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

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Delivering Social Change:
OFMDFM Briefing

5 December 2012

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Delivering Social Change: OFMDFM Briefing

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Paul Givan
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr John McCallister
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray

Witnesses:

Mr Jonathan Bell	Junior Minister
Ms Jennifer McCann	Junior Minister
Mr Frank Duffy	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 junior Ministers McCann and Bell and officials Denis McMahon and Frank Duffy. Jonathan, are you leading the batting?

Mr Jonathan Bell (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): It is my turn this time. Thank you very much, Chair and members, for the opportunity to update the Committee on the work that we are doing to help to improve the lives of our children and young people. I will speak mainly about the work that we are carrying out to prepare the Northern Ireland contribution to the UK report on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). I will also give you an update on staff resources, which emphasises the importance that we are placing on children and young people.

The UNCRC report is part of the six-yearly periodic review. Under the convention, the UK is required to report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child by January 2014 on the work that is being taken forward to deliver on children's rights. The UN Committee will then seek views from the Children's Commissioners and other organisations before holding a hearing, after which it will publish its response and recommendations in the form of concluding observations. We will co-ordinate the Northern Ireland input to the UK state party report, based on contributions from all Departments.

Discussions on the preparation of the report have begun between the four nations at official level. In Northern Ireland, our current emphasis is on building an evidence base and deciding how children and young people can best be involved in the report.

In building the evidence base, the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) has taken the initiative to commission the UNESCO centre in the University of Ulster to develop a framework of child rights indicators that are related to the UNCRC. The centre has mapped existing indicators, primarily from the children and young people's strategy, against the relevant UNCRC articles and previous concluding observations. The initial data will be reviewed to identify those indicators that are most relevant and meaningful, and where possible, those will be broken down to allow further analysis of how particular groups of children are faring.

The Children's Commissioner and the children's sector have been centrally involved in the development of the framework, and we will work closely with them to ensure that it is robust and comprehensive. The framework represents an important step change in our work for children's rights, and is being watched with interest by the other three nations. It will inform our research programme and our work on involving children and young people in decision-making. The framework will identify where there are gaps in the evidence base that need to be filled. It will allow us to identify achievements since the last report, as well as informing us about shortfalls where effort may need to be focused to address problems.

In participation and engagement with children and young people, children — and particularly those who most need our support — need to understand their rights and be able to tell us when those rights are not being met. Too often in the past, their voices have not been heard. We are committed to putting that right, and we will use the evidence base accumulated by the framework to focus on those children who are at most risk.

We know that there are many organisations — for example, the Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC) — that are doing excellent work in giving a voice to these children. Jennifer had the chance to hear directly from children in care at an event hosted by VOYPIC. We want to build on the work that the Participation Network has carried out on our behalf to assist officials to consult with children as part of policymaking. We are pioneering a proactive approach to seeking the views of children and young people that will allow us to engage with them on their terms, whether through representative groups, on a face-to-face basis or through the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Officials are drafting a scoping paper that will identify the target groups of children that we need to engage and the methods that are most likely to obtain the maximum involvement, particularly with those children who traditionally remain disengaged. We are keen to hear any ideas that the Committee has that might feed into our approach.

In resourcing, there is a growing understanding that the experiences of our early years have a profound influence on the rest of our lives. That is reflected in the UNCRC, and it is also the reason why the Executive have placed so much emphasis on children and young people within the Delivering Social Change framework. In recognition of that, we are pleased to tell you that the Department has recently increased the size of the children and young people's branch, and by January, it will have a total of seven staff focused on advancing the vital work.

At this point, Chair, with your permission, I will hand over to Jennifer, who will tell you more about Delivering Social Change as it relates to children and young people, along with other updates on our work.

Ms Jennifer McCann (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):

Thank you, Jonathan. I think it might be helpful for the Committee if I update you on progress with implementing the Delivering Social Change framework, the work that we have done to address child poverty, developments in childcare and our promotion of play and leisure.

First, with regard to Delivering Social Change, I can report that, this morning, Jonathan and I chaired the ministerial subcommittee on children and young people. That afforded the opportunity to reflect on some of the development of the Delivering Social Change policy work and how it is being put into practice.

Members will appreciate that no single Department has the capacity to tackle the multitude of issues affecting children and young people and the communities in which they grow. The framework is, therefore, intended to co-ordinate efforts across Departments to deliver on priority social policy areas. It aims to deliver a sustained reduction in poverty and associated challenges from across all ages, while placing emphasis on improving children and young people's health, well-being and life opportunities, thereby breaking the long-term cycle of multigenerational problems. Work is under way

to identify priorities for children and families and how they can be addressed. We have just approved the draft children and young people's early actions paper, which has been influenced by Ministers and senior officials through the Delivering Social Change programme board and the ministerial subcommittees. It has also been informed by the views of the major voluntary and community sector organisations, and a draft should, hopefully, be with the Committee shortly.

Members will also be aware that, in October, the First Minister and deputy First Minister announced the development of six signature programmes under the Delivering Social Change framework to tackle issues including literacy and numeracy, family support and pathways to employment for young people. Those will be supported by investment of around £26 million under the framework and are examples of some of the initiatives that will deliver on priorities identified in the draft early action paper. Departments will now come together to deliver those actions through the Delivering Social Change governance structure. In addition to the ministerial subcommittees, that includes the programme board of senior officials, chaired by Jonathan and me, which meets every eight weeks, and within the framework, the signature programmes will be underpinned by programme delivery plans against which there will be regular reports on progress.

