
OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

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NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Friday 11 December 2009

Written Answers to Questions

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Maze Site

Mr D Simpson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the work carried out in relation to maximising the historical potential of the Maze site; and how it is intended to ensure that the history of the site is developed in such a way that no one could consider it to be a shrine to terrorism. (AQW 375/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness): As we stated in April, we seek to maximise the economic, historical and reconciliation potential of the site for the benefit of all and in doing so intend to foster the many and varied historical aspects of the site and will reinforce this objective with the soon to be formed Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation.

The rich and diverse heritage of Maze/Long Kesh stretches back over many decades ranging from an aircraft base and subsequent wartime contribution, to its use as an internment and detention centre before its latter conversion to a prison.

There is no intention of having a shrine at the MLK site.

Maze Site

Mr D Simpson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps (i) they have taken; and (ii) they will take to ensure that no development of the Maze site could in any way be construed as a shine to terrorism. (AQW 378/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: As we stated in April, we seek to maximise the economic, historical and reconciliation potential of the site for the benefit of all and in doing so intend to foster the many and varied historical aspects of the site and will reinforce this objective with the soon to be formed Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation.

The rich and diverse heritage of Maze/Long Kesh stretches back over many decades ranging from an aircraft base and subsequent wartime contribution, to its use as an internment and detention centre before its latter conversion to a prison.

There is no intention of having a shrine at the MLK site.

Evangelical Christian Community

Mr M Storey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 1937/10, if the Community Relations Council has approached their Department to discuss its concerns regarding the lack of understanding of the Evangelical Christian community which remains apart from the ecumenical movement. (AQW 2655/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Community Relations Council has not approached the Department to discuss any issues surrounding the Evangelical Christian community.

Evangelical Christian Community

Mr M Storey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 1937/10, what work the Community Relations Council has undertaken to promote understanding of the Evangelical Christian community which remains apart from the ecumenical movement. (AQW 2664/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Community Relations Council has not undertaken any specific work with regard to this group. However, its funding streams are open to all sections of the community including the Evangelical Christian community. The approach adopted is summarised below:

All CRC Grant Schemes are publically advertised through the organisation's website and various community networks ie: NICVA, through District Council Community Relations Officers and Good Relations Officers, and in the case of the CRC's EU Programme, advertising is also carried out in the press and through the SEUPB website.

All community and voluntary based groups have open access to the Schemes. In addition, various Information Events on funding opportunities are held throughout the region by all the funding schemes. All grant applications received are processed in accordance with agreed Council practices/operating principles and receive fair and equal treatment. Review/complaint procedures are in place.

Evangelical Christian Community

Mr M Storey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 1937/10, how much funding their Department has allocated to the Community Relations Council to promote understanding of the Evangelical Christian community which remains apart from the ecumenical movement. (AQW 2665/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Department provides funding to the Community Relations Council through grant-in-aid, and the Community Relations Council's funding streams are open to all sections of the community including the Evangelical Christian community.

Community Relations Council Funding

Lord Morrow asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much funding from the Community Relations Council was provided to each council area in the last financial year; and how much of this funding was allocated to staffing. (AQW 2669/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The funding provided to each Council area in 2008/09 is listed below.

Council	Overall Award £	Staffing Figure £
Antrim	15,520	Nil
Ards	8,478	Nil
Armagh	513,276	181,120 (10 posts)
Ballymena	10,315	Nil
Ballymoney	54,928	29,179 (2 posts)
Banbridge	44,507	Nil
Belfast	1,931,463	1,005,446 (47.5 posts)
Carrickfergus	3,750	Nil
Castlereagh	2,594	Nil
Coleraine	83,805	47,966 (3 posts)
Cookstown	40,567	Nil
Craigavon	61,276	24,901 (2posts)
Derry	807,280	405,630 (20 posts)

Council	Overall Award £	Staffing Figure £
Down	87,480	34,724 (2 posts)
Dungannon	51,003	Nil
Fermanagh	484,728	164,040 (9 posts)
Larne	Nil	Nil
Limavady	8,814	Nil
Lisburn	14,652	Nil
Magherafelt	12,902	Nil
Moyle	12,500	Nil
Newry & Mourne	63,281	11,371 (1 Post)
Newtownabbey	34,360	26,802 (1 post)
North Down	7,300	Nil
Omagh	432,918	173,292 (8 Posts)
Strabane	117,775	39,506 (2 posts)
Across two or more Councils	1,037,771	713,830 (43 posts)
Grand Total	5,943,243.00	
Staffing Funding	2,857,807.00	Total = 150.5 posts supported

OFMDFM Papers to the Executive

Mr G Savage asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many papers their Department has submitted to the Executive since the restoration of devolution; and how many agreements have arisen as a result of each paper following Executive discussion. (AQW 3090/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The number of papers submitted to the Executive in this period is as follows:

Department	Number of papers
OFMDFM	173
DFP	94
DE	5
DETI	22
DHSSPS	33
DSD	36
DRD	39
DOE	47
DARD	26
DCAL	12
DEL	13
Total	500

The Executive agreed the proposals in all but one of these papers.

Consumer Council Report

Mr F McCann asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for his assessment of the recent Consumer Council report which highlighted that insurance companies are overcharging customers; and what steps can be taken to address this issue. (AQO 527/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We welcome the publication and findings of the Consumer Council's Research Report "Quote... Unquote" - The Cost of Insurance in Northern Ireland, which was launched in March this year by Junior Minister Kelly. The report raises some important issues which would warrant further consideration.

The final recommendation of the "Quote... Unquote" report committed the Consumer Council to work with OFMDFM and others, and take forward a thorough follow-up investigation to provide recommendations and potential actions to be taken to lower insurance costs for all consumers and particularly those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

Consequently, Consumer Council representatives met with us recently to discuss any possible follow-up action to their report. We are now giving this further consideration, taking account of the fact that insurance cost is a reserved matter and thus an issue which we would have limited power to influence directly.

Regeneration

Mr R McCartney asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the importance of ensuring that high quality regeneration strategies are developed for sites, rather than rushing to get strategies in place. (AQO 500/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: We consider high quality regeneration strategies crucial to the success of all OFMDFM regeneration projects and thus can confirm that it is more important to get the strategies right rather than rushing to have them simply in place. Additionally, we can confirm that prescribed guidance and best practice models are followed to ensure that the desired outcomes are obtained to maximise the social and economic potential of any asset in our care.

Craigavon: Street Disturbances

Mr J O'Dowd asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what support their Department has offered to the communities in Brownlow, Craigavon that were affected by street disturbances in the Spring and Summer of 2009. (AQO 501/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Junior Minister Kelly and former Junior Minister Donaldson met with key stakeholders in the Craigavon area last year. Since then officials have met with the grouping twice, to discuss what and how the Department could help and support those key partners on the ground in Craigavon in their work in relation to changing attitudes, regenerating areas and providing support to those communities blighted by violence and antisocial behaviour.

The stakeholders from Craigavon comprise the local district Council, Southern Education and Library Board, Housing Executive, PSNI, DSD Neighbourhood Renewal, Community Safety and representatives from the local communities.

Much work is being done presently on regeneration and environmental work, youth work, training opportunities and a multi-agency action plan has been agreed and ratified by the Council. Some further remedial work on it is being carried out on the Action Plan which is to be presented to Junior Ministers shortly after Christmas.

Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation

Mr I McCrea asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the legislative timetable for the proposed Maze/ Long Kesh Development Corporation. (AQO 502/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Statutory Rule (SR) to establish and empower the Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation was approved by the OFMDFM Committee on 25 November 2009 and will be listed for Assembly debate as soon as possible.

Military Sites

Mr P Butler asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the military sites, mentioned in Gordon Brown's correspondence of 12 October 2009, will be handed over to the Executive. (AQO 503/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: Discussions are ongoing and we are unable to confirm a date at this time. We can confirm that the military sites mentioned in the Prime Minister's letter would transfer to the Executive when policing and justice powers are devolved. We will ensure the Assembly is kept informed on this issue.

Social Security: Earnings Disregard

Mr P Maskey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister if the Executive Sub-Committee on Children and Young People or the Executive Sub-Committee on Poverty and Social Inclusion have considered a move away from parity with England, Scotland and Wales by setting a higher earnings disregard level than currently exists under social security arrangements. (AQO 504/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: There have been no discussions to date at either of these Sub-Committee's on the issue of earnings disregard levels.

The Minister for Social Development has advised that to do so would be a breach of the principle that people in Northern Ireland should receive the same benefit under the same conditions as people in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Executive Sub-Committee on Poverty and Social Inclusion plan to meet before the end of the year to consider a 'Priorities' paper that sets out a number of suggestions for potential areas for further work to go forward in the field of poverty and social inclusion. Any further work will require the support of the relevant Minister/s.

Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy

Mr D Ford asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister if the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration strategy will be published before the Assembly's summer recess in 2010. (AQO 505/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Executive is fully committed to building a better, brighter and shared future for all the people here.

Our commitment within the Programme for Government to bring forward a Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration will be honoured.

Much has already been achieved on the ground to tackle the problems of sectarianism and racism. That is why in OFMDFM we have allocated unprecedented levels of funding for good relations. We are working hard on a wide range of areas, with partners such as local councils, the Community Relations Council and a range of others.

Executive Issues

Mr T Lunn asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide any example of a major issue which remains unresolved within the Executive, but where progress is being made. (AQO 506/10)

First Minister and deputy First Minister: It is not our practice to disclose details of Executive business. The content of Executive papers and all aspects of Executive business are confidential.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Animal Welfare Bill

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when she will be introducing an Animal Welfare Bill, given that consultation ended in March 2009. (AQW 2984/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms M Gildernew): My Department consulted with stakeholders on a review of animal welfare legislation in 2006. As this consultation was carried out during Direct Rule, I wanted to take the time to engage directly with key stakeholders to hear at first hand their concerns. Since taking up office in 2007, my officials and I have engaged extensively with a wide range of welfare interests, from here, the south of Ireland and Britain. This has taken time, but I want to get any new Bill right. Finally, a stakeholder workshop was held on 17 September 2009. At the workshop my officials provided an overview of the proposals for the new Welfare of Animals Bill and attendees were requested to submit any further written comments by 25 September 2009 when the consultation stage for this Bill closed.

The Executive at its meeting on 5 November 2009 endorsed the final policy content proposals for the Bill and agreed that the drafting of the Bill should commence. The new Welfare of Animals Bill is one of my key priorities and I intend to introduce it to the Assembly by June 2010, with enactment during the lifetime of this Assembly.

2002 Equine Strategy

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline (i) the recommendations implemented to date under the 2002 Equine Strategy; and (ii) recommendations that will be implemented in the next 18 months, including their respective costs. (AQW 3030/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Equine Strategy was published in 2007, not 2002 as per the question.

The production of the "Strategy for the Equine Industry in NI" was a culmination of a period of extensive engagement between organisations across all the equine disciplines. Although funded by DARD, the Strategy was written by and is owned by the equine industry. The Strategy sets out some 75 recommendations which the industry has identified it needs to take forward. These cover areas such as: - increasing participation, promotion and co-ordination within the Equine Sector; improvement of quality and standards in breeding equines; improvement of economic performance of the Equine Sector; improvement of sporting achievement; and improvement of the health and welfare of all equines.

Following the publication of the Strategy, the next steps identified by the industry was the establishment of an independent organisation fully representative of the industry to take forward the Strategy.

However the body in question the Equine Council for NI (ECNI) has encountered difficulties around the setting up of the ECNI and despite the commitment and assistance by my Department the difficulties have not yet been resolved. However an early resolution is anticipated and this will enable the ECNI to bring forward proposals around the implementation of the Strategy.

2002 Equine Strategy

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to the implementation of the 2002 Equine Strategy, (i) what consultations have taken place; (ii) who was consulted; (iii) when the consultations took place; (iv) what was the method of consultation; and (v) what was the outcome of each consultation. (AQW 3031/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Strategy in question was published in March 2007, rather than 2002 as per the question.

The Strategy, developed by the local industry, involved significant consultation. The Equine Sub Group (ESG) of the Rural Stakeholders' Forum was established in 2003 and brought together 21 representatives from all areas within the equine industry to provide effective two-way communication with Government. In 2005, ESG

assisted consultants to complete the report “Research on the Equine Sector in NI”. DARD commissioned the same consultants to assist the sector in consulting widely within their own industry to devise a comprehensive, long-term strategy. The resultant Strategy contained 75 actions, and proposed that implementation of the recommendations be taken forward by a single representative body, the Equine Council for NI (ECNI).

Due to difficulties around the formulation of the ECNI, no proposals have been brought forward by ECNI on the implementation of any of the recommendations. DARD is however continuing to work with the relevant sectors, to resolve outstanding difficulties, to enable the early implementation of the Strategy.

Liaison Body for the Equine Industry

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what consultation has taken place with key stakeholders on the formation of a liaison body for the equine industry. (AQW 3032/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Following the publication of the “Strategy for the Equine Industry in NI” in March 2007, the new industry body tasked with taking forward the recommendations in the Strategy, to be known as the Equine Council for NI (ECNI), was launched in January 2008.

However, having been made aware of difficulties around finalising the formal structure of ECNI and in particular representation, my Department has been in discussion with the relevant sector representatives on a number of occasions in recent months to try to resolve the outstanding difficulties. These organisations included The Half Bred Horse Breeders Society Ltd, NI Horse Board Co-operative Society Ltd, NI Connemara Pony Association, and the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders Association (Northern Region). It remains my desire that a single representative body for the whole of the Equine industry here takes forward the implementation of the Strategy and my officials will continue to assist in resolving the outstanding issues.

2002 Equine Strategy

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if her Department intends to conduct a review of the 2002 Equine Strategy. (AQW 3033/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: The Strategy in question was published in 2007, not 2002 as per the question.

The production of the “Strategy for the Equine Industry in NI” in March 2007 was the culmination of a period of extensive engagement between organisations across all the equine disciplines. Although funded by DARD, the Strategy which was written by and is owned by the equine industry, sets out some 75 actions which the industry identified it needs to take forward. In these circumstances it would be inappropriate for the Department to conduct a review of this Strategy.

Equine Industry

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if her Department is proceeding with the formation of a body to represent the equine industry; and to detail the cost to date of establishing this body. (AQW 3040/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Following the publication of the “Strategy for the Equine Industry in NI”, in March 2007, the Equine Sub Group (ESG) assisted by DARD, has been in the process of forming the independent industry body to be known as Equine Council for NI (ECNI), to take forward the implementation of the Strategy.

My Department became aware some time ago of difficulties that have arisen from within the industry in finalising the formal structure of the ECNI and on how it should now proceed.

Despite concerted efforts by officials involving meetings with representatives of the sectors involved the difficulties remain unresolved.

My Department made a commitment to facilitate the set up of the new body and agreed to fund the consultancy costs associated with developing a business plan, associated with the Strategy, for the industry. To date the

Department has paid £6,360 in consultancy costs and £1,196.15 to solicitors in respect of legal advice on the Constitution for the ECNI.

It remains my desire for a single representative organisation to take forward the Equine Strategy and my officials will continue to work with the industry representatives to resolve the outstanding difficulties.

European Fisheries Fund

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much of her Department's allocation under the European Fisheries Fund has been spent in the last three years. (AQW 3046/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: There has been no spending to date under the European Fisheries Fund. The European Commission approved the Operational Programme on 9 September 2008, meaning spend was only possible from that date onwards. My Department is currently assessing 28 applications, seeking £4.39m EFF grant support and will be in a position to announce the first awards shortly.

10-day Prompt Payment Scheme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action she is taking to ensure that the 10-day prompt payment scheme is passed on to sub-contractors by businesses who are receiving direct payments from the Department, and its related public bodies. (AQW 3075/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: DARD's major contracts are procured through the Central Procurement Directorate which acts as the Department's Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE).

Payment within 10 days is not a binding requirement in Government contracts. However, for construction contracts, procured through the Central Procurement Directorate, main contractors are required to comply with the 'Code of Practice for Government Construction Clients and their Supply Chains'. The Code sets out the core principles that should govern the behaviour of clients, contractors and subcontractors, including the need for fair dealing within the supply chain.

Principle 3 of the Construction Industry Forum for NI Procurement Task Group (PTG) Report recognises that enterprises have the opportunity to benefit from participation in Government contracts either as a main contractor or as a subcontractor. A PTG Working Group is currently considering the expansion of the 'Code of Practice for Government Construction Clients and their Supply Chains' to include a 'Fair Payment Charter' and to include a requirement that first tier subcontractors provide feedback directly to the Government Construction Client on monthly payment progress from the main contractor to the supply chain. The proposals, to be developed by December 2009, will seek to ensure that main contractors pass on the benefits of prompt payment to subcontractors.

Supplies and services contracts also require main contractors to enter into subcontracts on the same terms and conditions as the main contract.

Central Procurement Directorate is currently considering if the approach taken in construction contracts would be practicable in supplies and services contracts.

Nitrates Directive

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many jobs have been lost in each constituency as a direct result of the Nitrates Directive, in each of the last three years. (AQW 3085/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department does not hold a record of this information.

Nitrates Directive

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many contractors have lost earnings as a direct result of the Nitrates Directive; and what action she is taking to allow contractors to recoup those earnings. (AQW 3086/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: My Department does not hold information on the earnings of contractors.

A proportion of slurry spreading is carried out by agricultural contractors in the north of Ireland. The Nitrates Directive Action Programme sets a closed period for spreading slurry from 15 October to 31 January. However, the closed period does not actually change the volume of slurry to be spread. Contractors should have broadly the same volume of slurry to spread as prior to the introduction of the Action Programme.

To comply with the slurry and manure storage requirements of the Nitrates Directive Action Programme over 3900 farm businesses have built improved storage facilities with grant support from my Department's Farm Nutrient Management Scheme. This investment of over £200 million in farm infrastructure provided very significant work for building contractors up to the end of 2008 and nearly 300 companies were involved in works under the scheme.

Private Sector Training Providers

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if any private sector training providers were invited to attend the information evening in Limavady regarding the Farm Family Options scheme; if so, which private sector training providers were invited; and, if not, why they were omitted. (AQW 3320/10)

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Private sector training providers were not invited to attend the information evening in Limavady. The organisers did not consider inviting private sector training providers to the event as the purpose of the information evening was to highlight the support and funding opportunities which are available to farmers and farm family members under Axis 1 of the Rural Development Programme.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

Revenue Safety Management

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 2298/10, (i) to outline what is meant by 'Revenue Safety Management'; (ii) how do clubs apply for funding for Revenue Safety Management; and (iii) what eligibility criteria are used. (AQW 3066/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr N McCausland): The Revenue Safety Management Programme, administered by Sport Northern Ireland (SNI), provided revenue funding to assist clubs who hosted fixtures at larger sports grounds to upgrade safety management arrangements at their respective venues.

Clubs cannot apply for funding at present as the programme closed in 2007/08. This was to allow SNI, in conjunction with other key stakeholders, to develop a more up to date revenue training programme, to be delivered by local training colleges, for club stewards. The first tranche of this new programme is expected to be delivered in the Spring of 2010.

Funding will be made available to the owners/operators of venues that have been designated as requiring a safety certificated under The Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 to enable stewards to receive the appropriate training.

10-day Prompt Payment Scheme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action he is taking to ensure that the 10-day prompt payment scheme is passed on to sub-contractors by businesses who are receiving direct payments from the Department, and its related public bodies. (AQW 3076/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I strongly support the 10 day target and my Department has issued guidance internally and to its sponsored bodies, requesting that every effort is made to comply with the ten day payment policy.

However, the target applies to the payment practices of public bodies only and I do not think it is appropriate for this Department to unilaterally involve itself in any commercial arrangements which may exist between private sector businesses.

100th Anniversary of the Signing of the Ulster Covenant

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he has considered events, or appointing a committee to mark the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Ulster Covenant, in 2012. (AQW 3188/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The forthcoming centenary of the Ulster Covenant in 2012, which is the start of a decade of centenaries, provides a unique opportunity to enhance knowledge and understanding of an important period in our shared history and culture.

I intend to explore with officials the scope for bringing commemorative events, including the centenary of the 1912 Ulster Solemn League and Covenant, within a strategic framework.

Ulster Scots Agency

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of the performance of the Ulster Scots Agency in delivering on community projects in the west of Northern Ireland and Donegal; and to outline the distribution of funding in each county in Ulster. (AQW 3209/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Ulster-Scots Agency has allocated funding to various Ulster-Scots organisations throughout Northern Ireland and the border counties of Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan in the Republic of Ireland involved in the promotion of Ulster-Scots culture, heritage and language.

Funding is allocated on a merit basis to projects which align with the strategic objectives and priorities of the Agency as stipulated in its Financial Assistance Scheme.

In 2009 the Ulster-Scots Agency awarded £191.3k in financial assistance to community projects and incurred costs of £72.3k on community projects in the West of Northern Ireland (Co Londonderry, Co Fermanagh and Co Tyrone) and Co Donegal. This equates to approximately 19% of the total funds awarded by the Ulster-Scots Agency to community projects.

The table below details the distribution of funding by the Ulster-Scots Agency in each county referred to above:

	Grants	Others	Total
Co Antrim	£683,150	£44,809	£727,959
Co Down	£216,490	£29,657	£246,147
Co Armagh	£98,458	£18,359	£116,817
Co Londonderry	£112,719	£16,317	£129,036
Co Tyrone	£53,726	£23,964	£77,690
Co Fermanagh	£14,056	£20,272	£34,328
Co Donegal	£10,841	£11,688	£22,529
Co Monaghan	£8,750	nil	£8,750
Co Cavan	nil	nil	NIL
Total	£1,198,189	£165,066	£1,363,255

Forward Strategy of the Ulster Scots Agency

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQO 433/10, (i) when the current Forward Strategy of the Ulster Scots Agency was developed; (ii) who was involved in its development; (iii) to list the main recommendations of the strategy document; (iv) to detail the budgetary implications; and (v) what actions are being taken by the Agency to ensure it provides value for money. (AQW 3230/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: At a strategic planning seminar held in July 2009 the Board of the Ulster-Scots Agency drafted a strategy document for the Agency for 2010. The strategy reviewed the mandates, vision, mission, strategic objectives, priorities and values of the Agency.

The Board agreed strategic priorities for 2010 relating to:

- increased recognition of Ulster-Scots within the island of Ireland as a European lesser used language by increasing awareness and usage; increased access and participation in Ulster-Scots culture through the arts history and heritage; improved Community capability; improved customer satisfaction; and to maintain robust corporate governance policies and procedures.

A subsequent Operational Planning Workshop was held on 13 August 2009 when the Board's strategy document was used as the basis for the development of the Agency's draft Business Plan 2010.

National Federation of Sub-Postmasters Report 'Six Steps of a Sustainable Post Office Network'

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of the recommendations aimed at devolved institutions and local councils in the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters Report 'Six Steps of a Sustainable Post Office Network' (March 2009); and whether the Department has identified how it can make better use of the Post Office network. (AQW 3233/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I am aware of the Report produced by the Federation regarding the Post Office Network.

DCAL currently sells angling permits and licences through a distribution network including fishing tackle shops, hotels and tourist information outlets. The Department also use the services of local Post Offices in rural locations to act as angling permit and licence distributors on behalf of the Department.

Where there are geographical gaps in the current distribution network, rural Post Offices located close to prime angling waters could consider becoming an approved DCAL angling permit and licence distributor and stock angling related merchandise to encourage anglers into their premises.

Northern Ireland Football History Museum

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions have taken place involving his Department, Linfield Football Club and the Irish Football Association about the establishment of a Northern Ireland football history museum similar to the Scottish football museum established following the re-development of Hampden Park Stadium, Glasgow. (AQW 3240/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department has had no discussions to date with Linfield FC or the IFA about the establishment of a Northern Ireland football history museum similar to the Scottish football museum, nor has either Linfield FC or the IFA offered any suggestions to date for the establishment of such a museum as part of any of the present discussions.

Damp Problem at the Ulster Hall

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if he will make a statement on the recently reported damp problem at the Ulster hall and the implications this has on the recent programme of refurbishment. (AQW 3331/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I am aware of the damp problem within the Ulster Hall, which I believe is as a result of problems in the past which led to water gathering in the walls. I understand these underlying problems have been corrected as part of the recent refurbishment work however; the walls have been absorbing water for many years and will require significant time to dry out, possibly up to a year in some areas due to the thickness of the walls.

Whilst the main refurbishment work is complete, allowances have been made for periodic minor redecoration as required until the final decoration takes place when walls have fully dried out.

Information panels are on display in the foyer of the Ulster Hall which explain to visitors how the damp patches have occurred and the remedial works being undertaken to address the problem.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Middletown Autism Centre

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of Education, in light of a change of commitment of the Republic of Ireland Government and the N.I. Executive decision to apply 3% efficiency savings to cross-border initiatives (i) if she has reassessed the viability of the Middletown Autism Centre; (ii) if she will now acknowledge that the concept is flawed; (iii) to detail how she intends to fund its capital and revenue budgets; and (iv) to detail how much each element will cost in each of the next three years. (AQW 1418/10)

Minister of Education (Ms C Ruane): The need to maximise efficiency in all public bodies was recognised by the Executive in Budget 2008-2011 and has proved particularly pertinent in the current economic and fiscal climate. It is essential, therefore, that resources are released through efficiencies in the delivery and management of all existing and planned programmes, including North/South initiatives.

I wish to assure you that I remain committed to the Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA).

Is tionscnamh ceannródaíoch uile-Éireann é Ionad Uathachais Choillidh Chanannáin a sholáthraíonn réimse úrsheirbhísí nuálaíocha chun feabhas a chur ar oideachas páistí agus daoine óga a bhfuil neamhord ar speictream an uathachais acu i gcomhpháirtíocht le teaghlaigh agus leis na soláthróirí seirbhísí deonacha agus reachtúla atá ann.

The MCA is a pioneering all-Ireland initiative that delivers a range of innovative new services in order to improve the education of children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders in partnership with families and existing statutory and voluntary service providers.

The MCA operates within the terms of a reciprocal funding agreement between the Department of Education (DE) and the Department of Education and Science (DES). In addition, a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum, which has been approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel and signed by DE, DES and the MCA is in place. All funding, both capital and revenue, is predicated on a 50:50 split between DE and DES.

The combined DE and DES 2009/10 budgetary allocation for the MCA is currently £1.3m which includes £42k for capital expenditure. Future years allocations will be decided when MCA has taken into consideration DE and DES requirements as part of the MCA corporate planning process, which is still ongoing.

The MCA was discussed at a North South Ministerial Council Meeting in May 2009, at which I expressed to Minister O'Keefe my disappointment about the decision to pause the DES funding of the capital programme and advised that I am unable to accept any cuts in funding to this important project. This decision has meant a pause of the capital programme to build a bespoke Learning Support Centre and refurbish residential accommodation and also a pause in the development of two services.

DES has advised that the outcome of their 2010 estimates process will be known in December 2009.

I strongly believe that the most important focus for the Centre must be on support provided directly to children. My officials, Middletown staff and the Education and Library Boards are considering, as an interim measure, how they can support children and teachers in schools in the north.

Irish Language Education Facilities in East Londonderry

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) proposed; and (ii) approved expenditure for the provision of new Irish language education facilities in the East Londonderry constituency for the (a) 2009/10; and (b) 2010/11 financial years. (AQW 2241/10)

Minister of Education: My Department has allocated expenditure of £29,730 through the Common Funding Formula for St Canice's Primary School, Dungiven – Irish Medium Unit in 2009/10 financial year. The information is not yet available to determine the unit's allocation for 2010/11 financial year.

Tá mo Roinn ag breathnú faoi láthair ar iarratas na scoile ar shíneadh leithris a sholáthar do dhá cheann de na seomraí ranga sealadacha atá á n-úsaid ag an aonad Gaeilge. Dá bhfaomhfaí é, meastar go mbeadh costas de £24K air sa bhliain airgeadais 2009/10.

My Department is currently examining the school's request to provide a toilet extension to two of the temporary classrooms currently being used by the Irish medium unit. If approved this is likely to result in expenditure of around £24k in the 2009/10 financial year.

Náilscoil Neachtain in Dungiven received funding of £19,305 from the Pre-School Expansion programme in the 2009/10 financial year. The playgroup will receive funding next year, however, we are not yet aware of the number of children who will receive places.

Contractual Pay Increases

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Education if all employees of the Western Education and Library Board will receive their contractual pay increases from 1 April 2009 with immediate effect. (AQW 2299/10)

Minister of Education: Tháinig an Chomhchomhairle Náisiúnta agus an Ceadchumann ar chomhaontú maidir le rátaí pá a bheidh infheidhmithe ó 1 Aibreán 2009. Mar aitheantas ar na deacrachtaí a bheadh ag na Boird roimh bhunú an Údaráis um Oideachas agus Scileanna, d'aontaigh mo chuid feidhmeannach réimse socrúithe speisialta leis an Roinn Airgeadais agus Pearsanra chun an Bronnadh Pá Bliantúil 2009/10 a chur i bhfeidhm.

Agreement has been reached between the NJC and Trade Union Side on the rates of pay applicable from 1 April 2009.

