



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Office of the First Minister
and deputy First Minister

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Programme for Government Commitments:
Office of the First Minister and deputy First
Minister

11 June 2014

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Programme for Government Commitments: OFMDFM Officials

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mr Leslie Cree
Ms Megan Fearon
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr George Robinson

Witnesses:

Mr Henry Johnston	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Mrs Grainne Killen	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Dr Denis McMahon	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

The Chairperson: We welcome Grainne Killen, Henry Johnston and Denis McMahon from the Department. Denis, when were you aware that the papers would not be delivered according to the protocol?

Dr Denis McMahon (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I suppose that the date for having them with you was last week.

The Chairperson: Did you alert the Committee Clerk as a matter of courtesy?

Dr McMahon: I would need to check that. There are regular meetings between our accounting liaison officer and the Committee Clerk.

The Chairperson: I suppose that the good news is that we already have the papers for next week's session. Over to you.

Dr McMahon: If you are happy enough, we will talk about where we are in the Programme for Government overall, and then we will take you through the commitments that relate to my directorate. Mark can cover his next week. Henry, do you want to say a few words about where we are generally?

Mr Henry Johnston (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I will talk a wee bit about the overall process and give a brief introduction. I will then introduce Grainne as this is her first time in front of the Committee. It is her job to drive the system through overseeing delivery of the 82 commitments across the other Departments. We are here today to talk about the Q4 out-turn. We commissioned the Q4 material from all the Departments towards the end of March. We now have all the material in, and we hope that the Executive programme board will meet very shortly to close that off. We will commission Q1 towards the end of this month. Grainne, do you want to talk a wee bit about the detail behind that?

Mrs Grainne Killen (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): As Henry said, we commissioned progress reports from across all Departments, including OFMDFM, on 24 March. Those were collated and analysed by the central Programme for Government (PFG) team, which includes representation from the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). On the back of that, we produced a report for the delivery oversight group, which comprises all the permanent secretaries. The group met on 16 May to consider progress against the Programme for Government and to develop a report for the Executive programme board. As part of that process, Malcolm McKibbin, head of the Civil Service, had a number of bilateral discussions with permanent secretaries, particularly on issues with the achievement of certain commitments. The Executive programme board will meet in the near future to consider the response proposed by the delivery oversight group. That is our process, and that is where we are at this stage.

Dr McMahon: At this stage, overall, it still looks positive.

Mr Johnston: It is looking positive, probably better at this stage than the previous Programme for Government. We have updates from all the Departments on the 82 commitments, and they will be put on to the website in the near future. We now have updated delivery plans from all Departments, including OFMDFM, and they will be on the website shortly. That will give you a perspective right across the PFG on where Departments say that they are on delivery, and it will highlight areas with difficulties.

The Chairperson: Does anybody have oversight of your oversight? Grainne, you said that you kicked off on 24 March, so this is a three-month process, which seems quite laborious and labour-intensive. Is that a reasonable assumption?

Mrs Killen: The process has been in place for some time now and has become more streamlined. In the sense that we monitor 82 commitments, you could say that it is quite a task to do that quarterly, but the Departments are fairly well up to speed with the process.

Dr McMahon: It is worth saying that we get a lot of challenge in the process, and there is a lot of pushback. The team works with DFP, for example, which comments on our commitments. If we say that we think that we will achieve a commitment, DFP will come back to us and say that we do not have x, y and z in place to be able to do that. A lot of challenge is built into the process, and that happens right through to the Executive programme board, where, ultimately, we have to be able to account to the First Minister or the deputy First Minister and the Finance Minister for our performance.

Mr Johnston: There are some issues with the timing of some of the material that Departments rely on. Some of the DETI responses, for example, are reliant on Invest NI pushing material through to it, and that can be delayed because Invest NI is waiting for consolidated business reports to come through. Between commissioning the reports at the end of March, getting them back at the beginning of April and the meeting with the delivery oversight group, the team has a fairly intensive series of engagement with Departments. As Denis said, the process has become much slicker. The engagement with Departments and the delivery oversight group is going quite well and focuses on the commitments that there are difficulties with. That focus is not just to berate people; it is to look at whether any remedial actions could be taken or, if they cannot deliver on that commitment, what they could deliver on. You would need to talk to the other Departments, but the aim is a more positive engagement. It is not entirely negative and focusing on what people have not achieved; it is about what could be done to improve achievement.

The Chairperson: I do not want to compare apples and pears, but I think that, compared with the private sector, it is probably not as slick. The private sector does this type of thing almost live. Maybe I am trying to compare apples and pears.

Mr Johnston: Yes. There is also an issue in that, for most Departments, any material that they send on will require clearance within the Department before they issue it externally. That can take some time, depending on Departments and Ministers.

Dr McMahon: It is a fair point, too. Government tends to be very paper-based, whereas, in the private sector — going on what colleagues and friends who work in the private sector say— there is a sense of, as you say, making very rapid responses, but they are not necessarily waiting for detailed reports to come through. There is a slight difference, particularly when working between different Departments. Ministers also have responsibilities, so there is a careful line to tread between, on one hand, making sure that things are being done from a central perspective and, on the other hand, not cutting across Ministers' responsibilities. We try to tread that line.

Mr Johnston: I will correct something that Denis said: ours is not an entirely paper-based system; we have invested in an electronic system to support the back end of that. Last time, one of the big problems was that whole reams of paper feeds were coming in, and trying to cut and paste them to produce consolidated documents was not efficient.

The Chairperson: My main point is that you cannot look at the First Minister and the deputy First Minister as joint chief executives or at Ministers as the equivalent of, say, HR manager, production manager or sales manager.

Mr Johnston: Absolutely.

The Chairperson: That does not hold water. Do any members want to make any comments or ask questions on the overall scene before we get into the detailed PFG commitments? If not, we will go straight there.

Dr McMahon: OK, Chair. Thank you very much. The first commitments that I will cover are numbers 31 and 32, which are the two that relate to the social investment fund (SIF). I will remind you where we are and bring you up to speed. Lead partners have been identified and vouching verification completed on their organisations. On 10 February, Ministers announced the first tranche of 23 projects, of which 12 are capital and 11 revenue, and the lead partners were given letters of offer. We had a lead partner workshop on 10 March. The idea was to provide an opportunity to start to discuss the implementation in detail in a way that we had not been able to until that point because it had not been clear which projects would go forward.

Steering groups have continued to have regular meetings to monitor the progress of the programme. In fact, the steering groups were at the event on 10 March. The letters of offer are being finalised based on our feedback from the lead partners. We have in place additional capacity, the systems from the Strategic Investment Board, to ensure that the plans that the lead partners are putting in place are deliverable and will achieve the objectives. The aim is to issue letters of offer in final form for the 23 projects by the end of this month. In addition, a process to work through the 34 remaining business cases is under way. We are working collectively with our finance colleagues and, as necessary, the Department of Finance to make sure that we get those approved, the aim being to have all of the expenditure committed by the end of the financial year.

