust is legally obliged to report such instances to the Health and Safety Executive (NI) under the Reporting of Injuries and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health whether any patients have suffered injury as a result of a chemical mixture in the Renal Unit of Antrim Area Hospital, over the last 3 years; and if so, how many patients have been affected.

(AQW 7101/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: In the last 3 years a total of 6 staff members and no patients have been injured during the disinfection and processing of renal waste using a commercially available product called STERI-CID II (also known as Kirkstart). My Department has no further detail surrounding the specific instances of injury to staff however the Trust is legally obliged to report such instances to the Health and Safety Executive (NI) under the Reporting of Injuries and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 2239/16-21, for an update on when the 1per cent pay increase agreed for Health Service workers will be implemented, given that it was anticipated to be paid in early autumn.

(AQW 7143/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The vast majority of staff received their uplift and arrears in their November salary. I understand that only those staff groups whose allowances need to be manually updated on the payroll system might experience a delay, but they should get their uplifts and arrears in December or January at the very latest.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health whether it is the position of her Department that it is inevitable that elective waiting times will continue to increase in 2016/17.

(AQW 7196/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Long waiting times are a product of the rising demand for services set against a current configuration of HSC services that no longer meets the needs of the population. Building a health service that is sustainable in the long term requires us to deal with these factors.

I have set out my vision for what our health and social care services should look like in Delivering Together; I am now seeking to engage with members of the public, organisations and medical professionals to get their input into shaping how services should be delivered.

I have said many times those long waiting times are unacceptable to me. Tackling waiting lists will require both short term and long term investment. I do not underestimate the size of the challenge in addressing waiting lists; given the increase in

demand upon services, waiting lists will continue to be an issue until we can deliver the transformed, sustainable services envisaged in Delivering Together.

Ultimately, I want to get to the point where we have the capacity within the HSC to deliver the services patients need. But my overriding concern is ensuring that patients receive their treatment in a safe and timely manner. I will therefore bring forward a plan, in January that will set out how, over the next five years, we will address waiting lists.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to detail the gap between funded capacity and patient demand, broken down by speciality.

(AQW 7197/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: A breakdown of the gap between funded capacity and patient demand, by specialty for new outpatient appointments and inpatient/daycase treatment, and key modality for diagnostics in respect of 2016/17, is provided at Annex A.

The shortfall between capacity and demand is the cause of the unacceptably long waiting lists for treatment faced by patients. Our health and social care services no longer meets the needs of the population.

I have set out my vision for what our health and social care services should look like in Delivering Together; I am now seeking to engage with members of the public, organisations and medical professionals to get their input into shaping how services should be delivered.

New Outpatient Appointments

Annex A

Out Patient Specialty	Capacity Gap (2016/17)
Cardiology	3,565
Clinical Genetics	88
Endocrinology	667
ENT (incl Paeds)	5,406
Gastroenterology	5,866
General Medicine	4,886
General Surgery	6,645
Geriatric Medicine	1,201
Neurology	5,277
Neurosurgery	376
Obs & Gynae (Gynae)	2,106
Ophthalmology	1,051
Oral Medicine/ Restorative	304
Oral Surgery	3,033
Paediatric Dentistry	303
Paediatric Neurology	165
Paediatrics	2,374
Pain Management	4,317
Plastic Surgery	585
Rheumatology	2,685
Trauma and Orthopaedics	11,312
Urology	452
Palliative Medicine	137
Chemical Pathology	60
Total	62,862

Diagnostics

Diagnostic Modality	Capacity Gap (2016/17)
MRI including CMR	12,361
CT	19,327
Non Obstetric Ultrasound	26,259
Plain Film	72,743
Endoscopy (4 scopes)	3,198
Audiology	30,739
Cardiac Diagnostics	7,008
Total	171,635

Inpatient / Daycase

Inpatient / Daycase Specialty	Capacity Gap (2016/17)
Cardiac Surgery	152
Cardiology	1,731
Dermatology	1,577
ENT (inc Paeds)	3,176
General Medicine /Gastroenterology	1,007
General Surgery	9,208
Geriatric Medicine	170
Neurosurgery	165
Obs & Gynae (Gynae)	1,733
Ophthalmology	2,268
Oral Surgery	837
Paediatric Dentistry	154
Paediatric Neurology	1
Pain Management	835
Plastic Surgery	550
Rheumatology	2,050
Trauma & Orthopaedics	8,702
Urology	2,016
Total	36,332

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health how each Health and Social Care Trust is providing help and guidance to (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools to assist with concerns around self-harm amongst pupils; and what consideration has been given to the drafting of Northern Ireland-wide guidance for schools.

(AQW 7212/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Health and Social Care sector worked in partnership with the Department of Education and others to develop a Pupils Emotional Health and Wellbeing Programme. The iMatter Programme is about

addressing how the entire school community should be engaged in promoting resilient emotional health for all pupils, what support systems are available for vulnerable pupils, and what support is available to schools in the event of a crisis.

Suicide prevention guidance for all schools was published in March 2016. It focuses on supporting schools to reduce suicide and self-harm. Additional resources have been developed and issued to all schools in September 2016 (<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/suicide-prevention-guidance>). Health and Social Care Trusts participated in the working group which developed this guidance; the group was chaired by my Department.

HSC Trusts are not engaged in providing help and guidance to primary schools on self-harm amongst pupils, unless in the context of activation of a community response plan in relation to a potentially emerging suicide cluster in an area.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Health whether social workers will be represented in the Transformation Board established to implement the recommendations of the Bengoa report.

(AQW 7371/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I have announced the transformation oversight structures and will chair a Transformation Advisory Board to oversee the reforms. A Transformation Implementation Group, chaired by the Permanent Secretary, has also been established to manage the implementation of the transformation.

Members of the Board have yet to be finalised but will be drawn from the field of independent experts, trade unions, community and voluntary sector and user representatives. The Chief Social Services Officer is a member of the Transformation Implementation Group and will play an important role in managing the implementation of the transformation.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Health how she is promoting breastfeeding to expectant mothers.

(AQW 7407/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department's Breastfeeding Strategy (2013-2023) aims to improve the health and wellbeing of mothers and babies through breastfeeding. In keeping with the Strategy, the Public Health Agency has developed breastfeeding promotional material which is distributed to expectant mothers through HSC maternity services. A website www.breastfedbabies.org provides further information and support. Specific training is also provided for health professionals to promote and support breastfeeding.

The UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) promotes breastfeeding. Recently the north of Ireland became the first region across Britain and Ireland to achieve 100% of births in a BFI fully accredited maternity service.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister of Health to list the out-of-hours services available in each Health and Social Care Trust for (i) children and young people; and (ii) adults with addiction and mental health problems, identified by tier of service.

(AQW 7415/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Generally the first points of contact in an out of hours emergency are Emergency Departments or Out of Hours GP Services which can trigger a mental health response if that is assessed as being required. The Regional Emergency Social Work service provides a social work response to emergency situations regarding vulnerable children and their families across the region on an out of hours basis as follows: 5pm to 9am weekdays, and 24 hours at weekends and bank holidays. Trusts have access to regional addiction treatment beds as required. These regional services complement the Trust services detailed at Tables 1 and 2 below.

- (i) Out-of-hours services available in each Health and Social Care Trust for children and young people with addiction and mental health problems are detailed in Table 1 below, with tier of service identified where possible.

Table 1

Trust	Out-of-hours services for Children and Young People
Belfast & South Eastern	A Crisis Assessment and Intervention Team is in place for under 18s in acute mental health crisis 7 days per week 8:00am - 9:00pm for direct same day/next day assessment and intervention and on-call 9:00pm - 8:00am for advice, guidance and direct assessment where clinically indicated. This Team accepts referrals from General Practice, Emergency Departments and Social Services. Belfast Trust has a Consultant Psychiatrist, a Senior Trainee Psychiatrist and a Senior Mental Health Manager on-call at all times out of hours.
Northern	Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Team (CRHT), Step 4/5 operates from 9am to 9pm Monday to Friday, Saturday 10am to 2pm and Sunday from 9am to 5pm. Outside these hours, the Rapid Assessment Interface and Discharge service (RAID) see and risk assess all young people. All the young people are seen within a 2 hour timeframe by both CRHT and RAID. RAID work closely with CAMHS and Learning Disability Services to ensure that people who are within these groups are also supported.
Southern	A dedicated CAMHS Team provides an emergency response 9.00am to 7.00pm Monday to Friday and 9.00 am to 5.00pm at weekends and Bank Holidays. Outside of these hours young people presenting to Emergency Departments are triaged and seen by Staff Grade and above and if a child safety plan can be agreed they are discharged for CAMHS follow up at 9.00am the following day. If they are not medically fit for discharge or are seen as too vulnerable to discharge they remain in hospital until CAMHS can assess the following morning. Where presentations are complex Medical Staff can liaise directly with the Consultant Psychiatrist on call.

Trust	Out-of-hours services for Children and Young People
Western	<p>CAMHS, Family and Childcare provides the following services for Children and Young People beyond the 9 to 5 working day arrangements:</p> <p>In cases of low risk, a Card Before You Leave Service is operational across the Trust which provides follow up to young people who present as concerning but at low risk to Emergency Department (EDs). This service is available 365 days per year and staffed by CAMHS clinicians daily.</p> <p>In cases of high risk children or young people who present to EDs, referrals are made to either the Out of Hours Regional Emergency Social Work Services (RESWS) or Trust Out of Hours Adult Mental Health services in cases of psychiatric emergencies.</p> <p>Family Response Service, 24/7 Fostering Service, Childcare senior manager on call.</p>

- (ii) The out-of-hours services for adults with addiction and mental health problems in each Health and Social Care Trust are detailed in Table 2 below, with tier of service identified where possible.

Table 2

Trust	Out-of-hours services for Adults
Belfast	<p>From 5:00pm each day and all day Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays, Mental Health Unscheduled Care provide an urgent/emergency Mental Health Assessment to individuals who are referred by their GP or who present to Emergency Departments and are triaged as requiring an urgent Mental Health Assessment. After 9:00pm this service is provided by Belfast Trust Mental Health @ Night Services.</p> <p>Belfast Trust Home Treatment Team (a clinically-led Multidisciplinary Team) provides a 24 hour assessment and treatment service, 7 days a week, for those patients who are acutely unwell and who, in the absence of home treatment, would otherwise be admitted to hospital.</p>
Northern	<p>A Crisis Response and Home Treatment service is available 24 hours, bank holidays and weekends. This service accepts referrals from a wide range of referral agents and works very closely with primary care provider, Dalriada Urgent Care, to provide mental health assessment and intervention out of hours to those who present with mental health problems.</p> <p>The Rapid Assessment Interface and Discharge (RAID) service based in both Antrim Area Hospital and Causeway Hospital has Mental Health Practitioners who are available to provide assessment and intervention out of hours (across 24 hours) to those who are admitted or who present with mental health problems. They also work closely with CAMHS and Learning Disability Services to ensure that people who are within these groups are supported.</p>
South Eastern	<p>Tier 3</p> <p>Emergency Mental Health Response via Trust Mental Health Assessment Centres (based in Lisburn, Ards and Downpatrick) which are open from 9am until 8pm on 7 days per week including Bank Holidays. The Trust Mental Health at Night Service takes over from 7.30 pm (including half hour handover) 7 nights per week and is exclusively an emergency service with the vast majority of referrals coming from Trust Emergency Departments.</p> <p>Home Treatment (HT) is available throughout the Trust with teams based in Lisburn, Ards and Downpatrick. Currently Downpatrick and Ards HT operates seven days a week and Ards HT is open until 8pm. From January 2017 the service will be available from 0900-2000 seven days a week throughout the Trust.</p> <p>Substance Liaison Service - currently available in acute general hospital sites. The service will be extending its operational times (9am-5pm) to include weekends from the beginning of the New Year.</p>
Southern	<p>The Southern Trust has a Home Treatment Crisis Response service (Tier 4) that operates 24 hrs a day for patients in mental distress. The service provides urgent mental health assessment and interventions by experienced Mental Health Practitioners to those in acute crisis. The service can be accessed via GP, Out of Hours GP service and Emergency Departments and has a targeted response time of 2 hrs</p>

Trust	Out-of-hours services for Adults
Western	The Adult Mental Health Crisis Response Home Treatment service provides 24/7 crisis assessment and intervention. If a person presents as intoxicated it may be necessary for them to be admitted to an Acute Hospital bed until they are medically fit for an assessment to be carried out. The assessment may be carried out by an alcohol liaison nurse who works within the acute setting Tier 2/3. Alternatively those clients requiring community detox within the Western Trust can be supported through a shared care approach with Tier 3 addictions services working in partnership with local GPs (Tier 3). Individuals with complex alcohol and drug presentation can be admitted via a Regional Co-ordinator to Tier 4 detox beds in Omagh.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health whether she will reconsider the viability of a secure mental health facility for prisoners similar to The State Hospital, Carstairs.

(AQW 7417/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The accommodation of prisoners is the policy responsibility of the Department of Justice. Healthcare services across the Prison Service are commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and delivered by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT).

In the North of Ireland there are two regional forensic hospital facilities. The Shannon Centre at Knockbracken in Belfast which is a medium secure Mental Health Hospital and Muckamore Abbey Hospital (Belfast Trust) which has a low secure ward for people with a Learning Disability. As well as local forensic facilities it is possible for a prisoner, dependent on assessed needs and risk, to be placed in other local Psychiatric Intensive Care Units.

Persons requiring treatment in conditions of high security can be transferred to a high secure hospital (HSH) such as Carstairs HSH in Scotland (for males) or Rampton HSH in England (for females).

The support for vulnerable prisoners in prisons will continue to include processes to move prisoners to other health facilities via a legal process which is initiated by the appropriate clinician. The SEHSCT will continue to assess and make recommendations to the Department of Justice for transfer of prisoners to a suitable healthcare treatment unit as necessary.

The State Hospital, Carstairs, is one of only four high secure hospitals in Britain. It provides most of the care and treatment in conditions of high security for male adults from the North of Ireland as part of a service for both Scotland and the North of Ireland at no current cost to the Department. Given this and the fact that there are only a small number of patients from the North of Ireland that require treatment in a high security setting such as this it would not be cost effective or appropriate to fund or provide a duplicated service of this nature.

Recently the Justice Minister and I have agreed to undertake an urgent review of vulnerable people in custody. Officials from both Departments are now working together to determine the structure, scope and timeframe of the Review.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the importance of timely diagnostics to enable a treatment plan to be put in place.

(AQW 7450/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I recognise the importance of timely diagnostics to ensure patients have the best opportunity for a positive health outcome. I acknowledge that performance against these targets is not where I want it to be but this further demonstrates the need for transformation to deliver better outcomes for people.

I am committed to reducing waiting times for patients and will be bringing forward a plan in January 2017 to tackle waiting lists. The details of this together with proposed investment will be announced then.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to list the current waiting times for diagnostics, broken down by speciality.

(AQW 7451/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Waiting times for diagnostics are routinely published on a quarterly basis on the Department of Health website. Data relating to quarter ending 30th September 2016 is available at the following link, broken down by type of test and Health and Social Care Trust; <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/diagnostic-waiting-times>

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to list the current waiting times for first outpatient appointments, broken down by speciality.

(AQW 7453/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Waiting times for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment are published on a quarterly basis on the Department of Health website. Data relating to quarter ending 30th September 2016 is available at the following link by specialty and HSC Trust level: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/outpatient-waiting-times>

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health to list each of the reasons for the current Health and Social Care waiting time performances.

(AQW 7455/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Section 2 of the Expert Panel's report, Systems, not Structures, contains a detailed analysis of the pressures facing the Health and Social Care system. A copy of the report is available on the Department's website.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health in absence of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 in Northern Ireland, whether agencies within or connected to her Department are legally required to report people considered at risk of being drawn into terrorism, as per the Prevent duty guidance.

(AQW 7485/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Prevent Duty Guidance relates to England, Wales and Scotland only. Health and social care bodies in the north of Ireland are, therefore, not bound by the provisions of the Prevent Duty Guidance.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health to outline the number of nursing posts that are vacant in the Western Health and Social Care Trust; and to outline her Department's strategy and action plan for addressing this issue.

(AQW 7574/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Western Health and Social Care Trust are actively recruiting in respect of 78 current Nursing vacancies. The Trust pursues a timely recruitment process to ensure that any vacant nursing posts are filled as soon as possible. Where there are short-term vacancies due to sickness, etc, temporary replacements are provided.

My Department is leading several initiatives to support HSC Trusts to fill nursing vacancies.

We have taken steps to increase the number of nurses qualifying from our local universities. In 2016/17 we increased the annual number of training places available by 100, and I have given a commitment to increase annual commissions by a further 100 from 2017/18.

That means that next year we will have a total of 300 more nursing students than this time last year. By 2019 we will be seeing around 700 fully qualified nurses ready to enter the workforce and around 800 in 2020.

The Business Services Organisation (BSO) has been commissioned by my Department to coordinate an international nurse recruitment campaign on behalf of all of the Trusts across the North. Six recruitment campaigns have already taken place during 2016 in The Philippines, Italy Greece and Romania.

My Department, through its Regional Workforce Planning Group, coordinates longer-term workforce planning on a regional basis across HSC. The Nursing and Midwifery workforce plan recommends a strategic approach to the future recruitment and retention of nurses and informs the commissioning of pre-registration nurse training from the local universities. Also in supporting Primary Care, I have committed to ensuring every GP practice has a named District Nurse and the development of Advanced Nurse Practitioner role.

I have given a commitment to the development, by May 2017, of a Workforce Strategy covering all aspects of the HSC workforce, including the key issue of workforce planning..

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health for an update on each action contained in Health and Wellbeing 2026 – Delivering Together.

(AQW 7588/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Delivering Together sets out 18 actions to be taken forward over the next 12 months.

Progress has been made in bringing forward all actions to ensure full implementation within the timeframe. I have announced the transformation oversight structures and already commenced a series of engagement with stakeholders. Additionally, the consultation on the criteria proposed by the Expert Panel for the reconfiguration of Health and Social Care services has begun and will run until 20 January 2017.

I have committed to bringing progress reports to the Assembly every six months.

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health what reviews are underway in her Department regarding the impact of a Brexit.

(AQW 7642/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I remain concerned about the impact of EU Exit on Health and Social Care. An initial assessment has been carried out on the potential impact of EU Exit on Health and Social Care services, and five key areas have been identified.

These are:

- Health and Social Care Workforce mobility, recruitment and professional regulation;
- Access to cross-border healthcare and impact on child placement and cross-border collaboration;
- Health procurement;
- Health funding, exchange rate impact on budget, INTERREG VA Health and Social Care Call and collaborative initiatives; and

■ Health regulation.

There remains a great deal of uncertainty around the implications of an EU Exit. I am working closely with my colleagues in England, Scotland, Wales and the South of Ireland on the implications and the decisions and actions that need to be taken.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 3018/16-21, how the regional review of autism services will (i) take best practice from the multi-disciplinary autism team in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust; and (ii) roll out that best practice across Health and Social Care Trusts without having a detrimental effect on waiting times and service delivery. (AQW 7700/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Health and Social Care Board has reviewed autism services in each Health and Social Care Trust and is currently working with Trust colleagues, those with lived experience of autism and other key stakeholders, to re-design the model for paediatric autism services. Examples of best practice locally, nationally and internationally have been used to inform the design of the new model. While the new model and associated implementation plan is being finalised, the HSC Trusts are working to reduce the waiting time to access autism services. The recruitment of new staff in each Trust utilising the additional investment made available this year will support these initiatives.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 6487/16-21, how many people have been charged under the Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident Regulations 2015 over the last 12 months, including (i) their country of origin; (ii) how much each were charged; and (iii) a breakdown of treatments delivered. (AQW 7715/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the total number of people charged and the amount charged under the Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident Regulations 2015 over the last 12 months is shown in the table below. A further breakdown of the information by country of origin and treatments delivered is not available for all Trusts.

Country of origin	Number of patients	Amount charged (£)
EEA patients	370	478,534
Non-EEA patients	152	401,886
Unknown	448	204,162
Total	970	1,084,582

Mr Attwood asked the Minister of Health whether her Department will commit to enshrine in law those protections that derive from judgements of the European Court of Justice. (AQW 7960/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department considers all relevant judgements from the European Court of Justice and legislates where appropriate.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Health to detail the cost of administration of each Local Commissioning Group, in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years. (AQW 7966/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The 5 Local Commissioning Groups (LCGS) are sub committees of the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and I am advised by the HSCB that the costs of administration for the last 5 years (to October 2016) are as follows.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Up to October 2016
Belfast	£71,736	£71,998	£86,316	£59,447	£31,612
Northern	£81,527	£93,723	£118,113	£87,448	£35,909
South Eastern	£84,691	£125,654	£154,618	£104,393	£43,159
Southern	£80,216	£86,875	£81,743	£66,676	£36,429
Western	£99,572	£90,966	£106,156	£107,362	£52,044
Total LCG Spend	£417,742	£469,217	£546,947	£425,326	£199,152

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 6096/16-21, on how many occasions local patient information leaflets have been (i) produced; and (ii) provided to patients in (a) large print; (b) Braille; and (c) audio CD format, in each of the last three years. (AQW 8009/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: This information is not available. The provision of information to patients in appropriate and accessible formats is a matter for individual Health and Social Care Trusts taking into account the circumstances and preferences of the individual patient.

A booklet entitled 'Making Communication Accessible for All: A Guide for Health and Social Care Staff' was produced to assist HSC staff in communicating more effectively with people who have a disability or a communication support need including those who are blind or visually impaired.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister of Health to detail the annual adjustments to waiting time targets across all areas over the last ten years.

(AQW 8011/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Targets to reduce waiting times are reviewed annually to ensure they remain challenging but realistic, and take into account current performance and the resources which are expected to be available to the HSC in that year.

The process followed this year was no different to previous years. Targets set for 2016/17 were agreed by my predecessor and published in the Commissioning Plan Direction on the Department of Health's website after Easter this year and also, by the HSC Board following their board meeting in June.

Changes made to waiting time targets set over the last ten years are set out in the attached annex to this answer.

In my first week as Minister I acknowledged the challenges we faced and pledged my commitment to transforming health and social care.

I am firmly of the view that the current waiting lists are unacceptably long. However, unless we tackle the root causes this will remain the case, as we have a 20th century model delivering services for a 21st century population. This is having an increasingly negative impact on the quality and experience of care. The only sustainable solution is the transformation of our health and social care system as outlined in Delivering Together.

It is only in transforming the health and social care system and by implementing new models of care that we will be able to alleviate the pressures on our health and social care services, sustain improvements in waiting times and deliver better outcomes for patients.

That said, I would pay tribute to the staff across the HSC sector. Notwithstanding the structural issues, they continue to work incredibly hard and on average deliver 9,000 outpatient appointments, 2,600 inpatient/day case procedures and 31,000 diagnostic tests per week.