I will say a few words on child poverty. Members will be aware of the recent debate in the Assembly on 19 November. I do not want to repeat the points that I made at the debate except to say that there is a real concern amongst many stakeholders in the community about the potential for child poverty to increase, especially given the changes to the welfare benefits and the tax policies of the coalition Government. In light of that, junior Minister Bell and I held bilateral discussions with virtually all our ministerial colleagues to encourage them to ensure that their respective Departments are doing everything that they can to address and reduce child poverty. OFMDFM is also taking forward work to develop a child poverty outcomes model, which we expect to be ready early in the next financial year. That will help Departments to gain a better understanding of how they can contribute to addressing child poverty, and will also facilitate the monitoring of progress.

Finally, let me make a quick reference to the issues of childcare and play and leisure. As Jonathan mentioned in answer to an Assembly question last week, considerable progress has been achieved since OFMDFM took responsibility for co-ordinating the development of a childcare strategy. Indeed, the Committee should, hopefully, have received the consultation document on the strategy, which is being published on the OFMDFM website today. That consultation draft will inform public consultation on the content of the final childcare strategy, and progress in the short term will be enhanced by the allocation of almost £5 million from the central ring-fenced childcare fund to support actions on the ground. We are also looking at some pilot projects to support and inform the final strategy. During the public consultation, Jonathan and I will participate in public meetings with parents to learn about the challenges that families face in assessing childcare, and the Department will also engage with a wide range of stakeholders throughout that period.

Play and leisure is another important area, and one that we are progressing through the delivery of the play and leisure implementation plan. It is important to emphasise that a key responsibility for delivering on play and leisure rests with councils and other statutory bodies, and as a Department, we are showing a lead by promoting the benefits of play and leisure and providing some support to councils to help them to deliver. We have supported the establishment of play and leisure partnerships in 14 councils, with funding of up to £10,000 for each council. Our officials will continue to work with all councils to share good practice, through, for example, facilitating a meeting of the play officers forum next week, and they will also encourage and support the establishment of partnerships in the other 12 councils. I will stop now; I am sure that the Committee will want to ask questions.

The Chairperson: Thank you both very much. Can I start with an overview? As long ago as February, the First Minister and deputy First Minister wrote to the Committee saying that the Delivering Social Change framework would address two key issues: first, a sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues across all ages, and secondly, an improvement in children and young people's health, well-being and life opportunities, thereby breaking the long-term cycle of multigenerational problems. Can you update us on actual delivery on, first, the sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues?

Mr Bell: We need to be careful about saying that it is a reduction in poverty. Child poverty has fallen in the past number of months. However, when we talk about this, I sometimes ask myself this question: has it fallen? The reality is that if you measure it against the median income of the UK, and the median income of the UK falls, child poverty falls. So, I can sit here today and claim success for a percentage reduction in child poverty. However, it is not that any more money has gone into those family homes. It is the fact that if the target is set at 60% of the median income or less, and the

median income falls, child poverty, therefore, falls. However, does that make a real difference in children's lives?

The Programme for Government sets out longer-term commitments that we are all working on. It has 27 specific commitments relevant to children and young people. Part of that is about children and young people improving their literacy and numeracy. We know that lifting children out of poverty is largely about the education that we can provide for them. I will look at specific things that we are trying to do. In most cases, to lift a child out of poverty, we have to lift the family out of poverty. I will finish on this, and then Jennifer can come in with any points that she wants to make.

Take the social investment fund, the social protection fund, our childcare fund, and the additional funds that we put together for Delivering Social Change: we are looking at spending £118 million by 2016. That will be targeted on four particular areas. First, it is looking at economic regeneration in areas where there are specific identified needs. Secondly, it is looking at better educational outcomes. Part of the £26 million that we put in will be about delivering on literacy and numeracy. Additional teachers and nurture units will go into schools to help children in areas where being settled in school will be a major part of increasing their educational outcome. Thirdly, we will be looking at additional programmes for the children who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and trying to get them onto pathways for employment. Finally, we are looking at where there is dereliction and where we can provide better services. We are looking to have social investment fund money on the ground by April 2013.

Ms J McCann: I will come in on the back of that. Jonathan has outlined the signature projects that are going to be there with the £26 million. It is also important that the money will be targeted. It is going to have an actual focus on families and communities and areas of deprivation and need. We are looking at the 230 extra newly qualified teachers that will be going in to do one-to-one tuition to raise educational attainment, and we will be looking at the worst areas in underachievement and at what communities and areas they come from. We will also be looking at social enterprise hubs. We had a meeting earlier, and the Ministers are very clear that the £26 million will be targeted at those in most need.

The Chairperson: Jennifer, I want to clarify something that you said towards the end of your presentation. You said that it would be ready early in the next financial year. Is that the models for the various Departments to help deliver social change?

Ms J McCann: Sorry, the signature projects?

The Chairperson: You are developing models for Departments to help to deliver social change.

Ms J McCann: Oh yes, I mean, we are —

The Chairperson: Is that what you are saying? Those models will be ready early in the next financial year?

Ms J McCann: Really, the models are ready at the moment. We have a framework. A Delivering Social Change board has been set up, and that comprises all the Ministers who are involved and who have responsibility for children and young people and for tackling poverty, disadvantage and need. That programme board is already in place. We are looking at the early actions paper, which will, hopefully, identify actions that we can take forward to get it out there on the ground and actually make a difference. I am not sure whether I have picked — is that what you are —

The Chairperson: Have all the Departments that you will be co-ordinating to deliver social change got in place their models of how they are going to help you?

Ms J McCann: We are talking to the Departments constantly. Obviously, this is a fairly new concept, and the board has just been put together this year. We have all the Ministers and all the Departments around a table like this. When they go back to their respective Departments, they should be encouraging them to work within that type of framework. It should be there.