In recognition of the difficulties which the Boards may experience in advance of the establishment of ESA my officials have agreed a series of special arrangements with the Department of Finance and Personnel for the 2009/10 Annual Pay Award. These new arrangements will greatly ease the administrative burden on the Board in support of the implementation of this pay award to enable staff to receive their contractual pay increases when these are approved.

2009/10 Annual Pay Award for all Non-teaching Staff

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of Education to outline the arrangements for the delivery of the 2009/10 Annual Pay Award for all non-teaching staff. (AQW 2674/10)

Minister of Education: As I advised in my previous answer, agreement has been reached between the NJC and Trade Union Side on the rates of pay applicable from 1 April 2009.

Éilítear ar gach comhlacht poiblí, lena n-áirítear Comhlachtaí Neamhrannacha Poiblí, pro forma théarmaí tagartha pá agus teimpléad chás gnó a chur isteach le haghaidh cheadú an Aire. Mar aitheantas ar na deacrachtaí a bhíodh ag na Boird roimh bhunú an Údaráis um Oideachas agus Scileanna, d'aontaigh mo chuid feidhmeannach réimse socrúithe speisialta chun an t-ualach riaracháin a éascú.

All public bodies, including NDPBs, are required to submit a pay remit pro forma and business case template for Ministerial approval. In recognition of the difficulties which the Boards may experience in advance of the establishment of ESA my officials have agreed a series of special arrangements to ease the administrative burden. In particular Boards will not have to complete the pay remit pro-forma or supply 2008/09 outturn details for administrative staff included in their NJC remit.

I trust that this arrangement will assist with the speedy completion of the NJC award to Board staff as once the relevant approvals are secured the Boards can proceed to implement the award.

Private Finance Initiatives

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of Private Finance Initiatives her Department has entered into with the private sector in the last three years; (ii) the education capital build projects being carried out under Private Finance Initiative contracts; and (iii) the cost of these projects, including payments that will be made to private contractors over the lifetime of the contracts. (AQW 2772/10)

Minister of Education: Ní raibh baint ag mo Roinn le haon Thionscnamh Airgeadais Phríobháideach ar bith le soláthróirí san earnáil phríobháideach. Is iad na hÚdaráis Scoile a aontaíonn ar chonarthaí Thionscnamh Airgeadais Phríobháideach le hoibreoir na comhpháirtíochta príobháidí poiblí. Sna trí bliana a chuaigh thart, bhí baint ag Údaráis Scoile le 6 chonradh a chuimsíonn tógáil 14 scoile.

My Department has not entered into any Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs) with private sector providers. PFI contracts are entered into between School Authorities and the Public Private Partnership (PPP) operator. In the last three years School Authorities have entered into 6 contracts covering the construction of 14 schools. A list of all projects and schools procured to date under PFI/PPP is set out below, together with the projected cost of the annual unitary charge across the lifetime of the contract. The unitary charge payable to the PPP operator covers the capital cost of the school, together with facilities management and planned and reactive maintenance.

Project	Current Position	Unitary Charge across lifetime of contract (£m)
Drumglass High School, Dungannon	Open	£29m
Wellington/Balmoral Project		
Wellington College, Belfast; Former Balmoral High School Premises & Regional Training Unit	Open	£27m
St Genevieve's High School, Belfast	Open	£71m
South Eastern Education and Library Board Project		
Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College; Nendrum College, Comber	Open	£154m
Holy Cross College, Strabane	Open	£121m
Derry Diocese Project		
St Cecilia's College, Derry; St Mary's College, Derry	Under Construction	£146m
Down and Connor, De La Salle Project		
St Mary's Primary School, Portglenone;	Under Construction	£201m
St Joseph's Primary school, Carryduff;		
Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock;		
St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick		
Belfast Education and Library Board Strategic Partnering Project Phase 1		
Orangefield Primary School;	Open	£444m
Ashfield Girls' High School;	Open	
Belfast Model School for Girls;	Under construction	
Belfast Boys' Model School;	Under construction	
Grosvenor Grammar	Under construction	

Vacant School Places

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education how many vacant school places there have been within the Irish-medium sector in each of the last three years. (AQW 2897/10)

Minister of Education: Seo a leanas líon na n-áiteanna folmha scoile in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta i ngach bliain le trí bliana anuas:

The number of vacant school places within the Irish-medium sector in each of the last three years is as follows:

Year	Approved Enrolment Number	Actual Enrolment	Places Available
2008/09	3360	2575	785
2007/08	3210	2525	685
2006/07	2946	2293	653

Figures are for Irish-medium schools only. Pupils accepted into Irish-medium units within other schools are counted within the school's approved admissions and enrolment numbers.

The Irish Medium sector is a growing sector despite the demographic downturn.

School Board of Governors

Mr W Irwin asked the Minister of Education between 2005 and 2009 (i) how many controlled schools had a disbarred company director on the Board of Governors; and (ii) of these schools, how many had a disbarred company director as the Chair of the Board. (AQW 2902/10)

Minister of Education: Ní choinníonn an Roinn ná ní choinníonn na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an t-eolas seo.

Neither the Department nor the Education and Library Boards hold this information.

The disbarment of a company director would not necessarily render a person ineligible to hold the position of a school governor unless the disbarment was due to bankruptcy or a criminal conviction. There are provisions in the schemes of management for grant-aided schools that disqualify existing governors from office on the basis of bankruptcy or debt and criminal conviction in particular circumstances.

If any Member is aware of information which indicates that a school governor should be disqualified from office, it would be helpful for me to know the relevant details.

Teachers Transferring to Another School

Mr W Irwin asked the Minister of Education how many teachers in controlled schools have transferred to a post in another school without the post being advertised, in the last twelve months; and of this number how many were transferred for reasons other than the impending redundancy of the transferring teachers. (AQW 3003/10)

Minister of Education: Tá tugtha le fios ag na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne dom gur aistrigh 33 múinteoir i scoileanna rialaithe le dhá mhí dhéag anuas chuig post ar scoil eile gan an post sin a bheith fógartha; agus, as an líon seo, níor aistríodh múinteoir ar bith ar chúis ar bith ach amháin nuair a bhí an múinteoir a bhí á aistriú ar tí éirí as ar iomarcaíocht.

I have been informed by the Education and Library Boards that in the last twelve months 33 teachers in controlled schools have transferred to a post in another school without the post being advertised; and of this number none was transferred for a reason other than the impending redundancy of the transferring teacher.

Employing authorities are legally required to endeavour to avoid compulsory redundancies. In order to achieve this, they will actively facilitate transferred redundancy by identifying volunteers to change places with teachers facing redundancy, subject to acceptance by the Board of Governors. In these circumstances there is no vacant post to advertise.

Letters in Irish

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) how many letters her Department received written in Irish only; and (ii) the cost of responding to these letters in Irish, in each of the last three years. (AQW 3006/10)

Minister of Education:

(i) The table below details the number of letters the Department received written in Irish only.

2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
6	53	25

(ii) This information is not held.

Sa bhliain 2008, d'earcaigh an Roinn beirt Oifigeach Gaeilge chun úsáid na Gaeilge sa Roinn a éascú. Glacann na hOifigigh seo mar chúram réimse dualgas, lena n-áirítear obair aistriúcháin phráinnigh. Ní ríomhtar ar leithligh costais ar na tascanna sonracha seo a dhéanamh.

In 2008 the Department recruited two Irish Language Staff Officers to facilitate its use of Irish. These officers undertake a range of duties, including urgent translation work. The costs incurred in carrying out specific tasks are not separately calculated.

Their duties also include responding to letters, answering telephone calls, attending meetings and conferences, helping with speeches to be delivered to the Irish Medium sector and carrying out outreach work with this sector.

Irish Language

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Education why her Department dedicates significant resources to the Irish language when according to her own figures there are 167,490 people with some knowledge of Irish and only 75,125, from a population of 1.77 million, who are able to speak or read Irish. (AQW 3007/10)

Minister of Education: Irish is the native language of Ireland. There are a significant and growing number of Irish speakers throughout Ireland, with an increasing demand for Irish medium education. The administrative use of Irish in my Department reflects the need to communicate with Irish speakers in their language of choice.

Tá ceangal ar ranna rialtais cloí le riachtanais na Cairte Eorpaí do Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh. Tá “stádas Páirt III” ag an Ghaeilge sa Chairt. Is é is aidhm don Pháirt III ná úsáid theangacha réigiúnacha nó mionlaigh a chur chun cinn sa saol poiblí. Tá oibleagáidí reachtúla ag mo Roinn faoi Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta “i ndáil le héagsúlacht teanga, ar a n-áirítear... an Ghaeilge” agus faoi Chomhaontú Chill Rímhinn don ghá atá ann “le forbairt na Gaeilge a fheabhsú agus a chosaint.” Tá sé de rún agam m’oibleagáidí i dtaca leis seo a chomhlíonadh.

There are obligations on all government departments to adhere to the requirements of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Irish has “Part III status” in the Charter. Part III aims to promote the use of regional or minority languages in public life.. My Department also has statutory duties under the Good Friday Agreement “in relation to linguistic diversity, including... the Irish language” and under the St Andrew’s Agreement in relation to the need to “enhance and protect the development of the Irish language”. I intend to meet my obligations in this regard.

Cost of Irish Translation

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Education what is the cost of (i) Irish translation of letters and correspondence to primary schools and parents of children; (ii) providing Irish language material, backdrops and memorabilia during Ministerial visits; and (iii) the cost of Irish translation at all meetings for (a) the last financial year; and (b) this financial year to date. (AQW 3009/10)

Minister of Education: Ba é costas ar litreacha agus comhfhreagras a aistriú a cuireadh chuig bunscoileanna agus tuismitheoirí na bpáistí don bhliain airgeadais seo a chuaigh thart ná £16,668. Bailítear an t-eolas seo ar bhonn bliantúil agus, mar sin de, níl sé ar fáil don bhliain airgeadais seo go dáta. Tá beirt Oifigeach Gaeilge fostaithe ag an Roinn chun úsáid na Gaeilge sa Roinn a éascú. Glacann na hOifigigh seo mar chúram réimse

dualgas, lena n-áirítear freastal ar chruinnithe a stiúrtar as Gaeilge. Ní ríomhtar ar leithligh costais ar na tascanna sonracha seo a dhéanamh.

The cost of Irish translations of letters and correspondence to primary schools and parents of children for the last financial year was £16,668. The information is collected on an annual basis and is therefore not available for this financial year to date.

The Department employs two Irish Language Staff Officers to facilitate its use of Irish. These officers have a range of duties, including attending meetings held in Irish. The costs incurred in carrying out specific tasks are not separately calculated.

No cost has been incurred in providing Irish language material, backdrops and memorabilia during Ministerial visits in the last financial year or in this financial year to date.

South Eastern Education and Library Board

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Education how she intends to recognise the many years of service given by members of the South Eastern Education and Library Board. [R] (AQW 3026/10)

Minister of Education: Tugadh cuireadh d'ionadaithe ó na heagraíochta oidhreachta go léir san oideachas, lena n-áirítear baill de Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt, le freastal ar fháiltiú i bhFoirgnimh na Párlaiminte ar 9 Nollaig 2009 chun aitheantas a thabhairt do sheirbhís na mball agus na foirne don phobal a chuir le soláthar oideachais le linn na mblianta fada.

Representatives of all the legacy organisations in education, including members of the South-Eastern Education and Library Board, have been invited to a reception in Parliament Buildings on 9 December 2009 to recognise the service to the community of the members and staff who have contributed to the delivery of education over many years.

Reception to be held at Parliament Buildings

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Education if the decision to exclude members of the South Eastern Education and Library Board from the reception to be held at Parliament Buildings was taken on the advice of departmental officials. [R] (AQW 3027/10)

Minister of Education: Toimhdím go bhfuil an Comhalta ag tagairt don fháiltiú atá pleanáilte do 9 Nollaig 2009 i bhFoirgnimh na Párlaiminte le aitheantas a thabhairt do ranníocaíocht ball agus foirne de na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne agus d'eagraíochtaí oidhreachta eile san earnáil oideachais. Tá mé sásta le dearbhú gur tugadh cuireadh do bhaill de Bhord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt le freastal ar an fháiltiú seo.

I presume the reception to which the Member is referring is that planned for 9 December 2009 in Parliament Buildings to mark the contribution of members of education and library boards and other legacy organisations to the work of the education sector.

I am pleased to confirm that members of the South-Eastern Education and Library Board have been invited to this reception.

Epilepsy Charities

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Education to detail any meetings she has held with epilepsy charities in the last 12 months. (AQW 3041/10)

Minister of Education: My Department has undertaken a Review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion to address a range of issues associated with the current special educational needs framework. The Review aims to ensure that every child and young person who faces a barrier to learning is given a fair and equal chance and is provided with the necessary support as early as possible to help them achieve their full potential.

Le 12 mí anuas, ní raibh an deis agam a bhualadh le haon charthanas titimis, ach chuirfinn fáilte roimh chuireadh dá mba mhaith le grúpa ar bith bualadh liom chun plé a dhéanamh ar fhadhbanna roimh pháistí agus daoine óga a bhfuil titimeas acu ar scoil.

In the last 12 months, I have not had the opportunity to meet with any epilepsy charities but if any epilepsy groups/charities would like to meet with the Department's Special Education Needs and Inclusion team, they would be happy to facilitate this.

Department's Headed Paper

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Education why Irish appears first (on the left-hand side) on her Department's headed paper, and in making this decision whether account was taken to the fact that English is the first language of Northern Ireland. (AQW 3044/10)

Minister of Education: Irish is the native language of Ireland. There are a significant and growing number of Irish speakers throughout Ireland. I view a bilingual format as a sensible and fair way of affording equal prominence to both the Irish and English languages.

Léiríonn úsáid riaracháin na Gaeilge i mo Roinn an ceangal atá ar ranna rialtais cloi le riachtanais na Cairte Eorpaí do Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh. Tá oibleagáidí reachtúla ag mo Roinn fosta faoi Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta "i ndáil le héagsúlacht teanga, ar a n-áirítear... an Ghaeilge" agus faoi Chomhaontú Chill Rímhinn don ghá atá ann "le forbairt na Gaeilge a fheabhsú agus a chosaint." Tá sé de rún agam m'oibleagáidí i dtaca leis seo a chomhlíonadh.

The administrative use of Irish in my Department reflects the obligation on all government departments to adhere to the requirements of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. My Department also has duties under the Good Friday Agreement "in relation to linguistic diversity, including... the Irish language" and under the St Andrew's Agreement in relation to the need to "enhance and protect the development of the Irish language". I intend to meet my obligations in this regard.

Cost Irish Language Officer Attending Meetings in Irish

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the cost, per meeting, of her Department's Irish Language Officer attending meetings held in Irish; and (ii) how many meetings have been held solely in Irish. (AQW 3049/10)

Minister of Education:

- (i) Fostaíonn an Roinn beirt Oifigeach Gaeilge chun úsáid na Gaeilge sa Roinn a éascú. Tá réimse dualgas ag na hOifigigh seo, lena n-áirítear freastal ar chruinnithe a stiúrtar as Gaeilge, nascadh le pobal na Gaeilge, Ceisteanna Tionóil a aistriú, glaonna gutháin a ghlacadh, agus freastal ar sheoltaí. Ní ríomhtar ar leithligh costais ar thascanna sonracha a dhéanamh.
- (ii) Bhí mórán cruinnithe agam trí mheán na Gaeilge. D'fhreastail Oifigigh Ghaeilge ar roinnt cruinnithe agus mise a d'fhreastail ar chruinnithe eile. Stiúradh cruinnithe eile i bhformáid dhátheangach, cionn is gur aontaigh Gaeilgeoirí go cineálta ar an chruinniú a stiúradh as Béarla ionas go mbeadh feidhmeannaigh ón Roinn in ann páirt a ghlacadh.
- (i) The Department employs two Irish Language Staff Officers to facilitate its use of Irish. These officers have a range of duties including attending meetings held in Irish, engaging with the Irish language community, translating Assembly Questions, taking phone calls and attending launches. The costs incurred in carrying out specific tasks are not separately calculated.
- (ii) I have had many meetings through the medium of Irish. Some with Irish Language Officers in attendance and others attended by me. Other meetings were in bilingual format, due to the fact that the Irish speakers kindly agreed to the meeting being mainly in English so that officials from the Department could take part.

Costs of Translation

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education if she will take steps to reduce the amount of money her Department spends on translating documents into other languages, in particular Irish and Ulster-Scots. (AQW 3063/10)

Minister of Education: As Minister of Education I am required to meet the language needs of all pupils attending our schools. Many pupils, such as newcomer children, do not have English as their first language. For

those whose first language is Irish, there is a range of Irish medium school settings. These children and their parents have the right to receive a range of communications and documentation from the Department in their native language. I therefore believe that current expenditure levels on translations are appropriate.

Cruthaíonn an Chairt Eorpach do Theangacha Réigiúnda nó Mionlaigh oibleagáidí ar an rialtas teangacha, cosúil leis an Ghaeilge agus le hAlbainis Uladh, a chosaint agus a chur chun cinn mar chuid dár n-oidhreacht chultúrtha. Tá oibleagáidí reachtúla agam faoi Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta agus faoi Chomhaontú Chill Rímhinn agus tá sé de rún agam iad a chomhlíonadh.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages places obligations on government to protect and promote minority languages. I also have statutory duties under the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrew's Agreement and I intend to fulfil these.

Education and Skills Authority

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education, in the event of the Education and Skills Authority not being in place by 1 January 2010, if the current members of the Education and Library Boards will remain in post. (AQW 3064/10)

Minister of Education: Dhíreoinn aird an Chomhalta ar an fhreagra a thug mé do Chomhaltaí Aontroim Theas agus Dhún Theas, Danny Kinahan agus Leslie Cree, ar Cheisteanna an Tionóil 451/10 agus 459/10 faoi seach, a foilsíodh sa Tuairisc Oifigiúil ar 30 Samhain 2009.

I refer the Member to the answer I gave to the Members for South Antrim and North Down, Danny Kinahan and Leslie Cree to AQOs 451/10 and 459/10 respectively, published in the Official Report on 30 November 2009.

10-day Prompt Payment Scheme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Education what action she is taking to ensure that the 10-day prompt payment scheme is passed on to sub-contractors by businesses who are receiving direct payments from the Department and its related public bodies. (AQW 3078/10)

Minister of Education: Tugaim tacaíocht iomlán don sprioc prapíocaíochta le híocaíochtaí a dhéanamh laistigh de dheich lá oibre, go háirithe le linn an choir chun donais eacnamaíoch. D^á eisigh mo Roinn treoir go himmheanach agus do na comhlachtaí a mhaoiníonn sí araon i mí na Nollag 2008 a chuir béim ar thábhacht na sprice nua seo agus ar an riachtanas lena chinntiú go bpróiseáltar íocaíochtaí gan moill mhíchuí.

I strongly support the prompt payment target of making payments within ten working days, particularly during the current economic downturn. My Department issued guidance both internally and to its funded bodies in December 2008 stressing the importance of this new target and the need to ensure payments are processed without undue delay. The Department continues to monitor its performance and that of its funded bodies on a monthly basis and takes whatever corrective action is appropriate to ensure payments are processed as efficiently as possible.

The ten day prompt payment scheme is a requirement for all public sector organisations. However, the Department has limited influence over the practices of private sector organisations in terms of their payment processes but wherever possible would encourage the early settlement of payments.

Department's Irish Language Policy

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Education if an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on her Department's Irish Language policy; and what impact implementing this policy has had on the workload of civil servants. (AQW 3137/10)

Minister of Education: Is beart intreach ionannais é an Polasaí Gaeilge, a léiríonn mo thiomantas do mheas a thabhairt don Ghaeilge agus é a thaispeáint ar bhealach cuí i gcumarsáidí na Roinne. Tá líon na nGaeilgeoirí ag dul i méid sna scoileanna agus tá an ceart ag na daltaí sin agus a dtuismitheoirí cumarsáidí a fháil uaim ina gcéad teanga faoin Chairt Eorpach do Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh.

The Irish Language Policy is an intrinsic equality measure, detailing my commitment to respect the Irish language and reflect it in an appropriate way in Departmental communications.

There are a growing number of Irish speakers in our schools and those pupils and their parents have the right to receive communications from me in their first language under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The Charter places obligations on government to protect and promote languages such as Irish as part of our cultural heritage and I have met with the Committee of Experts of the Council of Europe (COMEX) to discuss how best to meet these obligations. I also have statutory duties under the Good Friday Agreement and I intend to fulfil these.

The Irish Language Policy of the Department of Education is part and parcel of the everyday work the Department carries out.

Translation

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Education why her Department's two Irish Language officers have been unable to translate English to Irish and Irish to English; and why this has resulted in translation work being passed to a contractor at a cost of 40 pence a word. (AQW 3139/10)

Minister of Education: Déanann beirt Oifigigeach Gaeilge na Roinne réimse dualgas, lena n-áirítear aistriúcháin a sholáthar ó Béarla go Gaeilge agus ó Ghaeilge go Béarla. Cé go mbaineann na haistriúcháin seo faoi riachtanais phráinneacha na Roinne amach, déantar gnáthaistriúcháin ag Central Translations Ltd, a bhfuil conradh leis an Státseirbhís ar fad aige ar aistriúcháin Ghaeilge a sholáthar. Is é costas ar na haistriúcháin trí Central Translations Ltd ná 12 pingin san fhocal.

The Department's two Irish Language Staff Officers undertake a range of duties to facilitate its use of Irish, including providing translations from English to Irish and Irish to English. While these translations address the Department's urgent needs, routine translations are carried out by Central Translations Ltd, which holds the Civil Service-wide contract for carrying out Irish translations. The cost of translations through Central Translations Ltd is 12 pence per word.

Education and Skills Authority

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Education what plans she has to (i) retain administration posts in Omagh; and (ii) develop Omagh as an important location for the delivery of education services, once the Education and Skills Authority is established. (AQW 3189/10)

Minister of Education: Tá mórimpleachtaí eacnamaíochta agus sóisialta ag baint le suíomh post san earnáil phoiblí ar phobail áitiúla agus, mar sin de, is tábhachtach go bhfuil gach cinneadh cothrom feasach.

The location of public sector jobs has significant economic and social implications for local communities and it is therefore essential that decisions are objective, fair and well informed.

To date no decisions have been taken on the overall location strategy for the Education and Skills Authority however as previously advised any decisions will be subject to equality screening and an Equality Impact Assessment and consultation where appropriate. Furthermore, decisions will be taken in line with the guiding principles for RPA location. This process will allow Ministers to look at all of the location decisions on the many sectors affected by the RPA at one time.

Pupil-to-Teacher Ratio

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education what the average pupil-to-teacher ratio is in primary schools in each Education and Library Board area. (AQW 3195/10)

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

The information requested is detailed in the table below.

PUPIL: TEACHER RATIOS IN GRANT-AIDED PRIMARY¹ SCHOOLS, 2008/09

Education & Library Board	Pupil: Teacher Ratio in primary ¹ schools
Belfast	20.0
Western	20.3
North Eastern	20.5
South Eastern	20.7
Southern	20.3
Total	20.4

¹ includes preparatory departments of grammar schools

Pupil-to-Teacher Ratio

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education what the average pupil-to-teacher ratio is in post-primary schools in each Education and Library Board area. (AQW 3196/10)

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

The information requested is detailed in the table below.

PUPIL: TEACHER RATIOS IN GRANT-AIDED POST-PRIMARY¹ SCHOOLS, 2008/09

Education & Library Board	Pupil: Teacher Ratio in post-primary ¹ schools
Belfast	14.4
Western	14.5
North Eastern	14.4
South Eastern	14.4
Southern	14.6
Total	14.5

¹ secondary and grammar schools

Pupil-to-Teacher Ratios

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education how the pupil-to-teacher ratios compare to schools in (i) England; (ii) Scotland; (iii) Wales; and (iv) the Republic of Ireland. (AQW 3198/10)

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

The information requested is given in the table below.

PUPIL: TEACHER RATIOS, 2008-09

Sector	North of Ireland	England	Scotland	Wales	South of Ireland
Primary	20.4	21.4	15.7	20.0	15.9
Post-primary	14.5	15.9	11.7	16.4	- ¹
Overall	16.7	16.8	12.9	17.9	- ¹

¹ Post-primary teacher statistics for 2008-09 not yet published

Teacher Demand Model

Mr K Robinson asked the Minister of Education if the ‘Teacher Demand Model’ takes account of teachers registered with the General Teaching Council of Northern Ireland who are unable to find permanent teaching posts. (AQW 3253/10)

Minister of Education: Is tábhachtach a rá: nach bhfuil gach múinteoir atá cláraithe leis an Chomhairle Ginearálta Múinteoireachta anseo ar lorg fostaíochta buaine; agus nach gcoinníonn an GTCNI an t-eolas ar líon na múinteoirí atá ar lorg fostaíochta buaine go sonrach.

It is important to note that: not all teachers registered with the General Teaching Council here (GTCNI) are seeking permanent employment; and, that the GTCNI does not hold information on the number of teachers who are specifically seeking permanent employment.

However, the Teacher Demand Model which provides a statistical estimation of overall initial teacher education intake requirements utilises a range of statistical assumptions based on data obtained from a number of sources, including data provided by the GTCNI.

The GTCNI provides data on the employment position of recent graduates and this data is used to provide an assumption on the potential number of recent graduates who may be successful in filling future vacancies.

The Teacher Demand Model together with a range of other statistical information is used to inform the annual process of determining intakes to initial teacher education. This process is also informed by current and future policy changes in this process.

Civil Servants’ Earnings

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 2953/10, to detail (i) the job titles; (ii) pay scale; and (iii) the total amount earned by the civil servants in question. (AQW 3260/10)

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

The information requested is set out in the table below:

Job Title	Pay Scale	Total amount earned
Permanent Secretary	£98,059 - £205,000	£557,049
Chief Executive (Designate), Education and Skills Authority	£98,059 - £205,000	
Deputy Secretary	£81,600 - £160,000	
Deputy Secretary	£81,600 - £160,000	
Chief Inspector, Education and Training Inspectorate	£81,600 - £160,000	

Le Club Francais

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister of Education if she will acknowledge the work of Le Club Francais in delivering French and Spanish language lessons to primary school children; and if her Department would consider working with Le Club Francais in the future. (AQW 3264/10)

Minister of Education: I believe passionately about the importance of giving our children and young people the opportunity to learn another language in school here, so I fully acknowledge the work Le Club Francais does in delivering French and Spanish to our young people.

Ní mholann an Roinn Oideachais, áfach, na hábhair a úsáideann scoileanna chun ábhar ar bith sa churaclam a theagasc agus tá sé de dhualgas ar gach scoil aonair ábhair acmhainne a roghnú le cúnamh a thabhairt do mhúinteoirí chun an curaclam a sholáthar.

However, the Department of Education does not prescribe or recommend the materials to be used by schools in the teaching of any subject in the curriculum and the choice of resource materials to assist teachers in delivering the curriculum is a matter for each individual school.

The revised curriculum provides schools with greater flexibility to offer subjects that meet the needs of their pupils. At primary level, there is a range of existing good practice in language teaching here, and in order to encourage primary schools to offer the learning of an additional language, I introduced the Primary Languages Programme, which provides peripatetic support for primary schools wishing to deliver Spanish, Irish and Polish.

HIV/AIDS Awareness Programmes

Mr M Durkan asked the Minister of Education what HIV/AIDS awareness programmes are provided in schools. (AQW 3267/10)

Minister of Education: Ní éilítear ar scoileanna cláir fheasachta faoi VEID/shiondróm easpa imdhíonachta faighte a thairiscint. Cuimsíonn an curaclam athbhreithnithe fócas ar an eolas agus ar na scileanna a thabhairt do dhaoine óga a bheidh de dhíth orthu chun gaolmhaireachtaí sláintiúla a fhorbairt. In iarbhunscoileanna, caithfear deiseanna a thabhairt do dhaltáí chun impleachtaí mothúchánacha, sóisialta agus morálta a bhaineann le luathghníomhaíocht ghnéis a iniúchadh agus chun na fachtóirí a fhéadfar dul i gcion ar a sláinte féin agus ar shláinte dhaoine eile a thuiscint, a aithint agus a bhainistiú.

There is no specific requirement for schools to offer HIV/Aids awareness programmes. Rather, the revised curriculum includes a focus on giving young people the knowledge and skills they need to build healthy relationships. In post-primary schools, pupils must be given opportunities to explore the emotional, social and moral implications of early sexual activity and to understand, recognise and manage factors that may influence their health and the health of others.

This is normally done in the context of a school's written Relationships and Sexuality Policy which should be subject to consultation with parents and should be endorsed by a school's Board of Governors.

Guidance material from the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) advises schools that there are many resources (including specific resources addressing HIV/Aids and sexual health) available for the teaching of RSE. The guidance included a checklist to help schools to select the most appropriate resources. In addition, schools can use other resources, programmes or services provided by external organisations to support their curricular provision. It is of course a matter for individual schools, in the context of their RSE policy and the age and maturity of their pupils, to determine what resources they use.