The Chairperson: The full £80 million?

Dr McMahon: Yes, the intention is to have that committed, albeit that a profile of spend will go beyond that.

The Chairperson: Beyond the CSR, presumably. That sounds like a significant development, Denis, if the commitment to spend can be done in this financial year.

Dr McMahon: That is what we aim to do. We aim to have all of the letters of offer out by the end of this financial year, and that will be a formal contractual commitment with the lead partners.

The Chairperson: On the risks to the delivery of PFG commitments 31 and 32, it seems that there has been no change in the main risk, namely:

"Timing of Executive and business case approvals affecting ability to make programme operational and spend allocated Budgets".

The probability of that is still five, which is the highest, and the impact, if that is the case, is four. Presumably, that has been consistent for a while.

Dr McMahon: Yes. As you will have heard from colleagues, we are looking at business cases across the Executive because it is a huge challenge to make sure that we are getting good value for the taxpayer while ensuring that we are not turning it into a process, which goes back to an earlier point about having a process for process sake.

The added complication is that, normally, when a business case comes into a Department, an arm's-length body, a trust or a community and voluntary sector organisation has spent a period thinking about it beforehand, and the planning and a lot of the groundwork has been done. There will always be some pushback, with economists and finance colleagues saying, "This is wrong and that is wrong." However, usually, a lot of thinking has gone into a business case.

In fairness, on this occasion, there was a lot of thinking about the plans and the groups, which reflects the fact that Ministers wanted, and tried, to set up a participative democracy process, with people getting a chance to create something from the ground up. Some of the projects were well thought through because they were based on ideas that people may have had for years and they filtered their way through the planning process at a local level. Others were, perhaps, not as well thought through. It is clear that steering groups knew what they wanted but did not always have a clear handle on how they wanted it delivered.

That definitely created an additional level of challenge in this case. I will be honest with you: we have an internal commitment to try to issue these letters by the end of the year, which means having the approvals in place over the next three or four months. Realistically, that means a rate of two or three a week. Is that anything like the rate at which we have approved so far?" The honest answer is probably not. In fairness, is that the rate of approval across other Departments dealing with that number of business cases? Probably not.

So we are trying to find ways to do that more and, to use your earlier terminology, in real time. Mark and I have set up a team. As accounting officer, Mark has responsibility for the finance side, and I have economists on my side. We have set up a team and told them to get the lead partners in to write the business cases in real time. That is instead of putting it back to the consultants, who put it back to us, and we then send it to the lead partners to ask for additional information. We have told the team to get all the lead partners into a room and spend two days a week thrashing it out, and to lock the door until the business cases are approved — not quite lock the door, but you know what I mean.

The Chairperson: No, work away.

Dr McMahon: That is what we are trying to do, and we will see how it goes. We are focusing on this because it has been a huge challenge to get to this point and, if we are to get the letters of offer out, we need to get through this stage.

I have rated my other little worry as a 2 in the risk register, namely high quality design and delivery of interventions to meet need. The more we look at this and discuss it with the lead partners, the clearer it becomes that, as people think about things, new issues arise. That is natural because these are the people who have to deliver the projects on the ground. So, to some extent, that is an additional risk beyond that of the business cases. There is a danger that we focus all of our attention on pushing the business cases through, getting the letters of offer out and ticking boxes, but, when we get to the delivery phase, not getting the outcomes that we need.

On the positive side, while it is a negative that it is taking longer, and nobody could argue otherwise, we will, hopefully, get projects that deliver better outcomes in the long term. We are getting a lot of feedback on that, even through our wider work on Delivering Social Change (DSC). We have made a lot of progress and done a lot of work on Delivering Social Change, but it is really important to take the time to make sure that we evaluate and get the right outcomes. You and the Committee have made that point about other projects, such as childcare.

The Chairperson: I have two observations before I bring in the Deputy Chair. In 2007 or 2008, when I was involved in setting up the Victims' Commission, we started off in temporary accommodation in Goodwood House but were told that we had to move. We found a floor of Windsor House, which we got at a bargain price because the statutory body that had been there was moving out, so we were very pleased with ourselves. However, we were threatened by the Department, which said that it

would not write the cheques because there was no business case — not for moving to Windsor House but for the commission to have a permanent home. I would like to think that we have moved a bit from that position, given that you cannot possibly have a Victims' Commission without an office.

Sometimes, I feel that, collectively, we wait and wait because we are trying to find the right answer, whereas, in the private sector, there would be a realisation that there is no right answer. Rather, there are options, all of which have downsides. Eventually, you will have to make a decision and pick an option, knowing that there is a downside and managing that downside. I hope that more of a private sector spirit is emerging and that people are starting to say, "OK, it's never going to be 100 out of 100, but, realising that we'll have to manage the imperfections, it's good enough to go with".

Dr McMahon: That is a fair point.

Mr Lyttle: Thanks for your update. The PFG commitments 31 and 32 concern the social investment fund. It is a significant OFMDFM responsibility: £80 million of expenditure to tackle dereliction and deprivation, probably among the most common issues, originally by the end of 2014-15. I am sure that the need for regeneration and the need to tackle social disadvantage are raised with all MLAs. I am keen to assess progress, but I am also keen to assess the fairness and accuracy of the updates that we are provided with. Unless I am wrong, the update says that the commitment:

"is not likely to be achieved in the timescale initially envisaged".

The £80 million expenditure was to be achieved by the end of 2015. When exactly is it likely to be fully expended?

Dr McMahon: I am happy to be corrected on this, Henry, but we are looking at a planning timescale of around the end of 2017-18 for the majority of that. The only issue is that, as I mentioned, when we had the discussion with the lead partners, we were not sure what to expect. This is community driven, and some lead partners were a bit more surprised than we had expected about what the projects looked like. Some had been closely involved, but others were looking at a project for the first time and saying, "We'll have to look at this again. This is great, and it's what the community wants, but we may have to do it a slightly different way".

Mr Johnston: Some organisations put forward as a lead partner had an understanding of what that meant. At the workshop session, a number of people who had been put forward as a lead partner thought, "I don't really want to be a lead partner; I'm more interested in being the delivery agent". So there was a bit of changing around. A number of councils, in particular, moved centre stage once it became clear that people were much more interested in delivering services than overseeing their delivery by another agent.

