
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 12 June 2009

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Comments made by Junior Minister

Mr T Gallagher asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for its assessment of Junior Minister Jeffrey Donaldson's view that Catholics owe their first allegiance to the Vatican state; and if this view is compatible with the Junior Minister's duties of promoting understanding and developing community relations and a shared future. (AQW 6881/09)

First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): Junior Minister Donaldson was not speaking in his capacity as Junior Minister. We do not comment on remarks made by Ministers when they are not acting in their Ministerial capacity.

Committee of the Regions

Mr T Burns asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the dates of all meetings of; and (ii) the attendance records for the holders of the two full and two alternate seats in, the Committee of the Regions, in each of the past 5 years. (AQW 7337/09)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Councillor Edwin Poots MLA and Minister Conor Murphy MP, MLA were appointed as Northern Ireland's full members of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) for the current mandate (2006-2010), with Councillor Lord Maurice Morrow MLA and Councillor Bernice Swift as alternate members. In the previous mandate (2002-2006), Dermot Nesbitt and Alban Maginness MLA served as full members, with George Savage MLA and Margaret Ritchie MLA as their respective alternates.

As well as meeting in plenary session, the Committee has six sectoral Commissions, which meet four to five times per year. The table below gives the dates of all meetings of the Committee in each of the past five years.

Meeting	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Plenary Session	11/12 February	23/24 February	15/16 February	13/14 February	06/07 February
	21/22 April	13/14 April	26/27 April	22/23 March	09/10 April
	16/17 June	07/07 July	14/15 June	06/07 June	18/19 June
	29/30 September	12/13 October	11/12 October	10/11 October	08/09 October
	17/18 November	16/17 November	6/7 December	28/29 November	26/27 November
Territorial Cohesion Commission	18 February	4 February	23 February	31 January	21 February
	5 May	29 April	5 April	16 March	17 April
	7 July	29 June	23 June	23/24 May	26/27 June
	24 September	23 September	19 October	14 September	17 October
	26 November	25 November	11/12 December	9 November	12 December

Meeting	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Constitutional Affairs Commission	20 February	3 March	23 February	27 February	19 February
	16 April	22 April	5 April	2/3 May	16 April
	2 July	17 June	23 June	3 July	12 June
	21 September	21 October	19 October	17 October	15 October
	10 December	12 December	11/12 December	7 December	9 December
Economic and Social Policy Commission	2 March	7 February	24 February	2 February	27 February
	30 April	25 April	6 April	30 March	15 April
	6 July	20 June	3 July	28/29 June	3 July
	4 October	30 September	20 October	28 September	29/30 September
	8 December	30 November	15 December	16 November	10 December
Sustainable Development Commission	5 March	1 March	27 February	6 March	10 January
	3 May	28 April	3 April	19 June	7 March
	8 July	28 June	27 June	2 October	25 April
	20 September	6 October	6 October	4 December	25 June
	9 December	1 December	24 November		26 September
					16 December
Education and Culture Commission	19 February	28 February	1 March	16/17 April	28 February
	5/6 April	24 April	4 April	27 June	29/30 April
	9 July	11 July	20 June	21 September	1 July
	22 September	22 September	28/29 September	23 November	25 September
	7 December	7 December	30 November		17 December
External Relations Commission	1 March	11 February	28 February	25 January	25 February
	4 May	26 April	31 March	29 March	18 April
	5 July	30 June	22 June	31 May	30 June
	17 September	15 September	4 October	19 September	23 September
	3 December	7 November	21 November	7 November	19 November

AQW 5259/08 detailed the attendance levels of each of Northern Ireland's CoR representatives since the beginning of the current mandate in February 2006. An updated table correct to 1 May 2009 is given below.

CoR Member	Commission	Plenary Sessions			Commission Meetings		
		Number Attended	Number Open to Member	Dates of Attendance	Number Attended	Number Open to Member	Dates of Attendance
Edwin Poots, MLA	Sustainable Development Commission	9	17	15/02/2006; 26/04/2006; 14/06/2006; 11/10/2006; 6/12/2006; 08/10/2008; 26/11/2008; 11/02/2009; 21/04/2009	5	16	27/2/2006; 03/04/2006; 27/06/2006; 27/11/2006; 17/02/2009
Minister Conor Murphy, MP, MLA	Territorial Cohesion Commission	1	11	26/04/2006	0	12	N/A
Lord Maurice Morrow MLA	Economic and Social Policy Commission	1	8	23/03/2007	1	18	06/04/2006
Cllr Bernice Swift	Education and Culture Commission	0	10	N/A	0	11	N/A

* Attendance data from April 2008 has been sourced from the Local Government Association, which provides the secretariat for the CoR UK Delegation. Information prior to the current mandate is not readily available.

Minister Conor Murphy MP MLA, resigned from the CoR with effect from 13 March 2008. Sue Ramsey MLA was nominated to take his place. Her appointment is due to be formally ratified by the Council of Ministers on 4 June 2009.

In keeping with the procedures for the UK delegation, alternate members serve on and attend separate Commissions; however, they may only attend plenary sessions in the full members' absence. While a full seat is vacant, the alternate seat is effectively frozen. Councillor Swift cannot attend until a replacement for Minister Murphy has been appointed.

The nomination procedure for the next mandate, to begin in February 2010, will be initiated shortly by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Senior Civil Servant Bonuses

Mr P McGlone asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much was paid in bonuses to senior Civil Servants in its Department in (i) 2003/04; (ii) 2004/05; (iii) 2005/06; (iv) 2006/07; and (v) 2007/08. (AQW 7535/09)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The total amount paid in non-consolidated bonus payments to Senior Civil Servants in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister in respect of the performance years from 2003/2004 to 2007/2008 is shown in the table below. The table also includes the number of payments made in respect of each year.

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Performance Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Total Number of Bonuses	18	19	16	20	19
Total Value of Bonuses	£84,150	£86,250	£99,500	£151,000	£157,500

There is widespread public anger at the large bonuses being paid to public servants who are already in receipt of substantial incomes. As Ministers we share this concern and want a review to be undertaken on this matter.

UK Sustainable Development Commission

Mr D Ford asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister what progress has been made in appointing a Northern Ireland representative to the UK Sustainable Development Commission. (AQW 7716/09)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We are continuing to consider this matter against the recent changes to the organisational status of the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC). In this context we, along with the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and the Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), have recently taken membership of the newly established company. We continue to engage with the SDC at strategic level, and working with our colleagues from across the devolved Administrations, we have recently approved the appointment of a new Chair of the SDC. The appointment of a NI Commissioner remains a part of our plans to support the work of the SDC here.

Departmental Consultations

Mr J Craig asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much it spent on (i) Public Notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers; and (ii) other forms of media for consultations, in each of the past three years. (AQW 7938/09)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The following table sets out how much OFMDFM has spent on (i) Public Notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers; and (ii) other forms of media for consultations, in each of the past three years.

Financial Year	Expenditure	
	Public Notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers	Other forms of media for consultations
2006/07	£2,368	£5,850
2007/08	£17,987	£546
2008/09	£7,428	£6,449

Women's Organisations

Mrs D Kelly asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister in relation to the review on funding for women's organisations, to outline the (i) terms of reference; (ii) methodology; and (iii) timescale for completion. (AQW 8014/09)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Junior Ministers undertook to bring an interim report to the Executive on funding for women's organisations, in advance of a mid-term review of the Executive's Gender Equality Strategy. The aim is to help secure the best possible return on investment for women and for the communities to which they contribute, across all funding streams.

It is intended that the report will inform a wider exercise which will be part of the mid-term review of the current 10-year Gender Equality Strategy.

The terms of reference, methodology and timescale for completion of the review of funding for women's organisations have yet to be agreed. They are being developed in discussion with key stakeholders.

Gender Equality Strategy

Mrs D Kelly asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) if the action plan on Gender Equality Strategy will be signed off by the Executive in June 2009 as planned; and (ii) to provide details of the autumn conference. (AQW 8015/09)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Over the next few weeks, we will be considering refreshed cross-departmental gender equality action plans, one for men and one for women. We will consult the OFMDFM Committee on these plans in advance of Executive consideration.

The aim is to get the earliest possible consideration and agreement by the Executive.

At this stage there are no plans for an Autumn conference.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Animal and Public Health Information System

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has any plans to end the registration of animal births and deaths on the Animal and Public Health Information System by hard copy.

(AQW 7991/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): I do not have any plans to end the registration of animal births and deaths on the Animal and Public Health Information System by hard copy at present.

Animal and Public Health Information System

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has any plans to extend the pilot project of registering animal births and deaths on the Animal and Public Health Information System by telephone.

(AQW 7992/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development:

1. Following evaluation of the pilot, the Department is now in the process of considering options for the best way forward for this service. This will be conducted as part of a review of how we currently deliver Veterinary IRM (Identification, Registration and Movement) Services to our customers.
2. Until this review is complete no decision will be made on whether the service should be extended.

Animal and Public Health Information System

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has any plans to introduce only an on-line method of registering animal births and deaths on the Animals and Public Health Information System.

(AQW 7993/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I do not have any plans to introduce only an on-line method of registering animal births and deaths on the Animals and Public Health Information System at present.

However, I do support and wish to promote all DARD on-line services as they offer many advantages to customers.

Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of the removal of the supply of ice as a function of the Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority, to outline (i) the process followed to arrive at the decision; (ii) who was consulted; (iii) if the decision required Ministerial approval; and (iv) if an Equality Impact Assessment was carried out.

(AQW 8045/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: In March 2007 the NI Fishery Harbour Authority completed an internal strategic review of its facilities and the market demand for ice at the three harbours of Ardglass, Kilkeel and Portavogie. In light of the review the Board of the Authority decided to commission an independent business case to make a clear recommendation on a course of action for the Authority with regard to its ice plants. Interested parties from all sectors of the industry were consulted during the preparation of the Business Case which was presented to NIFHA in March 2008.

This concluded that the provision of ice could be more flexible and cost-effective in the private sector, rather than in the public sector and recommended that NIFHA offered the provision of ice in the ports (including NIFHA's ice plants) to the private sector.

The NIFHA Board decided to implement the Report's recommendations. This is an operational matter for the Authority and as such does not require my approval. However, when I met with the Board in September last year I indicated that I was supportive of the course of action that the Board decided to take which was to offer its ice plants for sale to the private sector.

In keeping with its statutory obligations the Authority carried out equality screening of the policy which concluded that a full Equality Impact Assessment was not required since screening did not identify any potential adverse impacts on the nine equality groups listed in Section 75 of the NI Act 1998.

Brucellosis Tests

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 7399/09, how many animals were tested in the 30 day pre-movement test for Brucellosis, in each of the Divisional Office areas, from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009 (AQW 8111/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The number of animal that had a 30 day premovement test carried out between 01/04/2008 and 31/03/2009 is as follows:

Divisional Office	Number of animals
Armagh	11,955
Ballymena	15,180
Coleraine	22,705
Dungannon	22,319
Enniskillen	24,800
Larne	16,584
Londonderry	7,046
Newry	18,199
Newtownards	14,050
Omagh	29,807

Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Report

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) to detail the outcome of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute report commissioned by her Department on the experimental cockle fishery that took place in October 2008; and (ii) what plans there are to ensure a sustainable cockle fishery in Belfast Lough. (AQW 8115/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The survey work carried out by AFBI involved assessment of water quality during fishing operations together with pre and post fishery surveys of the benthic habitat and the cockle population. The report will be available later this month when the results of the latest stock survey carried out during week commencing 8th June are known. The report will inform decisions about whether there will be any further cockle fishery in Belfast Lough

Oyster Farm in Carlingford Lough

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her Department applied the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations (1995) to the recent application for an oyster farm in Carlingford Lough. (AQW 8188/09)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Department is meeting its obligations under these regulations (which implement the Habitats Directive in NI) for all aquaculture licence applications, including the one referred to by the Member.

The Department has commissioned the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) to undertake appropriate assessments on all licence applications for new aquaculture developments, in accordance with the European Commission's methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive. An assessment was carried out in this case.

Under the provisions of regulation 43(3) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (NI) 1995, the Department must also consult formally with the Department of the Environment and have regard to any representations made by it in relation to the completion of the appropriate assessment. The Department consulted with NIEA on behalf of DOE in this case.

The AFBI assessment will influence a decision on whether or not the Department is minded to grant the licence, as required under the aquaculture licensing provisions of the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966. AFBI produced a Test of Likely Significance on 26 February 2009 which indicated that, subject to certain conditions to regulate husbandry practices, the proposed oyster farm development is not likely to have a significant effect on the Carlingford Lough Special Protection Area. The Department therefore became minded to grant the applicant the necessary licences and proceeded to undertake a public consultation exercise on the granting of the licences in accordance with the provisions of sections 11A(2) and 132(2)(a) of the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966.

The Department subsequently received a number of objections to the licence application, many of which relate to the potential environmental impact of the proposed development on the Carlingford Lough Special Protection Area. The Department also received confirmation from NIEA regarding a review of the site selection features for the Carlingford Lough SPA which officials in both AFBI and DARD were unaware had taken place.

The Department has therefore asked AFBI to review the Test of Likely Significance in light of the objections and the additional information received and a decision on how to progress the application will be taken on receipt of the results of that review.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

Orange Culture and Unionist Traditions

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions he has had with the Arts Council about the Orange culture and Unionist traditions. (AQW 8072/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr G Campbell): As Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, I am firmly committed to ensuring that there is parity of esteem for all cultural traditions in Northern Ireland. I have ensured that the importance which I attach to this matter has been conveyed, through my officials, to the Arts Council and to the Department's arms length bodies.

Whilst the Arts Council does not provide funding for the expression of political identity, support and funding are provided for the artistic expression of cultural identity and for traditional art forms.

Programmes which contribute to this include the Musical Instruments for Bands Scheme and the Lottery funded Small Grants Programme (formerly Awards for All).

These are important programmes which provide much needed funding each year to arts and cultural organisations, many of which are seeking to express and celebrate their cultural identity through various art forms.

I have sought to ensure the effective administration of these programmes to enable such organisations to benefit fully from the funding available.

For example, I have instructed my officials to work with the Arts Council to bring forward the launch of the Musical Instruments for Bands Scheme. Consequently, the Arts Council launched the programme in March 2009 – two months earlier than in previous years. I understand that this will enable many marching bands to access funding with sufficient time to prepare for the marching season.

I will continue to ensure that the Arts Council and my Department's arms length bodies, through their work, reflect and promote the development of our culture and traditions.

Bonuses Paid to Permanent Secretary

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much was paid in bonuses to his Department's Permanent Secretary in each of the last five financial years. (AQW 8136/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Combined salary and bonus information for the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure, is currently provided through Resource Accounts in £5k bands, available from www.dcalni.gov.uk. It is our policy not to disclose the remuneration details of individual civil servants, other than in broad terms.

2012 Olympic Preparations

Mr F Cobain asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans he has to maximise the economic and social impact of all 2012 Olympic preparations. (AQW 8173/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department has created a strategy for maximising the benefits to Northern Ireland from the London 2012 Olympics and DCAL has responsibility for co-ordination. The strategy identifies benefits associated with the following themes: sport; culture; tourism; business; education; volunteering; and skills development. The anticipated benefits are: increased participation in sport, culture and volunteering especially among young people; increased economic activity through businesses winning 2012 contracts; increase in visitors through sports and cultural tourism. The 2012 Strategy also includes the DCAL target to "seek to attract to host 10 countries or sports for Pre Games Training Camps".

This target was included in DCAL's Corporate Plan (PSA9 – Promoting access to culture, arts and leisure).

Fisheries Conservancy Board

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure following the transfer of the Fisheries Conservancy Board to his Department, for his assessment of the work of the Environment Agency in relation to the frequency of fish kill incidents. (AQW 8175/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Prevention and recording of pollution incidents is the responsibility of the Department of the Environment through the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. DCAL will continue to provide advice on reinstating waters where fish kills have occurred.

My Department is working with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Water Management Unit to devise a strategy for reinstating fisheries which have been affected by pollution incidents.

Shooting Sports

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the monies allocated to shooting sports this year and how that compares to the past three years. (AQW 8176/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) is responsible for the development of sport including the distribution of funding. In this financial year, SNI has made an offer of £234,566 to the Shooting Federation of Northern Ireland under the Investing in Performance Sport Programme which covers the 4-year period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2013. The allocation from this for the 2009/10 financial year is £10,000.

In addition to this, SNI has approved awards under the Athlete Support Programme for the April 2009 to December 2009 period to the following shooting organisations:

Ulster Rifle Association	£13,500
NI Smallbore Shooting Association	£12,000
Ulster Clay Pigeon Shooting Association	£16,000

SNI has allocated funding to shooting sports over the last three years as follows:

2006/07	£28,000
2007/08	£18,000
2008/09	£69,500

Senior Civil Servant Bonuses

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much was paid in bonuses to senior Civil Servants in his Department in 2008/09. (AQW 8224/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Information on the total amount paid in non-consolidated bonus payments to Senior Civil Servants in the Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure in respect of performance year 2008/2009 is not yet available. It is anticipated that this information will be available in the autumn.

Poland – Northern Ireland International Football Match

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, as large numbers of football fans have already booked accommodation, if he will contact the Polish Football Association asking it to reconsider the change of venue for the Poland – Northern Ireland match in September. (AQW 8273/09)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Responsibility for determining where an international football match is played rests with the relevant Football Association of the home country. It would be a matter for the Irish Football Association to contact the Polish Football Association if a change of venue was required.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Primary School Head Teachers

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education if her Department organised the meeting of primary school head teachers she attended in Newry on 24 April 2009, and, if so, how and by whom invitations were issued. (AQW 7540/09)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): At the meeting I had with Primary School head teachers in the Newry and Mourne area on 28 March, I agreed to have a follow up meeting regarding the issues raised.

The date and venue of this follow up meeting was agreed by my Private Office.

Review of the Programme for Government

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of Education whether the first review of the Programme for Government has resulted in the inclusion of targets relating to early years investment. (AQW 7869/09)

Minister of Education: Tá an t-athbhreithniú bliantúil ar an Chlár don Rialtas á chur i bhfeidhm faoi láthair thar gach Roinn ag OFMDFM. Ní meicníochtaí iad na socruithe monatóireachta agus an t-athbhreithniú bliantúil a éascaíonn athruithe do spriocanna agus d'aidhmeanna laistigh de PFG/PSAnna. Mar sin, níl spriocanna ar leith ann faoi láthair a bhfuil baint acu leis infheistíocht luathbhlianta.

The annual review of the Programme for Government is currently being taken forward across Departments by OFMDFM. The monitoring arrangements and annual review are not mechanisms that allow changes to be made to targets or goals within PFG/PSAs. There are therefore currently no specific targets relating to early years investment.

Special Educational Needs Assessment

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of Education (i) how many children are waiting for a special educational needs assessment; (ii) how many of these children are suspected of having Autism Spectrum disorder; and (iii) the average waiting time for an assessment, broken down by Education and Library board area. (AQW 7891/09)

Minister of Education: Seo a leanas na figiúirí is deireanaí atá le fáil ó na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne (ELBanna) maidir le líon na bpáistí a bhí ag fanacht ar mheasúnú riachtanais speisialta oideachais (SEN) i mí Dheireadh Fómhair 2008:-

The latest figures available from the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) regarding the number of children who are currently awaiting special educational needs (SEN) assessment are as at October 2008 and are as follows:-

BELB	267
NEELB	593
SEELB	421
SELB	516
WELB	242

These figures are in regard to children with a variety of need, including Stage 3 (non-statutory assessments) and Stage 4 (statutory assessments) of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (COP), reviews at Stage 3 and Stage 5 of the Code of Practice, special testing at transfer stage between primary and post-primary, pre-school and examination arrangements.

Referral forms from all five ELBs require schools to indicate the main area of special educational needs with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) falling under the “Communication and Interaction” category. It is not possible, therefore, to separately identify children who are suspected of having ASD when they are referred for special needs assessment. ELBs do not record that a child has ASD until after the psychological assessment or diagnosis by the health sector.

With regard to the average waiting time for an assessment in terms of statutory requirements, at Stage 4 of the COP, ELBs consider the need for a statutory assessment of SEN which will include an assessment by an educational psychologist. ELBs have 16 weeks from the date that the ELB notifies the parents that it is considering making an assessment or from the date that the request to carry out an assessment is received by the ELB from the parent or the school to complete the assessment.