Annex

Adjustments made to waiting time targets set for access to services in secondary, primary and community care between 2007/08 to 2016/17

Target Area	Changes made to target
Fractures	Target set that at least 75% of patients should, where clinically appropriate, wait no longer than 48 hours for inpatient fracture treatment was increased to 95% in 2008/09. Target was further revised in 2010/11 to apply only to inpatient treatment for hip fractures. This target remains in place.
Emergency Ambulance Response	<p>Target set that, on average, 65% Category A (life threatening) calls are responded to within 8 minutes was increased to 70% in 2008/09 with performance in each Board area to improve to 62.5%, by March 2009.</p> <p>Target was further increased in 2009/10 to 72.5% and then 75% in 2010/11, with rates in each LCG also rising to 65% in 2009/10, then 67.5% in 2010/11.</p> <p>Target was re-introduced in 2014/15 at 72.5% Category A (life threatening) calls to be responded to within 8 minutes by March 2015, and 67.5% in any LCG area. This target remains in place.</p>

Target Area	Changes made to target
Elective: 1st Outpatient appointment	<p>The elective waiting time target of 13 weeks for a first outpatient appointment was reduced to 9 weeks in 2008/9. This was subsequently increased to at least 50% waiting no longer than 9 weeks with no-one waiting more than 21 weeks in 2011/12, then 60% by March 2013, and no one waiting more than 18 weeks in 2012/13.</p> <p>This was revised further in 2013/14 to at least 70% waiting no longer than 9 weeks and no-one waiting longer than 18 weeks, increasing to 80% and no patient waiting longer than 15 weeks by March 2014.</p> <p>In 2015/16 target was again revised to at least 60% waiting no longer than 9 weeks, and no patient waiting longer than 18 weeks.</p> <p>Current target for 2016/17 is that 50% of patients are waiting no longer than 9 weeks, and no patient waiting longer than 52 weeks.</p>
Elective: Diagnostic test	<p>The elective waiting time target of 13 weeks for diagnostic tests was reduced to 9 weeks in 2008/9. This was unchanged to 2016/17 when it was revised to 75% of patients waiting no longer than 9 weeks, and no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks.</p>
Elective: Inpatient/ Daycase	<p>The elective waiting time target that no one should wait longer than 21 weeks for admission was reduced to 13 weeks by March 2009, in 2008/09.</p> <p>The target was revised again in 2010/11 to the majority treated within 13 weeks with no one waiting more than 36 weeks.</p> <p>The target was further revised to 60% waiting no longer than 13 weeks and no one waiting longer than 30 weeks in 2012/13; then 70% and no one waiting longer than 30 weeks in 2013/14, increasing to 80%, and no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks by March 2013.</p> <p>In 2015/16, percentage was revised to at least 65%. Current target for 2016/17 is that at least 55% wait no longer than 13 weeks and no patient waiting longer than 52 weeks.</p>
AHP	<p>Target that no patient waits longer than 13 weeks from referral to commencement of treatment by March 2009, was revised to 9 weeks by March 2010 in 2009/10. This was unchanged to 2015/16 when target was revised to 13 weeks from April 2015. This target remains in place.</p>
Mental Health	<p>Target set in 2008/09 that no patient waits longer than 13 weeks from referral to assessment and commencement of treatment for mental health issues was reduced to 9 weeks in 2009/10. This was subsequently increased to 13 weeks in 2011/12, then reduced again to 9 weeks the following year, which has remained the target to date. This excludes psychological therapies where the target has remained 13 weeks.</p>
Specialist Drugs	<p>Target set in 2007/08 that all patients with severe inflammatory arthritis who, at 31 March 2006, were on waiting list for treatment with biologic therapies to commence their treatment by March 2008.</p> <p>Waiting time was further reduced to 9 months in 2009/10, reducing to 21 weeks by March 2011, then 3 months, by September 2012.</p> <p>In 2013/14, target was extended to psoriasis, setting a 9 month maximum waiting time from April 2013, reducing to 3 months by September 2013. Target changed to an indicator from 2015/16.</p>
Community Care	<p>Target that older people with continuing needs should wait no longer than 8 weeks for assessment to be completed and have the main component of care needs met within a further 12 weeks revised to 5 weeks for assessment and 8 weeks for main components in place in 2013/14. Target changed to an indicator from 2014/15.</p>
Primary Care	<p>Target that all patients have 48 hour access to a GP or other appropriate practice based primary care practitioner. In cases where the patient has an acute condition (including exacerbation of an existing condition), access must be within 24 hours, revised to 70% within 48 hours in 2010/11, increasing to 80% from April 2011. This target was removed in 2011/12.</p>
Wheelchairs	<p>Target of an 18 week waiting maximum waiting time for 90% of all wheelchairs was reduced in 2010/11 to 13 weeks by March 2011. This was further revised in 2011/12 to 95% of all wheelchairs. Target changed to an indicator in 2012/13.</p>

Mr McKee asked the Minister of Health to outline (i) the training or advice provided to officials within her Department and each of its Arm's Length Bodies in relation to outcomes-based accountability; (ii) who delivered the training; (iii) an overview of each session including the number of people in attendance and themes covered; (iv) the total paid to each individual or organisation involved in the delivery of training up to 28 November 2016; and (v) the projected costs to be paid to each individual or organisation involved in the delivery training in 2016/17.

(AQW 8031/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Outcome based accountability (OBA) training has been provided to NISRA statisticians in all Executive Departments, to Programme for Government Senior Responsible Officers and their teams, and to policy officials with a particular identified requirement.

In addition, OBA familiarisation sessions have been provided, focusing on specific areas of outcomes-focused practice, at meetings of senior officials involved in Programme for Government implementation across Departments.

All of this training has been provided at no cost to Departments, by NISRA statisticians seconded to the Executive Office.

A wide range of events, conferences and workshops covering elements of OBA, have taken place or are planned in 2016/17. These are available to Departmental and ALB staff as appropriate.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health to detail (i) the drugs that have been approved by National Institute for Health and Care Excellence in the last three years; and (ii) the amount of money spent by the Health Service on these drugs.

(AQW 8046/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department has a formal link with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) under which NICE Technology Appraisals (TAs), published from 1 July 2006, are reviewed locally for their applicability in the North of Ireland. Where found to be applicable they are endorsed by the Department for implementation within Health and Social Care (HSC).

The tables below provide detail on new NICE TAs endorsed by the Department in the financial years 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16.

2013/14

NICE Ref	NICE Technology Appraisal
TA 276	Cystic fibrosis (pseudomonas lung infection) - colistimethate sodium and tobramycin
TA 278	Omalizumab for the treatment of severe persistent allergic asthma in children aged 6 and over and adults (review of TA133 and TA201)
TA 279	Percutaneous vertebroplasty and percutaneous balloon kyphoplasty for the treatment of osteoporotic vertebral fractures.
TA 280	Abatacept for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis only after the failure of conventional disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (rapid review of TA234).
TA 282	Pirfenidone for treating idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis
TA 283	Ranibizumab for treating visual impairment caused by macular oedema secondary to retinal vein occlusion
TA 284	Bevacizumab in combination with paclitaxel and carboplatin for first-line treatment of advanced ovarian cancer.
TA 285	Bevacizumab in combination with gemcitabine and carboplatin for treating the first recurrence of platinum-sensitive advanced ovarian cancer.
TA 287	Rivaroxaban for treating pulmonary embolism and preventing recurrent venous thromboembolism
TA 288	Dapagliflozin in combination therapy for treating type 2 diabetes
TA 289	Ruxolitinib for disease-related splenomegaly or symptoms in adult with myelofibrosis
TA 290	Mirabegron for treating symptoms of overactive bladder
TA 291	Pegloticase for treating severe debilitating chronic tophaceous gout
TA 292	Aripiprazole for treating moderate to severe manic episodes in adolescents with bipolar I disorder
TA 293	Eltrombopag for the treatment of chronic idiopathic (immune) thrombocytopenic purpura (review of technology appraisal 205)
TA 294	Aflibercept solution for injection for the first line treatment of wet age-related macular degeneration
TA 295	Everolimus in combination with an aromatase inhibitor for the treatment of HER2 negative, oestrogen receptor positive locally advanced or metastatic breast cancer after prior endocrine therapy.

NICE Ref	NICE Technology Appraisal
TA 296	Crizotinib for the treatment of previously treated non-small-cell lung cancer associated with an anaplastic lymphoma kinase fusion gene
TA 297	Ocriplasmin for treating vitreomacular traction
TA 298	Ranibizumab for treating choroidal neovascularisation associated with pathological myopia
TA 299	Bosutinib for previously treated chronic myeloid leukaemia
TA 300	Peginterferon alfa and ribavirin for treating chronic hepatitis C in children and young people
TA 301	Fluocinolone acetonide intravitreal implant for treating chronic diabetic macular oedema after an inadequate response to prior therapy (rapid review of technology appraisal guidance 271)
TA 303	Teriflunomide for treating relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis
TA 305	Aflibercept for treating visual impairment caused by macular oedema secondary to central retinal vein occlusion
TA 306	Pixantrone monotherapy for treating multiply relapsed or refractory aggressive non-Hodgkin's Bcell lymphoma

2014/15

NICE Ref	Title of NICE Technology Appraisal
TA 307	Aflibercept in combination with irinotecan and fluorouracil-based therapy for the treatment of metastatic colorectal cancer which has progressed following prior oxaplatin-based chemotherapy.
TA 308	Rituximab in combination with glucocorticoids for treating anti-neutrophil cytoplasmic antibody-associated vasculitis.
TA 309	Pemetrexed for maintenance treatment following induction therapy with pemetrexed and cisplatin for non-squamous non-small-cell lung cancer
TA 310	Afatinib for treating epidermal growth factor receptor mutation positive locally advanced or metastatic non-small cell lung cancer
TA 311	Bortezomib for induction therapy in multiple myeloma before high dose chemotherapy and autologous stem cell transplantation.
TA 313	Ustekinumab for treating active psoriatic arthritis
TA 312	Alemtuzumab for the treatment of relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis
TA 315	Canagliflozin in combination therapy for treating type 2 diabetes.
TA 316	Enzalutamide for the treatment of metastatic hormone relapsed prostate cancer previously treated with a docetaxel-containing regimen
TA 317	Prasugrel with percutaneous coronary intervention for treating acute coronary syndrome (review of TA182).
TA 318	Lubiprostone for treating chronic idiopathic constipation.
TA 319	Ipilimumab for previously untreated advanced (unresectable or metastatic) melanoma.
TA 322	Lenalidomide for treating myelodysplastic syndromes associated with an isolated deletion 5q cytogenetic abnormality.
TA 320	Dimethyl fumarate for the treatment of relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis.
TA 321	Dabrafenib for treating unresectable, advanced or metastatic BRAFV600 mutation-positive melanoma
TA 323	Erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (epoetin and darbepoetin) for treating anaemia in people with cancer having chemotherapy (including review of TA142)
TA 325	Nalmefene for reducing alcohol consumption in people with alcohol dependence.
TA 326	Imatinib for the adjuvant treatment of gastrointestinal stromal tumours (review of TA196).
TA 327	Dabigatran etexilate for the treatment and secondary prevention of deep vein thrombosis and/or pulmonary embolism
TA 332	Sipuleucel-T for the first line treatment of metastatic hormone relapsed prostate cancer

NICE Ref	Title of NICE Technology Appraisal
TA 329	Infliximab, adalimumab and golimumab for treating moderately to severely active ulcerative colitis after the failure of conventional therapy (including a review of TA140 and TA262).
TA 331	Simeprevir in combination with peginterferon alfa and ribavirin for treating genotype 1 or 4 chronic hepatitis C.
TA 333	Axitinib for the treatment of advanced renal cell carcinoma after failure of prior systemic treatment.

2015/16

NICE Ref	Title of NICE Technology Appraisal
TA 330	Sofosbuvir for treating chronic hepatitis C.
TA 335	Rivaroxaban for preventing adverse outcomes after acute management of acute coronary syndrome.
TA 336	Empagliflozin in combination therapy for treating type 2 diabetes.
TA 337	Rifaximin for the maintenance treatment of hepatic encephalopathy.
TA 338	Pomalidomide for treating relapsed and refractory multiple myeloma previously treated with both lenalidomide and bortezomib.
TA 339	Omalizumab for treating previously treated chronic spontaneous urticaria.
TA 340	Ustekinumab for treating active psoriatic arthritis (Rapid Review of TA313).
TA 341	Apixaban for the treatment and secondary prevention of deep vein thrombosis and/or pulmonary embolism
TA 342	Vedolizumab for treating moderately to severely active ulcerative colitis
TA 343	Obinutuzumab in combination with chlorambucil for untreated chronic lymphocytic leukaemia
TA 344	Ofatumumab in combination with chlorambucil or bendamustine for previously untreated chronic lymphocytic leukaemia.
TA 345	Naloxegol for treating opioid induced constipation.
TA 346	Aflibercept for treating diabetic macular oedema.
TA 347	Nintedanib for previously treated locally advanced, metastatic or locally recurrent non-small cell lung cancer.
TA 348	Everolimus for preventing organ rejection in liver transplantation.
TA 349	Dexamethasone intravitreal implant for treating diabetic macular oedema
TA 350	Secukinumab for treating moderate to severe plaque psoriasis.
TA 352	Vedolizumab for the treatment of adult patients with moderately to severely active Crohn's disease.
TA 354	Edoxaban tosylate for the treatment and secondary prevention of deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism.
TA 355	Edoxaban for preventing stroke and systemic embolism in people with non-valvular atrial fibrillation.
TA 357	Pembrolizumab for treating unresectable, metastatic melanoma after progression with ipilimumab
TA 358	Tolvaptan for treating autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease.
TA 359	Idelalisib for previously treated chronic lymphocytic leukaemia
TA 363	Ledipasvir-sofosbuvir for treating chronic hepatitis C
TA 364	Daclatasvir for treating chronic hepatitis C.
TA 365	Ombitasvir, paritaprevir, ritonavir with or without dasabuvir for treating chronic hepatitis C.
TA 366	Pembrolizumab for advanced melanoma not previously treated with ipilimumab
TA 367	Vortioxetine for treating major depressive disorder
TA 368	Apremilast for treating moderate to severe plaque psoriasis
TA 369	Ciclosporin for treating dry eye disease which has not improved after treatment with artificial tears.

NICE Ref	Title of NICE Technology Appraisal
TA 370	Bortezomib for previously untreated mantle cell lymphoma.
TA 371	Trastuzumab emtansine for treating HER2-positive, unresectable locally advanced or metastatic breast cancer after treatment with trastuzumab and a taxane.
TA 372	Apremilast for treating active psoriatic arthritis
TA 373	Abatacept, adalimumab, etanercept and tocilizumab for treating juvenile idiopathic arthritis (including review of TA35)
TA 374	Erlotinib and gefitinib for treating non-small-cell lung cancer that has progressed following prior chemotherapy.
TA 375	Adalimumab, etanercept, infliximab, certolizumab pegol, golimumab, tocilizumab and abatacept for rheumatoid arthritis not previously treated with DMARDs or after conventional DMARDs only have failed
TA 376	Radium-223 dichloride for treating metastatic hormone relapsed prostate cancer with bone metastases.
TA 377	Enzalutamide for treating metastatic hormone-relapsed prostate cancer before chemotherapy is indicated.
TA 378	Ramucirumab for treating advanced gastric cancer or gastro-oesophageal junction adenocarcinoma after chemotherapy.
TA 379	Nintedanib for treating idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis.
TA 380	Panobinostat for treating multiple myeloma after at least 2 previous treatments.
TA 381	Olaparib for maintenance treatment of relapsed, platinum-sensitive, BRCA mutation-positive ovarian, fallopian tube and peritoneal cancer after response to second-line or subsequent platinum-based chemotherapy.
TA 383	TNF-alpha inhibitors for ankylosing spondylitis and non-radiographic axial spondyloarthritis (including a review of TA143 and TA233).
TA 384	Nivolumab for treating advanced (unresectable or metastatic) melanoma.
TA 385	Ezetimibe for the treatment of primary (heterozygous-familial and non-familial) hypercholesterolaemia (review of TA132).

Each year as part of the planning and commissioning cycle the HSC Board submits proposals to the Department setting out the projected increase in costs associated with the continued provision of NICE approved therapies. These proposals are split into two categories:

- Funding to allow for a growth in the number of patients accessing NICE therapies which were approved in previous years; and
- Funding to allow the HSC to continue to implement newly approved NICE therapies each year.

The table below sets out the level of additional resource that has been provided from 2013/14 to 2015/16.

	2013-14 £m	2014-15 £m	2015-16 £m
Growth in existing NICE TAs and other drugs	6	14	12
New NICE TAs	7	5	6
Total	13	19	18

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health what plans she has to review the funding of GP practices, given that the rate per patient has not increased for almost eight years.

(AQW 8054/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There has been significant investment in general practice over recent years aimed at meeting the rising demand for services, increasing the GP workforce, and building the wider primary care team—indeed, over the last eight years, the funding allocated to GP practices through the general medical services contract has exceeded the growth in the registered patient list.

In “Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together” I have set out my plans to build on this investment. I will increase the number of GP training places over the next two years to 111. Building on the increase in training numbers made earlier this year, this represents an increase of more than 70% in GP training places within a three year period. I will also redirect funding

for undergraduate training so that undergraduate medical students get more experience of general practice. I will invest in a future model of primary care based on multidisciplinary teams embedded around general practice. By March 2017, every GP practice will have a named district nurse, health visitor and social worker to work with and I will continue to invest in the rollout of the practice-based pharmacists scheme. It is expected that close to 300 pharmacists will be employed to support GP practices across the North by 2020/21.

My intention is that these initiatives—together with planned investment in new technology such as phone and online triage systems—will ensure that general practice and wider primary care services can continue to meet the health and wellbeing needs of the population.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the role that the South West Acute Hospital in Enniskillen can play in service delivery in a transformed Health and Social Care plan.
(AQW 8124/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together provides a roadmap for transforming the way we receive health and social care services. This will require whole system transformation across primary, secondary and community care, and a radical change to the way we access services. As part of this, the nature and focus of our hospitals will change to focus on addressing the needs of patients requiring complex planned surgery or emergency care in an inpatient setting.

The Expert Panel has set out a process for reviewing acute services and I am currently consulting on their criteria. This will form the basis of a series of service reviews which will ensure that our services are configured and built around what people need.

It is too early to say what services will be provided in individual hospitals, but I expect the South West Acute Hospital to continue to play an important role in the provision of healthcare in the North.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Health what discussions she has had with the UK Government on retaining a common regulatory regime or access to common research funding scheme for medicines and life sciences.
(AQW 8131/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The HSC Research and Development Office is responsible for liaison with, Scotland, Wales and the British Government in relation to the regulatory regime surrounding research and government research funding. At present, there is a single regulatory regime for medicines and life sciences research across the north and Britain, which covers research governance, ethics and other relevant approvals. The HSC Research and Development Office interacts on a regular basis with the British Government, representatives from Scotland and Wales, and regulatory bodies to ensure that the current single regulatory regime and shared funding arrangements are working. This is important in relation to discussions around an exit from the European Union.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister of Health whether her Department has a policy preventing the recall of former medical staff, including consultants and GPs, to participate in medical case investigations or inquests.
(AQW 8132/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has no such policy.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health to outline the monitoring arrangements for the guidance contained in Making Communication Accessible for All, A Guide for Health and Social Care Staff.
(AQW 8168/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: In my answer to AQW 5479 I stated that in early 2017, my Department will write to the Chief Executives of Health and Social Care Trusts to seek assurance that they are fully complying with the guide. This is an important first step and further monitoring arrangements will be considered on completion of this exercise.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health for an update on the future of GP practices in Fermanagh and South Tyrone.
(AQW 8186/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware of the pressures facing GP services in the Fermanagh and South Tyrone area. Officials from my Department and the Health and Social Care Board have been working closely with local GPs and arrangements have now been agreed to ensure that people living in South East Fermanagh will continue to have access to high quality, sustainable and resilient GP services when a number of local GPs retire.

In Tyrone, a new partnership, Western Rural Healthcare, has been in place since April 2016 following the amalgamation of three GP practices. This new partnership has been able to attract a number of younger GPs to work as part of its team, and ensure that the full range of general medical services are available across all three sites.

More broadly, my Department has made a number of investments in recent years to help address the pressures facing GPs, including those in rural areas. This includes significant investment aimed at increasing capacity, meeting the rising demand for services, increasing the GP workforce, and building the wider primary care team.

I am committed to further enhancing primary care services to meet the health and well being needs of the population. I set out details of my strategic vision in October 2016 with the publication of 'Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together'.

The future model of primary care is to be based on multi-disciplinary teams embedded around general practice. By March 2017, every GP practice will have a named district nurse, health visitor and social worker to work with. I will also support the development of new roles such as Physician Associate and Advanced Nurse Practitioners.

I have already taken steps to increase the number of GPs in training, which over the next 2 years will rise from the current 85 per annum to 111 training places per year. Building on the rise in training numbers agreed earlier this year, this represents an increase of more than 70% in GP training places within a three year period. I have also indicated my commitment to redirect funding for undergraduate training so that undergraduate medical students get more experience of general practice. Other initiatives are also in place including a GP retainer scheme launched earlier this year which provides support and mentoring to GPs who might otherwise have been lost to general practice.

My Department will continue to invest in the Practice Based Pharmacists scheme to help optimise the use of medicines to improve patient outcomes as well as taking pressure off GPs. It is expected that close to 300 pharmacists will be employed to support GP practices across the North by 2020/21.

In addition, I have committed to further investment in technology to help free up GP time, through the continued rollout of the AskMyGP online and telephone triage system. I will also bring forward a consultation on the role of GP Federations here and whether they should become health service bodies.

These commitments, which will help to ease GP workload pressures and attract more doctors into general practice, will build on the already significant investment in general practice over recent years and reflect some of the recommendations of the GP-led Care Working Group.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health why the Southern Health and Social Care Trust withholds telephone number details when contacting patients and elected representatives.

(AQW 8187/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Southern Health and Social Care Trust's current telephone system automatically withholds number details. The Trust is currently updating its system and this will resolve the issue in due course.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health to detail the GP workforce age and gender profiles; and what workforce planning has been carried out to plan for future retirements.

(AQW 8211/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The GP workforce age and gender profiles are detailed in the tables below:

Female		Male	
Age Band	Head Count	Age Band	Head Count
25 - 29	6	25 - 29	0
30 - 34	114	30 - 34	44
35 - 39	170	35 - 39	96
40 - 44	108	40 - 44	77
45 - 49	95	45 - 49	84
50 - 54	101	50 - 54	112
55 - 59	67	55 - 59	124
60 - 64	20	60 - 64	64
65 & over	4	65 & over	19

A Workforce Review of training in General Practice was undertaken in 2014. As a result, the number of places on the GP training programme commissioned each year through the NI Medical and Dental Training Agency was increased by 20 to 85 from 2016/17. A further 12 additional places will be added in the 2017/18 training programme and a further additional 14 the year after.

In addition, a revised induction and refresher scheme for GPs has been developed to assist GPs not currently practising in the north of Ireland to return to practice. Also a new GP retainer scheme has been developed to encourage doctors to remain in general practice. The 25 places made available have all been filled.

In addition, I am currently considering the findings of the GP-led care review.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health how a lack of GP provision in Strabane is impacting on Emergency Services in Altnagelvin.
(AQW 8213/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Western Health and Social Care Trust has advised that there is no evidence of a direct correlation between a lack of GP provision in Strabane and increases in demand for emergency services in Altnagelvin.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister of Health whether she is considering a review of ambulance call-out classification criteria.
(AQW 8215/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware that the Welsh Government implemented a new clinical response model from October 2015, that the Scottish Government recently agreed a new response model, and that a number of English ambulance service providers are piloting other ambulance response programmes which aim to reach the most serious cases quicker and improve the use of ambulance resources.

Currently NIAS uses an Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System (AMPDS) to triage emergency calls. On the basis of the information provided by callers, approximately 30% of emergency calls are currently categorised as "Category A" (potentially immediately life-threatening). Experience has shown that in fact fewer than 10% of Category A calls are actually potentially life-threatening following assessment by the attending paramedics. NIAS is using AMPDS appropriately but triaging is necessarily risk-averse and has resulted in a large number of calls being allocated resources for an eight minute response that in fact warrant a less urgent response.

The Ambulance Service here has been engaged with other ambulance services including those in Wales, Scotland and England to examine alternative models for the categorisation of calls and presented a case for change to the Health and Social Care Board in early 2016/17. Work is currently ongoing and my Department will consider any proposals for change in due course.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of current primary care provision.
(AQW 8216/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Primary care is an essential part of our health and social care system and plays a vital role in supporting people to manage and improve their own health and wellbeing. GPs are often the first port of call for people in need of treatment, care and support.

I recognise the significant progress that has been made over recent years in improving primary care services, including the significant investment in general practice aimed at increasing capacity, meeting the rising demand for services, increasing the GP workforce, and building the wider primary care team. I am committed to further enhancing primary care services to meet the health and well being needs of the population.

On 25 October 2016, I published 'Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together' setting out the approach and actions I will take to lead the transformation of health and social care services in the North.

A key element in this will be the establishment of multi-disciplinary teams that will help further integrate how primary care services are provided. These teams, which will be embedded around general practice and comprise a range of disciplines, will focus on areas such as the pro-active management of long term conditions. By March 2017, every GP practice will have a named district nurse, health visitor and social worker to work with. I will also support the development of new roles such as Physician Associate and Advanced Nurse Practitioners.

I recognise that there are increasing pressures facing general practice. I want to ensure that GPs are supported to face these challenges and help make a career in general practice in the North more attractive both to existing GPs and those in training.

I have already taken steps to increase the number of GPs in training, which over the next 2 years will rise from the current 85 per annum to 111 training places per year. Building on the rise in training numbers agreed earlier this year, this represents an increase of more than 70% in GP training places within a three year period. I have also indicated my commitment to redirect funding for undergraduate training so that undergraduate medical students get more experience of general practice. Other initiatives are also in place including a GP retainer scheme launched earlier this year which provides support and mentoring to GPs who might otherwise have been lost to general practice.