As Denis said earlier, the intention is that, by the end of this financial year, we will have committed but not spent the £80 million. Our estimate is that it will go forward into 2017-18. The letters of offer will be finalised and sent out, and the lead partners and delivery agents will work out their delivery plan, particularly for capital projects. As Denis said earlier, normally, projects have been worked up for eons, so we pick up projects with a clear projection of delivery. Some of these are very new ideas, and capital projects tend to over-run in cost and time, so we will look at that throughout this year.

Mr Lyttle: Chair, I am reminded that I should declare an interest as a member of the east Belfast area steering group for the social investment fund.

Denis, you said that you expect full expenditure by the end of financial year 2017-18.

Dr McMahon: Yes.

Mr Lyttle: There has been some difficulty with the appointment of the lead partners. How exactly were they appointed?

Dr McMahon: There has not been a difficulty. It is a very different way of working for Departments and for us. The lead partners were proposed, as you will remember, by the steering groups. In some cases, the lead partners were very closely involved in that process, and in other cases they were —

Mr Johnston: More surprised.

Dr McMahon: Maybe not surprised. They were happy enough to be identified, but, when we talked them through the project and plan in more detail, they wondered whether they could deliver it in that way or whether there was maybe a different way of looking at it. It reflects the bottom-up approach. It means that, in turn, the Department has to accept that some of the lead partners will come back and give us plans and profiles that differ from what we originally expected. The reason that I said 2017-18 — to be open and transparent — is simply that, on the basis of previous expenditure, that seems a reasonable period in which to ramp up expenditure on those projects, particularly the capital projects.

Mr Lyttle: I want to follow up on that openness and transparency. The update that we have is that all the funds will be indicatively allocated in the near future, with a drawdown over a longer period. The online report, which is the public's window in to monitoring the Government's progress on its behalf, states that good progress has been made in securing approvals to business cases; lead partners have been identified; due diligence undertaken; steering groups have continued to meet to oversee the delivery of the programme; and a detailed monitoring framework is under development. All that information is available publicly. Do you think that that is adequately detailed information for the Committee and the public, given that you are able to say that you expect full expenditure in 2018, which appears to be three years later than the original date set?

Dr McMahon: That was the position in the last quarter and will be updated. Even with that, nothing there is untrue or was untrue at that stage. Good progress has been made. There are two ways of looking at it. Has good progress been made in meeting the original commitment? Obviously not. That —

Mr Lyttle: It does not say that.

Dr McMahon: We are not hiding it. People are very well aware that we have not been able to meet the original timeline in the commitment. The other side of it is this: has a lot of work been put into it, and have we tried to develop something from scratch that really needed more early input than everybody originally anticipated? I think that good progress has been made on that front. That is what we have tried to reflect in the report.

The Chairperson: Does anybody else have a question on that commitment before we move on?

Mr Attwood: Thank you very much for the information. I want to make one observation. You said that the overall state of play with delivery across the PFG commitments is more positive than it was in the last quarter. However, on analysing the PFG delivery commitments, that seems slightly extravagant. For reasons beyond your control, the Maze/Long Kesh project is somewhat uncertain. We have not agreed any changes, which might be a good thing, to the post-2015 structures of government. Money is being returned in this monitoring round because elements of the One Plan have not been taken forward.

We are uncertain whether there will be a 20% drawdown of competitive EU funds. Whether SIF and DSC are delivered is somewhat subject to whether you get money from monitoring rounds: you have put in a very substantial bid, some of which is described as an inescapable pressure. We are uncertain about where we are on age discrimination legislation, and we do not know where we are on welfare reform. It is, putting it at its best, a bit of a curate's egg. It is positive in places, such as the Derry/Londonderry City of Culture, but, as I see the commitments overall, "positive" might not be the most accurate description.

Dr McMahon: Can I clarify —

The Chairperson: Sorry, I will let you answer, Denis, but, just to be clear, members, I thought that we had agreed that we would go through the PFG commitments one by one rather than taking a —

Mr Attwood: That was just an overall comment before I go through them one by one.

Dr McMahon: As a point of clarification, when I referred to the overall state of play, I was talking about the Programme for Government overall across all of the Departments and all of the commitments. I was not picking out the 11 OFMDFM targets.

Mr Attwood: I cannot comment on where everybody else is. I do not interrogate the PFG commitments of every Department in that way, but that is certainly the conclusion that I draw about

this Department. My questions are about commitments 31 and 32. You were very honest in admitting that the processing of business cases had not necessarily been that successful. You said that the rate at which you now have to progress is probably three or four a week. I do not know whether that is true or not; it might be three or four a month. I am a wee bit circumspect, on the basis of the past three years of the SIF, about managing all of those business cases between now and March next year. History does not suggest that the pace will pick up to such an extent, despite the mitigation measure being introduced to achieve that outcome.

That is corroborated by the fact that, whilst the initial commitments were made, you said in your evidence that letters of offer in their "final form" to those who have already received a letter of offer will be out by the end of the month. That is two weeks from now. It will be interesting to hear within two weeks about the letters of offer in "final form" — whatever that means, as opposed to letters of offer. Will you explain the difference between letters of offer and letters of offer in final form?

Has a shortfall been identified, especially in capital commitments? Have the costings of the capital commitments on which you have issued a letter of offer ended up being higher than you anticipated? Can you confirm that planning permission exists, or will exist by the end of the month, for the capital commitments for which you will issue a letter of offer in final form?

Dr McMahon: There is quite a lot there. I will start with business cases. I do not disagree with what you are saying about the evidence. I was trying to say that a lot of good progress has been made. I say that from my experience, and that of the people in other Departments with whom I work on business cases, and taking into account how much time it can take to get a business case across the system, simply because there is so much scrutiny and so on. We are trying to get 23 business cases through with a reasonably small team. When you look at the consultancy fees spent so far and compare them with what it normally costs to get a normal green book appraisal through, you can see that it is being done at a very low cost, relatively speaking, and at quite a pace. That was why I wanted to draw it to the Committee's attention. That is why that risk is so high. My concern is that, if we are serious about trying to do this — we are serious about it — that really brings us down to some very tight timescales. You are absolutely right; we are going to have to see how the mitigation measures work. However, that was to reassure the Committee that we are not sitting here hoping that it will all come through. We are trying different ways to move the situation on.

I will say a little bit about the difference between the draft and the completed letters of offer. We put out letters of offer that specified the business cases that we went through. There were standard conditions in them that you would expect in any letter of offer. Over and above that, we had conditions in them that were about specific things that the business case said that they were to deliver and that needed to be included. There were other issues such as preconditions; for example, before you can spend money, you need to own the site, or you need to make sure that we own the site. In a way, that is to make sure that the money is being spent appropriately. Those specific things were in there as well.