In terms of non-statutory assessments, the latest figures available from the ELBs, again as at October 2008, regarding the average waiting time for such assessments by an educational psychologist, at Stage 3 of the COP, are as follows:-

- Belfast Education and Library Board – 43 days
- North-Eastern Education and Library Board – 109 days
- South-Eastern Education and Library Board – 158 days
- Southern Education and Library Board – 56 days
- Western Education and Library Board – no waiting list

Delay in assessment is one of the problems within the current SEN framework which the Review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion aimed to address. The policy proposals which emerged from the review are focused on ensuring that each child who experiences difficulties with their learning is identified and provided with appropriate support, as early as possible, to help them achieve their full potential.

The policy proposals were first referred to the Assembly’s Executive Committee last July seeking agreement to issue them for public consultation. However, almost 11 months later, it is regrettable that I have not been able to progress the proposals as planned due to that lack of Executive agreement to issue them for public consultation.

I remain hopeful that my Executive colleagues will agree at the earliest opportunity to the issuing of the policy proposals for consultation to allow everyone involved the opportunity to contribute to the shaping of the final policy.

Schools in North Antrim

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Education what capital work is planned to be carried out at schools in the North Antrim constituency, in each of the next 3 years. (AQW 7913/09)

Minister of Education: Tá trí phríomhthionscadal caipitil i dtoghcheantar Aontroim Thuaidh a bhfuil obair á déanamh orthu faoi láthair nó a bhfuil plean ann go ndéanfar obair orthu sa chéad trí bliana eile.

There are three major capital projects in the North Antrim constituency where work is either ongoing or planned to be carried out in the next three years.

Construction work to provide a replacement school building for St Patrick's & St Brigid's Primary School, Ballycastle on the existing site started in February 2009 and is due to complete in May 2010. Construction work on a new school building for St Mary's Primary School, Portglenone on the existing site has just commenced and is due to complete in May 2010.

A new school building for Ballymoney High School on its existing site is still in planning. The target date for opening is May 2012.

Non-Teaching Staff

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education how many non-teaching staff are employed in the controlled sector broken down by (i) Protestant; and (ii) Roman Catholic. (AQW 7921/09)

Minister of Education: Tá gach ball foirne neamhtheagaisc i Scoileanna Rialaithe agus i Scoileanna Caitliceacha faoi Chothabháil fostaithe ag na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne.

All non-teaching staff in Controlled Schools and Catholic Maintained Schools are employed by the Education and Library Boards. The information requested is set out in the table below and has been provided by the Boards in respect of staff employed at 1 January 2009 funded under schools' budgets. Therefore it does not include staff funded centrally such as catering staff. The information also excludes those non-teaching staff working in the Grant Maintained Integrated, other (independent), other maintained and voluntary sectors who are employed by the Board of Governors of the individual school.

NUMBER OF NON-TEACHING STAFF EMPLOYED BY THE EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARDS AT 1 JANUARY 2009 (BROKEN DOWN BY SCHOOLS SECTOR AND COMMUNITY BACKGROUND)

Board	Controlled Schools Sector			Catholic Maintained Schools Sector		
	Protestant	Catholic	Others*	Protestant	Catholic	Others*
Belfast	1297	220	90	62	1330	42
Western	842	281	42	287	2017	65
North Eastern	3080	325	457	249	1287	244
South Eastern	1998	317	180	144	923	144
Southern	1606	274	52	100	2214	28

Note: The Others column at * indicates the number of staff in each of the schools sectors whose community background has been determined as neither Protestant nor Catholic; is unknown; or has still to be determined.

Non-Teaching Staff

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education how many non-teaching staff are employed in the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools sector broken down by (i) Protestant; and (ii) Roman Catholic. (AQW 7922/09)

Minister of Education: Tá gach ball foirne neamhtheagaisc i Scoileanna Rialaithe agus i Scoileanna Caitliceacha faoi Chothabháil fostaithe ag na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne.

All non-teaching staff in Controlled Schools and Catholic Maintained Schools are employed by the Education and Library Boards. The information requested is set out in the table below and has been provided by the Boards in respect of staff employed at 1 January 2009 funded under schools' budgets. Therefore it does not include staff funded centrally such as catering staff. The information also excludes those non-teaching staff working in the

Grant Maintained Integrated, other (independent), other maintained and voluntary sectors who are employed by the Board of Governors of the individual school.

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Enrolment Numbers for St Paul's College, Kilrea

Mr J Dallat asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 7493/09, if she will order a temporary variation to the admissions and enrolment numbers for St Paul's College, Kilrea, to allow pupils to be enrolled for the academic year 2009/10; and if the college will be in a position to meet the demands of its applicants in future years. (AQW 7954/09)

Minister of Education: Mar fhreagairt ar iarratais ón scoil, d'fhaomh an Roinn athrú sealadach ar líon iontrála na scoile don scoilbhliain 2009/10 ó 54 go dtí 62 leis an bhrú áitiúil atá san earnáil meánscoile faoi chothabháil a mhaolú.

In response to requests from the school the Department has approved a temporary variation to the school's 2009/10 admissions number from 54 to 62 to help alleviate local pressure within the maintained secondary sector. Whilst the granting of temporary variations can be used to alleviate short term pressures in an area, the medium to longer term position must be considered in the context of post-primary transfer policy, area-based planning of post-primary provision, and any capital projects which may necessitate a review of the school's long term enrolment figure.

I am conscious of the need for consistency between my Department's policy for considering requests for temporary variations, set in the context of wider open enrolment policy, and the range of other education reforms I am introducing. Policy in this area will require review to reflect the outcomes of my reform programme.

Education Maintenance Allowance

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the proportion of pupils who currently receive free school meals; and (ii) the proportion of pupils aged between 16 and 19 who currently receive Education Maintenance Allowance, broken down by school. (AQW 8036/09)

Minister of Education:

- (i) Athraíonn líon na ndaltaí a mbíonn béilí scoile acu ó sheachtain go seachtain. Tugann an t-eolas a bhailítear ar bhonn bliantúil tri mhóráireamh na mBéilí Scoile léargas dúinn, áfach, ar líonta na ndaltaí atá ag fáil béile scoile ar an lá a bhailítear eolas an móráirimh.

The number of children taking school meals varies from week to week. However, information collected annually from the School Meals Census provides a snapshot of the numbers taking meals on the day on which census information is gathered.

- (i) The number of children taking school meals varies from week to week. However, information collected annually from the School Meals Census provides a snapshot of the numbers taking meals on the day on which census information is gathered.

On the date of the most recent School Meals Census, 10 October 2008, the proportion of pupils who received free school meals was 15%.

- (ii) The proportion of pupils who currently receive an Education Maintenance Allowance broken down by school is as follows:

BELFAST EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

School	%
Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School	19
Ashfield Boys' High School	62
Ashfield Girls' High School	51
Belfast Boys' Model School	69
Belfast Model School For Girls	68
Belfast Royal Academy	29
Bloomfield Collegiate	21
Campbell College	9
Castle High School	100
Christian Brothers' Secondary School	85
Coláiste Feirste	73
Corpus Christi College	100
De La Salle College	64
Dominican College	38
Fleming Fulton Special School	41
Glenveagh Special School	42
Grosvenor Grammar School	29
Hazelwood College	70
Hunterhouse College	34
Little Flower Girls' School	71
Malone Integrated College	67
Methodist College	12
Mitchell House Special School	71
Orangefield High School	73
Our Lady Of Mercy Girls' School	70
Park Education Resource Centre	54
Rathmore Grammar School	19
St Dominic's High School	59
St Gemma's High School	100
St Genevieve's High School	68
St Joseph's College	65
St Louise's Comprehensive College	77
St Malachy's College	42
St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School	56
St Patrick's College	76

School	%
St Rose's High School	74
Strathearn School	20
The Royal Belfast Academical Institution	16
Victoria College	20
Wellington College	36

NORTH-EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

School	%
Antrim Grammar School	30
Ballycastle High School	36
Ballyclare High School	17
Ballyclare Secondary School	38
Ballymena Academy	22
Ballymoney High School	100
Belfast High School	29
Cambridge House Grammar School	38
Carrickfergus College	59
Carrickfergus Grammar School	35
Castle Tower School	50
Coleraine Academical Institution	35
Coleraine College	74
Coleraine High School	27
Cross And Passion College	65
Cullybackey High School	55
Dalriada School	35
Dominican College, Portstewart	50
Downshire School	38
Dunclug College	52
Edmund Rice College	57
Garvagh High School	100
Glengormley High School	53
Hill Croft Special School	50
Jordanstown Special School	63
Kilronan Special School	44
Larne Grammar School	30
Larne High School	58
Loreto College	29
Maghera High School	100
Magherafelt High School	75
Monkstown Community School	62

School	%
Newtownabbey Community High School	100
North Coast Integrated College	82
Parkhall Senior College	100
Rainey Endowed School	35
Riverside School	18
Roddensvale Special School	47
Rosstulla Special School	62
Sandelford Special School	49
Slemish College	38
St Colm's High School	63
St Comgall's High School	66
St Joseph's College	62
St Louis Grammar School	24
St Macnissi's College	46
St Malachy's High School	100
St Mary's College, Clady	60
St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt	36
St Patrick's Co-Ed Comp. College, Maghera	47
St Patrick's College, Ballymena	44
St Pius X College	63
Ulidia Integrated College	51

SOUTH-EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

School	%
Assumption Grammar School	31
Bangor Academy And 6th Form College	53
Bangor Grammar School	29
Clifton Special School	30
De La Salle Secondary School	100
Down High School	25
Fort Hill College	64
Friends' School	15
Glastry College	58
Glenlola Collegiate	20
Knockbreda High School	100
Knockevin Special School	33
Lagan College	36
Laurelhill Community College	51
Lisnagarvey High School	53
Movilla High School	100

School	%
Newtownbreda High School	49
Our Lady And St Patrick's College	17
Parkview Special School	29
Priory Integrated College	39
Regent House School	27
Shimna Integrated College	52
St Colman's High School	57
St Colm's High School	92
St Columbanus' College	48
St Columba's College	63
St Malachy's High School	55
St Mary's High School	74
St Patrick's Grammar School	34
St Patrick's High School	55
Strangford Integrated College	46
Sullivan Upper School	11
Torbank Special School	32
Wallace High School	21

SOUTHERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

School	%
Abbey Christian Brothers' Grammar School	39
Banbridge Academy	21
Banbridge High School	53
Brownlow Integrated College	100
Ceara Special School	45
City Of Armagh High School	29
Cookstown High School	42
Craigavon Senior High School	100
Donard Special School	73
Drumglass High School	56
Fivemiletown College	57
Holy Trinity College	77
Integrated College Dungannon	48
Kilkeel High School	41
Lisanally Special School	61
Lismore Comprehensive School	72
Lurgan College	39
New-Bridge Integrated College	53
Newry High School	47

School	%
Newtownhamilton High School	100
Our Lady's Grammar School	41
Portadown College	34
Rathore School	47
Sacred Heart Grammar School	32
Sperrinview Special School	55
St Brigid's High School	100
St Catherine's College	61
St Ciaran's High School	60
St Colman's College	32
St Columban's College	100
St Joseph's Boys' High School	100
St Joseph's Grammar School	67
St Joseph's High School	64
St Louis Grammar School	45
St Mark's High School	58
St Mary's High School, Newry	62
St Mary's High School, Lurgan	100
St Michael's Grammar School	49
St Patrick's Academy	43
St Patrick's College, Dungannon	48
St Patrick's College, Banbridge	66
St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh	39
St Patrick's High School, Keady	61
St Paul's High School	55
The Royal School Armagh	17
The Royal School Dungannon	29

WESTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

School	%
Arvalee Special School	57
Belmont House Special School	58
Castledearg High School	75
Christian Brothers' Grammar School	42
Lisneal College	73
Enniskillen Collegiate Grammar School	38
Dean Maguire College	71
Devenish College	47
Drumragh College	61
Elmbrook Special School	31

School	%
Erne Integrated College	55
Erne Special School	58
Foyle & Londonderry College	38
Foyleview Special School	43
Holy Cross College	69
Immaculate Conception College	83
Knockavoe School And Resource Centre	78
Limavady Grammar School	38
Limavady High School	54
Loreto Grammar School	49
Lumen Christi College	33
Mount Lourdes Grammar School	55
Oakgrove Integrated College	61
Omagh Academy	42
Omagh High School	55
Portora Royal School	34
Rossmar Special School	100
Sacred Heart College	63
St Brigid's College	84
St Cecilia's College	78
St Columb's College	56
St Comhghall's High School	59
St Eugene's College	100
St Fanchea's College	53
St Joseph's Boys' School	88
St Joseph's College	86
St Mary's College, Irvinestown	100
St Mary's College, Derry	82
St Mary's High School, Limavady	72
St Michael's College	45
St Patrick's & St Brigid's High School	100
St Patrick's High School, Dungiven	66
St Peter's High School	86
Strabane Grammar School	49
Strabane High School	100
Thornhill College	53

Admission to a Nursery School

Mr R Newton asked the Minister of Education how many children have been refused admission to a nursery school or nursery unit for September 2009, in the East Belfast constituency. (AQW 8040/09)

Minister of Education: Chuir Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne Bhéal Feirste agus Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt in iúl don Roinn nach bhfuair 418 páiste a bhí ag iarraidh áit i naíscoil nó in aonad naíscoile do mhí Mheán Fómhair 2009 i dtoghcheantar Bhéal Feirste Thoir, nach bhfuair siad áit nuair a tháinig deireadh leis na próisis iontrála ar 1 Bealtaine 2009.

The Belfast Education and Library Board and South-Eastern Education and Library Board have advised the Department that 418 children seeking a place in a nursery school or nursery unit in the East Belfast Constituency area for September 2009 were unplaced when the admissions processes ended on 1 May 2009.

Broadbridge Primary School

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Education for an update on the delivery of a new school for Broadbridge Primary School in Eglinton and when the project will be completed. (AQW 8054/09)

Minister of Education: Thug mo chomhghleacaí Conor Murphy MP, MLA, Aire Forbartha Réigiúnaí le fios go raibh oifigigh ón tSeirbhís Bóithre ina Roinn agus sainchomhairleoirí, atá bainteach le dearadh na scéime débhealaigh ar an A2, go raibh siad i dteagmháil le Príomhoide Broadbridge Primary School trí phlé agus trí chumarsáid scríofa maidir leis an tionchar a d'fhéadfaí a bheith ag an tionscadal ar an scoil.

The Department's Professional advisors are currently scrutinising a Feasibility Study (FS), which considers all the potential options to meet the accommodation needs of Broadbridge Primary School. Following approval of the FS, an Economic Appraisal (EA) will be undertaken to determine the recommended option for the capital investment. The EA is subject to the approval of the Department of Education and, if total costs for the scheme are over £5 million, the Department of Finance and Personnel. Following approval of the EA, the scheme will be eligible for inclusion in any future new starts programme.

My colleague Conor Murphy MP, MLA, Minister for Regional Development, has advised that officials from his Department's Roads Service and consultants, engaged in the design of the A2 dualling scheme, have had discussions and written communication with the Principal of Broadbridge Primary School in relation to the impact the project may have on the school.

Broadbridge Primary School

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Education what discussions have taken place between her Department and (i) the Department for Regional Development; (ii) Roads Service; and (iii) other agencies, in respect of the impact of the A2 dualling project on Broadbridge Primary School in Eglinton. (AQW 8057/09)

Minister of Education: Thug mo chomhghleacaí Conor Murphy MP, MLA, Aire Forbartha Réigiúnaí le fios go raibh oifigigh ón tSeirbhís Bóithre ina Roinn agus sainchomhairleoirí, atá bainteach le dearadh na scéime débhealaigh ar an A2, go raibh siad i dteagmháil le Príomhoide Broadbridge Primary School trí phlé agus trí chumarsáid scríofa maidir leis an tionchar a d'fhéadfaí a bheith ag an tionscadal ar an scoil.

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Youth Provision

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Education to provide details of any youth provision her Department funds in the Colin area of West Belfast. (AQW 8073/09)

Minister of Education: Tugann an Roinn Oideachais cistiú do Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt agus don Bytes Project fosta do sholáthar ghníomhaíochtaí seirbhíse ógra i gceantar Chollann in Iarthar Bhéal Feirste.

The Department of Education currently provides funding to the South Eastern Education and Library Board as well as the Bytes Project for the provision of youth service activities in the Colin area of West Belfast.

The Chief Executive of the SEELB has provided the following information on the youth provision which the Board is funding in the Colin area during the 2009/10 financial year:

The Saints Youth Centre	£95,000
Colin Youth Development Centre	£132,000
Lagmore Area Project	£40,000
Colin "Reach Out" Project (Colin Neighbourhood Partnership)	£43,000
SEELB Youth Integrated Development Project	£109,000
Summer Intervention Funding	£13,000
Funding to small voluntary/community groups	£3,000
Youth Initiatives	£20,000
Outreach Disability Project	£15,000
Peer Education Training Programme	£25,000
Total SEELB Funding:	£495,000

The Director of the Bytes Project has advised that the Poleglass Bytes Centre also operates in the Colin area. The allocation for 2009/10 is yet to be determined.

North/South Ministerial Council Teacher Qualifications Working Group

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Education to outline (i) when the North/South Ministerial Council Teacher Qualifications Working Group will be re-constituted; (ii) what mechanisms will be put in place to promote greater teacher mobility between both jurisdictions; and (iii) what steps are being taken to resolve the issue of cross-border pensions mobility. (AQW 8077/09)

Minister of Education: Tá mo Roinn agus an Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta (DES) ag obair leis an Ghrúpa Oibre ar Cháilíochtaí Múinteora a chur ar bun arís agus le clár oibre comhaontaithe a fhorbairt le tabhairt faoi dhúshláin atá ann faoi láthair. Tá mé ag súil leis, mar sin de, go mbeidh cruinniú den Ghrúpa ar siúl san fhómhar.

My Department and the Department of Education and Science (DES) are working to re-establish the Teacher Qualifications Working Group and to develop an agreed programme of work to address current challenges. I expect, therefore, that a meeting of the Group will take place in the autumn.

Given the centrality of the Irish language in the Primary School Curriculum in the south of Ireland, there is a requirement that all primary teachers should hold an Irish language qualification (An Scrúdú le haghaidh Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge). As a result of the deliberations of the Teacher Qualifications Working Group, the requirements for attaining the Irish language qualification have been relaxed to facilitate greater teacher mobility. However, I recognise that this requirement still presents a challenge for teachers who qualify in the north and, consequently, I have asked my Department to liaise with the Department of Education and Science with a view to facilitating provision in the north of preparatory courses for the Irish language qualification.

Recent additions to the list of qualifying overseas recognised pension schemes in Britain and the north of Ireland, and reciprocal developments in the south of Ireland, should facilitate the transfer of the value of a teacher's accrued pension entitlements from one jurisdiction to the other. The NSMC has agreed that measures

should be taken to provide additional information on pension issues to teachers and others in the public sector who wish to transfer to work in the other jurisdiction. The NSMC Joint Secretariat in conjunction with Finance Departments and key stakeholders is now developing a plan to address the matter, including information on public sector schemes registered for the purpose of recognised transfers.

I CAN Early Years Centre, Ballynahinch

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Education what steps her Department is taking to ensure the long term future of the I CAN Early Years Centre in Ballynahinch. (AQW 8084/09)

Minister of Education: While the Department of Education (DE) recognises the crucial role of early intervention and provides additional funding to Education and Library Boards (ELBs) to develop provision for speech, language and communication needs, its remit on special education extends to the development of strategy and policy and not to operational delivery.

It is therefore the responsibility of ELBs to make provision for special educational needs in their area, as required by the special educational needs framework in legislation. DE has no role in directing ELBs as to how they determine the specific provision required to meet local needs.

The I CAN Centre in Ballynahinch is funded jointly by the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) and the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust and I understand that the SEELB has agreed to fund a shortfall in funding for the 2009/10 financial year.

Baineann ceist cistithe don Ionad i ndiaidh na bliana airgeadais 2009/2010 leis an Údáras um Oideachas agus Scileanna a ghlacfaidh freagrachtaí na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne ó Eanáir 2010.

Funding for the Centre after the 2009/2010 financial year will be a matter for the Education and Skills Authority which will assume the responsibilities of the Education and Library Boards from January 2010.