My Department will continue to invest in the Practice Based Pharmacists scheme to help optimise the use of medicines to improve patient outcomes as well as taking pressure off GPs. It is expected that close to 300 pharmacists will be employed to support GP practices across the North by 2020/21. In addition, I have committed to further investment in technology to help free up GP time, through the continued rollout of the AskMyGP online and telephone triage system. I will also bring forward a consultation on the role of GP Federations here and whether they should become health service bodies.

These commitments, which will help to ease GP workload pressures and attract more doctors into general practice, will build on the already significant investment in general practice over recent years and reflect some of the recommendations of the GP-led Care Working Group. That report identified a number of other actions aimed at addressing the pressures facing general practice and ensuring that it remains an attractive career choice. It is my intention to respond to the working group's recommendations shortly.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health what action will be taken to enhance primary care.
(AQW 8217/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Primary care is an essential part of our health and social care system and plays a vital role in supporting people to manage and improve their own health and wellbeing. GPs are often the first port of call for people in need of treatment, care and support.

I recognise the significant progress that has been made over recent years in improving primary care services, including the significant investment in general practice aimed at increasing capacity, meeting the rising demand for services, increasing the GP workforce, and building the wider primary care team. I am committed to further enhancing primary care services to meet the health and well being needs of the population.

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Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health what action is being taken to encourage GPs, who have to deal with an ever increasing workload, to remain in general practice.
(AQW 8218/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Primary care is an essential part of our health and social care system and plays a vital role in supporting people to manage and improve their own health and wellbeing. GPs are often the first port of call for people in need of treatment, care and support.

I recognise the significant progress that has been made over recent years in improving primary care services, including the significant investment in general practice aimed at increasing capacity, meeting the rising demand for services, increasing the GP workforce, and building the wider primary care team. I am committed to further enhancing primary care services to meet the health and well being needs of the population.

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Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health when the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service first made the case that their emergency call categorisation system required updating.

(AQW 8220/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Ambulance Service uses an Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System (AMPDS) to triage emergency calls. On the basis of the information provided by callers, approximately 30% of emergency calls are currently categorised as Category A – potentially immediately life-threatening. Experience has shown that fewer than 10% of Category A calls are actually potentially life-threatening following assessment by the attending paramedics. Work being undertaken in other countries confirms these findings. The Ambulance Service is using AMPDS appropriately but triaging is necessarily risk-averse so a number of calls are being categorised as potentially immediately life-threatening which would in fact warrant a less urgent response. Work is currently being undertaken by the Ambulance Service to more rapidly identify the sub-group of patients that require an immediate ambulance response, for example those suffering a cardiac arrest or who are unconscious.

The Ambulance Service has been engaged with other ambulance services including those in Wales, Scotland and England to consider alternative models for the categorisation of calls. AMPDS would continue to be used but changes to the call handling process would result in the more rapid identification of those patients who require the most urgent ambulance response. The case for change was first presented to the Health and Social Care Board in 2016/17 and the work is currently ongoing.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health on how many occasions in each month of the last three years has the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service received hoax calls; and how these figures compare as a percentage of genuine emergencies.

(AQW 8221/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number and percentage of potential hoax calls received by the ambulance service (NIAS) is detailed in the table overleaf, for each month over the last three years.

Number and Percentage of Potential ¹ Hoax Calls by each Month of the Year (2013/14 – 2015/16)

Month	2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	
	Number	Percentage ²	Number	Percentage ²	Number	Percentage ²
Apr	411	3.3%	403	3.2%	419	2.6%
May	406	3.3%	404	3.1%	457	2.8%
Jun	403	3.3%	436	2.9%	429	2.6%
Jul	522	3.9%	502	3.0%	415	2.6%
Aug	456	3.6%	480	2.9%	468	2.8%
Sept	378	3.1%	390	2.4%	384	2.4%
Oct	380	3.0%	358	2.2%	411	2.4%
Nov	363	2.9%	415	2.6%	323	1.9%
Dec	406	2.9%	407	2.3%	429	2.4%
Jan	356	2.8%	317	1.8%	358	2.0%
Feb	330	2.8%	329	2.0%	346	2.1%
Mar	373	2.7%	389	2.3%	413	2.3%

Source: Ambulance Service (NIAS)

¹ Some calls may not necessarily be hoaxes, as a number of technical issues may have caused a call to disconnect. In other instances, a patient may have changed location before the ambulance crew has arrived at the scene.

2 Potential hoax calls received as a percentage of the total calls received by the NIAS.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to detail the support provided to pregnant women and new mothers with severe mental health problems.

(AQW 8222/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Regionally, mental health services for expectant or new mothers are provided by general community mental health teams, in line with the Integrated Perinatal Mental Health Care Pathway (Dec 2012). This pathway provides guidance for all health and social care staff, and is currently being updated to reflect NICE guideline CG192 (2014). Where inpatient care is required, this is provided within existing general adult mental health facilities.

Small-scale specialist perinatal services are available in the Belfast Trust area. The Perinatal Mood Disorder Clinic provides care to mothers with serious mental illness who are not already attending a consultant psychiatrist. However, there is a clear need for a regional specialist service, and I am currently considering an options paper on establishing comprehensive specialist community provision and a Mother and Baby Unit. This is also an area where I will explore the potential for an all-island approach.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health for her assessment of the concerns raised by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service that the emergency call categorisation system is resulting in some calls being miscategorised.

(AQW 8232/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Ambulance Service uses an Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System (AMPDS) to triage emergency calls. On the basis of the information provided by callers, approximately 30% of emergency calls are currently categorised as Category A – potentially immediately life-threatening. Experience has shown that fewer than 10% of Category A calls are actually potentially life-threatening following assessment by the attending paramedics. Work being undertaken in other countries confirms these findings. The Ambulance Service is using AMPDS appropriately but triaging is necessarily risk-averse so a number of calls are being categorised as potentially immediately life-threatening which would in fact warrant a less urgent response. Work is currently being undertaken by the Ambulance Service to more rapidly identify the sub-group of patients that require an immediate ambulance response, for example those suffering a cardiac arrest or who are unconscious.

The Ambulance Service has been engaged with other ambulance services including those in Wales, Scotland and England to consider alternative models for the categorisation of calls. AMPDS would continue to be used but changes to the call handling process would result in the more rapid identification of those patients who require the most urgent ambulance response. The case for change was first presented to the Health and Social Care Board in 2016/17 and the work is currently ongoing.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health whether any Health and Social Care Trust facilities, other than Altnagelvin, have experienced problems with posted notifications for appointments not reaching patients.

(AQW 8234/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: As I advised previously under AQW 7920/16 -21, the Western HSC Trust is not aware of any wider issues at this time regarding the non receipt of posted notifications of outpatient appointments.

The South Eastern HSC Trust advised that delays in the delivery of patient appointment letters were experienced some five years ago. Once identified, steps were taken to improve delivery times resulting in episodes of delays being significantly reduced. The Northern Trust and the Southern Trust advise that very recently they have received some reports of patients not receiving letters or letters arriving late. Trusts are currently addressing this issue with Procurement and Logistics Service and the service provider.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health for an update on the implementation of a cancer strategy.

(AQW 8236/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Over the past twenty years cancer services have undergone significant reorganisation so that professionals with an expertise in treating the most common cancers can be brought together. Patients who are treated by professionals specialising in cancer and working together as a team have a better outcome than those not managed by such teams.

Cancer survival rates are better now than they ever have been. Over the past 20 years, survival rates have improved from 43% in 1993-99, to 54.3% in 2005-09. This indicates that things are changing for the better. Indeed 6 out of 10 people with a diagnosis of cancer live more than 5 years and 5 out of 10 live for more than 10 years. This improvement in survival is, in no small part, due to earlier diagnosis as well as access to better treatment.

Meeting the challenge posed by cancer is, and will continue to be, one of a high priority. We have made great strides in tackling cancer and have seen significant progress in the past decade since the opening of the Cancer Centre at Belfast City Hospital. I wish to see that progress continue and I can assure you that I will give due consideration to the need for a cancer strategy.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Health to detail the current number of people awaiting domiciliary care packages in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 8261/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested is not held centrally and was requested from Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts. Their responses can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Number of people waiting on a domiciliary care package.

HSC Trust	Position as at:	Number of People Waiting
Belfast	05/12/16	311
Northern1	01/12/16	83
South Eastern	05/12/16	59
Southern	01/12/16	104
Western	30/11/16	102
Total	-	659

1 Figures for the Northern and South Eastern HSC Trusts relate to those people waiting on a full/new domiciliary care package.

My Department is currently undertaking a regional review of the domiciliary care workforce to ensure the availability of a domiciliary care workforce to meet future service demands.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health given the emphasis in Systems and Structures on moving away from silos and taking a whole service approach, when she will consult on her overall roadmap for health and social care transformation, Delivering Together.

(AQW 8294/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Health and Wellbeing - Delivering Together sets out a roadmap for the future of Health and Social Care (HSC). The detailed design of HSC services moving forward will be developed through a process of co-production. Consultation will take place on the proposals for change as they emerge.

I am committed to the process of co-design and co-production and am continuing with a series of engagement with stakeholders. The consultation on the criteria proposed by the Expert Panel for the reconfiguration of Health and Social Care services has begun as has the consultation on proposals to improve Pathology Services. I have also launched two strategies that will modernise and enhance paediatric healthcare over the next 10 years.

Consultation and engagement will be key features throughout the transformation process.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health what expertise she will be recruiting to manage the transformation from the silos identified in Systems and Structures to a whole system approach.

(AQW 8297/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I will chair a Transformation Advisory Board to oversee the reforms. Members of the Board are being finalised and will be drawn from the field of independent experts, trade unions, user representatives and Community and Voluntary sector.

A Transformation Implementation Group has also been established. This group, chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health includes clinical experts, leaders from the wider health and social care system and other partners, to drive forward the process of implementation.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health which areas in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust do not have rapid response vehicle cover 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

(AQW 8299/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Rapid Response Vehicles do not operate 24 hours a day in any area due to lone working arrangements. The Rapid Response Vehicle shift patterns in the Southern Division cover the hours of 8am to midnight, 7 days a week.

The Ambulance Service operates a tactical deployment plan which means that the nearest available emergency resource will be dispatched to attend a call.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health to outline the steps she is taking to reduce the deficit of nursing staff in (i) medical; and (ii) surgical wards in Craigavon Area Hospital.

(AQW 8334/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department is leading several initiatives to support HSC Trusts to fill nursing vacancies.

The Business Services Organisation (BSO) has been commissioned by my Department to coordinate an international nurse recruitment campaign on behalf of all of the Trusts across the North. Six recruitment campaigns have already taken place during 2016 in The Philippines, Italy, Greece and Romania. 14 nurses from Italy have commenced pre-registration Band 3

positions in Southern HSC Trust, mainly in the Medical and Surgical Wards. Also, the Trust are currently progressing 88 offers to nurses from the Philippines.

My Department coordinates strategic longer-term workforce planning on a regional basis across HSC to inform the commissioning of pre-registration nurse training from the local universities. In *Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together*, setting out my vision for the HSC, I have given a commitment to develop by May 2017, a Workforce Strategy covering all aspects of the HSC workforce, including workforce planning.

In addition to these Departmental initiatives, the SHSCT are also taking the following steps to address the nursing deficit:

- A Nursing Workforce Group has been established to focus on nursing workforce resourcing and planning issues.
- Nurse Recruitment Days have been held. In November 2016 a total of 66 offers were made to both nursing registrants and year 2 and 3 students.
- Open, rolling advertisements for both nursing vacancies and nurse bank work and interviews are held every 2-4 weeks (depending on numbers).
- Attendance at local job fairs.
- Increased use of advertising media such as radio, social media, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Professional Nursing Journals.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health for an update on proposals to amend the Department's Senior Management Team in line with the stated intent in the draft Programme for Government to involve all health workers and professionals in decision making. (AQW 8399/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The ambitions set out in the draft Programme for Government cannot be achieved by one Government Department, body or arm of government in isolation, all of society needs to be involved. Draft Delivery Plans have been developed by Senior Responsible Owners and these plans set out the wide range of stakeholders that will be involved in delivery.

This approach supports the principle of co-production that I set out in *Delivering Together*. Co-production will underpin how we operate in the future, whether that be at a system level designing how our HSC services should be configured, or at a service level designing how care pathways and the care of individuals should be delivered differently. Very importantly, it signals a collaborative approach between the people who provide services and the people who depend on them.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health for an update on proposals to address the issue of under-representation of Allied Health Professionals at departmental level. (AQW 8400/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) are not under-represented at departmental level. The role of the departmental Lead AHP Officer is to provide policy and professional advice to myself and is not a policy lead for the service. The Lead AHP Officer is supported by a Deputy Principal, a part-time Housing Advisory Liaison Officer and administrative support within Nursing, Midwifery and AHP Directorate.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Health how she will ensure that the opinions of Allied Health Professionals contribute to her overall road map for Health and Social Care Transformation, *Delivering Together*. (AQW 8401/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I have made a commitment in *Health and Wellbeing* that all future changes will be designed with the involvement of those who provide services, including relevant professionals, as well as those who use services.

Work is currently underway to develop the techniques and tools to ensure this happens in practice.

Allied health professionals from a range of disciplines are also members of the Strategic Health Partnership Forum which I chair. This forum, facilitates discussion and collaboration among key stakeholders in influencing the strategic direction of policy development

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health whether full time hours are being cut, at Omagh Fire Station. (AQW 8402/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The level of wholetime firefighter resource at Omagh Fire Station is in the process of changing from Variable Crewing (07:30 to 19:30, 7 days per week) to Day Crewing (08:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday). Retained firefighters will continue to provide cover 24/7 as required.

The Fire and Rescue Service, in its most recent professional assessment of risk identified that the existing wholetime firefighter resource should be rebalanced appropriately and proportionately across the North of Ireland to address the level of risk.

A public consultation on the proposals ran from 14 December 2015 until 14 March 2016.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of attacks on staff at the South West Acute Hospital, in each of the last twelve months. (AQW 8408/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Table below details the number of attacks on staff at the South West Acute Hospital, in each of the last twelve months.

Recorded Incidents in the last twelve months ending 30 September 2016

	Verbal Attacks	Physical Attacks	Total
October 2015	0	5	5
November 2015	3	3	6
December 2015	2	4	6
January 2016	1	3	4
February 2016	1	1	2
March 2016	2	1	3
April 2016	2	2	4
May 2016	1	0	1
June 2016	0	3	3
July 2016	3	0	3
August 2016	1	2	3
September 2016	0	3	3

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health for her assessment on mental health services in Fermanagh and South Tyrone. (AQW 8410/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: People with mental ill health issues in Fermanagh and South Tyrone have access to the full range of mental health services provided either by the Western or the Southern Health and Social Care Trusts, depending on where they live. In line with the mental health care pathway, these services are tailored to meet each individual's particular needs and are provided in a wide variety of settings depending on the nature and seriousness of the condition. Services can be provided through GP surgeries, outpatient clinics, inpatient facilities or in the individual's own home, as well as through commissioned community and voluntary sector organisations.

Mental health and psychological therapies services are under increasing pressure, due to a higher than average prevalence of mental health issues in the North of Ireland compared to other regions, together with increased awareness of psychological therapies, and a legacy of unmet need, which have contributed to increasing waiting times to access services.

Mental health is one of my key priorities and I am considering a range of reform proposals in the context of the draft Programme for Government and budget processes. I am committed to working towards parity of esteem between mental and physical health. Increasing pressure on mental health services demonstrates why fundamental reshaping of the health and social care service is so vital, to enable resources to be released across the system so that it can be targeted to those areas that need it most.

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Health to detail how she will improve upon the number of those undiagnosed but suffering from dementia. (AQW 8417/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: While the diagnosis rates here are higher than in Britain, my Department is committed to improving services for people with dementia, and to encouraging people to seek a formal diagnosis of the condition.

The Department's regional strategy on dementia "Improving Dementia Services in NI", launched in 2011, addresses the importance of a formal diagnosis of dementia. The strategy helped to develop memory clinics in each of the five Health and Social Care Trusts to provide timely diagnosis and information and support to inform decisions about future care and treatment.

The Delivering Social Change Dementia initiative, launched in September 2014, aims to improve the quality of care and support for people living with dementia and recognises the importance of a formal diagnosis. As part of this initiative a Public Information Campaign on dementia was launched in September 2016 to raise awareness and understanding of dementia in the wider public. The campaign will focus, in particular, on recognising the symptoms of dementia and encouraging people to seek an early diagnosis.

In addition, the Delivering Social Change initiative is recruiting ten dementia navigators (two per Trust). These navigators will provide information and advice on dementia and will be able to signpost individuals to relevant sources of support and treatment.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister of Health for an update on the plan to build a new fire station in Limavady.

(AQW 8431/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Limavady Fire Station was earmarked for replacement following a stock condition survey in 2008. The Fire and Rescue Service has re-assessed this location and are planning a major refurbishment of the existing Station. This is planned for commencement early 2017.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health when the 2016-17 Draft Commissioning Plan will be published.

(AQW 8442/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) published the draft 2016/17 Commissioning Plan on their website as one of the papers for discussion at their June board meeting. A copy of the draft plan can be found here <http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/download/PUBLICATIONS/COMMISSIONING%20PLANS/Commissioning-Plan-2016-17.pdf>

I approved the HSCB 2016/17 Commissioning Plan on 23 August 2016 and a copy of the plan can be found here <http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/publications/commissioning-plans/>.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health whether she will publish each of the Health and Social Care Trust Delivery Plans for 2016-17.

(AQW 8444/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Trust Delivery Plans (TDPs) are the operational management tool that details the use of Trust resources to meet their responsibilities set out in the Health and Social Care Board's annual Commissioning Plan. The individual Trusts are responsible for their publication.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to detail every proposed measure for savings by each of the Health and Social Care Trusts in 2016-17.

(AQW 8445/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: All Trusts have a statutory obligation to deliver financial breakeven within their existing financial allocation and must ensure that deficits are not allowed to develop, and that where they do arise contingency arrangements are put in place to address the deficit.

The identification and delivery of savings and efficiencies is an ongoing process involving continuous interaction between the Trusts, the Board, the Department and other bodies. Trusts have been provided with more flexibility to deploy their resources as they deem appropriate; this includes the ability to set savings targets at a local level, rather on a regional basis.

The collation of the requested information would entail a major exercise by all Trusts to provide an accurate and complete response. The information required, therefore, is not readily available and can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister of Health to detail the level of (i) full time; and (ii) part time cover for Omagh Fire Station, in each of the last twelve months.

(AQW 8457/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Details of fire cover at Omagh Station over the last 12 months are provided below:

Full time cover, of a minimum of 5 Wholetime Firefighters, has been provided between the hours of 07:30 and 19:

- (i) 30 every day in each of the last 12 months.
- (ii) Part time cover has been provided on a 24/7 basis by 23 Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters over the last 12 months.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of children (i) in care; (ii) fostered; and (iii) waiting to be fostered.

(AQW 8461/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: These figures are published annually on the Department's website in 'Children's Social Care Statistics for NI'; the latest publication can be found at the following link:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/childrens-social-care-statistics-northern-ireland>

- (i) Figures on the numbers of children waiting to be placed with a foster family are not regularly collected. To provide these figures would require a manual trawl through hundreds of files and therefore cannot be provided due to disproportionate cost.

Mr McNulty asked the Minister of Health to detail any capital assistance her Department offers to families that foster children in order to allow them to foster more children.

(AQW 8462/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I can confirm that no specific allocation is made via the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) to HSC Trusts to extend the homes of foster carers to facilitate the placement of children. On occasions, when Trusts have highlighted a specific need relating to the placement of a specific child or sibling group and the HSCB or relevant Trust has been able to identify sufficient funding, allocations have been made for home extensions. This practice has become increasingly difficult in recent years in the context of growing financial pressures.

The HSCB does not currently collect data on the number of home extensions

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health given the establishment of a ministerial office at South Tyrone Hospital, when she will visit Oakridge Social Education Centre.

(AQW 8465/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I would be happy to visit Oakridge Social Education Centre at some stage during my tenure.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of ambulances diverted from the Emergency Department at the Ulster Hospital on Monday 21 November 2016; and the hospitals to which they were diverted.

(AQW 8468/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Temporary ambulance divers are typically put in place when an emergency department (ED) is experiencing significantly higher than usual activity. The divert helps to maintain patient flow through the ED and reduces potentially lengthy turnaround times for ambulances.

A temporary ambulance divert was put in place at the Ulster Hospital ED on Monday 21st November 2016 between the hours of 2:52pm and 5:05pm. During this period, one ambulance was potentially diverted from the Ulster Hospital to the Royal Victoria Hospital.

It is important to note that when a divert is in operation, the NIAS records do not indicate whether a ambulance would have gone to the Ulster Hospital, and then diverted to another hospital, they record that a call was

responded to at an assumed address within the Ulster Hospital catchment area, but were subsequently taken to another hospital.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health whether she has any plans to introduce screening of Group B Strep of expectant mothers which could prevent early onset GBS.

(AQW 8469/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: National Screening Committee (NSC) is an expert body which advises the four Health Departments on screening programmes. In November 2012 NSC re-reviewed the research evidence on antenatal screening for Group B Streptococcus (GBS) and recommended that screening should not be offered to all pregnant women.

The following were factors in the decision.

- 65% of deaths linked to GBS are in babies born prematurely i.e. before screening would take place.
- Most long term disability linked to GBS is caused when the baby is infected after the first week of life (Late Onset GBS) and antibiotics in labour do not reduce this type of GBS disease.
- The test only identifies women who are carrying GBS at the time when they are screened; some women will no longer be carrying GBS by the time they receive antibiotics in labour. Screening cannot identify the small number of women whose babies would be affected; therefore many thousands of women would receive antibiotics in labour when their babies would not be affected.
- Evidence suggests that a small number of pregnant women have been harmed as a result of receiving antibiotics in labour. This needs to be investigated further.

NSC's recommendation is currently being reviewed as part of NSC's regular review cycle of all policies. As part of this review a public consultation has been issued and responses are due to be returned by 25th January 2017.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and NICE also advise that screening for GBS should not be offered in pregnancy.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health for an update on providing 111 GP training places.

(AQW 8482/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The annual GP training programme was expanded by 20 places in 2016/17. The programme will be increased by 12 places in 2017/18 and by a further 14 in 2018/19 at which stage an annual commissioned intake of 111 will be attained, one year earlier than the recommendation in the extant GP training plan.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health to detail the retention rate of doctors from the GP training course, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8483/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The information sought is not available in the format requested. We do however know that, of the 295 GPs who completed training locally within the last five years, 282 (96%) are registered on the Primary Medical Performers List for the north of Ireland.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health to detail the financial support that the Southern Health and Social Care Trust has provided to community-based elders groups in each of the last five years; and what level of funding will be allocated in the incoming financial year.

(AQW 8490/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Funding provided by the Southern HSC Trust in each of the last five years specifically for community based older groups is set out in the table below. The Trust is unable to confirm funding, at this stage, for 2017/18.

Year	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Funding for community based older groups	£771k	£745k	£765k	£778k	£660k

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health what her Department is doing to allow patients access to cannabis products for medical purposes.

(AQW 8519/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The legislation and policy around the use of cannabis or cannabis products, including for medical proposes, is a reserved matter.

There is a process in place, overseen by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, supported by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs and the British Home Office, to assess the health benefits of any drug and to regulate its availability for medicinal use on a case-by-case basis to ensure the safe and effective treatment of patients.

Mr Sheehan asked the Minister of Health to outline the legal position in regard to installing and monitoring CCTV in care homes.

(AQW 8520/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Registered care home providers must comply with guidance and any relevant legislation, including the Data Protection Act and Human Rights Act, if giving consideration to the use of CCTV in care homes.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health whether her Department will continue the Be Cancer Aware programme.

(AQW 8595/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Proposals for extension of the Be Cancer Aware campaign have been included in the recent call for Public Information Campaign (PIC) bids for 2017-2018. As all PIC proposals have to be approved by the Executive the PHA is not able to confirm whether the programme will continue at this time.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health to detail the current financial limitations on the provision of care packages for patients awaiting hospital discharge in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 8622/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Once a need for domiciliary care support is determined for patients waiting on discharge from hospital, the Northern Trust aims to secure domiciliary care support in a timely manner. However the Trust is currently facing challenges in securing appropriate domiciliary care packages. These challenges are not financial in nature but mainly relate to difficulties in recruiting staff into domiciliary care services. My Department is currently undertaking a regional review of the domiciliary care workforce to ensure the availability of a domiciliary care workforce to meet future service demands.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 7323/16-21, what is the completion date for each review.