We put that out to the lead partners initially. In some cases, the lead partner said, "Absolutely fine; we have been working on this for years, and we want to do this". In other cases, the lead partners came back and said, "We cannot deliver this in the way that you have set it out, so we need to negotiate with you and discuss how we can take this forward in a different way". The final letters of offer reflect all of that discussion. You are absolutely right about two weeks. Two weeks is crucial. We need to get these out. The team is working extremely hard to make sure that that happens. The letters of offer will be structured, and they will be a contract. That will be us saying, "Here is the contract; this is the commitment; this is the money going out", but that money will obviously be phased. For example, on capital, you will spend something when a certain percentage of the build is done, a certain percentage of the design is done and so on. At the beginning, in almost all of the cases, they will need to put together a detailed project plan and documentation to be able to say, "Here is exactly how we are going to deliver all of this".

Mr Attwood: To cut to the bit: of those who received letters of offer, can you say, in the middle of June, whether some of those who received letters of offer will not receive letters of offer in final form?

Dr McMahon: We are working on the basis that all of those initial projects will have received their letters of offer in their final form by the end of June. That is what we are working on.

The Chairperson: I would like to move on to commitment 33, which is childcare. However, before we do, Denis, in the narrative under "Strategic Context", you say of the Delivering Social Change fund that:

"Of the £118 million ... currently allocated to March 2016, £92 million is available during the period of the current spending review."

Therefore, £26 million is not. What is the story with the £26 million?

Mr Johnston: When the Ministers made the announcement around the six signature programmes in October 2012, they were costed at £26 million. At that stage, it was agreed that that £26 million would be taken out of the funds that had been earmarked for SIF and childcare but would be made available again in the next CSR period.

The Chairperson: So, the £118 million has been split into two.

Mr Johnston: Yes.

The Chairperson: We move on to childcare — commitment 33.

Dr McMahon: You will be familiar with some of this, but I will go over it. The first phase of the Bright Start childcare strategy was launched in September 2013 and included 15 key first actions. I remind the Committee that all of the key first actions were under way at the end of March 2014, particularly the Bright Start school-age childcare grant scheme, which was launched on 27 March. The grant scheme will take forward the key first actions 1, 2 and 5, which aim to create or sustain up to 7,000 school-age childcare places by making available up to £15 million in grants over the period 2014-17. The deadlines for applications were 9 May, and we now have a series of applications in from childcare providers. The childcare partnerships are working on that on our behalf, and they are working through the 76 applications received at the moment. There are also 60 expressions of interest. Childcare partnerships subregional strategic funding panels will meet on 17 June to 25 June to assess formally the 76 applications. The aim is to issue the first letters of offer before September 2014. That is where we are at the moment.

Obviously, work is under way to begin to develop the childcare strategy, which you will be talking to colleagues about.

The Chairperson: The Committee noted earlier the potential need for a legislative consent motion with regard to the Childcare Payments Bill coming out of Westminster. What is your assessment of the impact that that might have on the PFG commitment?

Dr McMahon: That will need to be agreed by the Executive and the Assembly, but, subject to that, we hope that that will increase capacity. The last time that we were talking about childcare at the Committee, it was clear that we needed to be sensitive to the market. Ideally, this should increase uptake. It should be a good thing for access to childcare and also for helping the market, but there will still be problems with the market that will need to be addressed through additional funding programmes to try to improve capacity. So, we will need to make sure that our scheme is sensitive to market demands and any market demands that change as a result of this.

The Chairperson: If we cut and paste and bring through the Westminster legislation as a legislative consent motion, what will the impact be on Northern Ireland? What changes?

Dr McMahon: The main thing is that it offers an opportunity to parents who could not afford childcare before. It is additional Government funding coming from the Treasury to ensure that more people are able to access childcare places by putting money into a childcare savings account. Basically, that is the way that the model works.

The idea is that more people will be able to access it. For every £8 that a parent pays towards childcare costs, the idea is that the Government will make a top-up payment of £2. If the model were to come through, the value of Government support would be capped at a maximum of £2,000 a child each year, and there would be no restriction on the number of children for whom the support would be available. The idea is that more people will be able to access childcare. So, from that point of view, it should drive the need for additional capacity in the marketplace, which is good.

In addition to that, it means that, from our point of view, we need to make sure that we are not cutting across that by funding projects that undercut existing private childcare providers or other providers that are already in place. So, that is the main focus for us.

The Chairperson: Has there been any change since we last spoke about your attitude towards private sector provision in this area?

Dr McMahon: Ministers have announced the scheme, and the idea is that this will be a social investment model, and that is the way that the scheme was announced and launched, but there is still scope for private childcare settings, particularly ones that do not make a huge profit anyway, to use the social investment model to apply for funding.

The Chairperson: Last time, we entered into a debate about what a word like "substantial" means in, for example, "substantially reinvesting". Is there any more clarity on those definitions?

Dr McMahon: We have detailed guidance out now. I would be happy to forward that to the Committee if that is helpful.

The Chairperson: Yes, please, it would be.

Mr Lyttle: When will the £12 million budget for improving access to affordable childcare be expended?

Dr McMahon: Not for at least two years beyond this one. That is where we are now.

Mr Lyttle: The original milestone was the end of the financial year 2014-15.

Dr McMahon: It has taken longer.

Mr Lyttle: The update says that that target is achievable.

Dr McMahon: That is a fair point.

Mr Johnston: That childcare funding has also been used to fund existing childcare provision, so this is on top of that. So, there has been some expenditure during earlier bits of the CSR.

The Chairperson: Sorry, Henry, could you speak up a wee bit. I missed that.

Mr Johnston: There was some expenditure in the early years of the CSR out of the £12 million, but, as Denis said, even with the expenditure on Bright Start this year, we will not achieve £12 million by the end of this financial year. It will be at least another year and a half before that £12 million is used.

Dr McMahon: It is a fair point, and maybe we can look at the declaration again. There has been a bit of internal debate about declarations generally, because on the one hand we need to keep them current so that they reflect the real position, but on the other hand there is a view that that was the commitment that we have signed up to. We have changed them elsewhere, so it reasonable to say that it is probably more useful for people to have —

Mr Johnston: There is a generic point that this illustrates pretty well. The commitment is to:

"Publish and Implement a Childcare Strategy with key actions to provide integrated and affordable childcare".

Arguably, at the end of the period, you could tick that. However, you will not have achieved the milestones. With a number of the commitments, there is a mismatch between what the commitment says at a high level, such as "improve" or "reduce", and the specific targets in the milestones. We have identified a mismatch in the wording of some of those commitments between the high level element and the lower level annual specific targets.

Mr Lyttle: Childcare provision is obviously a key issue, so one has to welcome the progress that has been made on it. However, the key milestone here is to, by the end of the financial year 2014-15,

achieve expenditure, which is £12 million, and the key milestones in the strategy. The declaration states:

"I can confirm that this commitment is ... achievable".