Teaching Opportunities

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Education to outline (i) what steps her Department is taking, in conjunction with her counterparts in the Republic of Ireland, to promote teaching opportunities across the island of Ireland; and (ii) what plans her Department has to highlight the issue of teaching opportunities on an all-Ireland basis in the future. (AQW 8085/09)

Minister of Education: Mar thoradh ar an obair a rinneadh ag Grúpa Oibre ar Cháilíochtaí na Comhairle Aireachta Thuaidh Theas, tá na rialacha maidir leis na cáilíochtaí atá de dhíth le bheith ag teagasc ó dheas i ndiaidh bheith maolaithe ag an Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta (DES).

As a result of the work undertaken by the North South Ministerial Council Working Group on Qualifications, the Department of Education and Science (DES) in the South of Ireland have relaxed the rules regarding the qualifications needed to teach in the South.

Only teachers employed in the primary sector, in Gaeltacht schools, in Irish-medium schools or who teach any subject through the medium of Irish are required to hold the Irish language qualification (An Scrúdú le haghaidh Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge).

Teachers from the North who wish to teach in the primary sector in the South, but do not hold the requisite Irish language qualification, are granted provisional recognition as a teacher by the DES and are allowed five years (rather than three years previously) to acquire the qualification. On attainment of the qualification, such teachers are then recognised as fully qualified in the south of Ireland. Provisionally recognised teachers are placed on the appropriate point of the salary scale and are entitled to qualification allowances, whereas previously differential rates of pay pending the acquisition of the Irish language qualification applied.

Moreover, the two Departments of Education are currently liaising closely with a view to facilitating provision in the North of preparatory courses for the Irish language qualification.

In order to inform students here about the teaching requirements in the South, and further to discussions between the General Teaching Council (GTC) here and the Teaching Council, Ireland (TCI), arrangements are in place whereby the GTC includes, as part of its annual presentations to all PGCE and final year BEd students,

information about the role of the TCI and what students here would be required to do if they wished to teach in the primary or post-primary sectors in the South.

Teachers Pay Pensions Administration Branch

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education how many teachers have lost out on incapacity benefit due to the Teachers Pay Pensions Administration Branch's failure to provide them with the Statutory Sick Pay 1 form, in accordance with the regulations. (AQW 8117/09)

Minister of Education: Tá Foireann Riarachán Pá agus Phinsin na Múinteoirí eolach ar 2 chás nach bhfuair múinteoirí Sochar Éagumais mar gheall ar mhoill i soláthar fhoirm 1 do Phá Breoiteachta Reachtúil.

Teachers Pensions, Pay Administration Team are aware of 2 cases where teachers have lost out on Incapacity Benefit due to the delay in provision of Statutory Sick Pay 1 form.

There has been one ex-gratia payment of £271.32 issued to a teacher and a second ex-gratia payment of £1,166.56 for a teacher is currently being processed.

Where the Department has uncovered a delay in the issue of Statutory Sick Pay application forms from within Teachers Pensions, Pay Administration Team the full amount of financial loss, including interest if appropriate, has been reimbursed through issue of an ex-gratia payment.

Teachers Pay Pensions Administration Branch

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education how many ex-gratia payments have been made to teachers, due to the Teachers Pay Pensions Administration branch's failure to provide them with Statutory Sick Pay 1 form; and what is the total amount of payments made. (AQW 8118/09)

Minister of Education: Tá Foireann Riarachán Pá agus Phinsin na Múinteoirí eolach ar 2 chás nach bhfuair múinteoirí Sochar Éagumais mar gheall ar mhoill i soláthar fhoirm 1 do Phá Breoiteachta Reachtúil.

Teachers Pensions, Pay Administration Team are aware of 2 cases where teachers have lost out on Incapacity Benefit due to the delay in provision of Statutory Sick Pay 1 form.

There has been one ex-gratia payment of £271.32 issued to a teacher and a second ex-gratia payment of £1,166.56 for a teacher is currently being processed.

Where the Department has uncovered a delay in the issue of Statutory Sick Pay application forms from within Teachers Pensions, Pay Administration Team the full amount of financial loss, including interest if appropriate, has been reimbursed through issue of an ex-gratia payment.

Teachers Pay Pensions Administration Branch

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education what steps her Department is taking to reimburse teachers who have suffered a financial loss as a result of the Teachers Pay Pensions Administration branch's failure to provide them with Statutory Sick Pay 1 form at the appropriate time. (AQW 8119/09)

Minister of Education: Tá Foireann Riarachán Pá agus Phinsin na Múinteoirí eolach ar 2 chás nach bhfuair múinteoirí Sochar Éagumais mar gheall ar mhoill i soláthar fhoirm 1 do Phá Breoiteachta Reachtúil.

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Absence Management Policy for Teachers

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education what is the current status of policy TNC 2007/04, Absence Management Policy for Teachers. (AQW 8120/09)

Minister of Education: Bíonn Imlitreacha TNC á n-eisiúint ag an Choiste um Idirbheartaíocht le Múinteoirí (TNC), ar a bhfuil ionadaithe ón Roinn Oideachais, ó na húdaráis arb iad na fostóirí iad agus ó na ceardchumann aitheanta múinteoirí. Múnlaíonn an Coiste cuid de choinníollacha fhostaíocht na múinteoirí i scoileanna deontaschúnta.

TNC Circulars are issued by the Teacher Negotiating Committee (TNC), which comprises representatives of the Department of Education, the employing authorities and the recognised teacher unions. They form part of the conditions of employment for teachers in grant-aided schools.

The Circular TNC 2007/4 (Teacher Attendance Procedure), which was issued on 20 December 2007, has been superseded by the Circular TNC 2008/2 (Teacher Attendance Procedure), which issued to schools on 22 April 2008.

Holy Family Primary School, Magherafelt

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Education to provide an update on the progress of the new build programme for the Holy Family Primary School in Magherafelt. (AQW 8125/09)

Minister of Education: Tá Staidéar Féidearthachta faofa ag an Roinn, a mholann foirgneamh nua don scoil ar an láthair sínithe atá ann cheana féin. Táthar ag ceapadh sainchomhairleoirí faoi láthair le Breithmheas Eacnamaíochta a dhéanamh chun an rogha mholta caipitil a shocrú don scéim.

The Department has approved a Feasibility Study, recommending a new build on the extended existing site for the school. Consultants are currently being appointed to complete an Economic Appraisal to determine the recommended capital option for the scheme.

Academic Entrance Exams

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Education, as the majority of grammar schools are to set their own academic entrance exams, what action will she take in response to the concerns of schools, teachers and parents. (AQW 8129/09)

Minister of Education: Tá beartas na Roinne Oideachais ar leagan síos critéar iontrála, sa Treoir 2010 rud a thabharfar chun críche i ndiaidh tréimhse comhairliúcháin.

Department of Education policy on the setting of admissions criteria is contained in Transfer 2010 guidance, to be finalised following a period of consultation.

I have written to all primary school principals and Boards of Governors on the issue of entrance tests, and will be responding directly to principals' concerns at a series of regional events on the subject during June. Teachers' concerns are being addressed in the form of advice provided by their union representatives, and principals and Boards of Governors of Catholic maintained primary schools have received advice on Transfer 2010 from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools. Parents who consider themselves to be in possession of evidence that delivery of the revised curriculum to their children is being affected by preparation for entrance tests, may submit a complaint through the appropriate channels for investigation, and if the complaint is upheld, ultimately, the Department may direct a school to fulfil its statutory duties.

New Primary School for Islandmagee

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education (i) for how long has a new primary school for Islandmagee been planned by the North Eastern Education and Library Board; (ii) when did the Board acquire the site for the development; (iii) why has the scheme to build the school not progressed; and (iv) when is it envisaged that the building work will commence. (AQW 8144/09)

Minister of Education: (i) Bhí Moladh Forbartha a ligfeadh do bhunscoileanna Kilcoan agus Mullaghdubh bheith cónasctha mar scoil nua ar laithreán úrnua foilsithe ag Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirthuaiscirt (NEELB) mí na Nollaig 2003 agus thug an Roinn Oideachais faomhadh dó i mí Aibreáin 2004.

A Development Proposal to allow for the amalgamation of Kilcoan and Mullaghdubh Primary Schools onto a new school on a greenfield site, was published by the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) in December 2003 and approved by the Department of Education in April 2004.

(i) A Development Proposal to allow for the amalgamation of Kilcoan and Mullaghdubh Primary Schools onto a new school on a greenfield site, was published by the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) in December 2003 and approved by the Department of Education in April 2004. (ii) The Board purchased the new site on 30 April 2007 and acquired additional land to provide sight lines in September 2008. (iii) Funding is not yet available for this project, which will compete for funding at the time of the next capital funding announcement. (iv) A decision has yet to be taken on the timing of the next announcement.

Pre-school Education

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education how many (i) places for pre-school education were approved; (ii) places were allocated; and (iii) applications were received for the places allocated, in the Southern Education and Library Board area in the last two years. (AQW 8164/09)

Minister of Education: (i) Ba é líon na n-áiteanna cistithe réamhscoile a bhí ar fáil i limistéar an SELB sa bhliain 2007/08 ná 4,746. Ba é líon na n-áiteanna a bhí ar fáil sa bhliain 2008/09 ná 4,914.

(i) The number of funded pre-school places available in the SELB in 2007/08 was 4,746. The number available in 2008/09 was 4,914.

(ii) The number of children admitted to funded pre-school places in the SELB in 2007/08 was 4,757. The number admitted in 2008/09 was 4,938. The reason why the number admitted is slightly higher than the number of places available, is that each year a number of children with Statements of Special Education Need are admitted to statutory pre-school settings. The admission of such children is not part of the pre-school admissions arrangements and their places are additional.

(iii) The SELB have confirmed the number of applications received for funded pre-school places in their area in 2007/08 was 5,036. The number of applications received in 2008/09 was 5,194. These would include applications in respect of younger children not in their final pre-school year.

Primary School Foreign Languages

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education to outline the criteria used in selecting Spanish as a primary school foreign language and why it was selected instead of French or German. (AQW 8166/09)

Minister of Education: Mar a luaigh mé sa fhreagra a thug mé ar AQW 5187/09, thug mé isteach Spáinnis mar chuid den Chlár Teangacha Bunscoile as siocair gurb í an dara teanga is forleithne ar domhan í, i ndiaidh an Bhéarla, agus teanga atá ag éirí níos tábhachtaí ó thaobh na heacnamaíochta de.

As I stated in my answer to AQW 5187/09 I included Spanish in the Primary Languages Programme as it is the second most widely spoken global language after English, and an increasingly important one economically. It is of course open to schools to offer additional language learning opportunities outside of the primary languages programme, including in French and German, and I am pleased that many do this. There is a range of existing support arrangements already in place, including through CCEA and the Education and Library Boards for schools and, increasingly, post-primary schools are also becoming involved in supporting their primary partners. I believe that all efforts to provide enjoyable experience of language learning are valuable. The primary languages programme offers opportunities for our youngest pupils and it, along with the wider efforts of schools, will, I believe, encourage more young people to continue with languages at post-primary level and beyond.

Classroom Assistants

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Education for the cost of classroom assistants employed to support children and young people in receipt of statements of educational need, broken down by (i) school; (ii) sector; and (iii) type, in the Southern Education and Library Board area, in each of the last three financial years. (AQW 8169/09)

Minister of Education: The first principle of the Data Protection Act 1998 prohibits the disclosure of personal information relating to an individual. As an analysis of these costs, if provided in the format requested, could possibly identify an individual's salary the costs involved can only be provided by sector.

Dá réir sin, tá tugtha le fios ag Príomhfheidhmeannach Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Deiscirt gur mar seo a leanas a bhí an costas ó chúntóirí ranga a bhí fostaithe le tacaíocht a thabhairt do pháistí agus do dhaoine óga a raibh ráitis ar riachtanas oideachais acu, i ngach bliain le trí bliana airgeadais anuas:-

Accordingly the Chief Executive of the Southern Education and Library Board has advised that the cost, for each of the last three financial years, of classroom assistants employed to support children and young people in receipt of statements of educational need is as follows:-

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Controlled Nursery	£96,214	£105,054	£117,003
Maintained Nursery	£26,100	£38,855	£41,874
Controlled Primary	£1,920,145	£2,073,734	£2,268,230
Maintained Primary	£2,696,849	£3,068,045	£3,533,568
Controlled Secondary	£1,169,916	£1,290,297	£1,564,557
Maintained Secondary	£1,450,011	£1,597,297	£1,981,640
Controlled Grammar	£11,297	£9,297	£12,694
Special	£1,912,715	£2,125,983	£3,209,417

Children with Autism

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Education why her Department has not supported the Applied Behaviour Analysis for children with Autism, as per the evidence base recommended in the document 'None of the A's in ABA stand for autism: Dispelling the myths' (AQW 8172/09)

Minister of Education: Bíonn freagracht reachtúil ar Bhoird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne (ELBanna) as riachtanais speisialta oideachais pháistí a aithint, measúnú a dhéanamh orthu agus freastal orthu, páistí a bhfuil uathachas orthu san áireamh.

Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have statutory responsibility for identifying, assessing and meeting the special educational needs of children including those with autism. ELBs do so taking into account the individual needs of each child and there will therefore be variations in the provision made, based on the assessed needs of the child. Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) is one of many commercially available interventions for children with autism.

I am determined that all children with special education needs receive the very best start in life by ensuring that their education provision is tailored to their very different individual needs. Interventions for children with autism, in line with the recommendations of the Report of the Task Group on Autism, should be child-centred, not cost centred. The Task Group Report, launched in 2002, sets out very clear reasons why it would not be appropriate to advocate only one approach to meeting the needs of children with autism.

The Chief Executives of the ELBs have also advised that, following the allocation of additional funding by the Department of Education (DE) in the 2005/06 financial year, one officer from each ELB completed accredited training in ABA at Trinity College, Dublin. This represented a significant investment by DE in ABA in one year and subsequent to that teachers and officers in Boards' Autistic Spectrum Disorder Advisory Service have also completed this training. ELB officers have also had regular meetings with ABA professionals including the authors of 'None of the A's in ABA stand for autism: Dispelling the myths' to look at ways of utilising ABA strategies in schools.

Post Graduate Certificate in Education

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of Education why decisions on intake allocations for Post Graduate Certification in Education placements are more than four months late and when she expects these decisions to be made. (AQW 8181/09)

Minister of Education: Cuireadh in iúl don chúig institiúid ardoideachais ar 2 Meitheamh 2009 cinntí ar líonta iontógála d'oidreachas tosaigh múinteoirí (ITE) do gach cúrsa sa bhliain acadúil 2009/10, gach Teastas Iarchéime san Oideachas san áireamh.

Decisions on the 2009/10 academic year initial teacher education (ITE) intakes for all courses, including those for all Postgraduate Certificate in Education courses were notified to the five higher education institutions (HEIs) on 2 June 2009.

The determination of intakes to courses of ITE is a complex process and there is a need to ensure that the numbers enrolling on approved ITE courses reflect the needs of our school system, not only in the short term but also in the longer

term. Of key importance this year was the need to give careful consideration to the recommendations set out in the Report on the Review of Teacher Education produced by the Assembly's Committee for Employment and Learning. There was also the need to take account of the recently announced increase in births and to provide the Department for Employment and Learning with the opportunity to present their views on the intake numbers prior to their finalisation.

New Build Schools

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Education what provisions are in place to ensure that new build schools comply with the acoustics standards set out in Building Bulletin 93. (AQW 8203/09)

Minister of Education: Tá an doiciméad "Acoustic design of schools, Building Bulletin 93, Notes to Designers" ar láithreán gréasáin na Roinne Oideachais. Sa doiciméad seo molann an Roinn gurb éigean go mbíonn gach mórsceim caipitil a fógraíodh ó mhí Márta 2006 deartha de réir BB93 Acoustic Design of Schools, le solúbthacht mar atá curtha síos sa doiciméad.

The Department of Education's website contains a document "Acoustic design of schools, Building Bulletin 93, Notes to Designers". Within this document the Department advises that all major capital schemes announced since March 2006 must be designed in accordance with BB93 Acoustic Design of Schools, with relaxations as described in the document.

A suitably qualified and experienced Acoustic Consultant must also be appointed on all major capital projects to carry out an initial noise survey, assist with design development, check design details and on-site construction, and to carry out acoustic tests to confirm that the building achieves the required acoustic performance.

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Careers Advice

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what systems are in place to provide professional careers advice for people at risk of redundancy and for those who have already lost their jobs. (AQW 7994/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): My Department agrees, arranges and delivers a support service to employers whose employees are at risk of redundancy. When the Department is notified that an employer is making or considering making redundancies, the local District Manager will outline the support services available to both the employer and employees. The establishment of a redundancy clinic, usually held on the employer's premises provides information, advice and support to those facing redundancy. My Department's professionally qualified Careers Advisers play a vital role in these redundancy clinics offering redundancy counselling as a group activity or as an individual guidance interview.

In addition, there are over 100 Careers Advisers providing an impartial, all age careers information, advice and guidance service in JobCentres, Jobs and Benefits offices and Careers Offices throughout Northern Ireland. The service is available to people of all ages and backgrounds including those who are either at risk of redundancy or who have already lost their jobs.

Careers Advice

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how professional careers advice and its availability is being marketed to (i) employers; (ii) people at risk of redundancy; and (iii) people who have lost their jobs. (AQW 7996/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: My Department employs over 100 professionally qualified careers advisers who are based in Job Centres, Jobs and Benefits and Careers Offices across Northern Ireland. The services of my Department's Careers Service are marketed through press articles, leaflets, the Careers Service and the Department's websites and through attendance at relevant events.

In the last year the Careers Service has exhibited at a number of events throughout Northern Ireland offering careers services to a wide audience including those potentially facing redundancy and people in or out of work. A recent Jobs Fair and Advice Forum in the Millennium Forum attracted 1754 attendees while a similar event in the Opera House last October had an attendance of over 1700 people. Careers Advisers were also available at the Jobscene event at the Europa Hotel and the Balmoral Show providing a professional, impartial all-age careers information, advice and guidance service.

In addition, the Employment Service District Managers visit employers who notify the Department of potential redundancies to discuss the range of DEL support services available, including professional careers guidance. Employers are provided with a set of "Jobkits" that are to be distributed to all those employees facing or under threat of redundancy. The jobkit contains a new leaflet "Find your way back to work" which sets out the full range of support services available to an employee facing redundancy.

The approach to marketing will be further developed in line with my Department's overall marketing strategy and the implementation of "Preparing for Success" the careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) strategy.

Careers Advice

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what is the average waiting period for an appointment with a professional careers adviser. (AQW 7997/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department does not hold specific details of average waiting times for appointments with professional Careers Advisers. A rota system operates in most of the Department's offices to ensure that an Adviser is in attendance during office hours and where possible clients are seen immediately. Where this is not possible an appointment is scheduled, normally within 2-3 working days. Appointments with clients in partner organisations such as schools and training organisations are arranged to suit the client and the school/training timetable and usually take place on the premises of the partner organisation.

Further Education Colleges

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people, at risk of redundancy or who have already lost their jobs have been referred by his Department to Further Education Colleges, training providers or other agencies. (AQW 7998/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: It is not possible to provide the information requested. However, the Employment Service is experiencing considerable increased demand for its comprehensive range of redundancy and work-focused services designed to help people find and remain in work. These are: redundancy clinics, job search, job brokerage, work-focused interviews, and the Department's range of employment programmes including Steps to Work, Pathways to Work, Progress to Work and specialist programmes and services for people with disabilities. In response to rising demand, the Department is increasing capacity in frontline offices including by recruiting 130 additional frontline staff.

Retraining Programmes

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline how the retraining programmes for redundant workers are linked to the jobs that are available. (AQW 8064/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Steps to Work is an employment programme that offers a flexible approach to targeting individuals' barriers to employment. A good example is the work that is taking place in the Newtownabbey area where strong linkages have been established with large employers such as B&Q and Newtownabbey Council.

This approach has successfully demonstrated Steps to Work's ability to be tailored to prepare the unemployed to meet the needs of those employers who currently have jobs available.

Sector Skills Councils

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) with how many Sector Skills Councils his Department has contact; and (ii) how many have staff employed in Northern Ireland. (AQW 8141/09)

Minister for Employment and Learning:

- (i) The Department works closely with all 25 of the Sector Skills Councils.
- (ii) All of the Sector Skills Councils have staff employed in Northern Ireland.

DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Domestic Electricity Market

Mr C Boylan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline what efforts are being made by her Department to encourage competition in the domestic electricity market since the introduction of EU directive EU 2003/54/EC. (AQW 7983/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): This Directive was implemented in Northern Ireland via The Electricity Order 1992 (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, the Electricity Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007, and the Electricity (Single Wholesale Market) (Northern Ireland) Order 2007. Whilst my Department was responsible for the implementation of the Directive, it is the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (NIAUR) that has the principal responsibility for promoting competition within the Northern Ireland energy marketplace. NIAUR has recently formed a dedicated team tasked with establishing a regulatory programme to deliver competition, and has issued a consultation paper seeking views on how to improve energy retail competition.

The electricity supply market in Northern Ireland has been open to competition since 1 November 2007, when the Single Electricity Market (SEM) was established, which combined the wholesale power generation markets in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland for the purposes of driving down power generation costs.

My Department co-operates with NIAUR in its work to encourage new suppliers' participation in the retail electricity market in Northern Ireland. Since the introduction of the SEM there has been increasing interest in obtaining new electricity supply licences, and evidence of increasing electricity supply competition in the industrial and commercial sector. However, NIE Energy remains the only electricity supplier to the domestic market in Northern Ireland at present, and it may take some time to establish effective competition in this sector, given the small market here compared to the much larger market in Great Britain where competition is well established.

Construction and Quarry Industries

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what measures have been taken to prepare the Construction and Quarry Industries for new regulations that require all new homes to be zero carbon by 2016. (AQW 8008/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Invest NI has taken a number of measures to prepare clients in the Construction Industry for new regulations requiring all new homes to be zero carbon by 2016, including direct engagement with individual clients, dissemination of information from sectoral events and facilitation of best practice visits.

In particular Invest NI commissioned a scoping study into Future Opportunities for Sustainable Building Products involving consultation with a number of contractors and purchasers of building products, in addition to a wide range of industry bodies and associations.

A seminar entitled “Future Opportunities for Sustainable Building Products” was held on 4 June 2009 to highlight opportunities identified in the study within the design, construction, refit and maintenance of buildings and how Invest NI proposes to assist clients to take advantage of them. More than 40 companies attended the seminar.

Invest NI has also recently produced a series of five DVDs including one on Low Carbon Technologies which embraces integrated building technologies, to demonstrate Northern Ireland’s capabilities in the renewables sector and these were launched at an event in May 2009.

Whilst the Quarry Industry lies outside Invest NI’s remit, a number of Invest NI client companies have links to the Quarry Sector and Invest NI continues to work closely with the Northern Ireland Quarry Products Association.

Regional Tourism

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how she plans to develop the role of the Regional Tourism Partnership, particularly in relation to the Strangford Constituency and Strangford Lough. (AQW 8024/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: I recently commissioned a review of local tourism delivery arrangements, including Regional Tourism Partnerships (RTP). The need for this review has been driven by a number of factors including the proposed changes to local council boundaries and the transfer of additional resources to support the tourism activities of the new councils resulting from the Review of Public Administration. The Review will be completed by the end of June and it will set out the proposed roles and responsibilities of all the major players involved in tourism delivery in Northern Ireland. The Review findings will be used to inform the development of a new Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland which will be published for consultation later this year.

In relation to the RTP which covers the Strangford Constituency and Strangford Lough ie Armagh/Down RTP I have been advised that it will cease operations with effect from 30 June 2009. Representatives from NITB have however recently met with the Strangford Lough Management Committee, Ards Borough Council and Down District Council to identify how best they can continue to work together to develop, manage and market the Strangford Lough area, which is recognised as one of Northern Ireland’s key tourism assets. Plans are now being taken forward to develop an agreed destination development plan for the area.

General Consumer Council

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if the General Consumer Council held a staff “away day” on 21 May 2009; and if so (i) where it was held; (ii) how many staff attended; (iii) what percentage of the staff this represented; and (iv) to provide a breakdown of the total cost. (AQW 8037/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Consumer Council held a staff development day on Thursday 21st May 2009 as part of its programme to develop and train its staff. I understand that the objective of the event was to facilitate and encourage interaction between staff from different sections of the Council and to enhance team building. The event, which is held on an annual basis, is also designed to promote personal and career development for staff so that they can reach their potential, and to encourage them contribute fully to the achievement of the Consumer Council’s Corporate Plan.

The details of the event are as follows:-

- (i) Staff took part in two separate activities; one in the Black Box (Cathedral Quarter, Belfast) and the other in the University of Ulster (Belfast);
- (ii) & (iii) 41 staff attended representing 91% of the Council’s staff complement; and

(iv) The total cost of the development day was £1,884, which was broken down as follows:-

	£
Hire of Black Box facilities and cost of team building activities 690	
Hire of University of Ulster facilities and cost of team building activities	1,128
Cost of refreshments	66

The cost represents 7% of the Consumer Council's annual training and development budget and equates to £46 per member of staff attending.

Trade Visits

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the results arising from the trade visits to various countries she has undertaken and if jobs or contracts have been offered or confirmed. (AQW 8065/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Since my appointment as Minister of Enterprise Trade and Investment in May 2008 I have led two Invest NI trade and investment missions – one to the United States where I completed an intensive programme in Boston and Silicon Valley, and the second to the Netherlands, which was the largest mission ever from Northern Ireland to a European destination.

Trade and investment missions are designed primarily to make initial contact with potential customers and investors and there is normally a long lead in time before new business and investment is secured. When in Silicon Valley I announced a new investment for Northern Ireland which will promote 16 specialised software development and support jobs; and in the Netherlands I witnessed the signing of a major contract between Wrightbus of Ballymena and a Dutch company to supply buses to the city of London.

Companies participating in these two missions have so far reported actual and potential new trade business worth £2.8 million.

Grants Scheme for Solar Panels

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if her Department would consider making larger grants available to those who are not on benefits to install solar panels. (AQW 8066/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has not offered grants for the installation of solar panels since the closure of the Reconnect scheme on 31 March 2008. Following an evaluation of the scheme there are no plans to reintroduce the grant scheme at present, particularly as grants for household renewable technologies are available from the UK- wide Low Carbon Buildings Programme, operated by the Department of Energy and Climate Change. This programme does not distinguish between individuals in receipt of benefits and those not on benefits.

Regional Tourism

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, within the review of public administration, will local councils have responsibility for regional tourism. (AQW 8131/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Local councils make an important contribution to the development of tourism in their local areas and the review of public administration offers an opportunity to enhance the role the sector can play in further developing the tourism industry. DETI intends to transfer £1.33 million of funding to the new councils to strengthen the role they play in relation to local product development and visitor servicing.

In the light of the review of public administration, and other factors, I recently commissioned a review of local tourism delivery arrangements. This review, which I have asked to be completed by the end of June, will set out the basis for new arrangements which will ensure greater efficiency in the development of regional tourism delivery.

The review recommendations will also feed into the development of the new Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland currently being taken forward by NITB and DETI and which will be published, following Executive approval, later this year.

Bonuses Paid to Permanent Secretary

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much was paid in bonuses to her Department's Permanent Secretary in each of the last five financial years. (AQW 8137/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Combined salary and bonus information for the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment is currently provided through the annual Resource Accounts within a £5k range and is available from the Departmental website www.detini.gov.uk under Publications – DETI Financial Accounts Reports for years up to 2007/08. The figures which will appear in the 2008/09 Resource Accounts when published are £130k to £135K. It is our policy not to disclose the remuneration details of individual civil servants, other than in broad terms.

Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the progress made to date in working with the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation to implement a social tariff to help those in fuel poverty. (AQW 8148/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Lead responsibility for fuel poverty policy lies with the Department for Social Development, although there are issues which cut across several Northern Ireland departments. In May 2008, Minister Ritchie restructured the Inter-departmental Group on Fuel Poverty into a Taskforce, charged with developing and recommending proposals to ameliorate fuel poverty in Northern Ireland. The Taskforce proposals were brought to the Executive in September 2008, and included a recommendation on the feasibility of the introduction of social tariffs. It was acknowledged that further research would be needed in relation to this issue, particularly in terms of impact across different electricity users.

Since then the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation has progressed thinking internally in this area and has employed consultants to undertake a policy/option analysis of the options for implementing a social tariff in Northern Ireland including an examination of positive and negative effects associated with the various options.

The next steps will include a full public consultation on the report and further work in early Autumn to decide on a way forward and, if appropriate, implementation issues and timelines. This will include the need for supporting policy action by key Northern Ireland Departments, including legislation. The impact of any social tariff charges would need to be considered carefully and receive political endorsement.

Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline what progress she has made in working with the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation regarding Article 13 of the Energy End Use Efficiency Services Directive and when will this directive be implemented. (AQW 8149/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The Energy End Use Efficiency and Energy Services Directive came into force on 17 May 2008.

Article 13 of the Directive is concerned with billing and metering. Existing legislation and standard metering currently provided already meet the requirements of Article 13 (1) of the Directive. Northern Ireland is also already compliant with Article 13 (2) and 13 (3) (a), (c) and (d) which focus on the provision of additional information on bills.

Following close liaison with the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation, DETI consulted on Article 13 (3) (b) of the Directive and more generally on smart metering over a six week period 7 April – 19 May 2009. This consultation proposed the Electricity and Gas Billing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009, which amend the Energy Order (Northern Ireland) 2003 and which mandate electricity and gas suppliers to provide 12 months historical consumption data to domestic customers. This legislation has now been laid before the Assembly by

the negative resolution procedure, and will be subject to the 21 day rule, before coming into operation on 22 June 2009. This will complete implementation of Article 13 in Northern Ireland.

The remaining articles of the Directive have already been implemented on a UK wide basis, for example the UK Energy Efficiency Action Plan was published in June 2007 and in compliance with Article 6 of this Directive, DETI has signed voluntary Energy Efficiency Business Agreements with all the major net bound and non net bound energy suppliers here, while DFP has signed similar voluntary agreements with all Government Departments.

Debt Advice Contract

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) to provide an update on the roll-out of the debt advice contract with Citizens Advice for the period up to March 2011; (ii) to indicate how much of that funding has already been transferred to Citizens Advice; (iii) to indicate when the balance will be transferred; and (iv) to outline the reasons for any delay in the allocation of any such monies. (AQW 8215/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The current 3 year debt advice contract between my Department and Citizens Advice (CA) started on 1 April 2008 and is progressing well. It currently supports 14 advisers in locations throughout Northern Ireland and recent returns to my Department confirm that there continues to be a pressing and increasing demand for their services.

For the first year ending 31 March 2009 my Department has already paid CA some £370,000. A further claim for almost £45,000 has been made, and CA submitted the necessary supporting documentation on 13 May 2009. My Department expects to make a further payment very shortly.

The first claim relating to the 2009/10 financial year has been made and is being processed. My Department expects a payment to be made during week commencing 8 June 2009. This follows a change of payment process whereby payments will in future be made directly by my Department under a more streamlined approval process.

Telephone Debt Advisory Services

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide an update on the delivery of telephone debt advisory services. (AQW 8216/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Following a public tender, under the direction of the Central Procurement Directorate, my Department has awarded the contract to provide a free to use, confidential telephone debt advice service for Northern Ireland to A4e.

A4e was successful in the competition and is presently recruiting staff with a view to having the service operational in September 2009. The service will be based in Belfast and officials are meeting A4e on a regular basis to review the project plans.

US Investment Conference

Mr S Neeson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide details of the follow up work it has undertaken in relation to the US Investment Conference held in Belfast last year. (AQO 2964/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The USNI Conference took place in May 2008. Over 150 influential business leaders and potential investors had an opportunity to see at first hand what Northern Ireland has to offer. Media coverage and editorials, in Northern Ireland and the US reflected positively on the immediate impact and the longer term goals of the conference. The advertising value equivalent of the media interest generated by the USNI Conference was independently assessed to be £2.7m. To date, Invest NI has received over 40 expressions of interest in discussing what Northern Ireland has to offer.

In order to maximise the impact, Invest NI has put in place a comprehensive follow-up campaign. During the second half of 2008-09, a series of follow up meetings have also taken place in London and Dublin.

In addition to input from senior officials within Invest NI since the conference, as part of my personal efforts, I travelled to both the East and West coasts of the US in October 2008. While there I took the opportunity to meet with potential investors and follow up with attendees of the USNI Conference. On the West coast I participated in

Invest NI's 'Trade Mission to USA - 26-31 October 2008'. The companies on this mission were representative of Northern Ireland's innovative and diversified industrial base.

In December 2008 and March 2009, the First Minister Peter Robinson and deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness visited the US. During the course of their visit, the Ministers participated in a series of meetings aimed at promoting the Northern Ireland economy and securing further inward investment. In December 2008, in addition to meeting the US President, the Ministers had separate meetings with the Mayor of New York and the New York City Comptroller to discuss the investment of pension funds in projects in Northern Ireland.

Invest NI is conscious of the importance of global economic conditions and remain confident that the Northern Ireland business proposition is a highly-competitive alternative to other regions of the British Isles or Western Europe.

The growing uncertainty and global economic downturn means many companies are tightening their belts and are increasingly focused on cost containment and deferring investment decisions. Several firms in the region are, however, firmly focused on opportunities for continued growth and new projects. Recent announcements reflect US companies' belief in the competitive proposition that Northern Ireland has to offer. The Northern Ireland value proposition will continue to be promoted strongly to potential investors in all its markets.

Senior Civil Servant Bonuses

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much was paid in bonuses to Senior Civil Servants in her Department in the year 2008/09. (AQW 8226/09)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Bonuses totalling £69,500 in respect of the 2007/08 year were paid to Senior Civil Servants in the 2008/09 financial year. Bonuses in respect of the 2008/09 year have not yet been determined or paid. It is anticipated that this information will be available in the autumn.

Note: The Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland is included in the figure.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Hollywood Design Guide

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment following the launch of the Hollywood Design Guide, whether his Department will support the design guide recently published by the lower Newtownards Residents Group. (AQW 7931/09)

Minister of the Environment (Mr S Wilson): The Hollywood Conservation Area Design Guide, published in March 2009, constitutes Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Hollywood Conservation Area and will be taken into account by the Department as a material consideration in determining planning applications which are within, or may affect, the setting of the Conservation Area. This Design Guide is non-statutory planning guidance and such guidance is intended to supplement, elucidate and exemplify policy documents. The Design Guidance has also been prepared within the context of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan.

The East Belfast Partnership, in association with Belfast Regeneration Office and Belfast City Council, has commissioned work to draw together a Regeneration Framework for East Belfast. The Partnership Board has also been involved in the development of a Strategy entitled 'Newtownards Road 2012', and has prepared a Planning and Design Guide to assist with the regeneration of the area.

BMAP provides the planning framework for the Belfast Metropolitan Area and there is currently no mechanism for a local plan or design guide to be prepared on a statutory basis outside the Department's planning responsibilities. Although I would support and encourage a master planning approach, particularly where there are clear regeneration objectives, it is important that any emerging regeneration based proposals or a Planning and Design Guide for the Newtownards Road are compatible with the relevant planning framework contained in BMAP.

The Newtownards Road is designated in BMAP as an Arterial Route, with the aim of improving urban design without precluding innovative or imaginative design solutions, including regeneration and renewal/community projects. Although Planning Service notes that some of the detailed guidance contained in the Planning and Design Guide, particularly in respect of building heights, is not in line with BMAP, individual planning

applications, where a variation in height is proposed, will be dealt with on their merits, taking into account urban design considerations within the context of BMAP and other relevant policy. It should further be noted that there are two nodes along the Newtownards/Upper Newtownards Arterial Route where development up to 5 storeys and a gateway site where development up to 6 storeys would be permitted under the proposed guidance.

In conclusion, while the Planning and Design Guide may be a consideration in the planning process, the weight that can be attached to it will not be as great as if it had not gone through the normal statutory process.

I trust that this is of assistance.

Landfill Sites

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) how many landfill sites his Department monitors and inspects; (ii) how many complaints his Department has received in relation to all landfill sites in the last 2 years; and (iii) what action his Department has taken in relation to these complaints. (AQW 7987/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is responsible for monitoring and inspecting 76 landfills (including closed landfills). NIEA have received 633 complaints in relation to landfill over the last two years. In response, NIEA has devoted considerable time and resources in liaising with both complainant and site operator, conducting inspection visits and arranging testing of the site and its environs for noise, smell or vermin pollution. Where clear licence/permit breaches have been demonstrated to result in nuisance and/or pollution of some kind, NIEA officials have taken appropriate regulatory action, such as issuing the operator with an Enforcement Notice (with directions, in order to resolve the issue) or a Suspension Notice.

Protected Trees

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment to provide an update on the enforcement action being pursued in respect of the alleged breach of tree preservation orders at 135 Shandon Park, Belfast. (AQW 8088/09)

Minister of the Environment: Planning Service had a health and condition survey undertaken of the trees on the site in March 2008. No third party photographic evidence or video footage was requested from the residents by the Department as it has its own information in relation to the removal of the trees.

The enforcement case is still under investigation and the Department is considering its options in relation to prosecution. A replanting scheme has been put in place already.

Tree Preservation Orders

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the alleged breach of the Tree Preservation Orders at 135 Shandon Park, Belfast, to advise what legal or other advice has been sought by his Department on granting permission to Planning Application Reference Z/2008/0489/F; and what assessment he has made of the impact for any enforcement action or court proceedings in granting planning permission for this application. (AQW 8089/09)

Minister of the Environment: Planning application Z/2008/0489/F has not been granted planning permission. Planning Service is still processing the application and no decision has as yet been taken. Planning Service did not seek legal or other advice on the planning application and saw no reason to do so. Planning Service's view is that any decision to grant permission to the proposed housing development will have no bearing on any enforcement action envisaged in relation to the removal of the TPO trees.

Protected Trees

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment what survey work had been undertaken in respect of the protected trees at 135 Shandon Park, Belfast prior to their removal. (AQW 8090/09)

Minister of the Environment: Planning Service had a health and condition survey undertaken of the trees on the site in March 2008. No third party photographic evidence or video footage was requested from the residents by the Department as it has its own information in relation to the removal of the trees.

The enforcement case is still under investigation and the Department is considering its options in relation to prosecution. A replanting scheme has been put in place already.

Protected Trees

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department has sought to obtain the photographs and video footage taken by residents as trees were being removed at 135 Shandon Park, Belfast in pursuance of any enforcement case or legal action in respect of the alleged breach of tree preservation orders at the site. (AQW 8091/09)

Minister of the Environment: Planning Service had a health and condition survey undertaken of the trees on the site in March 2008. No third party photographic evidence or video footage was requested from the residents by the Department as it has its own information in relation to the removal of the trees.

The enforcement case is still under investigation and the Department is considering its options in relation to prosecution. A replanting scheme has been put in place already.

Tree Preservation Orders

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the action being taken by his Department to enforce the Tree Preservation Order at Myrtle Lodge, Bryansford. (AQW 8109/09)

Minister of the Environment: The matter still remains under consideration and the Department expects to finalise its decision within the next 4-6 weeks.

Illegal Dumping

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the investigation into illegal dumping at Ballyhornan Road, Downpatrick. (AQW 8110/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency is carrying out an investigation into alleged illegal dumping at a site on Ballyhornan Road, Downpatrick. The Agency is unable to provide further information at the present time, as to do so could compromise the integrity of the investigation or the rights of those under investigation.

Bonuses Paid to Permanent Secretary

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment how much was paid in bonuses to his Department's Permanent Secretary in each of the last five financial years. (AQW 8138/09)

Minister of the Environment: Combined salary and bonus information for the Permanent Secretary of Department of Environment is currently provided through Resource Accounts in £5k bands, available from the DOE website (www.doeni.gov.uk) the specific link is:

<http://applications.doeni.gov.uk/publications/document.asp?docid=15112>

(See Page 39, which details the Permanent Secretary's salary at £110-115,000).

It is our policy not to disclose the remuneration details of individual civil servants, other than in such broad terms.

Sewage Disposal

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the environmental considerations taken into account on the impact of proposed changes to the sewage collection, treatment and disposal proposals of NI Water; and can he confirm that his Department and the Environmental Protection Agency are being fully informed of the proposals and any subsequent changes to them as they would affect the areas of Islandmagee, Ballycarry and Whitehead. (AQW 8145/09)

Minister of the Environment: Under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, discharges to coastal waters serving a population equivalent (p.e.) of greater than 10,000 require secondary treatment while those less than 10,000 require appropriate treatment.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is currently in discussions with Northern Ireland Water regarding the proposal to pump wastewater from Whitehead, Ballystrudder and Ballycarry for disposal at Cloughfin Bay.