(AQW 8639/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The workforce planning reviews currently being led by my Department and their estimated completion date are set out in the table below:

Priority	Review	Lead Organisation	Anticipated Completion Date
1	Emergency (Intensive) Care Medicine	PHA	Completed Oct 16
2	Anaesthetics	PHA	Completed Dec 16
3	General medical	DoH/Mouchel	Spring 2017
4	Domiciliary Care	DoH	January 2017

Priority	Review	Lead Organisation	Anticipated Completion Date
5	Neurology	PHA	Spring/Summer 2017
6	Urology	PHA	May 2017
7	Dental	DoH / Skills for Health	May 2017
8	Acute Medicine	PHA	Sept 2017
	Geriatrics (Included in Acute Medicine review)		
9	Imaging Services -	DoH	To be confirmed as overarching Imaging Review progresses
10	Palliative Care	PHA	To be confirmed 2017
11	Occupational Medicine	PHA	To be confirmed

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 7386/16-21, (i) why this information could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost; (ii) what is the threshold for disproportionate cost; and (iii) who, aside from her Private Office, would need to be consulted in generating a response to the original question.

(AQW 8661/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) I have received over 700 requests for meetings since I took up my post in May. The information you asked for was not readily available in the format requested and could therefore only be provided at disproportionate cost.
- (ii) £700
- (iii) In this case, the Director of Corporate Management.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 7716/16-21, why the Department does not collect this information.
(AQW 8663/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The recording of information paid to individual recruitment agencies is an operational matter for Arms-length bodies.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health how many babies were born underweight in (i) 2013-14; (ii) 2014-15; (iii) 2015-16, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 8665/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department holds information on the number of live born babies with a birth weight of less than 2,500g as an indicator of low birth weight. The latest low birth weight information is presented in the table below by Parliamentary Constituency and year:

Parliamentary Constituency	2013	2014	2015
Belfast East	84	86	89
Belfast North	111	102	115
Belfast South	92	90	69
Belfast West	100	94	96
East Antrim	55	65	51
East Derry	87	97	83
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	106	90	84
Foyle	103	94	116
Lagan Valley	74	65	74
Mid Ulster	96	86	93
Newry and Armagh	100	121	124
North Antrim	95	71	86
North Down	60	68	72

Parliamentary Constituency	2013	2014	2015
South Antrim	85	74	74
South Down	59	95	77
Strangford	64	65	61
Upper Bann	99	116	149
West Tyrone	62	64	75

Source: NI Health & Social Care Inequalities Monitoring System

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Health whether she will consider recognising and formally acknowledging the service of former Fire and Rescue Service personnel.

(AQW 8667/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: There are no plans to further recognise or formally acknowledge the service of former Fire and Rescue Service personnel.

The Assembly did recognise the exemplary work of the Fire and Rescue Service in a ceremony at Parliament Buildings in 2001, when the service was given a Corporate Award.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister of Health what statutory assistance is available for people who are feeling suicidal; and what projects and groups her Department is funding in the voluntary sector to try and assist with preventing suicide.

(AQW 8687/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department allocates over £7m annually to suicide prevention. The Public Health Agency manages the implementation of the Protect Life suicide prevention strategy and allocation of this budget.

A range of self-harm and suicide prevention services are provided regionally. These include: Lifeline 24/7 helpline and associated support services; the Self Harm Intervention Programme; Card Before You Leave; RAID pilot scheme in the Northern Trust; bereavement support; mental health services; psychological therapies; public information campaigns; and training on suicide/mental health awareness; work with the arts sector; family and individual outreach support; and counselling and complementary therapies.

To date in 2016-17, the Public Health Agency has invested in 95 projects/activities through 60 different providers. In addition, some 125 small grants have been awarded to various providers through the CLEAR project, and 32 grants directly to Sports Coaches. A full list of the groups funded is available from the PHA.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health to detail the number of hours of homecare provision provided directly by each Health and Social Care Trust, for each of the last five years.

(AQW 8735/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on the number of statutory, domiciliary care hours provided by each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust is published annually in the "Domiciliary Care Services for Adults in NI" statistical bulletin.

Information for 2016 is due for publication on 15th December 2016. This, and annual publications from 2008 can be found published online at the web address below: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/domiciliary-care>

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health to outline the rationale for reducing the full-time Fire and Rescue Service cover in Omagh from 7.30am until 7.30pm to 8.00am until 6.00pm; and what impact will this have on service provision.

(AQW 8747/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Omagh is one of ten Fire Stations which will see changes to its crewing model to facilitate the rebalancing of existing wholetime firefighter resources appropriately and proportionately across the North of Ireland.

The Fire and Rescue Service believe changes to its crewing model at Omagh will maintain an appropriate level of wholetime resources and that there will be minimum impact on service delivery.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health what impact the proposed removal of the full-time weekend Fire and Rescue Service cover from Omagh will have on service provision.

(AQW 8748/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Omagh is one of ten Fire Stations which will see changes to its crewing model to facilitate the rebalancing of existing wholetime firefighter resources appropriately and proportionately across the North of Ireland.

The Fire and Rescue Service believe there is minimum impact on service delivery as a result of the crewing model changes at Omagh.

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health whether the proposal to remove the weekend full-time and reduce the full-time day Fire and Rescue Service cover from Omagh was subject to a consultation process.

(AQW 8750/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: A public consultation on the proposals ran from 14 December 2015 until 14 March 2016.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 7719/16-21, whether arm's-length bodies were asked to provide information on fees paid to each recruitment agency; and whether any bodies provided the information.

(AQW 8775/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Total expenditure information was requested from Arms-length bodies to answer AQW 6488, only where it was not already held by the Department. No break down by recruitment agency was requested.

The recording of information paid to individual recruitment agencies is an operational matter for arms-length bodies.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 7838/16-21, what makes it not practicable to list all changes; and whether she will now answer the original question.

(AQW 8778/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer the member to my reply AQW 7838/16-21.

Mr Butler asked the Minister of Health what steps her Department is taking to address the lack of regional strategy and resulting inequality of services for people impacted by Huntington's Disease.

(AQW 8779/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: While I have no current plans to produce a regional strategy for Huntington's Disease, the member will wish to note that in October 2015, my Department published 'Providing High Quality Care for people affected by Rare Diseases – The NI Implementation Plan for Rare Diseases'.

The plan reaffirms my Department's commitment to ensure that people living with a rare disease such as Huntington's Disease have access to the best evidence-based care and treatment in the north of Ireland.

Mr Milne asked the Minister of Health how many Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority inspections have taken place in each year since 2010, broken down by (i) establishment and agency type; and (ii) announced and unannounced visits.

(AQW 8826/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The tables below provide a breakdown of the numbers of announced and unannounced inspections in each type of agency and establishment regulated by RQIA.

Announced Inspections

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Adult Placement Agencies	6	4	6	4	4	4
Children's Homes	83	85	81	67	73	21
Day Care Settings	142	275	196	236	198	89
Dental Treatment	0	281	460	467	410	426
Domiciliary Care Agencies	308	302	323	314	188	59
Independent Clinics	10	13	8	10	6	7
Independent Hospitals	41	79	79	81	68	83
Independent Medical Agencies	0	0	1	5	5	5
Nursing Homes	526	318	327	273	281	159
Nursing Agencies	22	26	22	23	10	3
Residential Care Homes	401	364	419	316	234	108
Residential Family Centres	2	3	2	2	0	0
Voluntary Adoption Agencies	4	3	0	0	4	0

Unannounced Inspections

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Adult Placement Agencies	0	0	0	0	0	0
Children's Homes	89	70	62	67	84	93
Day Care Settings	5	42	106	70	65	177
Dental Treatment	0	0	0	1	2	7
Domiciliary Care Agencies	44	38	66	47	138	257
Independent Clinics	1	0	0	3	0	0
Independent Hospitals	18	5	1	3	0	4
Independent Medical Agencies	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nursing Homes	557	467	492	493	489	603
Nursing Agencies	1	1	0	1	24	28
Residential Care Homes	353	249	287	292	333	422
Residential Family Centres	0	0	0	0	1	1
Voluntary Adoption Agencies	0	0	0	0	0	0

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 8290/16-21, to define what constitutes a timely manner in relation to responses to queries from elected representatives.

(AQW 8878/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: Depending on the nature of the query it is either answered by me or by the relevant Health and Social Care body. My aim is that queries are responded to within 2 weeks.

Mr McGrath asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 7967/16-21, to detail the costs of locum doctors broken down by hospital in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8889/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department does not routinely collect data by individual hospital site and to do so would exceed the disproportionate cost threshold.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister of Health pursuant to AQW 7073/16-21 and AQW 7072/16-21, why information on the number of agency doctors or nurses employed in (i) South West Acute Hospital; and (ii) South Tyrone Hospital is not available.

(AQW 8984/16-21)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department does not routinely collect information on whole-time equivalent numbers of agency staff employed, as this is not readily available from Trust financial systems.

Department for Infrastructure

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Infrastructure when his Department will install the signalised pedestrian crossing at Tyrone Street, Carrick Hill.

(AQW 7859/16-21)

Mr Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure): The proposed puffin crossing is highly placed on my TransportNI Eastern Division priority list. Officials hope to be in a position to proceed with this crossing within the next financial year once the scheme design has been completed and funding has been secured.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he has any plans to review the appeals mechanism for fines for improper use of bus lanes.

(AQW 7869/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department has no plans to review the appeals mechanism for fines (Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs)) issued for improper use of bus lanes.

There are three opportunities under the Traffic Management (NI) Order 2005 when a driver can challenge a PCN. The stages are Challenge, Representations and Appeals. The Challenge is the first informal stage dealt with "in house" by the Department followed by the formal stage which is a Representation. The Representation is also dealt with "in house". The

final stage is an Appeal made to the independent Traffic Penalty Tribunal. Full details of the process are contained within the NI Direct website.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister for Infrastructure what proposals he will bring forward to allow vehicles to use bus lanes legally when they are not in use by public transport.

(AQW 7870/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department is currently in the process of amending legislation relating to the hours of operation of the bus lanes in East Bridge Street, Saintfield Road at Forestside and Upper Newtownards Road. This process is aimed at changing the hours of operation for these bus lanes from 24 hours to 12 hours per day, making them operational from 7am to 7pm.

Vehicles which are not permitted to be driven in bus lanes during prescribed bus lane operational times may be driven in them at all other times.

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline (i) what additional measures have been taken for the months of November and December to address the increase in passenger numbers using the Belfast to Londonderry train service, outbound and inbound; and (ii) the rationale for extra carriages on the train that are unavailable for passengers to use and remain empty for the journey.

(AQW 7905/16-21)

Mr Hazzard:

- (i) NI Railways commenced their pre-Christmas service enhancement programme with additional and strengthened services operating Friday-Sunday each weekend from 18 November 2016.

Further capacity has been added to late night services on Saturday evenings on both the Portadown and Derry lines. Increased capacity has also been added to mid-morning, afternoon and early evening trains across the network on Saturdays and Sundays to meet demand (five services in each direction on the Derry line strengthened to six car trains on Saturdays and two in each direction on Sundays).

Translink NI Railways have a number of promotions on offer over the Christmas period to attract customers:

- Sunday Day Tracker (travel anywhere on the NI Railways network) reduced from £9 to £7
- 25% off Monthly Local Rail tickets bought between 21 November and 9 December 2016
- 1/3 off all Day Return tickets purchased after 09:30 hours
- Enterprise Friends & Family fare £50 after 09:30 hours for 2 Adults and 3 Children
- Plus Bus Fare: Add an Ulsterbus Town Service ticket (£1) or Metro ticket (£2) when you purchase any NI Railways Day Return Fare.

- (ii) Regarding carriages being locked off and unavailable for passengers this normally only occurs when demand means that 3 carriages are sufficient for passengers and that the additional carriages are not required until the next journey or stop.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister for Infrastructure what measures his Department is taking to address the issue of cars parking on footpaths on the Lisburn Road which negatively impacts people with accessibility issues.

(AQW 7977/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The member may be aware whilst there is no general prohibition on footway parking, with the exception of the parking of heavy commercial vehicles on footways, if a vehicle is parked in such a manner that it is causing an obstruction, on the footway or carriageway, the police have the ability to enforce the obstruction by means of a Non-Endorsable Fixed Penalty Notice. However, if parking of this nature occurs in the future, local police can be contacted on telephone number 101.

Where there are waiting restrictions, these can be enforced by my Department's Traffic Attendants. It should be noted, on waiting restrictions vehicles are permitted to load / unload goods or set down / pick up passengers and Blue Badge holders also have a concession to park for up to three hours.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Infrastructure, in relation to the flooding that occurred in early December 2015 at the Park Lake stream which affected traders at the Linen Green, Moygashel. (i) whether he will publish the Rivers Agency report into the flooding; and (ii) to detail the prevention works that are required to ensure no repeat flooding.

(AQW 7992/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The report on the initial investigations into the cause of the flooding at Linen Green was finalised and shared with Linen Green Management in February 2016.

Following this report a feasibility study into the viability of work at this location commenced and is at an advanced stage. I am advised that an initial report on the feasibility study has been received by my Department and the options identified are currently considering.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether it is policy that NI Water staff can circulate GAA club notes, namely Glean Eallaigh Naomh Seosamh, to members from their work email address.

(AQW 8049/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: NI Water's policy on the use of internet and email facilities is modelled on the NICS Handbook. Users must at all times conduct themselves responsibly and honestly when accessing the Internet or when using e-mail facilities.

NI Water has advised that an employee was sending a GAA note to their local paper in their own time and inadvertently issued on the internal system by mistake. On discovering their error they immediately recalled the email. NI Water is not aware of any complaint in relation to this matter.

Ms S Bradley asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he intends to use the additional £250 million announced by the Chancellor to fund the Narrow Water Bridge project.

(AQW 8050/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Decisions on the allocation of the £250 million capital funding announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement will be taken forward within the Executive's overall Budget 2017-21 considerations. Until those considerations have been concluded and budgets for each department agreed, I will not be in a position to provide details of my spending plans.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the amount of money his Department has spent in inspecting the rail network in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8083/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: NI Railways is legally responsible (Section 25 of Transport Act 1967) for the rail network which includes 300 miles of track, including bridges, level crossings and signals. Translink regularly inspects and maintains this infrastructure to meet technical, operational and safety standards. Inspection is undertaken as part of ongoing operations and as part of individual capital projects.

My Department provides direct revenue subsidy to NI Railways and funds all capital projects undertaken. The NI Railways annual accounts include a note showing total infrastructure costs in compliance with the Railways Infrastructure (Access, Management and Licensing of Railway Undertakings) Regulations (NI) 2005. For the last five years costs were as follows:

2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
£17.4m	£15.7m	£16.4m	£17.9m	£18.6m

These costs include more than direct inspection costs but represent estimated revenue costs incurred in maintaining the rail network for operational use.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail how often the 9pm Northern Ireland Rail Enterprise Service from Dublin to Belfast has been late in the last three months.

(AQW 8086/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Since 1st September 2016 the 20:50 service from Dublin to Belfast has operated late a total of 15 times. Only six of these delays were deemed as within the control of NI Railways as defined under its passenger charter standard. The service runs six times a week. The Passenger Charter standard agreed with Translink and the Consumer Council is that it should ensure 90% of trains arrive no more than 10 minutes late. In this case only 83% of these services have met this standard which is a concern and I will raise this matter with NI Railways. It may also be important to raise this matter with the Southern authorities.

The last overall Passenger Charter review of all Enterprise services was undertaken in Spring 2016 and this assessed Enterprise services as achieving both reliability and punctuality targets. The next independent survey will be published in early 2017 and I will be monitoring that closely.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline reasons for driver licence applications being processed outside the statutory timeframe during the last five years.

(AQW 8088/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) does not have statutory limits for processing driving licence applications. Driver Licensing operates an agreed Customer Service delivery target, whereby it aims to process 95% of complete driving licence applications within 10 working days.

The DVA publishes its performance against Customer Service delivery targets in its Annual Report and Accounts. Performance figures for the last five years have been reproduced in the table below for your convenience.

Financial Year	Driving Licence Applications	% Processed within 10 working days
2011-12	210,161	99.5

Financial Year	Driving Licence Applications	% Processed within 10 working days
2012-13	211,649	99.4
2013-14	218,054	99.9
2014-15	227,250	96.4
2015-16	295,281	96.4

The DVA does not record against individual driver records reasons for delays incurred in processing driving licence applications. The processing of driving licence applications can be affected by the complexity of individual cases and seasonal variations in application volumes.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the difference in the number of driver licence applications processed (i) in; and (ii) outside the statutory timeframe for each year during the last five years.

(AQW 8089/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) does not have statutory limits for processing driving licence applications. Driver Licensing operates an agreed Customer Service delivery target, whereby it aims to process 95% of complete driving licence applications within 10 working days.

The DVA publishes its performance against Customer Service delivery targets in its Annual Report and Accounts. Performance figures for the last five years have been reproduced in the table below for your convenience.

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The DVA does not record against individual driver records reasons for delays incurred in processing driving licence applications. The processing of driving licence applications can be affected by the complexity of individual cases and seasonal variations in application volumes.

Mr Kennedy asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the statutory timeframe for processing driver licence applications.

(AQW 8090/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) does not have statutory limits for processing driving licence applications. Driver Licensing operates an agreed Customer Service delivery target, whereby it aims to process 95% of complete driving licence applications within 10 working days.

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2015-16	295,281	96.4

The DVA does not record against individual driver records reasons for delays incurred in processing driving licence applications. The processing of driving licence applications can be affected by the complexity of individual cases and seasonal variations in application volumes.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister for Infrastructure pursuant to AQW 5998/16-21, (i) whether the meeting to discuss the potential for the Department of Health and the Health and Social Care Trusts to consider helping to part grant fund the Rural Community Transport Partnerships has taken place; and (ii) for an update on what was agreed at this meeting.

(AQW 8091/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Health Minister, Michelle O'Neill MLA, has agreed to meet with me to discuss the work of the Rural Community Transport Partnerships. It is hoped that this meeting will take place in the New Year should diary commitments allow.

The Health Minister has already indicated that there are significant financial pressures on front line Health services.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail each (i) addition; and (ii) exclusion from the Transport NI winter gritting schedule within the Southern Division for each of the last three years.

(AQW 8092/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I can advise that there were no exclusions from the gritting schedule in Southern Division over the past three years and that there were no additions to the gritting schedule during 2016. The routes below were added to the gritting schedule during 2014 and 2015.

2014

- Calvertown Road, Bleary
- Railway Street Poyntzpass
- Abbot Drive Newtownards

2015

- Lisbarnet Road Lisbane
- Kilmore Road

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) each request to change Transport NI's winter gritting schedule in the Southern Division, including the origin of the request for each of the last three years; and (ii) how requests are assessed.

(AQW 8093/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Requests for changes to the gritting schedule within Southern Division for the past three years are set out below by year:

2014

Killysorrel Road, Blackskull, Donaghcloney	Stephen Mutray
Crowhill Road, Waringstown	Member of the Public
Blackskull Road, Donaghcloney	Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Aughnaskeagh Road, Dromara	NICCY - NI Commissioner
Cumber Road Drumaness	M Ritchie MP
Folly Lane Downpatrick	Member of the public
Bunkers Hill Castlewellan	Cllr Stephen Burns
Churchtown Road Downpatrick	M Ritchie MP
Drumkeeragh Road Ballynahinch	Member of the public
Tullyree Road Kilcoo	Member of the public
Clonvaraghan Road Castlewellan	Member of public
Calvertown Road, Bleary	D Simpson / Cllr M O Dowd / Public
Ballygowan Road, Banbridge	Member of the public
Glenanne Road Markethill	Member of the public
Fernaloy Road Keady	Cllr T O'Hanlon
Clay Road Keady	Cllr D McNally
Railway Street Poyntzpass	NI Railway Co Ltd
Mullinure Road Armagh	Armagh City and District Council
Abbot Drive Newtownards	Cllr Gregory
Innishargy Road Kircubbin	member of the public

2015

Fairhill Primary School, Tulliniskey Road	Cllr H Gamble
Ballymacbredan Road, Magheralin	Member of the Public
Crowhill Road, Waringstown	Member of the Public
Megans Park, Dromore	M Ritchie
Car Parks, Banbridge	Jo-Anne Dobson
Castle Hill, Gilford	Principal -St John's Primary School
Tullyah Road	Megan Fearon MLA / public
Clonvaraghan Road Castlewellan	Member of public
Shrewsbury Dale Saintfield	Member of public
Knocknashina Downpatrick	M Ritchie MP
Dundrum road Dromara	Member of public
Foffanny Road/ Slievenaman Road	Cllr Patrick Clark
Station Road Castlewellan	Cllr Willie Clark
Struell Wells Road Downpatrick	Member of public
Crossgar Road	Cllr Andrews
Clonvarnaghan Road Castlewellan	Cllr Patrick Clark
Fernaloy Road Keady	Cllr T O'Hanlon
Clay Road Keady	Cllr T O'Hanlon
Bog Road Portavogie	Cllr Adair
Lisbarnet Road Lisbane	Member of the public & Michelle McIlveen MLA
Kilmore Road	Not known

2016

Springvale Road, Tullylish	Jo-Anne Dobson
Bannview Road, Banbridge	J Wells
Clonvarnaghan Road Castlewellan	Cllr Patrick Clarke
Leitrim Road	Cllr Patrick Clarke
Bunkers Hill Castlewellan	Member of public
Clonvaraghan Road Castlewellan	Cllr Patrick Clarke
Drumkeeragh Road Ballynahinch	Member of public
Drumkeeragh Road Ballynahinch	M Ritchie MP
Fernaloy Road Keady	Cllr T O'Hanlon
Clay Road Keady	Cllr T O'Hanlon
Ballymacnab Road Armagh	Cllr S Haughey-Grimley
Ballystockart Road Comber	Michelle McIlveen MLA

I can advise that requests for inclusion on the gritting schedule are considered using well established criteria which is made available to the public via the DFI Website. The policy which includes the assessment criteria can be found here - <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/winter-service-rsppg-e022>.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Infrastructure what budget he has allocated for the implementation of the strategic plan for greenways.

(AQW 8114/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I launched 'Exercise – Explore – Enjoy', my strategic plan for greenways on 9 November. The strategy sets out my vision for greenways and a framework for a more strategic and ambitious programme to develop a greenway network

across the whole of the north. The strategy outlines a number of 10-year targets, including to have 75% of the primary network and 25% of the larger secondary network delivered by 2026.

I also announced grant funding of £160,000 to councils for 20 greenway feasibility studies which will begin the process of delivery of the network. I will provide further funding for the final stage of the Small Grants Programme for Greenways to enable the best schemes to be taken forward to detailed design stage. My officials are currently working on the development of a capital grant scheme for greenways and this will help Councils to build the schemes that form part of the Greenway Network.

At present there is no capital budget allocation set aside specifically for the construction of greenway schemes. However, when allocations are made later this year I will give more detailed consideration to capital funding for greenways.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether Transport NI officials can ensure that in the construction of ranch style fencing along roadsides, the cross boards be placed on the inside of the stakes, as opposed to the outside in the interest of removing the danger of these boards posing a threat in the event of a vehicle colliding with the fence.

(AQW 8115/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The design standards for new road schemes used by my Department's TransportNI require that where timber post and rail 'ranch type' fencing is used along a roadside the horizontal rails are fixed to the inside of the fence, that is not on the road side.

All new road schemes are checked before final payment with an emphasis placed on safety and in the case of those new schemes greater than £250k in value, a formal safety audit is carried out by accredited personnel.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the public expenditure per head of population for cycling in 2016-17.

(AQW 8117/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The estimated spend per head of population on cycling in this year (2016/17) is £1.45 based on a population of 1.87 million and spend of approximately £2.7 million. This includes expenditure on on-road infrastructure (some segregated off-road provision), the promotion of cycling and walking, the Greenways Programme and the funding of the Active School Travel Programme.

The attribution of spend to cycling specifically is not a precise exercise as many projects have benefits for cycling even if not carried out specifically for that purpose. Equally, there are cycling-related projects which have benefits for walking and other active travel modes additional to the cycling benefit. Other Departments such as the Department for Communities have invested in measures that promote cycling, through public realm schemes and the Department of Health with Health Promotion measures including support for the Active School Travel Programme.