Every School a Good School - The Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion

Mr F Cobain asked the Minister of Education what will be the status of existing statements of special educational needs following implementation of the proposed policy 'Every School a Good School - The Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion' (AQW 3277/10)

Minister of Education: Rinne an Roinn Oideachais athbhreithniú beartais ar Riachtanais Speisialta Oideachais agus Chuimsiú agus d'eisigh sí doiciméad a leagann amach tograí ardleibhéil i mí Lúnasa 2009 le haghaidh breithnithe phoiblí. Mairfidh an próiseas comhairlithe go dtí 31 Eanáir 2010, agus breithneoidh an Roinn go hiomlán na freagairtí a fhaigheann sí i ndiaidh an dáta seo.

The Department of Education has undertaken a policy review of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Inclusion and issued for consultation, in August 2009, a document setting out high level proposals for public consideration. The formal consultation period will run to 31 January 2010, after which the Department will fully consider the responses received. One of a range of proposals is to introduce a Coordinated Support Plan for children and young people with complex or multiple needs and a Personal Learning Plan for all other SEN children to focus on setting and monitoring outcomes for children, a process which it is considered is not adequately captured in the current system. After all responses to the policy proposals have been fully considered and decisions made on the proposals that are to be taken forward, the necessary lower level detail of the policy will be developed. One matter that will be fully explored in the detailed outworking of the responses is that of the future status of statements of special education needs.

Parents of children and young people with SEN will continued to be able to request an Education and Library Board to undertake a statutory assessment of their child's needs, that might lead to the drafting of a statement of special educational needs, within the existing SEN framework, until any new policy is implemented.

Every School a Good School - The Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion

Mr F Cobain asked the Minister of Education whether children with existing statements of special educational needs will be entitled to an immediate assessment for the new Co-ordinated Support Plan following implementation of the proposed policy 'Every School a Good School - The Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion' (AQW 3278/10)

Minister of Education: Rinne an Roinn Oideachais athbhreithniú beartais ar Riachtanais Speisialta Oideachais agus Chuimsiú agus d'eisigh sí doiciméad a leagann amach tograí ardleibhéil i mí Lúnasa 2009 le haghaidh breithnithe phoiblí. Mairfidh an próiseas comhairlithe go dtí 31 Eanáir 2010, agus breithneoidh an Roinn go hiomlán na freagairtí a fhaigheann sí i ndiaidh an dáta seo.

The Department of Education has undertaken a policy review of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Inclusion and issued for consultation, in August 2009, a document setting out high level proposals for public consideration. The formal consultation period will run to 31 January 2010, after which the Department will fully consider the responses received. One of a range of proposals is to introduce a Coordinated Support Plan for children and young people with complex or multiple needs to focus on setting and monitoring outcomes for children, a process which it is considered is not adequately captured in the current system. The consultation document also proposes, at a high level, transitional arrangements that would require the Education and Skills Authority, within a period of two years from the operative date of any new framework, to review those children in receipt of a statement and consider whether their needs should be met in future through a Co-ordinated Support Plan. After all responses to the policy proposals have been fully considered and decisions made on the proposals that are to be taken forward, the necessary lower level detail of the policy will be developed, which would include detailed transitional arrangements.

Every School a Good School - The Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion

Mr F Cobain asked the Minister of Education how the delay in the creation of the Education and Skills Authority will affect the implementation of the proposed policy 'Every School a Good School - The Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion'. (AQW 3279/10)

Minister of Education: Tá comhairliú formálta á dhéanamh ar na tograí ardleibhéil sa bheartas Gach Scoil ina Scoil Mhaith: An Bealach chun Tosaigh do Riachtanais Speisialta Oideachais agus Chuimsiú agus mairfidh sé go dtí 31 Eanáir 2010. Ina dhiaidh sin, breithneoidh an Roinn Oideachais go hiomlán na freagairtí a fhaigheann sí agus na saincheistanna a ardaíodh, agus comhlánóidh sí tuairisc a achoimríonn na freagairtí.

The high level policy proposals contained in Every School a Good School: The Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion are currently undergoing formal consultation up to 31 January 2010. Following that, the Department of Education will consider in detail the responses received and the issues that have been raised, and complete a report summarising the responses. It will only be at that stage that the detail of the policies to be taken forward can be discussed with stakeholders, agreed and subsequently implemented. This process will necessarily take some time. Therefore given the level of interest in the Review, and the complexity of the issues under consideration, I would not anticipate that the delay in the creation of the Education and Skills Authority will adversely affect the implementation of any agreed policies resulting from the Review.

Selection of Councillors for the Transitional Education Boards

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education how councillors will be selected for the Transitional Education Boards. (AQW 3280/10)

Minister of Education: Ceapfar comhairleoirí de réir na reachtaíochta láithrí a shonraíonn go gcineann an Roinn líon iomlán na gcomhairleoirí; go gcaithfear ionadaí ó gach comhairle ina limistéar a bheith ag gach Bord; agus go léiríonn ballraíocht na gcomhairleoirí, chomh gar agus is féidir, dhá chúigiú na ballraíochta iomláine. Scríobh mé chuig na comhairlí ceantair le hiarratais a iarraidh. Iarrfar ar iarrthóirí foirm iaratais a chomhlánú agus riachtanais ar leith a chomhlíonadh le go mbreithneofar iad le haghaidh ceapacháin. Cinnfidh mé ceapacháin ar na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne ó na hiarratasóirí incháilithe.

Councillors will be appointed using the existing legislation which states that the total number is determined by the Department; that each Board must have a representative of each Council in its area; and that the councillor

membership must constitute as nearly as possible to two-fifths of the total membership. I have written to the District Councils to request nominations. Candidates will be asked to complete an application form and meet certain requirements to be considered for appointment. I will decide on appointments to the ELBs from the eligible candidates.

National Federation of Sub-Postmasters Report ‘Six Steps of a Sustainable Post Office Network’

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of Education for her assessment of the recommendations aimed at devolved institutions and local councils in the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters Report ‘Six Steps of a Sustainable Post Office Network’ (March 2009); and whether the Department has identified how it can make better use of the Post Office network. (AQW 3281/10)

Minister of Education: Admhaím na moltaí dírithe ar institúidí déabhlóidithe agus ar chomhairlí áitiúla i dTuairisc Chónaidhm Náisiúnta na bhFomháistrí Poist “Sé Chéim de líonra Oifig Phoist Inbhuanaithe” (Márta 2009). Bhreithnigh mo Roinn úsáid a bhaineann muid as an líonra Oifig Phoist agus úsáideann sí seirbhísí poist ar bhonn laethúil. Tá mé sásta go n-úsáideann mo Roinn go hiomlán na seirbhísí atá ar fáil chun a riachtanais agus riachtanais ghnó ár gcustaiméirí a bhaint amach.

I acknowledge the recommendations aimed at devolved institutions and local councils in the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters Report “Six Steps of a Sustainable Post Office network” (March 2009). My Department has considered its use of the Post Office Network and avails of postal services on a daily basis. I am content that my Department fully utilises services available to meet its and our customer’s business needs.

Classroom Assistant Job Evaluations

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Education how much money has been (i) set aside; and (ii) spent, to date, on classroom assistant job evaluations. (AQW 3298/10)

Minister of Education: Chuir mo Roinn méideanna suntasacha maoinithe ar fáil do na Boird

(£45m go neasach) maidir leis na costais phá bhreise, lena n-áirítear riaráistí, a thagann ón chleachtadh meastóireachta agus le ceannach amach coinníollacha stairiúla seirbhíse cúntóirí ranga.

My Department has made available significant amounts of funding to the Boards (some £45m) in respect of the additional pay costs, including arrears, arising from the evaluation exercise and to buy out the historical conditions of service of classroom assistants.

The annual allocations to the Boards are outlined below and confirm that to date some £37 million has been allocated to the classroom assistant job evaluations process.

CLASSROOM ASSISTANT JOB EVALUATION ALLOCATIONS YEAR BY YEAR (£000S)

Year	Allocated	NEELB 18.30%	SEELB 24.60%	WELB 20.90%	SELB 22.10%	Total Allocated
2009/10	536	697	937	796	841	3807
2008/09	522	679	913	773	819	3706
Year	BELB 11.93%	NEELB 25.46%	SEELB 21.09%	WELB 15.68%	SELB 25.84%	Total Allocated
2007/08	430	919	761	566	933	3609
2006/07	413	880	729	542	894	3458
2005/06	394	840	696	517	853	3300
2004/05	382	814	675	502	827	3200
2003/04	2040	4057	3058	2466	4379	16000

Classroom Assistant Job Evaluations

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Education how many classroom assistant job evaluations have been held, to date, in Special Education departments regarding a claim for additional special needs, in each of the Education and Library Boards. (AQW 3299/10)

Minister of Education: Thug Príomhfheidhmeannaigh na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne le fios dom líon na bpostmheastóireachtaí chúntóirí ranga i ranna Oideachais Speisialta maidir le héileamh le haghaidh riachtanas breise speisialta. Soláthraíonn an tábla thíos miondealú ar an eolas seo ar bhonn cúig bhoird.

I have been advised by the Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards of the number of classroom assistant job evaluations in Special Education departments regarding a claim for additional special needs. The table below provides a breakdown on a five Board basis.

	No. of Claims	No. Processed
BELB	27	6
NEELB	238	221
SELB	168	127
SEELB	300	230
WELB	214	137

Free School Meals

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Education how many children currently are (i) entitled to; and (ii) receive free school meals. (AQW 3305/10)

Minister of Education: Athraíonn líon na bpáistí a ghlacann béilí scoile ó sheachtain go seachtain. Tugann an t-eolas a bhailítear ag an Daonáireamh Scoile agus ag Daonáireamh na mBéilí Scoile léargas ar líon na bpáistí a ghlac béilí scoile ar an lá a bailíodh eolas daonáirimh. Seo a leanas na figiúirí ó dhaonáireamh Dheireadh Fómhair 2008:

The number of children taking school meals varies from week to week. However, information collected annually from the School Census and School Meals Census provides a snapshot of the numbers taking meals on the day on which census information is gathered. The figures from the October 2008 census were as follows:

	Pupils Entitled To Free School Meals	Pupils Taking Free School Meals
Pupil Numbers	54,076	42,647

The figures exclude pupils in Special Schools.

Transitional Education and Library Boards

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education whether the proposed 21 'other' members of the Transitional Education and Library Boards, as outlined in Appendix A of the statement to the Assembly on 1 December, will be drawn exclusively from existing members of the Education and Library Boards. (AQW 3310/10)

Minister of Education: De réir na reachtaíochta láithrí, beidh mé ag ceapadh daoine a chreidim go bhfuil oiriúnach don cheapachán seo mar gheall ar a suim sna seirbhísí a bhfuil na Boird freagrach astu. Cuimsíonn an chatagóir seo múinteoirí ar seirbhís agus scríobh mé chuig na príomheagraíochtaí múinteoireachta le hainmniúcháin a iarraidh.

In accordance with the existing legislation I will be appointing persons whom I consider suitable for appointment by reason of their interest in the services for which the Boards are responsible. This category of member includes serving teachers and I have written to the main teachers' organisations seeking nominations. An advert seeking expressions of interest is also being placed on the Department's website. These processes are open to existing members on the Boards who wish to continue as a member for the transitional period.

Teacher Appointment Committee

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education how the Teacher Appointment Committee currently operates in the South Eastern Education and Library Board, given that the Board members are suspended. (AQW 3315/10)

Minister of Education: Féadfaidh Coistí Ceapachán Múinteoireachta feidhmeanna a chomhlíonadh thar ceann na, agus in ainm na, mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne. Leagtar amach na feidhmeanna a chomhlíonann a leithéid de Choistí i scéimeanna faoin Alt 153 den Ord um Athleasú Oideachais 1989.

Teaching Appointments Committees may perform functions on behalf of, and in the name of, Education and Library Boards. The functions to be so performed by such Committees are set out in schemes made under Article 153 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989.

In the case of the South Eastern Board, Commissioners have been appointed to perform functions of the Board. However, the Article 153 scheme remains in place, and teaching appointment functions continue to be performed by the Teaching Appointments Committee, which includes members of the Board.

Teacher Appointment Committee

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education how the Teacher Appointment Committee in the South Eastern Education and Library Board will operate from 1 January 2010. (AQW 3316/10)

Minister of Education: Féadfaidh Coistí Ceapachán Múinteoireachta feidhmeanna a chomhlíonadh thar ceann na, agus in ainm na, mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne. Leagtar amach na feidhmeanna a chomhlíonann a leithéid de Choistí i scéimeanna faoin Alt 153 den Ord um Athleasú Oideachais 1989.

Teaching Appointments Committees may perform functions on behalf of, and in the name of, Education and Library Boards. The functions to be so performed by such Committees are set out in schemes made under Article 153 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989.

In the case of the South Eastern Education and Library Board, the scheme will be revised so that, with effect from 1 January 2010, the responsibility for the performance of teaching appointment functions will rest with the Board, and not the Teaching Appointments Committee.

I intend to extend the appointment of Commissioners to perform the Board's functions during the interim period until the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority. Therefore, from 1 January 2010, teaching appointment functions will be performed by Commissioners on behalf of, and in the name of the Board.

Transitional Education and Library Boards

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education what is the legal status of the term 'Transitional Education and Library Board'. (AQW 3317/10)

Minister of Education: Ní úsáidtear an téarma sa reachtaíocht. Ní athraítear stádas dlíthiúil na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne agus na n-eagraíochtaí oideachais eile ag an rialachas eastramhach agus ag na socruithe bainistíochta atá mé ag cur i bhfeidhm.

The term is not used in legislation. The legal status of Education and Library Boards and other education organisations is not altered by the interim governance and management arrangements that I am putting in place.

Transitional Education and Library Boards

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Education if the size and constitution of the 'Transitional Education and Library Boards', as announced to the Assembly on 1 December 2009, is final or whether it is subject to change. (AQW 3319/10)

Minister of Education: Dhíreoinn aird an chomhalta don fhreagra ar AQW 3317/10, inár chuir mé in iúl roinnt mionathruithe a dhéanamh ar bhallraíocht de na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne. Tá sé ar intinn agam na socruithe a d'fhógair mé ar 1 Nollaig a choinneáil faoi athbhreithniú, lena chinntiú go leanfaidh siad de rialachas agus bainistíochta éifeachtach gach eagraíocht oideachais a sholáthar go dtí go gcuirfear an tÚdaras um Oideachas agus Scileanna ar bun.

I refer the member to the answer to AQW 3317/10, in which I indicated some further minor changes to the membership of Education and Library Boards. I intend to keep the arrangements that I announced on 1 December under review, to ensure that they continue to provide effective governance and management of all education organisations pending the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority.

New School Building for Glastry College, Ballyhalbert

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Education when work will start on the new school building for Glastry College, Ballyhalbert. (AQW 3328/10)

Minister of Education: Tá pleanáil don scoil nua le haghaidh Glastry College ag céim phleanála sceitse. Ní féidir tuilleadh pleanála a dhéanamh sula n-aontófar ar bhreithmheas eacnamaíochta athbhreithnithe nuashonraithe a chuir Bord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne an Oirdheiscirt isteach le déanaí. Braitheann dul chun cinn na scéime ar thoradh an athbhreithnithe leanúnaigh atá á dhéanamh ar gach tionscadal caipitil reatha; a chinnteoidh go mbeidh siad go léir comhsheasmhach leis an chreat beartais iomláin agus go mbeidh siad inbhuanaithe inmharthana san fhadthréimhse.

Planning of the proposed new school for Glastry College is at initial sketch plan stage. Further planning cannot progress until a revised and updated Economic Appraisal (EA), recently submitted by the South-Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB), has been agreed.

Progress on the scheme is also dependent on the outcome of the on-going review of all current capital projects; which will ensure that all are consistent with the overall policy framework and will be viable and sustainable in the long term.

Selection of Councillors for the Transitional Education Boards

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Education if councils will be consulted about the selection of councillors for the Transitional Education Boards. (AQW 3336/10)

Minister of Education: Ceapfar comhairleoirí de réir na reachtaíochta láithrí a shonraíonn go gceineann an Roinn líon iomlán na gcomhairleoirí; go gcaithfear ionadaí ó gach comhairle ina limistéar a bheith ag gach Bord; agus go léiríonn ballraíocht na gcomhairleoirí, chomh gar agus is féidir, dhá chúigiú na ballraíochta iomláine. Scríobh mé chuig na comhairlí ceantair le hiarratais a iarraidh. Iarrfar ar iarrthóirí foirm iarratais a chomhlánú agus riachtanais ar leith a chomhlíonadh le go mbreithneofar iad le haghaidh ceapacháin. Cinnfidh mé ceapacháin ar na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne ó na hiarratasóirí incháilithe.

Councillors will be appointed using the existing legislation which states that the total number is determined by the Department; that each Board must have a representative of each Council in its area; and that the councillor membership must constitute as nearly as possible to two-fifths of the total membership. I have written to the District Councils to request nominations. Candidates will be asked to complete an application form and meet certain requirements to be considered for appointment. I will decide on appointments to the ELBs from the eligible candidates.

Grammer School Entrance Test Grade

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 80/10, if her Department can now provide figures to detail the percentage intake of each entrance test grade accepted by each grammar school at the start of the September 2009 school term. (AQW 3385/10)

Minister of Education: Sonraítear sa tábla thíos céadatan iontógála de ghrád scrúdaithe iontrála a ghlac gach scoil ghramadaí leis ag tús téarma scoile Mheán Fómhair 2009. I gcás gach scoile, sloinntear próifíl gráid na ndaltaí a ligeadh mar chéadatan d'iontrálacha faofa iomlána na scoile. Ní chuirtear san áireamh ó na hiomláin chéadatan daltaí nach ndearna na Scrúduithe Aistrithe agus a ligeadh faoi fhorálacha speisialta. Ciallaíonn sé seo nach bhfuil roinnt de na hiontrálacha iomlána sa tábla cothrom le 100%.

The percentage intake of each entrance test grade accepted by each grammar school at the start of the September 2009 school term is detailed in the table below.

In the case of each school the grade profile of pupils admitted has been expressed as a percentage of the total approved admissions to the school.

Pupils who opted out of the Transfer Tests and were admitted under special provisions have been excluded from the percentage totals. This means that some total admissions in this table do not total 100%. Percentages also exclude pupils admitted on appeal. The Board of Governors have the power, for the purposes of admission, to notionally upgrade children whose performance in the transfer tests has been adversely affected due to special circumstances such as medical or other difficulties. In some cases, therefore, a number of pupils with lower test grades have been admitted to a school that is oversubscribed with applications from pupils with higher test grades.

Name of School	A	B1	B2	C1	C2	D
Belfast Education and Library Board						
Grosvenor Grammar School	88%	10%	1%	-	-	-
Wellington College	37%	28%	26%	6%	3%	-
Bloomfield Collegiate School	49%	15%	29%	1%	5%	-
Campbell College	20%	8%	5%	11%	18%	34%
St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School	22%	8%	16%	18%	12%	23%
Methodist College	76%	11%	7%	2%	-	1%
Royal Belfast Academical Institution	39%	13%	27%	11%	5%	4%
Belfast Royal Academy	61%	14%	18%	5%	1%	1%
St Dominic's High School	43%	16%	17%	15%	6%	1%
St Malachy's College	64%	15%	15%	5%	-	1%
Dominican College	53%	12%	13%	16%	4%	1%
Strathearn School	78%	15%	5%	2%	-	-
Rathmore Grammar School	99%	1%	-	-	-	-
Victoria College	35%	12%	17%	25%	2%	5%
Hunterhouse College	16%	16%	23%	32%	11%	2%
Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School	91%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Western Education and Library Board						
Collegiate Grammar School, Enniskillen	61%	14%	8%	14%	3%	-
Limavady Grammar School	47%	12%	15%	10%	14%	2%
Omagh Academy	66%	11%	9%	13%	-	1%
Strabane Grammar School	67%	18%	12%	-	-	3%
Mount Lourdes Grammar School	77%	10%	7%	4%	1%	1%
Portora Royal School	54%	11%	9%	11%	3%	12%
St Michael's College, Enniskillen	43%	17%	11%	15%	8%	4%
Thornhill College, Derry	57%	20%	16%	3%	1%	2%
St Columb's College	53%	13%	17%	13%	1%	2%
Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Omagh	53%	14%	8%	12%	7%	4%
Loreto Grammar School, Omagh	75%	11%	10%	2%	2%	-
Foyle and Londonderry College	41%	11%	8%	17%	12%	11%
Lumen Christi College	98%	2%	-	-	-	-

Name of School	A	B1	B2	C1	C2	D
North-Eastern Education and Library Board						
Ballyclare High School	79%	13%	5%	-	1%	1%
Coleraine High School	32%	17%	14%	19%	12%	5%
Carrickfergus Grammar School	65%	11%	16%	5%	3%	-
Antrim Grammar School	54%	18%	16%	6%	2%	-
Cambridge House Grammar	28%	6%	20%	28%	9%	9%
St Louis' Grammar School, Ballymena	77%	13%	5%	3%	1%	1%
Ballymena Academy	70%	7%	10%	1%	6%	4%
Dalriada School	99%	-	-	-	-	1%
Coleraine Academical Institution	23%	11%	12%	11%	8%	35%
Loreto College	87%	8%	-	1%	-	-
Larne Grammar School	50%	9%	10%	17%	7%	1%
Rainey Endowed School	57%	20%	15%	7%	1%	-
Dominican College	36%	19%	12%	20%	6%	-
Belfast High School	83%	15%	-	-	-	-
St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt	84%	8%	5%	1%	1%	1%
St Macnissi's College	30%	14%	12%	11%	9%	22%
South-Eastern Education and Library Board						
Regent House School	81%	17%	1%	-	-	-
Down High School	84%	12%	2%	-	-	1%
Glenlola Collegiate School	58%	11%	17%	13%	1%	-
Bangor Grammar School	52%	18%	23%	6%	-	1%
Sullivan Upper School	97%	1%	1%	-	-	-
Friends' School	96%	1%	-	-	-	-
Wallace High School	81%	13%	1%	1%	-	1%
Assumption Grammar School, Ballynahinch	58%	18%	18%	3%	1%	1%
St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick	63%	10%	13%	9%	5%	-
Our Lady & St Patrick's College	81%	12%	4%	1%	1%	-
Southern Education and Library Board						
Banbridge Academy	90%	8%	1%	-	-	1%
St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel	53%	17%	13%	8%	5%	4%
Abbey Grammar School, Newry	83%	10%	5%	2%	1%	1%
Our Lady's Grammar School Newry	63%	14%	11%	4%	2%	4%
St Colman's College	70%	7%	14%	2%	3%	-
St Joseph's Grammar School, Donaghmore	75%	18%	4%	2%	-	1%
Sacred Heart Grammar School, Newry	87%	6%	3%	2%	-	2%
The Royal School, Dungannon	41%	6%	9%	13%	6%	16%
The Royal School, Armagh	42%	9%	10%	15%	10%	6%
St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh	35%	7%	16%	10%	13%	19%
St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon	68%	7%	16%	6%	2%	1%

Statutory Assessments of Special Needs

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education if she has instructed the Education and Library Boards to decrease (i) the number of statutory assessments of special needs; and (ii) the number of statements of special educational needs being issued. (AQW 3387/10)

Minister of Education: Níor ordaigh mé do na Boird Oideachais agus Leabharlainne líon na measúnuithe reachtúla ar riachtanais speisialta a laghdú ná líon na ráiteas ar riachtanais speisialta oideachais a eisítear a laghdú.

I have not instructed the Education and Library Boards to decrease either the number of statutory assessments of special needs or the number of statements of special educational needs being issued.

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Epilepsy Charities

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail any meetings he has held with epilepsy charities in the last 12 months (AQW 3043/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning (Sir Reg Empey): In my capacity as Minister for Employment and Learning, I have held no meetings with epilepsy charities in the last 12 months, nor have I been invited to meet with any such groups during this period.

Deane Efficiency Award

Ms A Lo asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why principal lecturers and heads of departments have been excluded from the Deane Efficiency Award in the pay agreement for lecturers in further education. (AQW 3051/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I understand that, in March 2009, the Further Education College Employers tabled a pay offer to the lecturers' trade unions which was subsequently accepted. The terms of this agreement are a matter for the employers and the lecturers' trade unions, alone. The Department's role in the process was to ensure that the pay proposals complied with public sector pay policy.

Consequently, it is a matter for the respective parties, through the established consultation arrangements, to resolve any dispute relating to the pay settlement's implementation.

Deane Efficiency Award

Ms A Lo asked the Minister for Employment and Learning at what stage the employer's were made aware that principal lecturers and heads of departments were going to be excluded from the Deane Efficiency Award in the pay agreement for lecturers in further education. (AQW 3052/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I understand that, in March 2009, the Further Education College Employers tabled a pay offer to the lecturers' trade unions which was subsequently accepted. The terms of this agreement are a matter for the employers and the lecturers' trade unions, alone. The Department's role in the process was to ensure that the pay proposals complied with public sector pay policy.

Consequently, it is a matter for the respective parties, through the established consultation arrangements, to resolve any dispute relating to the pay settlement's implementation.

Deane Efficiency Award

Ms A Lo asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether union and non-union members were informed that principal lecturers and heads of departments were excluded from the Deane Efficiency Award in the pay agreement for lecturers in further education. (AQW 3053/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I understand that, in March 2009, the Further Education College Employers tabled a pay offer to the lecturers' trade unions which was subsequently accepted. The terms of this agreement are a matter for the employers and the lecturers' trade unions, alone. The Department's role in the process was to ensure that the pay proposals complied with public sector pay policy.

Consequently, it is a matter for the respective parties, through the established consultation arrangements, to resolve any dispute relating to the pay settlement's implementation.

Deane Efficiency Award

Ms A Lo asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how his Department will address the current impasse caused by the exclusion of principal lecturers and heads of departments from the Deane Efficiency Award in the pay agreement for lecturers in further education. (AQW 3054/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I understand that, in March 2009, the Further Education College Employers tabled a pay offer to the lecturers' trade unions which was subsequently accepted. The terms of this agreement are a matter for the employers and the lecturers' trade unions, alone. The Department's role in the process was to ensure that the pay proposals complied with public sector pay policy.

Consequently, it is a matter for the respective parties, through the established consultation arrangements, to resolve any dispute relating to the pay settlement's implementation.

10-day Prompt Payment Scheme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action he is taking to ensure that the 10-day prompt payment scheme is passed on to sub-contractors by businesses who are receiving direct payments from the Department and its related public bodies. (AQW 3081/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: For construction contracts, procured through the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) in the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP), main contractors are required to comply with the 'Code of Practice for Government Construction Clients and their Supply Chains'. The Code sets out the core principles that should govern the behaviour of clients, contractors and subcontractors, including the need for fair dealing within the supply chain.

The Procurement Task Group (PTG) of the Construction Industry Forum for Northern Ireland is currently considering the expansion of the 'Code of Practice for Government Construction Clients and their Supply Chains' to include a 'Fair Payment Charter' and to include a requirement that first tier subcontractors provide feedback directly to the Government Construction Client on monthly payment progress from the main contractor to the supply chain. The proposals, to be developed by December 2009, will seek to ensure that main contractors pass on the benefits of prompt payment to subcontractors.

Supplies and services contracts also require main contractors to enter into subcontracts on the same terms and conditions as the main contract. CPD is currently considering if the approach taken in construction contracts would be practicable in supplies and services contracts.

First Year Intake for St Mary's College

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people from (i) a Roman Catholic background; and (ii) a Protestant background were accepted in the first year intake for St Mary's College, in each of the last five years. (AQW 3092/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The number of NI domiciled first year students enrolled at St Mary's University College from (i) a Roman Catholic background; and (ii) a Protestant background, in each of the last five academic years, and for whom religion is known is detailed in the table below:

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
(i) Roman Catholic	300	220	275	335	270
(ii) Protestant	10	5	5	5	5

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes:

- (1) Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5
- (2) The latest available data are for 2007/08.
- (3) Information on religion at St.Mary's University College is only collected for NI domiciled students.
- (4) Religious affiliation is not a mandatory question and therefore can have a high non-response rate. For the period covered above, the non-response rate ranged from 3% to 18%.
- (5) The data for first year students relates to all levels of study i.e. both undergraduate and postgraduate.

Intake for Stranmillis College

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people from (i) a Roman Catholic background; and (ii) a Protestant background were accepted in the first year intake for Stranmillis College, in each of the last five years. (AQW 3105/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The number of NI domiciled first year students enrolled at Stranmillis University College from (i) a Roman Catholic background; and (ii) a Protestant background, in each of the last five academic years, and for whom religion is known is detailed in the table below:

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08(4)
(i) Roman Catholic	65	75	65	55	35
(ii) Protestant	275	285	275	240	55

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes:

- (1) Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5.
- (2) The latest available data are for 2007/08.
- (3) Information on religion at Stranmillis University College is only collected for NI domiciled students.
- (4) Religious affiliation is not a mandatory question and therefore can have a high non-response rate. For the period 2003/04 – 2006/07, the non-response rate ranged from 7% to 18%. In 2007/08 there was an extremely high non-response rate to the religious affiliation question for first year students enrolled at Stranmillis University College (76%). Figures should therefore be viewed in this context.
- (5) The data for first year students relates to all levels of study i.e. both undergraduate and postgraduate.