The total p.e. for the proposed new discharge is less than 10,000 and therefore would require appropriate treatment.

Under this proposal, the continuous discharges from Ballycarry and Ballystrudder would be removed from Larne Lough and pumped to the new site at Cloughfin Bay for disposal. This will contribute to the protection of the designated Shellfish Water in Larne Lough.

Derry City Council Equality Consultation

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of the Environment if his Department has been contacted by Derry City Council in pursuance of an equality consultation exercise in relation to the name of the City of Londonderry and, if so, how he intends to respond to the request. (AQW 8156/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department was advised in December 2007 of the Council's intention to apply to the Privy Council to have the name of the city changed. I have not received any further correspondence since this date.

Land Zoned for Industrial Use in Downpatrick

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the land zoned for industry available in the Downpatrick area to meet the foreseeable future needs of the area. (AQW 8170/09)

Minister of the Environment: The recently adopted Ards and Down Plan 2015 zones 19.7 hectares of land within Downpatrick. Nearly 8 hectares of land is zoned at Killough Road, and 11.8 hectares is zoned at Cloonagh Road and Brannish Road.

The Plan also proposes to safeguard designated lands in existing industrial use in Downpatrick. These areas of industrial land are located at Flying Horse Road, Brannish Road, Cloonagh Road, Killough Road and Ballydugan Road. These lands are safeguarded by Policy IND 1, in the Volume 1, Part 2 – Policy Framework of the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015.

Downpatrick also has a large, 34 hectare, serviced industrial estate on the Belfast Road with nearly 20 hectares of remaining developable land.

The previous Down Area Plan zoned 17 hectares of land for industry in Downpatrick, and 3.5 hectares are remaining.

There is therefore approximately 44 hectares of existing industrial land within or close to Downpatrick, that remains undeveloped, the majority of which is located on the Belfast to Downpatrick Link Corridor as identified within the Regional Development Strategy.

Land Zoned for Industrial Use in Downpatrick

Mr J Wells asked the Minister of the Environment for her assessment of the adequacy of the land zoned for industrial use in Downpatrick. (AQW 8171/09)

Minister of the Environment: The recently adopted Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 aims to facilitate economic development and the creation of employment in the Plan Area. The policies and proposals in the Plan are in accordance with the guidelines in the Regional Development Strategy, with the onus on providing a generous and continuous supply of land for employment purposes.

As part of the preparatory work undertaken during the plan process, in accordance with regional planning policy statement PPS4 – Industrial Development, an assessment was carried out of previous industrial land take up patterns and economically active and employment trends.

The Ards and Down Area Plan has zoned just under 20 hectares of land for industry in Downpatrick, and also recognises the importance of safeguarding existing industrial land in settlements from competing uses.

In addition, Downpatrick also has a large, 34 hectare, serviced industrial estate on the Belfast Road with nearly 20 hectares of remaining developable land.

I therefore consider that my Department has zoned adequate land for new industry in the Downpatrick area to meet the needs of industry and business enterprise during the Plan period.

Restriction of Lead Shot Over Wetlands

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the outcome of representations made to his Department by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation and the Countryside Alliance of Ireland on the restriction of lead shot in wetland areas. (AQW 8177/09)

Minister of the Environment: My Department has worked closely and successfully with both organisations throughout the development and introduction of new statutory restrictions which come into force on 1 September. Associated guidance for the shooting community on the restriction of lead shot over wetlands has been prepared and published jointly by my Department and the two organisations.

Banbridge/Newry Area Plan

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the current position on the launch of the Banbridge/Newry Area Plan. (AQW 8191/09)

Minister of the Environment: On 27 November 2008, the Department formally requested the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) to undertake an Independent Examination of objections to the Draft Banbridge / Newry & Mourne Area Plan 2015.

The PAC has now commenced the examination process with the first pre-examination meeting having been held on 11 March 2009. Stage 1 (Strategic topics) of the examination hearing is due to commence on 18 August and continue as necessary thereafter. It is anticipated that a date for the commencement of the Stage 2 (Site Specific topics) hearing will be announced at the second pre examination meeting which is due to be held on 17 June.

After the PAC has conducted the Examination it will report its findings to the Department. After considering the PAC report, the Department may then adopt the Plan in whole or in part, with or without amendment.

The timing of the Examination and the publication of the Commissions Report are matters for the Commission to determine. It is unlikely however that the PAC report will be forwarded to the Department before 2011.

Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Environment Act

Mrs N Long asked the Minister of the Environment if he plans to extend the Cleaner Neighbourhoods & Environment Act to Northern Ireland or to introduce similar legislation. (AQW 8225/09)

Minister of the Environment: In view of resource constraints and competing priorities facing my Department and the impact on Councils of the Review of Public Administration, further consideration of the Northern Ireland Clean Neighbourhoods agenda and associated new primary legislation corresponding to the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act has been deferred until 2011. This will allow my officials to concentrate on higher priority environmental issues over the coming years.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Civil Servants

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to provide an update on the equal pay claim for Civil Servants. (AQW 7863/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr N Dodds): I understand that NIPSA has lodged in excess of 4,500 equal pay claims with the Industrial Tribunals on behalf of female members, which are now the subject of legal processes. Departments have not yet been served with these claims but will have to respond to them in due course.

I met with representatives of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance NIPSA on 7 May to discuss the equal pay claims in respect of female members of the NICS. The meeting provided me with the opportunity to hear at first hand the issues of concern to NIPSA and to assure them of my commitment to resolving the Civil Service equal pay issue, if possible, through a negotiated settlement and without the need for litigation. Discussions between officials in the Department of Finance and Personnel and NIPSA are ongoing in an effort to establish as clearly as possible the parameters within which a negotiated settlement might be reached so that I, in conjunction with my Ministerial colleagues in the Executive, can consider how the matter should be taken forward.

A review of Technical Grades across NI Departments is a necessary part of that process. Arrangements are well underway to conduct the review of TG staff with the aim of completing the work by the end of the summer, with the cooperation of the Trade Union and staff. A sample of between 100 and 150 of posts in the relevant grades will be examined as part of the review.

The issues relating to equal pay in the NICS are both significant and complex and, therefore, it is important that they are properly addressed. It is likely that it may yet take some time before they will be finally resolved. However, if there are unlawful inequalities in pay in the NICS, I am determined that any unlawful inequalities in pay in the NICS should be put right.

Government Vehicles

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if he is taking steps to ensure that all Departments set an emissions limit when purchasing new vehicles. (AQW 7916/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Vehicles purchased by my Department within the last number of years have had to meet a set CO2 emission limit. It is envisaged that a CO2 emissions limit will continue to be a criterion in future procurement processes.

It is not the responsibility of DFP to set emissions limits for vehicles purchased by other Departments.

Departmental Consultations

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much his Department spent on (i) Public Notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers; and (ii) other forms of media for consultations, in each of the past three years. (AQW 7941/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The total expenditure for Department of Finance and Personnel over the last three years on consultation is set out in the table below.

Description	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Local or Regional Newspapers	£5,596	£12,506	£2,655
Other Forms of Media for Consultations	£147,921	£114,320	£49,327
Total	£153,517	£126,826	£51,982

Civil Service

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the reasons for the delay in settling the civil service equal pay claim, and when he expects to finalise this matter. (AQW 7942/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The issues relating to equal pay in the NICS are both significant and complex and, therefore, it is important that they are properly addressed.

Discussions between officials in the Department of Finance and Personnel and NIPSA are ongoing in an effort to establish as clearly as possible the parameters within which a negotiated settlement might be reached so that I, in conjunction with my Ministerial colleagues in the Executive, can consider how the matter should be taken forward.

Cleaning Products

Mr G McHugh asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what plans his Department has to purchase cleaning, household or toiletry products which, including their contents, have not been tested on animals. (AQW 7945/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Department of Finance and Personnel only uses cleaning products supplied through the cleaning contract set up by Central Procurement Directorate (CPD).

The Department has no plans to purchase any cleaning materials outside of the current cleaning contract.

Government Vehicles

Mr D McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the financial and environmental benefits in purchasing and using hybrid vehicles in the central car pool. (AQW 7955/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: My Department has two hybrid vehicles in its central car pool which were purchased in 2005. The vehicles produce lower CO2 emissions than the other vehicles in the central car pool, are quiet in operation and a substantial element of the component parts are recyclable.

The purchase price of the vehicles was higher than comparable non hybrid vehicles and the running costs are not considered to be significantly different from other cars managed and operated by the Department.

Civil Service

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many vacancies are in the Civil Service in the Derry City Council area, broken down by (i) grade; and (ii) Government Department. (AQW 7990/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The number of vacancies in permanent Northern Ireland Civil Service posts, located in the Council area, in each of the eleven Northern Ireland Departments and their Agencies, is set out in the attached table.

NICS VACANCIES IN THE COUNCIL AREA, BROKEN DOWN BY GRADE AND GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT¹
FULL TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) BASIS AT 27 MAY 2009

Dept	AA	AO	EO2	EO1	SO	DP	G7	Other		Total
								No.	Grade	
DARD	1	2.5	2							5.5
DEL	1	3								4
DFP	2				1	1				4
DOE	1			1				1	SPTO ¹	5
								2	PTO ²	
DRD								1	Road Worker	1

Dept	AA	AO	EO2	EO1	SO	DP	G7	Other		Total
								No.	Grade	
DSD	15.4	3.4	6.2	1.2	0.2		2	2	SGB2 ³	30.4
Totals	20.4	8.9	8.2	2.2	1.2	1	2	6		49.9

Note: Departments not shown in the table had no vacancies.

¹ Senior Professional and Technical Officer

² Professional and Technical Officer

³ Support Grade Band 2

Divisional Veterinary Office, Larne

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel in relation to the Divisional Veterinary/DARD Office in Larne (i) how much money was spent on upgrading the office; (ii) when the last upgrade was completed; and (iii) if the building is vacated by her Department, whether her Department will have any further financial responsibilities. (AQW 8002/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The building DARD occupies is also a Jobs & Benefit office (JBO). The amount of funding that has been spent on the building, in the last five years is as follows:-

Resource	£ 358,040
Capital	£2,035,000

The last upgrade was completed in November 2004.

In the event that any Department decides to vacate a property then the vacating Department must meet the accommodation costs of the property until it can be re-occupied or disposed of.

Domestic Rates

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many households have experienced higher domestic rates compared to last year. (AQW 8021/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: A total of 687,407 domestic properties have been assessed for rates both this year and last year. Of these 12,504 (1.8%) had a lower rating assessment this year compared with last year and 636,578 (92.6%) had a higher rating assessment. The remaining 38,325 (5.6%) had the same assessment in both years.

Domestic Rates

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many households have experienced lower domestic rates compared to last year. (AQW 8022/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: A total of 687,407 domestic properties have been assessed for rates both this year and last year. Of these 12,504 (1.8%) had a lower rating assessment this year compared with last year and 636,578 (92.6%) had a higher rating assessment. The remaining 38,325 (5.6%) had the same assessment in both years.

Civil Service

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in relation to the Civil Service Equal Pay claim, (i) to clarify the total number of meetings he has held on this issue; (ii) to detail which groups and individuals attended these meetings; (iii) on what date they were held; and (iv) where they were held. (AQW 8029/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: I have held one meeting with representatives of NIPSA, which took place in Parliament Buildings on 7th May 2009 at 10.00am; senior officials of the Department of Finance and Personnel and my Special Advisor were also present at this meeting.

In addition, the matter has been, and continues to be, discussed with senior DFP officials at my weekly issues meetings.

Civil Service

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total number of correspondence he has received from members of the public regarding Civil Service back pay. (AQW 8031/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: I have received a number of letters and emails from members of the public in relation to the equal pay issue.

Equal Pay Claim

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if the £100 million pounds received from Treasury to facilitate a settlement in the Civil Service Equal Pay claim is still available and able to be drawn upon by his Department. (AQW 8032/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The £100m facility I secured as a result of negotiations with the Prime Minister in November 2008 is to be used to address cost pressures facing the Executive, one of which may be the equal pay issue. This facility has not yet been used.

Bonuses Paid to Permanent Secretary

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much was paid in bonuses to his Department's Permanent Secretary in each of the last five years. (AQW 8123/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Combined salary and bonus information for the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Finance and Personnel is currently provided through Resource Accounts in £5k bands, available from www.dfpni.gov.uk It is our policy not to disclose the remuneration details of individual civil servants, other than in broad terms.

Civil Registration Bill

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to answer AQW 7340/09, to detail the timeframe for this proposed legislation to become law. (AQW 8155/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Civil Registration Bill is expected to complete its passage through the Assembly legislative process later this year. Subsequent Regulations will be required to enable the unmarried father's details to be added to the birth record without the mother being present and it is anticipated that these powers will be introduced in late 2010.

Chancellor's Budget

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline any further details on the impact on Northern Ireland of the Chancellor's recent budget. (AQW 8179/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered the 2009 Budget statement to Parliament on 22 April 2009.

The main implications for Northern Ireland (NI) are in relation to the NI Executive Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) with a net reduction of £6.4 million over the period 2009-11. This is a result of the additional Barnett consequentials over this period being offset by the NI Executive's share of the increased efficiency savings expected of UK Departments in 2010-11.

The Budget 2009 document also sets out the latest HM Treasury projections as regards growth in UK public expenditure over the medium term. These imply that there will need to be increased emphasis by the NI Executive in achieving Value for Money over the period 2011-12 to 2013-14 in light of the more constrained public expenditure environment.

In addition, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a number of UK wide measures which will impact on NI citizens and businesses, including:

- One year increase in first-year capital allowances to 40%;
- Increase in Winter Fuel Allowance for 2009-10 of £100 for over 80's and £50 for over 60's, although the level of payment is the same as in 2008-09;
- Vehicle Scrappage scheme, co-funded with the industry, that will enable consumers to scrap vehicles older than ten years with new vehicles at a discount of £2,000
- Strategic Investment Fund to support advanced industrial projects of strategic importance with a third of the £750 million funding earmarked for low carbon projects; and
- Increase in the income tax rate to 50% for those earning £150,000 and more from 2010-11.

Senior Civil Servant Bonuses

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much was paid in bonuses to senior Civil Servants in his Department in the year 2008/09. (AQW 8198/09)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Information on the total amount paid in non-consolidated bonus payments to Senior Civil Servants in the Department of Finance and Personnel in respect of performance year 2008/2009 is not yet available. It is anticipated that this information will be available in the Autumn.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Health Service Contracts

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to Health Service contracts issued to the voluntary sector, (i) what the average length of contract is; and (ii) how many contracts were issued in the last three months of the financial year. (AQW 6921/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): The average length of contract awarded to the voluntary sector, and the number of contracts awarded to the sector during the period January to March 2009 is indicated in the table below.

	Ave Length of Contract	No of contracts Jan-Mar 09
EHSSB	2 years	13
WHSSB	290 days	14
NHSSB	1 year	0
SHSSB	2.5 years	0
NJHSCT	2 years	19
SEHSCT	1 year	29
BHSCT	1 year	86
SHSCT	1 year	4
WHSCT	11 months	45
NIAS	1 year*	0

* NIAS only have one contract with the voluntary sector

External Service Providers

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Health Service patients have been assessed by external service providers such as 'Medinet,' over the past two years.

(AQW 7027/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A total of 20,725 Health Service patients received a first outpatient assessment by an external service provider in 2007/08. Information on the number assessed in 2008/09 is not currently available.

Supplementing health care capacity through the use of the independent sector is intended only as a short-term measure and, along with other measures, has delivered significant improvements in waiting times. It will continue to be necessary to use the independent sector while waiting lists times are further reduced and backlogs exist, and while shortfalls in capacity are identified and addressed.

Children in Care

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what supervised contact between parents and children in care entails; (ii) the criteria for supervised contact; and (iii) what training is required for supervisors.

(AQW 7078/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety:

- (i) Supervised contact between parents and children in care is where contact takes place in a safe, controlled situation, overseen by appropriate staff employed by a HSC Trust, another relevant organisation or adult.
- (ii) Subject to any court order, it is for a HSC Trust to decide on the nature of any contact arrangements between a looked after child and his parent/s. In determining whether contact should be supervised, HSC Trusts consider a range of circumstances, including the child's needs, wishes and feelings, potential risks to the child, any pending court proceedings following physical, emotional or sexual abuse, the stability of the child's placement, the quality of relationship and the benefit of contact for the child. HSC Trusts are also required to take account of the proportional human rights of each of the parties. The child's welfare is the paramount consideration in any decision regarding contact.

The training and experience requirements of the individual/s supervising contact will depend on the nature of the situation and the assessed risks. Where there are serious concerns for the child's well being, for example, contact will be supervised by a qualified Social Worker. In other situations, a suitable adult can be nominated and agreed by the parties involved and endorsed by the Trust. This often involves a relative or friend known to the child and parent or a nominated member of staff within the Trust who receives on the job training.

Clostridium Difficile Outbreak

Mr A Maskey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he would consider extending the inquiry into the Clostridium difficile outbreak taking place in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area to include the Belfast City and Musgrave Park Hospitals.

(AQW 7091/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I have considered requests to extend this public inquiry to other HSC Trusts, and decided not to do so.

The outbreak of C. difficile in Northern Trust hospitals was unprecedented and unparalleled in Northern Ireland in a number of respects including its scale, extent and duration, and the appearance for the first time in Northern Ireland of C. difficile ribotype 027. I advised the Assembly on 14 October 2008 that the purpose of the public inquiry would be to establish how many deaths resulted from the Clostridium difficile outbreak in Northern Trust hospitals and to examine the experiences of patients and others who were affected by that outbreak. I have no plans to change the scope of this inquiry.

I fully expect that there will be lessons to be learned from this inquiry, and all Trusts will be expected to act on these.

Paediatric Occupational Therapy

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in relation to Paediatric Occupational Therapy posts, to detail for each Health and Social CareTrust area, (i) how many posts are community based, whole time equivalent; (ii) how many posts are filled; and (iii) how many posts are vacant.

(AQW 7366/09)

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

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF COMMUNITY BASED PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY (I) POSTS, (II) POSTS FILLED AND (III) POSTS VACANT BY HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST AS AT APRIL 2009.

HSC Trust	Community Based Paediatric Occupational Therapy posts		Community Based Paediatric Occupational Therapy posts filled		Community Based Paediatric Occupational Therapy posts vacant	
	Headcount	WTE ¹	Headcount	WTE ¹	Headcount	WTE ¹
Belfast	14	11.94	14	11.94	0	0.00
Northern	26	21.77	23	19.27	3	2.50
South Eastern	6	5.06	6	5.06	0	0.00
Southern	27	22.26	22	17.76	5	4.50
Western	14	11.67	14	11.67	0	0.00
Total	87	72.70	79	65.70	8	7.00

Source: Northern Ireland Health & Social Care Trusts

Notes:

1. WTE = Whole-Time Equivalent.
2. Numbers are provided for all staff at Band 5 or above.
3. Northern Trust advised that 1 vacant post is currently being advertised and 2 posts are already in the recruitment process and will be filled shortly.
4. Southern Trust advised that 2 (1.5 WTE) vacancies have been filled with one post holder taking up post on 5th May 2009 and the second to take up post by June 2009. 3.39 WTE Band 5 posts in the Southern Trust are currently funded from non-recurrent monies.
5. Western Trust advised that their figures include 3 (3.00 WTE) Temporary Band 5 posts which are funded through reallocation of resources.

Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in relation to Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy posts, to detail for each Health and Social CareTrust area, (i) how many posts are community based, whole time equivalent; (ii) how many posts are filled; and (iii) how many posts are vacant.

(AQW 7367/09)

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

Table 1: Number of Community Based Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy (i) Posts, (ii) Posts filled and (iii) Posts Vacant by Health and Social Care Trust as at April 2009.