The Chairperson: It is just that, the last time we were briefed by junior Ministers, we were told that they anticipated that Departments would have developed their models by March 2013.

Mr Bell: There are two things running concurrently. Some parts of the models are working already. For example, there are seven nurture units in schools, and we are hoping to expand that to over 20. The placement of those additional units is being worked on and identified. It is difficult for us. The Department of Education will be looking at recruiting additional teachers in literacy and numeracy and is in the process of doing so. The other models that are working include the £700,000 on the PlayBoard scheme, the after-schools clubs that we are financing, including in rural areas, and the money that we allocated to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) regarding the processing time to have people registered, particularly around childcare and early years, are all up and running as we speak. The additional models, including the additional 20 hubs and the recruitment of teachers for literacy and numeracy, are works in progress. They are in the course of being recruited.

The Chairperson: The model is in place?

Mr Bell: Yes. Some of it is going to be additional. For example, the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is already working with young people not in education, employment or training. It has a smaller model. We have significantly expanded it to make sure that children can continue, so it will be working with that model. The additional model for literacy and numeracy is a new model that we have introduced, and that is being formulated. Again, we are looking to have money on the ground and teachers recruited in spring 2013.

Ms J McCann: I was not clear about what you were saying at the beginning, but I should add that there is a model in respect of taking all those signature projects forward, as Jonathan said, but there is also the poverty outcomes model, which the National Children's Bureau is helping Departments to develop. It is all working in parallel.

The Chairperson: Also the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People Services?

Ms J McCann: Sorry? Yes.

Mr Bell: It is included within that, yes.

Mrs Hale: Thank you for coming to the Committee today. My question is to do with the childcare development fund. Part of the Programme for Government concerns the implementation of a childcare strategy, as you have just explained. I understand that the Executive have ring-fenced £12 million over the four-year comprehensive spending review period for the development of a childcare strategy. I have a couple of questions. First, can you inform the Committee as to which Departments have made successful bids, if yet, and what their projects are? Secondly, will more money be made available for the development fund?

I have just one more question, very quickly. Sorry, there is a quite a lot here. On the nurture units that you mentioned, Jonathan, are those placed in inner-city areas or will rural poverty be recognised as well?

Ms J McCann: To answer your first question about the actual departmental bids that have been granted, DHSSPS has got up to £250,000 for a focused review of the childcare needs of vulnerable families. It has also got £500,000 to enhance childcare provision for children with a disability. The Department of Education and DHSSPS together have up to £370,000 for enhanced development opportunities for preschool children. The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure has £362,000 for after-schools film clubs, and DEL has up to £3 million to expand the Steps to Work childcare provision. Those are the departmental bids that have been successful.

The nurture groups will be throughout the whole of the North. It is hoped that they will look at urban and rural poverty. Where nurture groups are needed and in what schools they are needed will be taken into consideration, but there will certainly be an even spread between urban and rural.

Mrs Hale: Will extra money be made available?

Ms J McCann: For nurture groups?

Mrs Hale: No, for the strategy in general if needed.

Ms J McCann: Around £5 million has not yet been spent, so that will be rolled out over the next period, and we will then look at what is needed after that.

Mr Bell: Currently, the model is focused on us having a strategy that allows childcare to be affordable, accessible and of high quality. The draft strategy is ready for consultation. We used RSM McClure Watters to specifically research the areas in which there is need. I represent an area that is partially rural. Anecdotally, we hear that there is over-provision in a certain area and no provision in another area, so we commissioned the research to inform us about how we could ensure that it was accessible and flexible whether you lived in a rural area or not.

In the first tranche, we spent just under £350,000, and in the second, we are looking at spending £5 million in total, from the £12 million in the three-year strategy. You asked what additional money has been put in, so I should say that this is being supported by the £700,000 that is being put into the PlayBoard schemes. Additional to this is the support for school provisions such as the film clubs, which have been very successful. A critical issue was that there had been a backlog in the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in getting people registered. You could not provide childcare without being properly registered, so we invested there in order to reduce the time taken for a person to become registered to provide the childcare service. We have reduced that time. This is all additional to the existing £12 million.

The Chairperson: We were talking to Michael Hughes from the Rural Community Network about strategies. You said that there is pretty solid anecdotal evidence that there are gaps or issues. Have you any sense of going for a quick win while you are developing a robust, overarching strategy?

Mr Bell: Yes. Work is under way through projects announced already, such as Skainos in east Belfast, which is providing childcare as part of social enterprise. We are considering how we can encourage community organisations to come to us, particularly those that have capacity.

We need to ensure that our childcare is flexible. Some people who are taking their first step on the rung of employment may need childcare for only three hours a day. In the private sector, to a certain extent, you may have to take a contract, so you may need to take eight hours even if you are using only three. We are looking to community organisations, of which Skainos in east Belfast is one example, to come forward and give us their bids on the flexibility that they can offer that will allow people to gain access to employment and have flexible childcare.

I am sure that there are other models, but one that I referenced last week in the Assembly was the Shankill Women's Centre. I looked at the range of programmes it has for personal development and counselling for trauma, and its education facilities. A whole range of things impressed me, but the thing that impressed me most was that no woman would be turned away — I should say no woman or man — from accessing employment, personal development or counselling services on the grounds of childcare needs, because it is provided on site. I was in the crèche, which is a good facility. Those are some of the models that we have to look towards. They involve communities responding to need in their own areas and allowing people a hand up by providing childcare on site.

Mr Maskey: I will pick up on a lot of what has been said. Jonathan said that we have to ask ourselves periodically whether we are making an impact on reducing child poverty. The only way you can do that is to have set plans, targets and measurements. Given the legislative requirement under the Child Poverty Act, can you confirm that all the relevant Departments will have their plans in place so that we can measure what is happening in a holistic way?

