

# Written Ministerial Statement

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## The Executive Office

### **PUBLICATION OF THE PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026**

*Published at 1.30pm on Wednesday 27 May 2026*

**Mrs O'Neill (The First Minister) and Mrs Little-Pengelly (The deputy First Minister):** We wish to update the Assembly on the publication of the Programme for Government (PfG) Annual Report for 2025-2026.

When the Executive agreed the Programme for Government (PfG) 2024–2027, Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most, we committed to working together to bring about real change that people here could see and feel in their everyday lives. We set an ambitious programme to address the challenges that so many families face. These commitments centered around nine key priorities, underpinned by longer-term objectives that would build new foundations for the future. The PfG is not the totality of the Executive's ambition for people here. There is significant work going on across departments that is making a real difference in communities.

Today (Wednesday 27 May 2026), the PfG Annual Report for 2025-2026 has been published. We believe that this report demonstrates the tangible progress that has been made towards the nine PfG priorities across the Executive. Delivered through a shared ambition and despite the challenging financial context in which we are operating, the achievements made this year reflect a collective endeavour, with departments, local government, the voluntary and community sector, and businesses all playing vital roles. Of course, a Programme for Government is not just about the here and now, it has to build for the future. Work is also progressing on the longer-term Missions of People, Planet, Prosperity, the cross-cutting commitment to Peace, and the Building New Foundations commitments.

We believe that as a result of the work that has been carried out to deliver on the commitments in the PfG, people are seeing a real difference. Local families have saved an estimated £26 million from the Childcare Subsidy Scheme and the £135 million invested in cutting health waiting times has meant that over 237,000 additional patients have been treated.

The £55 million invested in early learning and childcare provision has resulted in over 2,500 additional full-time pre-school education places and the £20 million invested in delivery of the Skills Fund from July 2024 is supporting 17,000 individuals to upskill and reskill.

Within our commitment to provide better support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs, improved outcomes are being delivered. One example of this has been the creation of an additional 157 classes for 1,374 pupils across 123 schools.

A range of work has also been carried out to speed up justice, which is supported by the £20.5 million funding secured from the Public Sector Transformation Board. This is part of our continued commitment to keep our communities safe.

Across the range of progress that has been made to date, much has been as a result of strong cross-departmental and partnership working. From enabling 5,300 additional properties to connect to wastewater infrastructure to investing £83.7 million in housing support services assisting 20,000 vulnerable individuals and families to live independently, we are clear that, by working together, we can deliver more for our people.

Of course, we recognise that there is still more to do and we are clear that many of the challenges we face cannot be resolved overnight. There can be no room for complacency. Over £5 million has been invested in the Local and Regional Change Funds to support vital, on-the-ground work to tackle violence against women and girls. Ending the scourge of Violence Against Women and Girls will remain a key priority for this Executive.

Reversing the damage caused to Lough Neagh is part of a longer-term plan, and good progress is being made in delivering the Lough Neagh Action Plan.

There is no doubt we are taking steps in the right direction.

As we move into the final year of the Programme for Government, we recognise that many challenges remain, not least the extremely difficult financial position. Quite simply, we have consistently been under-funded relative to our level of need. We will continue to press for a fair and sustainable funding model to enable us to invest in our public services, to ensure they can properly meet the needs of all our people.

However, we know that there is no simple fix for the strain on our public services, even with increased funding. This is why reform and transformation are central to the Programme for Government. The PfG Annual Report 2025-2026 demonstrates that we are already driving delivery on this front. This has included establishing an Office of AI and Digital to drive innovation and investing £129 million through the Public Sector Transformation Fund across innovative projects in Health, Justice, Infrastructure and Education.

We agree as an Executive that our obligations do not end with this mandate. We will continue to encourage and support innovative and new solutions for the delivery of the PfG. The Public Sector Transformation Fund Annual Report 2025-2026, which is annexed to the PfG Annual Report, details further transformation projects which were announced by the Finance Minister yesterday. With significant potential to bring about visible and lasting improvements to the way frontline services are delivered, including to some of the most vulnerable in society, this is a welcome next step as we work to protect the sustainability of services in the longer term.

We remain committed to shaping a better, fairer and more prosperous future for everyone and we hope that this Annual Report gives confidence that we are moving collectively in the right direction to do what matters most for the people that live here.