
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 6 February 2009

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Reduction in Paperwork

Dr A McDonnell asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps it is taking to significantly reduce the amount of paperwork it sends to constituency offices and other organisations throughout 2009. (AQW 3732/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness):

OFMDFM adheres to the "Guidance on Distribution of Departmental Publications and Consultation Documents" provided to all Departments here, which advises that there is a requirement to provide hard copies of documents to certain recipients including political representatives, Parliamentary contacts and Legal Deposit and other libraries. The guidance states that it is a matter of choice for the receiving organisation(s) as to their preferred method of receipt of Government publications, and the Department ensures that arrangements are in place to facilitate these preferences.

OFMDFM is cognisant of the value of using electronic documents where appropriate. OFMDFM's sustainable development policy includes a commitment to use less paper more sustainably, to support electronic document management, and to continue to use the web for the majority of external publications. The Department has also adopted a good practice approach to publishing, which supports the production of printed documents only when a need has been identified and electronic publication is not a suitable medium for communication to the target audience. The aim therefore is to use electronic communications as first choice and only to provide printed documents where a need exists, for example where the recipient does not have access to IT facilities or the document's size makes it unsuitable for electronic transfer by e-mail.

All OFMDFM staff have access to modern electronic IT equipment and facilities and the Department seeks to make best use of technology to reduce the amount of hard copy paper documents that are issued, by encouraging the use of electronic documents via e-mail or though the Department's website where appropriate.

Planning Appeals Commission

Mr T Elliott asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister if it will request the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) to resume the supply of electronic data to Planning Online. (AQW 4274/09)

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister:

The Planning Appeals Commission is an independent tribunal Non-Departmental Public Body. Given its independent tribunal status, its Chief Commissioner has been asked to provide a response directly to you, and we understand that she has written to you in the following terms:

"I have been asked to provide you with information requested in the above Assembly Question.

The Planning Appeals Commission provides information to the public in electronic format free of charge on all aspects of its workload on its website, www.pacni.gov.uk. This is updated daily. Accordingly the Commission will not supply electronic data to Planning Online.

If you, as a MLA, wish to discuss this matter further please contact my Personal Secretary, Mrs Selina Quinn, to arrange a meeting.”

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Welfare of Farmed Animals

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development in what circumstances her Department can serve a rectification notice under the terms of Regulation II of the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000. (AQW 4278/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): Under Regulation 11 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (NI) 2000, if an authorised officer considers that a farm animal is being kept in a way which is likely to cause it unnecessary pain, suffering, injury or distress, or is being kept in any way in contravention of the legislation, he may serve a notice on the person in charge of the animals.

Notices served under Regulation 11 set out what actions the person in charge of an animal must take in order to ensure compliance with the Regulations. Failure to comply with such a notice is an offence under Section 2(1) of the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 1972.

Welfare of Farmed Animals

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if a rectification notice can be served under the terms of Regulation II of the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000, to the owner of a puppy farm. (AQW 4279/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Under Regulation 11 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (NI) 2000, if an authorised officer considers that a farm animal is being kept in a way which is likely to cause it unnecessary pain, suffering, injury or distress, or is being kept in any way in contravention of the Regulations, he may serve a notice on the person in charge of the animals.

Under the legislation, farmed animals are defined as those bred or kept for the production of food, wool, skin or fur or for other farming purposes. This would therefore not apply to dog breeding establishments (puppy farms). Furthermore, such establishments are governed by the Dogs (NI) Order 1983, and DARD inspectors have no powers of access under that legislation.

However, as I stated in the Assembly on Monday 26 January 2009, I have been concerned about the lack of regulation for puppy farms for some time. It is a matter that I will want to deal with in any new legislation which would mirror that of Britain and would end the intensive farming of puppies here. I also plan to raise this matter with Ministers in Dublin, as it is my view that puppy farming is an all-Island problem.

Construction Industry

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what construction projects and maintenance contracts are available for her to offer to the construction industry in the coming year. (AQW 4300/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The following table lists the construction projects and maintenance contracts available for my Department to offer to the construction industry during the 2009/2010 period.

Title of Construction Projects	Brief Description
Roll-out of DARD Direct Accommodation Project	Building works to upgrade existing and new office accommodation for DARD Direct 'one stop shops'.

Title of Construction Projects	Brief Description
No specific projects – a range of minor capital refurbishment projects will be carried out.	A programme of minor capital refurbishment works will be carried out in a number of properties throughout the departmental owned estate.
Belfast -Blackstaff Glen Road & Whiterock Drainage Scheme	Drainage infrastructure repair.
Coleraine –Lodge Burn Drainage Scheme	Upgrading drainage infrastructure to cater flood alleviation and development.
Belfast- Strathmore Park Stream	Drainage infrastructure repair.
Mallusk-Ballymartin Blackwater Rivers Drainage Scheme	Upgrading drainage infrastructure to cater for flood alleviation and development.
Belfast-Rochester Avenue Stream	Drainage infrastructure repair.
Belfast –Mount Vernon Stream	Drainage infrastructure repair.
Belfast- Ferndene Stream	Drainage infrastructure repair.
Whiteabbey-Threemilewater/Concrete Row drainage scheme	Upgrading drainage infrastructure to cater for flood alleviation and development.
Carrickfergus –Sullatober Water –Phase 1	Drainage infrastructure repair.
Omagh-Hunter Crescent flood wall scheme	Drainage infrastructure repair.
Omagh-Johnston Park Stream drainage scheme	Upgrading drainage infrastructure to cater for flood alleviation and development.
Omagh –Dromore Road Drainage Scheme 2	Upgrading drainage infrastructure to cater for flood alleviation and development.
Comber –Crescent Stream	Drainage infrastructure repair.
Coalisland –Mousetown Drain	Drainage infrastructure repair.

In addition proposals are at an advanced stage for the provision of additional student bedrooms, teaching rooms, recreational facilities and staff offices, plus an outdoor equine arena at CAFRE's Enniskillen Campus. The appraisal for this project is currently with DFP for approval.

Title of Maintenance Contract	Brief Description
DFP Properties Division Measured Term Contract	A programme of planned preventative maintenance (statutory and health and safety), emergency maintenance and minor modernisation work will be carried out in the departmental owned estate.
Routine watercourse maintenance programme	Maintenance of designated watercourses to ensure free flow.
	CCTV survey of culverts Culvert desilting.

Poultry Industry

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many jobs are dependent on poultry farming and processing; and what plans she has to strengthen that sector. (AQW 4328/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: It is estimated that approximately 5,290 jobs are dependent on poultry production and processing. To help strengthen this sector, among others within agriculture, my Department has a number of schemes under the Rural Development Programme that aim to help the economic performance of the agri-food sector.

A Processing and Marketing Scheme (PMG), which opened for applications in December 2007, will continue to provide capital support to micro, small, medium and intermediate sized enterprises involved in processing and marketing of agricultural, horticultural and forestry products.

A Market Development Grant Scheme will provide financial support for businesses to improve the marketing of produce. This scheme opened for application on 28 January 2009.

The Supply Chain Development Programme will facilitate co-operation and collaboration in supply chains between producers and processors. It is expected that this scheme will open for applications in the next two months.

In addition to these measures the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) offers education programmes in agriculture, food technology and food supply management producing people qualified at National Certificate, National Diploma, Foundation Degree and Honours Degree level for the farming and food processing industry, including the poultry sector.

There is also support from the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) which assists DARD and the Poultry Industry by carrying out R&D studies and promoting innovation. It also works with DARD and the Industry in providing diagnostic, regulatory and surveillance testing.

Poultry Industry

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what representations she has made to the Environment Minister in relation to the protection of jobs in the poultry industry, given the EU waste directives on nitrates and phosphates. (AQW 4329/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My officials have been working with Department of Environment (DOE) officials and poultry farming representatives to consider the poultry sector's ongoing compliance with the EU Nitrates Directive.

The Nitrates Action Programme Regulations are joint DARD and DOE legislation which implements the EU Nitrates Directive here. The Action Programme includes measures which control when and where poultry litter can be spread on land and how it must be stored. My officials are currently in discussion with the European Commission about the measures for the storage and management of poultry litter.

My Officials have also provided input to Invest NI, the Department of Trade and Investment and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister about the impact of the Nitrates Directive on the poultry industry.

While the Nitrates Directive requires change to some farming practice, I believe the poultry industry can operate within its requirements. I can assure you that I and my Department are fully supportive of the poultry sector. I want to ensure that jobs are safeguarded in both primary production and poultry processing and that the industry has a sustainable future.

Larne Veterinary Office

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if the closure of the Larne Veterinary Office goes ahead as planned, to where the staff will be relocated. (AQW 4492/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: In the eventuality of the need to relocate staff from any offices, decisions will be based primarily on business need. On confirmation of DARD Direct office locations, DARD business areas are being asked to indicate the staff requirements at each location.

DARD Personnel Management Branch will fully engage with all staff affected by any potential relocation and in addition to business requirements, will also take into account other issues including staff welfare, disability legislation requirements, transfer lists and redeployment opportunities.

However, this process has not commenced in relation to South and East Antrim as no decision has yet been taken on the location of the DARD Direct office to service South and East Antrim. At this stage it is not possible to definitively say where staff may be relocated.

Animal Welfare Legislation

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for a timescale for the completion of her review of the consultation on animal welfare legislation. (AQW 4509/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: In my Statement to the Assembly on 26 January 2009, I outlined the actions I had taken to date to review animal welfare legislation in the north.

In my Statement I outlined that my Department had consulted on proposals for new animal welfare legislation in late 2006, but as this was carried out under Direct Rule, I wanted to take time to fully consider existing Animal Welfare legislation and the responses received to the consultation. I have completed an initial review, and have met a range of key stakeholders. These meetings have been exceptionally informative.

I believe that it is important that animal welfare legislation across the island of Ireland is broadly compatible. I may add that this is a view shared by some of the welfare groups I met. I welcome the fact that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the South is continuing to meet stakeholders and will shortly be finalising its own legislative proposals on animal welfare.

My review of animal welfare legislation is nearing completion. I will shortly be examining all the evidence presented to me. I will then consider the scope for new legislation in the north, in line with the resources that are available.

DARD Office in Banbridge

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development the reasons for closing the part-time DARD office in Banbridge. (AQW 4573/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The aim of DARD Direct is to improve the accessibility of the full range of farmer focussed services to DARD's customers. The establishment of the DARD Direct service delivery model will mean that a wider range of DARD services will be offered from a smaller number of strategically located offices, which will open 5 days a week for customers.

In order to provide this enhanced service, DARD has already signalled that it will inevitably lead to the closure of a number of its smaller offices. These provide access to a limited range of services and are generally only open to customers on a part-time basis. This includes the Banbridge sub-office which is only open to the public for a half a day per week (Monday mornings) and provides access to a limited range of services.

Pork Producers

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if his Department has considered giving compensation to pork producers and processors who had to put their product in cold storage due to contamination concerns. (AQW 4729/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I can advise that on 29 January the Executive agreed to fund financial hardship assistance of up to 25% of the direct verifiable costs incurred by those producers and processors affected by dioxin-contaminated feed. DARD and DETI officials are to consider the practical outworkings of these hardship payments for both the production and processing sectors, including the pork sector.

In addition, the introduction of Private Storage Aid for pigmeat which I was successful in having introduced here in mid-December and which has a potential value of around £6m, will provide market support to the pig sector over the next six months.

My officials will also continue to take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that all markets remain open to pigmeat from the North and will co-operate closely with the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment and Invest NI to re-establish lost ground.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

GAA in the Tyrone Area

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he intends to discuss with the governing body of the GAA, the naming of competitions and teams in the Tyrone area that commemorate controversial figures. (AQW 4233/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell): The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is the governing body of Gaelic sports. I have grave concerns in relation to the naming of competitions and naming

of sports grounds after controversial figures. I have already made representations to the GAA about the naming of competitions, grounds and events in the Tyrone area and recently wrote to the Association expressing my concerns on the matter. I have also continued to make clear my view that all sports in Northern Ireland should be run on as open and inclusive a basis as possible.

Elite Facilities Programme

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many applications for elite facilities were received by Sport NI before the deadline; and how many facilities are expected to be completed in time for the London 2012 Olympics. (AQW 4250/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Ten applications to the Elite Facilities Programme were received by Sport NI before the Stage Two (outline business case) deadline of 4pm precisely on 28 November 2008. These exclude the 50 Metre Swimming Pool project which had previously been granted approval to proceed to the full business case stage.

Based on an initial analysis by Sport NI and the Central Procurement Directorate of the proposed Outline Master Programmes, potentially seven elite facilities, covering eight sports, could be completed prior to the London 2012 Olympics, if they are successful through Stage Two of the competition. This includes the 50 Metre Swimming Pool project.

I consider the provision of elite facilities in time for the 2012 Olympics as an urgent priority and have asked Sport NI to reflect this in its plans for the sport capital programme. However, there are a wide range of factors including the planning process, business case approvals and budgetary considerations to be addressed before final approvals to proceed.

Northern Ireland Sports Strategy

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what is the current position on the Northern Ireland Sports Strategy. (AQW 4499/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), in partnership with Sport Northern Ireland (SNI), has prepared a final version of the Northern Ireland Sports Strategy. This final version has been forwarded to the Northern Ireland Executive for consideration at a future meeting.

Language Literature for Schools

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what he is doing to ensure that the post-primary and primary school language literature prepared 12 months ago is given out to those schools. (AQW 4505/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I recognise the importance of the Ulster-Scots teaching materials produced by the Curriculum Development Unit in Stranmillis for the Ulster-Scots Agency in 2007.

My department is facilitating discussions between the relevant stakeholders in the Ulster-Scots community about the outstanding issues affecting publication and dissemination of the materials. This work is currently ongoing and I want to see this issue resolved as a matter of priority.

Proposed Merger of the Education and Library Boards

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many library posts will be lost as a direct result of the proposed merger of the Education and Library Boards. (AQW 4579/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: As a result of the formation of a single library service, which will come into effect in April when responsibility transfers to the Library Authority, it is anticipated that around 13 posts at senior and middle management levels will no longer be required. Funding has been made available this year to allow a number of members of staff to leave the library service early. These redundancies are voluntary.

Stewards at Irish League Grounds

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what level of training is required before members of the public can act as a steward at Irish League grounds. (AQW 4581/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Responsibility for determining the level of training required before members of the public can act as stewards at Irish League grounds rests with the owners and operators of the grounds and the governing body of soccer in Northern Ireland, the Irish Football Association (IFA) in the first instance. However, the Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds, published by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in 2007, provides guidelines on stewarding at sports venues including the training of stewards.

Sport Northern Ireland (SNI), which is responsible for the development of sport including the distribution of funding, is also currently in discussion with a range of accrediting bodies, SkillsActive and further and higher education colleges about the possibility of offering owners and operators of sports grounds and sports governing bodies opportunities to participate in safety training courses for stewards. These discussions are on-going.

Maze Site

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to list all the companies involved with the sports stadium at the Maze site; and the payments they received, broken down by (i) client; (ii) design team; (iii) advisers; and (iv) tenderers, including the development team; contractors; and designers. (AQW 4594/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: A breakdown of the organisations my department contracted, the functions they undertook, and the payments they have received in relation to the multi-sports stadium at the Maze is as follows:

- PricewaterhouseCoopers
- Development of Business Plan and Outline Business Case £285,691
- Mott MacDonald/HOK Sports Partnership
 - Stadium Design
 - £3,139,530
- KPMG/Davis Langdon
 - Programme Management
 - £144,922
- Fire IMC
 - Advertising for Naming Rights Competition
 - £10,374
- Mott MacDonald
 - CEEQUAL(sustainability/environmental quality assessment)
 - £4,670
- Central Procurement Directorate
 - Procurement
 - £13,521

Dog Racing Facilities

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he will support proposals for dog racing facilities in the Ballymoney area. (AQW 4609/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Under the Recreation and Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, responsibility for the provision of adequate facilities for recreation, social, physical and cultural activities

rests with District Councils. Any request for support for dog racing facilities in the Ballymoney area should therefore be addressed, in the first instance, to Ballymoney Borough Council.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Classroom Assistants

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Education for a comparison of pay between classroom assistants in Grant Maintained Integrated Schools and those in schools funded by Education and Library Boards. (AQW 3907/09)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): Maidir le scálaí tuarastáil, thaispeáin Comhaontú ar Phostmheastóireacht sna Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne, a socraíodh i mí na Samhna 2007, trí chineál cuntóirí ranga agus ghlac formhór na gcúntóirí ranga atá fostaithe ag na Boird leis an comhaontú seo.

With regard to salary scales, the November 2007 Job Evaluation Agreement in the Education and Library Boards, which the vast majority of classroom assistants employed by the Boards have signed up to, resulted in 3 categories of classroom assistant:

- Classroom Assistant (General)
- Classroom Assistant (Special Needs)
- Classroom Assistant (Additional Special Needs)

The 2007 Agreement also included a one-off payment to buy out the historic terms and conditions of classroom assistants. This removed the special needs allowance and provided for a 36 hour salary divisor rather than the previous 32.5 hour divisor. The 2007/08 salary scales for each of the above grades are set out in the attached table at Appendix A. (The 2008/09 pay scales have not yet been implemented).

As Job Evaluation for the grant-maintained integrated and voluntary grammar sector, has to date not been implemented by schools in these sectors, the majority of classroom assistants employed in grant-maintained integrated schools are paid on a Protected Salary Scale which has the following 3 categories of classroom assistant:

- Classroom Assistant (Qualified)
- Classroom Assistant (Recognised)
- Classroom Assistant (Unqualified)

The 2007/08 salary scales for each of the above grades are set out in the attached table at Appendix B. (The 2008/09 pay scales have not yet been implemented).

I hope this clarifies the position.

Family Learning and Literacy

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education what actions her Department is taking to support family learning and literacy; and to outline how funding on this issue was spent in the last year. (AQW 4134/09)

Minister of Education: Mar Aire Oideachais, tugaim lántacaíocht d'fhoghlaim teaghlaigh, agus creidim go bhfuil dualgas ar thuismitheoirí tionchar dearfach bheith acu ag tabhairt tacaíochta don fhoghlaim.

As Minister for Education, I am fully supportive of family learning, and believe that parents have a responsibility to play a positive role in supporting learning.

One of my top priorities is reforming the current system of transfer to post-primary school. The current selective system of transfer is failing large numbers of our children: every year over 11,000 children leave school without achieving good GCSEs in English or Irish and Maths and this cannot continue. If we want to see improvements, in particular in literacy and numeracy, we must reform radically our current education system, removing the inequities that exist.

My Department is therefore seeking to support this through a range of policies and programmes being developed in this changing educational environment. These include the new school improvement policy, the revised literacy and numeracy strategy and the extended school policy, all of which recognise the centrality of family learning in improving educational outcomes.

As part of our school improvement policy and the revised literacy and numeracy strategy, we want to see a greater focus on engagement within schools – particularly with pupils – and between schools and the families and communities they serve. It is essential that parents play their part in supporting the work of the school, raising the aspirations and expectations of pupils and valuing education.

With the addition of Extended Schools funding, £10.8m in 2008/09, some 450 schools operating in the most deprived and disadvantaged areas have been able to offer a range of services and activities to help meet the needs of children, their families and the wider community through providing opportunities for lifelong learning and personal development. Extended Schools have been building partnerships with neighbouring schools, the further education sector and other statutory, voluntary, business and community organisations to develop and deliver better services for the community as a whole and for children and young people and their families in particular.

Neighbourhood Renewal

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister of Education (i) how many posts her Department will fund for neighbourhood renewal; and (ii) when a decision will be made regarding these posts. (AQW 4154/09)

Minister of Education: Tá iarrtha ag oifigigh DSD ar mo chuid oifigeach féin athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar na tionscadail a maoiníonn an Belfast Regeneration Office faoin Chlár Athnuachana Comharsanachta le gur féidir le DSD teacht ar chinntí maidir le cé acu a maoiníodh siad iad i ndiaidh mhí an Mhárta 2009 agus maidir le cá mhéad a thabharfaidh siad.

My officials have been asked by DSD officials to review the projects currently funded via the Belfast Regeneration Office under the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme to enable DSD to reach decisions on whether and to what extent it should continue to fund them after March 2009. I have not been asked to consider funding for specific projects or indeed for posts within those projects, rather I understand that projects that have the broad support of both DSD and the lead policy department will be considered by DSD for funding from its Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund.

I fully support the objectives of the Neighbourhood Renewal strategy and through my focus on raising standards in education and particularly, on tackling underachievement, I am confident that education can and will make a real contribution to the success of that strategy.

The introduction of the revised curriculum with its emphasis on the core skills of literacy and numeracy and my proposed reform of post-primary transfer which seeks to create a more equal education system. So too is my establishment of the Taskforce on Traveller education whose recommendations will assist the Department in developing an action plan to ensure better educational access and outcomes for Irish Traveller and Roma children.

These interventions, along with programmes such as Extended Schools and the targeted interventions under Achieving Belfast and Achieving Derry, are all fully in line with the objectives of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and will, I believe, make a real difference to the educational outcomes and life chances of young people in our most disadvantaged communities.

Category 2 Posts in Conway Education Centre

Mr G Adams asked the Minister of Education to detail what stage discussions are at between her Department and the Department of Social Development regarding the funding of Category 2 posts in Conway Education Centre, the progression of these discussions and a date for when they are set to conclude. (AQW 4292/09)

Minister of Education: Tá iarrtha ag oifigigh DSD ar mo chuid oifigeach féin athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar na tionscadail a maoiníonn an Belfast Regeneration Office faoin Chlár Athnuachana Comharsanachta a d'fhéadfaí nasc a bheith acu leis an oideachas le gur féidir le DSD teacht ar chinntí maidir le cé acu a maoiníodh siad iad i ndiaidh mhí an Mhárta 2009 agus maidir le cá mhéad a thabharfaidh siad.

My officials have been asked by DSD officials to review the projects currently funded via the Belfast Regeneration Office under the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme that may have a link to education to enable

DSD to reach decisions on whether and to what extent it should continue to fund them after March 2009. The list of projects includes the Conway Education Centre. I have not been asked to consider funding for specific projects, rather I understand that projects that have the broad support of both DSD and the lead policy department will be considered by DSD for funding from its Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund.

School Transport

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Education what steps she intends to take to ensure that school transport is equality proofed for rural families. (AQW 4309/09)

Minister of Education: The forthcoming changes to the post-primary transfer arrangements and area-based planning proposals are likely to have a major impact on the provision of home to school transport assistance. I have, therefore, decided to postpone any further work on the review of school transport policy until the way forward in relation to the transfer arrangements and area-based planning are known.

A luaithe atá daoine ar an eolas faoi thodhchaí an tsoláthair iarbhunoideachais cuirfear tús arís eile leis an athbhreithniú.

Once the future of post primary education provision is known the review will recommence. All Departments are now required to 'rural proof' new or reviewed policies and complete a full equality impact assessment to ensure equality of provision for all. We will be undertaking this process as part of the review.

Educational Psychologists

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education how many pupils in East Antrim are waiting to be assessed by an educational psychologist. (AQW 4330/09)

Minister of Education: Tá curtha in iúl ag Príomhfheidhmeannach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt dom go bhfuil 174 páiste ag freastal ar scoileanna i dtoghcheantar Aontroim Thoir atá ag fanacht ar mheasúnú ó shíceolaí oideachais.

I have been advised by the Chief Executive of the North-Eastern Education and Library Board that the number of children attending schools in East Antrim who are waiting to be assessed by an educational psychologist is 174.

This figures includes Stage 3 assessments and reviews, Stage 4 assessments, Stage 5 reviews, special testing and examination arrangements and assessments of pre-school children who are attending a nursery school or class, as outlined in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Educational Psychologists

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education what is the average waiting time for pupils in East Antrim to be assessed by an educational psychologist. (AQW 4331/09)

Minister of Education: Bhí tugtha le fios dom ag Príomhfheidhmeannach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt gurb é seo a leanas an meán thréimhse feithimh i gcomhair mheasúnaithe le síceolaí oideachais do dhaltai in Aontroim Thoir.

I have been advised by the Chief Executive of the North Eastern Education and Library Board that the average waiting time for pupils in East Antrim to be assessed by an educational psychologist is as follows:-

Stage 3 non-statutory assessments – 141 days

Stage 5 statutory assessments – less than 6 weeks.

Composite Classes

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of Education what research, if any, has been undertaken by her Department to assess the impact of composite classes on (i) educational attainment; and (ii) school enrolment levels. (AQW 4337/09)

Minister of Education: Ní dhearna ná níor choimisiúnaigh an Roinn taighde le measúnú a dhéanamh ar thionchar ranganna cónasctha (i) ar ghnóthachtáil oideachais; agus (ii) ar leibhéil rollaithe scoile.

The Department has not undertaken nor commissioned research to assess the impact of composite classes on (i) educational attainment; and (ii) school enrolment levels. The pupil level data required to undertake such analysis are not currently held by the Department therefore no assessment of impact can be made.

Composite Classes

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the impact of composite classes on (i) educational attainment; and (ii) school enrolment levels. (AQW 4338/09)

Minister of Education: Ní dhearna ná níor choimisiúnaigh an Roinn taighde le measúnú a dhéanamh ar thionchar ranganna cónasctha (i) ar ghnóthachtáil oideachais; agus (ii) ar leibhéil rollaithe scoile.

The Department has not undertaken nor commissioned research to assess the impact of composite classes on (i) educational attainment; and (ii) school enrolment levels. The pupil level data required to undertake such analysis are not currently held by the Department therefore no assessment of impact can be made.

New Build Primary Schools

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of Education what consideration is given to the percentage of children with special needs when determining the appropriate class sizes in the planning process for new build primary schools. (AQW 4339/09)

Minister of Education: I am committed to improving provision and outcomes for all children. My proposals relating to the Review of SEN and Inclusion are currently awaiting agreement from the Executive to issue for public consultation.

I am also currently considering a revised version of the Primary School Building Handbook. The current Building Handbook identifies that the size of general classrooms in new build primary schools are 60m² which is to cater for all children in the class. A shared resource area of 40m², is also provided which can be used by the school for a wide range of educational activities. In addition, a small group room is provided which can be used for special needs tuition.

Is féidir le húdarás scoile moltaí a thabhairt don roinn le go ndéanfaidh sí breithniú orthu, má chreideann an túdarás scoile go bhfuil imthosca ar leith ag an scoil nach mór a chur san áireamh.

A school authority can also raise proposals with the department for consideration if it believes it has particular circumstances which need to be taken into account.

From the 2008/09 school year I have made available substantial additional funding to support primary schools with the delivery of the Foundation Stage of the revised curriculum. This is providing all Year 1 and Year 2 pupils with access to classroom assistance for the first time and will help to give our youngest primary pupils the best start to their education.

Recruitment Agencies

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Education how much public money was paid to recruitment agencies for teaching and non-teaching staff in each Education and Library Board, in each of the last three years. (AQW 4397/09)

Minister of Education: Seo mar a leanas suimeanna a íocadh le gníomhaireachtaí earcaíochta le haghaidh foirne múinteoireachta agus foirne neamhmhúinteoireachta i ngach Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne, i ngach bliain airgeadais le trí bliana anuas:

The amount paid to recruitment agencies for teaching and non teaching staff in each Education and Library Board, in each of the last three financial years, is as follows:

2005-06:

	Teaching Staff	Non Teaching Staff
BELB	£203,480	£320,061
NEELB	£114,725	£214,437
SEELB	£258,419	£447,598
SELB	£21,000	£78,000
WELB	£14,497	£77,953
Total	£612,121	£1,138,049

2006-07:

	Teaching Staff	Non Teaching Staff
BELB	£109,864	£331,212
NEELB	£76,822	£350,847
SEELB	£136,843	£430,436
SELB	£17,000	£79,000
WELB	£2,376	£92,579
Total	£342,905	£1,284,074

2007-08:

	Teaching Staff	Non Teaching Staff
BELB	£35,975	£566,461
NEELB	£63,694	£529,616
SEELB	£67,896	£443,402
SELB	£2,000	£116,000
WELB	£580	£261,629
Total	£170,145	£1,917,108

Educational Opportunities

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Education what work she has carried out to foster and promote better educational opportunities. (AQW 4398/09)

Minister of Education: Tá díogbháilteacht i gcoilár mo chláir um leasú san oideachas a chinnteoidh go bhfuil an deis ag gach páiste a chumas nó a cumas iomlán a bhaint amach.