The current population of the north of Ireland is estimated at 1.87 million using the 'Population Clock Northern Ireland', (which may be viewed on the NISRA website: http://www.nisra.gov.uk/population_clock/ClockText.html).

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Infrastructure for his assessment of the Sirocco Skyway proposal for an elevated traffic-free pathway.

(AQW 8118/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I plan to publish the draft Belfast Bicycle Network early in the New Year. During the public consultation, views will be sought on both the detail of the draft Network and on proposed improvements.

The final agreed Network will take into account all responses to the public consultation including any proposal such as the suggested Sirocco Skyway.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Infrastructure how many parking tickets have been issued for parking in the loading area outside Mawhinney's Butchers on Main Street, Bangor in the last 12 months.

(AQW 8142/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: 75 parking tickets (Penalty Charge Notices) have been issued for parking contraventions in the loading bay outside Mawhinney's Butchers on Main Street, Bangor in the last 12 months.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the (i) different types; and (ii) capacities of public buses operated by Translink within the Ards and North Down Borough Council area.

(AQW 8143/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The table below details the number, type and capacities of public buses operated by Translink from bus stations within the Ards and North Down Borough Council area:

Bangor Bus Station

Vehicle Type	Seating Capacity	Number of Vehicles Allocated
Low Floor Minibus	27	2
	31	4
Low Floor Single Deck	44	15
Low Floor Rural Single Deck	55	2
High Capacity Single Deck	62	4
	66	0
	69	1
Goldliner Single Deck	53	1
Interurban Single Deck	55	1
Double Deck	75	2
	76	5
Total		37

Newtownards Bus Station

Vehicle Type	Seating Capacity	Number of Vehicles Allocated
Low Floor Minibus	27	2
	31	4
Low Floor Single Deck	44	12
Low Floor Rural Single Deck	55	9
High Capacity Single Deck	62	3
	66	5
	69	2
Goldliner Single Deck	53	2
Interurban Single Deck	55	3
Double Deck	75	1
	76	6
Total		49

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Infrastructure pursuant to AQW 6801/16-21, to detail (i) why is this permitted at Kingspan Stadium; and (ii) as no action is being taken, can public hire drivers now do likewise without fear of enforcement action.

(AQW 8145/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Touting is not permitted at any location or venue and Driver & Vehicle Agency enforcement officers will investigate any complaints made in this regard and pursue enforcement action where sufficient evidence of an offence is obtained.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail how often a non-Enterprise set was used in an Enterprise rail service in each of the last twelve months.

(AQW 8147/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: From 1 December 2015 through to 1 December 2016, there were 165 unplanned instances when an Enterprise service was substituted with non-Enterprise rolling stock. This represents about 6% of the total.

Furthermore, during this period a further 1066 Enterprise Services were operated by CAF trains. These were planned substitutions associated with the Enterprise Refurbishment Programme which meant Enterprise rolling stock had to be taken out of service for refurbishment.

A detailed monthly breakdown of the substitutions is shown in the table below:

	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Total
Unplanned	0	1	4	12	33	6	8	4	11	8	23	12	112
Planned	336	320	180	178	52	2	0	0	0	0	12	32	1,112
Total	336	321	184	190	85	8	8	4	11	8	35	44	1,234

Reasons for substitution are summarised as follows:

- Fleet refurbishment: 1066
- Mechanical: 115
- Low adhesion: 46
- Train striking debris: 2
- Driver training on refurbished De Dietrich carriages: 2
- Signal fault: 2
- Flooding: 1
- Total Services: 1,234

Low rail adhesion is a particular factor in October and November.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure for his assessment of the increase in reliability times during the refurbishment of Belfast to Dublin Enterprise carriages.

(AQW 8148/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The refurbishment of the Enterprise trains was largely financed through the Interreg IVA programme, managed by the Special EU Programme Board, on an agreed North-South basis. Translink acted as lead partner for the project and worked with Iarnród Éireann to deliver the project as the Enterprise is a jointly run train service. The agreed project elements included a range of measures to refurbish 28 carriages and 6 locomotives.

The targets for the project includes: safety; reliability; passenger numbers growth and improved passenger satisfaction. In relation to reliability of service it is hoped to assess this after a full year of operation in May 2017. Recent analysis of delays on the Enterprise service suggest that only around 8% of the delays are caused by reliability of the trains as opposed to other factors notably the rail track.

During the refurbishment of the Belfast – Dublin Enterprise carriages, the service was substituted with more modern, diesel, multiple units owned either by NI Railways or Iarnród Éireann. That is the Class 4000 trains owned by NI Railways or Rotem trains owned by Iarnród Éireann.

These trains, which are used primarily on local networks in the North and South, are designed to accelerate and decelerate faster than the Class 201 locomotives which normally operate the Enterprise service.

As a result operating the Enterprise train service with this more modern rolling stock did show an improvement in reliability but with a much lower standard of customer amenities for passengers and without the same seating capacity.

Since a full Enterprise service resumed in June 2016 the Class 4000 trains and Rotem trains have been used mainly on local networks North and South.

Both companies continue to review and implement reliability improvements.

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the number of Senior SmartPass holders that are registered to use Dial a Lift services, broken down by Rural Transport Fund area.

(AQW 8170/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The table below details the number of Senior SmartPass holders that are registered to use Dial a Lift services broken down by the Rural Community Transport Partnership to which those SmartPass holders are members. This table is based on figures provided by the Rural Community Transport Partnerships.

Rural Community Transport Partnership	No. of Smart Pass holders
CDM Community Transport	
CDM Community Transport	838
Out & About Community Transport	419
Down Community Transport	399
Easilink Community Transport	1,356
Fermanagh Community Transport	1,020

Rural Community Transport Partnership	No. of Smart Pass holders
Lagan Valley Rural Transport	395
North Coast Community Transport	994
South Antrim Community Transport	343
Southern Area Partnership	
Armagh Rural Transport	147
Down and Armagh Rural Transport	461
Newry & Mourne Community Transport	807
Total	7,179

Ms Armstrong asked the Minister for Infrastructure (i) whether he or his officials have had meetings with Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs representatives to discuss the continuation of the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme; (ii) to detail the dates of these meetings; and (iii) to provide copies of the minutes.

(AQW 8171/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I have not held any meetings with the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to discuss the continuation of the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme.

Any such meeting can only take place after the Executive has agreed the budget position for 2017/2018.

Officials meet to discuss the administration of the scheme not its continuation which is a policy issue for Ministers.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the planned (i) upgrades; and (ii) maintenance works for roads in East Derry in the current financial year.

(AQW 8196/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: All of the planned upgrade and maintenance works for roads in the current financial year are contained in the reports presented to the local councils twice a year. The relevant council reports for your constituency, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council; and Derry City and Strabane District Council can be found on the Department for Infrastructure website at the following links

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/annual-report-causeway-coast-and-glens-borough-council-2016>

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/annual-report-derry-city-and-strabane-district-council-2016>

Mrs Palmer asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) the expenditure relating to the installation of domestic water meters starting from the initial contract broken down for the last three financial years; and (ii) all planned future spending.

(AQW 8206/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Since NI Water's inception on 1 April 2007, until July this year when I instructed the company to pause the installation, the total costs associated with the provision and installation of water meters to new domestic properties was £1,625,877. The expenditure broken down for the last three financial years is as detailed in the table below.

Year	Meters Installed	Total Costs Incurred
2013/14	3,031	£112,639
2014/15	3,787	£147,639
2015/16	5,218	£203,502

I have now changed legislation to remove the current requirement to install domestic water meters at properties connecting to the public water supply for the first time. NI Water will not, therefore, have any future spending on the installation of domestic water meters.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Infrastructure what impact the establishment of new housing developments situated on roads that are not currently gritted has on that road's inclusion on the Transport NI winter gritting schedule.

(AQW 8223/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Department receives many requests each year for roads to be included on the salting schedule. I am sure the member will appreciate that for both financial and operational reasons it is not possible to facilitate every request. To ensure equity, all requests are subject to criteria based assessment.

In order for a road to be included in the salting schedule it shall be:

- 1 a motorway or trunk road,
- 2 a main route – i.e. a through route carrying more than 1,500 vehicles per day,
- 3 another busy route with special difficulties – i.e. a through routes carrying between 1,000 and 1,500 vehicles per day where there are special difficulties for example railway crossings, height above sea level, extent and severity of gradients etc.
- 4 a link to a small settlement containing 100 dwellings or more (via the shortest route to the salting schedule).

Account shall also be taken of the availability of alternative or parallel routes and where parallel routes are available, the routes qualifying under points 2 and 3 above need not be salted.

My Department targets its limited resources available for winter service on the busier main routes. However, if following the establishment of new housing developments on an existing road, which is not currently salted, a reassessment against the winter service policy can be undertaken to see if it warrants a change or inclusion on the salting schedule.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Infrastructure why the work for dropped kerbs earmarked for Perry Road, Bangor has not been carried out.

(AQW 8244/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department has included the provision of dropped kerbs at Perry Road, Bangor in the current programme of works for this financial year. This work has been issued to the Contractor and is due to be completed when he is next in the area.

I expect this work will be completed by the end of the current financial year.

Mr McCrossan asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether Northern Ireland Railways has plans to purchase new rail carriages.

(AQW 8249/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: In response to increasing passenger numbers and at my request NI Railways is currently developing a feasibility study and business case for a project aimed at purchasing additional new trains in order to increase the capacity of the network, particularly for peak services.

It is anticipated the business case will be submitted to the Department by March 2017 for approval.

I will need to consider the availability of the necessary funding for this project.

Ms Lockhart asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether his Department has had any discussions with the British Horse Society regarding their 'Dead Slow' campaign which aims to advise drivers how to safely pass horse riders.

(AQW 8254/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department has liaised with the British Horse Society regarding road safety on several occasions, although my officials have not had any discussions with the British Horse Society specifically regarding the 'Dead Slow' campaign.

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) researches and targets the main causation factors which contribute to road collisions and raises public awareness of the main causes of death and serious injury. The advertising itself aims to change those attitudes and behaviours which lead to death and serious injury.

Targeting drivers to adapt their behaviour helps protect both drivers themselves and other road users, including horse riders. We are continuously targeting drivers to amend their driving behaviour, encouraging them to never ever drink and drive, to pay attention and to slow down.

My Department is aware that horse riders are very much a vulnerable road user group. The safety of horse riders certainly remains a priority for DfI. An information and advice page has been developed for the nidirect website and can be accessed at the link below:

www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/motoring/road-safety/horse-safety-on-the-road.htm

Furthermore, my officials have also developed a leaflet entitled 'Horse Sense For Riders and Motorists'. This leaflet was completed with the contribution and approval of The British Horse Society and Road Safety Scotland. The leaflet can be downloaded at:

www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/motoring/road-safety/road-safety-leaflets.htm

On a regular basis, the Share the Road to Zero Facebook and Twitter pages often dedicate a week to horse rider safety for riders and motorists to make people aware of their obligations under the Highway Code. The most recent advice to drivers to take extra care around horse riders was posted during Road Safety Week 2016 at the end of November.

I am happy to say that the messages issued by my Department regarding horse rider safety are consistent with the messages in the 'Dead Slow' campaign.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the number of staff members that have been disciplined in his Department in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8268/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: There were 82 staff disciplined, under the NICS Disciplinary Procedures, in each of the last five years. The table below provides the breakdown of the number of staff disciplined in each year.

Year	Number of Staff Disciplined*
2011/12	2
2012/13	9
2013/14	26
2014/15	14
2015/16	17
2016 - December 2016	14

* The above information includes those staff employed in the transferring functions in the former Departments (Department for Regional Development, Department of Environment and Department of Agriculture and Rural Development) which were in existence prior to the restructuring of NICS Departments and the formation of the Department for Infrastructure on 9 May 2016.

Ms Mallon asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline (i) why Translink do not have toilet facilities on their Belfast to Dublin bus route; and (ii) his Department's intentions to address this.

(AQW 8281/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As outlined in my answer to AQW 7494/16-21, under the European Bus and Coach Directive 2001/85/EC there is no legal requirement to provide toilet facilities on any bus service.

Translink's policy is to provide toilets on journeys that are expected to last more than three hours and where there is no access to toilet facilities on the route i.e. at a bus station or other planned stop on the route.

As the scheduled journey time for the Belfast to Dublin service is less than three hours, no toilet facilities are currently provided.

In the event of an emergency where an individual requires toilet facilities during the bus journey, passengers can make the bus driver aware of the situation and an appropriate stop can be made on the route where toilet facilities would be available.

Bus specifications must reflect an assessment of customer requirements and value for money consideration. My Department does provide Translink with capital grants for bus replacement and, if this issue is demonstrated to be a significant concern amongst its customer base, Translink will be expected to consider it in future economic appraisals.

Mr Stalford asked the Minister for Infrastructure, in the event that his Department proceeds to cut down the remaining trees in College Park Avenue, South Belfast; (i) how many replacement trees will be planted; (ii) what species will be used; (iii) how much time will intervene between the removal of the existing trees and the planting of new trees.

(AQW 8301/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As part of the work in College Park Avenue the existing ten Sycamore trees are to be replaced with nineteen new semi-mature trees. The species of tree is still under consideration by my Department's TransportNI but will be either Silver Leaf Lime or Flowering Cherry trees. These trees will be approximately five metres in height and are more appropriate for a streetscape environment.

The works programme is being finalised with the TransportNI's Contractor. However, it is envisaged that once the trees are removed it will take approximately six weeks to reconstruct the footways and carriageway, at which time the new trees will be planted. My officials will provide regular updates on the programme to all the residents and stakeholders.

Mr Stalford asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether, before removing any more trees in College Park Avenue, South Belfast, his Department will consult individually with all households in the street, including those who are not part of any residents' group.

(AQW 8302/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department's TransportNI has been in consultation with the residents of College Park Avenue in relation to the work in College Park Avenue, Belfast and will continue to liaise with all the residents and stakeholders, including those not part of a residents group as the scheme progresses.

Mr Stalford asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) when College Park Avenue, South Belfast was adopted as a public road; and (ii) whether the existing trees in the avenue are part of the adopted road.

(AQW 8303/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The earliest records of the adoption and maintenance responsibility of College Park Avenue date back to 1930. Responsibility for the road transferred to the Department from the former Belfast Corporation during the Northern Ireland Local Government Reorganisation in May 1973. The existing trees are part of the adopted public road and therefore also the responsibility of the Department.

Mr Stalford asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether his Department has the lawful authority to cut down the existing trees in College Park Avenue, South Belfast without serving notice on the owners of the trees or the occupiers of the land in accordance with Article 50 of the Roads (NI) Order 1993.

(AQW 8304/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Article 50 of the Roads (NI) Order 1993 relates to the provision for the Department to serve notice on the owner of any tree or hedge adjoining, adjacent to, or growing on a road requiring its removal, cutting back, or remedy any other matter to which the notice relates if it is considered to be potentially dangerous. As the trees to be removed in College Park Avenue are within the public road and the responsibility of the Department, there is no requirement to serve notice.

Mr Stalford asked the Minister for Infrastructure given a report prepared for his Department stated that the scheme may increase localised flood risk, damage existing service utilities and place increased resource pressures on Transport NI maintenance systems, why his Department is proposing to carry out an experimental Sustainable Urban Drainage scheme in College Park Avenue, South Belfast.

(AQW 8305/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department is taking forward a resurfacing project in College Park Avenue that includes a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS). The components of SuDS are not experimental but are an established and accepted industry standard for sustainable drainage solutions. The Department has used SuDS solutions on many of its infrastructure projects and road schemes.

The College Park Avenue project is an innovative project that seeks to incorporate sustainable drainage solutions within existing built-up urban environment to allow stormwater run-off to be managed in a more environmental responsible and cost effective manner.

The report prepared by my Department provided an overview of the College Park Avenue project with commentary on the use of SuDS in this context. The risks that the Member has highlighted above are the disbenefits that are considered when compiling the generic risks associated with this (or any other) scheme. The identification of these is common to any infrastructure project to enable a design to be developed that will mitigate them.

As a result of this process, the scheme at College Park Avenue has been carefully designed and will include a separated drainage system to deal with stormwater run-off in a more sustainable manner. Safeguards have also been included in the design to accommodate the run-off without the use of the SuDS. This includes the retention of the road gullies and a direct drainage connection to the River Lagan, improving on the current arrangements

The Department has also undertaken a number of site surveys, consulted with statutory bodies and utility companies, and excavated trial holes in the area to ensure that existing utilities are incorporated and accommodated within the scheme.

In addition to the many environmental advantages of a scheme such as this, there is also the financial benefit derived from the removal of the stormwater from the combined sewer system eliminating unnecessary treatment costs. As with all my Department's drainage infrastructure, my officials will continue to inspect and maintain the completed project to ensure that it continues to operate as designed.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Infrastructure following the reform of local government making local council responsible for planning in their respective areas from the 01 April 2015, (i) whether any audits have been carried out on each of the local councils to date; and (ii) to outline the findings.

(AQW 8306/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department has not carried out any audits or assessments, as described in Part 10 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011, on any of the councils since 01 April 2015. The Act precludes the Department from making any assessment of a council's decision within one year immediately preceding the assessment being notified by the Department.

My Department does not hold any information on any audits councils may have carried out internally. This would be a matter for each council.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Infrastructure why Translink has dispensed with Permanent Way Inspectors.

(AQW 8314/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Translink has advised that part of a modernisation programme within the Permanent Way department has been the adoption of revised assurance processes. Whilst the Permanent Way Inspector grade has been removed as part of this

process, it has been replaced in each location by the introduction of professional Permanent Way section engineer posts who must hold specific educational qualifications.

I would also refer you to AQW 6721/16-21 and AQW 8313/16-21.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether the new signalling system on the Derry railway line meets Rail Accident Investigation Branch safety standards.

(AQW 8315/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Rail Accident Investigation Body is an investigative body and does not set railway industry standards. NI Railways is obliged to comply with European Interoperability Standards (Technical Standard for Interoperability) and has additionally adopted signalling technical design and installation standards modelled on the mainline rail industry in Britain. I can confirm that the new installation on the Coleraine to Derry Line has been built to these standards. My Department, as Rail Safety Authority, has approved the placing of the new signalling system into service.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) who commissioned the new signalling system on the Derry railway line; and (ii) from which supplier.

(AQW 8316/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Following the completion of a public procurement process, Translink (NI Railways) contracted with Babcock International Group to design, install and commission the new signalling system between Coleraine and Derry. This is one essential element in the Phase 2 Derry to Coleraine track relay.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Infrastructure how many rail services arrived late into Derry for the week beginning 21 November after the line reopened after extensive refurbishment of the track and signalling system.

(AQW 8317/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The 21 November marked the end of the blockade which enabled signalling works to be undertaken. It does not signify the end of the Phase 2 project.

64 train services operated into Derry between 21 and 27 November.

44 train services arrived late into Derry during this period.

29 of these services arrived outside the passenger charter target of 10 minutes from the timetabled arrival time and 15 services arrived within 10 minutes.

This is clearly unacceptable. I understand that there has been an improvement since that week but with particular problems on 1 and 7 December. I have asked that this is monitored closely.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Infrastructure pursuant to AQW 7702/16-21, whether (i) Protestant Street; and (ii) Connell Street, Limavady are deemed appropriate for residents' parking schemes.

(AQW 8318/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department is currently pursuing a number of residents' parking schemes which are at various stages of development. It is my Department's intention to develop further proposals when the initial batch of schemes have been implemented and evaluated. Meantime Protestant Street and Connell Street will be assessed for the provision of a resident's parking scheme.

I trust you find this reply helpful.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail any conversations that he has had with the Chief Constable or PSNI to discuss whether there are any plans to place average speed cameras on the A26 between (i) the Dunsilly Roundabout to Ballee Road Roundabout; and (ii) the Ballee Road Roundabout to the Drones Road Roundabout.

(AQW 8319/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I have had no discussions with the Chief Constable or any PSNI officers about plans to place average speed cameras on the A26 between (i) the Dunsilly Roundabout to Ballee Road Roundabout; and (ii) the Ballee Road Roundabout to the Drones Road Roundabout.

Mr Chambers asked the Minister for Infrastructure in relation to the adoption of The Point, Groomsport, whether he will instruct Transport NI to explore a potential partnership approach with Ards and North Down Borough Council, local residents, all being frontagers, along with other parties requiring access to bring this roadway up to adoption standard.

(AQW 8321/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: In accordance with the provisions of the Private Streets (NI) Order 1980 responsibility for the costs of undertaking any such work would lie with the frontagers of The Point. Extensive works would be required to be carried out to have this lane brought up to the standard for adoption and Departmental public funds cannot be used for this purpose. The

design of any work would have to be carried out privately and submitted to the Department for approval. These costs would also require to be borne by the frontagers.

The Private Streets (NI) Order also precludes my Department from making any contribution towards the cost of street works within such a private street and on this basis cannot become involved in any potential partnership with Ards and North Down Borough Council or residents.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) what is the average weekday traffic volume through Main Street, Cullybackey; and (ii) what are the figures for the period when schools are (a) starting; and (b) finishing.

(AQW 8323/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The latest traffic count to be completed on Main Street Cullybackey was carried out at the Reformed Presbyterian Church in 2013.

This survey showed:

- (1) The average two way daily workday traffic to be 12528 vehicles per day.
- (2) 1000 vehicles per hour at school starting time (08:00-09:00).
- (3) 882 vehicles per hour at school finishing time (15:00-16:00).

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Infrastructure pursuant to AQW 7401/16-21, to outline the scheduled completion date for the evaluation and assessment of the residents' parking scheme for the Rossville Street area of Derry.

(AQW 8340/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The detail of the Rossville Street Residents' Parking Scheme is presently being finalised and a formal consultation with the wider public is planned for early 2017. Following this consultation exercise the scheme to be taken forward will be finalised and a system to implement and manage the day to day running of the scheme will then be developed.

Allowing for the various stages that have to be gone through, I hope to have the scheme in operation in late 2017 and evaluation complete in 2018.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Infrastructure what future plans Transport NI has for its Bangor depot.

(AQW 8348/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department has no specific plans for the depot at Balloo Road Bangor. However, in accordance with the Executive's Asset Management Strategy (2013), a feasibility study is being undertaken to consider the opportunities or otherwise to consolidate demand for Depots and Warehouses across central Government. The feasibility study is due to be completed in 2017 which will inform future plans for these types of facilities.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether Transport NI would consider a joint road surfacing scheme with residents of The Point, Groomsport, which is currently an unadopted road.

(AQW 8350/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: In accordance with the provisions of the Private Streets (NI) Order 1980 responsibility for the costs of undertaking any such work would lie with the frontagers of The Point. Extensive works would be required to be carried out to have this lane brought up to the standard for adoption and Departmental public funds cannot be used for this purpose. The design of any work would have to be carried out privately and submitted to the Department for approval. These costs would also require to be borne by the frontagers.

The Private Streets (NI) Order also precludes my Department from making any contribution towards the cost of street works within such a private street and on this basis cannot become involved in any potential partnership with Ards and North Down Borough Council or residents.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Infrastructure how many unadopted roads are there across Northern Ireland.

(AQW 8351/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department does not maintain a record of unadopted rural lanes, alleyways and other private roads.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline what funding is available through his Department for community and voluntary organisations in East Derry.

(AQW 8360/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Within the East Derry constituency area my Department provides grant funding to community and voluntary organisations through a number of schemes. It is not, however, possible to apportion accurately the grants to a specific constituency as the grants are allocated to organisations which cover a number of areas.

Rural Transport Fund

Through the Rural Transport Fund, my Department provides grant funding to Rural Community Transport Partnerships to contribute to their costs of providing Dial-a-Lift services. Dial-a-Lift is a specialised transport scheme that provides transport links for people living in rural areas who are unable to or find it difficult to use public transport. Within the East Derry constituency area, North Coast Community Transport is currently in receipt of this grant funding.

Transport Programme for People with Disabilities

Through the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities (TPPD), grant funding is provided to Disability Action for the provision of the Disability Action Transport Scheme. This service is provided in Limavady and Coleraine within East Derry and is a transport service for people with disabilities or for those who find it difficult using mainstream public transport.

Road Safety Grant Scheme

Individuals and groups from the voluntary and community sector across the north of Ireland can apply to the Road Safety Grant Scheme which has been running in its current format since 2010.