Ms J McCann: I tried to explain the poverty outcomes model and that the National Children's Bureau is working with Departments on that. All Departments have signed up to the Programme for Government. They already work together on the signature projects for the £26 million. So, all those early actions and projects show that Departments are working together. The family resource hubs will also be helpful. There is still a job to be done by individual Departments. My predecessor, Martina Anderson, and Jonathan met all Ministers one-to-one to make sure that everybody was singing from the one hymn sheet. A lot of work is ongoing. I am confident in how the signature projects have been brought together by Education, Health, Employment and Learning, Social Development and Enterprise Trade and Investment. Quite a number of Departments are working together to deliver the first series of signature projects, and I hope that they will work that way in the future.

Mr Bell: It is sometimes hard to rely on statistics, Alex, because I am conscious that the 93,000 of our children who are in poverty are 93,000 too many. As Jennifer said, Departments are very clearly working together. I think that we are very encouraged by the response that we are getting from Ministers and by the work that they have put in, even as recently as this morning.

The UK-wide 2020 target is to have fewer than 10% of children living in households with an income of 60% of the UK median. Under that measure of relative child poverty, we have 93,000 children here, and we have a target to reduce that to fewer than 44,000 by 2020. A reduction to lower than 10% is called elimination. Latest figures are for 2010-11 and show that 21% of our children live in that position, which is an improvement on 2009-2010, when 27,000 of our children were living in relative poverty. So, there has been a reduction from 116,900 to 93,000 children.

The second target is for absolute child poverty, which is the proportion of children who still live in purely income-poor households, based on an income threshold for 1998-99 that has been adjusted for inflation. The latest figures, from 2010-11, showed that 13% of our children were living in absolute child poverty, which works out at 58,500. That was a reduction from 2009-2010, when it was 14%, or 62,000 children. So the number living in absolute child poverty went down from 62,000 to 58,500. However, as junior Ministers, we are determined to hold ministerial feet to the fire to bring about change in the short term and, in the longer term — *[Inaudible.]* As regards some of the things that we will look at to achieve those aims, we know that a child with five good GCSEs can lift themselves out of poverty, but to get that right, we must get early years provision right. So, we may not see the outcome of what we are doing now in the lifetime of two to three Assembly sessions. However, I still think that our approach has to be two-pronged. To an extent, the easiest thing to do would be to provide an extra £15 to certain families to bring down the figures. We could all then pat ourselves on the back and say that we have reduced child poverty by x thousand. Would that really make a long-term difference? I beg the Committee's indulgence to focus, with us, on building the longer-term framework to make sure that children are nurtured properly, get into school and get the early foundations in their education that will allow them to get five good GCSEs at age 16.

Again, it may be 10 to 15 years before we see the outcome of the work that we are doing now. So, it is not all about immediately reducing statistics; it is about building a long-term foundation.

Ms McGahan: Thank you for the presentation. Jennifer, I direct this question to you.

First, given the commitment that the childcare strategy is to be an integrated strategy, can you ensure that any pilot projects will be focused on child development and not merely be childcare aimed at the labour market?

Secondly, you mentioned meeting stakeholders and parents in relation to the challenges facing childcare. I live in the district electoral area of Clogher Valley, where there is a population of 8,000 or 9,000 people. We do not have one full-time child daycare facility. I think that that is incredible. I have a sister who drives 18 miles into Dungannon to use those facilities, with a six-month-old baby and a two-and-a-half-year-old child. Furthermore, it is a contract that you have to stick with. I welcome that you are looking at flexible childcare models, but I am anxious to know your process for meeting parents. I want to emphasise the rural end of this; that you should speak to parents there.

Last week, a young girl came into my office. It was pretty heartbreaking. She moved into a house six months ago and had exhausted the avenue of a community care grant and hardship loan to buy essentials such as a cooker, fridge and washing machine. She had no money to heat her home. I pursued it with a local organisation, and it disappointed me that the first question I was asked was whether the girl was known to social services. As she could not heat her home, she was almost being seen as being a bad mother. You need to be very cognisant of that aspect as well. That mindset needs to be stamped out. People do not have money to heat their homes, but there was nothing I could do for her. I just wanted to flag that up.

Ms J McCann: The first thing to say, Bronwyn, is that when we are looking at childcare, it is not just about the parents who are going out to work. The employment aspect is part of it, obviously, but we also need to be looking at childcare and the child's overall development.

Earlier, some members talked about early intervention. It has been proven that the earlier you intervene in a child's life, the better that child's life opportunities will be in the longer term. In fact, it is better for the whole family and community. We are looking at this in respect of the overall development of the child as well.

You mentioned gaps. There are very clear gaps in childcare provision in rural communities. This is not the first time I have heard people talk about the distance that they have to travel. I also believe that childcare has to be flexible for the people who are working and the childcare needs, because people do not work the same hours as people worked years ago. Most people's jobs are no longer nine to five. Childcare has to be flexible and take in the likes of starting earlier and going on later in the evenings. Everybody's employment is different, so people have different needs. I am trying to say that when we are looking at childcare, we need to be looking at the child's development, how the family has to be accommodated and the flexibility in all of that.

We hear about rural issues all the time. We hear about the lack of rural transport. It is something that we need to be focusing on.

Mr Bell: I have not practised as a social worker for a couple of years, but there were what were called article 18 moneys, which could have been accessed and used at that time.