At the heart of my programme of reform in education lies a determination to ensure that every child has the opportunity to achieve to her or his full potential.

One of my top priorities is reforming the current system of transfer to post-primary school. The current selective system of transfer does not, in my view, promote better educational opportunities and is failing large numbers of our children. If we want to see improvements, in particular in literacy and numeracy, we must reform radically our current education system, removing the inequities that exist.

Alongside this, my Department is implementing a revised curriculum designed to meet the needs and spark the interests of every child and is ensuring, through the Entitlement Framework and the new careers strategy, that young people have access to a much broader and more balanced range of pathways from the age of 14 and to the careers education, information, advice and guidance they need to make informed choices.

Literacy and numeracy, of course, remain at the heart of the revised curriculum and we are currently finalising a new school improvement policy and a revised literacy and numeracy strategy designed to ensure that, by the time they finish their compulsory education, young people have the literacy, numeracy and other skills they need to succeed and flourish.

We also recognise that young people need the support of their parents, families and the wider community if they are to succeed. Through programmes such as Extended Schools, some 450 schools operating in the most deprived and disadvantaged areas of the north are already building links with parents, communities and other schools to provide services that support young people in overcoming some of the barriers to learning that they face.

Through all this we aim to ensure that young people are better prepared for life and work in the 21st century.

Teaching English

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister of Education how much was spent on teaching English to (i) primary; and (ii) post primary pupils who do not have English as their first language in each of the last three years broken down by (a) total; (b) Education and Library Board; and (iii) constituency. (AQW 4403/09)

Minister of Education: Soláthraíonn mo Roinn cistiú ar bhonn díreach don Seirbhís um Chuimsiú agus Ilchineálacht (IDS) a bhunaíodh ar 1 Aibreán 2007. Is seirbhís réigiúnach é a oibríonn thar an cúig Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne (ELBanna) agus úsáidtear an cistiú a fhaigheann sí le tacaíocht a thabhairt do dhaltaí nua a bhfuil Béarla acu mar theanga breise (EAL). Sular cuireadh an IDS ar bun, tugadh cistiú do gach ELB go díreach.

My Department provides funding directly to the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS) which was established on 1 April 2007. It is a regional service working across the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the funding it receives is used to support schools with newcomer pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL). Prior to the setting up of the IDS, funding was allocated directly to each of the ELBs.

The Common Funding Formula (CFF) provides funding directly to schools. The EAL factor, which is within the CFF, is a specific amount that a school can receive for each newcomer pupil with EAL who is recorded on the annual school census.

The following tables explain the funding that has been allocated through these two mechanisms.

Funding to Inclusion and Diversity Service / Education and Library Boards

Year	IDS (£)	BELB (£)	NEELB (£)	SELB (£)	SEELB (£)	WELB (£)	Total
2008/09	1,015,000	-	-	-	-	-	1,015,000
2007/08	888,000	-	-	-	-	-	888,000
2006/07	353,000*	160,000	96,000	177,000	96,000	52,000	934,000

* Costs for initial set up of Inclusion and Diversity Service.

COMMON FUNDING FORMULA – EAL FACTOR - 2008/09

Constituency	Primary	Post-Primary
Belfast East	140,569	117,960
Belfast North	167,110	51,116
Belfast South	355,846	211,345
Belfast West	94,368	40,303
East Antrim	102,232	31,456
East Derry	167,110	49,150
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	492,483	318,492
Foyle	138,603	33,422
Lagan Valley	198,566	74,708

Constituency	Primary	Post-Primary
Mid Ulster	231,988	91,419
Newry & Armagh	312,594	155,314
North Antrim	168,093	51,116
North Down	95,351	45,218
South Antrim	168,093	61,929
South Down	147,450	60,946
Strangford	119,926	40,303
Upper Bann	469,874	203,481
West Tyrone	173,991	47,184
TOTAL	3,744,247	1,684,862

COMMON FUNDING FORMULA – EAL FACTOR - 2007/08

Constituency	Primary	Post-Primary
Belfast East	98,072	66,010
Belfast North	113,160	40,549
Belfast South	249,895	143,336
Belfast West	66,010	22,632
East Antrim	80,155	15,088
East Derry	109,388	35,834
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	347,967	223,491
Foyle	93,357	19,803
Lagan Valley	146,165	49,979
Mid Ulster	146,165	58,466
Newry & Armagh	184,828	99,015
North Antrim	87,699	27,347
North Down	66,953	20,746
South Antrim	114,103	28,290
South Down	83,927	33,948
Strangford	82,984	23,575
Upper Bann	314,962	151,823
West Tyrone	94,300	22,632
TOTAL	2,480,090	1,082,564

COMMON FUNDING FORMULA – EAL FACTOR - 2006/07

Constituency	Primary	Post-Primary
Belfast East	94,848	47,424
Belfast North	62,016	18,240
Belfast South	223,440	190,608
Belfast West	64,752	22,800
East Antrim	75,696	18,240
East Derry	91,200	15,504
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	170,544	51,984

Constituency	Primary	Post-Primary
Foyle	67,488	4,560
Lagan Valley	102,144	20,064
Mid Ulster	92,112	31,920
Newry & Armagh	116,736	41,952
North Antrim	52,896	18,240
North Down	62,928	10,944
South Antrim	72,048	23,712
South Down	41,040	21,888
Strangford	91,200	12,768
Upper Bann	205,200	70,224
West Tyrone	48,336	20,064
TOTAL	1,734,624	641,136

School Entrance Examinations

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the recent development in which schools in Ballymena and Magherafelt have announced their intention to set their own entrance examinations on a cross sector basis; and if guidance from her Department would have the power to prevent this action. (AQW 4405/09)

Minister of Education: My assessment is that, in order to deliver on their announcement, the schools in Ballymena and Magherafelt will, firstly, have to have regard to the guidance issued by my Department on 2 February 2009 and, in particular, to the recommendation not to continue academic selection on the grounds of equality and the risks of dysfunction.

Mar sin, beidh ar na scoileanna seo, má leanann siad leo, an mheicníocht láidir mheasúnaithe agus na gnásanna atá riachtanach do chritéir iontrála acadúla, a sholáthar dóibh féin.

Then these schools, if they persist, will have to provide for themselves the robust assessment mechanism and procedures that academic admissions criteria require.

Male Teachers

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education for each of the last five years, how many male teachers have been in a full time permanent post in a secondary school, broken down by (i) Education and Library Boards; (ii) The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools; (iii) Integrated sector; and (iv) Irish Medium sector. (AQW 4432/09)

Minister of Education: Tugtar líonta na múinteoirí fear, ar múinteoirí lánaimseartha buana iad, atá i mbunscoileanna agus in iarbhunscoileanna i dtuaisceart na hÉireann sna táblaí thíos.

The numbers of full-time permanent male teachers in primary and post-primary schools in the north of Ireland are given in the tables below.

FULL-TIME PERMANENT MALE TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND, 2003/04 - 2007/08

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Education and Library Board schools ^{1,2}	540	543	520	494	482
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools ³	765	736	712	680	670
Integrated schools ²	48	50	53	49	51
Irish medium schools ³	17	18	19	17	18

- 1 includes teachers in preparatory departments of controlled grammar schools.
- 2 teachers in Controlled Integrated schools are included with Integrated schools rather than Education and Library Board schools.
- 3 one Irish medium school is Catholic Maintained. Teachers in this school are included with Irish medium schools rather than CCMS schools.

FULL-TIME PERMANENT MALE TEACHERS IN POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND, 2003/04 - 2007/08

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Education and Library Board schools ¹	1,265	1,235	1,180	1,119	1,063
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	1,143	1,121	1,077	1,014	955
Integrated schools ¹	232	231	229	224	243
Irish medium schools	16	17	17	17	14

- 1 teachers in Controlled Integrated schools are included with Integrated schools rather than Education and Library Board schools.

Male Teachers

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education for each of the last five years, how many male teachers have been in a full time permanent post in a primary school, broken down by (i) Education and Library Boards; (ii) The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools; (iii) Integrated sector; and (iv) Irish Medium sector. (AQW 4434/09)

Minister of Education: Tugtar líonta na múinteoirí fear, ar múinteoirí lánaimseartha buana iad, atá i mbunscoileanna agus in iarbhunscoileanna i dtuaisceart na hÉireann sna táblaí thíos.

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Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	1,143	1,121	1,077	1,014	955
Integrated schools ¹	232	231	229	224	243
Irish medium schools	16	17	17	17	14

- 1 teachers in Controlled Integrated schools are included with Integrated schools rather than Education and Library Board schools.

Pupil Absence

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Education if schools who record as absent, pupils unable to get to school due to the unavailability of transport as a result of inclement weather, are acting in accordance with her Department's policy or the policy of any other school authority. (AQW 4470/09)

Minister of Education: Soláthraíonn imlitreach na Roinne 2006/14 comhairle do scoileanna ar chóid asláithreachta ba chóir a usáid nuair nach bhfuil dalta i láthair ag clarú na maidine nó ag clarú iarnóna. Tá an imlitreach seo ar fáil ag www.deni.gov.uk/revised_circular_2006_14_-_school_attendance__absence_recording_by_schools_-_6_october_2008.pdf

The Department's Circular 2006/14, which is available at www.deni.gov.uk/revised_circular_2006_14_-_school_attendance__absence_recording_by_schools_-_6_october_2008.pdf, provides advice to schools on absence codes to be used by schools when a pupil is not present at morning or afternoon registration.

Registration Code O may be used to record an authorised absence in exceptional circumstances which were outside the control of the school or the pupil, such as unavailability of Education and Library Board transport or if a pupil is unable to travel due to heavy snow. The guidance also states that a school can keep the morning register open for a longer period than usual in circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, so that a pupil would not be marked 'late'.

School Enrolment Figures

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education for the enrolment figures for each (i) primary; (ii) special; and (iii) post-primary school, broken down by Education and Library Board. (AQW 4471/09)

Minister of Education: Tá socraithe agam go gcuirfean an t-eolas a iarradh i Leabharlann an Tionóil.

I have arranged to have the information requested to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Capital Schemes

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education what stage each approved capital scheme is currently at; and to provide an estimated start time. (AQW 4473/09)

Minister of Education: Tá an t-eolas a iarradh ar gach mórscéim fhaofa caipitil atá á pleanáil faoi láthair mionsonraithe sa tábla thíos.

The information requested for each approved major capital scheme currently in planning is detailed in the table below.

Projects Currently in Planning	Location	Current Planning Position (Note 1)	Estimated Start Date (Note 2)
Ballymoney HS - New replacement school	Ballymoney	Outline Business Case approved	2010/11
Glendhu Nursery School – New replacement school	Belfast	Pre-tender	2009/10
Glenwood P.S. / Edenderry N.S. – New replacement school	Belfast	Initial Sketch plans awaited	2009/10
Greenwood Assessment Centre – New replacement school	Belfast	EA under review	2010/11
Holy Trinity College - New replacement school	Cookstown	Outline Business Case stage	2011/12
Lagan College - Extension & Refurbishment	Belfast	Bid Evaluation Completed	2009/10
Loreto Grammar - New replacement school	Omagh	Outline Business Case stage	2011/12
Mitchell House Special School – New replacement school	Belfast	EA under review	2010/11
Our Lady's & St Patrick's GS - New replacement school	Belfast	Full Business Case stage	2009/10
Rainey Endowed School - New replacement school	Magherafelt	Outline Business Case approved	2010/11
Ravenscroft Nursery School – New replacement school	Belfast	Pre-tender	2009/10

Projects Currently in Planning	Location	Current Planning Position (Note 1)	Estimated Start Date (Note 2)
Springhill P.S. – New replacement school	Belfast	Revised initial sketch plans awaited	2009/10
St Joseph's PS - New replacement school	Carryduff	Full Business Case stage	2009/10
St Mary's PS - New replacement school	Portglenone	Full Business Case stage	2009/10
St Patrick's GS - New replacement school	Downpatrick	Full Business Case stage	2009/10
Strand / Sydenham P.S. – New replacement school	Belfast	Initial sketch plans awaited	2009/10
Strandtown P.S. – New replacement school	Belfast	Initial sketch plans awaited	2009/10
Taughmonagh PS - New replacement school	Belfast	Initial sketch plans under consideration	2009/10
Tor Bank Special - New replacement school	Dundonald	Bid Evaluation Completed	2009/10
Artigarvan P.S. – New replacement school	Strabane	Final sketch plans awaited	2009/10
Arvalee / Cranny Special School – New replacement school	Omagh	Initial sketch plans awaited	2010/11
Ballykelly P.S. – New replacement school	Limavady	Final sketch plans awaited	2009/10
Bangor G.S. – New replacement school	Bangor	Pre-tender submission awaited	2009/10
Belmont Special School – New replacement school	Derry	Initial sketch plans awaited	2010/11
Coranny & Cornagague P.S. – New replacement school	Roslea	Pre-tender submission awaited	2009/10
Dean Maguire College – New replacement school	Carrickmore	EA under review	2010/11
Devenish College – New replacement school	Enniskillen	Initial sketch plans awaited	2010/11
Dromore Central P.S. – New replacement school	Dromore	Pre-tender submission awaited	2009/10
Ebrington P.S. – New replacement school	Derry	Initial sketch plans awaited	2009/10
Edendork P.S. – New replacement school	Dungannon	Revised initial sketch plans awaited	2009/10
Eglinton P.S. – New replacement school	Derry	Final sketch plans awaited	2009/10
Enniskillen Model P.S. – New replacement school	Enniskillen	Final sketch plans awaited	2009/10
Foyle & Londonderry College – New replacement school	Derry	Initial sketch plans awaited	2009/10
Glastry College – New replacement school	Ballyhalbert	Initial sketch plans under consideration	2009/10
Holy Family P.S. – New replacement school	Magherafelt	EA under review	2010/11
Hollywood P.S. – New replacement school	Hollywood	Initial sketch plans awaited	2011/12
Knockbreda H.S. – New replacement school	Belfast	Final sketch plans awaited	2009/10
Knockevin Special School – New replacement school	Downpatrick	Revised initial sketch plans awaited	2009/10
Limegrove / Glasvey Special School – New replacement school	Limavady	Initial sketch plans awaited	2010/11
Lisbellaw P.S. – New replacement school	Lisbellaw	Tender costs under consideration	2008/09
Lisnagelvin P.S. – New replacement school	Lisnagelvin	Tender costs under consideration	2008/09

Projects Currently in Planning	Location	Current Planning Position (Note 1)	Estimated Start Date (Note 2)
Little Flower Girls S.S. – New replacement school	Belfast	Initial sketch plans under consideration	2009/10
Lurgan College - New replacement school	Lurgan	EA under review	2009/10
Magherafelt H.S – New replacement school.	Magherafelt	Tender stage	2009/10
Methodist College – Extension & Refurbishment	Belfast	Initial sketch plans awaited	2010/11
New Buildings P.S. – New replacement school	Derry	Final sketch plans awaited	2009/10
Omagh I.P.S. – New replacement school	Omagh	EA under review	2010/11
Parkhall College – New replacement school and Youth Provision	Antrim	Final sketch plans under consideration	2009/10
Portadown College – New replacement school	Portadown	EA under review	2009/10
Priory College – New replacement school	Holywood	Initial sketch plans awaited	2009/10
St Bronagh’s P.S. – New replacement school and Youth Provision	Rostrevor	Final sketch plans awaited	2009/10
St Columbanus College – New replacement school and Youth Provision	Bangor	Pre-tender submission awaited	2009/10
St Columbkille’s P.S. – New replacement school	Carrickmore	Pre-tender submission awaited	2009/10
St Conor’s P.S. – New replacement school	Omagh	Revised initial sketch plans awaited	2010/11
St Joseph’s Convent P.S. – New replacement school	Newry	Revised initial sketch plans under consideration	2009/10
St Louis G.S. – New replacement school	Kilkeel	Final sketch plans awaited	2009/10
St Mary’s P.S. – New replacement school	Banbridge	Final sketch plans awaited	2009/10
St Patrick’s Academy – New replacement school	Dungannon	Revised final sketch plans awaited	2009/10
St Patrick’s College, – New replacement school	Banbridge	Final sketch plans under consideration	2009/10
St Paul’s P.S. – New replacement school	Irvinestown	Awaiting initial sketch plans	2010/11
Strathearn G.S. – New replacement school	Belfast	Pre-tender submission under consideration	2009/10
Tannaghmore P.S. – New replacement school	Lurgan	Final sketch plans under consideration	2009/10
The High School Ballynahinch – New replacement school	Ballynahinch	Awaiting initial sketch plans	2010/11
Carrick P.S. – New replacement school	Warrenpoint	Pre-tender submission under consideration	2009/10
Colaiste Feirste, – Extension & Refurbishment	Belfast	Revised final sketch plans under consideration	2009/10

Projects Currently in Planning	Location	Current Planning Position (Note 1)	Estimated Start Date (Note 2)
Dromintee P.S. Killeavey – New replacement school	Newry	Pre-tender submission awaited	2009/10
Magherafelt P.S. – New replacement school	Magherafelt	Tender stage	2009/10
Scoil Na Fuisceoige, – New replacement school	Belfast	Pre-tender submission awaited	2009/10
St Clare's Abbey P.S. – New replacement school	Newry	Pre-tender submission under consideration	2009/10
St Colman's P.S. Lambeg – New replacement school	Lisburn	Tender stage	2009/10
St Columba's P.S. Straw – New replacement school	Draperstown	Pre-tender submission under consideration	2009/10
St Joseph's P.S. Madden – New replacement school	Armagh	Tender stage	2009/10
St Mary's P.S. – New replacement school	Newcastle	Pre-tender submission under consideration	2009/10
St Oliver Plunkett P.S. – New replacement school	Forkhill	Pre-tender submission awaited	2009/10
St Patrick's G.S. – Extension & Refurbishment	Armagh	Initial sketch plans under consideration	2010/11
St Teresa's P.S. – New replacement school	Lurgan	Final sketch plans under consideration	2009/10
Victoria College – Extension & Refurbishment	Belfast	Revised final sketch plans awaited	2009/10
Whitehouse P.S – New replacement school	Newtownabbey	Tender stage	2009/10

Note 1:

Initial Sketch Plans - RIBA Stage C; Final Sketch Plans - RIBA Stage D; Pre-tender - RIBA Stages E, F, G

Note 2:

Estimated Dates are subject to planning stages being progressed and approved with the relevant school authorities within the estimated timeframes, all statutory approvals being achieved, and the availability of resources at that time.

Modern Languages

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education how many pupils sat (i) GCSE; (ii) AS, and (iii) A2 examinations in modern languages, broken down by each modern language, over the last five years.

(AQW 4474/09)

Minister of Education: Tá an teolas a iarradh leagtha amach sna táblaí thíos:

The information requested is detailed in the tables below:

(I) GCSE LANGUAGE ENTRIES 2003/04 – 2007/08

Subject	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Irish	2,530	2,248	2,258	2,446	2,147
Dutch	0	0	0	0	*

Subject	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
French	12,436	11,239	10,658	10,415	9,008
German	1,266	1,315	1,264	1,203	1,204
Italian	151	137	114	79	38
Portuguese	0	*	*	13	10
Spanish	2,945	3,132	2,848	3,046	3,232
Chinese	19	19	14	15	21
Polish	0	0	2	14	37
Russian	10	7	10	17	12
Greek	*	*	*	6	5
Arabic	*	*	0	*	0
Turkish	0	*	0	0	0
Urdu	0	0	0	*	0
Persian	0	0	0	*	0
Latin	112	115	143	114	151

(ii) Due to the inconsistent recording of AS entries, the number of AS language entries is unavailable.

(III) A2 LEVEL LANGUAGE ENTRIES 2003/04 – 2007/08

Subject	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Irish	274	295	308	254	238
French	792	725	701	662	694
German	184	133	143	145	159
Italian	15	18	10	7	0
Portuguese	0	0	0	*	0
Spanish	432	402	406	458	415
Chinese	12	21	28	16	30
Russian	*	6	*	*	*
Urdu	0	0	0	*	0
Polish	0	0	0	0	*
Dutch	*	*	0	0	0
Greek	*	6	*	0	0
Turkish	0	*	0	0	0
Arabic	0	0	*	0	0
Latin	31	26	23	26	26

Notes:

- 1) All languages with entries in the years requested have been included.
- 2) * = Fewer than five cases.

Modern Languages

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to increase the number of languages offered in primary schools; and to detail the modern languages that will be offered. (AQW 4475/09)

Minister of Education: In 2007/08 I introduced the Primary Languages Programme to provide support for those primary schools which wished to make available modern languages. Currently, Spanish and Irish are available and the programme is expanding in the 2008/09 school year to include a newcomer language element, Polish.

I will continue to keep the programme under review and, in determining languages which can be provided through the programme, will take account of views provided through evaluations, which will include feedback from schools.

Tá mé iontach sásta leis an aiseolas dhearfach atá faighte agam go dtí seo ó scoileanna atá páirteach sa chlár agus tá súil agam go mbeidh deis ag níos mó daoine óga tairbhe a bhaint as dara teanga a fhoghlaim ó aois óg.

I am pleased with the positive feedback received to date from participating schools and look forward to more of our young people benefitting from learning a second language from an early age.

Suicide Awareness in Schools

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education what efforts her Department has made to raise suicide awareness in schools. (AQW 4489/09)

Minister of Education: Leis an churaclam athbhreithnithe beidh daoine óga níos ullmhaithe le déileáil leis na dúshláin a bheidh rompu ina saol. Tá gné nua ar an churaclam athbhreithnithe mar atá, Forbairt Phearsanta & Comhthuiscint (PDMU) ag leibhéal na bunscoile agus Foghlaim don Saol agus don Obair (LLW) ag leibhéal na hiarbhunscoile.

The revised curriculum will better equip young people to deal with the challenges they face in life. It includes a new area of Personal Development & Mutual Understanding (PDMU) at primary level and Learning for Life and Work (LLW) at post-primary level. Both provide opportunities to promote positive mental and emotional health among young people and schools can include awareness raising around the issue of suicide and prevention through work to enhance self esteem and manage emotions.

The promotion of pupils' emotional health and wellbeing has been identified as a priority for action within education. The Department in partnership with representatives of the community and voluntary sector, statutory agencies and other interested parties is developing a Pupils Emotional Health and Well being Programme initially focussed on pupils in post primary schools. The Programme will be expected to address how a pupil's emotional health and wellbeing is promoted by the school, what support systems are available to support a pupil under stress and what support is available to a school in the event of a crisis. The emphasis will be on positive prevention by building coping skills in children and young people and will complement the personal development strand of the curriculum.

While the initial focus is on post-primary schools, it is expected that the outcomes can be adapted through time for the primary and special sectors and that the resulting programme will have more general application in developing and supporting pastoral care systems in schools. An audit is currently underway of the counselling and other therapeutic interventions in primary and special schools to determine the nature and level of need in those sectors to determine appropriate and age specific interventions.

The Independent Schools Counselling Service is also available for young people in post-primary schools during difficult and vulnerable periods in their lives.

All post primary schools can access a minimum amount of counselling support which meets best practice standards in terms of counsellor qualifications and professional supervision. Young people are able to self refer to this service or may be referred by the school or a parent.

Schools in Foyle

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to her answer to AQW 3625/09, to provide the same information for schools in the Foyle constituency. (AQW 4503/09)

Minister of Education: Tá an teolas a iarradh sa tábla thíos:

The information requested is contained in the table below.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE FOYLE CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2003/04

School name	Total enrolment
ST PATRICKS PS, CARN HILL	917
ST JOHN'S PS, WESTLAND	675
ST ANNE'S PS, ROSEMOUNT	590
STEELSTOWN VOL MAINTAINED PS	569
LISNAGELVIN PS	540
HOLY FAMILY PS	513
ST EITHNE'S PS, CREVAGH	501
ST THERESA'S PS, LENAMORE	466
EBRINGTON CONTROLLED PS	459
OAKGROVE INTEGRATED PS	444
GOOD SHEPHERD PS NURSERY SCHOOL	435
TRENCH ROAD PS	426
LONGTOWER PS	378
NAZARETH HOUSE PS	351
ST BRIGID'S PS, CARN HILL	349
HOLLYBUSH PS	341
LONDONDERRY MODEL PS	335
ROSEMOUNT PS	318
HOLY CHILD PS	316
BROADBRIDGE PS	309
ST COLMCILLE'S PS, CLAUDY	299
ST EUGENE'S PS, STRAND	274
NEWBUILDINGS PS	273
GREENHAW PS	267
ST PAULS PS, SLIEVEMORE	263
DRUMAHOE PS	261
EGLINTON PS	235
BUNSCOIL CHOLMCILLE	189
ST OLIVER PLUNKETT PS, ENAGH	176
ST MARY'S PS, BANAGHER	167
GLENDERMOTT PS	158
CUMBER CLAUDY PS	138
CHAPEL ROAD PS	136
FOUNTAIN PS	120
ASHLEA PS	112
CRAIGBRACK PS	96
ST COLUMBA'S PS, HOLLY MOUNT	96
MULLABUOY PS	93

School name	Total enrolment
GAELSCOIL ÉADAIN MHÓIR	90
CULMORE PS	79
BALLOUGRY PS	60
GROARTY PS	46
LISTRESS PS	31

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE FOYLE CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2004/05

School name	Total enrolment
ST PATRICKS PS, CARN HILL	878
ST JOHN'S PS, WESTLAND	636
ST ANNE'S PS, ROSEMOUNT	570
ST EITHNE'S PS, CREVAGH	552
STEELSTOWN VOL MAINTAINED PS	543
LISNAGELVIN PS	524
HOLY FAMILY PS	465
ST THERESA'S PS, LENAMORE	456
OAKGROVE INTEGRATED PS	451
GOOD SHEPHERD PS NURSERY SCHOOL	442
EBRINGTON CONTROLLED PS	438
TRENCH ROAD PS	406
HOLLYBUSH PS	354
NAZARETH HOUSE PS	346
ST BRIGID'S PS, CARN HILL	338
BROADBRIDGE PS	337
LONGTOWER PS	332
LONDONDERRY MODEL PS	325
ST COLMCILLE'S PS	303
ROSEMOUNT PS	299
HOLY CHILD PS	297
GREENHAW PS	283
DRUMAHOE PS	270
ST EUGENE'S PS	256
NEWBUILDINGS PS	249
EGLINTON PS	241
ST PAULS PS, SLIEVEMORE	233
BUNSCOIL CHOLMCILLE	185
ST MARY'S PS, BANAGHER	179
ST OLIVER PLUNKETT PS, ENAGH	173
GLENDERMOTT PS	157
CHAPEL ROAD PS	156

School name	Total enrolment
CUMBER CLAUDY PS	135
FOUNTAIN PS	129
GAELSCOIL EADAIN MHOIR	111
ASHLEA PS	97
CRAIGBRACK PS	95
MULLABUOY PS	91
ST COLUMBA'S PS, HOLLY MOUNT	85
CULMORE PS	75
BALLOUGRY PS	68
GROARTY PS	47
LISTRESS PS	30

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE FOYLE CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2005/06

School name	Total enrolment
ST PATRICKS PS, CARN HILL	872
ST JOHN'S PS, WESTLAND	622
LISNAGELVIN PS	554
ST ANNE'S PS, ROSEMOUNT	546
STEELSTOWN VOL MAINTAINED PS	543
ST EITHNE'S PS, CREVAGH	529
HOLY FAMILY PS	446
OAKGROVE INTEGRATED PS	445
GOOD SHEPHERD PS AND NURSERY SCHOOL	443
ST THERESA'S PS, LENAMORE	438
EBRINGTON CONTROLLED PS	426
TRENCH ROAD PS	377
HOLLYBUSH PS	374
BROADBRIDGE PS	340
ST BRIGID'S PS, CARN HILL	335
NAZARETH HOUSE PS	330
LONDONDERRY MODEL PS	317
LONGTOWER PS	316
ST COLMCILLE'S PS, CLAUDY	307
HOLY CHILD PS	293
ROSEMOUNT PS	292
DRUMAHOE PS	273
GREENHAW PS	272
NEWBUILDINGS PS	246
ST EUGENE'S PS, STRAND	242
EGLINTON PS	237