Post-graduate Places at St Mary's College

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people from (i) a Roman Catholic background; and (ii) a Protestant background were accepted for post-graduate places at St Mary's College, in each of the last five years. (AQW 3106/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The number of NI domiciled first year students enrolled on postgraduate courses at St. Mary's University College from (i) a Roman Catholic background; and (ii) a Protestant background, in each of the last five academic years, and for whom religion is known is detailed in the table below:

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
(i) Roman Catholic	15	20	35	40	45
(ii) Protestant	10	5	5	5	5

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes:

- (1) Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5.
- (2) The latest available data are for 2007/08.
- (3) Information on religion at St.Mary's University College is only collected for NI domiciled students.
- (4) Religious affiliation is not a mandatory question and therefore can have a high non-response rate. For the period covered above, the non-response rate ranged from 6% to 34%.

Post-graduate Places at Stranmillis College

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people from a Roman Catholic background were accepted for post-graduate places at Stranmillis College, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 3107/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The number of NI domiciled first year students enrolled on postgraduate courses at Stranmillis University College from a Roman Catholic background, in each of the last five academic years, and for whom religion is known is detailed in the table below:

	Allocated	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Roman Catholic	20	15	20	15	15

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes:

- (1) Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5.
- (2) The latest available data are for 2007/08.
- (3) Information on religion at Stranmillis University College is only collected for NI domiciled students.
- (4) Religious affiliation is not a mandatory question and therefore can have a high non-response rate. For the period covered above, the non-response rate ranged from 2% to 40%.

Home Student University Fees

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if his Department plans to increase home student university fees after 2010.

(AQW 3118/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: A review of tuition fees and student finance arrangements in Northern Ireland is currently underway chaired independently by Joanne Stuart, the current chair of the Institute of Directors (Northern Ireland Division). A steering group has been established to ensure stakeholder interests are represented as part of this review. Membership of this group includes, amongst others, Queen's University and the University of Ulster.

I have recently received the chairperson's interim report and I am currently considering its findings. I look forward to bringing my interim recommendations to the Committee for Employment and Learning and other stakeholders in due course.

However, a final report cannot be prepared until enrolment data on a three year cohort of students becomes available in January 2010. Following this, a full public consultation exercise on future student finance policy for Northern Ireland is scheduled for early 2010.

Home Student University Fees

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if he has had any discussions with Queen's University or the University of Ulster about increasing home student university fees. (AQW 3119/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: A review of tuition fees and student finance arrangements in Northern Ireland is currently underway chaired independently by Joanne Stuart, the current chair of the Institute of Directors (Northern Ireland Division). A steering group has been established to ensure stakeholder interests are represented as part of this review. Membership of this group includes, amongst others, Queen's University and the University of Ulster.

I have recently received the chairperson's interim report and I am currently considering its findings. I look forward to bringing my interim recommendations to the Committee for Employment and Learning and other stakeholders in due course.

However, a final report cannot be prepared until enrolment data on a three year cohort of students becomes available in January 2010. Following this, a full public consultation exercise on future student finance policy for Northern Ireland is scheduled for early 2010.

Overseas Students

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many overseas students enrolled in (i) universities; and (ii) Further Education Colleges in each of the last five academic years. (AQW 3134/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The number of overseas students enrolled in (i) Northern Ireland Higher Education institutions (NI HEIs); and (ii) Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges (NI FECs), in each of the last five academic years, is detailed in the table below:

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
(i) NI HEIs	1,370	1,415	1,380	1,380	1,310
(ii) NI FECs	145	159	140	160	129

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Further Education Statistical Record (FESR)

Notes:

- (1) HESA figures have been rounded to the nearest 5
- (2) The latest available data are for 2007/08.
- (3) Overseas students are defined as those students who are domiciled outside the EU.

Refusal of Visas

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many overseas applicants have not accepted places (i) in universities; and (ii) in Further Education Colleges, due to the refusal of visas, in each of the last five academic years. (AQW 3135/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Responsibility for issuing visas to facilitate overseas applicants to study at higher and further education institutions in Northern Ireland lies with the United Kingdom Border Agency. As they do not provide information on visa refusals for individual cases to Northern Irish Universities, University Colleges, Further Education Colleges or the Department it is not possible to provide the data requested.

Entry Visas for Students wishing to Study in Northern Ireland

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what actions his Department is taking to liaise with British Embassies and High Commissions to ensure the processing of entry visas for students wishing to study in Northern Ireland universities and colleges. (AQW 3136/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: Non-European Union students wishing to study at Further and Higher Education institutions in Northern Ireland must apply for entry under the United Kingdom (UK) Border Agency's Tier Four Points Based System.

It is the responsibility of the UK Border Agency to process visas for students applying under Tier Four. Visa acceptance and refusal is at the sole discretion of the UK Border Agency and is dependant upon students meeting the full requirements of the Immigration Rules and the Points Based System.

Although immigration is not a devolved matter my Department is kept fully informed of all policy developments regarding the Tier Four system by the UK Border Agency and will where appropriate liaise with colleagues and stakeholders in other UK administrations.

Post-graduate Places at Stranmillis College

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people from a Protestant background were accepted for post-graduate places at Stranmillis College, in each of the last five years (AQW 3142/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The number of NI domiciled first year students enrolled on postgraduate courses at Stranmillis University College from a Protestant background, in each of the last five academic years, and for whom religion is known is detailed in the table below:

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Protestant	25	35	35	40	30

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes:

- (1) Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5
- (2) The latest available data are for 2007/08.
- (3) Information on religion at Stranmillis University College is only collected for NI domiciled students.
- (4) Religious affiliation is not a mandatory question and therefore can have a high non-response rate. For the period covered above, the non-response rate ranged from 2% to 40%.

Further and Higher Education

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline (i) the number of annual taught hours required for a full-time course in Further and Higher Education; (ii) the number of teaching hours, per full-time course, funded by the Department; (iii) whether students at the Belfast Metropolitan College are receiving their full-time complement of taught hours; and (iv) whether time allocated to pastoral care and essential skills is separately funded by his Department; and (v) whether these hours should count towards the number of annual taught hours required for a full-time course. (AQW 3210/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning:

- (i) For recurrent grant funding purposes, a minimum of 450 hours per academic year is required for full time study. A student studying full time provision is in attendance for at least 15 hours and at least 7 morning/afternoon sessions per week, or for more than 21 hours per week with no sessional requirement.
- (ii) The full time programme is not funded on the basis of hours but on the basis of continuing attendance at specified threshold dates through the academic year, in November, February and May.
- (iii) Belfast Metropolitan College has advised that students are receiving their full time complement of taught hours.
- (iv) Essential Skills provision is also funded through the recurrent block grant and is funded separately from other provision. Pastoral care is integral to any college delivery and is not factored into a student's eligible hours in regard to funding.
- (v) Essential Skills hours are funded over and above other provision. Pastoral care arrangements are not timetabled and Further Education Colleges provide access to a wide range of pastoral care initiatives for their students and staff, alongside delivery of provision.

Students Studying GCSE, A Level, BTEC and GNVQ

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether students studying (i) GCSE; (ii) A Level; (iii) BTEC; and (iv) GNVQ courses are receiving the teaching hours in Colleges of Further and Higher Education recommended by the various examination bodies. (AQW 3211/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: To meet the needs of learners and employers effectively, Further Education Colleges base the majority of their provision on qualifications that are accredited to the National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ). Guided Learning Hours are given for each qualification on NDAQ and colleges are required to adhere to these criteria.

NDAQ qualifications are a benchmark of quality. These qualifications meet the stringent quality criteria devised and agreed by the regulatory authorities for qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is the responsibility of the awarding organisation to ensure that learning centres such as the FE Colleges are delivering their qualifications in accordance with their awarding criteria.

Deane Efficiency Award

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, in relation to the present impasse on the exclusion of Principal Lecturers and Heads of Departments from the Deane Efficiency Award (i) how was this position reached; (ii) at what stage did the employers' side become aware that Principal Lecturers and Heads of Department were going to be excluded; (iii) why were union members and non-union members not informed of this decision in any written communications; and (iv) how does his Department intend to address this situation to ensure that staff are not treated inequitably. (AQW 3236/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: I understand that, in March 2009, the Further Education College Employers tabled a pay offer to the lecturers' trade unions which was subsequently accepted. The detailed terms of this agreement are a matter for the employers' and the lecturers' trade unions. The Department's main role was to ensure that the pay proposals complied with public sector pay policy.

It is a matter for the respective parties, through the established consultation arrangements, to resolve any dispute relating to the implementation of the pay settlement.

People with Haemophilia

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what measures are in place to ensure that people with Haemophilia, who are fit to work are given equal employment opportunities. (AQW 3247/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: The Department offers a range of pre-employment and employment programmes to help people access employment. In addition to a range of mainstream programmes, a number of programmes are focused specifically on assisting people with disabilities including Haemophilia.

The particular programme that is appropriate for each individual is discussed and agreed with a Pathways Personal Adviser based in local Jobs and Benefits Offices/Jobcentres across Northern Ireland.

DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

10-day Prompt Payment Scheme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action she is taking to ensure that the 10-day prompt payment scheme is passed on to sub-contractors by businesses who are receiving direct payments from the Department, and its related public bodies. (AQW 3103/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs A Foster): The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) strives to pay all invoices within 10 days from date of receipt. The 10 day prompt payment pledge is a government initiative and at the request of the Minister of Finance and Personnel, NICS Departments

are encouraged to pay suppliers within 10 days of receipt of a valid invoice. However this is not a contractual requirement.

With regard to the construction industry, a working group established by the Department of Finance and Personnel will consider expanding the 'Code of Practice for Government Construction Clients and their Supply Chains' to include a 'Fair Payment Charter.' These proposals, which are to be developed by December 2009, will seek to ensure that contractors and subcontractors benefit from fair and transparent payment practices.

In relation to the non-construction industry, under Late Payment of Commercial Debt Regulations 2002 payment of all sums due to be made by the main contractor to subcontractors is required within a specified period not exceeding 30 days from the receipt of a valid invoice.

Research and Development

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much has been invested in research and development in companies (i) by her Department; and (ii) by other sources in each of the last five years. (AQW 3117/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: In each of the last five years there has been significant investment in Research and Development (R & D) in companies by my Department through a range of financial assistance and incentives to support the development of new products and processes. The figures for total investment for each of the five years are set out below:

2004/05	£43.79m
2005/06	£26.22m
2006/07	£36.19m
2007/08	£41.08m
2008/09	£55.71m

Companies can also access R&D funding from InterTradeIreland, The Technology Strategy Board and The EU Framework Programme but my Department would not hold a record of the level of funding going into companies from these sources. I can state that in the region of 15million euro has been allocated to NI organisations from the EU Framework Programme 7 (FP7) since it started in 2007.

Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) how many businesses have received assistance under the Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme since its inception; and (ii) how much has been spent on it. (AQW 3191/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Since the launch, in January 2009, of the Government's Enterprise Finance Guarantee, 6,855 businesses across the United Kingdom have received offers of loans under the scheme, with 5,643 businesses having drawn down the loans. 72 businesses in Northern Ireland have received offers, with 59 businesses having drawn down the loans. The total value of loans drawn down for Northern Ireland is £11.12m.

Broadband Fund

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many (i) households; and (ii) businesses have received broadband as a result of the Broadband Fund. (AQW 3289/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: We are currently supporting 3 projects under the Broadband Fund which are developing new, or extending existing, fixed wireless networks. This infrastructure will increase the range of options available to both residential and business customers seeking a broadband service. However take-up of services will be a matter of choice for such consumers as commercial services become available.

The take-up information is not held by my Department as the emphasis of these projects is on development of infrastructure and not the delivery of services per se.

Broadband Fund

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, excluding customers who previously received satellite service from BT, how many households and businesses have received broadband as a result of the Broadband Fund broken down by each County. (AQW 3290/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: We are currently supporting 3 projects under the Broadband Fund which are developing new, or extending existing fixed wireless networks. This infrastructure will increase the range of options available to both residential and business customers seeking a broadband service. However take-up of services will be a matter of choice for such consumers as commercial services become available.

The take-up information is not held by my Department as the emphasis of these projects is on development of infrastructure and not the delivery of services per se.

Broadband Fund

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) why companies awarded funding through the Broadband Fund are charging over-priced tariffs compared with ADSL broadband; and (ii) for her assessment of the speed and reliability of the technology being offered through the Broadband Fund compared with ADSL broadband. (AQW 3293/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:

- (i) The UK telecommunications market is fully competitive and regulated nationally by OFCOM. Under the Broadband Fund my Department is investing in the development of infrastructure that will provide options for users seeking access to broadband services. It is appropriate that the market sets the pricing for these services.
- (ii) My Department has not specified any preferred technology under the Broadband Fund and in fact to do so might constitute unacceptable State Aid. To date the market has responded to calls for proposals under the Fund by identifying WIMAX Fixed Wireless Services as the most appropriate for provision of services in the most rural parts of Northern Ireland. A range of options from 1Mbps to 100Mbps dedicated point to point solutions can be delivered by this regulated technology which is deployed globally to provide high bandwidth.

Broadband Fund

Mr P Doherty asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given that most European satellite broadband providers do not offer varying speed packages, but instead base their pricing models on monthly usage (i) for her assessment of the various price tariffs being offered by Avanti Communications to customers in Northern Ireland; and (i) what action she intends to take to introduce pricing models based on monthly usage allowance and to deliver upon the services her Department has promised. (AQW 3294/10)

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: The telecommunications market is privatised and regulated nationally by Ofcom. Investment decisions in the delivery and pricing of services are typically made by the private sector service providers. DETI has made investments in the marketplace to deliver networks or improve their extent, quality and reliability where it notes underlying market failure.

The contract between DETI and Avanti Communications was put in place to counter a market failure in the delivery of broadband services to those living and working in rural areas but unable to access broadband services via a fixed-line solution. The contract was awarded following an open and competitive, European-wide tendering process. In issuing the tender the Department maintained its technology neutral stance and it was the industry that decided that satellite remained the optimum solution for providing broadband services to those areas of Northern Ireland where a fixed-line broadband solution is not viable due to distance from the exchange. The tender bids also established the pricing mechanism on the basis of return on investment.

Prices for services under the contract start at £24.47 per month and £74.75 for installation. These compare extremely favourably with the cost of similar services available under normal commercial conditions elsewhere in the United Kingdom, which are estimated, on average to be approximately £70 per month, with an installation charge of £1,400. Furthermore, the prices charged under the contract with Avanti are marginally cheaper than those levied under the previous contract with BT, which capped the cost for a 512kbps service at £27 per month.

DETI has no plans, nor indeed the remit, to introduce pricing models based on monthly usage allowance.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Taxi Expenditure

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of the Environment how much his Department has spent on taxis in each of the last five years. (AQW 2457/10)

Minister of the Environment (Mr E Poots): The table below gives details of my Department's expenditure on taxis for each of the last 5 years. This expenditure relates only to the payment of invoices to taxi companies. Expenditure in relation to taxi fares claimed by staff through travel claims cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost. The figures for 2004-05 and 2005-06 exclude expenditure on taxis by DVA Testing as these are not available from the Testing accounting system. Furthermore, the figure for 2004-05 includes a small element of expenditure in relation to bus fares however this figure also cannot be quantified except at disproportionate cost.

Taxi expenditure	2004/05 £	2005/06 £	2006/07 £	2007/08 £	2008/09 £
Total	4,488	5,135	7,187	4,881	5,579

10-day Prompt Payment Scheme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of the Environment what action he is taking to ensure that the 10-day prompt payment scheme is passed on to sub-contractors by businesses who are receiving direct payments from the Department and its related public bodies. (AQW 3080/10)

Minister of the Environment: Payment within 10 days is not a binding requirement in Government contracts. However, for construction contracts, procured through the Central Procurement Directorate, main contractors are required to comply with the 'Code of Practice for Government Construction Clients and their Supply Chains'. The Code sets out the core principles that should govern the behaviour of clients, contractors and subcontractors, including the need for fair dealing within the supply chain.

Principle 3 of the Construction Industry Forum for Northern Ireland Procurement Task Group (PTG) Report recognises that enterprises have the opportunity to benefit from participation in Government contracts either as a main contractor or as a subcontractor. A PTG Working Group is currently considering the expansion of the 'Code of Practice for Government Construction Clients and their Supply Chains' to include a 'Fair Payment Charter' and to include a requirement that first tier subcontractors provide feedback directly to the Government Construction Client on monthly payment progress from the main contractor to the supply chain. The proposals, to be developed by December 2009, will seek to ensure that main contractors pass on the benefits of prompt payment to subcontractors.

Supplies and services contracts also require main contractors to enter into subcontracts on the same terms and conditions as the main contract. Central Procurement Directorate is currently considering if the approach taken in construction contracts would be practicable in supplies and services contracts.

Driver and Vehicle Agency Enforcement Testing Operations

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of enforcement testing operations conducted by the Driver and Vehicle Agency on goods vehicles, buses and taxis, in each town, in each of the last six months. (AQW 3082/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) has primary responsibility for regulating the goods vehicle, bus and taxi industries within Northern Ireland. During the period 1 June 2009 to 19 November 2009, DVA enforcement officers carried out a total of 132 enforcement operations on goods vehicles, buses and taxis.

The detail of the locations and operational type per month are set out below.

JUNE 2009

Location/Area	Type	Number of Operations
Moira	Goods	One
Ballymoney	Goods	One
Carryduff	Goods	One
Kesh	Goods	Two
Strabane	Goods	Two
Newtownstewart	Goods	One
Portadown	Goods	One
Dungiven	Goods	One
Feeny	Goods	One
Cookstown	Goods	One
Lisburn	Goods	Three
Ballymena	Goods	Four
Craigavon	Goods	Two
Newry	Goods	Two
Mallusk	Goods	One
Larne	Goods	Two
Dungannon	Goods	One
Toome	Goods	One
Coleraine	Goods	Two
Londonderry	Goods	One
Armagh	Goods	One
Enniskillen	Goods	Two
Belcoo	Goods	One
Moneymore	Goods	One
Newry	Bus	One

JULY 2009

Location/Area	Type	Number of Operations
Maghera	Goods	One
Moneymore	Goods	Two

Location/Area	Type	Number of Operations
Toome	Goods	Three
Cookstown	Goods	Two
Enniskillen	Goods	One
Strabane	Goods	One
Coleraine	Goods	Three
Dundrum	Goods	One
Ballygawley	Goods	One
Lisburn	Goods	One
Ballymena	Goods	One
Ballynahinch	Goods	One
Nutts Corner	Goods	One
Kesh	Goods	One
Belfast	Taxi	Two
Belfast	Bus	One

AUGUST 2009

Location/Area	Type	Number of Operations
Craigavon	Goods	One
Toome	Goods	One
Ballymena	Goods	One
Omagh	Goods	One
Cookstown	Goods	One
Lisburn	Goods	One
Larne	Goods	One
Nuttscorner	Goods	One
Londonderry	Goods	Three
Belfast	Goods	One
Omagh	Goods	One
Enniskillen	Goods	One
Belfast	Taxi	Sixteen
Londonderry	Taxi	One
Antrim	Taxi	Two
Magherafelt	Taxi	One
Bangor	Taxi	One
Craigavon	Taxi	One
Omagh	Taxi	One

SEPTEMBER 2009

Location/Area	Type	Number of Operations
Craigavon	Goods	One
Newry	Goods	Two
Belfast	Goods	Three
Coleraine	Goods	One
Nuttscorner	Goods	One
Larne	Goods	One
Lisburn	Goods	Three
Ballymena	Goods	One
Ballymoney	Taxi	One
Newry	Taxi	One
Lisburn	Taxi	Three
Belfast	Taxi	Five
Londonderry	Taxi	Four
Strabane	Taxi	One
Cookstown	Taxi	One
Dungannon	Taxi	One
Portrush	Taxi	One
Enniskillen	Taxi	One
Ballymena	Taxi	One
Armagh	Taxi	One
Magherafelt	Taxi	One

OCTOBER 2009

Location/Area	Type	Number of Operations
Lisburn	Goods	Two
Cookstown	Goods	Two
Larne	Goods	One
Nuttscorner	Goods	Three
Lurgan	Goods	One
Omagh	Goods	Two
Londonderry	Goods	Two
Belfast	Goods	Two
Newtownards	Goods	One
Coleraine	Taxi	One
Belfast	Taxi	Nine
Craigavon	Taxi	One
Newry	Taxi	Two
Antrim	Taxi	Two

Location/Area	Type	Number of Operations
Lisburn	Taxi	Two
Larne	Taxi	Two
Magherafelt	Taxi	One
Londonderry	Taxi	Two
Armagh	Taxi	One
Bangor	Taxi	One
Enniskillen	Taxi	One
Carrickfergus	Taxi	One
Strabane	Taxi	One
Magherafelt	Bus	One
Newry	Bus	One

NOVEMBER 2009

Location/Area	Type	Number of Operations
Lisburn	Goods	Three
Nuttscorner	Goods	One
Limavady	Goods	One
Omagh	Goods	One
Craigavon	Goods	One
Londonderry	Goods	One
Londonderry	Taxi	Three
Belfast	Taxi	Eight
Lisburn	Taxi	Two
Newtownabbey	Taxi	Three
Coleraine	Taxi	Two
Banbridge	Taxi	One
Newry	Taxi	Two
Craigavon	Taxi	One
Armagh	Taxi	One
Portadown	Taxi	One

Illegal Bus Operators

Mr R McCartney asked the Minister of the Environment how many illegal bus operators have been (i) apprehended; and (ii) charged since the restoration of devolution. (AQW 3115/10)

Minister of the Environment: During the period April 2007 to September 2009, the Driver & Vehicle Agency carried out spot checks on 903 buses and coaches resulting in 281 operators being reported with a view to prosecution.

Illegal Bus Operators

Mr R McCartney asked the Minister of the Environment how many illegal bus operators have been (i) apprehended; and (ii) charged since the restoration of devolution in (a) the Foyle constituency; and (b) the West Tyrone constituency. (AQW 3116/10)

Minister of the Environment: During the period April 2007 to September 2009, DVA enforcement officers carried out compliance checks on 903 buses and coaches, and as a result 281 operators were reported with a view to prosecution.

A breakdown of these figures by constituency is not available. However, 50 of the operators reported were based in County Londonderry and 43 in County Tyrone.

Slurry Tanks

Mr P J Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment what concessions his Department will give to farmers to permit them to empty slurry tanks that have overflowed with rainwater during the closed season for spreading. (AQW 3124/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Nitrates Action Programme Regulations (NI) 2006 (the 'NAP Regulations') stipulate that all farmers in Northern Ireland cannot apply organic manures to land, except for farmyard manure and dirty water, between 15 October and 31 January. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is the competent authority for enforcement of the environmental aspects of the legislation including compliance with the closed period. In order to comply with this, the Nap Regulations also require farmers to put in place sufficient storage capacity for organic manure. In addition, farmers need to ensure that their storage capacity is sufficient to meet periods of adverse weather conditions.

Under exceptional circumstances, beyond the control and not foreseeable by the farmer, such as disease control restrictions, a defence can be made for non-compliance with some of the Regulations. This defence would have to be considered by NIEA on a case-by-case basis and would require a farmer to demonstrate that he had taken all reasonable steps to manage the situation and meet the terms of the legislation. Rainfall entering slurry tanks would not normally satisfy the criteria for exceptional circumstances since farmers should have taken account of this when considering their livestock manure storage capacity.

Whilst NIEA cannot alter the dates of the closed spreading period for organic manure, it will continue to work with farmers in a proportionate and consistent manner within the terms of the legislation.

Road Deaths and Injuries

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment, as road fatalities increase, to outline the steps his Department is taking to reduce road deaths and injuries. (AQW 3141/10)

Minister of the Environment: The number of road deaths in Northern Ireland so far this year is 107, compared to 101 for the same period last year. Although there is an increase in road deaths at this stage this year, compared to last year's figures, a year on year comparison could be potentially misleading, and it may be better to look at the trend over a 5-10 year period. In 1998, a total of 160 people were killed. In 2003 this had dropped to 150 and in 2008 to 107.

Progress over the six years since the introduction of the road safety strategy has been significant, with an overall reduction in road deaths of around 29%. The 2008 figure was also the lowest since records began in 1931.

Most of the targets/objectives have been achieved and it is for this reason that I am introducing a new Road Safety Strategy two years ahead of schedule.

Consultation on the development of a new road safety strategy for Northern Ireland will begin in the first quarter of 2010. The work currently ongoing includes the development of challenging new casualty reduction targets which will provide the necessary focus to achieve further significant reductions in road deaths and serious injuries over the coming years.

A number of research and statistical investigations into road safety in Northern Ireland are nearing completion and will also inform the development of the new strategy.

Officials have engaged extensively with road safety partners and other interested parties in developing possible new measures to improve safety on our roads. These measures, along with the reports mentioned above, will help inform the upcoming public consultation on the way forward.

In the meantime the Department will continue to deliver on the key responsibility of working towards further reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads each year. This will involve making all road users, drivers and pedestrians alike, aware of their vulnerability on our roads, their responsibilities towards themselves and other road users, and by influencing their attitudes and behaviours when using, or thinking of using, the roads.

The road safety advertising and publicity strategy will continue to deliver a broad mix of messages to all road users, with both existing and new campaigns.

Advertising campaigns address road traffic collision causation factors including speeding, drink driving, driver and pedestrian inattention, and driving under the influence of drugs, as well as injury severity factors, such as failure to wear a seat belt. Campaigns have also been developed to raise awareness among young people of the dangers they face on the roads and also to highlight the increased risk all road users face on the roads over weekend periods.

The Department's Road Safety Education Officers (RSEOs) promote and deliver road safety education in schools throughout Northern Ireland in line with the Department for Transport Best Practice Guidelines.

Following public consultation earlier this year we are currently working to develop a range of measures to tackle drink driving including reducing drink drive limits, introducing random breath testing and revising the penalties for drink drive offences.

Beginning in early 2010 we will implement a long-term programme of measures to strengthen the way that people learn to drive and are tested and to embed a culture of continued and lifelong learning. Planned initial changes include improvements to the learning process for pre-drivers and to the theory and practical driving tests.

The Department will consult, in 2010, on proposals to reform the 45mph speed limit for learner and restricted drivers and to introduce a range of potential graduated driver licensing measures designed to limit the risk exposure of novice drivers while they gain experience.

Although any downward trend in road deaths is to be welcomed, the 107 fatalities for 2009 confirms that there are still too many people dying on our roads and that we cannot be complacent. My Department will continue to do all in its power to ensure the downward trend in road deaths continues.

Sale of Cherished Number Plates

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of the Environment how much revenue has been generated from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing sale of cherished number plates in each of the last five years. (AQW 3143/10)

Minister of the Environment: Vehicle licensing is an excepted matter which is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Transport. It is administered in Northern Ireland by the Driver & Vehicle Agency under a formal agreement between DoE and the Department for Transport.

The revenue generated from the sale of registration marks in each of the last five years is set out in the table below. The figures include the £80 assignment fee payable for each mark purchased and VAT on the purchase price.

Year	£
2004/05	1,643,657
2005/06	1,879,321
2006/07	1,948,783
2007/08	1,963,955
2008/09	1,289,255

As this is an excepted matter, all revenue from the sale of registration marks is remitted to HM Treasury.

Reform of Public Administration

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment when the current level of expenditure on the Reform of Public Administration will begin to save the taxpayer money. (AQW 3154/10)

Minister of the Environment: Current expenditure on Reform of Public Administration by my Department is £6.96m, this relates to the preparation work in relation to the local government reform programme.

The PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Economic Appraisal on Local Government Service Delivery in its entirety indicates that under the preferred option 'Transformation within Regional Collaboration', the local government reform programme will require an initial investment of £118m. The programme will begin to realise a reduction in operating costs by 2013-14, with the break-even point in terms of return on the initial investment by 2016-17.

Reform of Public Administration

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) how much has been spent to date; and (ii) how much is still planned to be spent on implementing the Reform of Public Administration. (AQW 3155/10)

Minister of the Environment:

- (i) To the end of October 2009 my Department has spent £6.96 million on taking forward the Review of Public Administration.
- (ii) The projected expenditure for the remainder of the 2009/2010 financial year is £2.7m. The overall programme includes projected savings of £438million over a 25-year period for an initial investment of £118million.

George Best Belfast City Airport

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment if there is evidence that the noise level at George Best Belfast City Airport has exceeded the contour limit set in the 2008 Planning Agreement, and if so, what steps his Department intends to take to enforce the agreed limit. (AQW 3158/10)

Minister of the Environment: The requirement of the 2008 Planning Agreement for my Department and George Best Belfast City Airport to agree an indicative noise contour has not yet been finalised and therefore there is no agreed limit. The noise issue in general is currently being considered in the context of the current planning application to extend the runway.

Oil Stamp Savings Scheme

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment (i) which councils have introduced the Oil Stamp Savings Scheme; and (ii) the amount of savings generated since its inception. (AQW 3214/10)

Minister of the Environment: Eight councils have introduced the Oil Stamp Savings Scheme. Although there are no tangible monetary savings, this scheme benefits those vulnerable to fuel poverty as it helps them to budget for their oil bills.

Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Committees

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the role of the Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Committees and their future funding arrangements. (AQW 3237/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Committees have made a significant contribution to the management and development of the Lough Neagh and Lower Bann waterways.