HSC Trust	Community Based Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy posts		Community Based Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy posts filled		Community Based Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy posts vacant	
	Headcount	WTE ¹	Headcount	WTE ¹	Headcount	WTE ¹
Belfast	75	49.95	70	45.33	5	4.62
Northern	76	64.07	65	54.82	11	9.25
South Eastern	23	14.69	23	14.69	0	0.00
Southern	25	17.93	25	17.93	0	0.00
Western	33	21.20	32	20.40	1	0.80
Total	232	167.84	215	153.17	17	14.67

Source: Northern Ireland Health & Social Care Trusts

Notes:

6. WTE = Whole-Time Equivalent.
7. Numbers are provided for all staff at Band 5 or above.
8. Belfast Trust advised that all 5 vacancies are currently in the recruitment process and will be filled by July 2009.
9. Northern Trust advised that 6 of the vacancies will be filled shortly, 2 are being re-advertised, 2 are being re-configured in the new Trust structure and 1 vacancy is being re-configured as a lower Band post.
10. Southern Trust advised that their figures include 3.00 WTE Band 5 posts which are funded through reallocation of resources.

Paediatric Physiotherapy

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in relation to Paediatric Physiotherapy posts, to detail for each Health and Social Care Trust area, (i) how many posts are community based, whole time equivalent; (ii) how many posts are filled; and (iii) how many posts are vacant. (AQW 7368/09)

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

Table 1: Number of Community Based Paediatric Physiotherapy (i) Posts, (ii) Posts filled and (iii) Posts Vacant by Health and Social Care Trust as at April 2009.

HSC Trust	Community Based Paediatric Physiotherapy posts		Community Based Paediatric Physiotherapy posts filled		Community Based Paediatric Physiotherapy posts vacant	
	Headcount	WTE ¹	Headcount	WTE ¹	Headcount	WTE ¹
Belfast	7	3.67	7	3.67	0	0.00
Northern	21	14.28	17	11.78	4	2.50
South Eastern	14	11.06	13	10.66	1	0.40
Southern	20	14.95	14	9.44	6	5.51
Western	13	9.16	13	9.16	0	0.00
Total	75	53.12	64	44.71	11	8.41

Source: Northern Ireland Health & Social Care Trusts

Notes:

11. WTE = Whole-Time Equivalent.
12. Numbers are provided for all staff at Band 5 or above.
13. Northern Trust advised that 1 vacancy is being scrutinised for approval to proceed with recruitment, 1 vacancy is currently being re-advertised and 2 vacancies are short-term to cover maternity leave (1 of which is to be filled internally).
14. Southern Trust advised that 2 posts will be filled shortly, 2 posts are currently in the recruitment process and 2 are being scrutinised for approval to proceed with recruitment.

Departmental Consultations

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department spent on (i) Public Notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers; and (ii) other forms of media for consultations, in each of the past three years. (AQW 7972/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: (i) The amount spent by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on public notices for consultations in local and regional newspapers over the past three years is shown in the table.

2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
£34,963.53	£12,498.81	£8,882.65

The costs were higher in 2006/07 due to bi-lingual translations under Direct Rule. The costs have reduced significantly following my decision to produce Departmental public notices in English only.

(ii) The Department also publishes public consultations on the Departmental website, the costs of which are not separately identifiable.

Accident and Emergency Units

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have presented themselves at Accident and Emergency Units because of accidents in the home, in each of the last three years, and what action is the Minister taking to reduce the number of such incidents. (AQW 7976/09)

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

Approximately 7,000 patients are admitted to hospital each year in Northern Ireland as a result of accidents in the home. Efforts to reduce the number of accidents in the home are being taken forward through my Department's Home Accident Prevention Strategy published in 2004. The Strategy aims to facilitate a reduction in the number of accidental deaths and injuries in the home through partnership working with the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. Actions include the provision of training for those with a contribution to make in the promotion of safety in the home, raising public awareness of home safety issues through local education and information campaigns, home safety checks and the installation of home safety equipment.

Patient Welfare

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW/7659/09, to define the use of the term 'responsibly and reasonably' and to outline what action health and social care staff can take when they feel they have exhausted all available avenues of reporting patient welfare concerns. (AQW 8013/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Neither the Public Interest Disclosure Order (Northern Ireland) 1998 nor the Guide to the Order offer a legal definition of the words "responsibly and reasonably". However, Health and Social Care staff, are protected against victimisation under the Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 provided they have acted in good faith.

There are a number of options open to HSC staff if they find it is necessary to raise concerns about patient welfare. These include an approach to a relevant organisation prescribed under the Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. For example, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority plays a key role in the investigation of standards and quality of treatment and care.

People Diagnosed with Retinoblastoma

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have been diagnosed with Retinoblastoma, broken down by age groups (i) 0-5 years; (ii) 6-15 years; (iii) 16-21 years; (iv) 22-40 years; and (v) over 40 years of age. (AQW 8020/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of people who have been diagnosed with Retinoblastoma is not available.

Home Care Arrangements

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail, for the past three months, the number of patients from each Health and Social Care Trust area who have been unable to be discharged from hospital due to the unavailability of home care arrangements, and to indicate the waiting times involved. (AQW 8033/09)

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

Daisy Hill Hospital

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the level of funding he has committed to Daisy Hill Hospital and to outline the proposed timetable for the delivery of the committed funding. (AQW 8053/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: During the first 3 years of ISNI I have committed £5m to developments at Daisy Hill. These include additional renal dialysis services and car parking both progressing to completion. As part of the Capital Priorities Review further funding of around £50m has been identified within the ISNI to start a further phase of developments at Daisy Hill Hospital.

The Southern Trust will in due course develop proposals for the future development of Daisy Hill Hospital. Treasury Green Book guidance requires that that proposal take into account a number of factors such as location and accessibility. It is only on receipt and assessment of that proposal that I will be able to comment specifically on such aspects of the development.

No absolute guarantees can be made on funding however the estimated timeframe for construction is 2016/17 to 2017/18.

Daisy Hill Hospital

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the last two years' statistics on the cleanliness of Daisy Hill Hospital. (AQW 8055/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This information is not held centrally. However, Daisy Hill Hospital was subject to an unannounced hygiene inspection by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) earlier this year. The report and a quality improvement plan will be published later in the summer and Daisy Hill will be re-inspected at a later date to ensure that actions have been carried out.

Daisy Hill Hospital

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to replace the eight year old CT scanner at Daisy Hill Hospital. (AQW 8056/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: This is a matter for the Southern Health and Social Care Trust. The Trust has advised that procurement of a new CT scanner is one of its priorities and a business case for replacement of the scanner is being developed.

Daisy Hill Hospital

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to confirm that an Ophthalmology Speciality Unit is planned for the Southern Health and Social Care Trust and if it will be located at Daisy Hill Hospital. (AQW 8058/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Southern Health and Social Care Trust and the Health and Social Care Board are discussing the commissioning and provision of an ophthalmic service for patients in the Southern Trust area. The location of this service will be determined as part of these discussions.

Daisy Hill Hospital

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the location and accessibility of Daisy Hill Hospital and what cognisance will be given to these factors in relation to the hospital's future development. (AQW 8059/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: During the first 3 years of ISNI I have committed £5m to developments at Daisy Hill. These include additional renal dialysis services and car parking both progressing to completion. As part of the Capital Priorities Review further funding of around £50m has been identified within the ISNI to start a further phase of developments at Daisy Hill Hospital.

The Southern Trust will in due course develop proposals for the future development of Daisy Hill Hospital. Treasury Green Book guidance requires that that proposal take into account a number of factors such as location and accessibility. It is only on receipt and assessment of that proposal that I will be able to comment specifically on such aspects of the development.

No absolute guarantees can be made on funding however the estimated timeframe for construction is 2016/17 to 2017/18.

People with Long Term Conditions

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his Department's plans to support people living with long term conditions. (AQW 8092/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Over the current comprehensive spending review period, £44m has been made available to improve the range of services available for people with long term conditions. This funding is being used by the Health and Social Care Board and Trusts to develop pro-active case management arrangements and provide specialist nursing and treatment services in the community for people with long term conditions. The funding will also be used to develop patient education programmes to help more people to manage their own condition successfully.

Almost half of these resources will be used to introduce a "remote vital signs monitoring service". This service will underpin the delivery of case management and will also help patients to manage their own condition more effectively.

People with Long Term Conditions

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following the joint Long Term Conditions Alliance Northern Ireland and DHSSPS conference in October 2008, (i) to outline the progress made in self management of long term conditions; and (ii) for an update on the Connecting Health Home monitoring project. (AQW 8093/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: (i) The introduction of self management and patient education programmes is an essential element of my Department's approach to the more effective management of people with long term conditions in the community. A wide range of self management programmes is available. Some are professionally-led and others are delivered by patients or service users. It is a matter for the HSC Board and Trusts working with healthcare professionals and voluntary organisations to decide on the most appropriate programmes to be delivered to individuals or to groups of people with long term conditions.

(ii) The design and procurement of a regional remote monitoring service for patients with long term conditions like diabetes, respiratory disease and heart failure is well advanced and is expected to become operational by early 2010. In advance of this, a number of pilots have been running in each of the 5 Trusts to improve the quality of care and to develop the experience of clinicians, patients and managers in the use of technology to effectively manage chronic conditions. By March 2009 some 1300 patients had accessed this service.

People with Long Term Conditions

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the budget of each Health and Social Care Trust for self managing long term conditions. (AQW 8094/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Health and Social Care Trusts provide a wide range of services for people with long term conditions, including help for people to manage their own conditions more effectively. However, Trusts do not have a discrete budget for self managing long term conditions and the specific cost of self management cannot be disaggregated from the overall resources deployed for the care and treatment of people with long term conditions.

Eastern Health and Social Services Board

Mr R McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people appointed to senior posts in the Regional Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency were not previously employed by the Eastern Health and Social Services Board. (AQW 8095/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There have been 12 appointments to senior posts in the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency. Nine of those appointed were not from the Eastern Health and Social Services Board.

Western Health and Social Services Board

Mr R McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people appointed to senior posts in the Regional Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency were previously employed by the Western Health and Social Services Board. (AQW 8096/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There have been 12 appointments to senior posts in the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency. None of those appointed were previously employed in the former Western Health and Social Services Board.

South Tyrone Hospital

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there has been a reduction in mental health services at South Tyrone Hospital. (AQW 8098/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There has been no reduction in Mental Health Services at the South Tyrone Hospital. In fact, the Trust will be enhancing the mental health services on the South Tyrone Hospital site by the opening of a Mental Health Resource Centre offering day treatment to 16 patients per day, with additional sessions and input for patients requiring psychological therapy. The Trust expects the Centre to open over the summer of 2009.

Mental Health

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage of the Health Service budget is spent on mental health, in each Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 8099/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The table below shows the percentage of the Health Service budget spent on Mental Health by each Health and Social Care Trust in the 2007/08 year.

HSC Trust	% Spend
Belfast HSC Trust	1.6
Northern HSC Trust	1.1
South Eastern HSC Trust	0.8
Southern HSC Trust	0.8
Western HSC Trust	0.9
Northern Ireland Total	5.2

The total revenue budget for health in 2007/8 was £3,804.8m and the percentages quoted above are in relation to this.

Waterside General Hospital

Mr R McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline if he has any plans to reduce the number of beds in the Waterside General Hospital. (AQW 8112/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It is primarily for the Health and Social Care Board, as the commissioner of services, to prioritise and allocate resources to meet the needs of the population within each Trust area.

However, I can advise that the Western Trust is currently reviewing its inpatient care of the elderly as part of an ongoing reform and modernisation programme. That review includes service provision at Waterside Hospital and has resulted in the development of an intensive rehabilitation service and the roll out of an ortho-rehabilitation service at the Waterside Hospital.

The Trust has advised that no beds have been closed and it continues to work closely with commissioners regarding future service developments.

Efficiency Savings: DHSSPS

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Comprehensive Spending Review efficiency savings process for his Department. (AQO 2893/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Our organisations have delivered their challenging 2008/09 efficiency target of £118m, equal to 3% of baseline funding. They should be justly proud of such an achievement.

There has been no dispensation for health and social care and therefore a total of £700m efficiencies must be achieved across the years.

In addition to the proposals for 2009/10 and 2010/11, I have made some decisions and I am working urgently with Trusts and stakeholders to make my decisions on the remainder. Difficult decisions will have to be made, but I am clear that the delivery of the best possible care for patients is at the forefront of my mind throughout this process. There will only be change if it is change for the better.

Agenda for Change

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on Agenda for Change. (AQO 2897/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am pleased to report that with the exception of around 100 jobs all HSC staff are now in receipt of Agenda for Change rates of pay and over 98% of the current staff have been paid the arrears due to them. Payroll departments are now concentrating their efforts on paying arrears due to the remaining 1% of the current staff.

85% of staff are satisfied with their Agenda for Change grading. 15% of staff have asked to have their grading reviewed; this is a fundamental part of the implementation process. HSC employers aim to have the review requests considered by review panels by the end of June 2009.

This entire process has been carried out in partnership between Health and Social Care employers and Trade Unions.

Dental Services

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following the announcement of a contract with Oasis Dental Care, when the new dental surgeries will open. (AQO 2899/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The contract with Oasis Dental Care specifies that there will be a phased roll out of dental practices across Northern Ireland, starting with the areas of greatest need. The first new dental practices will open in Enniskillen and Londonderry and begin seeing patients before the end of this year.

Subject to any required planning permission being approved promptly, I fully expect that all of the new dentists will be in post within 12 months of the first new practice opening.

Efficiency Savings: DHSSPS

Mr J McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has held discussions with the Trade Unions about exempting his Department from the Comprehensive Spending Review efficiency savings. (AQO 2900/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The decision to impose the level of efficiencies demanded from my Department was taken by the Executive. The Trade Unions have expressed to me their belief that the Health Service should be exempt from CSR efficiency savings.

I have also indicated that I am of the belief that the service needs to reform and modernise, but not under timescales that are widely considered unreasonable given the size of the task.

Aspartame

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what investigations his Department has carried out into Aspartame, which is marketed as Nutra Sweet. (AQO 2901/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is the responsible authority for issues pertaining to food safety and use of additives. The FSA advises me that the artificial sweetener Aspartame is currently permitted to be used in food and drink in all 27 Member States of the EU.

It was first approved in the United Kingdom (UK) in 1982 by the UK's Committee on Toxicity, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT). This was later reaffirmed in 1992 by COT.

The Committee on Carcinogenicity reviewed work on Aspartame in 1996 and again in 2006 and concluded that aspartame was acceptable for use in food.

There is no current UK Government funded research into aspartame, therefore the FSA has recently asked the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to undertake further research on this additive.

Sunbeds

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if any progress has been made in highlighting the risks of sunbed usage since the Cancer Research UK SunSmart Campaign was launched. (AQO 2902/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Research has shown that sunbeds increase the risk of skin cancer and may also cause immunosuppression and eye damage. Highlighting the risks of sunbed usage by means of a public information campaign has been a priority for the Northern Ireland Melanoma Strategy Implementation Group (NIMSIG).

At a recent conference organised by NIMSIG, experts from the UK and Europe spoke about the dangers of sunbeds to raise awareness of the adverse health effects. In addition, a subgroup of NIMSIG recently submitted their findings from an extensive sunbed survey to the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment to inform its UK-wide report on the risks arising from sunbed use.

Sunbeds

Mr A Attwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he is considering regulating the sunbed industry, particular in relation to sunbed usage by persons under 18 years of age. (AQO 2903/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am considering whether the sunbed industry in Northern Ireland should be regulated.

In the next few weeks the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment, or COMARE, will publish the report of a study of sunbeds and skin cancer. This study has been commissioned jointly by my department and the other UK health departments. I will consider carefully the findings and recommendations in this report, as well as other evidence that is available.

DHSSPS Capital Budget

Mr D McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has held with the Minister of Finance and Personnel regarding re-profiling the capital budget for his Department. (AQO 2904/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Following the Review of Capital Priorities which I commissioned last year I met with the Minister for Finance and Personnel to discuss a broad range of issues relating to the funding constraints including the capital profile which has been allocated to me and the impact this will have on delivery of the capital programme within health and social care.

Following this meeting work is continuing at official level to take this important issue forward and hopefully secure a successful outcome.

Despite these constraints, I am pressing ahead to ensure that almost £700m of capital funding is being invested during the CSR to deliver first class facilities across the service.

Mental Health and Elderly Care

Ms A Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the health care provision to be made in light of the proposed cuts in mental health and elderly care in the Belfast Trust area. (AQO 2905/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: While I am still considering the Belfast efficiency proposals which affect Elderly homes, Windsor House and Victoria Day Centre, I understand that these are made in the context of above inflation service developments in a wide range of modern community based support teams, care packages and in day opportunities which will support the relevant client groups in new ways. The Trust has given an undertaking that once it identifies particular older people's statutory residential homes for closure, it will consult on the closure of specific homes.

Approval from me will only be given if the changes are in line with our strategic direction, on the basis that any transition is handled sensitively, seamlessly and in liaison with patients, their families and staff and that any new service model will meet the volume and type of demand anticipated. I am still considering the Belfast Trust proposals.

Swine Flu

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide an update on swine 'flu'. (AQO 2906/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the Member to the information that has been published on my Department's website: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk. This information is updated frequently.

Huntington's Disease

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the provision of care for people with Huntington's disease. (AQO 2908/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: People with Huntington's Disease have access to the full range of Health and Social Care services available to all people with a disability, such as Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Day Care, Respite, Direct Payments, Mental Health services, Nursing and Social Work.

While there are no specific services dedicated to people with Huntington's, each person with the condition is assessed as an individual first and foremost, and their needs are then addressed accordingly. This ensures that Health and Social Care Services are provided on the basis of this individually assessed need, and not on the basis of a particular named disability.

I am committed to improving services for people with a disability. For that reason I have secured £10m over the three-year Comprehensive Spending Review period for the Physical and Sensory Disability Programme of Care. Part of this funding will be used to provide an additional 200 packages of respite for people with a physical and/or sensory disability, including those with Huntington's, by 2011, benefitting around 800 people.

Public Health Agency

Mr F Cobain asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Public Health Agency. (AQO 2909/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Public Health Agency was established on 1 April 2009, bringing together a wide range of public health functions within one organization and providing a renewed, enhanced and energized focus on public health in Northern Ireland. The Agency's board-level appointments have now been completed and its board has met three times.

The Agency is taking forward a very challenging public health agenda in 2009/10 and beyond which include securing improvements in life expectancy, reducing health inequalities, tackling obesity and suicide, and reducing smoking prevalence and alcohol and drug misuse.

The Agency also has responsibility for health protection and has played a key role in leading the operational response to swine flu across Northern Ireland. This has included advising the public of the risk to health and the measures they need to take in preparation for a potential pandemic as well as ensuring robust surveillance and testing.

Swine Flu

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on swine 'flu'. (AQO 2910/09)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I refer the Member to the information that has been published on my Department's website: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk. This information is updated frequently.

DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Safety Barriers

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the location of all safety barriers maintained by Roads Service in the Dunmurry and Colin areas and what criteria were used in assessing these locations. (AQW 7986/09)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): Details of the location of the 37 safety fences maintained by my Department's Roads Service in the Dunmurry and Colin areas are provided in the table below.

Road	Length (metres)	Location
Dunmurry Lane	206	LHS* verge 300 metres before road bridge over M1 travelling towards Dunmurry.
Dunmurry Lane	38.4	LHS* verge at both approaches to parapets of bridge.
Upper Dunmurry Lane	116.3	At both parapets of bridge over Creighton Road
Pantridge Road	325	LHS* 150 metres east of Pembroke Loop towards Stewartstown Road junction.
Pantridge Road	325	Approximately 200 metres from the Stewartstown Road junction LHS* for 302 metres.
Pembroke Loop Road	122	At Pembroke Loop Road, LHS*, 20 metres from junction with Colinbrook towards Pantridge Road.
Bellsteel Road	261	LHS* verge 200 metres from the junction of the Stewartstown Road for 261 metres towards Pantridge Road
Bellsteel Road	94	At LHS* and RHS+ verges adjacent to two culverts and park entrance, 500 metres before Pantridge Road entrance.