School name	Total enrolment
ST PAULS PS, SLIEVEMORE	219
ST MARY'S PS, BANAGHER	190
BUNSCOIL CHOLMCILLE	173
ST OLIVER PLUNKETT PS, ENAGH	172
GLENDERMOTT PS	161
CHAPEL ROAD PS	157
CUMBER CLAUDY PS	125
GAELSCOIL EADAIN MHOIR	116
FOUNTAIN PS	111
ASHLEA PS	98
CRAIGBRACK PS	96
MULLABUOY PS	90
CULMORE PS	75
ST COLUMBA'S PS, HOLLY MOUNT	74
BALLOUGRY PS	66
GROARTY INTEGRATED PS	43
LISTRESS PS	28

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE FOYLE CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2006/07

School name	Total enrolment
ST PATRICKS PS, CARN HILL	880
ST JOHN'S PS, WESTLAND	588
LISNAGELVIN PS	553
ST ANNE'S PS, ROSEMOUNT	533
ST EITHNE'S PS, CREVAGH	516
STEELSTOWN VOL MAINTAINED PS	511
OAKGROVE INTEGRATED PS	467
GOOD SHEPHERD PS AND NURSERY SCHOOL	451
HOLY FAMILY PS	448
ST THERESA'S PS, LENAMORE	426
HOLLYBUSH PS	425
EBRINGTON CONTROLLED PS	422
BROADBRIDGE PS	350
ST BRIGID'S PS, CARN HILL	343
TRENCH ROAD PS	341
LONDONDERRY MODEL PS	333
NAZARETH HOUSE PS	331
ST COLMCILLE'S PS, CLAUDY	319
LONGTOWER PS	311
HOLY CHILD PS	287

School name	Total enrolment
ROSEMOUNT PS	284
GREENHAW PS	275
DRUMAHOE PS	264
NEWBUILDINGS PS	238
EGLINTON PS	232
ST EUGENE'S PS, STRAND	227
ST MARY'S PS, BANAGHER	198
ST PAULS PS, SLIEVEMORE	183
ST OLIVER PLUNKETT PS, ENAGH	167
BUNSCOIL CHOLMCILLE	163
GLENDERMOTT PS	160
CHAPEL ROAD PS	151
CUMBER CLAUDY PS	123
GAELSCOIL EADAIN MHOIR	116
FOUNTAIN PS	112
CRAIGBRACK PS	96
MULLABUOY PS	92
ASHLEA PS	91
CULMORE PS	72
BALLOUGRY PS	69
ST COLUMBA'S PS, HOLLY MOUNT	67
GROARTY INTEGRATED PS	39
LISTRESS PS	25

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE FOYLE CONSTITUENCY – TOTAL ENROLMENT – 2007/08

School name	Total enrolment
ST PATRICKS PS, CARN HILL	861
ST JOHN'S PS, WESTLAND	592
LISNAGELVIN PS	532
ST ANNE'S PS, ROSEMOUNT	515
ST EITHNE'S PS, CREVAGH	501
STEELSTOWN VOL MAINTAINED PS	477
OAKGROVE INTEGRATED PS	451
GOOD SHEPHERD PS AND NURSERY SCHOOL	445
HOLY FAMILY PS	433
HOLLYBUSH PS	427
EBRINGTON CONTROLLED PS	421
ST THERESA'S PS, LENAMORE	406
BROADBRIDGE PS	374
LONDONDERRY MODEL PS	343
ST BRIGID'S PS, CARN HILL	339

School name	Total enrolment
TRENCH ROAD PS	322
ST COLMCILLE'S PS, CLAUDY	315
NAZARETH HOUSE PS	309
LONGTOWER PS	296
GREENHAW PS	288
HOLY CHILD PS	285
ROSEMOUNT PS	271
DRUMAHOE PS	245
EGLINTON PS	230
NEWBUILDINGS PS	223
ST MARY'S PS, BANAGHER	207
ST EUGENE'S PS, STRAND	205
ST PAULS PS, SLIEVEMORE	178
GLENDERMOTT PS	169
CHAPEL ROAD PS	166
ST OLIVER PLUNKETT PS, ENAGH	163
BUNSCOIL CHOLMCILLE	159
GAELSCOIL EADAIN MHOIR	135
CUMBER CLAUDY PS	119
FOUNTAIN PS	92
MULLABUOY PS	92
ASHLEA PS	90
CRAIGBRACK PS	89
CULMORE PS	75
BALLOUGRY PS	71
ST COLUMBA'S PS, HOLLY MOUNT	58
GROARTY INTEGRATED PS	34
LISTRESS PS	23

Source: Annual school census

Note: Figures includes nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.

Trainee Student Teachers

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Education what percentage of primary school trainee student teachers who have graduated from universities in the past year have obtained permanent teaching positions. (AQW 4578/09)

Minister of Education: Tá an t-eolas a iarradh sa tábla thíos.

The information requested is detailed in the table below.

'Age Range' Trained To Teach	Graduates	Graduates Registered and in Employment	% of Graduates in Employment
Primary	354	33	9.32

Ballykelly Primary School

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Education if she has considered, or has been asked to consider the former army barracks at Ballykelly as a potential replacement site for Ballykelly Primary School. (AQW 4689/09)

Minister of Education: Tuigim nár iarradh ar Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Iarthair, a bhfuil freagracht air as an scoil seo, breithniú a dhéanamh ar láthair fhéideartha ag seandún an airm.

I understand that the Western Education and Library Board which has responsibility for this school has not been asked to consider a potential site at the former army barracks. The Board is satisfied that the plan for a new building on the existing school site will provide pupils with the facilities they require.

The scheme is now advancing in planning with work scheduled to begin on the new school building early next year.

Guidelines Announced in the Assembly

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education from which bodies did she receive legal advice about the guidelines announced in the Assembly on 2 February 2009. (AQW 4735/09)

Minister of Education: Fuarthas comhairle ó Oifig Dlíodóra na Roinne

Advice was received from the Departmental Solicitor's Office.

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Student Fees

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when his review into student fees will be completed. (AQW 4332/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): The review of variable tuition fees and student finance arrangements in Northern Ireland is currently underway. The purpose of the review is to provide an evidence base for an Assembly debate on fee levels which, under provisions in the Higher Education Order 2005, the Department can schedule any time after 1st January 2010. In light of this, I anticipate an interim report for consideration in May 2009 which I will bring before the DEL Committee with a view to issuing documents for public consultation and impact assessment in Autumn 2009.

Unemployed in Ballymoney

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps he will take to assist the growing number of unemployed in Ballymoney given the significant job losses in the area. (AQW 4482/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department will continue to provide information and advice to individuals who are unemployed in Ballymoney to help them find employment or identify alternative opportunities through the Department's employment, training and further education programmes. Jobs & Benefits staff, in partnership with the Social Security Agency, have delivered on-site clinics directly to workers who had received notices of redundancy. Services include individual interviews, action planning and information advice and guidance on the range of measures to improve their job prospects.

Northern Ireland Office in Brussels

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what contact his Department has had with the Northern Ireland Office in Brussels, broken down by (i) issues discussed; and (ii) benefits to his Department that these issues might have. (AQW 4488/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning:**Issues Discussed**

The Office of the Northern Ireland Office in Brussels (ONIEB) has been an extremely useful point of contact for DEL officials wishing to gain insight into how the European institutions operate. Within the past year it has helped newly appointed staff in the Department's European Policy Unit gain understanding into how relevant European institutions operate. This included facilitation of a visit to Brussels and arrangement of meetings with members of the Commission and MEPs to discuss the broad sweep of European employment, social and educational measures and the workings of the European Community in general.

ONIEB staff also assisted DEL with the arrangements for a European Employment and Social Policy conference. A delegation of senior officials from the European Commission presented a series of workshops in Adelaide House, the purpose of which was to raise awareness of the work of the Commission in the areas of employment and social inclusion. ONIEB identified relevant speakers and assisted with initial contacts.

Benefits to the Department

ONIEB staff have therefore helped DEL staff gain a fuller understanding of relevant EU issues, thus enabling them to carry out their roles effectively. Useful contacts were established with key European counterparts.

The European seminar was a recognised outcome from the EU Taskforce on Northern Ireland and of benefit not just to the Department but a wider audience. In addition to providing an opportunity to hear, at first hand, the latest thinking from the EU Commission on employment and social policy issues, it also afforded those attending the opportunity to establish valuable ongoing contacts with key European officials.

Further Education Exchanges with the EU

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what assistance he has given to Further Education Exchanges with the EU. (AQW 4557/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Further Education Exchanges within the EU are facilitated through EU Lifelong Learning Programmes which are managed on a UK basis. My Department contributes to the local administration of those arrangements and participates in an Advisory Group which aims to promote the take-up of programmes in Northern Ireland.

Further Education Exchanges with the EU

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what requests for financial assistance have been made to his Department for Further Education Exchanges with the European Union. (AQW 4558/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department has not received any requests for direct financial assistance for Further Education Exchanges within the European Union. Exchange arrangements are facilitated through EU Lifelong Learning programmes which are administered on a UK wide basis with my Department providing a local advisory input.

Programme for Government

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what risk assessment he has carried out of the Programme for Government targets. (AQW 4784/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Performance against the Programme for Government targets is currently monitored by DFP quarterly, via the Departmental Monitoring Rounds. It is clear that the current economic downturn may impact on the achievement of some of the targets for March 2011. It is, however, too early to be definitive on the impact on the long-term targets for skills and employment levels in 2015.

DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Review of Economic Development Policy

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what consideration will be given to the impact of social divisions on labour market mobility and investment decisions, in the review of economic development policy. (AQW 4149/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): The Terms of Reference for the Independent Review of Economic Development Policy were outlined to Members as part of the Minister's statement on 1 December 2008. They have also been placed on a dedicated website (www.irep.org.uk) that has been established as part of the Review.

The Terms of Reference are wide ranging and include the need to make recommendations on the policy options to stimulate economic growth and productivity, and to build a larger and more wealth-creating private sector. This will include identification and consideration of any inhibitors to economic and productivity growth.

FG Wilson

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what measures her Department has taken to assist FG Wilson in its efforts to prevent any further job losses in the Larne or Monkstown factories. (AQW 4238/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In these difficult times, Invest NI is maintaining regular contact with its client base and, in the case of FG Wilson specifically, senior management on both sides met very recently to discuss the current issues. Invest NI has expressed its willingness to explore with FG Wilson the potential to retain skilled labour by bringing forward R&D and training initiatives. Such initiatives may well be eligible for grant support, thereby helping the company manage costs, but more importantly will leave the company well placed to respond quickly and effectively, and thereby maximise the opportunities that undoubtedly will arise, as the economy begins to recover.

Mineral Oil Tax Relief Scheme

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to her answer to AQW 2216/08, if she will ask the Irish Republic government on behalf of local bio fuel producers, to allow them to access unused places on the Mineral Oil Tax Relief Scheme. (AQW 4239/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In their 2006 Budget, the Republic of Ireland Government announced a 5 year targeted package of excise relief on biofuels (the Mineral Oil Tax Relief Scheme II) to the end of December 2010. The Scheme was advertised as a competitive call for proposals open to anyone who could fulfil its criteria. A total of 102 applications were received and following an assessment process there were 16 successful applicants selected. Applicants were not awarded the full amount of excise relief sought in every instance.

The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) reports that this Scheme is fully subscribed and there are no "unused places" available. DCENR notes that it is continuously monitoring progress being made and is in communication with project promoters on an ongoing basis. The Scheme allows for the roll over of volumes into the following year as appropriate.

There is no provision for further excise relief on biofuels beyond the life of this Scheme.

Unemployment Figures

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the unemployment figures, in each of the last twelve months. (AQW 4382/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The latest Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimate of unemployment in Northern Ireland, along with estimates for the previous twelve months, can be found in the table below.

NORTHERN IRELAND SEASONALLY ADJUSTED UNEMPLOYMENT ESTIMATES¹, 2007-2008

Period ²	Number Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Sep-Nov 2007	35,000	4.3%
Oct-Dec 2007	34,000	4.2%
Nov-Jan 2008	36,000	4.4%
Dec-Feb 2008	34,000	4.2%
Jan-Mar 2008	38,000	4.6%
Feb-Apr 2008	33,000	4.0%
Mar-May 2008	34,000	4.1%
Apr-Jun 2008	34,000	4.2%
May-Jul 2008	36,000	4.4%
Jun-Aug 2008	35,000	4.3%
Jul-Sep 2008	33,000	4.1%
Aug-Oct 2008	36,000	4.3%
Sep-Nov 2008	34,000	4.2%

1 Estimates are based on a sample survey and are therefore subject to sampling error.

2 Only estimates from non-overlapping periods should be compared e.g. figures for Sep- Nov 2008 can not be compared with Aug-Oct 2008, as there are two common months (September and October) in each period.

Source: Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey

Invest NI

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much financial assistance was provided by Invest NI towards business start-up projects, in each council area, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 4392/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: During the period 2003/04 to 2007/08 Invest NI offered assistance to 533 new locally-owned businesses that have the potential for significant growth, primarily through the development of markets outside Northern Ireland.

In addition, 16,153 offers were made to individuals intending to set up a business with a focus on the local market. Most of these were assisted indirectly through the Start A Business Programme, which is delivered in partnership with Enterprise Northern Ireland.

These 16,686 offers amounted to almost £28m of assistance during the 5 year period. Table 1 below shows the number of offers approved in each District Council Area and the corresponding amount of assistance offered in each year.

TABLE 1: INVEST NI OFFERS APPROVED TO INDIGENOUS BUSINESS STARTS BY DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA (2003/04 – 2007/08)

DCA	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	No of Offers	Assistance Offered (£000)	No of Offers	Assistance Offered (£000)	No of Offers	Assistance Offered (£000)
ANTRIM	51	54	83	133	73	57
ARDS	152	286	155	137	174	137
ARMAGH	112	292	129	263	128	104
BALLYMENA	59	121	99	223	72	40
BALLYMONEY	38	59	64	72	65	34
BANBRIDGE	81	124	105	260	109	48

DCA	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	No of Offers	Assistance Offered (£000)	No of Offers	Assistance Offered (£000)	No of Offers	Assistance Offered (£000)
BELFAST	319	854	426	1,280	379	1,223
CARRICKFERGUS	52	65	86	64	53	33
CASTLEREAGH	71	161	102	142	83	38
COLERAINE	71	173	124	116	104	83
COOKSTOWN	75	401	102	157	90	61
CRAIGAVON	136	663	196	1,237	174	100
DERRY	212	670	360	775	252	220
DOWN	157	183	233	191	198	96
DUNGANNON	116	307	150	151	135	62
FERMANAGH	148	313	227	303	203	101
LARNE	61	171	88	115	79	134
LIMAVADY	66	102	112	78	96	90
LISBURN	126	174	164	274	160	120
MAGHERAFELT	109	208	131	134	146	105
MOYLE	17	90	41	52	44	19
NEWRY & MOURNE	145	271	273	435	204	256
NEWTOWNABBEY	143	353	139	264	142	173
NORTH DOWN	127	211	137	285	114	387
OMAGH	75	240	104	199	118	98
STRABANE	62	146	84	266	77	62
TOTAL	2,781	6,691	3,914	7,607	3,472	3,880

Note: Table totals may not add due to rounding.

TABLE 1 (CONT)

DCA	2006/07		2007/08		TOTAL (2003-04 – 2007-08)	
	No of Offers	Assistance Offered (£000)	No of Offers	Assistance Offered (£000)	No of Offers	Assistance Offered (£000)
ANTRIM	82	66	71	121	360	431
ARDS	101	39	91	57	673	656
ARMAGH	103	292	106	80	578	1,031
BALLYMENA	82	73	106	208	418	665
BALLYMONEY	76	36	70	68	313	269
BANBRIDGE	98	35	102	115	495	582
BELFAST	325	619	412	872	1,861	4,847
CARRICKFERGUS	49	59	37	53	277	273
CASTLEREAGH	94	168	100	41	450	551
COLERAINE	103	74	127	156	529	600

DCA	2006/07		2007/08		TOTAL (2003-04 – 2007-08)	
	No of Offers	Assistance Offered (£000)	No of Offers	Assistance Offered (£000)	No of Offers	Assistance Offered (£000)
COOKSTOWN	94	91	108	86	469	796
CRAIGAVON	94	135	119	649	719	2,782
DERRY	232	321	282	245	1,338	2,232
DOWN	124	87	152	135	864	692
DUNGANNON	123	199	136	331	660	1,049
FERMANAGH	217	173	245	273	1,040	1,163
LARNE	88	40	95	69	411	529
LIMAVADY	80	73	114	47	468	390
LISBURN	146	971	151	233	747	1,772
MAGHERAFELT	103	47	136	273	625	767
MOYLE	54	56	74	27	230	244
NEWRY & MOURNE	159	332	212	339	993	1,633
NEWTOWNABBEY	98	79	101	143	623	1,013
NORTH DOWN	99	57	93	180	570	1,121
OMAGH	125	129	156	85	578	751
STRABANE	79	176	95	216	397	865
TOTAL	3,028	4,427	3,491	5,101	16,686	27,706

Note: Table totals may not add due to rounding.

Invest NI

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what was the total monetary value of applications to Invest NI for financial assistance for business start-ups in each Council area, in each of the last five years. (AQW 4393/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI's client companies, including eligible business start-ups, do not apply for a pre-determined level of financial assistance in relation to investment projects. Invest NI requires clients to prepare comprehensive business plans in relation to such investment proposals which must meet the Agency's strict intervention criteria. Invest NI then negotiates and agrees bespoke financial assistance packages individually with the companies concerned with the aim of offering the minimum funding necessary to enable a project to proceed at a given location, within a pre-determined timeframe. The amount of funding awarded is determined principally by a project's eligible costs, the identified need for public funds and company size. All assistance offered by Invest NI is subject to the ceilings and other requirements determined by the European Commission's State Aid Regulations.

However, information and analysis on the number of offers made to indigenous business start-ups, and the related financial assistance offered, per District Council Area for the five year period 2003/04 to 2007/08, is available in the Invest NI Performance Report which was published at the end of January 2008 (<http://www.investni.com/performance-report0203-0607.pdf>).

Business Start Up Projects in East Antrim

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much financial assistance was given to business start up projects in the East Antrim constituency, for each of the last five years. (AQW 4457/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: During the period 2003/04 to 2007/08 Invest NI directly offered assistance to 24 new locally-owned businesses in the East Antrim Parliamentary Constituency Area. These businesses have the potential for significant growth, primarily through the development of markets outside Northern Ireland.

In addition, 826 offers were made to individuals intending to set up a business with a focus on the local market. Most of these were assisted indirectly through the Start A Business programme, which is delivered in partnership with Enterprise Northern Ireland.

These 850 offers amounted to £1.2 million of assistance during the 5 year period. Table 1 below shows the number of offers approved in the area and the corresponding amount of assistance offered in each year.

TABLE 1: INVEST NI OFFERS APPROVED TO INDIGENOUS BUSINESS STARTS IN EAST ANTRIM PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY AREA (2003/04 – 2007/08)

Year Of Offer	No of Offers	Total Assistance (£)
2003/04	143	357,249
2004/05	213	316,450
2005/06	162	196,008
2006/07	174	157,036
2007/08	158	188,732
TOTAL	850	1,215,475

Presbyterian Mutual Society

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail her Department's contact with the Presbyterian Mutual Society in the last 12 months. (AQW 4511/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Along with the Minister of Finance and Personnel and our Departmental officials I met with a delegation from the Presbyterian Mutual Society at their request on Monday 10 November 2008 to discuss the financial difficulties facing the Society and the urgent action that might be taken to safeguard its funds and the interests of its members.

I acted swiftly to enact legislation that would provide the Society with options. The Insolvency (Company Arrangement or Administration Provisions for an Industrial and Provident Society) Order (Northern Ireland) 2008 was signed, sealed and laid at the Assembly on 14 November 2008 and made on the same day.

In addition, all registered societies are required under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1969 to submit an annual return within seven months of its respective year-end. The most recent annual return in respect of the Presbyterian Mutual Society was received and filed with my Department's Registry of Companies Credit Unions and Industrial and Provident Societies on 8th July 2008.

Unemployment in Mid Ulster

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many people were registered as unemployed in Mid Ulster in January 2008, broken down by (i) Magherafelt District Council; and (ii) Cookstown District Council, (AQW 4534/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: At January 2008 there were 714 Claimant Count unemployed persons in Mid-Ulster Parliamentary Constituency Area, (488 males and 226 females), which corresponds to 1.2% of persons of working age in the constituency.

Mid-Ulster Parliamentary Constituency Area is made up of Magherafelt and Cookstown District Council areas and part of Dungannon District Council area.

Magherafelt District Council Area had 283 Claimant Count unemployed persons (201 males and 82 females), which corresponds to 1.0% of persons of working age at that time.

Cookstown District Council Area had 315 Claimant Count unemployed persons (212 males and 103 females), which corresponds to 1.4% of persons of working age at that time.

For information the equivalent Northern Ireland rate in January 2008 was 2.2%.

Unemployment in Mid Ulster

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many people are currently registered as unemployed in Mid Ulster, broken down by (i) Magherafelt District Council; and (ii) Cookstown District Council. (AQW 4535/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: At December 2008 (the latest available figures) there were 1,772 Claimant Count unemployed persons in Mid-Ulster Parliamentary Constituency Area, (1,440 males and 332 females), which corresponds to 3.0% of persons of working age in the constituency.

Mid-Ulster Parliamentary Constituency Area is made up of Magherafelt and Cookstown District Council areas and part of Dungannon District Council area.

Magherafelt District Council Area had 731 Claimant Count unemployed persons (613 males and 118 females), which corresponds to 2.7% of persons of working age at that time.

Cookstown District Council Area had 706 Claimant Count unemployed persons (559 males and 147 females), which corresponds to 3.2% of persons of working age at that time.

For information the equivalent Northern Ireland rate in December 2008 was 3.3%.

Jobs Offered to Local Applicants

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if jobs created as a result of her Department's work should be offered to local applicants first and then to people from elsewhere in Europe, as proposed by the Environment Minister. (AQW 4540/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: My Department is committed to achieving a successful economy in Northern Ireland which will provide equal opportunities for all its citizens. In this respect, those businesses with which my Department and its NDPBs work, are required to conform to current Northern Ireland legislation in relation to Fair Employment practice.

Community Renewables and Micro Generation

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if she will increase spending on community renewables and micro generation. (AQW 4562/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: There are no plans for my Department to increase spending on community renewables and microgeneration at present. To date my Department, through the Reconnect scheme, has supported in the region of 4,300 installations of household renewable energy systems at a cost of £10.8 million. A full evaluation of the Reconnect scheme is nearing completion and is due to report shortly. Any additional support going forward will need to take into account changing market conditions, value for money, energy efficiency and the effect on competitiveness.

My Department continues to provide funding for Action Renewables to provide free technical advice to householders and communities on renewable energy technologies and offer a signposting service to the Low Carbon Building Programme, which offers grant support until 2011 to domestic households in Northern Ireland for the installation of renewable energy technologies. Additionally there is a reduced rate of VAT at 5% for small scale renewable technologies and for those technologies generating electricity, Renewable Obligation Certificates are available.

My Department has also recently provided funding to extend the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) work on low carbon solutions for households and communities to Northern Ireland. This is a programme of research to determine how Government can deliver policy measures that will encourage uptake by householders and communities. Two seminars are planned for Northern Ireland in the next few months.

Invest NI

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many businesses have started (i) with Invest NI assistance; and (ii) without Invest NI assistance, each month in the last year. (AQW 4571/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:

- (i) During the 2007/08 financial year Invest NI directly offered assistance to 80 new locally-owned businesses that have the potential for significant growth, primarily through the development of markets outside Northern Ireland.

In addition, 3,411 offers were made to individuals intending to set up a business with a focus on the local market. Most of these were assisted indirectly through the Start A Business programme, which is delivered in partnership with Enterprise Northern Ireland.

Table 1 below shows the number of offers approved in each month of the 2007/08 year.

TABLE 1: INVEST NI OFFERS APPROVED TO INDIGENOUS BUSINESS STARTS (2007/08)

Month	Number of Start Ups
April	149
May	229
June	311
July	203
August	258
September	234
October	307
November	303
December	253
January	246
February	398
March	600
TOTAL	3,491

- (ii) Invest NI is unable to answer this part of the question, as it does not collect and hold information on businesses that have started without its assistance.

Project Kelvin Scheme

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given the urgency of impending technical approval, to state whether she or any of her officials made any representation to Hibernia Atlantic regarding the decision to change the original proposed site of Derry/Londonderry, for the telehouse facility as part of the project Kelvin scheme, to Coleraine. (AQW 4699/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The contract for Project Kelvin has been awarded and there is no further technical approval required. The decision to site the telehouse facility in Coleraine was taken by Hibernia Atlantic and was included in its response to my Department's invitation to tender for the Project. Neither I nor my officials made any representation to Hibernia Atlantic in relation to this decision.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Road Safety Council

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of the Environment how much extra it will cost his Department when he takes over the administrative work from the Road Safety Council. (AQW 3766/09)

Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson): I have asked officials to develop a new model for the funding of the work of the Road Safety Council for the period from 1 April 2009. Until that work has been completed, it will not be possible to say precisely what the balance of resourcing will be between local road safety committees and the Department. However, the proposal is that funding should be channelled directly to local road safety committees, not that the existing administrative work of the Council should be duplicated by the Department. It is envisaged that the costs involved will be minimal and not in excess of 50% of an officer's time. At approximately £15k this will be significantly less than the £62,240 allocated to the Road Safety Council for central administration in 2008/09.

Protected Trees

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the enforcement investigation that took place following the felling of protected trees on a site at 135 Shandon Park in July 2005. (AQW 3820/09)

Minister of the Environment: A possible breach of a TPO on protected trees on a site at 135 Shandon Park was reported to my Department on 10 July 2008. Following visits to the site, my Planning Officials have determined that the removal of four protected trees, as well as works to other trees protected by the Order does constitute a breach of the TPO. An enforcement investigation is therefore ongoing. A replanting scheme was agreed with the Department. The planting has been undertaken and is of a greater specification than was required.

In light of the extensive removal work which has taken place and the complex process involved in enforcement cases, the Department is examining the best way forward.

Speed Restrictors on Motor Vehicles

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of the Environment to outline his Departments plans to install speed restrictors on motor vehicles. (AQW 4013/09)

Minister of the Environment: Speed limiters are already required, under Construction and Use Regulations, to be fitted to certain buses, coaches and goods vehicles over 3.5 tonnes, depending on date of first registration and maximum design speed.

I have no plans to extend these requirements to other motor vehicles.

Deer Poaching

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment if he is aware of the increase in deer poaching; and if so, what steps he is taking to work with landowners and the PSNI to reduce and eradicate poaching. (AQW 4230/09)

Minister of the Environment: I have been informed by my officials that there has been no increase in the number of reports to the PSNI of incidents of deer poaching. Deer poaching is a criminal offence and incidents of this nature are the responsibility of the PSNI and not a Departmental matter.

High Hedges

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment when he will (i) introduce; and (ii) issue a timescale for legislation on high hedges. (AQW 4232/09)

Minister of the Environment: As any scheme to deal with the issue of high hedges will be operated by local government I must be conscious of the impact on Councils of the Review of Public Administration and our

intention to implement the agreed local government reorganisation package by 2011. I also have to be mindful of the competing priorities and resource constraints I am facing. In these circumstances, I intend to undertake the engagement process with the eleven new Councils once they have been elected in May 2011.

Planning Service

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment in relation to Planning Service's electronic planning system, what was the (i) original projected costs; (ii) actual costs for completion of the project; (iii) original projected time-scale; and (iv) actual time-scale for the completion of the project. (AQW 4275/09)

Minister of the Environment: The original capital budget allocation for e-PIC was £5.5m. However as the complexity of the project became clearer, and following negotiations with the contractor, a revised business case and bid for additional funding was approved in 2006 which revised the capital budget to £9.3m.

In 2007, following the delivery by the contractor of a basic system which represents up to 80% of the e-PIC solution, further negotiations took place on a final funding package to complete and implement the full system. A revised business case and funding bid, which is currently with the Department of Finance and Personnel, will, if approved, finalise the capital budget at £12.8m.

The original timescale for implementation was 2006 and the revised implementation date is March 2010.

Planning Service

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment in relation to Planning Service's electronic planning system, when will (i) the system be fully operational for use by Planning Service staff; and (ii) it become accessible to members of the public. (AQW 4276/09)

Minister of the Environment: The complete e-PIC system will be fully implemented across Planning Service by March 2010 and will be made available to the public from that date.