My Department has provided financial support to the Committees since their formation in the early nineties. I understand however that a number of District Councils have recently indicated that they are no longer in a

position to provide support for the Committees beyond March 2010. I regret that my Department is unable to make up any shortfall in view of existing commitments and constraints on its budget.

Cost for an Archaeological Report

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment why, when applying for planning permission for a waste disposal area, the cost for an archaeological report is a flat fee regardless of the size of land involved; and for his assessment as to whether this method of costing is fair. (AQW 3263/10)

Minister of the Environment: Waste management proposals may have an impact on archaeologically sensitive sites. To fully assess the impact of this type of development and other development proposals on archaeologically sensitive areas Planning Service will carry out consultation with NIEA.

Further to the consultation process, Planning Service may require as a condition of planning approval that an archaeological report is submitted to and approved in writing by the Department before any development takes place. This is to ensure that any archaeological remains exposed are properly evaluated. The cost of the survey carried out is a private contractual matter between the developer and the person(s) appointed to carry this out.

Driving Tests

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of the Environment how many times an individual has failed (i) a car driving test; (ii) a motorcycle driving test; or (iii) a HGV driving test (a) once; (b) twice; (c) three times; (d) four times; and (e) five or more times in the past five years. (AQW 3303/10)

Minister of the Environment: The table below details the number of failed driving tests for cars, motorcycles and HGVs in the past five years broken down into the number of first, second, third, fourth and fifth or more attempts.

Test Category	Year	Failed 1st Time	Failed 2nd Time	Failed 3rd Time	Failed 4th Time	Failed 5th Time or more
Motorcycle (Over 120cc and less than 125cc)	2004/05	405	89	9	0	0
	2005/06	488	114	24	8	1
	2006/07	522	103	16	3	0
	2007/08	684	160	31	9	1
	2008/09	675	149	38	11	4
Light Motorcycle (75cc to 120cc)	2004/05	1	0	0	0	0
	2005/06	1	0	0	0	0
	2006/07	1	0	0	0	0
	2007/08	1	0	0	0	0
	2008/09	0	0	0	0	0
Car	2004/05	13907	5048	1591	448	190
	2005/06	17655	7018	2583	867	379
	2006/07	13525	9900	4735	1992	1330
	2007/08	15256	11067	5533	2374	1749
	2008/09	14744	11126	5839	2608	1981

Test Category	Year	Failed 1st Time	Failed 2nd Time	Failed 3rd Time	Failed 4th Time	Failed 5th Time or more
Large Goods Vehicles (over 7500kg)	2004/05	408	97	14	2	1
	2005/06	540	136	29	5	1
	2006/07	643	187	44	7	2
	2007/08	643	221	58	20	6
	2008/09	599	202	64	25	16
Goods Vehicle (3500kgs to 7500kg)	2004/05	31	1	0	0	0
	2005/06	13	1	0	0	0
	2006/07	14	3	2	0	0
	2007/08	28	5	0	0	0
	2008/09	23	4	2	0	0

Seats For Sale by the George Best Belfast City Airport

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment what measures he intends to take following the acknowledged breach of the ‘Seats For Sale’ limit by the George Best Belfast City Airport. (AQW 3306/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Planning Service has raised the breach of the ‘seats for sale’ restriction with George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA) and a response is awaited.

In addition, GBBCA has formally written to my Department requesting that the ‘seats for sale’ restriction be removed from the 2008 modified Planning Agreement. The Planning Service is currently taking legal advice with regard to this request.

Hare Population

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of the Environment at what stage the hare population will warrant being placed on the quarry list. (AQW 3329/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Irish Hare is a Game species which receives temporary protection until 31 March 2010, under the current Special Protection Order.

The Species Action Plan (SAP) for the Irish Hare expires in 2010 and future protection for the species will be informed by a review of the SAP. This review will involve a scientific analysis and assessment of overall population trends of the Irish Hare.

Business Services Organisation

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment, given that he recently informed the Assembly that he wanted to “deliver efficient government rather than heavily-bureaucratic government”, what assurance he can give that the creation of an all-encompassing body, such as the proposed Business Services Organisation, will not be heavily-bureaucratic. (AQO 509/10)

Minister of the Environment: I welcome the member raising the question on the delivery of efficient government in relation to the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) economic appraisal and in particular the new regional Business Service Organisation (BSO). The mission of the proposed (BSO) will be to enable “collaborative solutions across local government that will support the optimum use of internal resources to allow a focus on the delivery of front-line services”.

PwC suggest that the BSO should be established as a mandatory Joint Committee of all 11 new councils with a Chief Executive and Director team recruited in line with the senior management team for the new councils. The establishment of a Joint Committee is a proven mechanism for ensuring that activities can be taken forward jointly and efficiently while remaining accountable to the councils.

Local Government: Arbuthnott Review

Mrs M Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department will consider the findings of Sir John Arbuthnott's 'Clyde Valley Review of Joint Working and Shared Services' once it is published, particularly in relation to lessons that could be applied to assist councils working on a cross-border basis.

(AQO 514/10)

Minister of the Environment: I welcome the member drawing Sir John Arbuthnott's forthcoming 'Clyde Valley Review of Joint Working and Shared Services' to my attention. I think this is clearly an important piece of work and will no doubt provide further support to our agreed vision of a restructured, strong and dynamic local government working on a collaborative basis. I will therefore be happy to consider all the findings of the review once published.

Local Government Elections

Mr F McCann asked the Minister of the Environment if local council elections will be postponed to 2011.

(AQO 515/10)

Minister of the Environment: Elections are a matter for the Secretary of State. On 25 April 2008 the Secretary of State announced that he had agreed to a request from my predecessor, Arlene Foster, to postpone the local government elections for two years to May 2011, to enable elections to be held to the new local government structure.

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the adoption of B Map. (AQO 516/10)

Minister of the Environment: The BMAP Public Inquiry concluded in May 2008, and the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) is currently considering all the information before it prior to completing its report and making its recommendations to the Department.

The PAC has indicated a preliminary timescale for delivery of the report to Planning Service as early summer 2010. Upon receipt of the report, Planning Service will consider the recommendations of the PAC, and the Plan will then be prepared for adoption. Although the date of adoption will be dependent on the date that the PAC Report is received, it is unlikely that the Plan will be adopted before 2011.

Planning Policy Statement 21

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the draft PPS21 and when the draft policy will be approved. (AQO 517/10)

Minister of the Environment: I have submitted PPS 21 to the Executive for consideration and look forward to publishing it once it has been cleared.

Northern Ireland Audit Office Report on the Planning Service

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the Northern Ireland Audit Office report on the Performance of the Planning Service. (AQO 518/10)

Minister of the Environment: I welcome the Northern Ireland Audit Office report on the performance of the Planning Service. It is timely that we have such a significant stocktake when we are about to enter a period of such transformation for the planning system and for local government which will become responsible for much of the planning system.

As the Member may be aware, the report was the subject of a recent Public Accounts Committee hearing held on 3 December. A considered response to the Committee's report, in the form of a DFP Memorandum of Reply, will be made in due course. It would be inappropriate therefore to offer a more substantive comment until this process has been completed.

Climate Change Conference, Copenhagen

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of the Environment if there will be representation from his Department at the Climate Change conference in Copenhagen. (AQO 519/10)

Minister of the Environment: Responsibility for international negotiations at the UN Conference on Climate Change falls to the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC).

There have been contacts in relation to the UK negotiating position for some time. I have recently written to Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for DECC. I encouraged him to seek ambitious targets for developed countries, pursue reductions in green house gas emissions in developing countries from business as usual and consider providing financial/technological support for developing countries. However I also cautioned against taking specific action in the UK without an international globally binding agreement.

Since I am in Copenhagen on other Departmental business I will take the opportunity to support the UK delegation whilst I am there.

Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill

Mr W Irwin asked the Minister of the Environment what progress has been made in progressing the Local Government Re-organisation Bill through the Executive. (AQO 520/10)

Minister of the Environment: I am pressing the Executive to agree the policy proposals for the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill circulated by my predecessor on 30 June 2009, to enable me to publish the proposals for consultation before the end of the year.

Climate Change Conference, Copenhagen

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions his Department has had with the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs concerning the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. (AQO 521/10)

Minister of the Environment: Responsibility for international negotiations at the UN Conference on Climate Change falls to the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC).

There have been contacts in relation to the UK negotiating position for some time. I have recently written to Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for DECC. I encouraged him to seek ambitious targets for developed countries, pursue reductions in green house gas emissions in developing countries from business as usual and consider providing financial/technological support for developing countries. However I also cautioned against taking specific action in the UK without an international globally binding agreement.

Since I am in Copenhagen on other Departmental business I will take the opportunity to support the UK delegation whilst I am there.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Agency Staff

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many agency staff each Department employed; and for how long on average they were employed, in each of the past 3 years. (AQW 2551/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel (Mr S Wilson): The number of agency staff employed in each Department and the average length of employment are set out in the attached table.

NUMBER OF AGENCY STAFF EMPLOYED IN EACH DEPARTMENT AND AVERAGE LENGTH OF EMPLOYMENT

DEPT	1 April 2006 – 31 March 2007		1 April 2007 – 31 March 2008		1 April 2008 – 31 March 2009	
	Number of Agency Staff	Average Length of Employment (weeks)	Number of Agency Staff	Average Length of Employment (weeks)	Number of Agency Staff	Average Length of Employment (weeks)
DARD	3	21	52	14.1	9	25.2
DHSSPS	48	5.9	46	9.4	51	11.1
DEL	4	9.7	8	28.5	25	14.8
DFP	42	14.6	265	15.7	245	23.3
DCAL	15	14.3	28	13.5	23	12
DE	25	14.3	38	20	9	37.5
DETI	2	10.8	12	15.4	10	13.1
DRD	383	19	189	21.2	203	16.6
OFMDFM	2	23.9	1	21.6	1	8.4
DSD	12	7.3	161	12.5	218	14.4
DOE	206	44.9	82.5	44.4	188	43.8

Properties owned by the NI Civil Service and Government Departments

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to list any properties in North Down owned by the NI Civil Service and Government Departments which are currently (i) vacant; and (ii) derelict. (AQW 2919/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: There is currently one such vacant or derelict property in North Down, namely Craigowen Lodge, Holywood. The building is owned by the Department for Regional Development and has been declared surplus. It is being disposed of according to agreed procedures.

Rates 'break' Initiative

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) what consideration he has given to a rates 'break' for manufacturing companies; and (ii) to outline the legal, legislative and budgetary issues related to such an initiative. (AQW 3056/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: This matter was raised with me in July shortly after I took over as Minister. I met with Northern Ireland Manufacturing and listened carefully to their proposal for a rates holiday for manufacturing.

I came to the conclusion that this was not deliverable. My Department's assessment of the issues is as follows:

Providing a rates holiday to manufacturing would cost around £20m a year in lost revenue. A decision would have to be made as to whether this cost would be met fully from within DEL or if the district rate would carry its share of the overall cost (around £9m). The affordability of such a measure would be a substantial issue at this time, in light of the current financial position facing the Executive; were a rates holiday to be granted the only options open to the Executive would be to raise additional revenue elsewhere or cut back on services.

Rates are paid in advance and to provide an in year rates break would also pose major and probably insurmountable operational difficulties for Land and Property Services, involving the provision of refunds to those manufacturers who have already paid in full for the year ahead.

There may also be wider constraints associated with a payment break, including a potential requirement for Land and Property Services under (the recently relaxed) EU State Aid rules to correspond with each recipient of any rate relief to positively establish that it and any other aid does not exceed the new de-minimus levels. In addition, such a measure may be discriminatory in terms of other business sectors.

Primary legislation would also be required, which would have to be agreed by the Executive and taken through the Assembly. A process that would take many months.

The Executive will continue to give economic policy and sustaining enterprise a priority. I along with my Executive Colleagues will continue to work closely with business in weathering the downturn and help create the right conditions for recovery to enable all sectors of business to flourish. Devolution has already made a real difference to this key sector by holding onto industrial de-rating, which provides factories in NI with a 70% rates reduction compared to manufacturers in the rest of the UK and compared to other business sectors here. The regional rates freeze is also unique in the UK, providing an additional saving to all business ratepayers worth £8million this year. In addition I am introducing a Small Business Rate Relief Scheme in 2010, costing another £8million, which will help many of our smaller firms, including those in the manufacturing sector.

Financial Intermediary Service

Lord Browne asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if any discussions have taken place regarding the introduction of a Financial Intermediary Service (FIS) similar to the FIS which was set up in England, with all banks signed up to participate to work with small businesses having difficulty accessing finance. (AQW 3079/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: There have been no discussions to date regarding this particular scheme. However, I have on several occasions pressed the local banks on their lending to SMEs through the Cross Sector Advisory Forum Banking, Lending and Finance Sub-Group.

10-day Prompt Payment Scheme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what action he is taking to ensure that the 10-day prompt payment scheme is passed on to sub-contractors by businesses who are receiving direct payments from the Department, and its related public bodies. (AQW 3096/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Although it is not a contractually binding requirement, my Department, as best practice client, is committed to paying suppliers within 10 days of the receipt of a valid invoice.

For construction works contracts, procured through the Central Procurement Directorate, main contractors are required to comply with the 'Code of Practice for Government Construction Clients and their Supply Chains'. The Code sets out the core principles that should govern the behaviour of clients, contractors and subcontractors, including the need for fair dealing within the supply chain.

Principle 3 of the Construction Industry Forum for Northern Ireland Procurement Task Group (PTG) Report recognises that enterprises have the opportunity to benefit from participation in Government contracts either as a main contractor or as a subcontractor. A PTG Working Group is currently considering the expansion of the 'Code of Practice for Government Construction Clients and their Supply Chains' to include a 'Fair Payment Charter' and to include a requirement that first tier subcontractors provide feedback directly to the Government Construction Client on monthly payment progress from the main contractor to the supply chain. The proposals, to be developed by December 2009, will seek to ensure that main contractors pass on the benefits of prompt payment to subcontractors.

Supplies and services contracts also require main contractors to enter into subcontracts on the same terms and conditions as the main contract. Central Procurement Directorate is currently considering if the approach taken in construction contracts would be practicable in supplies and services contracts.

Northern Ireland Utility Regulator

Mr P Butler asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in relation to the Northern Ireland Utility Regulator to detail (i) the number of people employed; (ii) the cost of running the organisation for the last five years, including salaries; and (iii) how many (a) local representatives; and (b) outside representatives sit on the Board. (AQW 3121/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (the Utility Regulator) was established on 1 April 2007 when responsibility for the regulation of the water and sewerage

industry in Northern Ireland was taken on in accordance with the provisions of the Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.

The following table provides details of the number of people employed and the cost of running the office in each of the two financial years since the Utility Regulator was established.

Year	07/08	08/09
Cost of running the Utility Regulator - budget Outturn £m	6,305	6,354
Number of staff employed at 31 March	60	62

The Authority Board currently comprises eight members - two reside in Northern Ireland, one resides in the Republic of Ireland and five reside in Great Britain.

Rate Relief for Owners of Stud Farms

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what rate relief is available for owners of stud farms. (AQW 3125/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: There is no rate relief available in Northern Ireland for stud farms, nor would such premises qualify for any sort of agricultural relief because the horse is not considered to be an agricultural animal.

The issue of relief for stud farms was considered by Direct Rule Ministers during a review of business rates in 2006 but it was decided not to proceed. Minister Rooker concluded that it would be sensible to await the outcome of a development strategy for the equine industry before making decisions.

That strategy was published in March 2007 by a sectoral group (Equine Sub Group) operating under the umbrella of the Rural Stakeholder Forum, established and supported by DARD. In a brief reference to rate relief, the report merely states that “the industry categorically supports rate relief being introduced for stud farms as part of a group of measures”. It does not, however, present a persuasive case for providing rate relief.

Peter Robinson, when he was Finance Minister took the view that if a proper case could be made for support to DARD, then rate relief could be looked at as one of a number of options, bearing in mind the constraints of EU State Aid rules.

I share this view. Rates may be regarded by some as a virtual cost and a convenient solution in pursuit of wider social and economic policy aims, however, every pound forgone through rate relief is a pound less for public expenditure and therefore any concessions made need to be carefully considered against other spending priorities.

There have been calls for the horse to be designated as an agricultural animal. The major effect of this would be that under rates legislation as it stands, stables and all associated property would not be rateable. Any change in designation would require primary legislation and agreement at a national level. As such, it is also a matter for the DARD Minister in the first instance.

To finish on a more positive note, horse establishments that fall within the requisite rateable value limits for small business rate relief will automatically qualify for assistance when that scheme is introduced in April 2010.

Stud Farms

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if horse stud farms qualify for agricultural relief under the rating system. (AQW 3129/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: There is no rate relief available in Northern Ireland for stud farms, nor would such premises qualify for any sort of agricultural relief because the horse is not considered to be an agricultural animal.

The issue of relief for stud farms was considered by Direct Rule Ministers during a review of business rates in 2006 but it was decided not to proceed. Minister Rooker concluded that it would be sensible to await the outcome of a development strategy for the equine industry before making decisions.

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To finish on a more positive note, horse establishments that fall within the requisite rateable value limits for small business rate relief will automatically qualify for assistance when that scheme is introduced in April 2010.

Regional Economic Strategy

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to explain the timing of the decision to abandon the production of a dedicated Regional Economic Strategy in favour of working on the basis that the Programme for Government 2008-2011 implicitly provided such a strategy. (AQW 3133/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The need to produce a Regional Economic Strategy (RES) is a legacy of Direct Rule when HM Treasury made it a requirement on all UK regional authorities. I have not sought to update this Strategy as my colleague, the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, had commissioned an independent review of economic policy for Northern Ireland.

This comprehensive exercise has now been concluded and is subject to consideration by the ETI Minister. The Review recommendations set out a roadmap for economic policy intervention by the Executive going forward. There is therefore no need for a separate ‘Regional Economic Strategy’ document as this would entail nugatory replication of the analysis presented within the Independent Review of Economic Policy (IREP). Instead, the Executive’s economic strategy will be refined as officials evaluate progress on the existing Programme for Government economy targets and consider the IREP recommendations.

Civil Servants’ Pay

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many civil servants currently earn more than £43,101 per annum; and to detail in which Departments these personnel are employed. (AQW 3138/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The number of civil servants who earn more than £43,101 and in which Departments they are employed is set out in the table attached.

Department	Number of staff earning more than £43,101
DARD	159
DCAL	18
DE	96
DETI	42
DFP	212
DEL	37
DHSSPS	95
DOE	115

Department	Number of staff earning more than £43,101
DRD	79
DSD	63
OFMDFM	53
Total	969

Training Courses for Civil Servants

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to list all training courses available to civil servants; and to detail the annual cost for the provision of each course. (AQW 3150/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Information on all training courses available to civil servants is not held centrally and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost. The list overleaf shows all non business specific (generic) training courses currently on offer to Northern Ireland civil servants through the Centre for Applied Learning which is the sole internal provider of such training to the NICS.

The Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) does not hold expenditure information by course but its total expenditure for the 2008/09 financial year was £3.782 million

Course Title

- Administrative Development Programme
- Appearing Before an Assembly Committee
- Assembly Questions
- Assertiveness
- Audio A, B and C Course
- Audio A, B and C Test
- CIPD Certificate In Training Practice
- Coaching Skills
- Content Manager
- Criterion Based Interviewing
- Criterion Based Interviewing Refresher
- Criterion Based Interviewing SCS Refresher
- Customer Service
- Dealing With Difficult Situations
- Disability Awareness for Frontline Staff
- Diversity
- Effective Writing AA/AO
- Effective Writing EO2/EO1
- Good Management Practice
- ILM Level 3 Award in First Line Management
- ILM Level 5 Award in Management
- Including Children and Young People in Public Decision Making - Module 2:- How Can We?
- Including Children and Young People in Public Decision Making - Module 1: - Why Should We?
- Influencing & Negotiating Skills
- Introduction to Business Continuity Management
- Introduction To Europe
- JEGS
- JESP
- Line Managers Role in Managing Stress

- Managing Attendance
- Managing Conflict
- Managers Managing
- Managing Personal Stress
- Managing Small Projects
- Manuscript A, B and C Course
- Manuscript A, B and C Test
- NVQ Level 2 in Business and Administration (minimum of 6 days/workshops in a 2yr period)
- NVQ Level 3 in Business and Administration (minimum of 9 days/workshops in a 2yr period)
- Performance Management
- Performance Management (1 Day Refresher)
- Practical Project Management
- Presentation Skills
- Programme and Project Management Overview
- Secretaryship of Meetings
- Staff Officer Graduate Corporate Induction
- Tabulation Course
- Tabulation Test
- Time Management
- Understanding Devolution
- Understanding The Gateway Process
- Welcome Host
- Welcome Host +
- Working With Ministers
- Access to Information - Foundation Course *Under Development
- Accident Investigation
- Advanced PowerPoint
- Advanced Word
- Advanced Writing Skills
- Auditing Data Protection
- Basic Excel
- Basic PowerPoint
- Basic Word
- Benefits Management
- Conducting an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)
- Construction Site Safety Awareness for Visitors
- Data Protection Act Rights and Exemptions *Under Development
- Data Protection Act: Interaction With Other Legislation *Under Development
- Data Security *Under Development
- Developing A Business Case
- Developing Policy Workshop
- Display Screen Equipment Risk Assessment
- Effective Sponsorship of Arms Length Bodies *Under Development
- Evaluating Policy
- Financial Management - an overview
- Fraud Awareness

- General Risk Assessment
- Grade 6/7 Programme Leading For Change
- Harrassment Contact Officer
- Health & Safety Awareness
- Health & Safety Awareness For Managers
- Health & Safety for Premises Officers
- Healthworks - Total Health
- Implementing European Directives
- Introduction to Records Management *Under Development
- Internal Reviews and ICO Appeals
- Introduction to Business Cases and Economic Appraisal
- Introduction to Corporate Governance in the Public Sector
- Introduction To Legislation
- Introduction To Microsoft Project
- Introduction to Risk Management
- IOSH Managing Safely
- Leading and Managing Change
- Manual Handling Risk Assessment
- Manual Handling Techniques
- Planning For The Future
- Professional Policymaking in Government
- Practical Data Protection
- Practical Skills for Budgeting
- Preparation For Gateway Review
- Preparing for Judicial Review
- Quicker Reading
- Retirement
- Safe Use Of Computers (DSE Awareness)
- Safe Use Of Evacuation Chairs
- Screening Of Policies
- Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) Masterclass
- Speech Writing
- Strategic Planning
- Subordinate Legislation
- Subordinate Legislation Template
- The Consultation Process in Northern Ireland
- TRIM Administrator
- TRIM End User
- TRIM Power User
- Understanding the Data Protection Act Principles *Under Development
- Working with the Environmental Information Regulations *Under Development
- Working with the Freedom of Information Act
- Your Health and Safety Responsibilities - A Brief for Senior Officers
- Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)
- Primary Legislation (NIO)

Training Courses for Civil Servants

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much has been spent on delivering training courses to civil servants in each of the last three years. (AQW 3151/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Individual departments are responsible for financing staff training from their respective budgets.

The amount my department has spent on delivering training courses to civil servants in each of the last three years, is set out in the table below.

Year	£000's
2006-07*	791
2007-08	1,593
2008-09	2,317

Note:

The 2006-07 expenditure reflects the net running costs of the Centre for Applied Learning. The 2006-07 expenditure incurred by other business areas across the department is not reflected as it is not readily identifiable on the department's accounting system pre-Account NI.

Civil Service Equal Pay Claim

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many (i) Administrative Assistants; (ii) Administrative Officers; and (iii) EO2s, (a) retired from; and (b) left the Civil Service between 1 February 2003 and 31 January 2009. (AQW 3175/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The number of Administrative Assistants, Administrative Officers and EO2s who retired from, and left the Civil Service between 1 February 2003 and 31 January 2009 is set out in the table below.

Period 1 February 2003 - 31 January 2009	Administrative Officer	Administrative Assistant	EO2
Retirees	466	256	281
Leavers	2406	5517	460

Civil Service Equal Pay Claim

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what steps are being taken to address the Equal Pay claims for people who had been in employment in the Civil Service during the period of disputed years but who have since left the service. (AQW 3176/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Under the terms of the proposal to settle the current equal pay claims lodged with the Industrial Tribunal by NIPSA on behalf of a number of its members, staff who have left or retired from the NICS on or after 1 August 2008 with more than two years reckonable service will be eligible for inclusion in the settlement.

Under equal pay legislation, former employees have six months from the date of leaving their employment in which to lodge an equal pay claim with the Industrial Tribunal.

Civil Service Equal Pay Claim

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what is being done to address the Equal Pay claims of civil service staff seconded to the Northern Ireland Office but still paid on NI Civil Service pay scales. (AQW 3177/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: There are no Northern Ireland Civil Servants seconded to the Northern Ireland Office who are paid on NICS pay scales.

Northern Ireland Block Grant

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what discussions they have had with the Prime Minister's office, the Treasury and other regional administrations in relation to the impact and timing of any proposed efficiency savings on the Northern Ireland Block Grant, and on the impact of any changes to the Barnett formula. (AQO 499/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: I am not aware of any proposals in respect of further efficiencies that will impact on the NI Executive Block Grant for the remainder of the period covered by the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review.

Going forward, the level of efficiency savings for 2011-12 and beyond will be considered as part of the next Spending Review, which is not expected to formally begin until 2010.

Similarly the UK Government has not indicated that it intends to make any changes to the current operation of the Barnett formula.

Overtime Figures

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant AQW 2649/10, to provide a breakdown of the overtime figures for each individual Department. (AQW 3266/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The total amounts paid by each of the eleven Northern Ireland Civil Service departments (and their agencies) to non-industrial and industrial staff in respect of overtime for the last five financial years is set out in the attached table.

Department	Total £				
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
DFP	1,746,652	1,902,424	1,686,906	1,961,180	1,661,315
OFMDFM	45,000	42,000	53,000	61,000	83,000
DRD	8,173,884	8,445,607	8,517,248	3,645,001	3,942,604
DHSSPS	431,810	438,977	445,019	382,843	289,257
DSD	4,040,000	3,560,000	3,860,000	4,370,000	4,110,000
DETI	255,225	255,161	231,562	262,849	214,279
DEL	184,202	133,015	124,392	186,254	154,241
DE	183,450	141,581	175,442	188,178	118,094
DARD	4,069,408	4,126,945	3,640,000	3,934,718	2,927,782
DCAL	251,136	262,539	330,947	365,212	126,719
DOE	1,022,707	2,057,592	2,011,059	1,888,440	2,029,090

Civil Service Equal Pay

Mr J O'Dowd asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what measures are being taken to compensate former Civil Service staff who resigned from the service outside the effective dates set out in the Equal Pay offer made to NIPSA on 23 November 2009. (AQW 3291/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Under the terms of the proposal to settle the current equal pay claims lodged with the Industrial Tribunal by NIPSA on behalf of a number of its members, staff who have left or retired from the NICS on or after 1 August 2008 with more than two years reckonable service will be eligible for inclusion in the settlement.

Under equal pay legislation, former employees have six months from the date of leaving their employment in which to lodge an equal pay claim with the Industrial Tribunal. Therefore, former Civil Service staff who

resigned from the service outside the effective date of the equal pay settlement offer have no legal entitlement to an equal pay claim.

Government Funding Allocations for Private Sector Projects

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) if Government funding allocations of over £10 million to private sector companies require Executive clearance; and (ii) to outline the criteria for Government funding allocations for private sector projects which require Executive clearance. (AQW 3295/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: There is no specific requirement for Executive clearance of funding allocations of over £10 million to private sector companies. The ministerial code sections 2.4 and 2.5 are the framework for deciding which decisions should be brought to the attention of the Executive. These include any matter which:

- cuts across the responsibilities of two or more Ministers;
- requires agreement on prioritisation;
- requires the adoption of a common position;
- has implications for the Programme for Government;
- is significant or controversial and is clearly outside the scope of the agreed programme referred to in paragraph 20 of Strand One of the Agreement;
- is significant or controversial and which has been determined by the First Minister and deputy First Minister acting jointly to be a matter that should be considered by the Executive Committee; or
- relates to a proposal to make a determination, designation or scheme for the provision of financial assistance under the Financial Assistance Act (Northern Ireland) 2009.

The criteria for funding allocations for private sector projects are specific to the various Departments and to the Programmes and Schemes under which the assistance is provided. To ensure maximum benefit from expenditure and value for money are achieved, all funding proposals, whether requiring Executive clearance or not, must be assessed in line with the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation.

Retirement

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel the average age of retirement for (i) men; and (ii) women in the senior civil service. (AQW 3332/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: The average age of retirement for Senior Civil Service staff in the Northern Ireland Senior Civil Service from 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2009 was 60 for both men and women.

Civil Service Equal Pay

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many Administrative Assistants and Administrative Officers will not be entitled to a pay-out under the Civil Service equal pay claim because they left the service before August 2008. (AQW 3413/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: Under equal pay legislation, former employees have six months from the date of leaving their employment in which to lodge an equal pay claim with the Industrial Tribunal. Therefore, former Civil Service staff who resigned from the service before August 2008 have no legal entitlement to an equal pay claim.

In the period 1st February 2003 to 31st July 2008: 5426 staff at Administrative Assistant grade and 2650 staff at Administrative Officer grade have left the service due to retirement or other reasons.