Road	Length (metres)	Location
Colinwell Road / Colinglen Road	333.2	LHS* verge travelling North: 200 metres before the junction with the Colinglen Road and then Colinglen Road for a further 100 metres.
Colinglen Road / Colinwell Road	663.4	LHS* verge travelling towards Lisburn City, 50 metres before the Colinwell Road Junction and then into Colinwell Road for 600 metres.
Colinglen Road	75	LHS* approximately 100 metres beyond the entrance to Colinwell Concrete going in the direction of Lisburn.
Colinglen Road	261	LHS* approximately 1300 metres from the junction with the Colinwell Road going in the direction of Lisburn. Opposite no. 71 to opposite The Farmers Inn.
Colinglen Road	40	LHS* verge 100 metres beyond the junction with the Lagmore Road going in the direction of Lisburn.
Colinglen Road	53	LHS* going in the direction of Lisburn opposite house numbers 113 and 115.
Colinglen Road	37	LHS* verge going in the direction of Lisburn opposite the junction with the Ballycolin Road.
Mullaghglass Road	40.5	Approaching Sale's Corner opposite Castlerobin Primary School.
Barnfield Road, Derriaghy.	18.5	At parapet of bridge.
White Rise, White Glen, Lagmore	48.4	At back of footway skirting Bus Terminus.
White Rise, Lagmore	15	On footway fronting boundary fence at end of Cul-de-Sac.
Black's Road On-Slip	103	From parapet of bridge up the on-slip on the RHS+ verge to the M1.
Black's Road	40.2	LHS* of the median at the approach to the RHS+ parapet of bridge over the railway going in the direction of the junction with the Old Golf Course Road.
Black's Road	40.2	LHS* footway at the approach to bridge going in the direction of the Old Golf Course Road junction.
Black's Road	15	LHS* footway at the departure from bridge going in the direction of the Upper Lisburn Road/Kingsway junction.
Black's Road	38	At median at the approach to, and departure from bridges at junction of Old Golf Course Road and Black's Road On-slip.
Black's Road	31	In median at departure from bridge going in the direction of the Upper Lisburn Road/ Kingsway junction.
Old Golf Course Road	280	In the median of Old Golf Course Road from approx 250 metres past Creighton Road Roundabout for 280 metres going in the direction of Black's Road.
Cherry Road	369	LHS* from junction with Upper Dunmurry Lane for 369 metres.
Old Golf Course Road	112.5	At both parapets of bridge.
Summerhill Drive	40	Culvert and adjacent to entrance to Derriaghy River Walk.
Summerhill Road	395	Summerhill Road skirting the Derriaghy River walk and playing fields.
Stewartstown Road	250.8	LHS* footway going south, opposite junction with the Bellsteel Road.
Glengoland Park	68.4	Glengoland Park – LHS* going in the direction of Glengoland Avenue.
Lagmore Avenue	246.2	Lagmore Avenue - on both footways approx 100 metres from the junction with Lagmore Road.
Mounteagles Square Lagmore	27.6	At the top of an embankment at the rear of properties 32-40.
Mounteagles Crescent Lagmore	88.6	Opposite No's 1 to 11 – at top of embankment.
Mounteagles Drive Lagmore	307.2	At top of embankment opposite No's 35 to 71.
Barnfield Road, Derriaghy	22.4	LHS* verge going in the direction of Derriaghy opposite covered reservoir and adjacent to rear of the Mounteagles Estate, Lagmore

* LHS = Left hand side

+RHS – Right Hand Side

In relation to the criteria used for assessing these locations, Roads Service has advised that the provision of a safety fence is assessed against the applicable standard at that time. However, the assessment generally takes account of the volume of traffic, the severity of the hazard and the road's speed limit.

Pantridge Road in Poleglass

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development what assessment his Department has made of the provision of a footpath on the Pantridge Road in Poleglass from the Stewartstown Road roundabout, to the junction of Bell Steel and Pembroke Roads. (AQW 7988/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service recently completed a pedestrian survey on this section of the Pantridge Road and recorded low pedestrian volumes. Given the scale and cost of such a scheme, the provision of a footway at this location would not compare favourably against other potential minor works schemes.

Mount Eagles and Lagmore

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development what assessment his Department has made of the provision of an alternative road into the Mount Eagles and Lagmore areas of Dunmurry from the Barnfield and Colinglen Roads. (AQW 7989/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service is aware of an Article 40 agreement between the developer and the Department of the Environment's Planning Service to provide a link road connecting the Stewartstown Road and Lagmore Avenue.

It is considered that this link road, once constructed, will be adequate to meet the needs of road users in the area and it will not be necessary to consider the provision of an alternative road from the Barnfield and Colinglen Roads.

Knockmore and Sprucefield Link Road

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the plans for the Knockmore and Sprucefield Link Road including a possible timescale. (AQW 8010/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the Knockmore and Sprucefield link road has been identified as a developer led proposal. As a consultee to Planning Service, Roads Service has been engaging in pre-application discussions with the potential developer. However, as delivery of a link road is dependent on future development in the area, it is not possible to provide an accurate timescale at this time.

Strategic Development Plan for Lisburn

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development if the Roads Service has a strategic development plan for Lisburn, considering a potential John Lewis store and a major master plan for the regeneration of the city centre. (AQW 8011/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP), which will deliver an implementation programme of transport schemes to 2015, contains my Department's plans for an integrated and sustainable approach to transportation for the greater Belfast area, under the four headings of Walking and Cycling, Public Transport, Highways and Management.

The BMTP, which was subject to extensive consultation with key stakeholders including Lisburn City Council, takes into account areas of land for future development, such as land at Sprucefield. Included within the BMTP, which considers the needs of the Lisburn area, are a number of significant proposals for implementation before 2015.

However, I should explain that the BMTP can be revised within its lifetime, thereby providing the opportunity to revisit any areas of concern, raised by the masterplan, for the regeneration of Lisburn City Centre.

Ballycastle Waste Water Treatment Works

Mr D McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update, indicating the timescale, on the upgrade at Ballycastle Waste Water Treatment Works. (AQW 8019/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it proposes to undertake a flow survey over the summer period to assist in establishing the level and nature of the loading on Ballycastle Wastewater Treatment Works. The results of the survey will enable final options for upgrading the Works to be developed in conjunction with the NI Environment Agency and Moyle District Council. The timescale for completing the upgrade of the Works will be prepared following the development of final options.

Bangor to Belfast Train

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the punctuality record for the Bangor to Belfast train, in the last year. (AQW 8038/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink have provided the information in the table below regarding the punctuality of the Bangor rail service. The table presents punctuality for each period plus the previous half year average for all of 2008/09 and the first two periods of 2009/10.

This information is collected by Northern Ireland Rail (NIR) as part of its internal management information system.

Similar to the Passenger's Charter monitoring exercise the performance figures exclude delays caused by security alerts, crime, extreme weather conditions and any other event that NIR could not reasonably be expected to control.

For reference the punctuality target for the Bangor line in the Passenger's Charter is that 95% of trains arrive no more than five minutes late.

Period	From	To	Period Punctuality	26 week Rolling Average
1	31/03/08	27/04/08	95.87%	93.16%
2	28/04/08	25/05/08	95.37%	94.46%
3	26/05/08	29/06/08	95.64%	95.13%
4	30/06/08	27/07/08	98.54%	95.88%
5	28/07/08	24/08/08	94.49%	95.91%
6	25/08/08	28/09/08	97.56%	96.26%
7	29/09/08	26/10/08	89.50%	95.30%
8	27/10/08	23/11/08	88.64%	94.34%
9	24/11/08	28/12/08	92.74%	93.79%
10	29/12/08	25/01/09	97.02%	93.54%
11	26/01/09	22/02/09	97.42%	94.02%
12	23/02/09	29/03/09	98.02%	95.66%

Vehicles Damaged by Potholes

Mr R Newton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the number of compensation claims which have been received by his Department from owners of vehicles damaged by potholes in the East Belfast constituency; and (ii) the amount of money that has been paid out, in each of the last five years. (AQW 8039/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Unfortunately, my Department's Central Claims Unit (CCU) does not hold the information in the format requested. However, CCU does maintain a record of compensation claims details for each Roads Service Section Office. The area of the Belfast East constituency covers the Belfast South and Castlereagh Section Offices. The operational area of Belfast South Section Office extends into the three

constituencies of Belfast East, Belfast South and Belfast West. The operational area of Castlereagh Section Office extends into the two constituencies of Belfast East and Strangford. Claims identified solely within the Belfast East constituency boundaries could only be extracted at a disproportionate cost. The following figures show the number of compensation claims received by the owners of vehicles damaged by potholes and the amount of compensation paid out in each of the last five years for the whole of the two Section Office operational areas. This information covers the Belfast East constituency and those parts of the other constituencies which fall within the operational areas of the two Section Offices.

	No. of Claims Received	Compensation Paid
2008/2009		
Belfast South Section Office	48	£1,725.35
Castlereagh Section Office	14	£83.14
Total	62	£1,808.49
2007/2008		
Belfast South Section Office	18	£673.60
Castlereagh Section Office	10	£894.18
Total	28	£1,567.78
2006/2007		
Belfast South Section Office	36	£437.76
Castlereagh Section Office	13	£479.99
Total	49	£917.75
2005/2006		
Belfast South Section Office	11	£189.41
Castlereagh Section Office	7	£749.61
Total	18	£939.02
2004/2005		
Belfast South Section Office	19	£2,641.13
Castlereagh Section Office	14	£3,513.62
Total	33	£6,154.75

Road Closure at Joymount, Carrickfergus

Mr D Hilditch asked the Minister for Regional Development what assistance and compensation is available for those businesses affected by the current road closure at Joymount, Carrickfergus. (AQW 8046/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it is a general principle that there is no entitlement to compensation for disruption or loss of business as a result of a road closure.

The work at Joymount, Carrickfergus is part of a £2.5 million combined contract between NIW and Rivers Agency which aims to minimise the risk of surface flooding in the area and to reduce discharges to the sea. NIW is aware of the effect of the works on local businesses but regrettably some disruption and inconvenience is unavoidable with large scale schemes of this nature. NIW will continue to consult with the local community about progress of the works and its contractors will be taking all practicable steps to reopen the road as quickly as possible.

Pedestrian Crossing Facility in Main Street, Glenavy

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress his Department has made to provide a pedestrian crossing facility in Main Street, Glenavy. (AQW 8080/09)

Minister for Regional Development: As outlined in my response to the Member's question on this issue in February 2008 (AQW 4078/08), the results of a previous survey fell well below that required for the provision of a pelican crossing at Main Street, Glenavy, and there were, therefore, no plans to provide such a crossing.

However, given the time that has elapsed since the last survey was carried out, I have asked my Department's Roads Service to re-survey the location. As traffic and pedestrian flows are generally lighter over the summer months, this survey will be scheduled for September 2009, and Mr Tom McCourt, Divisional Roads Manager for Eastern Division, will write to you when the results have been analysed.

Fly-Posting

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the number of prosecutions for fly-posting; (ii) if the prosecutions related to (a) voluntary; or (b) commercial organisations, broken down by council areas, in each of the last three years. (AQW 8108/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has not carried out any prosecutions relating to flyposting within the last three years.

I can advise the Member that, although District Councils have the power to remove flyposting, the ultimate responsibility for the regulation and enforcement of flyposting rests with the Department of the Environment's Planning Service.

Resurfacing of Springfield Road Portavogie

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) if he is aware that the Springfield Road, through Portavogie, is in need of repair; (ii) can he confirm that his Department is aware of the problem; and (iii) will he ensure that repairs take place urgently. (AQW 8132/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I can confirm that I was not aware of the current condition of Springfield Road, Portavogie, however, my Department's Roads Service has advised that this road would benefit from resurfacing.

Northern Ireland Water has given notice of impending future works on this road and you will appreciate that Roads Service wishes to avoid a situation where a newly surfaced road is subject to excavation and reinstatement within a relatively short time. Consequently, there are no plans for major resurfacing in the immediate future.

The road will, however, continue to be inspected under Roads Service's cyclic regime and any actionable defects noted for repair in line with maintenance guidelines. If there are any more significant areas of deterioration, they will be addressed by way of more extensive interim repairs as appropriate.

Sewage Disposal

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to outline the proposals for sewage disposal for Ballystrudder, Whitehead and Ballycarry; (ii) if the level of treatment proposed reflects the required European Union standards; (iii) has he taken into account the extra loading that tourism development plans for the Gobbins area of Islandmagee will generate; and (iv) will the level of treatment be adequate given the increase in house building in this part of East Antrim. (AQW 8146/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it proposes to combine wastewater flows from Ballystrudder, Whitehead and Ballycarry and screen the flow before pumping to a marine outfall at Cloughfin Bay. This proposal will improve water quality in Larne and Belfast Loughs and the Irish Sea by removing the Ballystrudder and Ballycarry wastewater discharges from Larne Lough and Whitehead's unscreened discharge from the mouth of Belfast Lough. The level of treatment proposed is in line with European Union standards.

In developing its plans, NIW has taken into account any additional loading that may be generated by the proposed tourist development plans for the Gobbins area and projected population growth in the East Antrim area to 2030.

Accessible Transport Strategy

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development when funding will be available for the pilot audio visual information on buses, in line with the Accessible Transport Strategy. (AQW 8159/09)

Minister for Regional Development: As I said in my answer to AQW 7881/09, my Department has now received proposals for an audio-visual pilot on buses which are being considered. The funding of any pilot will be dependent on the outcome of those considerations and availability of resources, including in light of other priorities, at that time. The Accessible Transport Strategy does not contain a commitment to run a pilot.

Audio-Visual System on Buses

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department found the mislaid funding application for the Audio-Visual System on buses. (AQW 8163/09)

Minister for Regional Development: As I said in my answer to AQW 7881/09, no application to fund an audio-visual pilot on buses has been mislaid.

Bonuses Paid to Permanent Secretary

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development how much was paid in bonuses to the Department's Permanent Secretary, in each of the last five years. (AQW 8183/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Combined salary and bonus information for DRD's Permanent Secretary, shown in bandings of £5,000, is currently provided through the Department's published Resource Accounts, available on the DRD internet site www.drni.gov.uk. In line with its responsibilities under the Data Protection Act, it is the Department's policy not to disclose, other than in broad terms, the remuneration details of individual civil servants.

Bonuses Paid to Senior Civil Servants

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development how much was paid in bonuses to senior Civil Servants in his Department in the year 2008/09. (AQW 8185/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Information on the total amount paid in non-consolidated bonus payments to senior Civil Servants in DRD in respect of the performance year 2008/09 is not yet available. It is anticipated that this information will be available in the autumn.

Water Charges

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister for Regional Development what assessment he has made of the cost of deferring domestic water charging after 2010. (AQO 2912/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I answered a similar question from the Member's party colleague Tom Elliott at oral questions in April this year.

While I have made my views on the subject of deferral known, the Executive has not yet made a decision about funding of water and sewerage services in 2010/11 and beyond.

Based on current estimates a decision to defer additional household payments could cost NI DEL in the region of £1 billion over the period 2010 – 2013.

Queen's University Belfast: Parking

Ms A Lo asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of parking provision for the proposed Queen's University Belfast, Elms development. (AQO 2914/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, as a consultee of the Planning Service, it has been assessing a planning application for the proposed Queen's University Belfast Elms development.

Roads Service responded to Planning Service on 9 March 2009, identifying some concerns about the proposed car parking provision for this development. Roads Service asked that the applicant should submit further information, to demonstrate how parking for the development would be accommodated.

When the requested information becomes available, Roads Service will be in a position to advise Planning Service of any potential impact the proposed parking arrangements may have on road safety and traffic progression in the vicinity of the proposed development.

Planning Service will then need to consider the potential impact, that any parking shortfall may have, on the amenity enjoyed by existing residents in nearby streets.

Water Charges

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the operational structures put in place for domestic water charging following the decision to defer charges. (AQO 2919/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Following the Executive's unanimous decision, last November, to defer household water and sewerage payments for 2009/10, NIW has continued to maintain the capacity to implement domestic billing in accordance with existing arrangements.

My Department has also been working with the company and DFP to investigate the combined billing proposal recommended by the Independent Water Review Panel.

The Executive has not taken decisions beyond 2009/10. Should it decide on further deferral, we will have to consider the implications.

Northern Ireland Water: Chief Executive

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress has been made in appointing a new Chief Executive to Northern Ireland Water, and when he expects the person to be in post. (AQO 2920/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that on 12 March this year it announced that Laurence MacKenzie, who is currently an executive director of the Viridian Group, has been appointed Chief Executive of Northern Ireland Water with effect from 27 July 2009.

Rural Roads

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the shortfall in funding for the maintenance of rural roads, and his Department's plans to secure the necessary funding from the Executive to improve the condition of rural roads. (AQO 2924/09)

Minister for Regional Development: Firstly, I should explain that the rural road network accounts for around 80% of the overall network length.

My Department's Roads Service has advised that some £108 million per annum, based on 2009 prices, is needed to maintain the structural integrity of the entire road network at good practice resurfacing frequencies. The structural maintenance budget for financial year 2009/10 is currently estimated at £72 million, leaving a shortfall of £36 million.

In relation to the second part of your question, I can assure you that my Department will continue to make strong bids for additional structural maintenance funds. In the meantime, the Department's Roads Service will continue to make the best use of resources available to it, to develop and maintain the road network.

McKinstry Road/Lisburn North Feeder Road Junction

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development how much the new traffic light junction at McKinstry Road and Lisburn North Feeder Road is costing, and how much private investment is included in this project. (AQO 2925/09)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the current work at the junction of Wilmar Road and McKinstry Road is expected to cost around £620,000. This cost will include land acquisition, alterations to utility company services and construction work.

While the current work is being funded entirely by Roads Service, it fulfils a commitment, given by Roads Service in June 2004, to provide these improvements, in response to an £8 million investment by the private sector to construct the North Lisburn Feeder Road.

Narrow Water Bridge

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister for Regional Development what discussions he has had with Louth County Council on the proposed bridge at Narrow Water. (AQO 2926/09)

Minister for Regional Development: As the member will be aware, Louth County Council, funded by the Irish Government, is responsible for assessing, designing and taking forward the Narrow Water Bridge project. I understand that they have appointed consultants to carry out a study into this project and this work is ongoing. Some public presentations have been made, in relation to this study, with further work currently underway.

I am fully supportive of the Narrow Water Bridge project, and can advise that when my Department's Roads Service has been asked for information or assistance, with regard to this scheme, it has also been provided and will continue to be the case.

Roads Service and Louth County Council have agreed that they will share information from the technical studies, on the Narrow Water Bridge project and the Newry Southern Relief Road scheme, when they have been completed.

Road Maintenance

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Regional Development how much money he plans to spend on road maintenance in the next financial year. (AQO 2927/09)

Minister for Regional Development: The outcome of the Budget 2008-11 means that funding for my Department's Roads Service's structural maintenance will be £71.8 million in 2009/10, and £70.4 million in 2010/11. In the three years to end of March 2011, over £200 million will have been invested in structural maintenance.

Regional Development Strategy

Mr F Molloy asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the review of the Regional Development Strategy. (AQO 2928/09)

Minister for Regional Development: I met with Ministerial colleagues in an Executive Sub Group on 26 March. I also attended a meeting of External Stakeholders at the end of April and in May officials met with the Regional Development Committee. In addition an Inter-Departmental meeting of senior civil servants met on 14 May to provide input and advice. My officials are working on a revised document taking account of comments and discussions.

My intention is to seek Executive clearance on a revised RDS document to issue for public consultation.

NSL Ltd

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the background and circumstances surrounding the industrial relations dispute involving NSL Ltd and traffic attendants contracted by his Department. (AQO 2929/09)

Minister for Regional Development: NSL Services Group (NSL) is a private company, contracted to my Department to provide parking enforcement and car park management services. As with all private companies, contracted to a government Department, industrial relations are an internal matter for the company itself.

However, I understand that a number of traffic attendants, employed by NSL, took unofficial strike action on 3 April 2009. As a result of this action, NSL management took the decision to dismiss 25 employees on the 18 April 2009.

My Department's Roads Service has advised that NSL is in the process of recruiting new attendants to fill the vacant posts.

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Departmental Consultations

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Social Development how much her Department spent on (i) Public Notices for consultations in local or regional newspapers; and (ii) other forms of media for consultations, in each of the past three years. (AQW 7973/09)

Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): The following amounts were spent on consultations in the last three years:

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
(i) Public Notices	£8747.05	NIL	£9,349.20
(ii) Printing	£23,098.08	NIL	£2,604.91

Regeneration in Larne

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Social Development to outline how plans for regeneration in Larne will be affected by her proposals to relocate public sector posts away from Larne, which has among the lowest number of public sector posts per constituency. (AQW 8000/09)

Minister for Social Development: Any regeneration plans supported by the Larne Masterplan are not affected by my proposals to modernise and safeguard services for customers across the local office network of the Social Security Agency.