Given the delay in implementing the full e-PIC solution, Planning Service has bought forward a number of e-planning initiatives, to deliver tangible benefits to both internal staff and the public as partial implementation of e-PIC.

These include a new Intranet Portal and an electronic planning application Fee Calculator which have already been made available to Planning Service staff. Other initiatives which are planned for release to the public by March 2009 include: Pandarus - a planning advice system with a fee calculator, Planning Explorer to track the progress of planning applications being processed, a new Internet Portal and a Development Plan viewer.

Ulster Society for the Protection of the Countryside

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of the Environment how much grant-aid was provided to the Ulster Society for the Protection of the Countryside, in each of the last ten financial years. (AQW 4277/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department has not provided any grant-aid to the Ulster Society for the Protection of the Countryside.

Applications for Enforcement Action

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment how many applications for enforcement action are still outstanding in (i) the Ards Peninsula; (ii) Ards Town; (iii) Ards East; and (iv) Ards West. (AQW 4303/09)

Minister of the Environment: At present there are 381 live enforcement cases in the Ards Borough Council.

The current system of electronic data storage and retrieval – 20/20 - used by Planning Service does not provide information or analysis for areas smaller than district councils. To provide this information a manual analysis of all the existing files would need to be carried out and this would not be available in the time specified and would incur disproportionate costs.

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment to provide an update on the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan. (AQO 1959/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP) was published in November 2004. The Area Plan was the largest ever published in Northern Ireland and covered the Belfast, Lisburn, Castlereagh, North Down, Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus District Council areas.

Approximately 4,000 representations and objections were received during the consultation period. Following a period for counter objections, Planning Service asked the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) to convene a Public Inquiry to consider objections to the Draft Plan including Plan Amendment No.1 to the Draft Plan.

Following a series of Pre Inquiry meetings, the Public Inquiry commenced in April 2007 and concluded in May 2008.

The PAC is currently considering all the information before it prior to completing its report and making its recommendations to the Department. The PAC has indicated a preliminary timescale for delivery of the report to Planning Service as early summer 2010. However, the Commission would hope to be in a position to announce a firmer timescale later this year.

The PAC is an independent body and is not part of the Department of the Environment but appointed by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. It is possible that the any review of timescales undertaken by the PAC may advance the Report or elements of the Report. The Department would welcome such a move.

In October 2008, the Department wrote to the PAC and requested the early release of that part of the BMAP Report relating to strategic retail issues, including Sprucefield. The PAC took the view that this was a discrete issue and, as the public sessions of the Inquiry were complete, it could comply with the Department's request. The Commission issued the report to the Department on 21 January 2009. It is anticipated that this report will be made available to the public when the Minister has made a decision on the process to be followed in respect of Sprucefield.

Environmental Risk Assessment in Mallusk

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to his answer to AQW 1451/09 and AQW 589/09 to provide a summary of the final outcome of the environmental risk assessment undertaken in Mallusk; and to outline any enforcement action his Department has taken, and against whom. (AQW 4357/09)

Minister of the Environment: Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is still in the process of carrying out Pollution Prevention Risk Assessments at the Mallusk Industrial Estate. There are over 300 registered businesses in the area and, to date, 189 Risk Assessments have been carried out. All sites which are classed as high or medium risk, in terms of the risk of causing water pollution, have been assessed and it is anticipated that the remaining assessments will take approximately six months to complete.

Table A below sets out details of the risk assessments carried out to date.

TABLE A

Risk Assessment	High	Medium	Low
Number of sites	23	60	106

Table B below details the number of enforcement cases taken forward since 5 July 2008 at the Mallusk Industrial Estate.

TABLE B

Enforcement Action	Number
Water (NI) Order 1999 Warning Letter	59
Water (NI) Order 1999 Pre-Notices	19
Water (NI) Order 1999 Notices	5

Enforcement Action	Number
Successful Prosecution	1
Submitted to the Public Prosecution Service	2
Currently being processed by NIEA	5

A list of all those who have had enforcement action taken against them will take some time to produce and my officials will provide this to you directly by Friday 13 February 2009.

Clandeboye Estate, Bangor

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of the Environment if Clandeboye Estate, Bangor is protected as an area of full conservation. (AQW 4453/09)

Minister of the Environment: All of Clandeboye Estate lies within the Green Belt as designated by the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015. The estate is also covered by one or more of the following designations:

- Designation ND 07 - Clandeboye Rural Landscape Wedge;
- Designation BR 17/02 - Clandeboye Estate Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance;
- Designation ND 02/05 - Clandeboye Avenue Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance;
- Designation BR 24 - Clandeboye Local Landscape Policy Area; and
- Designation ND 01/01 - Clandeboye Historic Park, Garden and Demesne.

In terms of Built Heritage, there are four Listed structures on the Clandeboye Estate that are specially protected under the provisions of the Planning (NI) Order 1991 including Clandeboye House, the Memorial, the Gasworks and Helen's Tower.

The designed landscape at Clandeboye has also been included in the Register of Parks, Gardens and Demesnes of Special Historical Interest for Northern Ireland and has been designated as a Historic Park and Garden in BMAP.

Illegal Dumping at Ballyhornan Road

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment if the Northern Ireland Environment Agency has carried out an investigation into illegal dumping at Ballyhornan Road, Downpatrick; and if so, to detail the results of this investigation. (AQW 4487/09)

Minister of the Environment: An investigation into this site is currently ongoing. I have asked officials from NIEA's Environmental Crime team to write and advise you of the outcome of the investigation when it has been completed.

Departmental Staff

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of the Environment how many (i) staff; and (ii) public appointees were appointed by his Department since he took up office; and how many of those people are citizens of other EU countries. (AQW 4536/09)

Minister of the Environment: (i) The number of staff appointed by the Department since 10 June 2008, the date on which I took up appointment, is 244.

Figures on nationality cannot be provided as it is not obligatory for applicants to declare their nationality when applying for NICS posts.

(ii) The table below sets out the numbers of public appointments in DOE since 10 June 2008. Figures on nationality cannot be provided as this information is not requested in the public appointment process.

Public Body	Public Appointees appointed since 10 June 2008	Total
Historic Monuments Council (HMC)	Chair + 14	15
Local Government Boundaries Commission	Local Government Boundaries Commissioner + 11 Assistant Local Government Boundaries Commissioners	12
Total		27

Ulster Scots Academy

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of the Environment how much money his Department has made available to (i) the Ulster Scots Academy; and (ii) Ulster Scots projects, in each of the last two years. (AQW 4543/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department has not made any money available to (i) the Ulster Scots Academy; or (ii) Ulster Scots projects, in each of the last two years.

Financial Incentive Recycling Scheme

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of the Environment to list the Councils that have come forward with an expression of interest to introduce a financial incentive recycling scheme. (AQW 4563/09)

Minister of the Environment: I am not aware of any substantive proposals by councils for financial incentive recycling schemes (waste charging). However the provision of such schemes would require legislative change. I have decided not to proceed with amending the necessary legislation at this time.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

BT and Ministry of Defence Properties

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what assistance is given to local councils to combat their financial losses through revaluation of BT and Ministry of Defence properties. (AQW 4281/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr N Dodds): The overall value of the BT network has decreased. However, it is expected that Coleraine Borough and Newry and Mourne District Councils could benefit from a small increase in revenue, from the reassessment. All other councils will lose revenue, though one of the main reasons why the overall value of the BT network has decreased in value is because of increased competition in the telecommunications industry. These reductions are therefore indirectly offset by growth elsewhere.

Down District Council could benefit, in revenue terms, from the reassessment of MOD hereditaments. Nine district councils will not be affected given that there are no MOD properties in their area. Those councils likely to have reduced revenue, from the reassessment, are Antrim, Armagh City & District, Ballymena, Banbridge, Belfast City, Coleraine, Craigavon, Derry City, Dungannon & South Tyrone, Fermanagh, Limavady, Lisburn City, Newry and Mourne, Omagh and Strabane district councils. North Down, for whom figures are already finalised, will have reduced revenue.

The package of assistance for councils, which I announced on 19 January, includes help with any repayments associated with reductions in BT and MOD valuations, which would otherwise have been due and owing this year. Where councils are in a general repayment situation, I will allow them to offset this amount through staging the BT and MOD reductions over five years, a benefit reckoned to be worth up to £3.3m next year, intended to cushion the sudden and accumulated impact of these reductions. It is anticipated that 23 district councils could be able to fully stagger their BT and MOD repayments. The remaining three councils, Ballymena, Belfast and Cookstown, could be able to partially stagger their repayments, given that the sums associated with BT and MOD are likely to be greater than their overall repayment.

The figures in relation to the BT and MOD repayments are indicative at this stage and represent the estimated maximum possible assistance that could be provided to councils next year. They are expected to fluctuate because the benefit of the MOD and BT offset is dependent on the extent that individual councils would otherwise have been required to repay. Furthermore, the position of individual councils at finalization is particularly difficult to gauge during this unprecedented economic uncertainty.

Rates Re-Assessment

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel which Councils benefitted from rates re-assessment of Ministry of Defence properties. (AQW 4282/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The overall value of the BT network has decreased. However, it is expected that Coleraine Borough and Newry and Mourne District Councils could benefit from a small increase in revenue, from the reassessment. All other councils will lose revenue, though one of the main reasons why the overall value of the BT network has decreased in value is because of increased competition in the telecommunications industry. These reductions are therefore indirectly offset by growth elsewhere.

Down District Council could benefit, in revenue terms, from the reassessment of MOD hereditaments. Nine district councils will not be affected given that there are no MOD properties in their area. Those councils likely to have reduced revenue, from the reassessment, are Antrim, Armagh City & District, Ballymena, Banbridge, Belfast City, Coleraine, Craigavon, Derry City, Dungannon & South Tyrone, Fermanagh, Limavady, Lisburn City, Newry and Mourne, Omagh and Strabane district councils. North Down, for whom figures are already finalised, will have reduced revenue.

The package of assistance for councils, which I announced on 19 January, includes help with any repayments associated with reductions in BT and MOD valuations, which would otherwise have been due and owing this year. Where councils are in a general repayment situation, I will allow them to offset this amount through staging the BT and MOD reductions over five years, a benefit reckoned to be worth up to £3.3m next year, intended to cushion the sudden and accumulated impact of these reductions. It is anticipated that 23 district councils could be able to fully stagger their BT and MOD repayments. The remaining three councils, Ballymena, Belfast and Cookstown, could be able to partially stagger their repayments, given that the sums associated with BT and MOD are likely to be greater than their overall repayment.

The figures in relation to the BT and MOD repayments are indicative at this stage and represent the estimated maximum possible assistance that could be provided to councils next year. They are expected to fluctuate because the benefit of the MOD and BT offset is dependent on the extent that individual councils would otherwise have been required to repay. Furthermore, the position of individual councils at finalization is particularly difficult to gauge during this unprecedented economic uncertainty.

Rates Assistance

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what rates assistance has been given to each of the local councils. (AQW 4283/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: As you will be aware I announced a package of assistance for councils on 19 January that could be worth up to £8m next year. This will allow councils, where they are in a general repayment situation, to offset this amount through staging any repayments arising from reductions in British Telecom (BT) and Ministry of Defence (MOD) valuations over five years, a benefit estimated to be worth up to £3.3m next year.

I will also provide for the removal of the 3% cost for councils attributable to housing benefit administration from 2008/09 and reduce the impact of the landlord allowance on councils, for NIHE properties, over 2008/09 and 2009/10, pending a review of the allowance prior to the introduction of the rating of empty homes. This change to the way councils' net revenues are calculated could provide a benefit of up to £4m next year. Finally, there will be a one of reduction in the cost of collection to ensure that some of the additional costs associated with the development of new IT systems are not passed on to councils. This will provide a one off benefit to councils of around £600,000.

The figures in relation to the BT and MOD repayments are indicative at this stage and represent the estimated maximum possible assistance that could be provided to councils next year. They are expected to

fluctuate because the benefit of the MOD and BT offset is dependent on the extent that individual councils would otherwise have been required to repay. Furthermore, the position of individual councils at finalisation is particularly difficult to gauge during this period of unprecedented economic uncertainty. For these reasons is not possible to provide a precise breakdown of the assistance to each council at this stage. However, once there is greater certainty I will ensure that the information is provided.

Rates Re-Assessment

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel which Councils have benefitted from rates re-assessment on BT properties. (AQW 4285/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The overall value of the BT network has decreased. However, it is expected that Coleraine Borough and Newry and Mourne District Councils could benefit from a small increase in revenue, from the reassessment. All other councils will lose revenue, though one of the main reasons why the overall value of the BT network has decreased in value is because of increased competition in the telecommunications industry. These reductions are therefore indirectly offset by growth elsewhere.

Down District Council could benefit, in revenue terms, from the reassessment of MOD hereditaments. Nine district councils will not be affected given that there are no MOD properties in their area. Those councils likely to have reduced revenue, from the reassessment, are Antrim, Armagh City & District, Ballymena, Banbridge, Belfast City, Coleraine, Craigavon, Derry City, Dungannon & South Tyrone, Fermanagh, Limavady, Lisburn City, Newry and Mourne, Omagh and Strabane district councils. North Down, for whom figures are already finalised, will have reduced revenue.

The package of assistance for councils, which I announced on 19 January, includes help with any repayments associated with reductions in BT and MOD valuations, which would otherwise have been due and owing this year. Where councils are in a general repayment situation, I will allow them to offset this amount through staging the BT and MOD reductions over five years, a benefit reckoned to be worth up to £3.3m next year, intended to cushion the sudden and accumulated impact of these reductions. It is anticipated that 23 district councils could be able to fully stagger their BT and MOD repayments. The remaining three councils, Ballymena, Belfast and Cookstown, could be able to partially stagger their repayments, given that the sums associated with BT and MOD are likely to be greater than their overall repayment.

The figures in relation to the BT and MOD repayments are indicative at this stage and represent the estimated maximum possible assistance that could be provided to councils next year. They are expected to fluctuate because the benefit of the MOD and BT offset is dependent on the extent that individual councils would otherwise have been required to repay. Furthermore, the position of individual councils at finalization is particularly difficult to gauge during this unprecedented economic uncertainty.

Rating on Vacant Properties

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what are his plans to remove rating on vacant properties. (AQW 4386/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: I have no immediate plans to remove the rating of empty commercial properties. My Department, however, will shortly be undertaking a planned evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the policy, now that it has been in place for 5 years. This will also afford the opportunity to consider its effect during this period of unprecedented economic uncertainty. England and Wales revised their vacant rating policy from 1 April 2008, moving to 100% rating and extending liability to factories.

In relation to domestic property, while it is intended to rate empty homes at 100% liability from 2010, I will review the introduction of this measure closer to the time, should market conditions not have improved by then. Under the council tax system in the rest of the UK, empty homes are charged. This is usually at 90% of full liability, depending on the charging policy of the local authority concerned.

Civil Service

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if civil servants who left the Civil Service during the six-year back pay period in the equal pay award, will receive the back pay; and how this payment will be made. (AQW 4417/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Work is still ongoing to determine the size and scope of the equal pay issue, those staff affected by it, and what options might exist to resolve it. Negotiations have commenced between Departmental officials and Trade Union Side and several meetings have already taken place with a view to addressing this issue as soon as possible. Until these negotiations are concluded I am not in a position to say what impact, if any, they will have on staff who have left or retired from the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Under equal pay legislation however, staff who have left the NICS, or retired from it, have to make a claim with an Industrial Tribunal within six months of leaving.

Location of Public Sector Jobs

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to report on the formation of the Executive sub-committee to lead the relocation initiative and the central unit to provide direction, oversight and support, as specified in the report by Sir George Bain, on the Review of Policy on Location of Public Sector Jobs. (AQW 4418/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: I am currently preparing a paper for consideration by the Executive which I hope will provide an agreed response to Professor Bain's independent Review. It will be in line with the motion passed by the Assembly on 21 October which called for a timely report on how the matter may be addressed. I will be circulating a paper shortly to Ministerial colleagues ahead of an Executive discussion.

Location of Public Sector Jobs

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to confirm that he has referred the report by Sir George Bain on the Review of Policy on Location of Public Sector Jobs to the Executive for an early discussion, as indicated in his press statement of 30 September 2008; and, if so, to detail the outcome of these discussions. (AQW 4419/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: On 21 October 2008, during the Assembly debate on Professor Bain's report on the location of public sector jobs, I gave an assurance that I would report to the Executive and the Assembly in a timely manner, having carefully considered the various consequences, including value for money, with views on how this matter may be addressed. I wrote to Executive Ministers at the time asking for their initial views. I am now preparing a paper for the Executive which takes account of the responses from Executive ministers, together with the views of the Finance and Personnel Committee and the points raised during the Assembly debate.

The outcome of the discussion will be available in due course.

Peace III

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) for an update on the delivery of Peace III monies allocated for each priority and theme to organisations that will deliver on the aims and objectives of the programme; and (ii) what the reasons are for any delays in allocating programme funds. (AQW 4469/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The PEACE III Programme is now fully operational. To date 44% of the total funds have been allocated by Steering Committees. A total of 43 letters of offer have been issued under the following themes.

Project Priority & Theme	Funds Approved (£)	Funds Approved (€)
Priority 1 Theme 1 - Local	£29,239,892	€18,025,805
Priority 1 Theme 1 – Regional	£17,052,639	€2,999,099

Project Priority & Theme	Funds Approved (£)	Funds Approved (€)
Priority 1 Theme 2	£4,449,457.72	€1,955,281.43
Priority 2 Theme 1	£24,184,307	€10,855,451
TOTAL	£74,926,295.72	€33,835,636.43

Due to the strategic nature of the PEACE III Programme, Programme implementation arrangements took longer to put in place than originally envisaged. This was due mainly to:

Delays in the formation of local authority clusters because of the uncertainty surrounding the final configuration of RPA boundaries.

The time required to prepare and approve local authority action plans.

The need to put in place selection and approval procedures for large scale, strategic projects.

These difficulties were overcome through constructive cooperation between all interested parties. The Managing Authority is confident that they have been fully resolved and that the Programme will achieve all of its spending and performance targets.

Civil Service

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) how much it will cost in full to meet the Northern Ireland Civil Service equal pay claim; (ii) how much he has set aside to address this pay claim; and (iii) when this claim will be settled. (AQW 4478/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: No specific sum has been set aside to meet the costs of the equal pay claim. However, the Prime Minister has recently provided access to £100 million for either 2008-09 or 2009-2010 to help to address a range of spending pressures faced by the Executive. The enhanced access to funding is comprised of additional borrowing power and early access to the block grant but it needs to be clearly recognised that funding applied to settling the equal pay issue will not be available to the Executive for other spending proposals.

Officials continue to identify the equal pay vulnerabilities within the NICS and develop options for dealing with previous inequalities. Meanwhile negotiations with NIPSA are ongoing and a further meeting is planned for the end of January. Due to the complexities involved, achieving a negotiated resolution of any equal pay settlement may take some time.

Presbyterian Mutual Society

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail his Department's contact with the Presbyterian Mutual Society in the last 12 months. (AQW 4512/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: On the 10th November 2008 I, together with the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, met with the Presbyterian Mutual Society's Board of Directors to discuss the deteriorating financial position of the organisation.

Following that meeting, the Executive assisted the Society in entering into administration protection.

I have also discussed with Treasury Ministers the ongoing review of such financial institutions in Northern Ireland as announced in the Chancellor's Pre-Budget Report. My officials are assisting HMT in undertaking this review.

Civil Service

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel when his Department expects to pay the equal pay claim for Civil Service staff; and how these payments will be made. (AQW 4525/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Officials continue to identify the equal pay vulnerabilities within the NICS and develop options for dealing with previous inequalities. Meanwhile, negotiations with NIPSA are ongoing, with the most recent meeting taking place at the end of January. Due to the complexities involved,

achieving a negotiated resolution of any equal pay settlement may take some time. Until a resolution is achieved it is not possible to give specific details on how any settlement would be administered.

No specific sum has been set aside to meet the costs of the equal pay claim. However, the Prime Minister has recently provided access to £100 million for either 2008-09 or 2009-2010 to help to address a range of spending pressures faced by the Executive. The enhanced access to funding is comprised of additional borrowing power and early access to the block grant but it needs to be clearly recognised that funding applied to settling the equal pay issue will not be available to the Executive for other spending proposals.

Arm's Length Agencies

Rev Dr R Coulter asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what plans it has to outsource the work of Departments to arm's length agencies or private bodies under its civil service reform responsibility.

(AQO 2000/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: A number of programmes to facilitate Northern Ireland Civil Service reform have already been implemented. In these programmes there are no current plans to increase the level of outsourcing already undertaken by private sector partners, nor to allocate the work to arm's length agencies.

The procurement of Workplace 2010 is currently suspended.

Phase One of the NI Direct project is being taken forward through a strategic partnership with an external provider. If approval to implement Phase Two of NI Direct is secured in the future, it may be that this would also involve a partnership with an external provider.

Civil Service

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on efforts to resolve the Civil Service Equal Pay Claim.

(AQW 4567/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Officials continue to identify the equal pay vulnerabilities within the NICS and develop options for dealing with previous inequalities. Meanwhile, negotiations with NIPSA are ongoing with the most recent meeting having been held at the end of January

Due to the complexity of the work, the legal issues it raises, and the sensitivity of negotiations at present, it is difficult to provide more specific details on any possible resolution. However, achieving a negotiated resolution of any equal pay settlement may take some time.

Housing Executive's 5 Year Housing Condition Surveys

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if his Department has carried out, or intends to carry out, an investigation into the Department for Social Development's handling of the questionnaire and awarding of the tender for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's 5 year housing condition surveys.

(AQW 4596/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: I have not carried out, nor intend to carry out, an investigation into the Department for Social Development's handling of the questionnaire and awarding of the tender for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's housing condition surveys.

This procurement was carried out by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, an accredited Centre of Procurement Expertise, and concerns regarding the procurement process should be addressed to that body.

Rate Arrears

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what progress has been made to reduce the rate arrears.

(AQW 4602/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: At 11 January 2009 the ratepayer debt of £124 million at 31 March 2008 had been reduced to £65 million.

Between 1 April 2008 and 31 December 2008, Land & Property Services has continued to pursue this debt, and also the in-year ratepayer arrears, and has issued –

- 114,000 final notices;
- 42,000 court processes, and
- 11,824 Notices of Intention to Enforce Debt.

Land & Property Services continues to pursue ratepayers for all outstanding debt, including in-year arrears, while at the same time seeking to agree payment arrangements with individuals who are encountering difficulties in making payments and ensuring that they have taken up any benefits and reliefs to which they are entitled.

Departmental Underspend

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if all Departments are not underspending and will not underspend in this financial year (AQW 4783/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Information regarding the level of end-year underspend by Northern Ireland departments for 2008-09 will not be available until June 2009, as part of Provisional Outturn.

Cycle to Work Scheme

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) if the ‘cycle to work’ scheme is available to civil servants; (ii) if he has any plans to introduce this scheme; and (iii) what is the eligibility criteria used to determine who can lease a bicycle under this scheme. (AQW 4816/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: A “cycle to work” scheme is not currently available to NICS staff. Central Personnel Group are considering introducing this scheme and our intention will be to allow all staff equal access to the scheme.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Stars Pre-School Playgroup

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to give his reasons for cutting funding to the Stars Pre School Playgroup by 29%, in 2009-10. (AQW 3589/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): The Children’s Fund came to an end in March 2008 when the centrally earmarked funding ceased. However I recognised fully the impact that this would have on important activities that were being delivered on the ground. For this reason, I identified within my Department’s budget funding to support projects that had a strong health and social care focus, and I was delighted recently to be able to tell Stars that I would be continuing to support it for a further two years, with grant assistance in the region of £43,000 in each year. The project has already indicated that this level of support will allow it to continue to provide its service, albeit at a reduced level.

I hope you will agree that this represents a considerable ongoing commitment on our part, given the budgetary climate in which we are working. As you know, my Department wasn’t given as much in its budget as I had bid for to run health and social care services, hence the need to prioritise our funding.

Stars Pre-School Playgroup

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what was the criteria for the 29% funding cut to the Stars Pre-School Playgroup in 2009/10. (AQW 3591/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Children’s Fund came to an end in March 2008 when the centrally earmarked funding ceased. However I recognised fully the impact that this would have on

important activities that were being delivered on the ground. For this reason, I identified within my Department's budget funding to support projects that had a strong health and social care focus, and I was delighted recently to be able to tell Stars that I would be continuing to support it for a further two years, with grant assistance in the region of £43,000 in each year. The project has already indicated that this level of support will allow it to continue to provide its service, albeit at a reduced level.

I hope you will agree that this represents a considerable ongoing commitment on our part, given the budgetary climate in which we are working. As you know, my Department wasn't given as much in its budget as I had bid for to run health and social care services, hence the need to prioritise our funding.

Stars Pre-School Playgroup

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration was given to the caring aspect of the work done by Stars Pre-School Playgroup when setting its budget. (AQW 3592/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Children's Fund came to an end in March 2008 when the centrally earmarked funding ceased. However I recognised fully the impact that this would have on important activities that were being delivered on the ground. For this reason, I identified within my Department's budget funding to support projects that had a strong health and social care focus, and I was delighted recently to be able to tell Stars that I would be continuing to support it for a further two years, with grant assistance in the region of £43,000 in each year. The project has already indicated that this level of support will allow it to continue to provide its service, albeit at a reduced level.

I hope you will agree that this represents a considerable ongoing commitment on our part, given the budgetary climate in which we are working. As you know, my Department wasn't given as much in its budget as I had bid for to run health and social care services, hence the need to prioritise our funding.

Pre-School Provision

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how will the hours removed from the pre-school provision recommended by Social Services in (i) Ballymena; (ii) Coleraine; and (iii) the Child Development Clinic in Ballymoney, be replaced for the children involved. (AQW 3593/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Health and Social Care Board are not aware of any removal of pre-school hours from the pre-school provision recommended by Social Services in Ballymena, Coleraine and the Child Development Clinic in Ballymoney, other than those in respect of projects previously supported through the Children's Fund.

Details of the assessment of award regarding this are set out in my response to your questions regarding the Stars Pre-School Playgroup.

Stars Pre-School Playgroup

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will re-examine the 29% cut in funding to the Stars Pre-School Playgroup in 2009/10. (AQW 3594/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Children's Fund came to an end in March 2008 when the centrally earmarked funding ceased. However I recognised fully the impact that this would have on important activities that were being delivered on the ground. For this reason, I identified within my Department's budget funding to support projects that had a strong health and social care focus, and I was delighted recently to be able to tell Stars that I would be continuing to support it for a further two years, with grant assistance in the region of £43,000 in each year. The project has already indicated that this level of support will allow it to continue to provide its service, albeit at a reduced level.

I hope you will agree that this represents a considerable ongoing commitment on our part, given the budgetary climate in which we are working. As you know, my Department wasn't given as much in its budget as I had bid for to run health and social care services, hence the need to prioritise our funding.

Bangor Health Care Centre

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the total projected capital cost of the proposed Bangor Health Care Centre. (AQW 3612/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As you will no doubt be aware, the funding available to me over the next 10 years is insufficient to meet all the capital demands across the HSC estate. To ensure that I make optimum use of the capital resources available to me I commissioned a review of capital priorities earlier in the summer.

Under current plans it is anticipated that the proposed Bangor Health and Care Centre project will commence in 2016/17 with a completion date of 20/21, subject to business case approval.

The capital cost of this scheme is estimated to be £39 million subject to Business Case development and approval.

I am not yet in a position to confirm the location for the provision of the new Health and Care Centre in Bangor as the Business Case is still being developed by the South Eastern Trust.

Bangor Health Care Centre

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what location has been identified for the proposed Bangor Health Care Centre. (AQW 3614/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As you will no doubt be aware, the funding available to me over the next 10 years is insufficient to meet all the capital demands across the HSC estate. To ensure that I make optimum use of the capital resources available to me I commissioned a review of capital priorities earlier in the summer.

Under current plans it is anticipated that the proposed Bangor Health and Care Centre project will commence in 2016/17 with a completion date of 20/21, subject to business case approval.

The capital cost of this scheme is estimated to be £39 million subject to Business Case development and approval.

I am not yet in a position to confirm the location for the provision of the new Health and Care Centre in Bangor as the Business Case is still being developed by the South Eastern Trust.