Grants of up to £10,000 are available to develop and run local road safety promotion or outreach projects in the north of Ireland. The scheme is now closed for applications for 2016/17 financial year.

Ms Hanna asked the Minister for Infrastructure for an update on the planned pedestrian crossing at Finaghy Road South, Belfast.

(AQW 8371/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I am pleased to advise the member that TransportNI officials plan to implement two pedestrian refuge islands along Finaghy Road South before the end of the current financial year.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the signalling problems that necessitated the return of a train to Londonderry on 01 December 2016.

(AQW 8378/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: A new signalling system between Coleraine and Derry was recently activated over the weekend of 19th/20th November. Despite the testing completed pre installation, as would be expected with any new, complex installation there will be a period of bedding in while components adjust to full operational loadings.

On the morning of 1st December two faults arose, one with the barriers at Bellarena and the other a faulty track circuit indication at Castlerock.

The combination of the two faults made the operation of that morning's peak trains very difficult and it was decided to return a train to Derry in order to best ensure passenger and public safety, and to recover services back to the timetable.

I will continue to monitor the punctuality and reliability of train services on the Derry line in light of the full implementation of the Phase 2 relay, which includes the installation of a signalling system. Phase 2 is not expected to be substantially complete until the end of 2016.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Infrastructure what compensation will be available to passengers who had necessary journeys disrupted on the Londonderry to Belfast train on 1 December 2016.

(AQW 8379/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I can confirm that passengers are entitled to claim rail travel vouchers as part of the delay-repay compensation scheme. Details of the scheme can be found on the Translink website via the following link. <http://www.translink.co.uk/corporate/About-Us/Publications/Delay-Repay-Compensation-Scheme/>. Any other specific promotions or concessions will be advertised by Translink.

Ultimately the new signalling system installed as part of the phase 2 project will benefit passengers to and from Derry.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Infrastructure for an update on (i) how the new signalling installed on the Coleraine to Londonderry railway line is operating; and (ii) any problems which have interrupted passenger journeys since the line was re-opened after the new signalling was installed.

(AQW 8380/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The new signalling between Coleraine and Derry was activated over the weekend of 19/20 November. As would be expected with any new, complex installation there will be a period of bedding in whilst all components settle into working under full operation loadings and final adjustments are made.

There have been a number of system issues over the past two weeks and unfortunately some of these have led to disruption of rail services, most notably on 28 November, 1 December and 7 December.

I acknowledge that the performance issues on those dates were not satisfactory. I will continue to monitor the punctuality and reliability of train services on the Derry line in light of the full implementation of the Phase 2 relay, which includes the installation of a signalling system. Phase 2 is not expected to be substantially complete until the end of 2016.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister for Infrastructure for an update on proposals to extend park and ride provision (i) in; and (ii) beyond the Carryduff area.
(AQW 8398/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department currently has no plans to extend Park & Ride provision on the Carryduff corridor.

The Park & Ride facility at Cairnshill was provided in 2010 to serve this corridor and continues to prove very popular with commuters. The site regularly attracts over 500 cars each day and also caters for drop-offs, walk-in and cyclists.

My Department appreciates the important role of Park & Ride and Park & Share in encouraging a shift from the private car to public transport, both bus and train, and has delivered over 2,000 additional spaces in the last three years under the Strategic Park & Ride Delivery Programme. My Department is currently finalising a new Park & Ride Strategic Delivery Programme which will set out proposals to provide further additional Park & Ride and Park & Share spaces across the North.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the legal costs involved in litigation regarding the A6.
(AQW 8403/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The hearing for the Judicial Review associated with the A6 is scheduled to take place in early 2017. The detailed legal costs relating to the litigation will not be determined until that process is concluded and the court has ruled on the apportionment of cost liability between the Department and the Applicant.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure for a timeframe for the completion of the A6.
(AQW 8404/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The A6 is one of the Executive's Flagship projects. My Department is currently progressing two separate dualling projects on the A6 route; Randalstown to Castledawson and Derry to Dungiven. Both of these projects will significantly improve connectivity between Derry and Belfast and contribute to enhancing the economy of the Northwest.

In August I announced my intention to proceed with the £160m Randalstown to Castledawson dualling scheme and the making of the Vesting Order. This 14.7km scheme comprises two sections of new dual carriageway located either side of the Toome Bypass.

In September an application for Leave for a Judicial Review was received. On the 24 November 2016 the courts ruled out five of the six grounds stated in the application for the Judicial Review. A Judicial Review hearing on the one remaining ground relating to the Habitats Directive will be heard early in the new year.

While I had hoped that we would have been able to proceed immediately with this strategically important scheme, I look forward to an early date for the hearing.

All preliminary works adjacent to the environmentally sensitive, Special Protection Area, home to the Whooper Swans have been completed in accordance with our environmental commitments. Preliminary works are ongoing along the remainder of the scheme.

I am also currently working with officials to consider options for commencing construction on the unchallenged section of this project, from Randalstown to Toome, should the Judicial Review process cause significant delay.

The 30km Derry to Dungiven scheme, which includes a 5km bypass of Dungiven, is well advanced in terms of development.

Work is progressing to determine the extent of the Derry to Dungiven scheme that can be delivered within the funding allocations contained in the December 2015 Budget Statement, with priority being given to commencing construction with a bypass of Dungiven and progressing westwards towards Drumahoe.

I am fully committed to maximising the upgrading of the A6 during this mandate and I am currently engaging with officials about expediting delivery of the scheme. Subject to completing the statutory orders and confirmation of funding in the forthcoming budget, construction work on this Derry to Dungiven dualling project could commence in the latter part of 2018/19.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the amount of subsidy provided to ferry services, in each of the last three years.
(AQW 8405/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The contract period with the operator runs across financial years. The current contract runs up to the end of December 2016, with an option to extend if required.

The current contract totals £1.75m and covers the period of 30 months up to 31 December 2016. The contract total is equivalent to the level of subsidy.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure for his assessment of the future of the Magilligan to Greencastle Ferry service.
(AQW 8406/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: While I recognise the benefits that the Magilligan to Greencastle Ferry service brings to local communities and tourism in general during its summer operation my Department holds no statutory powers in relation to this ferry service. As such, it cannot have involvement in the ongoing or future operation and funding of this service.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the discussions he had with (i) the Irish Government; and (ii) Donegal County Council regarding the Magilligan to Greencastle Ferry service.
(AQW 8407/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As Minister for Infrastructure my role includes supporting and driving economic recovery. My Programme for Government Delivery Plan contains a number of projects for the north-west that will be beneficial to the economies of the north and south of Ireland.

I have regular discussions with my counterparts from the south about these projects, but to date, these discussions have not included the Magilligan to Greencastle Ferry, nor have I been approached by the Irish Government or Donegal County Council to discuss the Ferry service. This is probably due to the fact that I have no statutory powers in relation to this ferry service.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Infrastructure what was the reason for the delay to the service between Derry and Belfast on 28 November.
(AQW 8412/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Services to and from Derry were affected by two separate faults on Monday 28 November 2016.

Firstly at 06.03 there was a fault with a signal indication panel for City of Derry airport and, secondly, at 17.35 there was a track circuit failure at Lock Crossing automatic half barrier.

There have been a number of system issues over the past few weeks most notably on 28 November, 1 December and 7 December

I will continue to monitor the punctuality and reliability of train services on the Derry line in light of the full implementation of the Phase 2 relay, which includes the installation of a signalling system. Phase 2 is not expected to be substantially complete until the end of 2016.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Infrastructure when will an hourly service between Derry and Belfast be introduced.
(AQW 8413/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I have interpreted this question to refer to the possibility of introducing an hourly service on the existing rail network whereby trains from Derry go via Coleraine and other stops to Belfast. I recognise that there is currently an hourly service from Coleraine so if Derry services to Coleraine run hourly, connections can be made.

The introduction of an hourly service between Derry and Belfast is dependent upon my Department securing the necessary resource funding to subsidise Translink to enable the expansion of the service. This is currently estimated at £1.4m per annum.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline (i) what plans there are for introducing a Derry to Dublin through railway service; and (ii) when is it envisaged that this service will commence.
(AQW 8414/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I have interpreted this question to refer to the possibility of a service running on the existing rail network but outside of existing timetables.

The current Derry timetable is based on a largely clock faced format and links with other NIR local services to and from Belfast.

The ability to run a Derry to Dublin through service requires the purchase of additional rolling stock commensurate with an intercity service and then increasing the frequency of services between Derry to Belfast and Belfast to Dublin to an hourly frequency. This will require a significant increase in revenue subsidy both for NIR and Iarnród Éireann as well as new Enterprise trains.

It also needs to be agreed and be taken forward in conjunction with the Southern Authorities. I intend to do this as part of a feasibility study depending on funding

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Infrastructure why there was no special marketing or promotional events to mark the reopening of the Derry railway line.
(AQW 8415/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Although the Derry line re-opened on 21 November 2016 the Phase 2 project has not finished. As referred to previously the Phase 2 project is due to be substantially complete by the end of 2016, when both the signalling and passing loop should be complete. Translink has promoted the re-opening of the line after the blockade via

- a range of promotional fares;
- a press release issued to all appropriate media about the blockade;
- notification to all local stakeholders including the Castlerock community association;
- information communicated through passenger information posters, website and social media channels.

I expect to mark completion of the full Phase 2 relay project at a later date.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister for Infrastructure, following the completion of Phase 2 of the upgrade of the Derry railway line, when will Phase 3 (i) begin; and (ii) reach completion.

(AQW 8416/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Phase 2 of the Coleraine to Derry Track Renewals project is planned to be completed by the end of December 2016. Phase 1 was completed in 2013 along with the earlier track life extension works for the section of the line between Castlerock and Eglinton. These major works represents significant investment both in the safety of the line and the future operations of this part of the network.

The final Phase 3, to renew the track between Castlerock and Eglinton is not planned within the next budget period (2017/18 – 2020/21) but will remain in Translink's longer term infrastructure strategy.

Mr Smith asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the roads that have been (i) upgraded; and (ii) resurfaced to date in the Rowallane District Electoral Area as part of the £10 million Rural Roads Initiative.

(AQW 8424/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The following resurfacing work has been carried out in the Rowallane Area under the Rural Roads Initiative.

Schemes Completed

■ Creevyagon Road, Ballynahinch (3 stretches)	£30,000
■ Lisbane Road, Saintfield (3 stretches)	£30,000
■ Ballyaugherty Road, Saintfield	£14,500
■ Liberty Hill Saintfield (3 stretches)	£30,000
■ Glasswater Road, Crossgar	£14,200
■ Beechview Road, Crossgar (2 stretches)	£22,500

Schemes to be Completed

■ Lisdoonooan Road, Saintfield	£15,000
■ Leesans Road, Saintfield	£10,000
■ Monlough Road, Saintfield	£15,000
■ Total	£181,200

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister for Infrastructure what plans his Department has to provide testing facilities for class B taxis with retro-fitted wheelchair installations.

(AQW 8429/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Currently, the only body providing the approval test for vehicles modified after registration, including taxis with wheelchair anchorage points and restraints retrofitted, is the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA), in Great Britain.

However, I recognise the benefits of providing an approval testing service to customers in the North, particularly to the taxi industry. I have, therefore, instructed my officials to explore the possibility of providing that service here.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister for Infrastructure what concessions are in place in respect of public transport for (i) children with special needs; and (ii) their accompanying carers.

(AQW 8430/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Translink offers half fare travel for all children and young people up until the 30 June following their 16th Birthday.

In addition, the Concessionary Fares Scheme offers half fare travel to individuals who have a learning disability.

While I am sympathetic to extending the Concessionary Fares Scheme to accompanying carers, the position is that there are already numerous competing priorities for resources across my department and as such any extension to the concessionary fares scheme cannot be considered at this time.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Infrastructure given the evidence and significant stock piling of sand removed from Lough Neagh Special Protection Area without regulation, to outline the steps his Department has taken to establish whether unauthorised extraction from this Natura 2000 site has intensified following the service of enforcement notices.

(AQW 8433/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The unauthorised extraction of sand from Lough Neagh is the subject of an ongoing live enforcement case including an independent appeal and it would be inappropriate to comment further pending the outcome of these processes.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Infrastructure for an update on the resurfacing of High Street, Hollywood.

(AQW 8438/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I can advise the Member that my Department's TransportNI intends to carry out a resurfacing scheme at High Street, Holywood before the end of the current financial year. The extent of this scheme is from Church Road to Downshire Road.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Infrastructure to outline any review that has been conducted, or is planned, in respect of the worth and appropriateness of the offence of careless driving causing death.

(AQW 8472/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: As responsibility for road traffic legislation falls within the remit of the Department for Infrastructure, your question has been forwarded to me for consideration and response.

The offence of 'causing death or grievous bodily injury by careless or inconsiderate driving' is provided for and defined in Articles 12 and 12A of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The Order also makes provision for a separate offence of 'causing death or grievous bodily injury by dangerous driving'.

The Order seeks to define what constitutes 'careless' and 'dangerous' driving. Essentially, it is a question of the extent to which driving falls below the standard expected of a careful and competent driver. Driving which falls below that standard is likely to be considered careless; driving which falls far below is likely to be deemed dangerous.

I understand that PSNI crime statistics for 2015/16 record 85 offences of causing death or serious injury by careless or inconsiderate driving. The corresponding figure for 2014/15 was 71. It therefore appears that the offence is being actively applied on our roads. I have received no representations on this issue, and have no plans to review or change the offence.

Finally, you will be aware that the Minister of Justice announced in June a review of sentencing policy. The terms of reference for that review will consider, amongst other things, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the current legislative framework governing sentencing for particular categories of crime, including certain offences which cause death.

Mr McPhillips asked the Minister for Infrastructure whether he intends to cut funding for Fermanagh Community Transport.

(AQW 8486/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I fully support the services that all the Rural Community Transport Partnerships provide and recognise the important role they play in enabling individuals in rural areas to overcome barriers to social interaction and to access essential services.

However, until the Executive has agreed the budget position for 2017 – 2018 and I am made aware of my Department's budget allocation, I would not be in a position to comment on funding for any Community Transport organisation.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the number of water meters installed in East Derry since 2007.

(AQW 8509/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: NI Water does not hold information about meter installation according to geographical area or constituency boundary and is therefore not in a position to provide the requested information.

However, since NI Water's inception on 1 April 2007, until July this year when I asked the company to pause on the installation of domestic water meters, the total number of domestic water meters installed in the north of Ireland was 41,624.

Records for non-domestic meters began in 2009/10 and, up to the end of 2015/16, 4,857 meters had been installed.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Infrastructure pursuant to AQW 3104/16-21, (i) why the fare card gives fares per mile; and (ii) whether tariffs that were written to £1.60 a mile are now wrong.

(AQW 8514/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: A taxi driver is required to exhibit a fares board (card) in a position where a passenger can easily read it. This card displays approximate costs in miles, which enables the customer to easily estimate the maximum fare cost based on the distance of their journey.

Taxi operators are permitted to have their own bespoke tariffs, provided they do not exceed the maximum fare charges as stated in The Taxis (Taximeters, Devices and Maximum Fares) Regulations (NI) 2015.

Where the fares card states 'Approximately £1.60 charged for every additional mile', this is actually £1.60 for 1776 yards, which is 16 yards more than a mile. Therefore, in this particular case, if a tariff is written where £1.60 can be charged for one additional mile (1760 yards), this would clearly be in excess of the maximum fare chargeable and could not be approved.
Driver Vehicle Agency Staff

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Infrastructure pursuant to AQW 4895/16-21 and AQW 4830/16-21, whether Driver Vehicle Agency staff query suppliers for information.

(AQW 8515/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA), which is responsible for approving taxi meters and fare tariffs, does contact taximeter manufacturers and their agents.

The purpose of this contact is to ensure that both parties are clear about the processes and requirements of the approval scheme and also to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, the approval of taximeters and tariffs presented to the DVA are not unduly delayed.

On occasion, especially in relation to new taximeters, the DVA will require specific, detailed information from a manufacturer on the functionality of their meter.

Mr Smith asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail each budgetary pressure that (i) his Department; and each (ii) of its arm's-length bodies were facing at 1 December 2016.

(AQW 8566/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: Any budgetary pressures raised are for the purpose of informing the Executive's deliberations in reaching an agreed monitoring round outcome and as such this information is not disclosed. I would refer the Member to his previous question (AQW 6143/16-21) and the corresponding answer.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Infrastructure pursuant to AQW 7402/16-21, to detail all instances where traffic attendants have invoked their conflict avoidance training and withdrawn prior to the patrol being completed in 2016 to date, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 8567/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: My Department's parking enforcement service provider NSL Services Ltd (NSL) advises that it does not keep a record of patrols that were withdrawn due to actual or potential conflict situations. NSL further advises that Traffic Attendants (TAs) will invoke their conflict avoidance training almost every day. In keeping with NSL guidelines, if a conflict situation has the potential to arise, the TA would divert to another location on their beat to let tensions or crowds dissipate and then go back at a later point in the day if it is practicable to do so and time allows.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail (i) the cost of providing NI Railways with the new ticketing system to enable fare credit card payments; (ii) the difficulties being experienced by staff using it; (iii) the reliability of wi-fi on trains; (iv) the supposed battery life of each machine; and (v) the number of complaints registered with Translink regarding problems with the machines.

(AQW 8569/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I am encouraged that Translink is making progress to modernise its ticketing and payment options. The NI Railways Handheld Ticketing Project cost £1.9m which includes all equipment, software, back office systems, programming, testing, installation and training.

Difficulties with credit/debit card acceptance generally relate to mobile network communications which are outside the control of Translink. Devices are configured for real-time online authorisations to manage risk of unpaid fares. Any communications 'blackspots' on the rail network may prevent a successful transaction until the device can automatically reconnect to the mobile network.

The WiFi service on trains is monitored on a daily basis by both the supplier and Translink. Reliability of the system in November 2016 was 98.91% with nine faults detected and subsequently resolved.

The battery life of any electronic device is dependent on usage, however, performance testing of the ticket machines that:

- With a fully charged battery, over 700 paper tickets can be issued
- Or with a fully charged battery, over 400 smartcard validations can be performed.

There have been no customer complaints registered with Translink specifically regarding problems with the handheld ticket machines.

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Infrastructure how many vehicles were detected with bullbars during MOT tests in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8570/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The presence of bull bars is not recorded during a vehicle's annual MOT test.

Ms Archibald asked the Minister for Infrastructure for his assessment of the testing procedure for taxi drivers, in particular the theory test.

(AQW 8620/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: The taxi driving test was introduced on 31 October 2014. The test is in two parts; a theory test and a practical test. The theory test is also in two main parts; a multiple choice test and a hazard perception test. Both tests are taken as part of the same test event and both must be passed before a theory test certificate will be issued. The multiple choice element of the test is split into four bands with each band covering a different syllabus area. Candidates must pass each band to achieve an overall pass. This is to ensure that candidates have a good knowledge of all of the syllabus areas.

Following concerns raised by the taxi industry about the low pass rate I asked officials to review the theory test. Whilst the review is still ongoing, the theory test provider has been asked to implement the following enhancements:

- Include an English voiceover to assist candidates with reading difficulties or where English is not their first language.
- Introducing an enhanced feedback letter which will not only set out each band score, but also identify areas within each band where incorrect answers were recorded. This will assist candidates focus on particular areas of weakness in their knowledge.
- More explicit signposting to training materials in the taxi theory test appointment letter, online booking and telephone script.

The review is expected to be concluded in early 2017 at which time I will write to you about the findings.

The taxi practical test is performing as expected and no issues have been identified or raised by customers.

Mr K Buchanan asked the Minister for Infrastructure given the current levels of anti-social behaviour, for his assessment of the importance of replacing, rather than removing, damaged street lighting appliances.

(AQW 8654/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: I recognise the importance of good street lighting, and my Department always strives to replace damaged street lighting equipment rather than removing the lighting. Only in exceptional circumstances would the withdrawal of lights have to be considered.

For example, it could be necessary to remove street lighting in cases where serious or repeated vandalism results in an electrical or structural hazard which cannot be made safe by any other reasonable means. Or it could be that the cost of repeated repair of vandalised lights has become prohibitive in a particular location.

However, even in such circumstances, the withdrawal of the street lighting would normally be considered as temporary, and the situation would be reviewed periodically, with a view to restoring the lighting where possible.

Mr Robinson asked the Minister for Infrastructure to detail the reason for the delays on the Londonderry to Belfast railway line on 7 December 2016.

(AQW 8726/16-21)

Mr Hazzard: A signalling failure occurred at Bellarena halt which delayed the 07:35 service from Derry. This service was terminated and all passengers were transferred by bus to Coleraine and onwards to Belfast via the 218 Goldline service.

Furthermore, there was a signalling failure between Ballymena and Magherabeg. This resulted in the 08:19 service from Coleraine to Great Victoria Street terminating at Ballymena. Buses were dispatched immediately to ferry passengers to Antrim railway station where they continued their journey by train.

A signalling equipment fault in Derry in the evening led to the 19:10 Great Victoria Street to Derry service being operated via bus substation between Coleraine and Derry. The 21:33 Great Victoria Street to Derry service was also delayed by 33 minutes due to this issue.

I acknowledge that the performance issues on 1 and 7 December were not satisfactory and will continue to monitor the punctuality and reliability of train services between Belfast and Derry.

Mrs Barton asked the Minister for Infrastructure how many Driver and Vehicle Agency posts there were in (i) Fermanagh and South Tyrone; and (ii) West Tyrone in (a) 2007-08; and; (b) the most recent period for which figures are available.

(AQW 8818/16-21)

Mr Hazzard:

- a) The Department has no information on the number of Driver and Vehicle Agency posts in (i) Fermanagh and South Tyrone; and (ii) West Tyrone in 2007-08.
- b) At 1 December 2016 the Driver and Vehicle Agency has (i) 26 posts in Fermanagh and South Tyrone; and (ii) 24 posts in West Tyrone. The table below provides the more detail of these posts by location.

Location	DVA Office	Number of Posts
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	Enniskillen Test Centre	26
West Tyrone	Omagh Test Centre	24

In addition, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) centralised the delivery of vehicle registration and licensing services in Swansea from 21 July 2014, resulting in the closure of local motor tax offices in the north to the public. Prior to this decision by DVLA, there were two Licensing Offices in Omagh and Enniskillen with six posts and four posts respectively.

Department of Justice

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many people are currently serving life sentences for murder.
(AQW 8062/16-21)

Ms Sugden (The Minister of Justice): There are currently 138 inmates serving life sentences for Murder.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many prisoners have taken their own life while in custody in each of the last four years, broken down by prison.
(AQW 8071/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The table below provides details of how many prisoners have died while in custody in each of the last four years. The exact cause of death cannot be established until the Coroner has concluded the investigation into the death.

	Maghaberry	Magilligan	Hydebank College	Total
2013	3	0	1	4
2014	1	0	0	1
2015	2	1	0	3
2016 (to 1/12/16)	6	0	0	6
Total	12	1	1	14

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice following the recent return to custody of licenced prisoner Nathan Telford after further offending, will she conduct a review into the suitability, safety and monitoring ability of the hostel in question where it was claimed in court he was reintroduced to the drugs.

(AQW 8075/16-21)

Ms Sugden: It would not be appropriate for either myself as Justice Minister or the Probation Board for Northern Ireland to comment on individual cases. Consequently, I am unable to go into the specifics of the matter raised.

However, as outlined in my response to a previous question AQW/3010/16-21, non-approved hostels, known as direct access hostels, are run by the voluntary and community sector. The running and governance of these premises is overseen by the hostel's management committee.

As these types of hostels are already subject to inspection by Criminal Justice Inspection and oversight by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, I have no plans to conduct such a review.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline the date NIPS were first asked by the Prison Officer Association to conduct a stress risk assessment for staff at HMP Maghaberry.

(AQW 8156/16-21)

Ms Sugden: As far as Prison Service records show there has been no official request from the Prison Officer Association to conduct a stress risk assessment for staff at HMP Maghaberry. However, there was a request to apply for a staff risk assessment for the Prison Service as a whole in September 2012. An assessment was carried out in 2011/12 and it is proposed that there will be a further assessment in 2017 as part of Department of Justice compliance.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline how the legislative change allowing convicted sex offenders to apply to be removed from the sex offenders register impacts the Child Protection Disclosure Scheme and other risk assessment mechanisms.