Civil Service Equal Pay

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many penalty charge notices have been issued as a result of home-owners failing to provide an energy performance certificate. (AQO 526/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: To date, there have been no penalty charge notices issued as a result of home-owners failing to provide an energy performance certificate.

Budget 2010-11

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what progress has been made in relation to the 2010/2011 budget. (AQO 528/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: In light of the public expenditure pressures facing the Executive next year, I have initiated a Review of the 2010-11 Spending Plans of Northern Ireland departments.

The aim of this process is to address these pressures and also to provide the Executive with more flexibility to respond to emerging issues as part of the 2010-11 In Year Monitoring Process.

Following initial discussions at the Executive, I recently held a series of bilateral meetings with my Ministerial colleagues. This has informed my formal recommendations to the Executive as regards the way forward which were considered last Thursday.

We are due to have a further discussion at the next meeting of the Executive. Once the proposed approach has been agreed by Ministers, I will present the draft revised spending plans to the Assembly for consultation.

Government Departments: Savings

Mr G Savage asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what discussions he has had with the First Minister and deputy First Minister and other Ministers about the potential to effect savings across all Departments. (AQO 529/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: As part of the ongoing Review of 2010-11 Spending Plans I have recently held separate meetings with all my Executive colleagues to provide me with a full understanding of the key issues involved for their departments.

The primary focus of these meeting was to discuss the scope for each department to make savings in 2010-11 in response to the financial pressures faced by the Executive.

However, there was also an opportunity for each Minister to highlight the departmental pressures they face next year.

I found these meetings most useful and they have informed my recommendations to the Executive in respect of how the spending pressures faced by the Executive might be addressed.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Funding

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail, for each Health and Social Care Trust, (i) the funding allocated for the 2009/10 financial year; (ii) the amount of under funding and over funding received based on (a) the Fourth Capitation Formula Review; and (b) the Fifth Capitation Formula Review; and (iii) when the review will be fully implemented. (AQW 139/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr M McGimpsey): Funding is allocated to commissioners of services and not Health and Social Care Trusts. It is for commissioners of services to decide upon the level of funding made available to HSC Trusts based on the services they provide.

AQW 7157/09 details the level of over and underfunding in relation to the Fourth Review Formula. During this period allocations were made to Health and Social Services Boards.

The Fifth Review Formula has now been implemented and is used to inform allocations. The table below details the over/underfunding position of the five Local Commissioning Groups in 2009/10.

	Over/Under Funded £m	Equity Gap %
Belfast LCG	25.3	4.2%
South Eastern LCG	-5.5	-1.1%
Northern LCG	-6.4	-0.9%
Southern LCG	-10.5	-1.9%
Western LCG	-2.9	-0.6%

The Department remains committed to moving all commissioners to within 1% of their target fair share. However, an immediate move could have a destabilising impact on services and a transitional movement to fair shares is therefore the preferred approach.

Funding for Occupational Therapy Services

Mr P Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the level of funding for occupational therapy services and aids in North Down in each of the last five years. (AQW 553/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The tables shown below detail the level of funding for Occupational Therapy services and equipment expenditure, where available, during the last five years.

TABLE 1: OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY TOTAL PLANNED EXPENDITURE NORTH DOWN

	2005/06 £000	2006/07 £000	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000
Occupational Therapy	613	646	694	727

1. Source - Strategic Resources Framework 2005/06 to 2008/09.
2. Expenditure for occupational therapy services was not recorded separately pre 2005.

Table 2: Occupational Therapy Equipment Expenditure

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Expenditure (£)	120478	132339	123225	100115	89605

1. Source – South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
2. Covers North Down and Ards.

Administrative Staff Employed in the Health Service

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how many administrative staff are currently employed in the Health Service; and (ii) how many were employed in each grade, in each of the last five years. (AQW 751/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The number of administrative staff employed in the Health Service at present can be found at the following web link http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/work_force/stats-research.htm

The analysis of the numbers employed in each grade is currently being updated to take account of staff turnover up the end of September. I will write to the member with details after that process is complete.

Administration in the Health Service

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been spent on administration in the Health Service in each of the last five years. (AQW 752/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The table below shows administrative costs for the latest five years available.

Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Total admin costs (£m)	242.5	264.3	278.4	306.6	311.9

Expenditure includes staff costs and administrative expenses such as printing and stationery, telephones, postage and office equipment.

Administration costs have increased in the last five years though expenditure has reduced in real terms between the year ended March 2007 and the year ended March 2008. This is because it has not kept pace with the increases seen in the general rate of inflation or staff pay awards during this period.

Furthermore, year on year comparisons are expected to show an increase as the impact of moving the vast majority (63k Head Count) of the workforce to Agenda For Change rate of pay, including the payment of arrears over the past five years, takes place.

Private and Independent Service Providers

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been paid to private and independent service providers to undertake health service work in each Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 1083/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In 2008/09, a total of circa £55.6m was paid to private and independent sector service providers to undertake health service work.

This was broken down by Trust as follows:

Western Trust	Southern Trust	South Eastern Trust	Northern Trust	Belfast Trust
circa £9.2m	circa £6.6m	circa £8.9m	circa £5.3m	circa £25.6m

Financial Deficits

Mr K McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current financial deficits in each Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 1084/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The latest available forecast 2009/10 financial deficits reported by Health and Social Care Trusts as at the end of October 2009, adjusted to take account of contingency plans that I have recently approved, other savings identified and anticipated funding, are as follows:

Trust	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Western	Southern	NIAS	Total
Adjusted year-end forecast (£m)	(2.0)	(3.0)	(1.0)	(1.7)	0	0	(7.7)

Every trust has a statutory duty to break even over the course of the year and my Department, in conjunction with Health and Social Care commissioners, is working with the trusts in an effort to secure a break-even position in 2009/10.

Expenditure on External Consultants

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 7899/09 and AQW 163/10, (i) to provide a breakdown by contract value of all expenditure on external consultants; and (ii) to explain the discrepancy in the figures given in these answers for the year 2006/07. (AQW 1299/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department, in line with DFP requirements, records external consultancy by consultancy exercises rather than contract value. The breakdown of Departmental expenditure (including Health Estates Agency) is as follows:-

Financial Year	Consultancy Exercises by Value		
	£0-10k	£11-50k	£50k+
2008/09	25	13	2
2007/08	16	22	16
2006/07	49	41	15
2005/06	55	32	12
2004/05	77	33	10

There is no discrepancy in the figures given in the answers to AQW 7899/09 and AQW 163/10 for the year 2006/07. AQW 7899/09 provided expenditure on both internal and external consultancy. AQW 163/10 provided expenditure on external consultancy only.

Cost of New Services

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of all new services introduced by his Department in the 2007/2008 financial year. (AQW 1317/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: DHSSPS introduced some £61m of new services in 2007/08.

Cost of New Services

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of all new services introduced by his Department in the 2008/2009 financial year. (AQW 1318/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: DHSSPS introduced some £82m of new services in 2008-09.

Patients Transferred to the Private Clinic in Ballykelly

Mr T Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many patients have been transferred by the Western Health and Social Care Trust for surgery at the private clinic in Ballykelly; and (ii) what was the cost to the Trust, in each of the last three years. (AQW 1558/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As part of the ongoing initiatives to reduce waiting times, Health and Social Care providers procure services from the Independent Sector where capacity is not available within the Health Service.

I am advised that the number of patients referred by the Western Trust to the North West Independent Clinic for surgery and associated costs for the last two financial years are as follows

Year	Inpatients	Daycases	Costs
2007/08	817	1317	£6.02 million
2008/09	1400	2504	£9.87 million

The Western Health and Social Care Trust became operational on 1 April 2007. Information on the numbers of patients referred in the 2006/07 year for surgery to the North West Independent Clinic and the associated costs is not held by the Trust.

Hire Cars for Staff Use

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if any Health and Social Care Trusts currently use hire cars for staff use. (AQW 1568/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Southern, Western and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trusts do not use car hire for staff use.

The Belfast and Northern Trusts advised that hire cars may be used very occasionally for staff required to travel, for work purposes, outside Northern Ireland and only when it is not cost effective or practical to use public transport or taxi services.

Cost of Advertising

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the amount spent on all advertising by each Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last four financial years. (AQW 1708/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The following table details the expenditure on advertising by each Health and Social Care Trust. Information for 2008/9 is not currently available.

Health and Social Care Trust	2005/06 £'000	2006/07 £'000	2007/08 £'000
Belfast HSC Trust	804	661	470
Northern HSC Trust	482	399	267
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service	43	10	27
South Eastern HSC Trust	366	309	309
Southern HSC Trust	352	327	280
Western HSC Trust	603	538	303
Total	2,650	2,244	1,656

Source: Trust annual financial returns

Advertising relates to e.g. Recruitment of staff, Adverts for Board meetings and Annual AGMs, Adverts for Foster Carers etc.

Cost of Running the Regulatory and Quality Improvement Authority

Mr D Kennedy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of running the Regulatory and Quality Improvement Authority in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 1743/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The running costs for the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority in each of the last 3 financial years were as follows:

2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
£4,325,807	£5,027,646	£6,290,687

The increase in costs between 2006/07 and 2008/09 can be explained by an increased number of staff and other costs required to carry out additional responsibilities

Cost of Employing Press Officers and Advertising

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much money has been spent by his Department on (i) employing press officers; and (ii) advertising, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 1755/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The information is set out in the table below:

Financial Year	Press Office Salary Costs	Total Advertising and Publicity Costs*
2008/09	£284,617	£189,332
2007/08	£215,582	£270,583
2006/07	£209,795	£425,611
2005/06	£151,579	£479,990
2004/05	£143,899	£485,591

* The Department can not separately identify advertising and publicity costs; to do so would incur disproportionate cost. The expenditure therefore includes costs for public notices, recruitment advertising and publicity campaigns.

Swine Flu

Mr D O'Loan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide a breakdown of the £22 million capital investment stated as the minimum requirement to deal with swine flu; and to state the long term benefits of this investment.

(AQW 1756/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Capital and Revenue projections are subject to change as the impact of swine flu becomes clearer and plans are finalised to deal with the threat. The September Monitoring bid was based on a mild virus spread and predicted capital costs of £22m.

Description	Vaccines/Antivirals / Antibiotics	Critical Care Equipment	Personal Protection Equipment	Other	Total Potential Capital Requirement
£m	14.4	4.5	1.3	1.8	£22m

Vaccines, antivirals, antibiotics and PPE equipment have been purchased to ensure that the Northern Ireland population has access to a stockpile that provides the same level of ongoing protection as the rest of the UK. Critical care ventilators purchased for the estimated surge in swine flu cases requiring critical care support will be used in the longer term to replace older medical equipment and meet future demand.

Review of Public Administration

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of the redundancies made in each Health and Social Care Trust as a result of the Review of Public Administration.

(AQW 1760/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The cost of Review of Public Administration related voluntary redundancies, and voluntary early retirements on the grounds of redundancy, in each Health and Social Care Trust at 30 September 2009 is set out below:

Belfast HSC Trust	Northern HSC Trust	Southern HSC Trust	South Eastern HSC Trust	Western HSC Trust
£18.226m	£8.985m	£7.903m	£5.330m	£7.599m

These payments have been made in line with statutory entitlements and do not contain any compensation elements; this process is continuing.

Cuts to Cruse Bereavement Care

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the 3% cuts by the South Eastern and Belfast Health and Social Care Trusts to Cruse Bereavement Care. (AQW 1766/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I would remind the Honourable Member that the Assembly voted for efficiency savings within Health on two occasions.

Given the challenge of achieving £700m efficiency savings across the Health and Social Care system, each Trust needs to consider pursuing some of its efficiency savings from providers in the third sector. I have said that Trusts should consider such providers and the services they deliver on a case by case basis, with due regard for the circumstances of those organisations, ensuring that clients and patients continue to receive the services they need.

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has stated that Cruse received a 0.6% cut.

Belfast Trust is currently meeting with community and voluntary partners to discuss efficiency savings.

Cost of Paying Salaries to Suspended Staff

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the cost to the Health Service of paying salaries to suspended staff in the last financial year. (AQW 1787/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The gross cost in the last financial year to the Health Service of paying salaries to those employees that have been suspended was £854k.

Water Charges

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the annual cost to each Health and Social Care Trust in respect of water charges. (AQW 1822/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The cost to the Health and Social Care Trusts in respect of water charges in 2008-09 are set out in the table below:

HSC Trust	2008-09 £
Belfast	1,472,000
Northern	487,422
Southern	266,554
South Eastern	498,000
Western	610,449
NI Ambulance Service	5,196
Total	3,339,621

Patients with a Learning Disability or Mental Health Condition

Mrs I Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the daily cost of providing 24-hour care for a patient with a learning disability or mental health condition in hospital as compared to a residential care home. (AQW 1832/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The following table shows the estimated daily cost of providing 24 hour care for the specified services;

Service	Estimated average daily cost (£)
Residential Care (Programme of Care 5 Mental Health)	69

Service	Estimated average daily cost (£)
Residential Care (Programme of Care 6 Learning Disability)	103
Mental Health Inpatient	238
Learning Disability Inpatient	237

Source: Trust Financial Returns 2007-08

Please note:

1. The above average unit costs take no account of individual case complexity.
2. The Mental Health and Learning Disability Inpatient unit costs are weighted averages that have been calculated using costs and activity relating to all relevant services for both adults and children.

British and Irish Sign Language Interpreters

Mr T Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much was spent on the provision of (i) British Sign Language; and (ii) Irish Sign Language interpreters by each Health and Social Care Trust in the (a) 2007/08; and (b) 2008/09 financial years. (AQW 1877/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the cost of sign language and sign language interpreters for 2007/08 and 2008/09 is set out in the Table below.

Trust	2007/2008			2008/2009		
	Irish Sign Language	British Sign Language	Total	Irish Sign Language	British Sign Language	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Belfast		62,107	62,107	105	64,327	64,432
NIAS		130	130		130	130
Northern		48,000	48,000		57,203	57,203
South Eastern		125	125		1,338	1,338
Southern		32,690	32,690		32,088	32,088
Western	No breakdown available		42,807	8,773	36,626	45,399
Total		143,052	185,859	8,878	191,712	200,590

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

Bonuses for Senior Management

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total amount spent in each Health and Social Care Trust on bonuses for senior management, in each of the last five years. (AQW 1903/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: As Health and Social Care Trusts have only been in existence in their current configuration since April 2007 details of the non-consolidated bonus type payments made to the Chief Executives and Directors are only available from that date.

The details are as follows:

HSC Trust	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Belfast HSC Trust	£8,880	£9,563	*
Northern HSC Trust	£4,354	£2,650	*

HSC Trust	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Southern HSC Trust	£9,312	£6,452	*
Western HSC Trust	£3,525	£3,468	*
South Eastern HSC Trust	£6,280	£8,549	*

* The 2009 pay award due from 1 April 2009 has not yet been agreed

These bonus payments are contractual entitlement and HSC Trusts would be at risk of legal challenge on the basis of “an unlawful deduction from wages” if they were to withhold them.

Cost of Gardening and Landscaping

Mr S Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) total amount spent by his Department; and (ii) the amount spent in each Health and Social Care Trust, on gardening and landscaping in each year since 2007. (AQW 1904/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Department of Finance and Personnel is responsible for the NICS estate including gardening or landscape works.

The total expenditure, both capital and revenue, incurred by Trusts on gardening and landscaping is set out in the table below.

Trust	2007/08			2008/09		
	Revenue	Capital	Total	Revenue	Capital	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Belfast	282	196	478	268	130	398
Northern	187	-	187	278	-	278
South Eastern	217	-	217	217	197	414
Southern	245	5	250	245	241	486
Western	366	-	366	435	365	800
Ambulance Service	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

Private Consultants' Fees

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the cost incurred by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, since its inception on private consultants' fees; (ii) the cost incurred on travel; and (iii) the reasons for the consultancy and the travel. (AQW 1932/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The following tables present the total costs incurred by the Belfast Trust on management consultants (Table 1) and travel and subsistence (Table 2).

TABLE 1

	2007/08 £'000	2008/09 £'000	01/04/09 to 30/09/09 £'000
Management consultants' fees	23	8	0

Source: Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Consultancy support is employed only when it is necessary and will provide value for money.

TABLE 2

	2007/08 £'000	2008/09 £'000	01/04/09 to 30/09/09 £'000
Travel and Subsistence	6,000	4,500	2,600

Source: Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Travel and subsistence costs are payable to staff only on official business i.e.

- where staff travel from their base to other places of work for meetings, training or client/patient visits.
- to cover the cost of travel to pre-approved training courses, conferences etc.
- excess mileage is payable for staff who are required to move locations as a result of RPA in accordance with guidelines
- subsistence for meals and accommodation is due when staff are away from their normal base of work.

Debt Inherited by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail the debt inherited by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust at its inception, and how the debt was incurred; and (ii) if any former Chief Executives or senior managers have been held to account for this debt. (AQW 2007/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: From its financial accounts, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust did not inherit any debt at inception. However, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has needed to use non recurrent income to offset recurrent costs and is taking steps to place the Trust on a more secure financial footing.

Cost of Private Finance Initiative Projects

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost to his Department of Private Finance Initiative projects in each of the last three years. (AQW 2051/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The breakdown of PFI projects in the last three years is listed below:

2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
£10.93m	£16.53m	£16.97m

This spend relates to the recurrent unitary payments on completed PFI projects.

Cost of Taxi Hire

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total amount spent by each Health and Social Care Trust on taxi hire in (i) 2007/08; and (ii) 2008/09. (AQW 2059/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Taxis may be used by Health and Social Care Trusts for various purposes, for example, the transportation of blood, medical records, equipment, staff, clients or patients. Most of the expenditure is incurred on the transport of patients and clients.

The following table details the amount spent on taxis by each Health and Social Care Trust for the financial years 2007/08 and 2008/09.

Health and Social Care Trust	2007/08 £'000	2008/09 £'000
Belfast HSC Trust	795*	916
Northern HSC Trust	Not available	1,067

Health and Social Care Trust	2007/08 £'000	2008/09 £'000
South Eastern HSC Trust	573	631
Southern HSC Trust	985	1,163
Western HSC Trust	706	795
NIAS	126	236

* Estimate

Physiotherapy Posts

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 8298/09, how many of these physiotherapy posts have now been filled. (AQW 2192/10)

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

HSC Trust	Vacant Physiotherapy posts at June 2009 (WTE)	Physiotherapy post at June 2009 now filled (WTE)	Physiotherapists in post at 30th Sept 2009 (WTE)
Belfast	37.06	28.6	279.6
Northern	3.0	2.5	146.2
South Eastern	7.1	2.4	135.7
Southern	13.2	1.6	147.3
Western	8.5	8.5	103.4

Source: Health & Social Care Trusts

Notes:

1. WTE = whole-time equivalent.

Beds in the Mid-Ulster Hospital

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there will be a reduction in the number of beds in the Mid-Ulster Hospital after 6 November 2009, and if so, by how many. (AQW 2311/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Trust's proposals to consolidate acute inpatient surgery services at Antrim Area and Causeway Hospitals will mean the removal of inpatient surgical services at the Mid-Ulster Hospital. To assist with the implementation of these changes I am advised that the Trust is planning to remove 7 beds at the Mid-Ulster hospital. The Trust will re-provide this capacity within the current bed complement at Antrim Area Hospital through the more efficient utilisation of existing surgical beds.

The Mid-Ulster will be developed as a local hospital and whilst acute services will not be provided there, the hospital will play a key role in supporting the acute hospitals. This change creates the opportunity to develop and broaden the range of services provided there including a minor injuries service, day procedures, diagnostics and outpatient services. This change also offers the potential to maximise day surgery capacity, increasing the volume of work done at the hospital and reducing the need for overnight stays.

I expect that after these changes have been implemented, the Mid Ulster will continue to provide the vast majority of hospital services needed by local people.

Harassment Against Health Service Staff

Mr T Burns asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 1768/10, to detail the number of recorded incidents of (i) sexual; (ii) racial; and (iii) religious or political harassment against

health service staff by (a) other members of staff; (b) patients; (c) visitors; and (d) any other person, in each of the last five years. (AQW 2317/10)

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

Harassment category and year	By other members of staff	By patients	By visitors	By other persons
Sexual¹				
2004/05	1	33 (21)	1	0
2005/06	2	54 (35)	0	4
2006/07	2	71 (61)	1	2
2007/08	1	71 (62)	0	0
2008/09	6	78 (60)	3	10
Racial				
2004/05	0	11	0	2
2005/06	0	9	0	2
2006/07	1	15	0	0
2007/08	0	9	0	0
2008/09	1	19	1	0
Religious/Political²				
2004/05	0	3	0	0
2005/06	0	1	0	1
2006/07	0	2	0	2
2007/08	1	2	0	0
2008/09	0	7	0	1

1 Figures in brackets refer to instances of unintentional inappropriate sexual behaviour by mentally ill patients or those with learning disabilities.

2 The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust does not collect data for this category.

Locum Consultants Employed in the Erne Hospital

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many locum consultants were employed in the Erne Hospital from 1 September 2009 to 31 October 2009, and how much they were paid. (AQW 2373/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: 12 locum consultants were employed in the Erne Hospital from 1 September 2009 to 31 October 2009.

The total cost was £200,787.41

Cost of Hospitality

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the money spent by each Health and Social Care Trust on hospitality and the hosting of functions in each of the last three financial years. (AQW 2594/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The following table details the money spent by each Health and Social Care Trust on hospitality and the hosting of functions for the financial years 2007/08 and 2008/09. Information for 2009/10 is not available until the end of the financial year. All Trusts have recently introduced additional limitations on the use of hospitality in the context of current financial constraints.

Health and Social Care Trust	2008/09 (£K)	2007/08 (£K)
Belfast HSC Trust	12	35
Northern HSC Trust	44	35
South Eastern HSC Trust	149*	100*
Southern HSC Trust	67*	62*
Western HSC Trust	86	109
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service	9	4

* SEHSCT costs are indicative and SHSCT costs include a degree of estimation

Costs recorded as 'hospitality' cover a wide range of activities, including:

- Public meetings, health awareness raising events, launches of new facilities and services, birthday/Christmas parties for patients/residents, Northern Ireland Assembly Health Committee visits to Trusts, etc
- Training events for essential skills for staff, and
- Staff meetings over lunch where meetings at other times clash with patient activities.

It is not possible to further analyse the costs without disproportionate cost.

Future Department of Justice

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) what steps his Department intends to take to engage with a future devolved Department of Justice on cross-cutting matters; and (ii) what contribution his Department can make to cross-cutting justice and community safety issues such as reducing levels of offending. (AQW 2681/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: New legislation will be introduced in the next few months, in line with England and Wales, allowing the removal of individuals who create a nuisance or disturbance from hospital premises. In the event of the establishment of a devolved Department of Justice prior to this, my Department will engage fully to ensure introduction of the legislation.

In addition, the NI Fire and Rescue Service undertakes a number of youth engagement projects such as Local Intervention Fire Education Schemes, a Cadet Fire Fighters Scheme and a Schools Programme aimed at community engagement with young people who are often involved in anti-social behaviour towards the emergency services.

Specialist Bladder/Urinary Services

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) which hospitals currently offer specialist bladder/urinary services; and (ii) to detail the current waiting lists for these services at each hospital. (AQW 2806/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Urology services are currently provided at the following hospitals.

Inpatient services	Outpatient services
Belfast City Hospital	Belfast City Hospital
Ards Hospital	Ards Hospital
Ulster Hospital	Ulster Hospital
Royal Victoria Hospital	Bangor Hospital
Mater Infirmorum Hospital	Royal Victoria Hospital
Lagan Valley Hospital	Mater Infirmorum Hospital
Downe Hospital	Lagan Valley Hospital

Inpatient services	Outpatient services
Causeway Hospital	Downe Hospital
South Tyrone Hospital	Causeway Hospital
Craigavon Area Hospital	South Tyrone Hospital
Altnagelvin Area Hospital	Banbridge Hospital
	Craigavon Area Hospital
	Altnagelvin Area Hospital
	Roe Valley (Outpatients) Hospital
	Tyrone County Hospital

Source: Departmental Returns KH03a and QOAR

1 – Urology services provided during quarter ending 30th September 2009

- (ii) Waiting times for both Inpatient admission and a first outpatient appointment are collected by the Department by Health and Social Care Trust, and are not available by hospital. Information on general waiting times, including urology, at 30th September, the latest position for which official figures are available, can be found at the following link:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/waiting_times_september_2009__final.pdf

Ambulances and Rapid Response Vehicles in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the numbers of (i) ambulances; and (ii) rapid response vehicles based in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area in (a) 2007/08; (b) 2008/09; and (c) 2009/10. (AQW 2821/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The number of A&E ambulances and rapid response vehicles (RRVs) in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) Northern Division, which is broadly coterminous with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area, is as follows:

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
A&E ambulances	36	36	32
RRVs	5	5	5

It is important to note that the number of vehicles in NIAS's emergency response fleet is determined solely by operational requirements. There has been substantial investment in new, more reliable, vehicles over the current CSR period.

The base locations from which these vehicles are despatched are as follows:

Station	Address
Antrim	Holywell Hospital, 62 Steeple Road
Ballycastle	Dalriada Hospital, Coleraine Rd
Ballymena	Braid Valley Hospital, Cushendall Road
Ballymoney	St James Road
Carrickfergus	Prince William Way
Coleraine	Newmills Industrial Estate, Lower Newmills Rd
Cookstown	Orritor Road
Larne	Moyle Hospital, Gloucester Ave
Magherafelt	Mid-Ulster Hospital, Hospital Road

Station	Address
Newtownabbey	Whiteabbey Hospital Doagh Rd

Ambulances and Rapid Response Vehicles in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Mr P McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the base locations for ambulances and rapid response vehicles in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area. (AQW 2822/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The number of A&E ambulances and rapid response vehicles (RRVs) in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) Northern Division, which is broadly coterminous with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area, is as follows:

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
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Carrickfergus	Prince William Way
Coleraine	Newmills Industrial Estate, Lower Newmills Rd
Cookstown	Orritor Road
Larne	Moyle Hospital, Gloucester Ave
Magherafelt	Mid-Ulster Hospital, Hospital Road
Newtownabbey	Whiteabbey Hospital Doagh Rd

Empty Wards

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many wards are currently empty in each Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 2969/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: On the 1st November 2009 there were no empty wards in any of the Health and Social Care Trusts.

This information has been supplied by Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland and has not been validated by the department.

Department's Efficiency Delivery Plan

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on his Department's Efficiency Delivery Plan. (AQW 2992/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The most recent information available (as at 30 September 2009) indicates that since April 2008 the following efficiencies have been delivered against the agreed categories in the Department's Efficiency Delivery Plan:

	Pharmaceutical Clinical Effectiveness	Productivity	RPA, admin & pay	Total
£m	27.4	55.3	61.3	144.0

Renal Dialysis Unit for the Causeway Hospital

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 7087/08, for an update on the provision of a new Renal Dialysis Unit for the Causeway Hospital. (AQW 2993/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Northern Health and Social Care Trust is currently developing a business case for the development of a renal unit at Causeway Hospital and is due to submit it to the Health and Social Care Board and my Department by February 2010.

Urology Review

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Urology Review. (AQW 2994/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Health and Social Care Board is currently undertaking a public consultation on the Review of Urology Services in Northern Ireland, which will run until 18 December 2009. I would encourage interested parties to read the review document and respond if they wish to the Board.

The consultation documents can be accessed at the Board's website at <http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/>

Waiting Time for a Neurologist Appointment

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety the average waiting time for an appointment with a neurologist for a patient newly diagnosed with epilepsy. (AQW 2998/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the waiting time for a first outpatient appointment is collected by specialty and the length of time that a patient is waiting, in timebands.

The waiting time position for a first outpatient appointment in the Neurology specialty, at the 30th June 2009, the most recent date for which official statistics are available, was published in the Northern Ireland Waiting Times Bulletin, which can be found at the following link:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/waiting_list_bulletin_jun_09.pdf

Swine Flu Vaccination

Mr A Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people in East Antrim have been refused the swine flu vaccination; and the reasons. (AQW 3002/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Figures on those refused vaccination and the reasons why are not collected.

Occupational Therapy Services in the Western Health and Social Care Trust

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) a timeline and process for appointing a manager for occupational therapy services in the Western Health and Social Care Trust; and (ii) the potential backlog of appointments and casework as a result of this post remaining vacant. (AQW 3010/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am informed by the Western Trust that the post has been advertised with a closing date for applications of 27 November 2009 and a provisional date for interviews in mid December 2009. The role of this new Head of Service is managerial and interim managerial arrangements are in place to ensure that there is no impact on waiting lists or patient appointments.

Urology Service at the Causeway Hospital

Mr A McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there are any plans to move the urology service from the Causeway Hospital to Antrim Area Hospital; and if so, when. (AQW 3011/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Health and Social Care Board is currently undertaking a public consultation on the Review of Urology Services in Northern Ireland, which will run until 18 December 2009.

I would encourage interested parties to read the review document and respond if they wish to the Board.

The consultation documents can be accessed at the Board's website at <http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/>

Cost of Overnight Stay in Hospital

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average cost to the Health Service of one overnight stay in hospital. (AQW 3013/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There is not a meaningful, or readily available, single average cost for one overnight stay in hospital.