Rathmore Residential Care Home

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will hold a consultation meeting on the proposed closure of Rathmore Residential Care Home in Ballycastle rather than Coleraine. (AQW 4121/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Responsibility for public meetings regarding Trust consultation proposals falls to each individual Trust. The Northern Health and Social Care Trust will be holding four public meetings across the Trust area and, in identifying the locations for these meetings, sought to have these in locations central to all ten district/borough council areas in the Trust. As the location of the forthcoming meeting in Coleraine has been widely publicised, the Trust does not feel that a change of venue at this stage would be appropriate.

Health and Social Care Trust Directors

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many directors there are in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4123/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is provided in the table below.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF DIRECTORS EMPLOYED BY HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST AS AT JANUARY 2009.

Health & Social Care Trust	Directors	
	Headcount	WTE
Belfast	11	11.00
Northern	7	7.00
South Eastern	8	8.00
Southern	8	8.00
Western	8	8.00

Source: NI Health and Social Care Trusts.

Notes:

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust stated that one of their Directors is retiring and the post will not be replaced.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust currently have one vacant post at Director level.

Figures exclude Chief Executives and Non-Executive Directors.

WTE = Whole-Time Equivalent.

Health and Social Care Trust Directors

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many directors there are in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4124/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is provided in the table below.

Table 1: Number of Directors Employed by Health & Social Care Trust as at January 2009.

Health & Social Care Trust	Directors	
	Headcount	WTE
Belfast	11	11.00
Northern	7	7.00
South Eastern	8	8.00
Southern	8	8.00
Western	8	8.00

Source: NI Health and Social Care Trusts.

Notes:

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust stated that one of their Directors is retiring and the post will not be replaced.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust currently have one vacant post at Director level.

Figures exclude Chief Executives and Non-Executive Directors.

WTE = Whole-Time Equivalent.

Health and Social Care Trust Directors

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many directors there are in the Western Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4125/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is provided in the table below.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF DIRECTORS EMPLOYED BY HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST AS AT JANUARY 2009.

Health & Social Care Trust	Directors	
	Headcount	WTE
Belfast	11	11.00
Northern	7	7.00
South Eastern	8	8.00
Southern	8	8.00
Western	8	8.00

Source: NI Health and Social Care Trusts.

Notes:

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust stated that one of their Directors is retiring and the post will not be replaced.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust currently have one vacant post at Director level.

Figures exclude Chief Executives and Non-Executive Directors.

WTE = Whole-Time Equivalent.

Health and Social Care Trust Directors

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many directors there are in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4126/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is provided in the table below.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF DIRECTORS EMPLOYED BY HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST AS AT JANUARY 2009.

Health & Social Care Trust	Directors	
	Headcount	WTE
Belfast	11	11.00
Northern	7	7.00
South Eastern	8	8.00
Southern	8	8.00
Western	8	8.00

Source: NI Health and Social Care Trusts.

Notes:

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust stated that one of their Directors is retiring and the post will not be replaced.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust currently have one vacant post at Director level.

Figures exclude Chief Executives and Non-Executive Directors.

WTE = Whole-Time Equivalent.

Health and Social Care Trust Directors

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many directors there are in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4127/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is provided in the table below.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF DIRECTORS EMPLOYED BY HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST AS AT JANUARY 2009.

Health & Social Care Trust	Directors	
	Headcount	WTE
Belfast	11	11.00
Northern	7	7.00
South Eastern	8	8.00
Southern	8	8.00
Western	8	8.00

Source: NI Health and Social Care Trusts.

Notes:

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust stated that one of their Directors is retiring and the post will not be replaced.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust currently have one vacant post at Director level.

Figures exclude Chief Executives and Non-Executive Directors.

WTE = Whole-Time Equivalent.

People who have been Refused Wheelchairs

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have been refused wheelchairs in the Ards Area of the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, in the past six months. (AQW 4139/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the format requested, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Processing Time for X-Rays

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what are the processing times for X-rays carried out at the radiology units in (i) Whiteabbey Hospital and (ii) Moyle Hospital; and how these compare with the radiology department in Antrim Area Hospital. (AQW 4150/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the time taken to process the results of a diagnostic test, known as the diagnostic turn around time, is collected by time band. It is therefore not possible to calculate the average (arithmetic mean) processing time for x-rays carried out. It is however possible to identify the median or mid point processing time band, i.e. the time band that contains the median waiting time.

The table below shows the median diagnostic turn around time bands for x-rays carried out during 2008 at the radiology units in (i) Whiteabbey Hospital and (ii) Moyle Hospital; and how these compare with the radiology department in Antrim Area Hospital.

Hospital	Median Diagnostic Turn around Time band (in calendar days) for X-rays carried out at the radiology units in 2008
Whiteabbey Hospital	22-28 days
Moyle Hospital	28+ days
Antrim Area Hospital	8-14 days

Source: Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Diagnostic turnaround time is measured from the date on which a diagnostic test is performed to the date on which a report is verified and dispatched to the referrer (in calendar days).

Tyrone County Hospital

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if a child suffering from a severe asthma attack can be treated at the Tyrone County Hospital. (AQW 4163/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

Where an ambulance is called to the home of a child suffering a severe asthma attack the child will be transported directly to the nearest acute hospital.

I am advised that if a child suffering a severe asthmatic attack presents firstly to the Urgent Care and Treatment Centre at the Tyrone County Hospital, they will be immediately transferred to an acute hospital. Ambulance staff will provide appropriate treatment until the child is transferred to the care of staff in an acute hospital.

Children and Adults with Autism

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail his Department's assessment criteria for recommending housing adaptations to meet the requirements of those families who have children or adults with autism. (AQW 4182/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The DHSSPS does not have specific assessment criteria for the recommendation of housing adaptations for people with autism. Rather the needs of people with autism is tailored to the specific nature of their condition, its severity and relevant personal and social circumstances.

There are general criteria for the provision of adaptations in the homes of people with disabilities. These have been developed and utilised by Occupational Therapy Services to assist Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts fulfil their statutory responsibilities under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978. These criteria reflect the clinical, social and technical aspects of care, standardised throughout Northern Ireland and endorsed for use by each of the four Health and Social Services Boards. Recent quality assurance of these criteria has been provided by the Equality Commission and Disability Action in 2003. A copy of the Criteria for the Provision of Adaptations in the Homes of People with Disabilities can be accessed by liaising with your local HSC Trust Community Head Occupational Therapist.

Rathmoyle Nursing Home in Ballycastle

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with the appropriate trade unions about the proposed closure of Rathmoyle Nursing Home in Ballycastle. (AQW 4197/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have had high level discussions recently with the Northern and other HSC Trusts concerning the range of efficiency proposals on which they are currently consulting, including those proposals affecting residential care. Given the ongoing consultation process, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on specific proposals.

While I have not had discussions with trade union officials regarding Rathmoyle House, officials from the Northern Health and Social Care Trust have met to consult trade union representatives about the proposals for Rathmoyle on January 8th and a further meeting is planned for January 28th 2009.

Rathmoyle Nursing Home in Ballycastle

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with the Health and Social Care Trust about the proposed closure of Rathmoyle Nursing Home. (AQW 4198/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have had high level discussions recently with the Northern and other HSC Trusts concerning the range of efficiency proposals on which they are currently consulting, including those proposals affecting residential care. Given the ongoing consultation process, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on specific proposals.

While I have not had discussions with trade union officials regarding Rathmoyle House, officials from the Northern Health and Social Care Trust have met to consult trade union representatives about the proposals for Rathmoyle on January 8th and a further meeting is planned for January 28th 2009.

Child Protection

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there are guidelines on either the average or maximum number of cases allocated to each social worker, working in child protection. (AQW 4213/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Whilst there are no specific guidelines detailing the average or maximum number of cases allocated to each social worker working in child protection, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety have issued a Caseload Management Model as part of the reform of front line child protection services. This Model, which is operational in Child Protection and Family Intervention/Family Support Teams, allows social workers and managers to agree caseload numbers based on a points system. Weighting is given on the basis of three major elements that make up workers effort which are risk; complexity; and travel.

The Model gives examples of issues that need to be taken into account and covers child protection cases.

All referrals to the Health and Social Care Trusts are screened by a senior social worker to identify if any cases are of a child protection nature. Such cases are allocated to social work staff and dealt with as a matter of priority. A front-line Gateway Service has been established which includes experienced senior practitioners. A number of expert principal practitioner posts have also been created to support less experienced staff within Trusts.

Child Protection

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how child protection cases are allocated to social workers in recognition of the experience and grade of the social worker. (AQW 4214/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The structures within Health and Social Care Trust children's teams have been developed to acknowledge experience and to retain experienced staff within the childcare service. Senior Practitioners and Principal Practitioners are involved in the most complex cases and provide advice, guidance and support to less experienced social workers and Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) staff.

Newly qualified social workers have to undertake an assessed year in employment and have a protected caseload. The Caseload Management Model issued by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, which is operational in Child Protection and Family Intervention/Family Support Teams, reflects this by indicating the average number of points for AYE staff. The Model allows social workers and managers to agree caseload numbers based on a points system. Weighting is given on the basis of three major elements that make up workers effort which are risk; complexity; and travel. The allocation process is underpinned by supervision of individual staff on a regular basis.

The Team Leader is required to consider the experience of staff when considering the complexity of individual cases as well as the capacity of the individual staff member to respond. In circumstances where an individual is working with a caseload above the recommended level for an extended period then the Team Leader is required to advise senior managers of the pressures on individual staff members with a view to addressing these.

Meals for Health and Social Care Trust Staff

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much is spent in each Health and Social Care Trust on subsidising meals for staff. (AQW 4215/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not available.

Patients Medical Records

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the legal requirement is that determines the length of time for keeping patients medical records. (AQW 4216/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Disposal of Documents Order (NI) 1925 outlines the responsibilities for the preservation and disposal of all public records, including patient's medical records.

The length of time patients' medical records are kept is also governed by the legislation that covers the information contained within the record, for example, if the medical record contains information on Mentally Disordered Persons under the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986, the medical record would be kept for 20 years from the last entry.

Ards Hospital Site

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much of the Ards Hospital site is not used at present. (AQW 4217/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust advise that 14% of the Ards Hospital site is not used at present.

Health and Social Care Trust Maintenance Work

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the cost was for maintenance in each of the Health and Social Care Trusts, for the last financial year. (AQW 4218/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not available.

Gardening Maintenance

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much it cost for gardening maintenance for each Health and Social Care Trust, for the last financial year. (AQW 4219/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is not available.

Rosedale Nursing Home

Mr D Burnside asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to breakdown the operational cost for Rosedale Nursing Home by (i) staffing; (ii) maintenance; (iii) fuel; and (iv) any other investment such as renovation and refurbishment, for 2007/8; and how many people are on its waiting list. (AQW 4225/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Health and Social Care Trust have provided the following breakdown of the operational cost of Rosedale residential home for 2007/08;

Staff	£ 597 000
Maintenance:	
Revenue	24,000
Capital	72,000
Heat/Light	49,000
Other Investment	68,000
Total Cost	810,000

The Trust has advised that there are currently 11 people on the waiting list for Rosedale.

Craigavon Hospital

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to his answer to AQW 229/09, (i) how many midwives have been recruited by Craigavon Hospital since 8 September 2008; and (ii) are maternity services now operating with a full complement of midwives. (AQW 4236/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Southern Health and Social Care Trust advises that a total of 12 midwives (11.67 whole time equivalent) have been recruited since 8th September 2008.

The Trust is still working towards filling the remaining vacant 88 hours. These hours have been offered to candidates on a waiting list.

Health Provision on Rathlin Island

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the work of his Department as part of the inter-departmental Regional Group in relation to health provision on Rathlin Island. (AQW 4245/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Inter-Departmental Regional Group was formed to develop a central government policy for Rathlin Island. The Group has held a series of meetings to consider a wide range of issues relating to Rathlin Island, including health provision on the island. The Northern Health and Social Care Trust, as the provider of healthcare services for the island, is represented on the Group. The Inter-Departmental Group has developed a draft policy document for the island which was issued to relevant Departments and islanders for consideration in January 2009.

In response to concerns raised by the islanders, during my recent visit to Rathlin Island, I gave a commitment to the provision of 24/7 nursing care on the island. My Department is currently liaising with the Northern HSC Trust to progress this. In addition, the Northern HSS Board has agreed the provision of chronic disease management and flu clinics on the island for the period up to 31 March 2009 as part of a pilot Local Enhanced Service programme. These services are provided by the GP practices in Ballycastle Health Centre with support from Trust nurses.

MRI Scans

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average waiting time for (i) obtaining an MRI scan; and (ii) obtaining the results of an MRI scan, at each hospital that provides this procedure. (AQW 4258/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Waiting list information is collected by time band. It is therefore not possible to calculate the average (arithmetic mean) waiting time for obtaining an MRI scan and obtaining the results of an MRI scan. It is however possible to identify the median or mid point waiting time band, i.e. the timeband that contains the median waiting time.

The median waiting time band for patients waiting for (i) obtaining an MRI scan at 31st December 2008 and (ii) obtaining the results of an MRI scan during December 2008, for each hospital that provides this procedure, is shown in the table below.

Hospital	Median timeband (in weeks) for patients waiting for an MRI scan at 31st December 2008	Median timeband (in days) for obtaining the results of an MRI scan during December 2008.
Antrim	> 3 - 6 weeks	8 - 14 days
Ulster	> 3 - 6 weeks	3 - 7 days
Altnagelvin	> 3 - 6 weeks	3 - 7 days
Royal Victoria	> 3 - 6 weeks	0 - 2 days
Belfast City	> 3 - 6 weeks	0 - 2 days
Mater	> 3 - 6 weeks	15 - 21 days
Musgrave	> 3 - 6 weeks	3 - 7 days

Hospital	Median timeband (in weeks) for patients waiting for an MRI scan at 31st December 2008	Median timeband (in days) for obtaining the results of an MRI scan during December 2008.
Craigavon Area	0 – 3 weeks	8 – 14 days

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts.

Sexual Health

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the contribution of the work carried out by 'Love for Life' on matters of sexual health. (AQW 4259/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Love for Life has been extremely active in regard to matters of sexual health and I would in particular note its role and involvement in relation to the implementation of my Department's Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood Strategy and Action Plan, and development of the recently published Sexual Health Promotion Strategy and Action Plan.

Report into the 'Liverpool pathway to death system'

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in relation to the debate that followed the Ministerial Statement of 3 June 2008, what recommendations came out of the report into the 'Liverpool pathway to death system'. (AQW 4269/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP) for the dying patient, which has been developed by the Marie Curie Hospice and the Specialist Palliative Care Team at the Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust, is designed to transfer the hospice model of care into other care settings. It is a multiprofessional document which provides an evidence-based framework for end-of-life care.

The RQIA review of the outbreak of *Clostridium difficile* in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust did not make any recommendations in relation to the Liverpool Care Pathway.

Following the debate on 3 June I asked the Northern Trust to investigate the events raised in relation to the use of the LCP. The Trust completed that investigation in August. The Trust has been advised that for reasons associated with the Data Protection Act the report should not be published. However the Trust has advised me that they are implementing all the recommendations that arose from the investigation, and that they are doing so in cooperation with members of the family concerned.

Fairhill Residential Home in Cookstown

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there are any proposals to close the Fairhill Residential home in Cookstown or any other residential homes in the Mid-Ulster constituency. (AQW 4284/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Health and Social Care Trust has advised that they own one residential care home for the elderly in the Mid Ulster area, Westlands Home in Cookstown. While the Trust is consulting on the future of a number of its homes, Westlands is not one of these. Fairfields residential home, on Fairhill in Cookstown, is an independently-owned establishment; its future, therefore, is a private matter for the homeowner.

Number of People Who Smoke

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for the latest figures his Department has on the number of people who smoke, over the past ten years. (AQW 4286/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Estimates of the prevalence of cigarette smoking are obtained through the Continuous Household Survey (CHS). Since 1990/91 the CHS has included a module on smoking biennially, until the introduction of the Smoking (Northern Ireland) Order 2006; since when the

smoking module has been included annually. The table below shows the estimates of the prevalence of cigarette smoking for persons aged 16 and over.

	1998/99	2000/01	2002/03	2004/05	2006/07	2007/08
All Adults aged 16 and over	29%	27%	26%	26%	25%	23%

Loughview Surgery

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the Global Sun Calculation for the surgery at Shore Road Kircubbin has not had a reply for 12 months. (AQW 4301/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As outlined in my recent correspondence, officials in my Department have been working with the Central Services Agency and the Eastern Health and Social Services Board in order to determine the correct financial position with regard to Global Sun and Correction Factor payments for Loughview Surgery under the legislative framework of the Statement of Financial Entitlements, as well as its historic funding during the baseline period.

This particular case has been complex, with the potential to create a precedent that would affect the funding of all GP practices, and so has required careful and detailed consideration among the Central Services Agency, the Eastern Health Board and the Department. While it is regrettable for the practice that a final determination has not yet issued, it is envisaged that this will be issued to Loughview Surgery shortly.

Construction Industry

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what construction projects and maintenance contracts could he offer to the construction industry in the coming year. (AQW 4302/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Health and Social Care Trusts are contractually committed in the next financial year to a wide range of construction projects with total projected spend in 2009/10 of more than £90million.

Expenditure cannot be incurred on any schemes until the respective business cases have been assessed and approved where necessary by DFP, and/or contracts awarded.

Parkinson's Disease

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are suffering from Parkinson's Disease in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4311/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the member to the reply I gave to AQW 2665/09 on 4th December 2008.

Parkinson's Disease

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people suffer from Parkinson's Disease in Northern Ireland. (AQW 4312/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the member to the reply I gave to AQW 2665/09 on 4th December 2008.

Stroke Strategy

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will ensure that there will be a robust analysis of all additional posts approved for the Stroke Strategy. (AQW 4314/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is for Trusts to decide on the specific staffing required to deliver services to their populations. In creating new posts Trusts must apply strict value for money criteria to ensure that any new investment will provide an appropriate service improvement. Those same arrangements will apply to posts created to improve stroke services.

I have allocated an additional £14m over the next 3 years (with £9m recurrent from year 4) to implement the improvements set out in Improving Stroke Services in Northern Ireland. Trusts are required to use that additional funding to deliver the specific targets set out in that document and this will be monitored through existing Trust and Departmental monitoring arrangements.

I am advised that the Western Trust has nominated its Chief Executive as its representative on the Regional Stroke Implementation Group. I am also advised that, due to other critical issues within the Trust over the past few months neither she nor her deputy has been available to attend Implementation Group meetings. I am assured that the Trust is playing a full part in the sub groups established to take forward specific work streams.

The recommendations arising from the Stroke Strategy are to be delivered to benefit all of the people of Northern Ireland, regardless of where they live. Each Trust is required to implement all of the recommendations by the set target dates. This will ensure equity of access to stroke services across Northern Ireland.

In addition, a Regional Stroke Implementation Group (RSIG) has been established to take forward and to oversee all of the recommendations in Improving Stroke Services in Northern Ireland. This group includes membership from the Health and Social Services Boards, Trusts, the Department and the voluntary sector and ensures a regional approach to implementing the recommendations. A number of sub groups have been established to ensure that implementation is taken forward as quickly and as effectively as possible and with representation from across the region.

Stroke Strategy

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he can guarantee all additional funds (£14m per annum from 2011/12) allocated for the Stroke Strategy will be used for improvement in stroke services and that existing funding will not be redirected for other use. (AQW 4315/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is for Trusts to decide on the specific staffing required to deliver services to their populations. In creating new posts Trusts must apply strict value for money criteria to ensure that any new investment will provide an appropriate service improvement. Those same arrangements will apply to posts created to improve stroke services.

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Stroke Strategy

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what proportion of the costs for a second post consultant neurologist at Altnagelvin Hospital will be drawn from monies for the Stroke Strategy. (AQW 4316/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is primarily a matter for Trusts to decide on the specific staffing required to deliver services to their populations. In creating new posts Trusts must apply strict value for money criteria to ensure that any new investment will provide an appropriate service improvement. Those same arrangements will apply to posts created to improve stroke services.

In this context, I am advised by the Western Trust that the appointment of the second consultant neurologist post at Altnagelvin Hospital will be funded from their allocation of the additional funding provided to support delivery of the Stroke Strategy "Improving Stroke Services in Northern Ireland".

I am also advised that the additional consultant neurologist, whilst located at Altnagelvin is a Trust appointment and will release other consultant time to drive an improvement stroke services across the Trust and in particular the preparatory work for out of hours thrombolysis.

Stroke Strategy

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he can confirm if the four meetings of the Regional Stroke Implementation Strategy Working Group have been attended by a representative from the Western Health and Social Care Services Trust. (AQW 4317/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is for Trusts to decide on the specific staffing required to deliver services to their populations. In creating new posts Trusts must apply strict value for money criteria to ensure that any new investment will provide an appropriate service improvement. Those same arrangements will apply to posts created to improve stroke services.

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Rapid Response Vehicles

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety with which unions has he discussed the introduction of Rapid Response Vehicles; and what was the outcome of these meetings. (AQW 4318/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have not had direct discussions with trade unions about the introduction of Rapid Response Vehicles (RRVs). RRVs were introduced in 2003. Prior to their introduction the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) worked with the Staff Side representative (representing the four trade unions UNISON, GMB, NIPSA, and UNITE) to jointly develop and implement a

local agreement for the introduction of RRVs and an RRV despatch procedure. Since the introduction of RRVs NIAS management have continued to work with Staff Side to develop a lone worker policy to address potential health and safety issues for lone workers including RRV personnel. More recently, NIAS has consulted trade unions on its current Comprehensive Spending Review proposals which include increasing the number of RRVs and the hours of RRV emergency response cover.

Rapid Response Vehicles

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if his Department has considered the possibility that attacks on paramedics would increase with the introduction of Rapid Response Vehicles. (AQW 4319/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service has advised that there is no evidence to date that Rapid Response Vehicle personnel are at any greater risk of attack than other emergency response personnel.

Rapid Response Vehicles

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he agrees that the introduction of Rapid Response Vehicles in rural parts of Wales has led to many negative incidents and an increase in attacks on paramedics. (AQW 4320/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am not in a position to comment on issues relating to ambulance service provision in Wales.

Ambulances

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the longest turnaround time was for ambulances waiting to hand patients over to each hospital in (i) 2006; (ii) 2007; and (iii) 2008. (AQW 4321/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information requested is shown in the table below. It should be noted that to ensure the continuity of patient care, the ambulance may on occasion be required to wait at a hospital.

Hospital	2006 Hrs/mins/secs	2007 Hrs/mins/secs	2008 Hrs/mins/secs
Altnagelvin	4:02:31	3:00:26	2:54:15
Antrim Area	2:10:00	4:29:58	1:46:11
Belfast City	3:26:39	3:04:37	1:05:45
Causeway	3:32:29	1:49:00	2:50:25
Craigavon Area	3:01:58	8:36:18	4:54:08
Daisy Hill	2:16:49	2:14:57	2:46:07
Downe	3:07:10	1:39:47	4:30:00
Erne	2:31:05	3:27:04	0:56:32
Lagan Valley	3:17:30	2:15:27	1:33:57
Mater Infirmorum	2:30:34	6:05:47	4:16:47
Mid Ulster	1:55:45	1:40:31	2:47:00
Royal Victoria	4:42:30	3:56:53	3:33:00
Tyrone County	2:15:35	2:41:16	2:21:01

Hospital	2006 Hrs/mins/secs	2007 Hrs/mins/secs	2008 Hrs/mins/secs
Ulster	3:27:04	3:19:32	6:38:00
Whiteabbey	1:39:15	1:30:32	1:19:13

Ambulances

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what the average turnaround time was for ambulances waiting to hand patients over to each hospital in (i) 2006; (ii) 2007; and (iii) 2008.

(AQW 4322/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Ambulance turnaround times at Northern Ireland hospitals with A&E departments are shown in the table below.

Hospital	2006 Mins:secs	2007 Mins:secs	2008 Mins:secs
Altnagelvin	17:49	17:37	16:43
Antrim Area	17:05	17:25	17:33
Belfast City	17:22	17:59	16:55
Causeway Hospital	14:51	14:47	14:19
Craigavon Area	15:41	16:27	16:11
Daisy Hill	16:18	15:15	15:27
Downe	14:56	14:47	15:03
Erne Hospital	17:48	16:32	15:07
Lagan Valley	14:39	13:49	13:23
Mater Infirmorum	15:59	16:48	16:53
Mid Ulster Magherafelt	15:51	15:22	15:03
Royal Victoria	18:21	18:38	19:44
Tyrone County	16:36	14:05	13:52
Ulster Hospital	19:07	19:48	19:58
Whiteabbey	12:16	11:50	12:26
Total	16:47	17:03	17:10

Stroke Strategy

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the second consultant post in neurology at Altnagelvin Hospital will be funded solely from the additional stroke monies, and if the post will be exclusively dedicated to additional stroke services.

(AQW 4323/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is primarily a matter for Trusts to decide on the specific staffing required to deliver services to their populations. In creating new posts Trusts must apply strict value for money criteria to ensure that any new investment will provide an appropriate service improvement. Those same arrangements will apply to posts created to improve stroke services.

In this context, I am advised by the Western Trust that the appointment of the second consultant neurologist post at Altnagelvin Hospital will be funded from their allocation of the additional funding provided to support delivery of the Stroke Strategy "Improving Stroke Services in Northern Ireland".

I am also advised that the additional consultant neurologist, whilst located at Altnagelvin is a Trust appointment and will release other consultant time to drive an improvement stroke services across the Trust and in particular the preparatory work for out of hours thrombolysis.

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to breakdown the capital spend for the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (i) in 2008/09; and (ii) projected for 2009/10. (AQW 4324/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Capital allocations totalling £54million have been made to the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust in 2008/09 to address a wide range of projects in areas such as construction, equipment and ICT.

Capital allocations for 2009/10 have not yet been formally advised to Trusts; current planned allocations total more than £30 million.

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what lands are owned by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4325/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I understand having sought clarification that the 'capital assets' referred to relate to land and buildings.

The land and buildings owned by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust are listed below.

Ards Hospital 8 Church Street Newtownards	Kircubbin Clinic 9 Church Grove Kircubbin
Ards Training Resource Centre 205 South Street Newtownards	Kyle House 13 Ballyholme Rd Bangor
Ardview House 18 The Ward Ardglass	Lagan Valley Hospital 39 Hillsborough Road Lisburn
Balloo Training Centre 94 Newtownards Rd Bangor	Land at Stoney Rd on long term lease to Knock Golf Club Stoney Road Belfast
Ballymacoss Hostel 4 Mourneview Park Lisburn	Laurelhill House 1 Ballymacash Park Lisburn
Ballynahinch Community Services 45 Main Street Ballynahinch	Lindsay House 1 Laurel Way Dunmurry
Ballywalter Health Clinic 107 Main Street Ballywalter	Lisburn Assessment & Resource Centre (LARC) 58 Wallace Avenue Lisburn
Bangor Health Clinic 1 Newtownards Rd Bangor	Lisburn Health Centre 25 Linenhall Street Lisburn

Ards Hospital 8 Church Street Newtownards	Kircubbin Clinic 9 Church Grove Kircubbin
Bangor Hospital 73 Castle Street Bangor	Loch Cuan EPH Bridge Street Downpatrick
Bayview Resource Centre Ballyholme Rd Bangor	Loch Cuan EPH 2 Dakota Avenue Newtownards
Bayview site (former Bayview Resource Centre) 165 Groomsport Road Bangor	Marmion Childrens Home 126 Church Road Holywood
Beechfield Respite Unit 32 Beechfield Ave Conlig	Mount Alexander EPH 18 Castlelodge Pk Comber
Castlewellan Health Clinic 23 Newcastle Road Castlewellan	Mountview Training Centre 9 Flying Horse Road Downpatrick
Colin Family Centre 5 Pembroke Loop Road Poleglass	Newcastle Clinic 20 Park Avenue Newcastle
Comber Health Centre 5 Newtownards Road Comber	Newcroft Lodge 124 Church Road Holywood
Crossgar Health Clinic 2 John Street Crossgar	Newtownards Health Centre (Former) 17 Frederick Street Newtownards
Donaghadee Health Centre 1 Killaughey Road Donaghadee	Northfield EPH 3 Northfield Road Donaghadee
Downe Hospital 3 Pound Lane Downpatrick	Occupation Centre and HC James Street Newtownards
Downshire Hospital 10 Ardglass Road Downpatrick	81 Market Street Downpatrick
Drumlough House 3 Moira Road Lisburn	Portaferry Health Centre 27 Ann Street Portaferry
Dunmurry Health Clinic 19 Upper Dunmurry Lane Dunmurry	Portavogie Health Centre 54 New Harbour Rd Portavogie
Fountain St Day Centre 28 John Street Downpatrick	Ravara House EPH 13 Ravara Gardens Bangor

Ards Hospital 8 Church Street Newtownards	Kircubbin Clinic 9 Church Grove Kircubbin
Glenmore House 1 Glenmore Park Lisburn	Ravara Staff House 13 Ravara Gardens Bangor
Glenwood House 1 Glenwood Green Dunmurry	Ravara Training & Resource Centre 14 Ravara Gardens Bangor
Greyabbey Health Clinic 17 Main Street Greyabbey	Resource Centre 37 Knocknashinna Road Downpatrick
Grove House 6 Antrim Road Ballynahinch	Respite & Daycare Centre 70 Hillsborough Road Lisburn
Health Centre & Clinic 14 Pound Lane Downpatrick	Rowan Centre 56 Wallace Avenue Lisburn
Hillhall Hostel 11 Hillhall Gardens Lisburn	169 Rathgael Road Bangor
Hillsborough Health Centre 29 Ballynahinch Street Hillsborough	Saintfield Health Centre 16 Fairview Saintfield
Hollywood Health Clinic 16 High Street Holywood	Seymour House 1 Laurel Way Dunmurry

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what capital assets are owned by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4326/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I understand having sought clarification that the 'capital assets' referred to relate to land and buildings.