Brenda Hale had a group of young mothers up with me. They came through the Simon Community and different areas. They found themselves in their position as a result of domestic violence or a partner abusing drugs or alcohol, and the finances of the house were out. It was not the mother's fault that she ended up in the position she was in. We are very sensitive to the point that women in particular are, through no fault of their own, finding themselves in situations in which they cannot heat a house. However, there is that provision of article 18 moneys.

You make a good point about looking at how that could be provided because it is vastly cheaper to provide the article 18 money than it is to take a child into care at a cost of thousands of pounds every week. I think your point is well made; many women find themselves in certain circumstances, and it should not be a reflection on their parenting of the child, but of the circumstances in which they find themselves.

The First Minister and deputy First Minister set up an alleviating hardship group. Those who took part in it were people with expertise in working with single parents, domestic violence, the disability sector and the voluntary sector. They produced a report. Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness asked them to look specifically at how we could alleviate, mitigate and avoid further financial hardship. That included a number of things: the impact of welfare reform, the rising level of fuel poverty and the prospects for economic growth. So, within those circumstances, they targeted people with expertise to come together. The group has now produced a report. I cannot say too much about that, but the First Minister and deputy First Minister will consult their ministerial colleagues, having taken the expertise from the group, to see how we can do better in areas such as fuel poverty, particularly with the likes of welfare reform coming on. They will be doing that in the not too distant future.

Mr Moutray: You are very welcome.

Over the past number of years, one of the increasing problems for parents, children and young people has been child internet safety. In relation to the well-being of our young people, where does that fit in with the work you are doing? It has been highlighted, especially recently, as an issue faced day and daily by many young people.

Mr Bell: We met the NSPCC on that matter. On 15 February, it will be child internet safety day, and we will be making more firm announcements on what we are doing. You are absolutely correct about the potential of children to be exposed to harmful material, particularly pornography or adult material.

We are also dealing with other children's groups about the phenomenon known as sexting, the exchange of sexual messages or images, and the potential harm that can come from those online actions, particularly now that children with mobile phone devices can send an image to a boyfriend or girlfriend that ends up being Bluetoothed around and, all of a sudden, could be picked up on YouTube or more extreme sites. We have had conversations with the police in relation to that, too.

To specifically answer your question, Stephen, about the actions that are under way, we are represented on the UK Council for Child Internet Safety. We are on the executive board, through DHSSPS. We participate, through its departmental representatives, in a child protection cross-border group of officials established under the North/South Ministerial Council. We are kept apprised of developments in internet safety on both sides of the border.

Guidance and circulars are issued by the Department of Education to all grant-aided schools, to give them information and advice on internet safety. C2K provides a service, through a directorate of the Western Education and Library Board, that allows all schools to manage access to social media sites and streaming media sites. It provides an e-safety monitoring system, known as Securus, to help teachers identify where cyberbullying is occurring and address child protection concerns. Jennifer and I have tasked our officials to look, along with other Departments and including the NSPCC — and I met Colin Reid recently — at identifying the best ways to raise awareness of the issue. A lot of parents are not aware of what can be accessed over a smartphone or internet-capacity phone. We must ensure that there is a consistent approach with a common theme and message.

We know that there are gaps. Where there are gaps in policy or actions, we will see what we can do on a cross-departmental basis to address that.

As I said, we are looking at what we can do around participation in the internet safety day. Jennifer and I spent several hours with the chair of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland and one of its forensic psychologists. The board is responsible for improving how each agency co-operates in order to safeguard children. We are looking not only at government agencies but at the likes of the NSPCC and Barnardo's. We are looking at what everybody is doing on internet safety and bringing that together.

We will continue, via our officials, to participate in departmental representatives groups. We are looking at a huge area. We are looking to see what we can do and looking to raise awareness through the internet safety day.

Our schools have done an excellent job on their safety network, the software they use to pick up cyberbullying, and the protection against violence and pornography. The problem, and it is a massive problem, is when our children leave school. I have two children at secondary school. One has a BlackBerry and one has an iPhone. It is very, very worrying what they can potentially access. Without making any specific commitments, I do know now that if you are going to an internet service provider, you have to opt into seeing the sort of material that is violent, adult or pornographic. You have to choose to opt into that. There is a way forward there. However, for the children who are already with internet service providers, they do not have to opt in. That leaves a whole generation of our current teenagers with potential access to those sites. We need to look at what we can do, legislatively and through raising awareness.

Ms J McCann: To pick up on one point, I think awareness is very important. A lot of children put themselves in a vulnerable position without even knowing it. They might send photographs to certain individuals, but not know that that image is being sent on to a wider audience. We are trying to create the situation where young people are aware that putting something on a phone or on Facebook is quite dangerous, because they do not know where that is going to end up.

Mr Lyttle: Thank you for your presentation, junior Ministers. I have a couple of questions. First, if a member of the public asked what Delivering Social Change was, what would you say?

Ms J McCann: Delivering Social Change is, in my view, about delivering projects that are going to make a change in people's lives. Delivering those actions and projects to people on the ground will, as I said, make a change in the quality of their life.

Mr Lyttle: My understanding is that it is a framework across government to bring Departments together. Is it? That is a genuine question.

Ms J McCann: There is a Delivering Social Change programme board, which creates a framework whereby all Departments buy into that board. We insist that when a Minister cannot go to a meeting — whether it is on children and young people or poverty and social inclusion — a senior official represents and speaks for that Minister. That is very important.

We have said on numerous occasions, as have many Committee members, that we need a holistic and joined-up approach if we are going to make any real, meaningful change in people's lives. It is about having all the Departments around the table agreeing. It is also about ensuring that when we announce things such as the signature projects, they link with one another and dovetail together, rather than sit in isolation. We all know that unless we take a holistic view of making changes in people's lives, it is not going to happen.