Overnight Stays in Hospital

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail, for the last five years, the average number of overnight stays in hospital for patients for whom appropriate care packages in the community could not be arranged. (AQW 3015/10)

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

Cardiac Rehabilitation

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients received cardiac rehabilitation, in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years. (AQW 3067/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the total number of patients who have received cardiac rehabilitation in previous years is not held centrally.

Cardiac rehabilitation service is costed within the overall cardiology service.

The current budget for 2008/09 to 2010/11 includes £12 million for cardiovascular services, £14 million for stroke services, £11 million for renal capacity, and a non-recurrent bridging supplement to support the delivery of the Framework, including cardiac rehabilitation.

Cardiac Rehabilitation

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients who did not receive cardiac rehabilitation had conditions that may have responded to cardiac rehabilitation in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years. (AQW 3068/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the total number of patients who have received cardiac rehabilitation in previous years is not held centrally.

Cardiac rehabilitation service is costed within the overall cardiology service.

The current budget for 2008/09 to 2010/11 includes £12 million for cardiovascular services, £14 million for stroke services, £11 million for renal capacity, and a non-recurrent bridging supplement to support the delivery of the Framework, including cardiac rehabilitation.

Cardiac Rehabilitation

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what analysis has been conducted into the benefits of cardiac rehabilitation; and what is the estimated increase in life expectancy for patients who receive cardiac rehabilitation compared to those who do not. (AQW 3069/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the total number of patients who have received cardiac rehabilitation in previous years is not held centrally.

Cardiac rehabilitation service is costed within the overall cardiology service.

The current budget for 2008/09 to 2010/11 includes £12 million for cardiovascular services, £14 million for stroke services, £11 million for renal capacity, and a non-recurrent bridging supplement to support the delivery of the Framework, including cardiac rehabilitation.

Cardiac Rehabilitation

Mr M Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been spent on cardiac rehabilitation in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years. (AQW 3070/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the total number of patients who have received cardiac rehabilitation in previous years is not held centrally.

Cardiac rehabilitation service is costed within the overall cardiology service.

The current budget for 2008/09 to 2010/11 includes £12 million for cardiovascular services, £14 million for stroke services, £11 million for renal capacity, and a non-recurrent bridging supplement to support the delivery of the Framework, including cardiac rehabilitation.

Locum Doctors and Consultants

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many locum doctors and consultants are currently engaged in (i) the Erne Hospital; and (ii) South Tyrone Hospital. (AQW 3073/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Western Trust has 11 (11 WTE) locum doctors currently engaged in the Erne Hospital and 1 (1 WTE) locum consultant.

The Southern Trust does not currently engage any locum doctors or consultants.

Source: Southern and Western Health & Social Care Trusts

Notes:

1. WTE = whole-time equivalent.

Herbal Drugs

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has any plans to call for a ban on herbal drugs, which have a similar effect to illegal substances and can lead to complex addiction issues. (AQW 3074/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In order to ensure a consistent approach is taken to the law in relation to drugs use, all jurisdictions within the UK place the same restrictions on certain drugs as set out in the Misuse of Drugs Act – which is the responsibility of the Home Office in Westminster.

I understand that the Home Office is currently proposing to amend the Act to include a number of substances known as “legal highs”. The amendment will make it illegal to possess or distribute a range of substances including:

- GBL and 1,4-BD);
- BZP and a group of substituted piperazines;
- a range of synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists; and
- 24 anabolic steroids and two growth promoters.

Redundancy Payments

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost to the Health Service of redundancy payments made under the Review of Public Administration. (AQW 3087/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The current cost of Review of Public Administration related voluntary redundancies and voluntary early retirements on the grounds of redundancy is £65.262m. These payments have been made in line with statutory entitlements and do not contain any compensation elements; this process is continuing.

Prescription Fraud

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the annual cost of prescription fraud in each of the last three years. (AQW 3088/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The estimated annual cost of prescription fraud for N Ireland for the last 3 financial years is as follows:

Financial Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Prescription fraud	£7.4m	£8.3m	£7.2m

I have announced that prescription charges will be abolished with effect from 1st April 2010.

New GP Contract

Mr A Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost to the Health Service to date of implementing the new GP contract. (AQW 3089/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The following table shows the cost to the health service (year on year) to date of the implementation of the new UK wide GP contract from 1st April 2004.

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Investment	£171.3m	£189.8m	£194.3m	£196.6m	£213.7m

The investment shown above represents an average of 5.5% of the overall health budget in the years concerned.

Restructuring of Statutory Residential Care

Rt Hon J Donaldson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the impact the proposed reduction in staff, as a result of the restructuring of statutory residential care by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, will have on the standard of care in residential homes for older people. (AQW 3095/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Trust have confirmed that, taking account of the numbers and dependency levels of residents, staffing levels in all five statutory residential homes exceed those

levels specified as the minimum required by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and set out in their document "Staffing Guidance for Residential Care Homes".

10-day Prompt Payment Scheme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to ensure that the 10-day prompt payment scheme is passed on to sub-contractors by businesses who are receiving direct payments from the Department, and its related public bodies. (AQW 3097/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: My Department and its related bodies take extremely seriously the obligation to pay promptly all organisations with which we do business directly. This includes taking all possible steps to ensure that suppliers are paid monthly in respect of validated invoices and within 10 days where possible. This being the case, it is to be expected that where main contractors benefit from earlier payment, this benefit would be passed on to sub contractors, although this remains a matter for agreement between these two parties.

Cost of Air Ambulance Provision

Mr B McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost to his Department of air ambulance provision in each Health and Social Care Trust area in (i) 2007/08; and (ii) 2008/09. (AQW 3114/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A regional contract has been in place with Woodgate Executive Air Charter (UK) Ltd since January 2006 for the transfer of critically ill patients, ie neonates, infants, paediatrics and adults to receiving hospitals in the UK. The contract also permits transfers, as required, outside of the UK eg Canada and Europe. Woodgate Executive Air Charter (UK) Ltd is based at Belfast International Airport and provides a 24 hour, 7 day a week service.

The information requested was collected by Health and Social Services Boards for the years concerned and is set out in the table below:

Health and Social Services Board	Eastern £	Northern £	Southern £	Western £
2007/08	263,654	111,984	154,821	88,461
2008/09	550,438 ¹	198,614	122,717	96,479

¹ Includes flights to Canada, Germany and France totalling £124,437

Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme

Rt Hon J Donaldson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if he has any plans to introduce a scheme similar to the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme, to encourage generic substitution by pharmacists. (AQW 3163/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme is UK wide and I am fully signed up to it including the proposals with regard to generic substitution.

Modifications to the Children Act 1989

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the modifications to the Children Act 1989 which were implemented in England and Wales as part of the Adoption and Children Act 2002; and if he has considered similar modifications here. (AQW 3190/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The amendments to the Children Act 1989 included within the 2002 Act cover private and public law matters as well as reserved and non-reserved issues. The impact of the changes in NI are the policy responsibility of:

- a) DHSSPS
- b) DFP or
- c) the NI Court Service which sits under the Ministry of Justice

For those areas which fall to my Department, we have made progress in a number of areas e.g. we have established an independent advocacy service for children in care although this is not yet placed this on a statutory basis. We have also consulted on other proposals as part of either the “Care Matters NI – A Bridge to a Better Future” or “Adopting the Future” consultations.

Elliott Dynes Rehabilitation Unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital

Mr J Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his Department’s plans for the Elliott Dynes Rehabilitation Unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital. (AQW 3218/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: With respect to the 46-bed Elliott Dynes Unit, the Belfast Trust plans to re-provide 24 of the rehabilitation beds in the community and to provide a new 24-bedded unit for appropriate acute medical care within the main hospital building.

The Trust’s plan for elderly services is focused on the development and expansion of domiciliary and intermediate care alongside the increasing role of technology, enabling us to maintain more people in their own homes, or in community settings, thereby avoiding unnecessary admission to hospital or institutional care where possible.

I have assurances that throughout transition, quality and safety will be maintained and care standards will be met, that demand will be met and that there will be a process of meaningful and sensitive engagement with patients, families and carers.

Special Guardianship Regulations 2005

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 which were introduced in England and Wales; and if he has given any consideration to introducing similar legislation here. (AQW 3226/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Under the Adopting the Future strategy it is proposed to introduce Special Guardianship as an amendment to the Children Order (Northern Ireland) 1995 through a proposed Adoption and Children Bill. A first draft paper is currently with the Executive seeking approval for the Bill proposals which includes Special Guardianship. My proposals are limited to introducing special guardianship in respect of public law cases for which I have responsibility.

2006 NICE Guidelines

Mr D McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) what steps his Department is taking to comply with the 2006 NICE guidelines which recommend that there should be one Parkinson’s disease nurse specialist for every 300 patients; (ii) how far short the Health Service currently is on this ratio; and (iii) when he expects to correct this shortfall. (AQW 3238/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: There are currently 7 Parkinson’s disease specialist nurses working in Northern Ireland (equivalent to 6.06 WTE) who provide specialist advice and support to patients and non specialist health and social care staff groups within integrated teams. This number reflects our integrated health and social care system and makes best use of all our resources. If our systems were not integrated the NICE recommendations would require us to have 9 WTE specialist nurses in Northern Ireland.

Care has been provided for people with Parkinson’s disease as part of the overall neurological service provision rather than through disease-specific care packages.

HSC Trusts are taking every opportunity to deliver services around the needs of people with Parkinson’s disease.

With the establishment of integrated teams, the ability of the service to more fully address the needs of people with long-term progressive conditions will be further developed.

2006 NICE Guidelines

Rt Hon J Donaldson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) if he is aware of the 2006 NICE Guidelines which state that there should be one Parkinson's disease specialist nurse for every 300 patients; and that there is currently no such nurse in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust area which has 800 patients; and (ii) what action he is taking to address this shortfall. (AQW 3265/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I am aware of the NICE Guidance on Parkinson's disease published in 2006. There are currently 7 Parkinson's disease specialist nurses working in Northern Ireland (equivalent to 6.06 WTE) who provide specialist advice and support to patients and non specialist health and social care staff groups within integrated teams. This number reflects our integrated health and social care system and makes best use of all our resources. If our systems were not integrated the NICE recommendations would require us to have 9 WTE specialist nurses in Northern Ireland.

Patients from South Eastern Trust who attend the Movement Disorder clinic in Belfast Trust, (where there are 3 Specialist nurses) have their care needs coordinated currently by this team.

HSC Trusts are taking every opportunity to deliver services around the needs of people with Parkinson's disease.

With the establishment of integrated teams, the ability of the service to more fully address the needs of people with long-term progressive conditions will be further developed.

Practical Support for Ward Sisters

Mrs M O'Neill asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how the £2 million announced on the 5th June 2009, to provide practical support for ward sisters has been distributed; and if it has been ringfenced for this purpose. (AQW 3321/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The uncertainty over my budget, in particular the funding of the £64 million for swine flu, has meant that I have been unable to move forward on this issue, and many other vital service developments.

Now that I have been given clarity around my budget, I will ensure Ward Sisters are given every possible support to help them improve cleanliness and hygiene levels.

Integration of the Dorothy Gardner and Rathlin Wards at Knockbracken

Ms D Purvis asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 3225/10, for an update on the ongoing consultation process on the integration of the Dorothy Gardner and Rathlin wards at Knockbracken, including (i) the specific stages of the process; (ii) when it will conclude; (iii) when an official decision will be made on the integration of the wards, based on the findings of the consultation; and (iv) if he can confirm that no male patients will be admitted to the Rathlin ward until the consultation is fully concluded. (AQW 3397/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: In making the decision to merge Dorothy Gardner and Rathlin villas the Belfast Trust consulted with user and carer representatives and senior staff from within Mental Health Services. The Trust is currently liaising with current inpatients and relatives/carers on the process. The Belfast Trust is confident that the changes it is making will bring a vast improvement in the quality of accommodation for patients who may spend lengthy periods of time in hospital.

The Trust anticipates admitting male patients to Rathlin when the designated male wing in Rathlin villa becomes available. It is expected that the merger of Dorothy Gardner and Rathlin villas will be completed by the end of January 2010.

The reduction in acute beds and the enhancement of community mental health services is in line with Bamford recommendations.

DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Road Openings

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development if he will amend his Department's system of data collection to differentiate between all road openings, and new roads completed within the last year which have been subject to road openings by utility and service providers. (AQW 2985/10)

Minister for Regional Development (Mr C Murphy): My Department's Roads Service has advised that it manages and shares information with utilities on road openings through the NI Streetworks Registration and Notification System (NISRANS). The system provides utilities with details of where substantial road works have been completed by Roads Service in the previous 12 months. A 12 month statutory restriction is imposed on such roads to prevent all further works taking place, with the exception of emergency works and new customer connections.

In order to assist in coordinating street works and to minimise the number of road openings within areas affected by restrictions, NISRANS is designed to report on potential violations. Roads Service is currently working closely with the system supplier to determine if reports on actual violations can be provided.

Road Surfaces

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development if he can give an assurance that priority will be given to rectifying a road surface that has been identified as a contributing factor in a road accident. (AQW 3062/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I can advise the Member that my Department's Roads Service regularly receives data on collisions involving personal injury from the PSNI. This data is used to identify locations where there are a number of collisions over a three-year period and to identify if there is a common cause which can be treated by engineering measures. However, I should point out that most traffic collisions in the North, which result in death or serious injury, occur as a result of excessive speed, (inappropriate for the conditions or in excess of the speed limit), alcohol, or failure to wear a seatbelt. Continued success in reducing the number of fatalities or seriously injured will depend on the combined effects of education, enforcement and engineering, as well as the coordinated efforts of all involved in road safety.

However, I can assure the Member that road safety is, and will continue to be, a top priority for Roads Service. In recognition of its duty of care under Article 8 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, which places it under a duty to maintain all public roads in reasonable condition, Roads Service has put in place a set of Maintenance Standards for Safety and an inspection programme, to ensure that roads have a satisfactory level of skidding resistance, which reduces the risk of uncontrolled skids and improves braking efficiency. These standards are based on best practice, research, and consultation with both the public and other professional bodies and Industry and designed to ensure a consistent service level and a safe highway, while offering value for money.

Essentially, the Safety Standards and procedures currently in operation establish frequencies for road inspections and specify response times for the repair of defects. Inspection frequencies vary between daily cycles for motorways, to four monthly cycles for carriageways carrying low volumes of traffic. Response times specified for the repair of defects are dependent on the severity of the defect and range from one calendar day, to simple inclusion in the next work programme for that particular route. These systems and procedures are recognised and accepted by the courts as being robust, given the finite level of funding available. The Standards were last reviewed in 2006 and continue to provide a systematic approach to road maintenance management.

Roads Service also has a programme of measuring skidding resistance on motorways, trunk roads and A Class roads and reports annually on the percentage of the road network which is equal to or below the recommended skid resistance standard. Roads Service engineers carry out investigations on all roads that are found to be below the investigatory level and arrange remedial work, where necessary.

10-day Prompt Payment Scheme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Regional Development what action he is taking to ensure that the 10-day prompt payment scheme is passed on to sub-contractors by businesses who are receiving direct payments from the Department, and its related public bodies. (AQW 3104/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Payment within 10 days is not a binding requirement in Government contracts. However, the Department and its related public bodies require main contractors to enter into subcontracts on the same terms and conditions as the main contract.

Central Procurement Directorate is currently considering the inclusion of additional conditions in its supplies and services contracts in relation to fair payment to ensure that main contractors pass on the benefits of prompt payment to their subcontractors. Any additional conditions in this respect will be mirrored in contracts entered into by the Department and its related public bodies.

EWAY Rapid Transit Scheme

Mrs N Long asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department is considering proposals to proceed with the EWAY Rapid Transit scheme on the Upper Newtownards Road, East Belfast. (AQW 3108/10)

Minister for Regional Development: At present, the Rapid Transit project is moving into the preliminary design stage and Rapid Transit Division is examining all the route options to confirm the findings of the Strategic Outline Case. This includes the Upper Newtownards Road in East Belfast.

Road Resurfacing Schemes

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development what road resurfacing schemes are planned for the Mid-Ulster constituency in the next two years. (AQW 3111/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that its resurfacing programmes for 2010/11 and 2011/12, in the Mid-Ulster constituency, have not been finalised.

I would remind the Member that information on resurfacing schemes can be found in my Department's Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from the Roads Service internet site at the following web address:

www.roadsni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-council_reports.htm

Roads Service is currently compiling their Autumn Reports to Councils.

Traffic Calming Schemes

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development what traffic calming schemes are planned for the Mid-Ulster constituency in the next two years. (AQW 3112/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I would remind the Member that information on my Department's Roads Service's future programme of traffic calming schemes can be found in the Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from the Roads Service internet site at the following web address:

www.roadsni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-council_reports.htm

Roads Service is currently compiling their Autumn Reports to Councils.

Stability of Bridges in Northern Ireland

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development, in light of the collapse of the bridge in Cumbria due to heavy rain, what measures are in place or are planned to be in place to ensure the stability of bridges in Northern Ireland. (AQW 3127/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), it carries out a programme of detailed bridge inspections, of all bridges on their network, on a two year cycle.

In addition, Roads Service recently completed an underwater bridge inspection programme of bridges susceptible to erosion, or scour, beneath the water line. This process will also be cyclical, and in accordance with the DMRB.

Following the recent heavy rainfall, Roads Service will also conduct further visual inspections of structures that are deemed at risk to undermining, once the flood levels recede.

With regard to bridges on the NI Railways (NIR) network, Translink and its sub-contractors carry out a visual inspection annually. In addition, 39 bridges over larger rivers and streams received underwater inspections in 2008. These inspections consider erosion to the river bed, and whether there has been a change since the previous inspection.

A further 116 bridges over smaller rivers and streams have been inspected in the last three months, with a further two bridges due to be inspected later this month.

All work recommended during the inspections has been completed, or is programmed.

Adopted Roads in East Antrim

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the number; and (ii) the location of roads that have been adopted in East Antrim, in the last 12 months. (AQW 3144/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it has adopted 23 roads, in the last 12 months in East Antrim.

The locations of the roads are:-

- Bay Road, Larne
- Bramble Glen, Old Carrick Road, Newtownabbey
- Brustin Lee, Ballygally
- Cherry Walk, Carrickfergus
- Clonvara, Jordanstown Road, Newtownabbey
- Craigs Close, Carrickfergus
- Drumahoe Gardens, Larne
- Edenmore Court, Jordanstown
- Edenvale Avenue/Copeland Road, Carrickfergus
- Greenwood Park, Carrickfergus
- Hawthorne Road, Carrickfergus
- Linn Road, Larne
- Mounthill Manor, Larne
- Mullaghmore Park, Carrickfergus
- Olde Forde, Islandmagee Road, Carrickfergus
- Prince Andrew Way, Carrickfergus
- Prospect Loanen, Carrickfergus
- Regent's Park, Larne
- Riverside, Gleno
- The Stables, Islandmagee
- Tudor Gardens, Carrickfergus
- Tudor Road, Broadlands, Carrickfergus
- Walnut Hollow, Larne

I would remind the Member that information on adopted roads can be found in my Department's Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from the Department for Regional Development's internet site at the following web addresses:

<http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-searchall.htm>

Railway Stations

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development to what extent each major railway station is compliant with section 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1996 and subsequent acts to 2005. (AQW 3149/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink has recently completed a £17m Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and New Rail Vision Upgrade Project across its stations and halts. The scope of the project was finalised in consultation with 'Disability Action' who recognised that providing full accessibility to all public transport infrastructures would involve enormous cost and recognised that due to limitations on funding that a means of prioritisation was required. The work carried out under the DDA project has resulted in major railway stations generally being in compliance with the DDA requirements.

In discussing a programme Disability Action did not set standards but agreed with Translink a pragmatic scope of works. Translink have informed me that to evidence in detail compliance with DDA regulations would take some time. I am aware that you have raised the issue of compliance with Translink in respect of Portadown railway station. Translink have informed me that over £400k has been spent on improvement works at the station recently. Major works would be required to remove the stepped access to the island platform. To overcome this shortcoming Translink can bring trains on request into platform 1 to assist passengers with access. I have discussed the issue of DDA plans at the station. It is estimated that £2m could be required to complete station modifications. It is envisaged that these plans, based on current budget scenarios, are to begin during the next Comprehensive Spending Review period.

Portadown Railway Station

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development when he plans to upgrade Portadown Railway Station, given that there are 400,000 passenger journeys out of it each year, and Translink does not plan to upgrade until 2014, especially since he has recently opened a new Railway station in his constituency of Newry and Armagh. (AQW 3152/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink had originally planned to complete the upgrade of Portadown station by 2013 but this has slipped to 2014 owing to pressures on available capital budgets. It is envisaged that the project will be delivered in phases, with the first phase designed to improve access to the island platform by constructing a footbridge serviced by passenger lifts. In the current plan which is subject to funding availability and approval, it is envisaged that work would start in 2013 and be completed in 2014. Whilst it is potentially feasible to bring the construction period forward, the funding pressures which already exist in the next few years suggest this is unlikely.

While it is accepted that major works may be required at Portadown Station, the facilities currently provided are clearly functional. In comparison, the old Newry Railway Station, which has now been replaced, was very basic and provided very poor conditions for both staff and passengers. Plans to build the new station were originally drawn up some fourteen years ago. The primary factors influencing station plans are in order; safety or legislative compliance; asset condition; business efficiency and strategic requirements.

Newry Railway Station

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development how many passengers depart from Newry Railway Station each year. (AQW 3153/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Owing to the open system of railway ticketing used by Translink, it is impossible to provide wholly accurate figures of passengers departing from Newry Railway Station.

Those passengers who have tickets which give unlimited access on bus and rail to the North of Ireland, commuter cards, family tickets or school passes cannot be recorded at individual train stations.

The following table provides details of the number of passengers, for which Translink have records, who have boarded the train at Newry over the past 3 years.

Newry NIR Passenger Journeys			
	27/03/06 – 25/03/07	26/03/07 – 30/03/08	31/03/08 – 29/03/09
Boarding	110,207	115,134	108,545

In addition there will, of course, be significant numbers of passengers arriving at Newry Station.

Development of Airports

Mr B Wilson asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment on the limitations on planning the development of airports, because civil aviation is a reserved matter. (AQW 3157/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Although civil aviation is currently a reserved matter, all three commercial airports in the North have development plans which involve the growth of services. The extent of airport development is, of course, subject to statutory environmental constraints, including planning, which are the responsibility of the devolved administration.

Roads

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent in each of the last five years on (i) the construction of new roads; and (ii) roads maintenance and repairs, by (a) council area; and (b) constituency. (AQW 3165/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service does not distinguish between new roads and other improvement measures. However, details of the total expenditure on road improvements in each of the last five years are available by Roads Service Division, including the construction of new roads and road maintenance and repairs, and are provided in the tables below:

Roads Service Division	Estimated Major Construction Spend*				
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Eastern	£6,732,000	£915,000	£2,829,000	£28,379,000	£68,929,000
Northern	£8,127,000	£6,767,000	£819,000	£5,262,000	0
Southern	£11,245,000	£13,458,000	£16,427,000	£5,456,000	£3,933,000
Western	£3,118,000	£5,263,000	£1,933,000	£1,148,000	£1,582,000

* Major Construction includes Public Private Partnership Permission to Use payments.

Roads Service Division	Estimated Minor Construction Spend*				
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Eastern	£10,065,000	£10,728,000	£7,925,000	£8,737,000	£8,587,000
Northern	£10,086,000	£10,491,000	£5,895,000	£7,107,000	£7,130,000
Southern	£9,962,000	£9,930,000	£6,311,000	£7,174,000	£6,837,000
Western	£9,857,000	£10,645,000	£6,355,000	£7,977,000	£7,324,000

* Minor Construction includes Local Transport and Safety Measures, Bridge Strengthening and Large Minor Works.

Roads Service Division	Structural Maintenance Spend*				
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Eastern	£15,917,000	£15,771,000	£15,034,000	£17,736,000	£14,719,000
Northern	£16,677,000	£16,749,000	£14,499,000	£17,089,000	£14,060,000
Southern	£20,340,000	£18,981,000	£17,374,000	£21,087,000	£16,311,000

Roads Service Division	Structural Maintenance Spend*				
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Western	£20,899,000	£19,017,000	£18,658,000	£21,418,000	£17,892,000

* Structural Maintenance includes resurfacing of roads and footways, surface dressing, patching and structural drainage.

Road Maintenance

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 266/10, to detail how the £4,000 per road mile spent on road maintenance compares to the amount spent per road mile in England, Wales and Scotland. (AQW 3168/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The following table contains broad comparison details of how my Department's Roads Service's structural maintenance expenditure for 2008/09, of £4,000 per mile of road, compares with details available for England, 2006/07, and Wales 2005/06. Unfortunately, a comparison figure is not available for Scotland:

Structural Maintenance	North of Ireland (08/09)	England (06/07)	Wales (05/06)
All roads /carriageway – £ per mile	£4,000	£21,000	£12,200

Roads

Mr S Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development if he has examined the provision of service ducts for electricity, gas, water and other utilities on both sides of new roads being constructed or on roads being upgraded, to avoid widespread road opening in the future. (AQW 3169/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, as part of the scheme appraisal process for new roads, they consult with all utility providers at an early stage to advise them of the proposals and also establish their current and future requirements within the vicinity of the scheme. Further enquiries are made to utility providers during the preliminary and detailed design stages, as to the location of existing apparatus and any proposals they may have for future works, which may need to be accommodated within the scheme. Liaison between Roads Service and the various utilities is enhanced through the workings of the NI Road Authority and Utilities Committee.

Roads Service endeavour to accommodate all utility works within the verge away from the carriageway, which not only removes the need for future road openings, but also helps reduce health and safety issues associated with any subsequent maintenance works. However, there is an exception in the case of motorways and special roads where access for utilities is restricted under the Roads (NI) Order 1993.

With the varying requirements of individual utility companies, there can be practical difficulties and significant expense to installing ducting along the entire length of a road scheme, particularly as much of the work could be of a nugatory nature, if it is never used.

However, through careful planning and liaison at the design stage of a project, it should be possible for Roads Service to minimise the requirement for widespread road openings in the future.

Unadopted Roads in East Antrim

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how many unadopted roads there are in East Antrim; (ii) to detail the location of these roads; and (iii) if Roads Service plans to adopt them. (AQW 3172/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service has advised that there are currently 57 roads / streets in the East Antrim area that are unadopted and which are subject to Private Streets Order Legislation.

The locations of these roads / streets are as follows:

- Cambridge Close , Carrick
- Cherry Walk, Carrick
- Loughview Terrace, Carrick
- North Lodge Court, Carrick
- Rathview , Carrick
- Riverdale Avenue, Carrick
- Shaftesbury Cross , Carrick
- Swifts Quay , Carrick
- Rodgers Quay, Carrick
- Cloughlands Park, Carrick
- Gorman Close, Green island
- Woodburn Avenue, Carrick
- Glynn Park , Carrick
- Rosemount Park / Mountpleasant Road , Jordanstown
- Knockmore Park , Carrick
- Glenavana House Hotel , Whiteabbey
- Upper Road , Greenisland
- Windmill Park , Carrick
- Old Turn , Eden
- 77 Woodburn Road , Carrick
- Riverbrook , Whitehaed
- Moyard Gardens , Carrick
- Woodfield , Jordanstown
- Meadowbank , Jordanstown
- Monkstown Mews , Jordanstown
- Glendhu Court , Monkstown
- Glenville Road , Whiteabbey
- Farmlodge , Green island
- Sloefield Road , Carrick
- Drumahoy Drive , Carrick
- Rhanbuoy Park, Carrick
- Ashbourne Manor , Carrick
- Charles Legg/Granville Drive , Carrick
- Rathview, Carrick
- The Close , Carrick
- Glenfield, Carrick
- Old Shore Court, Carrick
- Farmlodge Park , Carrick
- Edenvale Avenue , Carrick
- Longpark , Farm lodge , Carrick
- Cloughlands Park, Carrick
- Brooklands Close, Whitehead
- Walnut Hollow (part), Larne
- Coastguard Road, Larne
- Loranville, Larne
- Whinfield (part), Larne

- Casements View (part), Larne
- Inver Heights, Larne
- The Beeches Distributor Road, Larne
- Oakdene, Larne
- Castleview Cottages, Mark St., Larne
- Drumnahoe Manor, Larne
- Forthill, Ballycarry
- Kiln Court, Larne
- Sallagh Park (car-parking), Larne
- Curragh Hill, Carnlough
- Allenbrook, Millbrook, Larne

If the developers of these streets fulfil their obligations under the Private Streets Order, and the roads are completed to adoption standard, Roads Service will then adopt them.

In addition, there are also a number of roads / streets in the East Antrim area that remain unadopted but which are not subject to Private Streets Order Legislation. Information on such roads is not readily available and a significant commitment of staff resources would be required in order to collate it. However, if the Member has concerns about specific unadopted roads within particular developments, I would recommend that he raises these matters directly with the relevant Divisional Roads Manager in either Eastern Division or Northern Division both of whom have responsibility for parts of the East Antrim constituency.