The land and buildings owned by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust are listed below.

Ards Hospital 8 Church Street Newtownards	Kircubbin Clinic 9 Church Grove Kircubbin
Ards Training Resource Centre 205 South Street Newtownards	Kyle House 13 Ballyholme Rd Bangor
Ardview House 18 The Ward Ardglass	Lagan Valley Hospital 39 Hillsborough Road Lisburn

Ards Hospital 8 Church Street Newtownards	Kircubbin Clinic 9 Church Grove Kircubbin
Balloo Training Centre 94 Newtownards Rd Bangor	Land at Stoney Rd on long term lease to Knock Golf Club Stoney Road Belfast
Ballymacoss Hostel 4 Mourneview Park Lisburn	Laurelhill House 1 Ballymacash Park Lisburn
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Bangor Health Clinic 1 Newtownards Rd Bangor	Lisburn Health Centre 25 Linenhall Street Lisburn
Bangor Hospital 73 Castle Street Bangor	Loch Cuan EPH Bridge Street Downpatrick
Bayview Resource Centre Ballyholme Rd Bangor	Loch Cuan EPH 2 Dakota Avenue Newtownards
Bayview site (former Bayview Resource Centre) 165 Groomsport Road Bangor	Marmion Childrens Home 126 Church Road Holywood
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Colin Family Centre 5 Pembroke Loop Road Poleglass	Newcastle Clinic 20 Park Avenue Newcastle
Comber Health Centre 5 Newtownards Road Comber	Newcroft Lodge 124 Church Road Holywood
Crossgar Health Clinic 2 John Street Crossgar	Newtownards Health Centre (Former) 17 Frederick Street Newtownards
Donaghadee Health Centre 1 Killaughey Road Donaghadee	Northfield EPH 3 Northfield Road Donaghadee

Ards Hospital 8 Church Street Newtownards	Kircubbin Clinic 9 Church Grove Kircubbin
Downe Hospital 3 Pound Lane Downpatrick	Occupation Centre and HC James Street Newtownards
Downshire Hospital 10 Ardglass Road Downpatrick	81 Market Street Downpatrick
Drumlough House 3 Moira Road Lisburn	Portaferry Health Centre 27 Ann Street Portaferry
Dunmurry Health Clinic 19 Upper Dunmurry Lane Dunmurry	Portavogie Health Centre 54 New Harbour Rd Portavogie
Fountain St Day Centre 28 John Street Downpatrick	Ravara House EPH 13 Ravara Gardens Bangor
Glenmore House 1 Glenmore Park Lisburn	Ravara Staff House 13 Ravara Gardens Bangor
Glenwood House 1 Glenwood Green Dunmurry	Ravara Training & Resource Centre 14 Ravara Gardens Bangor
Greyabbey Health Clinic 17 Main Street Greyabbey	Resource Centre 37 Knocknashinna Road Downpatrick
Grove House 6 Antrim Road Ballynahinch	Respite & Daycare Centre 70 Hillsborough Road Lisburn
Health Centre & Clinic 14 Pound Lane Downpatrick	Rowan Centre 56 Wallace Avenue Lisburn
Hillhall Hostel 11 Hillhall Gardens Lisburn	169 Rathgael Road Bangor
Hillsborough Health Centre 29 Ballynahinch Street Hillsborough	Saintfield Health Centre 16 Fairview Saintfield
Hollywood Health Clinic 16 High Street Hollywood	Seymour House 1 Laurel Way Dunmurry

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to breakdown the purposes and areas, such as capital and resources, on which the additional £43m allocated to the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust will be spent. (AQW 4327/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The additional £43m revenue allocated to the South Eastern Trust following negotiation with Commissioners is intended to deliver on commitments and targets as set out in the Executive's Programme for Government and my Priorities for Action. This represents the additional investment available by 2010/11.

	£'m
Demographic Pressures	6.3
Long Term Conditions - Chronic Disease	2.0
Children's Services	1.5
Mental Health Services	4.0
Learning Disability Services	2.9
Disability Services	1.2
Children with Complex Needs	0.8
Cancer	0.8
Cardiovascular	0.8
Elective Care Access	1.2
Hospital & Specialist Drugs	2.4
Stroke	1.7
Trauma & Orthopaedics	1.8
Plastics	1.2
Expand Renal Capacity	1.3
Other Acute Services	1.6
Quality and Safety	0.9
Integrated Medicines Mgmt Initiatives	0.2
Nurse Mentoring	0.4
Prison Healthcare	0.5
Revenue Consequences of Capital Investment	9.5
TOTAL	£43m

Independent Sector Providers

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to break down by Health and Social Care Trust, the cost of using Independent Sector Providers, for the last financial year. (AQW 4342/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Agency Staff

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to break down by Health and Social Care Trust, the cost for the use of Agency staff, for the last financial year. (AQW 4343/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the use of Agency staff is published on a bi-annual basis on the departmental website at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/hrd/wpu/wpu-monitoring.htm

Ravara House Residential Home

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for the costing of refurbishment from the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust for Ravara House Residential Home, Bangor, under their plans for its closure. (AQW 4344/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The South Eastern Trust has advised that the £550,000 cost of refurbishing Ravara House comprises: replacement of the roof (£214,000), window repairs (£15,000), DDA Works (£20,000), Electrical rewiring (£100,000), Fire Safety Escapes (£20,000), Fixed Plant and Equipment (£50,000), Plumbing and Sanitary Ware (£50,000), Remedial Works (£50,000) and Grounds hard surface maintenance (£30,000).

This level of investment would not, however, address the remaining issue of functional suitability with corridors and doorways being too narrow by contemporary standards, a lack of ensuite facilities and bedroom sizes being too small.

Acute Medical Services

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what implications the withdrawal of financial support by HSBC will have for the future development of the new Acute Hospital in Enniskillen. (AQW 4361/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is not envisaged that the decision by HSBC to withdraw from all PFI related projects will have any implications for the future development of the new Acute Hospital in Enniskillen. Their decision was dealt with at the time by the Successful Tenderer for the Hospital, Northern Ireland Health Group. This matter remains commercially confidential and as such no further details can be disclosed at this time. The project remains on schedule for financial close this Spring.

Acute Medical Services

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what medical evidence he received to indicate that acute medical services could no longer be maintained at Tyrone County Hospital, Omagh. (AQW 4362/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In recent months, a number of key medical staff in the Western Health and Social Care Trust have advised my Department of the necessity to consolidate acute inpatient medical services on the Erne and Altnagelvin hospital sites if we are to ensure safe services for the people of the south-west.

The evidence from local clinicians was also supported by my Chief Medical Officer and Chief Nursing Officer.

Acute Medical Services

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many additional beds will be provided at the Erne and Altnagelvin Hospitals, after the acute medical service at Tyrone County Hospital closes at the beginning of March 2009. (AQW 4363/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Following an analysis of recent admissions to Tyrone County Hospital the Western Trust has estimated that, initially, an additional 12 beds will be required at each of the Erne and Altnagelvin hospitals.

The Western Trust has given an assurance that arrangements will be in place to deal effectively with the additional bed demand.

Health Service Vacancies

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what his Department is doing in conjunction with the Western Health and Social Care Trust to attract qualified consultants, doctors and nursing staff to fill the vacancies in that area. (AQW 4364/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Recruitment is a matter for Health and Social Care Trusts and the Western Trust has advised that they make every effort to ensure vacancies are filled.

There is a single on-line point of advertisement for all HSC jobs at www.hpssjobs.com and my Department, in conjunction with HSC Trusts, promotes health service careers generally through recruitment fairs and via the Departmental and Trust websites.

In addition, to help ensure that sufficient, suitably qualified staff are available to meet the needs of the service overall, my Department commissions training for healthcare professionals. The Department spends in the region of £150m per annum on training of healthcare staff.

Acute Medical Services

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to explain why the liaison group, set up by Omagh District Council at his request to shape the future for services at the new hospital planned for Omagh was not consulted prior to his decision to remove acute medical services from the Tyrone County Hospital; and to clarify the role of this liaison group. (AQW 4365/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I agreed with the party leaders within Omagh District Council that they would form a liaison group to improve communication with the Western Trust regarding the new £190m enhanced local hospital in Omagh.

To date, I am disappointed to note that this group has yet to meet and establish terms of reference. It was therefore not possible to consult with them prior to this decision

Stroke Strategy

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the approach taken by the five Health and Social Care Trusts in working with the Regional Implementation Group; and if the agreed strategy ensure that there is a synergistic approach rather than a postcode lottery in the future care of stroke survivors. (AQW 4366/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is for Trusts to decide on the specific staffing required to deliver services to their populations. In creating new posts Trusts must apply strict value for money criteria to ensure that any new investment will provide an appropriate service improvement. Those same arrangements will apply to posts created to improve stroke services.

I have allocated an additional £14m over the next 3 years (with £9m recurrent from year 4) to implement the improvements set out in Improving Stroke Services in Northern Ireland. Trusts are required to use that additional funding to deliver the specific targets set out in that document and this will be monitored through existing Trust and Departmental monitoring arrangements.

I am advised that the Western Trust has nominated its Chief Executive as its representative on the Regional Stroke Implementation Group. I am also advised that, due to other critical issues within the Trust over the past few months neither she nor her deputy has been available to attend Implementation Group meetings. I am assured that the Trust is playing a full part in the sub groups established to take forward specific work streams.

The recommendations arising from the Stroke Strategy are to be delivered to benefit all of the people of Northern Ireland, regardless of where they live. Each Trust is required to implement all of the recommendations by the set target dates. This will ensure equity of access to stroke services across Northern Ireland.

In addition, a Regional Stroke Implementation Group (RSIG) has been established to take forward and to oversee all of the recommendations in Improving Stroke Services in Northern Ireland. This group includes membership from the Health and Social Services Boards, Trusts, the Department and the voluntary sector and ensures a regional approach to implementing the recommendations. A number of sub groups have been established to ensure that implementation is taken forward as quickly and as effectively as possible and with representation from across the region.

Ambulance Service

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will extend the consultation period, on the Proposals for Efficiency Savings and CSR Investment 2008-11 for the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, considering that the consultation period included the Christmas and New Year holidays and could adversely affect the response rate. (AQW 4495/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is a matter for the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) to determine the length of time which the consultation period for its CSR efficiency and investment proposals will run. While guidance on public consultation indicates a minimum period of 8 weeks, the Ambulance Service has allowed a full 12 weeks for consultation on its CSR proposals.

Good Morning Projects

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the Good Morning Projects. (AQW 4541/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

While Good Morning Projects are not specifically health – related, I recognise that they can make a positive contribution to the overall well-being of older people. However, my Department can only provide funding to projects which are of a regional nature and I am therefore unable to provide funding to a project which operates only in the Belfast area.

Good Morning Projects

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if his Department is planning to fund the Good Morning Project in Belfast; and if so, when this funding will begin. (AQW 4542/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

While Good Morning Projects are not specifically health – related, I recognise that they can make a positive contribution to the overall well-being of older people. However, my Department can only provide funding to projects which are of a regional nature and I am therefore unable to provide funding to a project which operates only in the Belfast area.

NHS Dentists

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the number of salaried NHS dentists that have been recruited, by each Health and Social Services Board, since the initiative was announced in the Assembly in September 2007. (AQW 4568/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A total of four salaried dentists have been recruited, all in the Northern Board. A recruitment exercise by the Western Board failed to attract suitable candidates. As I advised the Assembly on 29th April and 30th September last year, my Department is taking steps to recruit 38 additional health service dentists in those areas of Northern Ireland where health service dental provision is problematic. I expect a contract for this work to be awarded by the Spring of this year.

Portstewart Fire Station

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he will intervene to stop the removal of the second fire appliance at the Portstewart Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service station. (AQW 4570/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am currently considering a range of efficiency proposals from the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, which include the removal of the second appliance from Portstewart fire station.

I have yet to come to a conclusion.

Portstewart Fire Station

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what impact the removal of the second Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service appliance in Portstewart will have on the fire cover for (i) Coleraine; (ii) Portrush; (iii) Limavady; and (iv) Ballymoney, when reinforcement cover is required in the Coleraine operational area. (AQW 4574/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am currently considering a range of efficiency proposals from the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, which include the removal of the second appliance from Portstewart fire station.

I have yet to come to a conclusion.

Portstewart Fire Station

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he can give an assurance that the removal of the second Fire and Rescue appliance from Portstewart will not set a precedent for other fire stations. (AQW 4575/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Board and its Chief Fire Officer have a clear statutory responsibility to continually examine, review and demonstrate that as a fire and rescue service, it has the right resources in the right place and at the right time to ensure the safety of the public and Firefighters. For that reason, the provision of emergency cover in all fire stations in Northern Ireland is kept under constant review.

Portstewart Fire Station

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he can give a definitive assurance that the removal of the second Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service appliance from Portstewart station is not a prelude to the closure of the station. (AQW 4576/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are no current plans to close Portstewart station. The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Chief Fire Officer and the Board have a clear statutory responsibility to continually examine, review and demonstrate with strong evidence that as a fire and rescue service, it has the right resources in the right place and at the right time to ensure the safety of the public and Firefighters. The provision of emergency cover in all fire stations in Northern Ireland is therefore kept under constant review.

Portstewart Fire Station

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the impact on public safety in the North Coast area with the removal of the 2nd Fire and Rescue appliance from Portstewart fire station. (AQW 4577/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am currently considering a range of efficiency proposals from the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, which include the removal of the second appliance from Portstewart fire station.

I have yet to come to a conclusion.

Mental Health Nurses

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage of mental health nurses who graduated in 2008 have obtained permanent posts. (AQW 4582/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Queen's University, Belfast, have confirmed that of those Mental Health nursing students who graduated in 2008 and returned destination survey questionnaires, 97% have obtained nursing posts. It is not known whether these are permanent posts as students are not requested to specify the length of the employment contract.

University of Ulster have reported that destination statistics for those students who successfully completed their Mental Health programme in 2008 are not yet available.

Mental Health Nurses

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many mental health nursing posts are vacant in each Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 4583/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of vacant posts for mental health nurses in Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trusts is given in the table below.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF CURRENT VACANCIES AND STAFF IN POST FOR MENTAL HEALTH NURSES IN NORTHERN IRELAND HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE.

Trust	Current Vacancies at 30th January 2009		Staff in Post at 30th January 2009	
	Headcount	WTE	Headcount	WTE
Belfast	17	17.0	437	411.9
Northern	17	17.0	351	326.9
South Eastern	36	31.0	434	420.5
Southern	17	17.0	295	272.8
Western	2	2.0	214	203.3
Total	89	84.0	1731	1635.5

Source: NI Health & Social Care Trusts and Human Resource Management System

Notes:

1. WTE = Whole-Time Equivalent.
2. A current vacancy is an unoccupied post, which at 30th January 2009 was vacant and which the organisation was actively trying to fill.
3. These figures exclude Temporary Post vacancies.
4. South Eastern HSC Trust is currently recruiting for Mental Health Nurses. They have 13 people short listed for 8 Band 5 posts and will hold interviews in the next fortnight.
5. Western HSC Trust operate a live waiting list and stated that their Band 5 Mental Health Nurse vacancies will be allocated from their waiting list.
6. Staff in post figures exclude bank staff.

Children under 18 Years of Age Treated in Hospitals

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children under 18 years of age were treated in hospital, broken down by (i) age; (ii) gender; (iii) socio-economic background; and (iv) health care trust. (AQW 4587/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: (i) The number of admissions to Health and Social Care Hospitals in Northern Ireland for children under 18 in 2006/07 broken down by age is shown below;

Age	Admissions
0	33,878
1	5,003
2	3,522
3	3,293
4	3,659
5	3,629
6	3,262
7	2,616
8	2,357
9	2,369
10	1,975
11	1,812
12	1,881
13	1,887
14	2,009
15	2,261
16	2,334
17	3,009

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

(ii) The number of admissions to Health and Social Care Hospitals in Northern Ireland for children under 18 in 2006/07 broken down by gender is shown below;

Gender	Admissions
Male	43,324
Female	37,432

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

(iii) The number of admissions to Health and Social Care Hospitals in Northern Ireland for children under 18 in 2006/07 broken down by socio-economic background is shown below;

Multiple Deprivation Measure	Admissions
Most Deprived	9,146
-	8,592
-	8,738
-	8,426
-	8,971
-	8,740
-	7,949
-	6,962
-	6,347
Least Deprived	5,613

Source: Hospital Inpatient System & NISRA Neighbourhood Statistics Unit

Note: The total number of admissions shown in the table above does not equate to the total number of admissions stated in parts (i), (ii) and (iv) of the answer, as the Multiple Deprivation Measure can only be calculated where a post code has been recorded for the patient.

(iv) The number of admissions to Health and Social Care Hospitals in Northern Ireland for children under 18 in 2006/07 broken down by Health and Social Care Trust is shown below;

Health and Social Care Trust	Admissions
Belfast HSC Trust	24,414
Northern HSC Trust	13,741
Southern HSC Trust	14,876
South Eastern HSC Trust	13,291
Western HSC Trust	14,434

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

In all the above tables deaths and discharges are used as an approximation of admissions. Therefore these figures do not equate to individuals as a person may be admitted to hospital more than once in a year.

Mental Health

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people were diagnosed with mental health conditions, in each year since 1998, broken down by constituency. (AQW 4588/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is not available in the format requested, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Private Nursing/Care Homes

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what legislation is in place to protect vulnerable adults residing in private nursing/care homes. (AQW 4606/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A range of legislative and procedural measures are in place to protect vulnerable adults, regardless of their physical and mental health or where they live. This includes the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003; the Regional Adult Protection Policy and Procedural Guidelines; and the Joint Protocol for the Investigation of Alleged Incidents of Abuse. These arrangements apply across Northern Ireland.

In addition, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 will introduce a new registration scheme in Northern Ireland for those individuals working with children or vulnerable adults. The Order will establish a new Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS), aimed at strengthening protection for children and vulnerable adults in workplace situations. A new Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) will be central to the new Scheme. When the VBS is implemented in full, those seeking work with children and vulnerable adults will be required to register with the ISA and will be subject to a process of continuous monitoring, subsequent to registration.

Programme for Government

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what risk assessment he has carried out of the Programme for Government targets. (AQW 4785/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The risks associated with my Department's Programme for Government targets are assessed on an ongoing basis to ensure that timely action is taken to address actual or potential performance difficulties.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what provision exists in the Health Service for people with chronic fatigue syndrome who are resident outside Belfast. (AQO 1931/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A range of treatment and support options is available for people with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Decisions on the specific care of an individual patient will normally be taken in conjunction with their medical practitioner or hospital consultant. Their care will be tailored according to their condition and its severity.

Patient care, is for the most part provided by GPs, however patients may access other areas of the health service as necessary. All patients with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome may be referred to general clinics or neurology clinics for treatment.

Stand Alone Midwife-Led Maternity Unit in Omagh

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on proposals for a stand alone midwife-led maternity unit in Omagh. (AQO 1932/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The study carried out by the Western Board in relation to the provision of a Community Midwifery Unit in Omagh identified a number of complex issues including mother and baby safety, the impact on maternity services at other hospitals and the sustainability of such a service, including the availability of appropriately skilled staff. I want to give these issues my fullest consideration and to take the necessary professional advice before determining the best way forward.

Respite Care Needs of Parents and Children in Mid-Ulster

Mr M McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following the public consultation exercise carried out by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, what plans he has to protect the respite care needs of parents and children in the Mid-Ulster area. (AQO 1933/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Trust is currently consulting on the equality implications of their proposals to reform and modernise respite services. Following the consultation the Trust will take account of responses in determining what respite services are most appropriate to meet the needs of children and adults requiring respite. You will understand that since the plans are not finalised and the public consultation process is still ongoing it would not be appropriate for me to comment at this stage. However a final decision on any changes to respite services will not be made before the end of the consultation period.

Comprehensive Spending Review Period

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the budget available to his Department over the Comprehensive Spending Review period. (AQO 1934/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department will receive an additional £837.4m by 2010/11 under CSR2007 of which £344m has to come from internally generated efficiencies. This investment will allow me to meet very substantial cost pressures and deliver significant service developments over the CSR period. However, I remain disappointed that additional resources have not been made available for Health and Social Services, following the recent Budget Stocktake exercise, to address the £600m funding gap that exists between Northern Ireland and England.

My Department submitted capital bids totalling more than £1.1billion for CSR period 2008-11 but received only £728m. Of this £95m was dependant on disposal of estate. The recent economic downturn has rendered this target unachievable and it has been cut to approximately £65m. This effectively reduces the available budget to just under £700m, which is sufficient only to meet existing contractual commitments and commence a limited number of new projects.

Screening for Sudden Cardiac Deaths

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on on screening for sudden cardiac deaths. (AQO 1935/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In 2008 the UK National Screening Committee reviewed the research evidence on screening for Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, the main cause of sudden cardiac death. In December 2008 they advised the four UK Health Departments that screening should not be offered, and that pre-participation screening of athletes for Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy or other causes of sudden cardiac death should not be instituted at present.

Since the Assembly debate on Sudden Cardiac Death in September 2007 I instructed my Department to look at what more can be done to reduce Sudden Cardiac Death in Northern Ireland. Following a workshop on Sudden Cardiac Death in March 2008 the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride, convened a working group of leading experts to take forward recommendations coming from the workshop.

Primacare Health Facility in Ballygawley

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has considered the proposal of the Primacare Health Facility in Ballygawley. (AQO 1936/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department has had no discussions with Primacare and as such has given no direct consideration to the proposal for a Primacare health facility in Ballygawley.

New Acute Hospital in the South West

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the new acute hospital in the South West. (AQO 1937/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Full planning permission for the new acute hospital in the south west was approved in December 2008. Construction of this new £267 million hospital is expected to begin later this year, and with the appointment now of the successful tenderer, Northern Ireland Health Group, this means that the new hospital is on schedule for completion in 2012.

This major investment marks a very important milestone in the development of world-class health and social care services for the population of the South West. Once completed, this new state-of-the-art hospital will be one of the most modern facilities, not only in Northern Ireland, but across the UK.

It is a flagship project and I am delighted to see the delivery of such a facility in the Western Trust area.

Ardoyne Ambulance Station

Mr N McCausland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what changes have been made in the ambulance service provided from the Ardoyne ambulance station in North Belfast. (AQO 1938/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: No change has been made to the level of ambulance service provided from Ardoyne ambulance station during the current financial year (2008-09).

Maternity Unit at Craigavon Area Hospital

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the effectiveness of the maternity unit at Craigavon Area Hospital. (AQO 1939/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Maternity services at Craigavon Area Hospital are of a very high standard, professionally delivered and safe.

It is recognised that increasing birth numbers have put the unit under some pressure in recent years and this is why I have announced an investment of £3.5m to strengthen maternity services at Craigavon and improve facilities.

Healthcare Provision

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what healthcare provision is available to refugees and victims of human trafficking who have applied for asylum. (AQO 1940/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A person who has been accepted as a refugee in the United Kingdom, or who has made a formal application for leave to stay as a refugee in the United Kingdom, including a person recognised as a victim of human trafficking, is entitled to receive free health services in Northern Ireland on the same basis as those ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland.

Furthermore, following a recent change to the relevant legislation and in accordance with the Council of Europe Convention on Human Trafficking, a victim of human trafficking is entitled to receive health services in Northern Ireland during the initial recovery and reflection period after that person has been identified as a victim, even should they not apply for refugee status during that time.

Antrim Area Hospital

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what contingency plans are in place at Antrim Area Hospital to cope with any further admissions of large numbers of patients suffering from influenza. (AQO 1941/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am advised that the Northern Health and Social Care Trust has a contingency escalation plan in place that ensures key staff are alerted to any peaks in emergency activity and increased admissions. A range of measures are then introduced to manage the situation and to ensure that all patients are treated appropriately.

It is essential that all our hospitals and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service work effectively together when there are sudden pressures such as those created by the recent upsurge in influenza. This is important to minimise the pressures faced by any one hospital and to provide the best overall service for patients.

Social Services

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many cases referred to social services for assessment remain unallocated. (AQO 1942/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information is only collected for children's social services. At the end of December 2008 there were 986 unallocated cases.

Reducing Inequalities in Health Outcomes

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress his Department has made towards reducing inequalities in health outcomes. (AQO 1945/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Health Inequalities are the product of social, economic and health related issues. A wide range of strategies, programmes and activities are underway to address this as part of the Investing for Health strategy. A review of the strategy will take place this year which will assess its impact and make recommendations. In addition the establishment in April 2009 of the Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Well-being will bring a much needed dedicated focus in order to seriously address health inequalities.

In respect of measuring progress the Department maintains and updates the Health and Social Care Inequalities Monitoring System which comprises a number of indicators that are monitored over time to assess area differences – inequalities between the 20% most deprived areas and Northern Ireland as a whole are measured.

One key indicator is life expectancy. While life expectancy generally in Northern Ireland is increasing across all areas, it still remains worse in the most deprived areas, and the gap between deprived areas and the NI average has remained fairly consistent over recent years. Improved mortality rates due to respiratory and circulatory diseases in the most deprived areas relative to Northern Ireland generally has narrowed both the male and female

deprived life expectancy gaps over recent years. However these improvements have been offset by a relative worsening of mortality due to other causes.

Life expectancy aside, there have been some relative improvements across a number of indicators (for example, teenage births, infant mortality, admission rates to hospital, cancer incidence and death rates), although in many of these areas, the health inequality gaps still remain large. The gaps for other monitored indicators have remained relatively consistent between deprived areas and the Northern Ireland average.

Further information on health inequalities monitoring has been published and is available on the Department's website on the following link -http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-equality.htm

DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Reduction in Paperwork

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps he is taking to significantly reduce the amount of paperwork he sends to constituency offices and other organisations throughout 2009.

(AQW 3831/09)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): My Department takes all reasonable steps to reduce the amount of paperwork issued. However, we also recognise that not everyone has access to, or wishes to use, electronic facilities.

My Department follows NICS Guidance on Distribution of Departmental Publications and Consultation Documents, published in November 2008. Sections 9 and 10 cover electronic publication and state, "It is a matter of choice for the organisation(s) as to their preferred method of receipt of Government publications ...". The Department's Equality Unit regularly seeks the views of consultees' regarding their preferred means of communication to ensure that paper issued is kept to a minimum.

My Department also pro-actively publishes information as required by the Freedom of Information Act (2000). This information is readily available on the Internet via my Department's website.

Departmental Legislation

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what legislation his Department will bring forward to the Assembly in 2009.