The proposals set out in the Strategic Business Review EQIA document are currently subject to an ongoing public consultation process which runs until 17 June 2009. I have made it clear previously that I will not make any final decisions until all the consultation responses have been considered.

I have also made it clear that the recommendations from the Bain Review on the Location of Public Sector Jobs, the Review of Public Administration plans and the Regional Development and Rural Development Strategies will also be used to inform final decisions on the proposals.

There will be a public consultation on the regeneration proposals for Larne contained in the masterplan currently being prepared by the Department. That consultation will take place in the early autumn.

Social Housing

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister for Social Development what progress is being made on two schemes that would enable social housing to be built in Monkstown. (AQW 8001/09)

Minister for Social Development: Two sites within the Monkstown Estate have been identified for inclusion on the Social Housing Development Programme. Potentially, these could deliver a total of 40 units in an area where housing need has increased dramatically. Detailed proposals have been agreed by local representatives and form the basis of a planning application currently being considered by Planning Service.

Social Housing

Mr M Brady asked the Minister for Social Development in respect of the Dungannon South Tyrone Borough Council area (i) the number of homeless people; (ii) the number of people on Housing Executive waiting lists; and (iii) how many social housing applicants are in housing stress, in the Dungannon South Tyrone Borough Council area. (AQW 8028/09)

Minister for Social Development: During 2008/09, 224 homeless applicants were awarded Full Duty Applicant status in the Dungannon South Tyrone Borough Council area. As at March 2009, there were 915 applicants on the waiting list for the Borough, 594 of these were in the housing stress category.

Social Housing

Mr M Brady asked the Minister for Social Development whether and how the need for social housing is being met in the Dungannon South Tyrone Borough Council area. (AQW 8030/09)

Minister for Social Development: During 2008/09, 72 new social homes were completed for social housing in the Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council area.

Details regarding the programme of activities, including the need for new social housing for 2009/10 will be addressed in the District Housing plan due to be presented to the Council on 29 June 2009.

Financial Position of Carers

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the financial position of carers during the economic crisis. (AQO 2907/09)

Minister for Social Development: Carers are an extremely diverse group of people and the financial support needs of carers vary hugely. Many carers combine their caring role with work, while others are full-time carers. Carer's allowance, as the main benefit available to carers, was designed primarily to provide a measure of financial support for a person who has given up the opportunity of full-time work to care for a severely disabled person. However, a carer can work and earn up to £95 per week and still receive carer's allowance. This not only gives the carer the opportunity of greater financial independence, but also allows a break from the often arduous caring role and helps carers to retain contact with the employment field.

Carer's allowance is not the only benefit available to carers; depending on individual circumstances, they have access to the full range of social security benefits, including income-related benefits such as income support and housing benefit which are paid at higher rates for carers. 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.

Bonuses Paid to Permanent Secretary

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development how much was paid in bonuses to her Department's Permanent Secretary in each of the last five financial years. (AQW 8135/09)

Minister for Social Development: Combined salary and bonus information for the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Social Development is currently provided through Resource Accounts in £5k bands, for the financial years between 2004 and 2008, available from http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/publications/annual_reports/publications-dsd_resource_account_reports.htm. The resource accounts for the 2008-09 year are not yet available. It is our policy not to disclose the remuneration details of individual civil servants, other than in broad terms.

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development would she consider using email to send and receive applications for Employment and Support Allowance to help expedite the process. (AQW 8211/09)

Minister for Social Development: The application form for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is a detailed document that requires the applicant to provide personal information about their health, their immediate family and their finances, including details of their bank / building society.

The transfer of personal information between government systems, using e-mail, is secure but the same level of assurance cannot be provided to information that is not transferred using the secure government gateway. The protection available from the gateway is not available to personal e-mail accounts. In addition, it is not possible to authenticate an application using an e-mail address.

The Agency has provided an application form on-line which applicants can download, complete and forward to the ESA Centre if they do not want to use the freephone ESA claim line.

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development how many applications for Employment and Support Allowance were delayed due to the Easter Holidays and when the backlog will be cleared. (AQW 8213/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information you have asked for is not available in the format you have requested. It is not possible to forecast when claims received at a particular period in time will be completed as some claims are more complex than others. However, the average clearance time during April and May for an Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claim was 22.8 days.

To ensure that there are sufficient resources to handle the high level of interest in the new benefit, the Social Security Agency has increased the staffing levels in the ESA Centre from 155 in January to 200 at the end of May. A further 60 staff are due to join towards the end of June. As with any change of this magnitude it takes time for staff to become fully efficient on the systems and benefit rules but the excellent progress to date has been down to the hard work and commitment of staff.

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how many applications were made through the Newtownards Social Security Office for Employment and Support Allowance in April 2009; (ii) how long will it take to process all of these applications; and (iii) what is the average length of time taken to process an application. (AQW 8214/09)

Minister for Social Development: The information requested is not available by benefit office location. The table below provides details of the number of fresh claims received each month since the benefit was introduced on 27 October 2008. It is not possible to predict how long it will take to process claims received from a specific location. The average clearance time for a claim to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) to be processed was 22.8 days at the end of May.

Month	Number of claims
October	56
November	940
December	1729
January	2435
February	2993
March	3313
April	2894
May	3267
Total	17,627

Housing: Autism

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister for Social Development to detail her Department's involvement in adapting houses for families where autistic children and young people exhibit challenging behaviour.

(AQO 2932/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive and each Housing Association are responsible for arranging this sort of adaptation work on their own properties, providing they are recommended by an Occupational Therapist acting for a Health and Social Care Trust.

I recently met with Caroline Brogue, co-ordinator for the NI National Autistic Society and during that meeting she raised concerns about recent problems experienced by families in the Western Trust Area.

It is clear that there needs to be very good communication between health and housing professionals to identify, assess and deliver these sorts of adaptations.

Although a Service Level Agreement is already in place to ensure timely delivery of these adaptations, I have undertaken to keep this under review and my officials are already investigating all of the related issues.

Shared Future: US Visit

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister for Social Development what message she brought to the Irish American political community in relation to a shared future in Northern Ireland, in her recent visit to the United States.

(AQO 2933/09)

Minister for Social Development: The objectives of the visit were to raise awareness of, and garner support for, my work in taking forward the Shared Future agenda across my Department. I went to establish, and to renew, a number of important relationships relevant to my portfolio with the new Administration, more widely at federal, state and city levels and to identify areas of mutual interest and exchangeable experience. This has the potential to forge stronger, practical relations between the Department and important US Government and other stakeholders.

My key messages were about both our achievements and our challenges. I explained how we have achieved a political settlement that has replaced conflict and violence with democratic political debate. I also explained that we continue to face huge challenges with particular regard to the continuation of segregated housing. I outlined my commitment to achieving a Shared Future and talked of the risk for our future if we do not address our segregated living. I said that I, as the Minister responsible for housing, had a particular interest and wanted to explore what successes had been achieved in the United States in tackling segregated living

I was pleased that a number of opportunities to develop relationships, cooperation and information exchange between DSD and key organisations in the areas visited emerged as a result of the visit.

In New York, Speaker Quinn and Mayor Bloomberg's Office offered access to their experience and resources on housing.

Over the summer months I want to further explore how we might progress my shared housing agenda through discussions with residents and communities here. I will be sharing with them the experiences I brought back from the United States.

Overall my message on this trip to Americans, whether at community level or in the White House, was please don't think the Northern Ireland problem is solved. The healing process has only really begun and we need you to stay with us for the long haul.

Housing Executive Replacement Grants

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development what action she is taking to ensure that all persons who already have been means tested for replacement grant assistance will receive approval for commencement of the work without undue delay.

(AQO 2937/09)

Minister for Social Development: I have ensured that grant applications, where formal approval has been issued, will continue to be funded and that the Disabled Facilities Grants scheme and mandatory Repairs Grants

will also continue to operate normally. I have great sympathy for people who find themselves waiting for a grant to come through.

However, the fact is that the level of funding available for grants in the private sector has had to be curtailed. With the collapse in receipts from house and land sales the Housing Executive simply does not have the funds to do everything it had planned to do. With the money available, the Housing Executive expect to issue 2,000 grant approvals this year. In the absence of more funding, this reduction is unavoidable. Applications for discretionary grants, including Renovation Grants, Replacement Grants and Home Repairs Assistance will therefore only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

My priority is to protect the most vulnerable in our society through the provision of new social housing within the Social Housing Development Programme. I have also ensured that the funding for Warm Homes – to deliver households from fuel poverty, and funds to support people to live independently, will be protected too.

Social Housing

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development what steps she is taking to ensure that the resources available for new build social housing deliver as many houses as possible. (AQO 2938/09)

Minister for Social Development: I have made the increased supply of housing my first and foremost priority. Despite the very real problems created by an anticipated £200m shortfall in the housing budget this year and next, I am pleased to report that our new build programme this year will be protected to make sure that those waiting for a new home do not wait any longer than is absolutely necessary.

I have made £155m available this year which will deliver 1750 new homes. Our new Procurement Strategy will ensure that this housing is delivered in the most efficient way possible and over the lifetime of the strategy, I expect to see real savings that will help us in effect deliver more for less. The save applies to my policy of building an increasing proportion of social newbuild on land we already own.

I have also reduced the levels of grant payable to Housing Associations, in effect requiring housing associations to introduce greater levels of private finance allowing our scarce resources to stretch even further.

Household Fuel Payments

Mr B Armstrong asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the administration of the Household Fuel Payment. (AQO 2939/09)

Minister for Social Development: I am delighted to report that to date, about 167,000 Household Fuel Payments have been issued. The Household Fuel Payment has been a tremendous success and my officials have received many calls and letters from householders expressing their appreciation.

While my officials have not formally recorded all calls, letters and emails relating to the Household Fuel Payment, we estimate that approximately 4,000 letters and emails and in excess of 10,000 calls have been received seeking clarification of entitlement to a payment.

My officials will continue to respond, either by making a payment or providing an explanation as to why there is no entitlement. Those who believe they qualify for the Household Fuel Payment have until 30 June to write to the Department setting out the reasons why they believe they qualify.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to everyone involved in the administration of the Household Fuel Payments and in particular my own officials, counterparts in Department for Work and Pensions, EDS and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, whose involvement ensured that payments were made accurately and securely.

Housing Budget

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Social Development, in light of the £100 million shortfall in the housing budget, to outline what action she is taking to put housing on a firm financial footing. (AQO 2940/09)

Minister for Social Development: I have decided my priority is to protect the provision of new social housing within the Social Housing Development Programme. As the University of Ulster pointed out yesterday,

current market conditions are more suited than ever before to increase investment in social housing, to stimulate the economy, protect jobs in the overall construction industry and help the most vulnerable in this society by providing them with a home. In a falling market the circumstances exist to secure excellent value for money in social newbuild. Sites are costing less (housing associations had been priced out of the market in many instances prior to the correction) and construction work is increasingly keenly priced.

A new Procurement Strategy became operative in April 2009. Collaborative procurement will provide the conditions for integrating resources, improving consistency and continuity and obtaining better value for money. One of the overall goals of the strategy is to procure the Social Housing Development Programme on a value for money basis and in accordance with best practice. This should enable more houses to be built for the same amount of funding.

But the fundamental point is that housing must be put on a firm financial footing. We cannot plan a housing investment programme around scraps from the table in quarterly monitoring rounds.

I will nonetheless continue to make bids for additional funding in future monitoring rounds this year and to lobby my Executive colleagues for their support for my proposals for funding for the Social Housing Development Programme and Housing Executive capital programmes.

Social Housing: Killyleagh

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development when social housing at Church Hill, Killyleagh, will commence and to provide a timescale for its completion; and to confirm whether this matter will be given priority given the waiting list for social housing in this area. (AQO 2941/09)

Minister for Social Development: The proposed scheme at Church Hill, Killyleagh falls within the category of Design and Build Packages. This is a negotiated contract for the provision of new social housing whereby the developer, who owns the land, would also build the houses. However, Developing European Union case law has called into question the use of negotiated Design and Build Packages throughout the European Union. Recent legal advice indicates that the negotiated Design and Build approach for delivering the social housing new build programme could run contrary to current EU procurement law. I am therefore unable to advise when this scheme will commence or provide a timescale for its completion.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is replacing negotiated Design and Build Packages with alternative new build schemes.

Housing: Voluntary and Community Sector

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the development of a legislative framework, in relation to housing, governing the relationship between government and the voluntary and community sector. (AQO 2942/09)

Minister for Social Development: I have no plans to develop a legislative framework governing the relationship between Government and the voluntary and community sector and instead will develop a new non-statutory concordat. This route will allow me to progress the issue more quickly. In terms of housing in particular, my Department has statutory responsibility to regulate registered social housing landlords. I am seeking new powers in the Housing (Amendment) Bill which I introduced today to enable my Department to undertake this function more effectively.

Shared Future: Housing

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development how she proposes to take forward her Shared Future agenda in housing. (AQO 2943/09)

Minister for Social Development: In the coming weeks I plan to announce details of the next phase in our Shared Neighbourhood Programme which we deliver in partnership with the International Fund for Ireland.

This next phase will see a further 10 existing estates identified as Shared Neighbourhoods where the community themselves have come forward and asked for our support to help them make this transition.

I will also be launching more Shared Future developments in the coming months in Sion Mills and Banbridge.

This follows on from the recent launch of 'Causeway Meadow' in Lisburn which to date is our second shared future development developed here in the North. In time I want these Shared Future developments to become the norm, rather than the exception and I am very encouraged that more and more people are now telling me this is how they want to live - together, not apart.

Village Urban Renewal Area

Ms A Lo asked the Minister for Social Development whether it is appropriate to force home owners located in the vesting area of the Greater Village Urban Renewal Area, to enter into negative equity through the Advanced Purchase scheme, in the current financial climate. (AQO 2944/09)

Minister for Social Development: The Advance Purchase scheme currently being offered to residents in the Village area is entirely voluntary and no home owners are being forced to apply for it.

The values paid for any housing acquired in this manner will of course be subject to market conditions and valuations available now may increase or decrease in the coming months. Homeowners in the affected area should take their own independent advice on when, if at all, they apply for Advance Purchase.

Child Maintenance

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister for Social Development what assessment she has made of the impact of the current economic downturn on child maintenance payments. (AQO 2945/09)

Minister for Social Development: The economic downturn has had a noticeable impact on Child Maintenance clients. The number of Non Resident Parents in receipt of benefit has increased by over 1000 between April 2008 and April 2009, a 10% uplift over 12 months. As Non Resident Parents see their incomes reduce as a result of job losses and short-time working, the collection of regular maintenance and arrears from them becomes more challenging. The Division is already seeing workload increases in the handling of reported changes and reassessments of maintenance liabilities.

However, despite these difficult economic conditions the annual amount of regular maintenance and arrears collected or arranged has steadily improved with a record £22.8 million collected for the year ended March 2009. This is a substantial increase on the £19.7 million collected in 2007/08. The number of children benefiting from child maintenance has also increased over the last year to 20,820 at the end of March 2009. This is an increase of almost 1600 more children when compared to March 2008. More money is now going to more children, and this despite increased numbers of Non Resident Parents being in receipt of benefit, and so having reduced ability to pay. This can be attributed to the focus on debt enforcement by the Division, including tougher strategies to recover debt and a high profile media campaign. The targeting by the Division of those Non Resident Parents who do not pay the full amount of child maintenance at the right time has helped to minimise the impact of the economic downturn on payments to Parents with Care.

That said, I am not complacent and continue to be committed to getting money to the children who are entitled to it. The unwillingness, indeed refusal, of some Non-Resident Parents to take financial responsibility for their children remains one of the biggest obstacles to progress in securing money for children and I intend to take firm action at the earliest opportunity against those parents who do not pay their child maintenance.

Housing Budget

Dr A McDonnell asked the Minister for Social Development what steps she is taking to make the most effective and efficient use of public money in relation to housing investment and provision. (AQO 2946/09)

Minister for Social Development: When I launched the New Housing Agenda last year, I recognised that we had to be creative and innovative in our use of scarce resources if we were to deliver the increased supply of housing that I have made my first and foremost priority.

I launched our new Procurement Strategy that will deliver savings of 10% in the procurement of our Social Housing Development Programme over these next five years. I have also reduced the level of grant payable for

new housing, in effect requiring a greater private contribution than ever before; for example, since Autumn 2007 the average grant paid on new social homes has fallen by nearly £30k per unit.

I have also brought forward the construction of more new homes on land already in our ownership. These homes can be delivered much more efficiently than those where we first have to buy the land. I have also sought to acquire value for money sites such as the former Military Housing in Pond Park, Lisburn, where we can negotiate a package to acquire these homes then reduce our subsidy further by offering them on a competitive basis amongst interested Housing Associations.

Each of these actions is helping us in effect deliver more for less.

Social Housing

Mrs C Hanna asked the Minister for Social Development what proposals she has brought forward to her Executive colleagues in relation to social housing to help counter the effects of the economic downturn. (AQO 2947/09)

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.

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr S Neeson asked the Minister for Social Development what action is being taken to hasten claims made for the Employment and Support Allowance. (AQO 2948/09)

Minister for Social Development: The introduction of Employment and Support Allowance is the most significant change in the benefit system in years. Its implementation has been a success, given the complexities involved in introducing a new benefit alongside new technology and the fact that it has coincided with the economic downturn. The success is due to the hard work and commitment of the staff and management of the Centre.

The Centre continues to increase the number of claims that are being processed as the staff gain experience in the benefit and become more familiar with the new systems. The number of claims assessed between February and April increased by 48% on the number processed during the previous three month period, November 2008 to January 2009.

To further support the implementation of the new benefit, additional resources continue to be recruited and trained. The number of staff in post has increased from 155 in January to the current level of 200 with further plans in place to recruit a further 60 staff in June. This continued investment should ensure that the Centre continues to improve performance across all areas.

Child Maintenance

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister for Social Development for an assessment of the impact of her recent departmental initiatives to get more parents without care to contribute to the up-keep and maintenance of their children. (AQO 2949/09)

Minister for Social Development: I am delighted to be able to report that the benefits realised through recent Departmental initiatives have made a very real and positive difference for children. The number of children benefiting from child maintenance has significantly increased to 20,820 at the end of March 2009, an increase of almost 1600 more children benefiting when compared to last year. The annual amount of regular maintenance and arrears collected or arranged has steadily improved with a record £22.8 million collected for the year ended March 2009. That good progress continues with a further £2.05 million collected/arranged in the month of April 2009, benefiting 21,123 children.

I want to ensure that many more children receive the money that is due to them. However, one of the biggest obstacles to progress in securing money for children remains the unwillingness, indeed refusal, of some Non-Resident Parents to take financial responsibility for their children and I intend to take firm action at the earliest opportunity against those parents who do not pay their child maintenance.

Housing Executive Maintenance Projects

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Social Development why maintenance work on Housing Executive projects, such as the Dales in Seymour Hill, Lisburn, has been cut, given the health and safety implications for the occupants. (AQO 2950/09)

Minister for Social Development: Due to the downturn in land and house sales, there is a £100 million shortfall in the Housing Budget for 2009/10 which will impact on all spending programmes. I have decided my priority is the provision of new social housing within the Social Housing Development Programme because the current market conditions are more suited than ever before to increase investment in social housing, to stimulate the economy, protect jobs in the overall construction industry and help the most vulnerable in this society by providing them with a home. This means that improvement schemes planned in Housing Executive estates which have not already started have had to be deferred and this has affected the proposals for The Dales. However, the Housing Executive routine maintenance service is unaffected and they will also develop a programme of works to address the health and safety items which were in programmes they had hoped to deliver. The Housing Executive anticipates that this work will commence later this year.

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Statue of Lord Craigavon in Parliament Buildings

Mr J Dallat asked the Assembly Commission to detail the cost of providing security for the statue of Lord Craigavon in Parliament Buildings for the period 1998 to date. (AQW 8187/09)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): There is no specific attributable cost in providing security for the statue of Lord Craigavon as there are no staff specifically assigned to this duty.

All doorkeepers on duty in the Great Hall and around the first floor balconies are there primarily to ensure that NI Assembly business is able to proceed uninterrupted and that good order is maintained at all times. Doorkeepers in these areas will also ensure that all visitors adhere to regulations around access to Parliament Buildings and will also direct them to the various functions or events that they are attending.

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