You have just told us that it is not achievable.

Mr Johnston: The milestone is not achievable.

Mr Lyttle: For at least a year and a half.

Dr McMahon: It is fair to say that that is something that we could clarify in the declaration. That is a fair point.

Mr Lyttle: Again, that is information that is available to our Committee, but the online reporting tool, which was heralded as an improved way for the public to access such information, does not contain it.

Mr Johnston: As I said earlier, the information that is currently publicly available on the online reporting tool only goes up to the end of the last calendar year. We hope, in coming weeks, to put online an update on all 82 commitments to the end of the financial year 2013-14.

Mr Attwood: Is it your intention to have completed the spending of the remaining expenditure take by the end of 2015-16 or by the end of 2016-17?

Mr Johnston: In terms of the £12 million, we would need to come back to you on that. It could well be 2015-16, when you take into account the expenditure that has already been made in the early years of the CSR. You might want to talk about the wider Bright Start budget.

Mr Attwood: Denis, in his answer, said —

Dr McMahon: "Two years", I said.

Mr Attwood: Two years after this financial year. That suggests that it will be the end of 2017.

Dr McMahon: It just depends on how quickly the expenditure ramps up. The childcare partnerships are assessing the 76 applications. So, we need to see what those look like and what sort of spending profiles they have in them before I can answer more definitively. My expectation, based on previous experience, is that we will not do it in one year. I think that it will take three years.

Mr Attwood: Do you agree with that, Henry?

Mr Johnston: I do. However, I am not sure — I will need to come back to you on this — about what we have banked to date. As Denis said, it will be a while before we get a rapid spend on the new programmes. It is not clear at the table exactly how much has been spent to date.

Mr Attwood: Where are we in respect of developing plans for the spending of the residue of the £12 million?

Dr McMahon: A lot of that spend will be through those 7,000 places. In addition, there are measures that other Departments are working on. For example, DARD and DRD are working together on additional rural childcare places and some rural transport projects. They are working them up at the minute, and they are due to be launched in the autumn. We will obviously see what those look like, but that is happening at the moment. In addition, there is the work on the family support website, with the aim of getting a new app-based website into place to help to provide parents and providers with the information they need. Again, that will improve the market.

Mr Cree: I have a wee quickie on that one. In the strategic context, you mentioned three magic words in two paragraphs on the costs of childcare. They must be "affordable", "good value for money" and "sustainable". What work has been done to see whether those three can be accommodated?

Dr McMahon: We talked about the issue of business cases earlier. This is an example of where the business case process has really added a lot of value. It has also added some delay. We have gone through quite a detailed process to examine the value for money of the scheme overall. Obviously, the criteria and the projects that come forward will have to be compliant with that. Part of that will be about sustainability and making sure that we are not creating places that will need to be funded forever. In some cases, that may be necessary because you are talking about areas that just would not sustain childcare provision otherwise. However, the idea is that, as far as possible, it will be funding for a period to increase the capacity, and it will then become sustaining in its own right. That is the sort of work that has been going on. We have had a lot of challenge. We have a finance subcommittee that tests every business case to destruction and makes sure that we know what we are talking about. We went through four phases of that to get the business case approved.

Mr Cree: Has that been benchmarked against the private sector?

Dr McMahon: Benchmarked in the sense of —

Mr Cree: Good value for money.

Dr McMahon: Yes, it has been —

Mr Cree: It can be only the private sector.

Dr McMahon: Yes, we have to look at existing demand and supply. That is what we have used to inform the business case.

The Chairperson: Delivering Social Change comprises PFG commitments 34 and 37. It is next.

Dr McMahon: Henry can maybe talk about the signature projects in a bit more detail. The main thing to say is that there has been a lot of work on this across a number of Departments. Our focus now is on making sure that we are evaluating this and monitoring the outputs. There has been good progress in getting in place teachers to do additional literacy and numeracy. We are getting a lot of reports back — a lot of them are qualitative, at this stage, because it is still at the early stages of full implementation — from schools, parents and teachers about it making a difference. There are a range of other measures that maybe Henry wants to take us through in a bit more detail.

Mr Johnston: As we have reported separately, there has been pretty good progress in all six of the October 2012 announced signature projects. The literacy and numeracy programme has been going quite well. The Department of Education ran a Celebrating Success event in Parliament Buildings last week. It had a number of newly qualified teachers and one existing teacher who had benefited from the programme and were starting to get some very positive messages back about the impact of the programme on children. By September last year, on all the programmes, we had agreed with the lead Department how they would evaluate the programme. Those evaluation processes are now well in place for most programmes. We recently held a series of bilateral meetings with Departments, because one thing that we are keen to do with the signature programmes is to not only look at them in the way that we always have but use this as an opportunity to look at other ways of evaluating the effectiveness of programme delivery. We are trying to pilot an approach for those programmes called outcome-based accountability, which looks not only at the thing that we are trying to achieve at a population level but at how effective the programme was in the quality of its delivery. That is key to whether Departments will mainstream the programmes.

The Chairperson: Is this the interim evaluation, as referenced in key action 10?

Mr Johnston: In the plan, yes. We intend that there will be an event in October, where we will feed back to a wider public what the initial results are. Obviously, some of the programmes have a longer lead time, such as literacy and numeracy. One thing we will have is the difference in predicted grades, but GCSE outcomes and what the real grades are for those children may be a while filtering through.

The Chairperson: I am interested in the length of time for the process. Key action 10 says that it begins in March 2014. Is it really going to take until October — eight months — to do the evaluation?

Dr McMahon: I think that, in fairness, we are talking about evaluating the performance. The idea, initially, is to get a set of data from Departments to say how they are performing. However, to some extent, we will need to wait. For example, for the teachers, we need to see what the actual exam results are before we can do a proper evaluation. In the meantime, we are trying to get as much information as we possibly can. We are looking at things like measures of self-efficacy and locus of control, which are about teachers and young people feeling more in control of their environment and how they are able to participate. Those are the sorts of things that we are trying to look at as early measures.

Mr Johnston: We are looking to have initial figures from Departments for the middle of July. However, in all those, they may have crude numbers for the number of teachers who have been deployed and the number of children who have benefited from the programmes. They may have some early results, but they may not have all the systems in place to capture some of the quality measures. That is what we are working on at the minute. It is about those qualitative aspects, a lot of which will be survey-based, around parents, teachers and the children in the programmes.

The literacy and numeracy programme has rolled out quite well. There has been a slight supply issue around teachers. The Department of Education is out for what is hopefully its final tranche for a very small number of teachers that it has been unable to get, to date. However, I think that all schools have benefited from bank teachers picking up some of the slack in the delivery.

The nurture units are now all operational and cohorts of children have been through all those DEL programmes. For example, the community family support programme has had at least one cohort run through it, and it is going well.