(AQW 3848/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I plan to introduce the Harbours Bill to the Assembly during the 2009 Session. The Bill seeks to provide enhanced commercial powers to Trust Ports, to introduce a number of marine safety provisions and to broaden and modernise powers to assist Ports in discharging their functions. However, the exact timing of introduction is dependent on the timing of confirmation from the Office of National Statistics that the proposed legislation will have the effect of removing the trust ports from their current status as public corporations for public expenditure purposes. This is awaited. The introduction of the Bill to the Assembly will also be dependent on prior Executive agreement to introduce.

Translink

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development how many recorded incidents of violent or abusive behaviour by members of the public towards Translink staff there were, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 3857/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The table below sets out details provided by Translink of the number of recorded incidents of abusive behaviour against Translink staff in the last five financial years. These incidents range from abusive language to physical assault.

Year	Bus	Train	Total
2004/05	35	219	254
2005/06	31	208	239
2006/07	19	183	202
2007/08	30	123	153
2008/09(to date)	19	98	117
TOTAL	134	831	965

Roads Service

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans does Roads Service have to prevent regular flooding along Silverwood Drive in the Shankill estate in Lurgan. (AQW 4193/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, the gullies and connecting pipes at Silverwood Drive, Lurgan, were found to be functioning normally when last checked on 22 January 2009.

However, this system connects into a main storm drain which runs through gardens of adjacent properties. This storm drain, which is the responsibility of Northern Ireland Water (NIW), appears to have an obstruction. Roads Service subsequently reported this matter to NIW for their attention and remedial action.

NIW has advised that, as a result of information received from Roads Service, an investigation was carried out on 29 January 2009, and a partial blockage was found in a storm drain at Silverwood Drive, Lurgan. The blockage was immediately removed and the storm drain is now flowing freely.

Road Improvements for Dublin Road and Airport Road in Antrim

Mr D Burnside asked the Minister for Regional Development if he can confirm (i) when the road improvements for Dublin Road and Airport Road in Antrim will resume; and (ii) that there is a dual carriageway planned for this road. (AQW 4224/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, due to escalating costs, funding for the proposed improvements to the A57 Antrim Road (Dublin Road), towards Belfast International Airport, is currently not available. Therefore, it has not been possible to include this scheme in a works programme. I would further advise that any future scheme proposals brought forward, for this route, will have to compete for funding with other schemes.

I can also confirm that Roads Service has no proposals to upgrade this road to dual carriageway standard.

Households with Lead Pipes

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department keeps a record of the number of households in each District Council area that have lead pipes. (AQW 4294/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it does not maintain records of households with lead pipes and is therefore unable to provide the breakdown sought for each District Council area.

Some properties built before 1970 may be connected to the public water mains by a lead service pipe. The part of the service pipe from the customer's tap to the property boundary, which is known as the supply pipe, is the responsibility of the customer while responsibility for the part of the pipe from the property boundary to the water main, which is known as the communication pipe, rests with NIW. Under its current policy, NIW will, at the request of a customer, replace the communication pipe free of charge provided that the customer replaces the supply pipe.

Phosphoric Acid in Water Supply

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development what comparisons he has made with other regions of the United Kingdom that add phosphoric acid to the water supply. (AQW 4295/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that no direct comparisons have been made with other water companies in Britain. However, the use of phosphoric acid in the treatment of drinking water has been approved by the Northern Ireland Drinking Water Inspectorate and the medical authorities. In the North and Britain, corrective treatment has been promoted, as opposed to the widespread replacement of lead pipes, as an appropriate first stage of achieving the new European standards for lead in drinking water.

Phosphoric Acid in Water Supply

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development what assessment he has made of the effect phosphoric acid in the water supply can have on calcium in children's bones. (AQW 4296/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it has not made any assessment of the effect that phosphoric acid in the water supply can have on calcium in children's bones. Orthophosphoric acid has been effective in reducing dissolved lead in water for over 20 years and its use in the treatment of drinking water has been approved by both the Drinking Water Inspector and the medical authorities.

Phosphoric Acid in Water Supply

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development if uranium or radionucleides is contained in the phosphoric acid present in the water supply. (AQW 4297/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the phosphoric acid used is an approved product by the Drinking Water Inspectorate for use in the drinking water industry. Radioactivity monitoring is a requirement of the Drinking Water Regulations. The water supply is tested for radionucleides, including uranium, following the addition of phosphoric acid. No samples have been found to be in excess of the regulatory limit.

Phosphoric Acid in Water Supply

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development what impact studies have been carried out on the use of phosphoric acid in the water supply. (AQW 4298/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that, prior to the use of orthophosphoric acid, environmental impact assessments were carried out in specific locations to ensure that there would be no detrimental effect on the phosphate removal process at major wastewater treatment works. The assessments used read across implications of similar assessments completed across the water industry. No further environmental impact assessments have been carried out since the commencement of phosphate dosing.

Roads Service

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister for Regional Development to confirm the details of any permits that have been issued by Roads Service to builders in relation to the work they are completing at Scotch Quarter, Carrickfergus. (AQW 4335/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I can confirm that a Consent was issued by my Department's Roads Service, under the provisions of Article 72 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, on 20 May 2008, to erect hoarding on an adjoining footway at 24 Scotch Quarter, Carrickfergus, to facilitate building work and protect pedestrians. As the works are not yet completed, Roads Service will be extending the duration of the Consent.

Translink

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development if Translink has a significant budget deficit in this financial year; and to state the size of this deficit. (AQW 4353/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) /Translink have advised that they do not have a significant budget deficit in the financial year to 31.03.09 and are on target to meet their key financial performance indicator (that is pro forma profit before tax based on pension contributions payable). This was reported as £2.8m for the year ending 2007/2008 and will be reported on in the 2008/2009 annual accounts later this year. The NITHC group accounts include all subsidiary companies including Metro, Ulsterbus and NI Railways.

Translink

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answer to AQW 3742/09, why the fuel costs incurred by Translink during the period September 2008 to December 2008 are so high; and why this has not decreased in line with the price of crude oil and the price of petrol and diesel at station forecourts. (AQW 4354/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink buy fuel in advance for fixed periods of time. This process is known as hedging and means that fares can more readily be set and held as the price of fuel fluctuates up and down. Fuel costs in the quarter to December 2008 are largely based on forward contracts taken out when fuel prices were higher. In the 6 months to September 2008 our fuel costs were below the market price.

Translink

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answers to AQW 3742/09 and AQW 1288/09, if the policy of hedging to purchase fuel is resulting in Translink paying significantly above the market value for fuel; and, if so, how much above the market price of fuel it is paying. (AQW 4355/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Hedging is industry practice across the bus industry and Translink has operated such a policy for years. Inevitably the hedging price will be different from the market price and it is the case that currently Translink is paying above the market price. In 2009/10 Translink expect their fuel costs to increase by 11% over this year.

However, in the past the hedged price has been below market price in 48 months out of 69 months from April 2003 to December 2008 and this has been passed on to the public in stable ticket fares at times of escalating oil prices. It is also expected that the Translink hedging policy will mean that current market trends are reflected in future fuel prices albeit with a time lag.

Hedged Fuel Purchasing Agreement

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answers to AQW 3742/09 and AQW 1288/09, the start and end dates for the current hedged fuel purchasing agreement. (AQW 4388/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink have informed me that their fuel hedge policy covers periods 5 quarters in advance and up to 8 quarters if circumstances are judged favourable. My understanding is that the current rolling contract covers a period up to June 2010.

Hedged Fuel Purchasing Agreement

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answer to AQW 1288/09, how often this agreement is re-negotiated; and how many times it has been re-negotiated in each of the last five years. (AQW 4389/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Since March 2008, hedge contracts are reviewed and potentially re-negotiated every quarter with all financial institutions willing to provide credit facilities. There are separate

contracts for Gas Oil and the Ultra Low Sulphur Diesel (ULSD) fuel hedges. There have been 16 fuel hedge contracts (8 for Gas Oil and 8 for ULSD) between 1 April 2004 and 30 June 2009. Prior to March 2008 arrangements were reviewed on an ad hoc basis, mainly annually but sometimes every six months.

Hedged Fuel Purchasing Agreement

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to his answer to AQW 1288/09, what percentage of fuel purchased by Translink is covered by the hedging agreement. (AQW 4390/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink's fuel hedging policy means that at all times a rolling minimum of at least 5 quarters forward fuel coverage is in place which normally covers between 85% and 90% of anticipated requirements.

Coleraine to Bushmills B17 Road

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans are in place to carry out road works on the Coleraine to Bushmills B17 Road. (AQW 4404/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has two future resurfacing schemes planned for the B17, Cloyfin Road, between Coleraine and Bushmills. One is at Boghill Road, near to the site of the former Bohill Hotel, and the other is at Killygreen, between the Creamery Road and Ballyversal Road junctions.

However, neither of these two schemes is currently included in Roads Service's three-year resurfacing programme, 2008 to 2011.

Business Owners in Ballykelly

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development what compensation is to be paid to business owners in Ballykelly due to the disruption and loss of business during the recent sewerage and water improvement scheme. (AQW 4406/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the work in Ballykelly was undertaken to benefit the whole of the local community by improving the sewerage network in the area and reducing the risk of out-of-sewer flooding. Unfortunately, some inconvenience is unavoidable during construction work of this nature but I am assured that NIW and its contractor worked closely with the local business community to minimise disruption to trade/business and to complete the work as quickly as possible.

Compensation is not normally payable where there has been no physical damage to property or where there is no indication that NIW was in any way negligent or failed to carry out its statutory duties. However, NIW will make good, or pay compensation for, any damage to property caused by the carrying out of the work and, following completion of the work, all local businesses were advised of the address to which claims should be submitted if they believed they were entitled to compensation.

Roads Service

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what criteria Roads Service uses to determine which schemes and works proceed. (AQW 4451/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The criteria that Roads Service use to determine which major schemes and works proceed is based on national transportation principles embracing the Government's five key criteria of environment, safety, economy, accessibility and integration. My Department's Regional Strategic Transportation Plan 2015, which can be found on the DRD website at http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/transport_planning/tp-transport_plans.htm expands on these principles at Section 5.1 and outlines the supporting analysis at Annex B.

The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland has enabled further schemes to be added to the Investment Delivery Plan for roads, based on similar principles and taking into account feedback from a consultation exercise carried out in 2006, which was supportive of those schemes being proposed by Roads Service.

More detailed and extensive guidance on highway project appraisal is available through the Department for Transport's "Transport Analysis Guidance" manual, which is available on internet website <http://www.dft.gov.uk/webtag>

Waste Water Treatment Works in Stewartstown

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development if Northern Ireland Water has any plans to upgrade the Waste Water Treatment Works in Stewartstown in the next 5 years. (AQW 4468/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it plans to commence the upgrading of Stewartstown Wastewater Treatment Works in 2009/10 to ensure future compliance with the standards set by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

Translink

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) what is the annual salary of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Translink; (ii) if her accommodation is paid by Translink; (iii) the location of her accommodation; (iv) what travel costs have been incurred by the Translink CEO, on a monthly basis, since her appointment; and (v) what additional costs have been incurred by the Translink CEO that have been paid out of the public purse. (AQW 4633/09)

Minister for Regional Development: (i) The annual salary of the NITHC Group Chief Executive (Mrs Catherine Mason) is £170,000. She is also entitled to a bonus of up to 25% of basic salary depending on achievement of key targets, she is a member of the NILGOSC pension scheme and receives other benefits namely health insurance and a car allowance.

- (ii) Mrs Mason's accommodation is not paid for by Translink and she did not receive relocation expenses.
- (iii) Mrs Mason is currently residing in Belfast;
- (iv) Since her appointment in March 2008, Mrs Mason's travel and related business costs have totalled £2,519.99 (equivalent to £252 per month). Mrs Mason is also, like all Translink employees, entitled to free public transport.
- (v) No other costs were incurred.

Road Traffic Signs

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development to give an assurance this his Department will not discriminate against any particular firm through the manipulation of the tender process in relation to the manufacture and erection of road traffic signs. (AQW 4642/09)

Minister for Regional Development: A tender competition is currently ongoing for the Supply and Delivery of Permanent and Temporary Road Traffic Signs. The contract does not include the erection of road traffic signs.

The tender competition is being undertaken by the Department of Finance and Personnel's Central Procurement Directorate, on behalf of my Department. The competition is regulated under the Public Contracts Regulations 2006, a specific aim of which is to ensure openness, transparency and equality of opportunity.

Road Traffic Signs

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the total value of the new tender for the manufacture and erection of road traffic signs; and (ii) the minimum turnover figure demanded of prospective companies as part of the tender process. (AQW 4643/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the contract notice gave the estimated value as between £1.5 and £2.5 million, with the contract duration being either one or two years. The required turnover figure of £400,000 per annum was also published in the tender documents.

Road Traffic Signs

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development why a new criterion has been included in the tender process for the manufacture and erection of road traffic signs about the turnover of companies wishing to make a bid. (AQW 4644/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service have been advised by Central Procurement Directorate that, following a judgement in Europe from an EU challenge on another contract, not related to Roads Service, that the scoring of "experience" should now be handled on a pass/fail basis relating to a minimum standard. In this respect the threshold figure was considered as a reasonable measure of tenderers' experience and capability, taking into account the possible overall value of the contract.

Road Traffic Signs

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development, in relation to the current contract for the manufacture and erection of road traffic signs, how much produce did PWS Ireland fail to deliver on time. (AQW 4645/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that information relating to the amount of produce PWS Ireland failed to deliver on time needs to be collated. I have asked Roads Service officials to forward this information to you as soon as it is available.

Road Traffic Signs

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the measures which his Department was obliged to take in the last five years to monitor the performance of companies who supply and erect road traffic signs; and (ii) the measures that were actually used for monitoring in the last five years. (AQW 4646/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I would again point out that the erection of signs was not included in the contract being referred to. Improved procedures for managing the contract for the supply of traffic signs were instigated in March 2003, in accordance with recommendations made by our Internal Auditors. These improved procedures have been in place for the current contract awarded in 2005.

Ballymoney Bus Depot

Mr M Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has for the retention of Ballymoney bus depot. (AQO 1952/09)

Minister for Regional Development: This is an operational matter for Translink. However, I understand that Ballymoney bus depot continues to be a key operational centre in providing a network of bus services to the North Antrim area and that Translink has no plans to discontinue its use.

Translink

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Regional Development for the number of hybrid buses currently operated by Translink; and what future plans he has for the introduction of these vehicles. (AQO 1953/09)

Minister for Regional Development: In October 2007 the Department gave approval to Translink to purchase two Hybrid or Environmentally Enhanced Vehicles (EEVs) on a trial basis and at a cost of £431,000. These vehicles, which are currently being tendered by Translink, will be used on the Giant's Causeway to Coleraine service.

In addition Translink have also submitted to the Department an economic appraisal for the purchase of a further five Hybrid Buses and it is intended that these will be used on short distance Park & Ride schemes in the Greater Belfast area.

My intention is to await the outcome of the pilots before finalising future plans.

Bus-Based Rapid Transit in Belfast

Mr P Maskey asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on his Department's plans to introduce bus-based rapid transit in Belfast. (AQO 1954/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Following Executive approval on 27 November 2008, bus-based Rapid Transit for Belfast was launched on 1 December 2008, when I delivered the keynote address at the 4th annual BRT-UK Conference in Belfast. Rapid Transit will initially operate along three pilot routes from the City Centre into East Belfast, West Belfast and Titanic Quarter.

A new Rapid Transit Division has now been established within my Department which has responsibility for taking the proposals for Rapid Transit forward to implementation. This will include the design of the network. As part of this process the required statutory assessments will be undertaken, including consultation with the public. This will provide opportunities for people to make their views known and influence how the Rapid Transit project is implemented.

My Department is also in the process of negotiating land purchase for the scheme and investigating the legal basis under which the system will be implemented.

Planned Expenditure in Upper Bann

Mr D Simpson asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's total planned expenditure in Upper Bann for the financial year 2009/10. (AQO 1955/09)

Minister for Regional Development: With regard to the roads expenditure, the overall budget allocation for my Department's Roads Service in 2009-10 is £395.4 million. However, Roads Service does not budget on a parliamentary constituency basis, as budget allocations are based on need rather than parliamentary boundaries.

Roads Service finalises allocations to their divisions by May each year and set out details of planned works in their Spring Reports to each District Council. Roads Service will be consulting with each District Council in the Upper Bann constituency area early in the 2009/10 financial year.

I can also advise that my Department's Ports and Public Transport Division plans to invest almost £1.4 million on improvements in the Upper Bann constituency during the 2009/10 financial year.

Northern Ireland Water has advised that during the 2009/10 financial year it plans to invest almost £21 million on improvements to the water and wastewater infrastructure in the Upper Bann constituency.

Construction Industry

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development how many construction projects and maintenance works his Department has provided to the construction industry in the last year; and how many of these works will be made available this year. (AQO 1956/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service had thirteen major road schemes, under construction during 2007/2008. During this financial year, 2008/2009, nine major road schemes have been under construction at a combined cost of approximately £450 million. One additional scheme, costing £11.5 million, is expected to be awarded in March 2009.

With regard to the number of minor works and maintenance works provided to the construction industry, Roads Service can only provide overall spend figures because of the micro nature of some of the works, for example, pothole repairs, traffic sign repairs, etc. I can advise that Roads Service spent some £20 million on its minor works programme in 2007/2008 and intends to spend some £25 million in 2008/2009. This includes works such as minor improvements, collision remedial schemes, traffic calming, pedestrian and bus measures, etc. The spend on minor bridge strengthening in 2007/2008 was £4 million and the estimated spend in 2008/2009 is £6.2 million.

Roads Service's expenditure on maintenance activities (including in-house contractor costs) was some £128.5 million in 2007/2008. The estimated spend in 2008/2009 is £112.9 million. This includes works such as resurfacing, reconstruction, surface dressing, patching, as well as other routine maintenance activity, eg, winter service, grass cutting, gully emptying, etc.

During the three year period to March 2010 an estimated £670 million will be invested by Northern Ireland Water on some 1,200 projects.

The construction elements of Northern Ireland Water's two major Public Private Partnership (Private Finance) schemes under construction during 2008, have a total combined investment of £232 million.

This year, Translink awarded 20 contracts within this category with a total contract value of £17,933,412. This mainly relates to the railway infrastructure budget of £37.7m for the year. In total, over the remaining budget period some £100.4m in capital grant is committed to enhance services on the railways. A significant proportion of this will be spent on construction projects. In 2009/10 up to 30 contracts are planned to be awarded.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr C Boylan asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will treat heavy goods vehicles as more than one unit when measuring vehicles per day travelling on rural roads. (AQO 1957/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that heavy goods vehicles are counted as one unit when measuring vehicles per day on all roads. However, heavy goods vehicles are classified separately, to allow Roads Service to determine the percentage of heavy goods vehicles travelling per day on the subject road.

NI Water

Mr A Attwood asked the Minister for Regional Development when he expects NI Water to have collated reliable data to ensure the issuing of accurate water bills and to assist in key decision-making. (AQO 1958/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I am advised by Northern Ireland Water that it continues to build on the significant progress made during the past two years with its extensive programme to improve data quality, income forecasting and financial monitoring. This programme, which spans data requirements across the whole organisation (including customer and billing data), is prioritised according to key business risks. Work on the top priority activity will be substantially complete by the end of March 2009 with testing and further development continuing into 2009/10. Some of the ongoing areas of focus include customer data and development of specific consumption reports to provide robust trend and customer category analysis for the future. I note that the Chair/Acting Chief Executive of Northern Ireland Water recently informed the Regional Development Committee that work on the broad range of data requirements across the whole organisation could take 3-5 years.

Independent Broadway Underpass Flooding Report

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress has been made in the assessment of the hydraulic efficiency of the drainage system on the Westlink as outlined in the Independent Broadway underpass flooding report. (AQO 1960/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the independent report into the flooding event at Broadway on 16 August 2008, completed by Amey Consultants, recommended that an assessment of the hydraulic efficiency of the drainage system be carried out using a physical hydraulic model.

In partnership with Rivers Agency and the Design Build Finance & Operate contractor, Highway Management Construction, Roads Service has instigated work to procure the appointment of a specialist hydraulic investigation team. Tenders for the physical hydraulic model were returned on 19 January 2009. Following assessment of the tenders, Roads Service hopes to make a suitable appointment by early February 2009.

It is anticipated that the results of the modelling exercise will be completed by June 2009.

EU Charter on Minority Languages

Mr F Brolly asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on his Department's compliance with the EU charter on minority languages. (AQO 1961/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department has implemented a number of initiatives to fulfil commitments in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. These include:

- The translation of all Ministerial forewords to Plans, Reports and Consultation documents into Irish;
- The translation of all new or revised information leaflets into Irish;
- The launch, on 29 September 2008, of a multi-lingual website for the Department;
- The publication of significant departmental announcements in an appropriate Irish language newspaper;
- The use of bilingual headings in the advertising of all departmental public notices;
- The identification of Irish speakers in DRD to help handle telephone calls in Irish ; The issue of revised Codes of Courtesy on Irish and Ulster Scots to all staff; and
- The preparation of a draft policy for the introduction of a range of bilingual road signs.

The Department is also continuing to liaise closely with the Irish language sector to improve and develop the Irish language section of the multi lingual website and identify training opportunities for staff.

In addition, Translink has also launched a range of new Irish language passenger materials. This includes:

- Bus-shelter timetable and route information;
- Bus Rules for Safety leaflet and poster targeting school children;
- ‘See Belfast by Metro’ Guide to the city’s main landmarks and attractions; and
- Travelling with Translink guide to using public transport in the North including bus and railway route maps.

NITHCo/Translink, the Port of Belfast, Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners, Warrenpoint Harbour Authority, and Northern Ireland Water all fulfil their requirements under the Charter. They allow users of regional or minority languages to submit a request in these languages, provide translation or interpretation as may be required, and allow the use or adoption of family names in the regional or minority languages at the request of those concerned.

Northern Ireland Water continues to offer a number of leaflets in six different languages including Irish, such as information on non domestic charging.

Regional Development Strategy

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress is being made on taking forward the fundamental review of the Regional Development Strategy. (AQO 1962/09)

Minister for Regional Development: During November and early December last year my officials held a series of stakeholder events on the basis of the proposed new Council areas. The purpose of these was to hear local views on challenges and issues facing their areas. My officials also met with the Regional Development Committee on 14 January to update them on progress on the review.

I also met with Ministerial colleagues in an Executive Sub Group on 29 January.

Work continues on the preparation of the draft Regional Development Strategy document. My intention is to present a draft document to Ministers by May this year.

Risk to Public Safety in Belfast City Centre

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Regional Development what his Department is doing to help reduce the risk to public safety in Belfast City Centre following the tragic death of Ciara Park last November. (AQO 1963/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department’s Roads Service has been working closely with the Department for Social Development to develop an overall traffic management plan for Belfast city centre. This plan will take into account the many competing demands, within the city centre, and road safety issues will be considered at every stage of the process.

Following my earlier meeting with the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Mr Tom Hartley, I met with Minister Wilson and Minister Ritchie, on 19 January, to discuss road safety in the city centre. At this meeting we agreed to set up a high level review of the emerging proposals for the city centre, to ensure that these proposals recognise the

importance of traffic safety, while meeting the needs of the essential user groups, including pedestrians, traders and public transport.

I expect that this review will be completed by the end of May 2009.

Public Transport

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development if the reduction in oil prices will have an impact on the cost of public transport. (AQO 1964/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The current fluctuations in oil prices will not have an immediate impact on the cost of public transport. This is because Translink buys fuel in advance for fixed periods of time.

The process is known as hedging and means that fares can more readily be set and held as the price of fuel fluctuates up and down. Fuel hedging is normal practice across the bus industry because of the need for planning certainty.

Decisions around fuel hedging are an operational matter for Translink. Whilst the level of fares charged are commercial decisions for Translink, these are discussed with my department in the context of Translink's corporate and financial plans.

Residents Only Parking Schemes

Mr A Maskey asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the implementation of the Residents Only Parking Schemes in Belfast. (AQO 1965/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The Member will be aware that the initial attempts by the Department for Regional Development Roads Service to introduce five residents' parking schemes in Belfast, was met with considerable local opposition, particularly in relation to the need to implement a charge for the permit as proposed by my direct rule predecessor.

On taking Office, as Minister for Regional Development, I took on board the views of the residents after further consultations and, on 21 October 2008, I announced that residents' parking schemes will be free for residents in the five areas selected for the initial scheme. I feel that this decision, is justified, given the unique position these residents find themselves in, compared to other areas of the North and considering the demand to resolve the matter over many years.

By removing all-day commuter parking, I hope to deliver a scheme, which is reflective of local needs, and will be an improvement the local residents can expect, in their day-to-day lives. I have therefore asked Roads Service to renew its work on developing schemes, for the initial five areas in Belfast, and to resume the local consultation process with residents.

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Business Review

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development why population base was not considered when assessing the location changes of social security main offices as part of the Strategic Business Review. (AQW 4049/09)

Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): The Social Security Agency is structured on the basis of 6 geographical Districts across Northern Ireland. The population base was not considered primarily because customers will continue to be served locally by their current Social Security/Jobs & Benefits office within these Districts.

The proposals are subject to a public consultation which will run until late April 2009. Final decisions on the proposals will not be made until the consultation exercise has been completed and the responses considered.

Review of Social Security Agency Provision

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development why she will not suspend the review of the Social Security Agency provision that could result in job losses in her Department. (AQW 4144/09)

Minister for Social Development: These proposals are out for consultation at this time. I believe it would be wrong to deny people the opportunity to have their say.

I also refer the member to my previous response to AQW 3082/09; and would re-emphasise, there is no risk of a reduction in service, staff working in benefit offices losing their employment, or of any public offices closing.

Pension Credit

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the number of pensioners who are not claiming the pension credit to which they are entitled. (AQW 4168/09)

Minister for Social Development: Determining levels of unclaimed benefit is a very complex process. The most recent research shows between 17,000 and 86,000 older people may be eligible for, but not claiming State Pension Credit. However this is based on information collated from the Family Resources Survey which is an annual survey of approximately 2,000 households in Northern Ireland. The survey was introduced in Northern Ireland in 2002-03 to facilitate a detailed assessment of all sources of income received by household. However, not all respondents accurately report the level of income, including benefit income that they receive. In addition, when the data is extrapolated to a Northern Ireland level the sample size is such that the precise level of take-up cannot be estimated with any degree of statistical confidence. Indeed, while certain data produced from the survey is robust, estimates of benefit take-up are characterised by exceptionally large confidence intervals. It is therefore difficult to say where the exact figure lies for any benefit, but especially State Pension Credit.

The most recent information in relation to benefit take-up was gathered over a period of 2 years from April 2004 - March 2006 and is expressed as an average uptake level over this period. It should be noted that considerable change has occurred since then, much of which will not have been included in the estimate.

Benefit Uptake is one of 5 key priorities for the Social Security Agency and State Pension Credit has been included in the Agency's Benefit Uptake Programmes since 2005. The number of customers who may be eligible and have not previously been contacted is diminishing each year. Whilst efforts continue to increase awareness of State Pension Credit there will always be an element who may be eligible but do not wish to claim the benefit.

Fuel Poverty

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister for Social Development what progress has been made in reducing fuel poverty. (AQW 4205/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Northern Ireland House Condition Survey 2006 reported that 34% of households in Northern Ireland were in fuel poverty. With the increases in energy costs the level of fuel poverty today is likely to be higher. My department's primary tool in tackling fuel poverty is the Warm Homes Scheme which provides a range of heating and insulation measures to eligible owner occupiers of those in private rented sector. The budget for the Warm Homes Scheme for the current financial year is all committed and I am pleased to report that my department is on track to meet its Public Service Agreement target which to alleviate fuel poverty in 9,000 households through implementing energy efficiency measures. In addition the Housing Executive administers the Heating Replacement Scheme for those people in social housing. By the end of the current financial year my department will have spent over £35 million in tackling fuel poverty.

In response to rising fuel prices I established the Fuel Poverty Task Force in May 2008. The Task Force produced a number of recommendations which could be taken forward to help those in greatest need this winter. The main recommendation was to make a one off payment to assist vulnerable households with fuel bills. This recommendation is being taken forward and Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister through the Financial Assistance Bill which will provide the legislative framework to allow a fuel payment scheme to be delivered.