Strategy to Address Flooding

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development if he has considered developing a new strategy to address flooding affecting homeowners and businesses. (AQW 3184/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service and Northern Ireland Water (NIW) contribute fully to the implementation of the EC Floods Directive in the North, through an inter-Agency Flooding Strategy Steering Group, under the leadership of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). The EC Floods Directive is designed to help Member States establish a new framework for managing flood risk, that is aimed at reducing the adverse consequences of flooding on human health, the environment, cultural heritage, and economic activity.

Responsibility for the drainage infrastructure in the North is shared between DARD and DRD, through the three main drainage organisations, namely Rivers Agency, Roads Service and NIW. The three agencies, through the Flood Strategy Steering group, have formulated procedures for liaison and co-ordination of the emergency response, resulting in the production of Best Practice Guidelines and a Flooding Hotspots register.

The flooding hotspots register includes a list of key flooding locations across the North. The register also identifies the agency which should take the lead during a flooding event for each location. The flooding hotspots register is continually updated, as new locations become apparent. However, even with the most thorough maintenance and careful planning, gullies, road drains and watercourses can be simply overwhelmed by a deluge of rain falling within a short period of time.

NIW has advised that they are developing long term solutions based on flooding records, and hydraulic modelling, and each of these solutions will be costed and prioritised according to the severity of the flooding. Progress on work to resolve flooding issues will be dependent on the outcome of the funding available to NIW as a result of the Price Control 2010-2013, which is currently under consideration by the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation. It is intended that expenditure will be focused upon those properties which are at risk of internal flooding.

With regards to the prevention of flooding related to future development, NIW's policy is that the 'foul' sewerage system should not accept storm run-off from greenfield developments. NIW is also fully supportive of the principle of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.

Flashing Warning Signs Outside Schools

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) how many flashing warning signs have been placed outside schools in each constituency; and (ii) his plans to install more of these signs in the next three years. (AQW 3185/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service provides flashing school warning signs and enhanced road safety features near schools as part of the Travelwise Safer Routes to Schools initiative.

Roads Service does not maintain information on the number of flashing warning signs placed outside schools by constituency area. However, I can advise that as at the end of November 2009, Roads Service has implemented road safety schemes, incorporating flashing warning signs, outside 236 schools across the North.

With regard to future proposals, I can advise that Roads Service expect to implement 30 road safety schemes, with on average two flashing warning signs per scheme, in each of the next three years.

Pumping Station at Ballynure

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the reliability and current operational condition of the pumping station at Ballynure; and to detail the maintenance that has been carried out on the station in the last five years and what plans there are to upgrade it. (AQW 3216/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the Ballynure Sewage Pumping Station was constructed in 2006 and became operational in 2007. There are no current plans to upgrade the Pumping Station as it is deemed to be in good operational condition and performs as designed under normal operating conditions.

The Pumping Station is inspected on a weekly basis. Although NIW does not have detailed records of maintenance work on this Station prior to November 2008, the table below illustrates that, since then, in addition to the scheduled weekly inspections, maintenance work has been undertaken on nine separate occasions as shown in the table below.

Date	Type of Maintenance Work
21 January 2009	Grounds maintenance
12 May 2009	Dealing with Communications failure
14 May 2009	Scheduled degritting of pump sump
2 July 2009	Telemetry aerial realignment
14 July 2009	Pump maintenance
29 July 2009	Scheduled degritting of pump sump
03 August 2009	Temporary radio replacement
2 November 2009	Removal of Pump blockage
3 November 2009	Degritting of pump sump

Work Planned by Roads Service and NI Water in the South Antrim Constituency

Mr T Burns asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the work planned by Roads Service and NI Water in the South Antrim constituency in December 2009. (AQW 3217/10)

Minister for Regional Development: My Department's Roads Service does not hold information on schemes on a constituency basis. However, information on completed and proposed schemes can be found in the Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from the Roads Service internet site at the following web address:

<http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-searchall.htm>

NI Water has advised that it plans to carry out the following works in the South Antrim Constituency during December 2009:

- Black Cave and Upper Roddens Sewage Improvements – conversion of outfall screen works;
- Joymount Drainage Area Plan - replacement of existing Shaftesbury Pumping Station with combined storage pump. New and upgraded storm pipes and desilting work;
- Manse Road, Camross Park, Newtownabbey – combined sewer overflow cleaning and repairs to storm system;
- Whiteabbey Lower – replacement of watermains; and
- various locations - upgrading of small wastewater treatment works.

This work is in addition to the day-to-day maintenance and repair required to the water and sewerage network.

NI Railways

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to outline the reason for the 45 minute delay to the 06.30 Coleraine to Belfast NI Railways service on 1 December; (ii) whether passengers will receive full compensation for any loss of wages; and (iii) if complaints will be treated with urgency. (AQW 3246/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Translink have informed me that the delay to the service in question was due to engineering work which damaged a cable, causing a signalling fault at Slaght crossing.

Translink's Passengers' Charter and Delay Repay scheme (at www.translink.co.uk) cover customers' entitlements in relation to compensation as a result of such delays. In this instance (for a 45-minute delay) passengers are entitled to reclaim half the fare paid for the journey.

Translink's Passengers' Charter states "if you complain in writing and we cannot give you a full response straight away, we will acknowledge your letter within 3 working days of receiving it. We aim to give you a full response within another 10 working days (in 90% of cases) and respond to all complaints within 15 working days of receiving them".

Road Openings

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Regional Development why NI Water has opened roads in Portaferry after completing a scheme of resurfacing which cost in the region of £6 million; and when will he establish a system of communication between departments on road openings. (AQW 3261/10)

Minister for Regional Development: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that due to the nature, and in many cases, urgency of day-to-day repair and maintenance work on the water and sewerage network, it is not normally practicable to co-ordinate this work with road resurfacing schemes except in the case of major works which can be planned well in advance.

There have been no major NIW works in the Strand area of Portaferry recently, but four minor repairs were completed in the past two years which required small excavations, one in the carriageway and three in the footway.

With regards to communication between departments, my Department's Roads Service has advised that it manages and shares information with utilities on road openings through the NI Streetworks Registration and Notification System (NISRANS).

Following the completion of works, Roads Service also has powers to restrict works on roads for a further 12 months, except when works are required for emergency purposes or new customer connections. Details of such restrictions are notified to utilities through NISRANS. However, such restrictions are limited to works completed by Roads Service and do not extend to works carried out by utilities, such as NIW.

Donaghadee Harbour

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development what capital works are planned for Donaghadee Harbour including possible commencement dates. (AQW 3352/10)

Minister for Regional Development: There are currently no capital works planned for Donaghadee Harbour.

Cost of Capital Works at Donaghadee Harbour

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development the estimated cost of capital works required to ensure that Donaghadee Harbour is in a safe condition. (AQW 3373/10)

Minister for Regional Development: Nil. Provision is made in revenue expenditure for the continuing maintenance of the harbour.

Old Railway Lines in Tyrone or Fermanagh

Mr T Gallagher asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department has estimated the cost of reopening the old railway lines in Tyrone or Fermanagh. (AQW 3434/10)

Minister for Regional Development: The cost of reopening the old railway lines in Tyrone or Fermanagh has not been formally estimated but from benchmarking information would have very significant capital and revenue consequences.

The planned investment in public transport by my Department in the North of Ireland, over the next ten years, is set out in the Investment Delivery Plan which is published on the Strategic Investment Board's website. Development of overall railway infrastructure was considered in the course of the production of the business case, completed in August 2007, for the New Trains Two Programme. This followed from the work of an inter-departmental group established in September 2006 which considered options for future investment in the railways network here. My priority currently is to maintain, improve and upgrade existing railway lines in the region. Subject to budget constraints I am conscious of the need to explore longer term options including possible cross border connectivities throughout the North West.

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Adaptations to Housing Executive Properties

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development if she can explain why adaptations to Housing Executive properties are decreasing despite the increase in the Housing Executive budget. (AQW 2834/10)

Minister for Social Development (Ms M Ritchie): The adaptations service is demand led and all housing adaptations are tailored to meet the individual needs of each particular applicant and therefore will vary in complexity and cost. The number of adaptations carried out each year does not have a direct correlation to the costs. Such is the variance of the costs of individual adaptations that it is not possible to compare the number of adaptations and associated costs in any one year, against the number of adaptations and total costs of adaptations in another year.

Civil Servants' Earnings

Mr J Craig asked the Minister for Social Development how many civil servants in her Department earn more than the Minister, inclusive of salaries, bonuses and any paid positions on outside bodies. (AQW 2907/10)

Minister for Social Development: The term civil servants encompasses members of the Northern Ireland Civil Service including the Senior Civil Service and, under a special arrangement, Special Advisors to Ministers. Salaries for civil servants are determined in pay scales relative to the appropriate grading structure. The grading structures are underpinned by job evaluation methodologies. Civil Service salaries paid in 2008-2009 have been used for the purpose of this comparison.

The Ministerial salary used for comparison purposes in this response is the annual salary payable in 2008-2009 to a Ministerial Office Holder of £37,801 plus the basic annual salary payable to a Member of the Legislative Assembly of £43,101.

During the 2008-2009 year 6 civil servants in the Department for Social Development earned more than the Minister. Information relating to paid positions on outside bodies is not held.

Replacement Windows in the Rathfern Estate

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development why replacement windows for homes in the Rathfern estate have been cancelled despite residents being informed that they would receive them. (AQW 3020/10)

Minister for Social Development: Physical surveys of Housing Executive properties in the Rathfern estate resulted in servicing and repairs being deemed adequate for the majority of window units. Residents were not informed they would receive them as the Housing Executive has not issued any formal notification to residents in Rathfern Estate to advise that window replacement forms part of the proposed External Cyclical Maintenance work.

Replacement Windows in the Glenville Estate and the Rathfern Estate

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development how many homes will benefit from replacement windows in (i) the Glenville Estate; and (ii) the Rathfern Estate; and how many were originally informed that they would benefit. (AQW 3021/10)

Minister for Social Development: Within the Glenville Estate, 84 tenanted dwellings are scheduled for full window replacement and in the Rathfern Estate two properties are scheduled to have full window replacement and two for partial window replacement. The Housing Executive has not issued any formal notifications to any residents in Rathfern Estate or Glenville Estate that window replacements will be included within the proposed External Cyclical Maintenance work.

Disabled Facilities Extensions

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development how many applications are currently held for disabled facilities extensions in (i) Larne; (ii) Carrickfergus; and (iii) Newtownabbey. (AQW 3022/10)

Minister for Social Development: The Housing Executive currently hold applications (approvals pending) for the following Disabled Facilities Grants involving extensions;

Larne	Carrickfergus	Newtownabbey
1	0	2

There are also 423 applications in these areas at a preliminary stage and it is not known how many will involve extensions until the Occupational Therapy Service's recommendations are received.

Disabled Facilities Extensions

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the average waiting time for residents to have disabled facilities extensions carried out in (i) Larne; (ii) Carrickfergus; and (iii) Newtownabbey. (AQW 3023/10)

Minister for Social Development: The average waiting time for carrying out disabled facilities extensions in the Housing Executive's District Offices in the above areas (from Occupational Therapist's referral to commencement) are as follows:-

Larne	Carrickfergus	Newtownabbey *
70 weeks	69 weeks	107 weeks

* This delay was due to the need to agree suitable decant accommodation with a number of tenants requiring adaptation works.

Disabled Facilities Extensions

Mr A Ross asked the Minister for Social Development how many people have received disabled facilities extensions in (i) Larne; (ii) Carrickfergus; and (iii) Newtownabbey in each of the last 3 years. (AQW 3024/10)

Minister for Social Development: The table below details the number of disabled facilities extensions completed in each of the last 3 years.

	Larne	Carrickfergus	Newtownabbey
2006/07	12	8	20
2007/08	3	15	17
2008/09	6	9	20

Small Pockets of Deprivation Funding

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development how, and when, areas receiving Small Pockets of Deprivation funding were informed that a 30 September 2009 deadline was in place for the receipt of new applications. (AQW 3055/10)

Minister for Social Development: In response to your previous question (AQW 2914) I stated that there was a deadline of 30 September for the submission of project funding applications with regards to the Small Pockets of Deprivation (SPOD) programme. This deadline has been communicated on an on-going basis through meetings and conversations with the groups throughout the year. Following a meeting between DSD and NIHE Officials on 19 August 2009, all groups were contacted again by telephone or visited to remind them of the deadline.

10-day Prompt Payment Scheme

Dr S Farry asked the Minister for Social Development what action she is taking to ensure that the 10-day prompt payment scheme is passed on to sub-contractors by businesses who are receiving direct payments from the Department, and its related public bodies. (AQW 3098/10)

Minister for Social Development: All contracts entered into by this Department follow strict tendering processes set by the Central Procurement Directorate of the Department of Finance & Personnel. For construction contracts procured through the Central Procurement Directorate, main contractors are required to comply with the 'Code of Practice for Government Construction Clients and their Supply Chains.' As such, this Department complies with Central Procurement Directorate guidance, which includes the need for fair dealing in the supply chain.

Housing Executive Properties

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive houses in (i) Cookstown District Council area; and (ii) Magherafelt District Council area are currently awaiting modernisation or renovation before being allocated to tenants. (AQW 3113/10)

Minister for Social Development: Currently there are no dwellings in Magherafelt or Cookstown awaiting major repairs or improvements before being allocated to applicants.

Housing Executive

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of Housing Executive houses sales; (ii) the money received from those sales to date in this financial year; and (iii) how these figures compare to the same period in the last two financial years. (AQW 3122/10)

Minister for Social Development: Housing Executive house sales for this financial year up to 30 November 2009, stood at 170 and £9.2m was received from the sale of these. During the corresponding period in 2008/09, the figure for house sales was 34 and £2.6m was received from the sale of these. For the same period in 2007/08 there were 743 sales and £52.2m was received from the sale of these.

Efficiencies Agreed by the Executive

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the areas where her Department has made the efficiencies agreed by the Executive in each financial year since the restoration of devolution including the current year to date, and to outline the monetary value of these efficiencies. (AQW 3123/10)

Minister for Social Development: Efficiencies have been made in Housing, Urban Regeneration and Community Development programmes, the Social Security Agency, the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division and in my Department's Core administration.

The efficiency target for 2007/08 of £49.4m was agreed with the previous direct rule administration, and was achieved. In 2008/09, the value of achieved efficiencies was £19.62m. As at 30 September 09, my Department was on track to achieve the cumulative full year efficiency target of £37.5m.

Women's Centres Childcare Fund

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development what groups her Department will consult on the review of the Women's Centres Childcare Fund. (AQW 3126/10)

Minister for Social Development: There are currently no plans to review the Women's Centres Childcare Fund (WCCF).

WCCF was introduced to protect childcare places in disadvantaged areas that had been funded by DSD under the Secretary of State's Children & Young People's Fund. WCCF was introduced as a possible three year programme that would only continue on a year on year basis in the absence of a coherent Northern Ireland Childcare Strategy.

The current financial year is the second year of the three year programme and therefore not subject to review.

Future decisions on funding childcare through the WCCF will be guided by the deliberations and outcomes of the Executive review of childcare currently being undertaken by OFMdfM under the guidance of the Ministerial sub-group on children and young people.

Women's Centres Childcare Fund

Mr P Weir asked the Minister for Social Development if she will ensure that women's centres and women's groups, who are outside the Women's Regional Centre's Partnership, will be able to access the Women's Centres Childcare Fund. (AQW 3128/10)

Minister for Social Development: In its new contract awarded in April 2009, the Women's Centres Regional Partnership was tasked with expanding its support network to include all women's groups in disadvantaged areas throughout Northern Ireland. This Regional Infrastructure Programme contract is totally separate from the 13 contracts provided under the Women's Centres Childcare Fund which my Department has neither plans nor the financial resources to add to.

WCCF was introduced to protect childcare places in disadvantaged areas that had been funded by DSD under the Secretary of State's Children & Young People's Fund. WCCF was introduced as a possible three year programme that would only continue on a year on year basis in the absence of a coherent Northern Ireland Childcare Strategy.

Future decisions on funding childcare through the WCCF will be guided by the deliberations and outcomes of the Executive review of childcare currently being undertaken by OFMdfM under the guidance of the Ministerial sub-group on children and young people.

Housing Executive's West Belfast Housing Strategy

Mr P Butler asked the Minister for Social Development how many dwellings have been built (i) in West Belfast; and (ii) in the Colin area since the beginning of the Housing Executive's West Belfast Housing Strategy. (AQW 3130/10)

Minister for Social Development: The table below provides details of the Social Housing Development Programme for the West Belfast and Colin areas since the beginning of the West Belfast Housing Strategy in 2003

Year	West Belfast	Colin Area
2003/2004	192	213
2004/2005	335	78
2005/2006	323	31
2006/2007	69	51
2007/2008	176	25
2008/2009	16	11
2009/2010	22	0
Total	1,133	409

Housing Maintenance Programmes

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the housing maintenance programmes scheduled for this financial year that have been delayed, broken down by each NI Housing Executive District office; and (ii) the monetary value of each delayed programme. (AQW 3145/10)

Minister for Social Development: There have been no delays in the housing maintenance programme for this financial year. This is because the Housing Executive formulates a rolling programme of planned maintenance and improvement schemes to ensure that it meets agreed annual physical targets. It anticipates that it will deliver all of the funded schemes included within its programme for the current financial year.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how many households have received assistance under the Warm Homes Scheme this financial year to date through (a) insulation; and (b) heating interventions; and (ii) how much has been spent to date on the scheme in each local Government district. (AQW 3160/10)

Minister for Social Development: Between 1 April and 30 November 2009, 1,808 insulation installations have been provided and 303 heating interventions have been provided. From 1 April until 30 November £2.3 million has been spent. It is not possible to detail the expenditure by local government district.

Maintenance Schemes

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development, given her Department's commitment to spend an extra £20 million on maintenance schemes, to explain why £6 million remains unspent. (AQW 3166/10)

Minister for Social Development: The £20m capital funding for grants allocated in the June Monitoring Round had a strict condition that a further £20m would be released to Egan contractors, for kitchen and refurbishments and other maintenance work, from current resource allocations.

However, existing pressures faced by the Housing Executive maintenance budget means that any additional funding provided to Egan contractors can only be released by reducing other essential maintenance works done by a range of other contractors. Many of these contractors are also reliant on the work they are allocated by the Housing Executive and are already suffering from the economic downturn.

It is my intention that the remainder of the Egan funding will be released later this financial year, but this is dependent on Executive approval of the proposed reallocations included in the December monitoring round submission.

Contractors Paid Within the Six Week Period

Mr A Easton asked the Minister for Social Development why her Department is failing to pay contractors within the six week period specified by the Finance Minister and the Executive. (AQW 3167/10)

Minister for Social Development: I understand that the six week payment period the Member refers to relates to Housing Executive Private Sector Grants payments. The Housing Executive generally makes payments to the applicant and cannot pay contractors unless the applicant has assigned the payments directly to the contractor. The Housing Executive acknowledges that performance this year to date is not of the level that they would expect and this reflects the exceptional circumstances in the early part of this year when grants cases had to be refused or cancelled due to the shortfall in the Housing Executive's budget. This, together with dealing with the resultant queries, imposed a substantial administrative workload on the grants offices which has impacted on performance in processing payments. The Housing Executive has now written to grants offices to reinforce the importance of prompt payments of grants.

Housing Executive

Mr J Shannon asked the Minister for Social Development what the budget was for the Newtownards Housing Executive office area for (i) 2006/07; (ii) 2007/08; (iii) 2008/09; and (iv) 2009/10. (AQW 3186/10)

Minister for Social Development: The information is not available in the format requested as Housing Executive budgets are allocated on the basis of their five administrative areas and not by District Office. However, the table below details the Housing Executive expenditure within its Newtownards District Office area for the period 2006-07 to 2009/10.

Activity	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10 to 31 October 2009
	£K	£K	£K	£K
Capital Improvement Work	5,692,000	2,638,000	2,374,000	839,000
Planned Maintenance Work	1,720,000	631,000	1,004,000	1,644,000
Response Maintenance	1,793,000	1,909,000	1,889,000	1,547,000
Private Sector Grants	1,157,000	1,393,000	1,468,000	869,000
Disabled Adaptations	829,000	645,000	635,000	498,000
Total	11,191,000	7,216,000	7,370,000	5,397,000

New Build Social Housing Schemes

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of new build social housing schemes in each common landlord area in the Housing Executive's North Belfast District; (ii) the total number of units provided through these schemes in each area; and (iii) the total expenditure involved in each scheme since 2007. (AQW 3221/10)

Minister for Social Development: In relation to (i) and (ii) the number of new build social housing schemes and units started in the North Belfast Strategy Area, by Common Landlord Area, for 2007/08 and 2008/09 are shown in the Table below. Details for 2009/10 will be available in April 2010. In relation to (iii) the Housing Executive does not release individual scheme cost information as this is considered commercially sensitive. However, the total Social Housing Development Programme expenditure for the North Belfast Strategy Area for 2007/08 was £49,436,162 and 2008/09 was £33,241,437.

Common Landlord Area	2007/08		2008/09	
	Schemes	Units	Schemes	Units
Alliance	0	0	1	7
Ardoyne	10	105	2	3

Common Landlord Area	2007/08		2008/09	
	Schemes	Units	Schemes	Units
Bawnmore	1	8	0	0
Carlisle	0	0	1	1
Cavehill	9	72	2	12
Cliftonville	5	43	0	0
Glandore	1	5	0	0
Grove	2	3	2	3
Longlands	0	0	1	56
Newington	3	17	4	6
Oldpark	0	0	1	15
Skegoniell	1	1	0	0
Torrens	0	0	1	112
Upper Ligoniel	1	32	1	8
Whitewell	1	12	1	11
Total Units	34	298	17	234

Maintenance and Refurbishment Schemes

Ms C Ní Chuilín asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of planned maintenance and refurbishment schemes in each common landlord area in the Housing Executive's North Belfast District; (ii) the nature and purpose of these schemes; and (iii) the total expenditure involved in each scheme since 2007. (AQW 3223/10)

Minister for Social Development: The table below details the information requested for the North Belfast Area:-

Common Landlord Area	Number of Schemes	Nature and Purpose of Scheme	Total Expenditure in each Scheme since 2007
Alliance	3	External maintenance	£32,914
		External maintenance	£72,072
		Kitchen replacement	£180,000
Alliance/Cliftondene	1	External maintenance	£220,900
Ardoyne	9	External maintenance	£126,994
		External maintenance	£635,179
		External maintenance	£493,497
		Change of heating to gas	£103,018
		Change of heating to gas	£454,536
		Kitchen replacement	£486,601
		Kitchen replacement	£233,622
		Kitchen replacement	£481,958
Kitchen replacement	£226,907		

Common Landlord Area	Number of Schemes	Nature and Purpose of Scheme	Total Expenditure in each Scheme since 2007
Ballysillan	3	External maintenance	£299,974
		Kitchen replacement	£198,000
		Kitchen replacement	£396,930
Carlisle	5	External maintenance	£322,435
		External maintenance	£230,293
		Kitchen replacement	£291,733
		Kitchen replacement	£412,119
		Kitchen replacement	£145,324
Cavehill	2	External maintenance	£316,000
		External maintenance	£507,069
Cliftonville/Antrim	1	Window replacement and external maintenance	£339,950
Duncairn	4	Full improvements and health and safety (including fire safety) works	£2,375,116
		Kitchen replacement	£462,125
		Kitchen replacement	£379,365
		Kitchen replacement	£355,298
Fairhill/Waveney/Downview	1	Kitchen replacement	£346,000
Gainsborough	3	External maintenance	£361,602
		Change of heating to gas	£358,707
		Extensions and full improvements	£605,000
Limestone	2	Kitchen replacement	£342,118
		Kitchen replacement	£189,318
Lower Oldpark	1	Kitchen replacement	£208,000
Mount Vernon	1	Asbestos removal	£352,548
Newington	3	External maintenance	£636,997
		External maintenance	£638,844
		External maintenance	£371,000
New Lodge Multis	2	Soil stack replacement	£249,750
		External maintenance	£780,000
Skegoniel	4	External maintenance	£321,786
		External maintenance	£294,747
		External maintenance	£510,000
		External maintenance	£411,200
Sunningdale/Joanmount	1	External maintenance and window replacement	£347,039
Upper Ligoneil/Alliance	1	Change of heating to gas	£621,502
Upper Whitewell	1	Window and roof replacement, and external maintenance	£477,080
White City	1	Change of heating to gas	£379,935

Common Landlord Area	Number of Schemes	Nature and Purpose of Scheme	Total Expenditure in each Scheme since 2007
Various	3	External maintenance	£46,227
		Change of heating to gas	£122,049
		Continuing programme of smoke alarm installation to flats, maisonettes, bungalows and 3 storey houses	£15,990

National Federation of Sub-Postmasters Report 'Six Steps of a Sustainable Post Office Network'

Mr D Kinahan asked the Minister for Social Development for her assessment of the recommendations aimed at devolved institutions and local councils in the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters Report 'Six Steps of a Sustainable Post Office Network' (March 2009); and whether the Department has identified how it can make better use of the Post Office network. (AQW 3235/10)

Minister for Social Development: I am aware of the Report produced by the Federation regarding the Post Office Network. My Department has already considered whether any further services could be delivered through Post Offices, but none were identified.

Haemophilia

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development to explain why people diagnosed with haemophilia cannot claim Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance because they are otherwise healthy, but cannot claim Job Seekers Allowance as they are not deemed fit to be sent for any available work; and if she has considered that this could be deemed discriminatory. (AQW 3242/10)

Minister for Social Development: Incapacity benefit is a non-means tested benefit for people who are unable to work because of sickness or disability and entitlement depends on the effects of sickness or disability on a person's life, not on a particular diagnosis or disability. From October 2008 incapacity benefit was replaced with employment and support allowance which focuses on how people can be helped into work and is based on the effects a condition has on a person's capacity to work rather than simply on diagnosis. Disability living allowance is intended to help severely disabled people with the extra costs arising as a result of their disabilities; entitlement depends on the effects of disability on a person's personal care needs and mobility restrictions, not on a particular diagnosis or disability. There is no bar to people with haemophilia claiming these benefits and a claim for disability living allowance, employment and support allowance or incapacity benefit from a person living with haemophilia will be treated in the same way as claims from those with other medical conditions. Jobseeker's allowance is a benefit specifically for unemployed people and the basic conditions of entitlement for its receipt are that a person should be available for and actively seeking work each week. Regard is given to the circumstances of each individual case and the requirement regarding availability for work can be restricted in light of a person's mental or physical condition. A jobseeker's physical or mental limitations are also taken into consideration in determining whether they have been actively seeking work.

Waterloo Place Public Realm Scheme in Londonderry

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development from which budget line within her Department was the additional £800,000 funding found for the Waterloo Place public realm scheme in Londonderry; and if any other regeneration schemes have had their funding reduced as a result. (AQW 3274/10)

Minister for Social Development: The additional funding for the Derry City Centre Public Realm Scheme is available within DSD's public realm budget line. With the application of the 10% tolerance limit allowable within normal business case approvals the Department expects to deliver the scheme successfully.

No funding has been reduced in respect of any other regeneration schemes.

Stock Transfer Scheme in Rinmore, Londonderry

Mr S Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development what assessment her Department has made of the stock transfer scheme in Rinmore, Londonderry; and when she intends to publish the results. (AQW 3275/10)

Minister for Social Development: My Department is still working with the Housing Executive to assess the implications for a possible stock transfer of properties in Rinmore.

The work is still ongoing and the outcome is not expected to be known until March next year at the earliest.

Housing Benefit, Income Support and Income Based Job Seekers Allowance: Rates for People Under the Age of 25

Ms M Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development (i) why Housing Benefit, Income Support and income based Job Seekers Allowance are paid at a lower rate for people who are under the age of 25; (ii) for her assessment of whether this is age-based discrimination; and (iii) if her Department has the authority or intention to redress it. (AQW 3311/10)

Minister for Social Development: The rates of Housing Benefit, Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance for younger, single people take account of the fact that the majority of this group live in someone else's household and can reasonably be assumed to have fewer financial responsibilities than those who are older and more likely to live independently. The rates also reflect the lower earnings expectations of younger people. The Minimum Wage is set at a different rate for people under the age of 25. (ii) I do not consider that this demonstrates age-related discrimination. (iii) The rates of income-related benefits are the same in Northern Ireland as in Britain and there are no plans at present to change them.

Multi-Element Improvement Scheme in Annadale, South Belfast

Mr J Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Multi-Element Improvement Scheme in Annadale, South Belfast. (AQW 3314/10)

Minister for Social Development: I advised you earlier this year that Phase 1 of the Multi Element Improvement Scheme was planned, subject to budget provision, for 2009/2010. However, due to the shortfall in the Housing Budget for 2009/10, the Housing Executive had to prioritise its expenditure in relation to housing programmes, including Multi Element Improvement Schemes. Consequently, the Housing Executive is unable to confirm at present when this scheme is likely to commence.

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

Assembly Staff Earnings

Mr T Burns asked the Assembly Commission how many Assembly staff, excluding Members, currently earn more than £43,101 per annum. (AQW 3156/10)

The Representative of the Assembly Commission (Mr S Neeson): Currently, 50 staff of the Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat earn more than £43,101 per annum.

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