On the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety side, the family support hubs are well established outside of Belfast. Belfast has been slower to get to market; however, the first two will come on stream this month and the rest should come on stream over the summer. There has been a difficulty with one of the parenting interventions that we had looked to do, because the supplier has withdrawn from the market. DHSSPS is looking at alternatives to that and other potential programmes.

Finally — hopefully I have not left anybody out — the social enterprise hubs have been the slowest to get to market. DSD had some difficulty in identifying suitable premises, but those are now coming online. I think that our Ministers will be launching the first of those, which will have both the services and buildings in place, in a fortnight's time.

The Chairperson: I go again to the risk register. What I am not seeing is anything about the finances. I note that the original set of milestones had the establishment of the historical institutional abuse inquiry. In last week's financial papers, it was made clear that there was a hefty — or significant — bid in June monitoring for the HIA. In that paper, it said the risk was that, without the money, the inquiry would fold. However, it is not on the risk register.

Dr McMahon: It is probably not unreasonable to put in resources as a risk. We are very aware of resources generally as a risk at the minute, given the tighter nature of finances and the difficult decisions that Ministers will be making over the next year. So, it probably is reasonable to put it in as a risk.

This was an example of us trying to act in a more flexible way. When Ministers set up Delivering Social Change, the idea was that we had significant resources that were not going to be spent through the social investment fund, which meant that there was scope then to move resources into this to try to progress some of the objectives of the social investment fund while we were setting it up. Indeed, that has happened, and to some extent the fact that we have to bid for extra money is a good thing because it means that the money is being spent and programmes are under way. The early feedback is that the programmes can and will make a difference and that they are making a difference.

So, it is reasonable for us to look at putting resources into the plan as an additional risk and to monitor it. Obviously, we depend on central funds, which we have to bid for. When you look at where we are now, we have a better quality of problem: we have still got a problem, but it comes from the fact that we are delivering more, which means that we have to rely on central bids more.

Mr Johnston: The other thing is that there is a slight timing issue. This was compiled at the end of March, and it was only really once we got into June monitoring that the scale of the challenges for victims and HIA became clear. I want to see that reflected in the revised plans.

The Chairperson: It is another argument for the live-time updating of things as we go. Some people feel that the way that the Committee worked with the Department to amend, improve and bring forward the legislation was exemplary. For us, it is not an option to see the abuse inquiry fold due to a lack of resource. If we feel that way, goodness knows how the victims feel, having waited so long.

Dr McMahon: I know that the Ministers will see the inquiry as an absolute priority as well, so I would be very surprised if it was in any way put at risk. I do not see that happening.

The Chairperson: If members have nothing to say on this chapter, we will move on.

Commitment 38 is on age discrimination legislation.

Dr McMahon: The situation with the age discrimination legislation is that we still do not have a decision on the scope of the proposed legislation, but Ministers have agreed that officials can engage with other Departments on a without-prejudice basis to discuss and explore the implications of the various options that are available for progressing the legislation.

That means that we are looking at what the implications are. You start off by saying, "This legislation would outlaw discrimination in terms of goods, facilities and services". Then, it is a case of saying, "What particular implications would that have?". The things that are not obvious are the ones you need to watch out for and understand. For example, holidays being offered to certain age groups and issues around free public transport being given at a certain age. We need to make sure that we take things like that into account. We are having those conversations with Departments.

Ministers were very open when they were in front of the Committee that there were issues of policy that needed to be agreed around the scope of the legislation. That is where we are at the moment.

The Chairperson: As you say in your declaration, this commitment presents a challenge.

Dr McMahon: It certainly does, given the timescale that is left. As part of the normal legislative process, you have consultation on the policy, introduction in the House and the Committee Stage. This is a significant Bill, and, I expect, the Committee will have a great deal of interest in it and will want to scrutinise it in great detail. All of that will make the timescale very tight.

The Chairperson: We discussed this previously. In order to get it over the line in this mandate, when will the process have to begin in earnest?

Dr McMahon: We would have to consult in the autumn. The only caveat would be accelerated passage. That would make things different, but nobody is talking about that.

The Chairperson: No.

Dr McMahon: That would be the only caveat. You are talking about going through consultation and through the Executive; then, there will be the Bill's introduction, its Second Stage and then its Committee Stage. At Committee Stage, you will want to give it a lot of scrutiny.

The Chairperson: Is your autumn deadline predicated on the Committee taking the statutory minimum time, or are you allowing for us to take extra time if we need it?

Dr McMahon: We are trying to work up a broad timescale that would take us right up to March 2016 for enactment. We have tried to work through what a broad timescale would look like for all those stages, including six weeks for the Committee Stage. There may be scope elsewhere to squeeze things if the Committee Stage takes longer.

The Chairperson: However, you really would be squeezing.

Dr McMahon: It would mean squeezing things elsewhere. That is the nature of legislation like this.

The Chairperson: In the absence of other questions, we will move on.

Commitment 67 is on Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC).

Dr McMahon: Progress has been made on all seven headline actions in Together: Building a United Community. Senior responsible owners in each lead Department have developed project plans, key milestones and budget profiles. A report is being prepared for discussion at the next meeting of the ministerial panel. We are hoping that that will in turn allow Ministers to take decisions on how they want to prioritise resources in order to support the various projects.

We have had announcements about two of the four urban villages: the lower Newtownards Road and Colin. We are also undertaking a comprehensive review of the delivery of the structures and delivery mechanisms and their impact on existing funding. We have also undertaken work on the equality and good relations commission with Equality Commission and Community Relations Council (CRC) representatives. You will be talking about the consultation exercise and the new good relations indicators after this session.

Similarly, there is good work under way in OFMDFM to make the summer school camp pilots operational and to do some initial work in 2014. All those things, however, will depend on the bids, and you will have seen some of that coming forward in the session last week on June monitoring.

That is a broad picture of where we are. We have had good joined-up working with other Departments on this, and they have stepped up to the plate. Therefore I pay tribute to colleagues in other Departments who have been putting their plans together and are trying to get everything in place so that we can take this forward as and when resources are made available. In the meantime, lower cost options are being looked at and taken forward in the strategy.

The Chairperson: Does T:BUC have a budget?

Dr McMahon: Various budgets are already taking forward elements of T:BUC.

The Chairperson: Can you talk us through them?