Mr Bell: I will give you the boring bit of the model, then tell you some of the actual detail, because I know that the Committee is interested in detail.

At the top, there is an Executive ministerial subcommittee on poverty and social inclusion, and a separate one on children and young people. Immediately below the ministerial subcommittee, Jennifer and I chair the Delivering Social Change programme board. The Executive subcommittees on poverty and social inclusion and children and young people report to the Executive on a quarterly rotating basis. Immediately below that, meeting every eight weeks, is the Delivering Social Change programme board. We have an OFMDFM programme director, special advisers, and then we have the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Department of Education, DEL, the Department of Finance and Personnel, Health, the Department for Social Development (DSD), the Department of Justice and the Department of the Environment. Other Departments are required. We meet every eight weeks. Out of the side of that eight-week box, you have the children's consultative group, which is our stakeholder group. It includes Children in Northern Ireland and Barnardo's. Then you have the children and young people's strategic partnership. You also have a deprivation advocacy group, and we have key stakeholders in deprivation feeding into us every week as we chair those meetings.

Flowing out of that are the specific programmes. Somebody might ask what that means to them. There are an additional 230 recent graduate teachers who are going to be employed to deliver one-to-one literacy and numeracy for children in primary and post-primary schools. Those are the children who are targeted as not meeting the basic standards that they need to meet. They are going to get 230 new teachers, who are additional to what the schools have, specifically to do one-to-one tuition to bring those children up to the level on literacy and numeracy.

We have 10 family support hubs through the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. All of us know that when families go to an organisation, they are told, "That is not my Department; you need to go to social services", and, "Social services cannot provide that; you need to go to Education." Those support hubs will, effectively, provide a one-stop shop. We asked the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to target parents who need a lot of support for their children. That is, in a non-judgemental way, targeting the parents who are vulnerable for additional support.

We are looking at 10 social enterprise incubation hubs. The understanding is that there will be one in each of the social investment fund zones. There will be 10 in total. They will be taken forward by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and DSD. They are looking at areas in which there has been multiple deprivation over two years. They will provide a social enterprise incubation hub to try to bring forward new business in areas in which there has been severe deprivation.

DEL had a pilot intervention — I mentioned it earlier — for the young people who are NEET. That was to develop the skills and link them to the employment market. It is going to upscale that through Delivering Social Change from a pilot project. It should be targeting in the region of 500 families.

The Department for Social Development should take forward an additional 20 nurture units. That is breakfast club support and support around behaviour when children are in school. There will be encouragement to parents to take ownership of their parenting. There are some fantastic examples in Belfast of parents taking ownership of their parenting and upskilling themselves in the help that they give to their children, so that they go into school, with a proper breakfast and socialisation skills, to be able to learn the foundation building blocks for literacy and numeracy.

Each Department has its own responsible owner for taking that forward. I could go through a whole list of all the groups, including Children in Northern Ireland, VOYPIC, Save the Children, the Children's Law Centre, Children in Need, the Aisling Bursaries programme, PlayBoard and Employers for Childcare, that we have met with as junior Ministers individually to take that forward. It was on the basis of the consultation with stakeholders that we have put forward the programmes that I have mentioned to you.

Mr Lyttle: How do we know that those projects have been targeted properly? How do we measure their success?

Mr Bell: The first way is through ministerial questions. We will co-ordinate, take forward and chair the meetings. We will report to the Executive. We are held to account via the Committee and directly through the Ministers for those particular roles.

Ms J McCann: There is going to be a focus on outcomes as opposed to anything else in this. The difference is that you have strong and visible ministerial leadership in the Delivering Social Change framework that perhaps was not there before.

The Chairperson: Are there six agreed delivery plans for the six signature projects?

Ms J McCann: Although the different projects are out to different Departments, the delivery plans are being looked at and are being framed at the moment.

The Chairperson: So, they are in development rather than agreed.

Ms J McCann: Yes, they are in development.

Mr McCallister: I have jotted down that I wanted to hear about monitoring and evaluation. The issue is how you do that constantly. I urge you to not be afraid to go to Departments to challenge them. Your point, Jennifer, about outcomes is something that we are all very supportive of. That type of early intervention is something that we have been calling for for a long, long number of years, and it is good to see something coming together. I hope that it is as all-embracing as we are being told today that it will be. When you do the evaluation and monitoring, I urge you to not be afraid to challenge and to go back to Departments or groups that you are leading and say, "Actually, this is not producing the outcome that we want." You made a point about five good GCSEs, and there is no doubt in all our minds that education is the way out of poverty for a great many people, particularly if you can get to that level. However, the issue is making sure that kids and parents are engaged with the education system and that there are linkages in between so that people do not just fall off the radar.

Mr Bell: One thing to look out for early in the new year — we have nearly finished it — is a child poverty outcomes model. We commissioned that work in OFMDFM, and it is about saying, "Are we addressing the issue?", "Are we being effective?", "What interventions are likely to produce the best outcomes over the long term?" and accessing the mainstream actions that are already in place. That model will be available to you early in the new year, and it is specifically saying, "What will produce the best outcomes in the longer term?" and "What are we doing with what we already have?", which is what you were saying when you said that we should challenge Departments along the way.

We have used the National Children's Bureau to assist Departments in developing the model so that it cuts across government. As I said before, does health lead to a better education model? We know that children with better health have a better education, and we know that children with a better education have better health, but which one is responsible? It is across government. We do workshops, and one is being held on Monday, to bring Departments together to find out what everyone is doing.