Travellers' Sites

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development to outline her Department's policy on the provision of travellers' sites. (AQW 4257/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is responsible for providing suitable accommodation for Travellers. The planning of any programmes or schemes is based on the scale of need within the geographical areas of choice of Traveller families and is informed by a comprehensive strategic needs assessment of current and projected accommodation requirements of all Travellers in consultation with Traveller organisations, members of the Traveller communities and District Councils.

The latest Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment was launched in December 2008 and will be used to facilitate decision making in relation to future accommodation schemes for the Traveller Community and should help to alleviate problems associated with the inadequate living condition of many Travellers.

Business Community in Ballycastle

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Social Development what work her Department has completed for the business community in Ballycastle town centre since she took office. (AQW 4265/09)

Minister for Social Development: A town centre promotions and marketing scheme for Ballycastle, which was supported with a grant of £20,000, was completed in March 2008. This funding was used, amongst other things, to develop a brand image for Ballycastle and produce a guide to town centre businesses. In addition, my Department has provided £94,752 to fund the production of a Development Plan for Ballycastle which will, amongst other things, make recommendations on how the growth of town centre businesses might be facilitated. This work will be completed before the end of March 2009.

Housing Executive Maintenance Programmes

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development (i) what Housing Executive maintenance programmes she has instructed to cease; (ii) what areas this will affect; and (iii) how she will spend the money received in her budget for repairs and maintenance. (AQW 4267/09)

Minister for Social Development: No instruction has been given to the Housing Executive to cease any maintenance programmes. The Housing Executive carried out a review of its Programmes following a £35 million shortfall in their budget caused by the collapse of the housing market. The Housing Executive intends to undertake its full schedule of work which includes improvement schemes, projects and maintenance work. Their Programme is made up of a combination of new build, improvements and repairs schemes and their aim is to complete all schemes in their programmes at the earliest opportunity.

Waiting Times for Housing

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development to breakdown by religion, waiting times for housing in (i) North Belfast; (ii) West Belfast; and (iii) Derry/Londonderry City. (AQW 4268/09)

Minister for Social Development: The average waiting times, broken down by religion, for housing in (i) North Belfast, (ii) West Belfast and (iii) Derry/Londonderry City are detailed in the table below:-

Average waiting times on Social Housing Waiting list for 2007/2008

	Catholic Average Months	Other Average Months	Protestant Average Months	Undisclosed Average Months
North Belfast	25.8	12.7	12.9	16.3
West Belfast	25.3	11.3	8.3	51.1
Derry 1	20.4	3.4	3.4	12.6
Derry 2	11.0	10.5	8.2	8.9

	Catholic Average Months	Other Average Months	Protestant Average Months	Undisclosed Average Months
Derry 3	12.1	11.3	-	20.2

Carers Allowance

Mr R McCartney asked the Minister for Social Development for the reasons for not providing Carers Allowance to pensioners. (AQW 4289/09)

Minister for Social Development: Carer's allowance is available to all carers aged 16 or over who meet the entitlement criteria. Entitlement is not withdrawn when a carer reaches pension age. However, it is a basic principle of the social security system that only one benefit at a time can be paid for the same purpose. Even though the circumstances which give rise to entitlement to carer's allowance and state pension are different, they are both designed to provide a degree of replacement for lost or foregone income. Carer's allowance replaces income where the carer has given up the chance of working full-time in order to look after a severely disabled person, while state pension replaces income in retirement. Entitlement to both benefits means that carer's allowance is not payable, or not payable in full, in addition to state pension. Where carer's allowance cannot be paid for this reason, the person will keep underlying entitlement to carer's allowance which gives access to the carer premium in the income-related benefits such as housing benefit, or the similar additional amount for carers through pension credit.

Housing Executive Properties

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive properties in the Limavady Borough Council area are unoccupied, broken down by each housing estate; and the length of time for which these properties have been unoccupied. (AQW 4305/09)

Minister for Social Development: The number of Housing Executive properties in the Limavady Borough Council area currently unoccupied, broken down by each housing estate, and the length of time for which these properties have been unoccupied, is detailed in the table below.

Location	Length of time unoccupied	Dwellings
Hospital Lane	< 1 month	1
	2mths-1 year	4
	1-2 years	2
	2-3 years	1
	>3 years	5
Drumachose Park	< 1 month	1
	<1 yr	1
Edenmore Park	<1 yr	1
Glens Estate	< 1 month	1

Housing Executive Properties

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister for Social Development how many unoccupied Housing Executive properties in the Limavady Borough Council area are awaiting repairs before they can be reallocated. (AQW 4306/09)

Minister for Social Development: There are currently seventeen unoccupied properties in the Limavady Borough Council area awaiting repairs before they can be reallocated.

Housing Executive's Maintenance Budget

Ms A Lo asked the Minister for Social Development what contingency is in place given the shortfall in the Housing Executive's maintenance budget. (AQW 4358/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive has been working alongside my Department to minimise the impact of the shortfall. A proposal to reallocate £10.5 million from existing Departmental resources to the Housing Executive has been made. This is subject to Executive agreement which will be sought as part of February monitoring.

Income Support and Job Seekers Allowance

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development how many people in East Antrim are in receipt of (i) income support; and (ii) job seekers allowance, broken down by month, in each of the past three years. (AQW 4383/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information requested is set out in the Tables below and is based on the East Antrim Parliamentary constituency area.

TABLE 1

BENEFIT CLAIMANTS IN RECEIPT OF INCOME SUPPORT

	2006	2007	2008
January	3279	3180	*
February	3265	3178	3144
March	3211	3186	3160
April	3209	3131	3146
May	3234	3177	3132
June	3215	3174	3144
July	3206	3184	3135
August	3207	3184	3158
September	3225	3166	3154
October	3197	3142	3181
November	3198	3133	3202
December	3189	*	3179

Note: * information not available due to a national embargo on movement of data from the Department for Work and Pensions

TABLE 2

BENEFIT CLAIMANTS IN RECEIPT OF JOBSSEKERS ALLOWANCE

	2006	2007	2008
January	955	923	776
February	984	923	774
March	960	895	791
April	946	880	779
May	922	786	796
June	897	759	760
July	865	734	791

	2006	2007	2008
August	953	775	817
September	982	760	881
October	930	729	948
November	901	747	1062
December	883	731	1171

Cold Weather Payments

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development what criteria is used to define which areas are considered for Cold Weather Payments. (AQW 4407/09)

Minister for Social Development: For the purposes of Cold Weather Payments, temperature measurements are made by five meteorological stations located at Aldergrove, Ballykelly, Castlederg, Katesbridge and Enniskillen.

Information on average temperatures is provided by the Meteorological Office in relation to weather stations which are linked to postcodes. The allocation of weather stations to postcode areas is decided by the Department after thorough consultation with the Meteorological Office to ensure that weather stations are as representative as possible of the conditions in the areas they cover.

The Cold Weather Payments Scheme's performance is monitored each year and the Department will make changes if appropriate. Expert advice from the Meteorological Office is always taken into account.

Social Security System

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how many people were caught defrauding the social security system; and (ii) how much was defrauded, broken down by (a) each constituency; and (b) each of the local government districts. (AQW 4409/09)

Minister for Social Development: The tables below show the number of 'people caught defrauding the social security system'; and (ii) how much was defrauded, broken down by (a) each constituency; and (b) each of the local government districts.

For the purposes of this reply 'people caught defrauding the social security system' are those cases where individuals have been convicted in court, or have accepted either a formal caution or an administrative penalty.

Local Government District	Number of Incidents	Value of overpayment
Antrim	10	£38,521
Ards	14	£55,565
Armagh	25	£145,516
Ballymena	15	£62,783
Ballymoney#		£3,827
Banbridge	8	£15,412
Belfast	310	£1,168,872
Carrickfergus	8	£25,591
Castlereagh	16	£78,909
Coleraine	8	£44,864
Cookstown	9	£20,645
Craigavon	38	£64,432

Local Government District	Number of Incidents	Value of overpayment
Derry	89	£250,133
Down	18	£41,381
Dungannon	17	£38,314
Fermanagh	24	£168,036
Larne#		£7,208
Limavady#		£66,085
Lisburn	37	£111,473
Magherafelt	7	£29,618
Moyle#		£2,769
Newry&Mourne	33	£107,409
Newtownabbey	35	£144,381
North Down	8	£50,828
Omagh	16	£46,155
Strabane	15	£40,371
Not known*	5	£1,801
Totals	765	£2,830,898
SUPPRESSED CELLS#	10	

* In producing this analysis, individual records were attributed to an electoral ward on the basis of their postcode. The ward counts are then aggregated for each Parliamentary Constituency and Local Government District. Not all records can be correctly allocated to an electoral ward using this method, and some cannot be allocated at all.

It is Departmental Policy to suppress those cells containing between one and four incidents to minimise the possibility of publishing potentially disclosive information.

Parliamentary Constituency	Number of Incidents	Value of overpayment
Belfast East	40	£137,649
Belfast North	123	£463,469
Belfast South	52	£126,936
Belfast West	137	£586,546
East Antrim	22	£77,406
East Londonderry	11	£110,950
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	37	£194,318
Foyle	89	£250,133
Lagan Valley	24	£80,473
Mid Ulster	20	£62,295
Newry & Armagh	51	£225,553
North Antrim	18	£69,378
North Down	11	£68,186
South Antrim	20	£73,948
South Down	26	£70,290
Strangford	16	£79,128

Parliamentary Constituency	Number of Incidents	Value of overpayment
Upper Bann	42	£65,914
West Tyrone	31	£86,526
Not known*	5	£1,801
Totals	775	£2,830,898

* In producing this analysis, individual records were attributed to an electoral ward on the basis of their postcode. The ward counts are then aggregated for each Parliamentary Constituency and Local Government District. Not all records can be correctly allocated to an electoral ward using this method, and some cannot be allocated at all.

Good Morning Project in Belfast

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development if her Department is planning to fund the Good Morning Project in Belfast, and if so, when this funding will start. (AQW 4438/09)

Minister for Social Development: My Departmental officials have been working with Belfast City Council officers who are leading on the development of a city wide Good Morning Project for Belfast. The proposed project requires a number of statutory bodies to contribute to the overall funding package. The funding package is expected to be finalised in the next few weeks.

Maintenance Scheme for Pensioner Bungalows

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development if she has made any decision on the maintenance scheme for pensioner bungalows in Bloomfield Estate, Bangor. (AQW 4449/09)

Minister for Social Development: No decision on the maintenance scheme for pensioner bungalows in Bloomfield Estate has been made. However, the current shortfall in Housing Executive funding means that the bulk of schemes within the remainder of this year's programme are being held back at this stage. The Housing Executive aims to undertake its full schedule of work and to commence all schemes within its programmes at the earliest opportunity.

St Lucia Barracks in Omagh

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development what steps it is taking to retain an account of the significant army role at St Lucia Barracks in Omagh with the proposed Education Project. (AQW 4459/09)

Minister for Social Development: St Lucia Barracks are still in the ownership and under the control of the Ministry of Defence. The Department for Social Development is committed to supporting the development of the St Lucia site for a range of uses compatible with, and complementary to, Omagh Town Centre. It is proposed that the shared Educational Campus would be located on the Lisanelly Barracks site. However, if the sites are not gifted to the Northern Ireland Executive, it is by no means certain that the projects will be able to proceed as affordability remains a serious obstacle.

Should the St Lucia site be acquired, my Department's intention would be to ensure the retention and preservation of the Listed Barracks buildings. To this end, my Department is currently preparing a Masterplanning exercise to determine the most suitable future uses for these buildings.

Home Sales and Access to Mortgages

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development what steps she is taking to encourage home sales and access to mortgages. (AQW 4460/09)

Minister for Social Development: On 6 January 2009 I announced a major change to the House Sales Scheme. Social housing tenants who wish to buy their home, but who cannot afford to do so outright, are now able to purchase an equity share in it from as little as 25 per cent. New homeowners may then increase their equity share in steps of as little as 5 per cent. Tenants will be able to receive 70 per cent of their available

discount, when they purchase just half of their home. In addition to this, I have been proactive in promoting new and creative approaches to support first time buyers with the launch of the Own-A-Home project in Portadown. This was the first of its type in the United Kingdom and provides the potential for low cost entry to home ownership.

I have also met the Council of Mortgage Lenders on a number of occasions and have pressed them to make mortgages more accessible.

Lifetime Awards for DLA

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development how many lifetime awards for DLA which are currently valid in the Strangford constituency were made in each of the last three years. (AQW 4506/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Welfare Reform and Pensions (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 removed the term “for life” in respect of awards of Disability Living Allowance and amended it to state awards “for an indefinite period”. The table below details the number of indefinite awards of Disability Living Allowance currently valid at the date of extract 30 November 2008 and made in each of the last three years in the Strangford constituency.

DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE

Year	Indefinite Awards Made and Still Valid
2005/06	329
2006/07	318
2007/08	443

Lifetime Awards for DLA

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development how many lifetime awards for DLA in the Strangford constituency were reviewed in each of the last three years. (AQW 4507/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Welfare Reform and Pensions (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 removed the term “for life” in respect of awards of Disability Living Allowance and amended it to state awards “for an indefinite period”. The table below details the number of indefinite awards of Disability Living Allowance which were reviewed in each of the last three years in the Strangford constituency under my Department’s Programme Protection strategy.

Year	Number of indefinite DLA awards reviewed in the Strangford constituency
2005/06	124
2006/07	161
2007/08	208

Housing Executive

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Social Development how many (i) planned maintenance; (ii) kitchen replacements; (iii) heating replacements; (iv) multi-element replacement schemes; and (v) new starts, have been held back this year in the Upper Bann constituency due to the £25m shortfall in the Housing Executive’s budget. (AQW 4514/09)

Minister for Social Development: Approximately 85 Planned Maintenance, Kitchen Replacement, Heating Replacement and Multi Element Improvement schemes in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive’s Programme have been held back this year and there are now only funds to allow 16 of these to proceed. There will also be a delay in up to 400 new starts. It is too early in the review of the Housing Executive’s programmes to state the specific

locations that might be affected by the shortfall in the Housing Executive's budget. However, the Housing Executive aims to undertake its full schedule of work and to commence all schemes in its programmes as soon as possible.

Development of a Volunteering Strategy

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the development of a volunteering strategy. (AQW 4526/09)

Minister for Social Development: We have a vibrant voluntary sector and a strong and active volunteer base. Volunteers are the lifeblood of our communities and the binding force in our community life. For the first time Northern Ireland will have a Volunteering Strategy to support the hundreds of thousands of people who freely give their time to help others. I hope it succeeds in encouraging more people to become volunteers, enriching their own lives as well as the lives of those they are helping

The Strategy will focus on making it easier for everyone to become involved and have a more rewarding volunteering experience. It will recognise the value and the benefits of volunteering for individuals and society. It will support and strengthen the infrastructure that supports volunteers and volunteer involving organisations.

I will be taking a consultation document to the Social Development Committee on 26 February and then on to the Executive. I hope the Executive will endorse the consultation document for what is a very important strategy which has the potential to have a very positive impact on the volunteers and people of Northern Ireland. I hope to publish the consultation document in May. There will be a full public consultation and a series of consultation events across the country.

Employment and Support Allowance Agency

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister for Social Development the number of occasions on which a duplicate sick line has been requested by the Employment and Support Allowance Agency. (AQW 4566/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information requested is not available. Since 27 October 2008 the Employment and Support Allowance Centre has received more than 7,300 medical certificates. In view of the large volumes being received, certificates may on occasion be mislaid. The Employment and Support Allowance Centre has recently introduced new measures to monitor all medical certificates received which will minimise the risk of any certificates being misplaced and customers being asked to provide a duplicate.

Strategic Business Review

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Social Development what impact the economic downturn is having on the Strategic Business Review. (AQW 4572/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Strategic Business Review proposals are currently subject to ongoing public consultation which will run until late April 2009. Final decisions on the proposals, which will include an assessment of the impact of the current economic downturn, will not be made until consultation has been completed and responses considered.

Full Time Carers

Lord Browne asked the Minister for Social Development what compensation is available to full time carers who have given up full time employment. (AQW 4584/09)

Minister for Social Development: Carer's allowance, as the main benefit available to carers, provides a measure of financial support for people who have given up the opportunity of full-time work to care for a severely disabled person. It is available to people aged 16 and over who provide care of at least 35 hours per week to a severely disabled person who is in receipt of either the highest or middle rate of disability living allowance care component or attendance allowance. It is not intended to be a payment for the services of caring nor is it envisaged that it would be able to make up for earnings that the carer had become used to. It provides a carer with some independent income that recognises some of the sacrifices that have to be made in taking on the

responsibility of caring for a severely disabled person. Carers may also be entitled to financial support through other social security benefits, for example, income support. Indeed additional premiums are available through income support and housing benefit for those entitled to carer's allowance. Carers' needs are not always financial and they have access to a wide range of support services from their local Health and Social Care Trusts. Such services provide practical support to carers to help them in their caring role.

Teleclaim Phone Lines

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are manning the teleclaim phone lines. (AQW 4589/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Social Security Agency offers customers the facility to claim a range of benefits by telephone. A total of 69 staff are dedicated to providing these services. A breakdown of the number of staff taking teleclaims for these benefits is provided in the table below.

NUMBER OF STAFF PROVIDING TELECLAIMS SERVICE BY BENEFIT TYPE

Benefit	No. of Staff
Attendance Allowance, Carers Allowance & Disability Living Allowance	5
Employment & Support Allowance	18
Social Fund Crisis Loans	8
State Pension Credit	20
State Retirement Pension	18
Total Staff	69

Housing Executive's 5 Year Housing Condition Surveys

Mr G Savage asked the Minister for Social Development who wrote the questionnaire for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's 5 year housing condition surveys. (AQW 4597/09)

Minister for Social Development: The questionnaire is prepared by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive with the support of a steering group containing key stakeholders from across government and the social housing sector. The questionnaire is broadly the same as the English House Condition Survey questionnaire in order to allow comparisons of key government measures. The current questionnaire has not changed greatly since 1991 and any changes reflect government policy over time.

Housing Executive Properties

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development if she would consider a scheme to bulk-buy oil and coal which can then be purchased at lower costs by tenants of Housing Executive properties. (AQW 4601/09)

Minister for Social Development: A feasibility study is currently being carried out in relation to the Housing Executive acting as a broker to secure discounted energy, including electricity, gas and potentially oil, for their tenants. It is important however to differentiate between brokering and bulk buying. The Housing Executive would not be bulk buying under this proposal but rather acting as a broker to secure appropriate discounts on behalf of their tenants.

Social Housing

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Social Development if she will apply the same approach to addressing the social housing crisis in Limavady, as that undertaken at Pond Park, Lisburn, by buying up the former MOD houses located at the Shackleton Barracks site. (AQW 4634/09)

Minister for Social Development: I have made it clear that I will leave no stone unturned in my desire to meet housing need, irrespective of where that need exists or how it could be met.

My Department has already explored the potential to meet housing need in a range of former MOD sites and this will be kept under review.

Former Army Site at Ballykelly

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister for Social Development what steps she has taken to investigate the possibility of acquiring homes on the former army site at Ballykelly and turning them into social and affordable housing. (AQW 4692/09)

Minister for Social Development: I have made it clear that I will leave no stone unturned in my desire to meet housing need, irrespective of where that need exists or how it could be met.

My Department has already explored the potential to meet housing need in a range of former MOD sites, including Ballykelly with a view to identifying homes which can be used for social and affordable housing. In light of the recent petition from those expressing an interest in living on the former MOD site, I have asked my Department to review our position in respect of the housing needs assessment for Ballykelly and I will report back to the Member when that work has been completed.

Employment Support Allowance

Mr P Maskey asked the Minister for Social Development to confirm whether claimants to the new Employment Support Allowance are having to use a premium rate telephone number to access information about their claims; and if so, why this is the case and how much it costs the claimant to call per minute. (AQW 4723/09)

Minister for Social Development: Claimants to the New Employment and Support Allowance do not have to use a premium rate telephone number to access information about their claims. There are two BT telephone numbers in use:

- An 0800 number for customers who wish to make a claim to benefit and
- An 0845 number for customers who have an enquiry about an existing claim or wish to report a change in circumstances.

BT does not charge customers for 0800 numbers. Calls to 0845 numbers are now free to BT customers depending on their Calling Plan.

Customers ringing from a non BT landline or mobile may be charged by their network provider for the connection onto the BT number. However, in these circumstances, customers can request a call-back at the outset of the call.

Housing Needs Assessment

Mr M Brady asked the Minister for Social Development to detail how the housing needs assessment is calculated, including what a sensitivity analysis is and how it is carried out. (AQO 1972/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Local Housing Need Assessment methodology involves two stages. Firstly, waiting list information such as numbers in housing stress, allocations and voids, is analysed to establish the projected social housing need in an area for a five year period. Secondly, a localised analysis is applied to check for accuracy and refine the result.

I am not sure from Mr Brady's question if he is actually asking in general what a sensitivity analysis is – but in case he is, it is a methodology for testing the responsiveness of a proposition or conclusion to a range of variables impacting upon it.

The sensitivity analysis in the context of housing needs assessment takes account of specific local issues such as existing housing mix, regeneration initiatives and latent demand. The results of the sensitivity analysis normally have only a minor impact on the initial calculation, where, unsurprisingly, levels of housing stress are influential.

Social Security Offices in Ballymoney

Mr M Storey asked the Minister for Social Development what impact the Strategic Business Review of the Social Security Agency will have on jobs in Social Security Offices in Ballymoney. (AQO 1973/09)

Minister for Social Development: The proposals set out in the Strategic Business Review of the Social Security Agency are currently subject to ongoing public consultation. I have made it clear that I will study carefully all responses to the consultation before deciding the way forward. I want to emphasise that no decisions have been taken at this stage.

Without pre-empting the outcome of the consultation, I have already highlighted on a number of occasions, most recently the adjournment debate on this topic last week, that I am concerned about any proposals that would result in large numbers of staff travelling long distances to work. Especially part-time or low paid staff or those with childcare responsibilities.

I am also concerned about too much upheaval at a time when demands on the Agency services are rising sharply.

At the same time, no organisation can stand still. While I can assure Members there will be no redundancies and no offices will close, I will always be interested in improving the service for those who rely on it.

As regards Ballymoney, all I can say is that no office will close and no one will lose their employment.

I also want to say that those who have been scare-mongering about job losses, including some in this House, should acquaint themselves with the facts.

Departmental Underspend

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Social Development how she is addressing the continuing levels of underspend in her Department. (AQO 1975/09)

Minister for Social Development: My Department continually strives for maximum resource utilisation. In the 2007/08 year the Department as a whole had a net overspend of 0.3% (£2.1million) against its £690.3 million budget. My Department is not forecasting any overall material underspend for this year 2008/09. During the year my officials have made every effort to ensure that no underspend occurs. My Department has followed Department of Finance and Personnel guidance to take proactive management action to reallocate budgets for key Housing priorities. For example, in the December 2008 Monitoring Round, over £36 million was identified and proposed for reallocation. However, the £36million proposed reallocation was taken back to the Northern Ireland Block with £9million being subsequently allocated. This type of action to reprioritise and reallocate budget will again be evident in the February Monitoring Round.

Housing Executive Tenants

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development if there has been an increase in enquiries by Housing Executive tenants seeking to purchase their homes, in light of the new scheme. (AQO 1976/09)

Minister for Social Development: I announced the amendment to the House Sales Scheme on 6 January 2009. The amendment will enable social housing tenants, who cannot afford to buy their home outright, to buy an equity share in it. The amended scheme will be fully operational by 31 January 2009.

In respect of the main House Sales Scheme, I can report that the Housing Executive received 26 applications during December 2008, with the same number also being received during the first 21 days of January. 41 sales have been completed in the current financial year.

Economic Downturn

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development what proposals she has brought forward to the Executive to help counter the effects of the economic downturn. (AQO 1977/09)

Minister for Social Development: On 27 November 2008 I submitted a paper to my Executive Colleagues entitled 'Social Housing – An effective Way to address the Downturn in the NI Economy.'

In this paper I outlined how an increased investment in social housing could have a profoundly beneficial effect on the economy in a relatively short period of time.

In addition to the economic benefits of increased investment in social housing, delivery against important social policy objectives, particularly those identified in the Programme for Government could be more quickly achieved with this investment.

My paper contained specific and costed proposals for increases in the Social Housing Development Programme, social housing maintenance and repairs; and the Warm Homes Scheme. Unfortunately the Executive was not able to support my proposals at that time. However, I remain convinced that the current market conditions are more suited now than ever before to increase our investment in social housing to stimulate the economy, protect jobs and help those in housing stress. I will continue to lobby my Executive colleagues for their support of my proposals.

Housing Executive Properties

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the impact of the economic downturn on the sale of Housing Executive properties. (AQO 1978/09)

Minister for Social Development: Two years ago the Housing Executive sold 2,021 homes through its House Sales Scheme, generating an income of more than £100 million. During 2008/09 (to date) the Housing Executive has received 650 applications through its House Sales Scheme, with 41 house sales completed during this period (an 87% drop out rate).

Kitchen Works

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister for Social Development what action she is taking to ensure that all necessary kitchen works are carried out by the Housing Executive without delay. (AQO 1979/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive carried out a review of all its Programmes because of the £35m shortfall in its budget, which was a consequence of the collapse of the housing market, combined with the credit crunch. The Housing Executive has been working alongside my Department to minimise the impact of the shortfall. A proposal to reallocate £10.5 million from existing Departmental resources to the Housing Executive has been made; this is subject to Executive agreement which will be sought as part of February monitoring. This would allow a significant amount of work to be undertaken this year that would otherwise not be possible, including support for kitchen replacement works, and the Housing Executive aims to undertake a full schedule of work and to advance all schemes in its programmes as soon as possible.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the programme of the revised Warm Homes Scheme. (AQO 1980/09)

Minister for Social Development: My Department has just completed a public consultation on proposed changes to the Warm Homes Scheme following a report by the Northern Ireland Audit Office and subsequent Public Accounts Committee hearing. The tendering process to procure new Scheme managers is well under way and I expect the new Scheme to be operational in the spring. The budget available for the current Warm Homes Scheme has been fully committed for the financial year 2008/09 and the Department is on track to meet its Public Service Agreement target to alleviate fuel poverty in 9,000 households through implementing energy efficiency measures.

Housing Executive Schemes

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Social Development how many new build Housing Executive schemes have been deferred until April 2009. (AQO 1981/09)

Minister for Social Development: On the 18 December 2008, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive announced a review of all their programmes following a £35 million shortfall in their budget caused by the collapse of the housing market and effects of the Credit Crunch.

The review of the 2008/09 Social Housing Development Programme has now been completed. The number of new homes expected to start by 31 March this year will now be approximately 1100. The remaining 400 homes that had been planned to start across 28 different schemes have now been deferred until 2009. A proposal to reallocate £10.5 million from existing Departmental resources to the Housing Executive has been made; this is subject to Executive agreement which will be sought as part of February monitoring.

Benefit Fraud

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister for Social Development what research her Department has carried out to determine the impact of its campaigns to reduce benefit fraud. (AQO 1982/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Agency's efforts to tackle benefit fraud have led to a steady reduction in estimated levels of fraud from £60m in 2001 to £12.7m in 2007. This represents a reduction of almost 80%, with the level of fraud now down to 0.3% of the Agency's annual benefit expenditure of around £3.6 billion.

As part of this approach, the Agency commissioned a specific publicity campaign in 2005 to raise the profile and to emphasise the seriousness of benefit fraud. MORI poll surveys carried out before and after the campaign showed an increase in those who felt well informed about benefit fraud and viewed benefit fraud as serious. As a direct result of the campaign, 5875 allegations of benefit fraud were reported which resulted in 44 sanctions and £1.8 m of benefit adjustments.

Community Workers

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what plans she has to guarantee the funding provided by her Department for community workers. (AQO 1983/09)

Minister for Social Development: I am unable to guarantee funding to any project beyond that which is detailed in a Contract for Funding. However, departmental budgets permitting, my officials and I will endeavour, where the need is identified, where the service provides value for money and where there is an evaluation which supports the case for further funding, to continue to support that project and service.

Social Housebuilding

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the scope for stimulating the economy through an accelerated programme of social housebuilding. (AQO 1984/09)

Minister for Social Development: On 27 November 2008 I submitted a paper to my Executive Colleagues entitled 'Social Housing – An effective Way to address the Downturn in the NI Economy.'

In this paper I outlined how an increased investment in social housing could have a profoundly beneficial effect on the economy in a relatively short period of time.

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