(AQW 8158/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Discharge from statutory indefinite notification requirements does not impact on the decision to disclose conviction information, under the Child Protection Disclosure provisions in the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008, to the responsible person where it is deemed necessary to protect a particular child or particular children from serious harm caused by that person.

Discharge of notification requirements will not take place in any case where there is a risk of sexual harm which the Chief Constable considers sufficient to justify continuance of the requirements.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice whether she would consider life sentences for first degree murders that actually means life imprisonment.

(AQW 8225/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Under the Life Sentences (Northern Ireland) Order 2001, where a court passes a life sentence, a whole life order can be imposed if the court considers it appropriate.

Where the court considers that such an order is not appropriate, the court is required to set a tariff: the minimum period that must be served before the offender can be released on licence. Release is at the direction of the Parole Commissioners who must be satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public from serious harm that the offender should continue to be confined. Where a life prisoner is released, the licence will remain in force until his or her death.

The determination of the tariff is at the discretion of the independent judiciary. In making these decisions, judges are guided by sentencing guidelines which indicate starting points, and the aggravating and mitigating factors that can be taken into account in the variation upwards or downwards of the starting point to determine the appropriate tariff.

Earlier this year I announced a comprehensive review of sentencing policy. This will include a review of the legislative framework governing the determination of tariffs.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice to outline the sentence tariffs for people convicted of first degree murder.
(AQW 8226/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Under the Life Sentences (Northern Ireland) Order 2001, where a court passes a life sentence, a whole life order can be imposed if the court considers it appropriate.

Where the court considers that such an order is not appropriate, the court is required to set a tariff: the minimum period that must be served before the offender can be released on licence. Release is at the direction of the Parole Commissioners who must be satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public from serious harm that the offender should continue to be confined. Where a life prisoner is released, the licence will remain in force until his or her death.

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Earlier this year I announced a comprehensive review of sentencing policy. This will include a review of the legislative framework governing the determination of tariffs.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether she will ask the Health and Safety executive to conduct an assessment of current staffing levels in HMP Maghaberry and their impact on sustainable and safe service delivery.
(AQW 8228/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I do not believe it is necessary to ask the Health and Safety Executive to conduct an assessment.

Agreed procedures and processes, including Work Area Risk Assessments, are in place to inform decisions on staffing levels and deployment needs.

Regime Delivery Quotas specify the operational activities and Standard Operating Procedures to meet health and safety requirements in the event of staff shortages.

The Prison Governor has absolute responsibility for the deployment of staff within their establishments. The Governor or their Senior Management Team will make operational decisions on a daily basis to address on-going operational needs

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether the victim of Keith and Caroline Baker was provided with assistance and/or protection, as defined in the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.
(AQW 8229/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The investigation involving Keith and Caroline Baker dates from 2013 and as such pre-dates the legislation that was brought forward by the member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice in relation to convicted offender Nathan Telford, to outline (i) which agency was responsible for his monitoring in the community whilst on licenced release, until his most recent offending; (ii) why drug abuse issues were not identified sooner; and (iii) whether drugs testing was a mandatory requirement of licenced release, including how often were tests conducted.
(AQW 8230/16-21)

Ms Sugden: It would not be appropriate for me, as Justice Minister, to comment on individual cases. Consequently, I am unable to go into the specifics of the matter raised.

Probation Board for Northern Ireland manage offenders who are released on license. Drug testing may, in some cases, by the court, be imposed as part of a licence condition for post release prisoners.

The drug testing process follows approved monitoring guidelines to minimise the possibility that those being tested can tamper with a sample without being detected. These tests are undertaken without prior notification to the person being tested or in response to concerns that they may be under the influence of substances. This removes any opportunity for an individual to be prepared in advance to dilute a sample or provide a false sample.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline how many sex offenders have been placed by courts on the sex offenders register for life, per former court division.

(AQW 8231/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The information requested during the period 2013 to 2015 is presented by former court division in the table below.

Court Division	Year		
	2013	2014	2015
Belfast	27	19	12
Londonderry	8	9	7
Antrim	7	6	4
Fermanagh and Tyrone	7	4	5
Armagh and South Down	7	7	5
Ards	7	12	14
Craigavon	8	3	4
Total	71	60	51

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of staff members that were disciplined in his Department, broken down over the past five years.

(AQW 8267/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The table below details the number of departmental staff disciplined in each of the past five years, i.e. those who received a written warning or a final written warning or those dismissed in relation to their conduct.

YEAR	Number
2016 – Up to 30 November	6
2015	10
2014	13
2013	16
2012	19

Mr Beattie asked the Minister of Justice to outline her discussions with the First Minister regarding her meeting with HMP Maghaberry POA on 10 October and (i) whether she will instigate their recommendations in respect to (i) prisoner safety; and (ii) Prison Officer wellbeing.

(AQW 8283/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Following discussions with the First Minister and the POA, I am now considering a number of options related to prisoner safety and prison officer well-being in Maghaberry Prison.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail the total amount of money extorted, as admitted to by Gary Haggarty, including all the Offences Taken Into Consideration.

(AQW 8326/16-21)

Ms Sugden: This information is not held by my Department. The decision to take offences into consideration is one for the Public Prosecution Service. You may therefore wish to direct your question to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice given the high security status of HMP Maghaberry, to outline why there is no secure alternative entrance for staff.

(AQW 8327/16-21)

Ms Sugden: It would not be sensible to discuss measures in place to protect staff and to maintain the integrity of a high security prison.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether a specific offence exists or what action can be taken against an adult that uses (i) a child up to 10 years old; and/or (ii) a youth between 11 and 18 years old, to commit a criminal offence.

(AQW 8328/16-21)

Ms Sugden: There is no specific offence of an adult using someone under the age 18 to commit a criminal offence.

In some circumstances an offence of aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring the offence may be committed by the adult who uses a child to commit a criminal offence.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice in relation to convicted sex offenders that apply successfully to be removed from the sex offender register, to explain how the non-requirement of victims to be notified in these instances is compliant with Entitlement Point 19, and Sections 7 and 8 of the Victim's Charter.

(AQW 8329/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Victim Charter provides victims with an entitlement to be informed when an offender leaves hospital or custody, or will be supervised by the Probation Board as part of their sentence. These schemes are available if a prison sentence of six months or more is awarded, the sentence includes supervision by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland or the offender has been sent to hospital under a restriction order. The entitlement applies where a victim has decided to register with the relevant victim information scheme. This would not be affected by whether or not the offender is subject to notification requirements under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 or is engaging in restorative justice.

The Victim Charter does not deal with notification requirements, including the discharge of those notification requirements, which is governed by separate legislation.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Justice to detail the percentage of the prison population classed as paramilitaries.

(AQW 8335/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Northern Ireland Prison Service does not use the classification "paramilitary" to describe any of its prisoners.

There are a number of prisoners in the normal prison population who have been convicted of what could be perceived as terrorist offences or whose index offences are related in some way to paramilitary activity. However, because of the wide range of offences involved it would not be possible to calculate the percentage of these types of prisoner in relation to the total population.

In addition a number of prisoners have requested to be housed in separated conditions and, after meeting the criteria, are held presently in either Bush House or Roe House in Maghaberry. The total numbers of prisoners held under these conditions varies but is currently around 3% of the total prison population.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Justice to detail the ratio of prison officer to prisoner and how that compares to other regions of the United Kingdom.

(AQW 8336/16-21)

Ms Sugden: On 1 November 2016 there were 1,032 front line operational staff in post in the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS). This number includes Senior Officers, Prison Officers, Custody Prison Officers, Operational Support Grades and Night Custody Officers.

On this date there were 1,521 individuals held in custody by NIPS.

NIPS does not hold this information in relation to other regions in the United Kingdom.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Justice to detail the total saving if the average cost of keeping a person in prison was reduced to the overall average for the United Kingdom.

(AQW 8337/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The average cost of keeping a person in prison in Northern Ireland is not directly comparable with the average cost of keeping a person in prison in the United Kingdom.

The Cost Per Prisoner Place for Northern Ireland include the costs of Headquarter overheads, prisoner transport and property costs, some of which are excluded from the average costs published by England and Wales and Scotland. Each organisation calculates the average costs using a different methodology and in the absence of this information from England and Wales and Scotland it would not be appropriate to apply their average cost per prisoner place to Northern Ireland.

Each year the Northern Ireland Prison Service sets out the average cost per prisoner place for the organisation as a whole in its Annual Report and Accounts. The cost per prisoner place for 2015/16 was £57,643.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Justice for her assessment on how well Policing and Community Safety Partnerships engage with people from ethnic minority communities to work out strategies to address issues of crime and build confidence in those communities.

(AQW 8342/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Whilst advice from the PSNI indicates there has not been a rise in reported levels of hate crime across most categories, I fully acknowledge that some communities feel more vulnerable at this time when they should be feeling welcome

within our society. My Department and the Northern Ireland Policing Board provide funding to PCSPs to enable local initiatives to be developed to tackle crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

In addition to PCSPs working alongside Council Good Relations officers to address hate, I am aware that PCSPs regularly engage with people from ethnic minority communities and are taking forward a number of projects to address issues of crime and build confidence. Some examples include:

- South Belfast District PCSP have commissioned the Migrant Centre NI to supply and deliver a hate crime and fear of hate crime programme;
- Mid and East Antrim PCSP has commissioned the services of (Mid and East Antrim) Inter Ethnic Forum, which includes an objective to encourage reporting of race hate crime and incidents; and
- Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon PCSP are rolling out a "Break the Silence" campaign to support Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities around issues such as vandalism, graffiti, drugs and street drinking.

The effectiveness of these and other PCSP projects will be measured using an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) approach from 2017/18 to align with the Programme for Government and following a recommendation by the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland to develop indices to enable the assessment of the success of PCSPs.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of cases presented to youth courts, over each of the past three years.

(AQW 8347/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The number of defendants received in the Magistrates' Youth Courts in each of the last three years is presented in table below.

Number of defendants received in the Magistrates' Youth Courts: 2013 to 2015

2013	2014	2015
2,241	2,035	1,780

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Justice to outline the funding available through her Department for community and voluntary organisations in East Derry.

(AQW 8359/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Community and voluntary organisations provide a range of services to support the strategic priorities of the Department of Justice.

Records available for the most recent complete financial year, 2015/16, show that £5,812,658 was allocated to community and voluntary organisations by this Department and its agencies. It is not possible to provide details by parliamentary constituency as a number of the organisations work on a regional basis across Northern Ireland.

My Department also provides funding to Policing and Community Safety Partnerships who work with a wide range of bodies including community and voluntary organisations, some of which may be in East Londonderry.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Justice to detail the total administration cost per prisoner.

(AQW 8372/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Northern Ireland Prison Service does not hold these costs. However each year NIPS sets out the average cost per prisoner place for the organisation as a whole in its Annual Report and Accounts.

The average cost per prisoner place for 2015/16 was £57,643.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline how many (i) people were removed from the sex offender register following the change in legislation in 2014; and of these (ii) had originally been placed on same for life following conviction.

(AQW 8387/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Since the introduction of the statutory review of sex offender indefinite notification requirements on 1 March 2014, a total of 53 individuals have made an application to the Chief Constable requesting a review of their notification requirements. Of these, 39 have had their notification requirements discharged. These review provisions only apply in cases where an offender is required to notify for an indefinite period.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice how many people were convicted for using their mobile phone whilst driving since 2013.

(AQW 8394/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Offences relating to using a mobile phone whilst driving may be prosecuted under Article 56A of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The most recent three year period for which conviction information is available is 2013 – 2015 and information for convictions handed down during that period, for the offence specified, has been provided in the following table.

Convictions for using a mobile phone whilst driving, 2013 – 2015.

Year	Convictions
2013	1,034
2014	960
2015	878

Note:

- 1 Figures relate to convictions which included at least one count of the offences specified.
- 2 The figures provided relate to convictions for all classifications of the offences specified and to disposals at Magistrates' courts and Crown Court.
- 3 Figures relate to initial disposals at court: disposals as a result of appeals are not included.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice how many people have been convicted for drink driving which resulted in a fatality, since 2013.

(AQW 8395/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Offences related to driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs may be prosecuted under the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. Information in relation to convictions for drink or drugs driving offences that resulted in a fatality up to the end of 2015, the most recent year available, has been provided in the table below.

Convictions for drink or drugs driving offences which resulted in a fatality, 2013 – 2015

Year	Convictions
2013	2
2014	1
2015	1

Notes:

- 1 Figures relate to convictions which included at least one count of the offences specified.
- 2 The figures provided relate to convictions for all classifications of the offences specified.
- 3 Figures relate to initial disposals at court: disposals as a result of appeals are not included.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many people have been convicted for using their mobile phone whilst driving that resulted in a fatality, since 2013.

(AQW 8396/16-21)

Ms Sugden: There is no specific offence of causing death whilst driving using a mobile phone. Such offences would more commonly be prosecuted under generic offence descriptions such as causing death by reckless driving (the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981) or causing death or grievous bodily injury by careless driving offences (the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995).

Information regarding the circumstances of an offence is not held within Department datasets. Therefore it is not possible from information held to identify those convictions where mobile phone usage caused the offence.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many directions of no prosecution have been issued since the offence of careless driving causing death was introduced.

(AQW 8475/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The decision whether to prosecute is taken by the Public Prosecution Service (PPS). I am committed to respecting the independence of the PPS. You may therefore wish to direct your question to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister of Justice to outline why Lorraine Taylor has been banned from visiting her husband, Tony Taylor, at Maghaberry Prison.

(AQW 8497/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Ms Taylor was banned from visiting her husband following an incident during a visitation on 30th October when her behaviour was considered abusive and threatening towards staff.

NIPS policy states that staff have the right to work in an environment free from conflict and intimidation.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister of Justice to outline the rules and procedures followed by prison management in investigating allegations made by members of prison staff against persons visiting prisoners.
(AQW 8498/16-21)

Ms Sugden: All incidents are investigated appropriately, whether reported by prisoners, visitors or staff. All available resources, such as witness testimonies and CCTV footage are used to assist in establishing the facts and enable an appropriate response. Where any incident results in visiting restrictions being imposed, the visitor concerned will be allowed the opportunity to provide a written response.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister of Justice to outline (i) the investigation carried out; and (ii) by whom, regarding an incident at Maghaberry prison on October 30 2016 prior to a decision being made that Lorraine Taylor should be barred until December 12 2016 from visiting her husband, Tony Taylor, in the prison.
(AQW 8499/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Northern Ireland Prison Service has a process in place to consider those incidents that may meet the threshold for a temporary ban on visiting.

Ms Taylor was contacted in writing on 30 October. The letter explained that she was subject to a temporary suspension of visiting. The letter further explained that she should make any representations in writing, in order that the Governor could consider these when making his decision whether to impose a visiting ban.

During consideration for such a ban all aspects of the incident are examined. There were no concerns as to the conduct of any staff member.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister of Justice to outline why Lorraine Taylor was not asked for her account of the incident at Maghaberry prison on October 30 2016 before a decision was made to bar her until December 12 2016 from visiting her husband, Tony Taylor, in the prison on account of her alleged role in the incident.
(AQW 8500/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Northern Ireland Prison Service has a process in place to consider those incidents that may meet the threshold for a temporary ban on visiting.

Ms Taylor was contacted in writing on 30 October. The letter explained that she was subject to a temporary suspension of visiting. The letter further explained that she should make any representations in writing, in order that the Governor could consider these when making his decision whether to impose a visiting ban.

During consideration for such a ban all aspects of the incident are examined. There were no concerns as to the conduct of any staff member.

Mr E McCann asked the Minister of Justice whether an investigation was carried out into the role and behaviour of a member of Maghaberry prison staff in the incident on October 30 2016 which led to Lorraine Taylor being barred until December 12 2016 from visiting her husband, Tony Taylor, in the prison.
(AQW 8501/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The Northern Ireland Prison Service has a process in place to consider those incidents that may meet the threshold for a temporary ban on visiting.

Ms Taylor was contacted in writing on 30 October. The letter explained that she was subject to a temporary suspension of visiting. The letter further explained that she should make any representations in writing, in order that the Governor could consider these when making his decision whether to impose a visiting ban.

During consideration for such a ban all aspects of the incident are examined. There were no concerns as to the conduct of any staff member.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice pursuant to AQW 467/16-21 and AQW 1055/16-21, to outline the discussions she or her Department held with the Lord Chief Justice to ensure preliminary investigations are ordered to be heard as the court and/or judge directs, and only after their ruling on same is required.
(AQW 8502/16-21)

Ms Sugden: The provisions of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2015, including those relating to committal, were discussed with the Office of the Lord Chief Justice and the wider criminal justice family. As indicated in the response to AQW 467/16-21 the reforms to the committal process in the Act have not yet been commenced and preliminary investigations currently proceed in line with existing arrangements and judicial direction.

Mr Mullan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of individuals convicted for shoplifting in each of the last five years.
(AQW 8507/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Offences related to shoplifting and other thefts may be prosecuted under Article 1 of the Theft Act (Northern Ireland) 1969. However, there is no specific offence description relating to shoplifting and details of the circumstances of an offence are not recorded on Departmental convictions datasets.

Shoplifting offences are recorded as theft offences, for which there are over 2,000 convictions each year. To identify specific shoplifting offences from these would require a manual trawl of court records, which, given the numbers of cases involved, would incur a disproportionate cost. Therefore, it has not been possible to provide the information requested.

Ms Bradshaw asked the Minister of Justice for her assessment of the signatures on the public petition (i) Campaign for Abortion Law Reform in Northern Ireland introduced to the Assembly on 22 November 2016; and (ii) Promotion of the Protection of Unborn Children in Northern Ireland introduced on 28 November 2016.

(AQW 8583/16-21)

Ms Sugden: On 23 November I received from the Speaker a petition collected by Amnesty International UK that had been presented, by Clare Bailey, to the Assembly on 22 November. The petition consisted of 45,000 electronic signatures. I understand from Amnesty that the petition was collected online via the Amnesty International UK website, between January and October 2016, and was signed by people from across the UK, including from Northern Ireland.

On 28 November I received from the Speaker material in relation to a petition collected by Precious Life that had been presented, by Jim Wells, to the Assembly on 28 November. In his speech to the Assembly Mr Wells described it as 'the largest petition ever received by the Northern Ireland Assembly. It has 300,000 signatures, not 45,000, calling for the protection of the unborn child in Northern Ireland. It has been signed by Northern Ireland residents who have given their address so that where they live can be verified. Therefore, I believe this petition is indeed authentic.'

What I received on 28 November consisted of 47 boxes containing multiple petitions dating from 2001/02 to 2014. In all there were nine separate campaigns identified by my officials, relating to subjects such as, in 2001/02, ensuring that the human rights of unborn children are protected in proposals from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on a new Bill of Rights; plans by a 'group of pro-abortion MPS' to change the law on abortion in Northern Ireland in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, due for debate in the House of Commons in February/March 2008; and opposition, in 2012, to Marie Stopes International opening a clinic in Northern Ireland.

There was no petition relating to termination of pregnancy for fatal fetal abnormality and no petition dated after September 2014.

There were also addresses identified in the material provided which were not in Northern Ireland.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many prosecutions were made relating to perverting the course of justice; and of these, how many related to family type matters as opposed to other matters, in the past three years.

(AQW 8584/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Offences related to perverting the course of justice may be prosecuted under Common Law. Information on the numbers of prosecutions resolved at courts for such offences, in the years 2013 – 2015, the most recent time period for which information is available, has been provided.

However, Departmental prosecutions datasets do not contain details of the circumstances of an offence or of the relationship between those involved. To identify cases which related to family type matters would require a manual trawl of court records, which, given the numbers of cases involved, would incur a disproportionate cost. Therefore, only information requested in relation to the initial part of the question has been provided.

Prosecutions and Convictions for perverting the course of justice offences, 2013 – 2015

	2013	2014	2015
Prosecutions	69	59	41
Convictions	47	33	15

Note:

- 1 Figures relate to cases which included at least one count of the offences specified.
- 2 The figures provided relate to prosecutions and convictions for all classifications of the offences specified.
- 3 Figures relate to initial disposals at court: disposals as a result of appeals are not included.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether the individual of the most recent death in HMP Maghaberry was (i) considered vulnerable; and (ii) subject to a Supporting Prisoner at Risk Scheme, at the time of his death.

(AQW 8591/16-21)

Ms Sugden: As the support which was received by Mr McCarthy will form part of the independent investigation by the Prisoner Ombudsman, it would be inappropriate to provide the details requested.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice whether she or her Department has had discussions with the PSNI regarding plans to remove the Criminal Investigation Department from Bangor Police Station.

(AQW 8706/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I have regular discussions with the Chief Constable on a range of strategic issues. However, the specific issue raised here, the potential removal of the Criminal Investigation Department from Bangor Police Station, is an operational matter and has not, therefore, been discussed. You may wish to contact the PSNI directly.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice pursuant to AQW 6702/16-21, whether she will hold discussions with the Lord Chief Justice to ensure defendants seeking anonymity in court cases due to suicidal ideation are appropriately protected under mental health legislation, as would be required in any other non-court instance of suicidal ideation.

(AQW 8741/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Those within the criminal justice system who are known to be at risk from suicide require timely access to appropriate protections under mental health legislation. The Minister of Health has responsibility for this provision. However, I am committed to prioritising mental health issues within this mandate and have already engaged with the Health Minister on the subject. Separately I plan to engage with the Lord Chief Justice on mental health issues pertaining to parties in judicial proceedings. The decision to grant an Anonymity Order is a matter for the judiciary based upon the information presented to the court.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether dip-testing used in NIPS facilities can detect prescription medication.

(AQW 8814/16-21)

Ms Sugden: Prescription medication can be detected by the normal method of drug testing carried out in all Northern Ireland Prison Service establishments.

Mr Ford asked the Minister of Justice to detail the services that will be reduced as a result of the decision to not proceed with the rationalisation of the court estate.

(AQW 8865/16-21)

Ms Sugden: No court services have been reduced as a result of the decision to not proceed with the rationalisation of the court estate. NICTS continue to maintain a high standard of services for court users across the court estate. Budgetary pressures continue to be appraised as do options to deliver savings going forward.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) to provide or place a copy of the NIPS Crisis Intervention Policy for HMP Maghaberry, and the referral criteria for same, in the Assembly library; and (ii) whether these are to be deployed in all NIPS facilities.

(AQW 8939/16-21)

Ms Sugden: I have been advised by my officials that there is no policy known as the NIPS Crisis Intervention Policy within the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) how it is decided whether a case will be heard in the Magistrates' Court or the Crown Court; and (ii) whether it is possible to later change these decisions.

(AQW 8996/16-21)

Ms Sugden: In criminal proceedings the mode of trial is determined by the way the offence is classified. A person charged with a summary offence which carries a maximum penalty of six months' imprisonment or less may only be tried by a magistrates' court. A person charged with a summary offence which carries a sentence of more than six months' imprisonment may, however, (subject to certain exceptions) claim a right to be tried on indictment in the Crown Court for that offence. The choice is that of the accused and must be made before a plea is entered.

Some statutes provide for offences to be tried either summarily or on indictment. These are known as "hybrid" offences and, as a general rule, it is for the prosecution to decide how to proceed. If the prosecution opts to proceed summarily, the defendant may claim a right to be tried in the Crown Court if the penalty, on summary conviction, would be greater than six months' imprisonment.

Certain indictable offences are triable summarily with the consent of the court, the prosecution and the accused. In such cases, the accused must be given at least 24 hours' notice of his right to be tried on indictment. Finally, offences which are

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr Robinson asked the Assembly Commission to outline the action it has taken to ensure Members can employ an additional staff member in the case of a permanent staff member being on sick leave.

(AQW 8224/16-21)

Mr Dickson (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2016, issued by the Independent Financial Review Panel (IFRP) in March 2016 defines the amounts of financial support available to Members in carrying out their Assembly functions and establishes the criteria for claiming such support.

Under the provisions of Part 4 of the Determination, Members may recover the costs of employing staff. Paragraph 33 of the Determination states that Members may claim the “necessary costs of replacement employees to cover employees on long-term sick leave.” Therefore, the provision of financial support for Members to engage replacement staff when an employee is ill is included within the Determination issued by IFRP.

The role of the Assembly Commission is to administer the Determination. This administrative role includes the provision of advice to Members on how they may make claims under the terms of the Determination. The Commission has published a “Recruitment Guidance: Members’ Support Staff” document which was issued to all Members. This document provides best practice guidance to Members when recruiting staff. Recruitment and employment of support staff, whether permanent or temporary to cover periods of absence, is a matter for each Member. The Commission has no role in this process.