Dr McMahon: Developments are going on in housing and in other areas that have budgets associated with them. I do not have all the detailed figures before me — apologies, Chair — but I would be happy to follow up on that. There are three levels of overall need. The first is existing budgets, some of which will be supplemented by Peace IV, where Departments and other organisations will be bidding through that. We are also looking at housing to see whether there are central Treasury funds that we could access and bid for. Secondly, we are looking at the additional central requirements for the central funding that we need to bid for. Once the ministerial panel has discussed the proposals, we will put forward the options to Ministers to agree. The third level is to say that there are some bigger things that need more time to work through. When people mention very large figures, they tend to think about the full commitment. For example, if we added up all the shared education campuses that we are talking about, it could be a very large figure. However, at this stage, a lot of developmental work needs to be done on those projects before we can finalise the figures. Lisanelly, for example, has been going for some years; about £3 million was allocated for exemplary design. It is only after that process and that work has been done that we get a sense of what the whole site will cost, and that will be done over a year.

When people talk about big numbers for Together: Building a United Community, they may be thinking about a longer-term period; however, additional funding will definitely be required in the short term to get some of those projects under way and up and running.

Mr Lyttle: So Programme for Government commitment 67 is to publish a cohesion, sharing and integration strategy, the original consultation for which was in 2010. However, the milestones in the report say that the target date to finalise the strategy and early actions is the end of the financial year 2012-13. In fairness, the strategy was finalised by the end of FY 2012-13. I do not think that the early actions are finalised a year later. The risk register shows that, for risk 1, there will be a potential delay in finalising the detail of key actions and shows a probability of 3; yet, if I am not wrong, it is delayed by a year already, which, as far as I can see, is another unhelpful inaccuracy. Is there a timescale or an action plan for those key actions? I will give you an example to work with: is there a timescale for the 10 shared education campuses or the 10 shared neighbourhoods?

Dr McMahon: Yes, there are detailed plans and timescales, which are to be discussed at the ministerial panel, and there is the issue about having the 10 shared education campuses fully completed. They have received 15 applications, and, at the minute, they are assessing them. Once they have been assessed, they will have a better idea of what is required. Each of the shared education campuses will be a very different type of project. Lisanelly, for example, is a huge project, given the number of schools involved and the potential number of pupils over time and also the fact that you are working across different sectors. There are detailed plans, and there are milestones for all of them. However, it reflects the fact that we cannot centrally drive all those plans without engaging with the partners who are putting forward their proposals. That work is being done at the moment.

Mr Lyttle: Why are those timescales not available to the Committee or the public?

Dr McMahon: We are happy to provide more to the Committee on the timescales and where we are at the moment, although that will need to be agreed by Ministers and the ministerial panel. The plans are subject to agreement by the ministerial panel, but I do not think that there will be any problem sharing them once they have been agreed by Ministers.

Mr Lyttle: That is less than clear. I want to move to other issues. The online report provides a bit more information than the Committee report provided today. The online report refers to a pilot year-round interventions programme to be delivered through Belfast City Council, which will contribute to the delivery of the action for 100 summer schools by FY 2014-15 target. It is a bit confusing to have a year-round intervention programme that contributes just to summer schools. Can you give us any more detail on what that pilot year-round intervention programme is, because this is the first that I have heard of it?

Dr McMahon: I am happy to provide detail. One thing that we had a lot of feedback on, even at the earlier stages of developing Together: Building a United Community, is that if we just wait until the summer, until things heat up and problems start, that will not help to solve some of the problems. You are right that there is an apparent contradiction between having summer schools and year-round interventions. The point is that it is not just about sending people away for a week and hoping that everything will be all right. It is about working, year-round, so that, when people go on summer camps, it is not the first time that they have met. It is about trying to promote better relations all round.

Mr Lyttle: What budget has been allocated to the pilot?

Dr McMahon: At present, we have £400,000 in the baseline, which we will be distributing to Belfast City Council and to DE. In addition, we put in a bid as part of June monitoring, which you will have seen in the papers and heard about in last week's discussion.

Mr Lyttle: What will be the criteria around which projects will be selected for the pilot?

Dr McMahon: I do not have the detailed criteria in front of me, but I am happy to come back to you on that.

Mr Lyttle: That would be helpful, thanks. It also mentions a public consultation taking place in March 2014 on legislation to create an equality and good relations commission. That date has passed. Is there a timescale for the consultation?

Dr McMahon: The intention is to get it out before the summer, and since we are now into the summer, we hope that it will happen in the next month or so. Again, perhaps my colleagues can update you on that in more detail. We are doing a lot of work with, as I say, the Equality Commission and the CRC, particularly with the chairs and chief executives. One thing that we need to be clear about is what the operating model is and how the equality and good relations commission will work in practice. We are working through scenarios with them at the moment as to what would happen if an issue arose around a public sector organisation not doing enough to promote good relations. We are trying to do that alongside the legislation. The aim is to get it out in the next couple of months.

Mr Lyttle: One other issue is the central good relations fund. Perhaps you can give us an update. However, it is my understanding that, following the applications for the past financial year, funds for the central good relations fund were allocated only late in the year, around Christmas time. Indeed, there seems to be a delay in the allocation of the fund this year. Could you speak to that and give us an idea of the total budget that we are talking about?

Dr McMahon: The closing date for applications to the central good relations fund in 2014-15 was 10 February. We have had a good deal of interest in it. Ministers are looking at how to prioritise that. Given the demand, Ministers are trying to ensure that the highest priority —

Mr Lyttle: So, there have been no allocations for this financial year.

Dr McMahon: I would need to come back to you on that, sorry. I need to double-check —

Mr Lyttle: When were allocations made in the financial year 2013-14?

Dr McMahon: Again, I would need to come back to you on that with the detail.

Mr Lyttle: This is the central good relations fund of OFMDFM. It is my understanding that allocations were made in late autumn, if not Christmas, which seems a fiasco.

Dr McMahon: There is no doubt that we would prefer to get applications and decisions out at the earliest possible stage. The other side of it is that we want to make sure that Ministers can select the best possible projects to go out. It has taken some time to get to the point where we can make decisions.

Mr Lyttle: Finally, risk number 3 on the report is the potential that the strategy does not deliver an improvement in good relations. On a scale of one to five, the probability is three. Are there real concerns about the potential effectiveness of the strategy?

Dr McMahon: There are significant actions and headline actions throughout the strategy, and, in fairness, we need to see what those bring. Having 10 shared educational campuses is a huge commitment. The work that needs to happen to move peace walls with local people's agreement and support is a huge exercise, and if those things happen as Ministers want, there is no doubt that it will have a huge effect. However, we have to recognise that there is only so much influence that government can have over some of these issues. There are wider issues. It is about trying to reflect the balance that, on the one hand, there is an ambitious programme of work here; and, on the other hand, trying not to be complacent because there are wider issues that could impact on that work and on the wider position.

Ms McGahan: Thanks, Denis, for your presentation. Do you have any updates on the shared educational campus for Moy Regional and St John's Primary School?

Dr McMahon: I can check for you. I assume that that is one of the 15 proposals. I will need to have a look at that and come back to you.