You asked about what we are actually delivering out of this. The key deliverables should be a mapping exercise that will assess the extent to which the existing Departments support improving life chances. What are the existing Departments doing to support improving life chances? We need an outcomes model to support the implementation of the strategy. So, as the strategy is implemented, we can say, "Here are the outcomes that we are delivering." There will be, consistent within that, a training programme and materials that will be rolled out not only across Departments but across stakeholders and partners. We are looking for a social impact tool that will help Departments to estimate the potential savings or returns that they will get from investing in the early intervention and the impact that that would have on reducing child poverty.

We are committed to a number of things. For example, we are committed to the target of five GCSEs at grades A to C, or the equivalent, including GCSEs in maths and English; we have allocated more of the overall health budget to public health; and we have a strategy to reduce economic inactivity through skills, training, incentives and job creation. The childcare strategy is going to the Executive imminently: I am not meant to tell you the exact date, but you can probably work it out from the word "imminently". We have put £40 million into addressing dereliction and promoting investment in physical regeneration through the social investment fund. An additional £40 million has been invested to improve the pathways to employment and to tackle the systemic issues that are linked to the deprivation that exists. We are using the social protection fund to help individuals and families in the current economic downturn, particularly against the backdrop of welfare reform. There are a number of other things, but those are the key actions that we are doing to back up the model. We have used the National Children's Bureau to give us a child poverty outcomes model specifically to do two things:

to tell us what new things we need to do to be most effective and to assess against the existing situation.

Ms J McCann: John, I will pick up on one thing that you said about challenging the Departments. I am glad that you said that because we would welcome the Committee's support in challenging the Departments on anything. The response from all the Committees to the Programme for Government was instrumental in creating the Delivering Social Change framework. It reflected the views of Committee members right across all Committees, which was that they needed more joined-up working and Departments working together, so it was something that came out of that consultation period.

Mr McCallister: On Jonathan's point about health, I do not know whether you can quantify this, but some people would say that only 20% of your health is affected by the Department of Health, so you need so many other things, such as environment, education and the quality of housing that you live in. There are other factors in there that are huge. The Chair has often said that one thing we do well here is strategy, but we are not just as good at the action plans. It would be good to see the types of models that come out of this and the actions flowing from this and not be afraid to look at all the options.

In some of these programmes, when we challenge, we tend to look at poverty. I urge you to remember that, sometimes, families that we would not normally think of can hit difficult times, whether it is through illness or whatever it happens to be. I am keen to ensure that we do not overlook that. Some models share a constituency boundary. For example, in Ballynahinch, we have a Home-Start programme. We need to ensure that we are not reinventing the wheel in some places. Those models work well, and we see that and support those types of services being delivered.

On the internet safety issue, how responsive have you found internet providers to be in addressing the problems that you rightly highlighted? Is it a fairly good relationship and a willingness to tackle that or has it been very difficult? I know that the internet is a minefield.

Mr Bell: We are operating through the UK Council for Child Internet Safety. My understanding is that it is in a strong relationship communication-wise with the internet service providers. We are thinking outside the box in legislation with respect to internet service providers, and whether we do it that way or by the means of encouragement. In my view, the internet service providers have stepped up to the mark a little in that all new people coming on have to opt into adult material, pornography and violent material. That is something that we wanted the providers to do. It will not work for those with existing services. We are in the process of evaluating with them — almost a bit like the press and the Leveson inquiry — on whether they do it themselves in advance or whether we do it by means of legislation. We need to ensure that the legislation that we would bring forward would not be unnecessarily draconian, but we need to protect children. So, it is a very early relationship between the two, but my understanding is that they are communicating together.

The First Minister and deputy First Minister and Jennifer and I are open to your specific ideas coming through. I know that your role here today is to scrutinise us on what we are doing, and we are happy to stay for as long as we need to in order to assist that process. Every change and amendment that you made as a Committee to us on historical institutional abuse is now in the Bill, which is to go for its final reading. I hope that shows that we are prepared to listen to the Committee. We are looking for your interesting, innovative and exciting ideas. In respect of Delivering Social Change, we are talking about signature projects, but we are looking at early intervention, at where we can bring all the Departments together cross-departmentally and at central funding that is allocated to Departments for projects. We are also looking for ideas and actions. We are very keen to see what you as a Committee tell us could be done better or could be more innovative in Delivering Social Change.

The Chairperson: Minister, you broadened it out to bring in the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Bill. There has been the issue of those who are not included because they were abused clerically rather than in institutions. The Committee wishes to engage with your Department on this. In a discussion on Radio Ulster's 'The Stephen Nolan Show', a line was read out — I do not think that it was from a press statement; I think that it was a line given specifically to Nolan — to say that the Department would look at this after Sir Anthony Hart had concluded. Is that the official position of the Department?

Mr Bell: The line that was put through by the Department is that the announcement of what we will do will be made after Sir Anthony Hart has concluded. Jennifer and I have already met, as had Martina and I, a whole range of people who came forward for the existing inquiry but who are not included in

its remit. It is not just clerical abuse. In this very room, we met people who had been abused by youth leaders on church premises. No matter where you draw the line, it is very difficult to draw the line in a specific way. I am continuing to meet with people who have been abused in clerical and other settings, so it is not that we have stopped everything. The Executive have decided that they will deal with the work to be taken forward on other instances of abuse after Sir Anthony Hart has concluded.

The Chairperson: That is useful clarification.

Mr Bell: We can still meet, and we will still talk with people. However, we need to be careful because people are coming forward on clerical abuse, and if you draw a line there, that excludes the children who are now adults who have come to us and who were abused on church premises by clerical-related people. Those people may not have been clerics, but they were cleric-related.