Ms Bailey asked the Assembly Commission pursuant to AQO 807/16-21, to outline the rationale behind the statement that it is unlawful to reserve a quota of jobs for members of a particular under-represented or disadvantaged group.

(AQW 8259/16-21)

Mr Wells (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): Mr Gerry Kelly MLA (AQO 807/16-21) asked the Assembly Commission “for an update on the current Gender Action Plan.” The issue of quotas arose during supplementary questions to this AQO.

The Gender Action Plan sets out actions and measures to promote gender equality within the Assembly Secretariat. The action plan was developed by the Gender Action Plan Working Group which comprised members of staff from across the Secretariat. The Group considered the issue of quotas during discussions on developing guidance for Heads of Business and Directors with regard to staff representation on internal working groups. The Group therefore sought confirmation from the Equality Commission on its position regarding the use of quotas in the appointment of internal decision-making groups.

In its response, the Equality Commission outlined the difference between lawful positive action and unlawful positive action, stating that:

“..... for employers generally, Articles 48 and 49 of the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 set out the conditions for positive action. Under these provisions employers are allowed to encourage persons of a particular sex to apply for jobs if few or no people of that sex have done that type of work in the previous twelve months. Positive action encouragement can take a number of forms, including positive action advertising. Under these provision employers may provide single-sex training in circumstances where that sex is under-represented in particular work or has been in the past twelve months. Positive action training may also be provided to people where they have been engaged in discharging domestic or family responsibilities to the exclusion of full-time employment for a period of time. The purpose of positive action training is to provide members of the under-represented group with the skills and abilities to enable them to compete for job vacancies on an equal basis. Examples of positive action training include management skills and engineering training courses for women as these are areas which women are under-represented.

Importantly, the provision for positive action encouragement does not allow an employer to treat a job application from a woman more favourably than one for a man. The exception to the principle of equal treatment only applies to special training provisions and encouragement to apply for a job and not at the point of selection for that job. The merit principle should always be applied at that point. It would therefore be unlawful for the Assembly Secretariat to reserve a quota of jobs for the appointment of women to jobs.”

This view accorded with the Group’s understanding that, in terms of recruitment, it would be unlawful to reserve a quota of jobs for members of particular under-represented or disadvantaged groups if those groups are defined by reference to sex, religion, community background, race or sexual orientation.

Specifically, in relation to quotas the Equality Commission stated that:

“In terms of the appointment of staff to internal to internal decision- making groups, it would appear to us that it would be unlawful to reserve a quota of positions for members of one sex or the other unless the conditions set out in Articles 48 and 49 of the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 are met.”

The Gender Action Plan can be found on the Assembly’s intranet, AsslSt. The Group’s consideration of quotas is outlined at page 31: <http://assist.assemblyni.gov.uk/services/commission/equality/genderequality.htm>

With regard to external recruitment, all job advertisements issued by the Assembly Commission include a clear statement that the Commission is committed to equality of opportunity in employment and that all applications for employment will be considered on the basis of merit. Before advertising a post, the Human Resources Office will consider the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Code for the post and whether a welcome statement is required in the advertisement. Welcome statements have been included in a number of competitions where there have been under-represented groups in terms of gender or community background.

Each recruitment selection panel will be balanced in terms of gender (and community background) and all selection panel members will be trained in criterion based interviewing which includes training on equality legislation and best practice.

Mrs Barton asked the Assembly Commission whether there are any plans to introduce a Youth Assembly, similar to the UK Youth Parliament.

(AQW 8292/16-21)

Mr Maskey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): In 2010 a Youth Panel of thirty 16 to 18 year olds was recruited to develop proposals for a Youth Assembly. Following a year of research and consultation the Youth Panel presented its proposals to the Assembly Commission. To date, funds have not been available to implement these proposals.

Nonetheless the Assembly Commission remains committed to engaging with young people. The Education Service continues to work with schools and the youth sector to increase young people's understanding of the work of the Assembly and to encourage engagement in the democratic process.

The Assembly Commission's Engagement Strategy 2015-16 included a commitment to "build partnerships with relevant stakeholders to create and improve engagement opportunities with citizens and under-represented groups". To this end the Education Service collaborated with the Northern Ireland Youth Forum to organise a debate involving 100 young people, which was held in the Assembly Chamber on 25th November 2015 and chaired by the then Speaker.

The Education Service also works closely with Assembly Committees at every opportunity to consult with young people about inquiry issues and legislation. For example the Education Service is currently working alongside the Education Committee to gather the opinions of young people on the subject of the upcoming Departmental "Children and young people's strategy" and the Committee's inquiry into educational underachievement.

The Assembly Commission is committed to "building partnerships with relevant stakeholders to create and improve engagement opportunities with citizens and under-represented groups". The Assembly Commission will consider all options to engage with young people including a Youth Assembly in 2017.

Revised Written Answers

This section contains the revised written answers to questions tabled by Members.

The content of the responses is as received at the time from the relevant Minister or representative of the Assembly Commission, and it has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process or changed.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 16 December 2016

Revised Written Answer

Department for the Economy

In this Bound Volume, page WA 174, replace the answer given for AQW 6145/16-21 with:

Mr Smith asked the Minister for the Economy to detail each budgetary pressure in his Department and its arm's-length bodies; and which of these pressures were raised with officials from the Department of Finance in advance of the October monitoring round.

(AQW 6145/16-21)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister for the Economy): My Department and its Arm's Length Bodies have managed emerging budget pressures from within existing resources, including partially managing a resource pressure in relation to commitments under the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme.

Journal of Proceedings

Minutes of Proceedings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 5 December 2016

The Assembly met at noon, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Prayers

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Speaker's Business

2.1 Committee Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson Nominations

The Speaker informed the House that he had received the resignation of both Ms Linda Dillon as Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, and Ms Caoimhe Archibald as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. The Speaker also informed the House that the nominating officer of Sinn Féin, Mr Pat Doherty, had nominated Ms Caoimhe Archibald to fill the vacancy of Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and Mr Oliver McMullan to fill the vacancy of Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, with effect from 2 December 2016, and confirmed the appointments.

3. Assembly Business

3.1 Motion: Committee Membership

That Mr Steven Agnew be appointed as a member of the Business Committee.

*Mr T Clarke
Ms C Ní Chuilín
Mr R Swann
Mr A Attwood
Mr S Dickson*

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

4. Executive Committee Business

4.1 Motion: Draft Water Meters Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

Proposed:

That the draft Water Meters Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister for Infrastructure

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** (Division 1).

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Ms Ruane) took the Chair.

4.2 Motion: Pensions (2015 Act) (Consequential Amendments) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016**Proposed:**

That the Pensions (2015 Act) (Consequential Amendments) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister for Communities

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

5. Private Members' Business

5.1 Motion: International Human Rights Day**Proposed:**

That this Assembly acknowledges international Human Rights Day; notes the United Nations' comments that more should be done to raise awareness of human rights and the need to improve education about human rights; and calls on all Government Departments and public bodies to introduce human rights action plans.

Mr S Lynch

Mr P McGuigan

Mr C Boylan

5.2 Motion: Amendment 1**Proposed:**

Leave out all after the third 'rights;' and insert:

'calls on the Executive to move immediately to ensure compliance with all minimum human rights standards; and further calls on all Government Departments and public bodies to introduce human rights action plans.'

Mr S Agnew

Ms C Bailey

5.3 Motion: Amendment 2**Proposed:**

Insert after the third 'rights;':

'notes the requirement in the Good Friday Agreement of the incorporation into Northern Ireland law of the European Convention on Human Rights and the subsequent passage of the Human Rights Act; believes that the Human Rights Act 1998 is important for the protection of the rights of the people in Northern Ireland and an obligation further to the Good Friday Agreement;'

Mr A Attwood

Ms C Hanna

Mr R McPhillips

Debate ensued.

The debate was suspended for Question Time.

The Speaker took the Chair.

6. Question Time

6.1 Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Miss Michelle McIlveen.

6.2 Communities

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Communities, Mr Paul Givan.

7. Private Members' Business (cont'd)

7.1 Motion: International Human Rights Day (cont'd)

Debate resumed.

The Question being put, Amendment 1 was **made** (Division 2).

The Question being put, the motion, as amended, was **carried** (Division 3).

7.2 Motion: Regulatory Reform and a Regionally Balanced Economy

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the draft Programme for Government's commitment to a strong, competitive, regionally balanced, economy; recognises the importance of regulatory reform in achieving this outcome; and calls on the Minister for the Economy to ensure that regulation for business in Northern Ireland is proportionate, effective and not unnecessarily burdensome on, or a hindrance to, economic growth and development.'

Mr M Storey

Mr T Buchanan

Mr G Lyons

Mr G Dunne

The Motion was not moved.

8. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 4.06pm.

Mr Robin Newton

The Speaker

5 December 2016

Northern Ireland Assembly

5 December 2016

Division 1

Motion: Draft Water Meters Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

Proposed:

That the draft Water Meters Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister for Infrastructure

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 79

Noes: 9

AYES

Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Ms Archibald, Mr Attwood, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Ms S Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mr Butler, Mrs Cameron, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Clarke, Ms Dillon, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Ms Gildernew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr McAleer, Mr E McCann, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Miss McIlveen, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Mr McQuillan, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Mullan, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Poots, Mr Ross, Ms Ruane, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Stalford, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Ms Armstrong, Ms Bailey, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Dickson, Mr Ford, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle.

Tellers for the Noes: Ms Bradshaw, Mr Dickson.

The motion was **carried**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

5 December 2016

Division 2

Motion: International Human Rights Day (Amendment 1)

Proposed:

Leave out all after the third 'rights;' and insert:

'calls on the Executive to move immediately to ensure compliance with all minimum human rights standards; and further calls on all Government Departments and public bodies to introduce human rights action plans.'

Mr S Agnew

Ms C Bailey

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 57

Noes: 34

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Ms Archibald, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Ms Dillon, Mrs Dobson, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Gildernew, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr E McCann, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Mr McKee, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Mullan, Mr Murphy, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs Overend, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Agnew, Ms Bailey.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lyons, Mr McCausland, Miss McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan, Mr Robinson.

Amendment 1 was **made**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

5 December 2016

Division 3

Motion: International Human Rights Day (as amended)

Proposed:

That this Assembly acknowledges international Human Rights Day; notes the United Nations' comments that more should be done to raise awareness of human rights and the need to improve education about human rights; calls on the Executive to move immediately to ensure compliance with all minimum human rights standards; and further calls on all Government Departments and public bodies to introduce human rights action plans.

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 58

Noes: 34

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Ms Archibald, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Ms Dillon, Mrs Dobson, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Gildernew, Ms Hanna, Mr Hazzard, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr E McCann, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCrossan, Mr McElduff, Mr McGrath, Mr McGuigan, Mr McKee, Mr McMullan, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Mullan, Mr Murphy, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs Overend, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Boylan, Mr Lynch.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lyons, Mr McCausland, Miss McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan, Mr Robinson.

The motion, as amended, was **carried**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 30 November 2016 – 5 December 2016

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
3. Orders in Council
4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules

SR 2016/408 The Rathlin Island (Prohibited Methods of Fishing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DAERA).

SR 2016/413 The Police Service of Northern Ireland (Promotion) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DoJ).

SR 2016/414 The Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfI).

SR 2016/419 The State Pension Revaluation for Transitional Pensions Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfC).

7. Written Ministerial Statements

Review of Winter Flooding 2015/16 (DfI).

Fresh Start 2016 (DoF).

8. Consultation Documents

Consultation on changes to packaging recycling business targets for paper, steel, aluminium, wood and overall recovery and recycling for 2018-20 (DAERA).

9. Departmental Publications

Financial Auditing and Reporting: General Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland – 2016 (NIAO).

Cycling and Walking to/from Work in Northern Ireland 2015/2016 (DfI).

10. Agency Publications

11. Westminster Publications

12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 6 December 2016

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Principal Deputy Speaker (Ms Ruane) in the Chair.

1. Prayers

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Executive Committee Business

2.1 Motion: Draft Food Hygiene Rating (Fee and Fixed Penalty Amount) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Proposed:

That the draft Food Hygiene Rating (Fee and Fixed Penalty Amount) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.

Minister of Health

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

3. Private Members' Business

3.1 First Stage: Abortion (Fatal Foetal Abnormality) Bill (NIA Bill 03/16-21)

Mr David Ford introduced a Bill to make provision to decriminalise medical termination of a pregnancy in those circumstances where the foetus is diagnosed with a fatal abnormality.

The Abortion (Fatal Foetal Abnormality) Bill (NIA Bill 03/16-21) passed First Stage and ordered to be printed.

3.2 Motion: Social Investment Fund

Proposed:

That this Assembly recognises the deep public concern regarding the formation, implementation and operation of the Social Investment Fund; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to commission an independent review of the operation of the entire Social Investment Fund process, taking particular account of the role of lead partners in this process and the impact that this role has had on good governance.

*Mrs N Long
Dr S Farry
Mr S Dickson
Mr D Ford*

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion **fell** (Division 1).

3.3 Motion: Covenant Reference Group

Proposed:

That this Assembly recognises the need to deliver for the veterans' community in Northern Ireland; and calls on the Executive to nominate a Northern Ireland representative to the UK-wide Armed Forces Covenant Reference Group, who will be responsible for ensuring that the Executive is kept updated of issues relating to the veterans' community in Northern Ireland.

Mr D Beattie [R]

Mr A Allen [R]

Mr S Aiken [R]

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr McGlone) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** (Division 2).

The sitting was suspended at 1.47pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Speaker in the Chair.

4. Question Time

4.1 Economy

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for the Economy, Mr Simon Hamilton.

4.2 Education

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Education, Mr Peter Weir.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Kennedy) took the Chair.

5. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

Mr Philip McGuigan spoke to his topic regarding the Proposed Closure of Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.34pm.

Mr Robin Newton

The Speaker

6 December 2016

Northern Ireland Assembly

6 December 2016

Division 1

Motion: Social Investment Fund

Proposed:

That this Assembly recognises the deep public concern regarding the formation, implementation and operation of the Social Investment Fund; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to commission an independent review of the operation of the entire Social Investment Fund process, taking particular account of the role of lead partners in this process and the impact that this role has had on good governance.

*Mrs N Long
Dr S Farry
Mr S Dickson
Mr D Ford*

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 38

Noes: 53

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Ms Armstrong, Mr Attwood, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Ms S Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Butler, Mr Carroll, Mr Chambers, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Eastwood, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Hanna, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann, Mr McCrossan, Mr McGlone, Mr McGrath, Mr McKee, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Mullan, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Smith, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Dickson, Mr Lunn.

NOES

Mr Anderson, Ms Archibald, Mr Bell, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Ms Gildernew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kelly, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyons, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCausland, Mr McElduff, Mr McGuigan, Miss McIlveen, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr Maskey, Mr Middleton, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Murphy, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Poots, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Ms Seeley, Mr Sheehan, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McGuigan, Mr Robinson.

The motion **fell**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

6 December 2016

Division 2

Motion: Covenant Reference Group

Proposed:

That this Assembly recognises the need to deliver for the veterans' community in Northern Ireland; and calls on the Executive to nominate a Northern Ireland representative to the UK-wide Armed Forces Covenant Reference Group, who will be responsible for ensuring that the Executive is kept updated of issues relating to the veterans' community in Northern Ireland.

Mr D Beattie [R]

Mr A Allen [R]

Mr S Aiken [R]

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 58

Noes: 20

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Ms Armstrong, Ms Bailey, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Ms Bradshaw, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mr Butler, Mrs Cameron, Mr Chambers, Mr Clarke, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyons, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCausland, Miss McIlveen, Mr McKee, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Smith, Mr Stafford, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Aiken, Mr Beattie.

NOES

Ms Archibald, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms Dillon, Ms Gildernew, Mr Kearney, Mr Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McElduff, Mr McGuigan, Mr McMullan, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Murphy, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Ms Archibald, Ms Dillon.

The motion was **carried**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 6 December 2016

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
Abortion (Fatal Foetal Abnormality) Bill (NIA Bill 03/16-21)
3. Orders in Council
4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly
19th Report of the Financial Reporting Advisory Board for the period April 2015 to March 2016 (DoF).
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules
SR 2016/420 The Railways Infrastructure (Access, Management and Licensing of Railway Undertakings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfI).
7. Written Ministerial Statements
Introduction of Universal Credit in Northern Ireland (DfC).
8. Consultation Documents
9. Departmental Publications
Greater Clarendon (Sailortown) Masterplan Report (DfC).
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly Legislation:

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills

First Stage: Introduction of Bill.

Second Stage: General debate of the Bill with an opportunity for Members to vote on its general principles.

Committee Stage (Comm. Stage): Detailed investigation by a Committee which concludes with the publication of a report for consideration by the Assembly.

Consideration Stage (CS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, the details of the Bill including amendments proposed to the Bill.

Further Consideration Stage (FCS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, further amendments to the Bill.

Final Stage: Passing or rejecting of Bill by the Assembly, without further amendment.

Royal Assent.

Proceedings as at 6 December 2016

2016-2021 Mandate

Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Budget (No.2) Bill 1/16-21	13.06.16	14.06.16	/	/	20.06.16	21.06.16	27.06.16	29.07.16
Assembly Members (Reduction of Numbers) Bill 76/11-16	12/01/16	25/01/16	/	/	02.02.16	16.02.16	23.02.16	22.07.16
Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill 2/16-21	19/09/16	27/09/16	23/02/17					

2016-2021 Mandate

Non-Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Abortion (Fatal Foetal Abnormality) Bill 3/16-21	06/12/16							

/ Bills progressing by accelerated passage

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 19 December 2016

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Prayers

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Speaker's Business

2.1 Member Resignation

The Speaker informed Members that Ms Jennifer McCann resigned as a Member of the Assembly with effect from 6 December 2016. The Speaker advised that the Speaker's Office had notified the Chief Electoral Officer, in accordance with section 35 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

2.2 New Member

The Speaker informed Members that he had been notified by the Chief Electoral Officer that Ms Órlaithí Flynn had been returned as a Member of the Assembly for the West Belfast constituency to fill the vacancy that resulted from the resignation of Ms Jennifer McCann.

Ms Flynn signed the undertaking, as provided for in the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Act 2016, and the Roll of Membership on 7 December 2016 in the presence of the Speaker and the Clerk to the Assembly. The Speaker confirmed that Ms Flynn had signed the undertaking and then the Roll and had entered her designation of identity.

The sitting was suspended at 10.36am.

The sitting resumed at 11.03am, with the Speaker in the Chair.

3. Executive Committee Business

3.1 Statement: The Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme

The First Minister, the Rt. Hon Arlene Foster, made a statement regarding the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme, following which she replied to questions.

The sitting was suspended at 12.07pm.

The sitting resumed at 1.00pm, with the Speaker in the Chair.

4. Assembly Business

4.1 Motion: Exclusion of Minister from Office under Section 30 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Proposed:

That this Assembly, in accordance with section 30 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, resolves that the First Minister no longer enjoys the confidence of the Assembly and that she be excluded from holding office as a Minister or junior Minister for a period of six months because of her failure to observe the terms of paragraph (g) of the Pledge of Office and the first paragraph of the Ministerial Code of Conduct, in that she failed to observe the highest standards of propriety and regularity in relation to the stewardship of public funds surrounding the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme.

Mr C Eastwood

Mr M Nesbitt

Mrs N Long

Mr S Agnew

Debate ensued.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Ms Ruane) took the Chair.

The Speaker took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **negatived** on a cross-community vote. (Division).

5. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 4.16pm.

Mr Robin Newton

The Speaker

19 December 2016

Northern Ireland Assembly

19 December 2016

Division 1

Motion: Exclusion of Minister from Office under Section 30 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Proposed:

That this Assembly, in accordance with section 30 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, resolves that the First Minister no longer enjoys the confidence of the Assembly and that she be excluded from holding office as a Minister or junior Minister for a period of six months because of her failure to observe the terms of paragraph (g) of the Pledge of Office and the first paragraph of the Ministerial Code of Conduct, in that she failed to observe the highest standards of propriety and regularity in relation to the stewardship of public funds surrounding the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme.

Mr C Eastwood

Mr M Nesbitt

Mrs N Long

Mr S Agnew

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 39

Noes: 36

AYES

Nationalist

Mr Attwood, Ms S Bradley, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Hanna, Mr McCrossan, Mr McGlone, Mr McGrath, Mr McNulty, Mr McPhillips, Ms Mallon, Mr Mullan.

Unionist

Mr Aiken, Mr Allen, Mr Allister, Mrs Barton, Mr Beattie, Mr Beggs, Mr Chambers, Mrs Dobson, Mr Hussey, Mr Kennedy, Mr McKee, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mrs Palmer, Mr Smith.

Other

Mr Agnew, Ms Armstrong, Ms Bailey, Ms Bradshaw, Mr Carroll, Mr Dickson, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr E McCann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Aiken, Mr McNulty.

NOES

Unionist

Mr Anderson, Mr M Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Ms Bunting, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs Little Pengelly, Ms Lockhart, Mr Logan, Mr Lyons, Mr McCausland, Miss McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Poots, Mr Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Stalford, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Weir, Mr Wells

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan, Mr Robinson.

Total Votes	75	Total Ayes	39	[52.0%]
Nationalist Votes	12	Nationalist Ayes	12	[100.0%]
Unionist Votes	51	Unionist Ayes	15	[29.4%]
Other Votes	12	Other Ayes	12	[100.0%]

The motion was **negatived** by cross-community vote.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly between 7 – 19 December 2016

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
3. Orders in Council
4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Safefood Annual Report 2015 (DoH).

Coronial Processes: An inspection of the arrangements in place in the Police Service of Northern Ireland to manage and disclose information in support of the Coronial process in Northern Ireland (DoJ).

Report on the British Wool Marketing Board Agricultural Marketing Scheme 2014-15 (DAERA).

Report on the British Wool Marketing Board Agricultural Marketing Scheme 2015-16 (DAERA).

Belfast Metropolitan College Annual Report and Financial Statements 2015-16 (DfE).

Northern Regional College Annual Report and Accounts 2015-16 (DfE).

North West Regional College Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 July 2016 (DfE).

South Eastern Regional College Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2016 (DfE).

Southern Regional College Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 July 2016 (DfE).

South West College Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2016 (DfE).

Improving Pupil Attendance Strategy (DE).

Land and Property Services Trust Statement – Rate Levy Accruals Account Annual Report and Accounts 2015-16 (DoF).

Special EU Programmes Body Annual Report and Accounts 2015 (DoF).

5. Assembly Reports

6. Statutory Rules

SR 2016/409 The Social Security (Credits, and Crediting and Treatment of Contributions) (Consequential and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfC).

SR 2016/423 The Occupational Pensions (Revaluation) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfC).

SR 2016/426 The Court of Judicature Fees (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DoJ).

SR 2017/000 Draft The Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 (Single Jurisdiction) (Consequential Amendments) Order (Northern Ireland) 2017 (DoJ).

For Information Only

SR 2016/421 The Parking Places (Disabled Persons' Vehicles) (Amendment No.4) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfI).

SR 2016/428 The Waiting Restrictions (Ballynure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfI).

SR 2016/429 The Roads (Speed Limit) (No. 4) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfI).

SR 2016/430 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Belfast) (Amendment) No.5) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (DfI).

7. Written Ministerial Statements

Ballynahinch Bypass - Publication of Formal "Environmental Statement - Notice to Proceed" and Making of the Direction Order (DfI).

Reform of Financial Assistance for People Infected or Otherwise Affected by Contaminated NHS Blood or Blood Products (DoH).

8. Consultation Documents

Consultation on the Zoonoses (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 (DAERA).

2017 Review of Bathing Waters in Northern Ireland (DAERA).

Review of Permitted Development Rights for Mineral Exploration (DfI).

Proposals to seek reversal of the reclassification of Registered Social Housing Providers in Northern Ireland - Public Consultation (DfC).

9. Departmental Publications

Northern Ireland Screen Commission Strategic Report, Directors' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2016 (DfC).

Strategic Investment Board Limited Annual Review and Financial Statements 2015-2016 (TEO).

DfI Driver, Vehicle, Operator Enforcement Statistics Quarter Two – 1 July 2016 to 30 September 2016 (DfI).

Northern Ireland Planning Statistics 2016/17 Second Quarterly Statistical Bulletin – 1 July to 30 September 2016 (DfI).

10. Agency Publications

11. Westminster Publications

12. Miscellaneous Publications