Ms McGahan: I have a general comment about risk number 3. I believe that the recent racist attacks do not help. I went through some of the indicators for achieving the outcomes against the core areas, and I believe that some of what is in the research report over the weekend about mixed marriages potentially jeopardises some of that.

Dr McMahon: That is absolutely right. These issues highlight the fact that we are working in a wider context. I reassure the Committee that Ministers are looking very carefully at how to tackle race hate issues and also the wider racial equality issue. They are looking very actively at the racial equality strategy.

Mr Attwood: I have two quick comments and two quick questions. Have any allocations been made for summer intervention projects for this summer, or are they entirely dependent on the bid that has gone into the monitoring round?

Dr McMahon: My understanding is that some allocations have been made already, and, again, I will happily come back to confirm that.

Mr Attwood: What are the consequences for interventions for this summer of the bid in the monitoring round being accepted or not accepted? You can come back on that. You were very forthright about funding for T:BUC. You said that you would be looking to Peace IV, to central Treasury, to Northern Ireland central funding and so on and so forth. It would be useful to get

a paper about how you think T:BUC will be funded, given that it is so dependent on what appears to be so many different sources of funding. That goes back to the Chair's opening question.

Just for the record, we will be opposing the proposed transfer of functions from the Community Relations Council to the Equality Commission. I advise that further.

I have a general question. Today, we have talked about PFG commitments, including the social investment fund, the DSC programme, the social protection fund and the Child Poverty Act. Does the Department recognise what it has put on its website about the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) review of child poverty in Northern Ireland, where it says that it is not going to achieve the reduction of 10%, but that, in relative and absolute terms, the figures will be 31% and 38% by 2020? Weaving in and out of all those PFG commitments is the issue of poverty, some, in particular, relating to child poverty. Is there some strategic thinking, given the PFG commitment on the Child Poverty Act and the scale of what the IFS has said? It has told OFMDFM that a catastrophic situation will arise within six years in respect of child poverty.

Dr McMahon: There are a couple of levels to that. Yes, thinking is definitely going on for a number of reasons. We touched on the Delivering Social Change for Children document that went out for consultation. We are listening to that consultation very carefully and taking on board what people are saying. We still have a statutory commitment to publish a child poverty strategy and an update. However, we have done a lot of things, and we have moved on a step. In the past, we had a lot of strategies that tended to focus on what Departments were doing already. We have moved to the point of having additional projects. To be fair, in the middle of all this, when you look at all the different commitments and compare that to the sort of thing that OFMDFM was doing in the past, you see that we are spending more money — more central funds and more of our own money.

We have more projects than ever before, and, if I am being honest, we are trying various experiments to improve things. I am not sure that projects will do this. There is a bigger issue that we are looking at. I am happy that you have raised the issue, because we want to see how we can go to the next stage. We think that there are things that we can do. We are learning from the United Youth programme, where we have done a lot of engagement and co-design work. There may be scope there to say that if you involve people in the design process — I am not talking about consultation; I am talking about something much more fundamental — there seems to be ways of moving mainstream services to be delivered in a different way. You are not just putting out signature projects; you are finding out how you influence the £10 billion of spend that comes into Northern Ireland. That is the sort of thinking that we are doing at the minute. We are open to the Committee's thoughts on this. There is a bigger question about when we move to take the child poverty agenda to the next stage.

Mr Attwood: An updated child poverty plan might be one. It is a commitment that you have, and it has not been done yet.

Dr McMahon: I take the criticism on board. However, in fairness, part of the consultation process was to highlight. The consultation process was too short; therefore, it was extended. Over and above that, and to do things more strategically, we thought that we would bring the child poverty strategy together with the children's strategy. The response was that people want integrated joined-up government, but they also do not want to lose things. They felt that the children's strategy was being lost. I think that we need to find a way to take this to the next level. Strategies will do a lot, but we should start to influence behaviours on the ground. I am talking about Departments and the arm's-length bodies that work for them.

The Chairperson: I remind members that we have three more substantive items to get through. I do not want to censure anybody.

Mr Maskey: I will be brief, Chair. Given the recent controversy, where do you see the racial equality strategy dovetailing with T:BUC?

Dr McMahon: The two have to work closely and in harmony. Racial equality is part of T:BUC, and the two need to work together. We need to agree the racial equality strategy and get it out. It needs to happen.

Mr Maskey: Pre-supposing that we get it at some point, what will the pecking order or relationship be between T:BUC and the racial equality strategy? I am trying to work out how you see it. I take your

point entirely. We need strategies, but, at the end of the day, it is action that changes people's behaviour. We can talk until the cows come home about getting people not to be sectarian or racist. It will take another 50 years before we change the mindset of a lot of people, but we can change their behaviour; that is for sure. The experience of the American civil rights movement tells us that, anywhere in the world, you will not convince people not to be sectarian, racist, colonial or imperialist; you will stop what they are doing and change their behaviour. I am trying to work out how they will dovetail their frameworks and sequencing.

Dr McMahon: Assuming that the strategy is published and agreed, a timescale for action will need to run alongside the various projects coming out of T:BUC, which I outlined earlier. We need to make sure that the two are given equal status. Going back to the earlier point, we need to have strategies and give things labels to make sure that we are taking forward the different initiatives and that there is clarity about what we are trying to do. However, we in the Department need to recognise where things need to join up. Take, for example, the United Youth programme. It came out under T:BUC, but, if it is to work, it will work by helping young people to develop their own competencies and confidence, even in their life and in the relationships around them. Then — this is the message that came back to us through the co-design process — it is a case of working out relationships with families and the local community, and then across the various divides. It was not going to be a case of putting together a programme, sending people away on a bit of training, giving them a bit of volunteering work and so on. The point that I am making is that there will be a racial equality dimension to that, for example. We need to make sure that all the different programmes reflect our increasingly diverse society and the issues and problems that have arisen through race hate and other issues and that we need to tackle through those programmes.

The Chairperson: We need to leave it there. I will sum up what you are coming back to us on. First, guidance in respect of Bright Start. Secondly, clarification on the spending profile of the £12 million for childcare. Thirdly, the budget profile for the T:BUC commitments and the sources of that funding —

Dr McMahon: Sorry, Chair, on that point, I did not get a chance to say that that would be subject to Ministers agreeing the profile and budgets. That is the only thing that I would say on that.

The Chairperson: OK. That clarification is noted. Fourthly, implementation plans for the same. Fifthly, criteria for the pilot youth intervention programmes and the consequences should June monitoring not be successful in the bids thereof. Sixthly, the timing of the allocations of the central good relations fund in 2013-14 and 2014-15. Finally, more info on the Moy education campus.

Grainne, Henry and Denis, thank you very much.

Dr McMahon: Thank you.