I should also say that anyone who has been abused has the system of a joint protocol investigation with the police and social services, regardless of the fact that we are investigating historical institutional abuse. Historical institutional abuse was taken to an inquiry because those children, who are now adults, had nowhere else to go. They could not go outside, and they had no one else to go back to. That is why the line was drawn at residential abuse. I have dealt with people who, 20 or 30 years later, revealed what occurred, and the perpetrators were still living and have subsequently been convicted by the courts. Anyone who has experienced abuse, no matter how many years in the past, should immediately bring that to the police, because that does two things. First, it allows the police to investigate with a view to prosecution, and secondly, it allows that information and intelligence to go into social services, which can examine what children those people have access to. Although a certain person may not have been convicted, social services can take action to protect other children. The fact that an inquiry is going on does go against anyone reporting an instance of abuse that they have suffered and to have it fully investigated and to have an action plan both of prosecution by the police and of protecting other children by social services. That is ongoing as we speak.

The Chairperson: That is a useful update. Thank you. I am sure that, at some point, the Committee will want to analyse that.

Mr Maskey: I do not want to prolong the meeting, and I know that the Ministers had an hour scheduled. From the presentations of both Ministers, it is clear that a lot of work and effort is going on to make all that happen and to make the strategic interventions work, and I appreciate that. One of the milestones in the Programme for Government on the Delivering Social Change commitment is about delivery and includes the social investment fund. Last Thursday, I did a meeting that included a number of organisations, including a couple from your constituency, Jennifer. Those organisations were a bit concerned about the guidance and the time frames within which some of the steering groups have to work. Some believe that they have very good projects, but they may not be in a state of readiness now and might, therefore, lose out. Is there an update or any new thinking on the guidance, framework or the timelines that are applicable to some of these applications? Clearly, some of them are very good, but they may not be ready in a short period of time. I understand the dilemma about getting the money out and spent, but I also accept entirely the validity of making sure that it is spent in the right way and in a more effective way, which is what the two Ministers are trying to do in an overall context.

Mr Bell: The area-based plans are due to be submitted by 31 January 2013, and we are working with the steering groups to identify the profile. Let me be very clear that — I think that this was inherent in your question — no money will be lost to anyone if they need time to get up and going. That money is ring-fenced.

Ms J McCann: I have heard concerns, and you have expressed them well. There has been some confusion about the final guidance, and some groups felt that they were at an unfair disadvantage. We are looking at that and will try to ensure that the deadlines or timescales are achievable. We certainly do not want to exclude anybody.

Mr Bell: I am referring to the social investment fund. You mentioned Delivering Social Change, but I think that you meant —

Mr Maskey: It is one of the milestones in Delivering Social Change and in the Programme for Government.

The Chairperson: I am looking at the Hansard report from when you were here with junior Minister Martina Anderson. She said that a key programme for Delivering Social Change is the social investment fund and:

"we are pleased that the Executive have now agreed our proposals for the final operation of the fund."

That was seven months ago, and it will be several more months before the money hits the ground. Has there been a slippage? In May, when Martina said that you had agreed your proposals for the final operation of the fund, was it known then that nothing would come out in this financial year?

Mr Bell: No moneys are lost. The money is there and is still to be spent. On the objectives that we set, some work was done to look at the economic regeneration in areas of need, better outcomes for education, pathways to employment, tackling dereliction and providing better services. It takes time to get the processes in place and get them right, and I am reasonably confident that we have done that. This is only the first phase, and we intend to have a second phase in the next spending review period. We need to get the right personnel on board in the steering groups and the right programmes in place. I am confident that, with money on the ground in April 2013 and with the first phase likely to run to March 2016, we have probably taken an adequate amount of time to get it right.

Ms J McCann: We feel that frustration, too, Chair. We would rather that it happened more quickly, but there has always been a bottom-up approach to the social investment fund, and some communities are concerned even now that they are not ready.

The Chairperson: I was about to mention frustration. Minister Bell and I talk to the same community groups in Strangford, and there is a sense of frustration among them. Can anything be usefully said today to those groups that see over £100 million effectively sitting in the bank and want the money?

Mr Bell: I accept what you are saying, Chair. The last community group that we visited was the Ards Community Network, and one of its key figures sits on the steering group. In seeing the work that it and others do across the board, I am confident. We needed to get the right personnel and the right structure in place. We are spending £80 million of public money, and it is easy to issue money. However, we want it spent correctly, and we want the right personnel. We could have spent it. To a certain extent, spending money is easy, but we wanted the people on the ground and in the community groups who know their areas and know what they need to feed up to us what they want. So, we have put the right structure and the right personnel in place, and when the money goes on the ground in April 2013, they will see an effect.

We have the social investment fund and the social protection fund. As I said, there is up to £5 million in the childcare fund, and there are the additional funds that we are using. We are already spending money and will be spending up to £118 million by 2016. A lot of money is already going onto the ground in respect of after-school clubs and film clubs, and money was put into getting additional people registered for childcare. That is all ongoing, and we look forward to seeing what the groups come up with. They know what is best on the ground, and they have to tell us from the ground up how they want their public money spent.

Mr Lyttle: Can I ask a quick supplementary question about timescales?

The Chairperson: Very quickly.

Mr Lyttle: Minister Bell, you said that it was important to take a lengthy time to get the right structures in place for the social investment fund. What would you say to concerns that the same amount of time is not being given to steering groups to get the area plans right, given that it is significantly less time than was taken to set up the groups? I declare an interest as a member of the east Belfast steering group.

Ms J McCann: I will answer that. We are already looking at that and are trying to push some of those timelines to ensure that no group is disadvantaged and that groups have enough time to get their plans together. We are looking at that at the minute because of the way that it has unfolded.

Mr Lyttle: Fair enough.

The Chairperson: I thank both junior Ministers and the officials for their time. You have been very generous. Thank you very much.