

Bulletin Notes

With elections approaching it is important to stay updated with the latest news from the Assembly! This bulletin provides a quick recap of some of the most important Assembly business from 22nd February – 8th March 2016.

Questions

AQW 53746/11-16 - Ms Paula Bradley (DUP, North Belfast):

Q. To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions have taken place about plans to increase cervical screening uptake amongst women from disadvantaged backgrounds.

A. Since 2009 the PHA has held a contract with the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) to raise awareness of the cancer screening programmes and to improve the uptake of these programmes by women from communities and populations who are often hard to reach and historically have low uptake levels of screening programmes.

Initially this contract covered the Belfast and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust areas only. Following an open tender, the PHA awarded a three-year contract to WRDA in June 2015, to extend this service regionally. To date, 43 educational awareness sessions have been delivered to approximately 425 attendees from target service user groups.

WRDA's target service user groups include, but are not limited to, deprived communities (e.g. 20% most deprived wards in each Health & Social Care Area as per the NISRA deprivation index); people from a black or ethnic minority; travellers; LGBT people; and people with learning, physical or sensory disabilities.

This project also trains peer facilitators to deliver education sessions on the three cancer screening programmes (breast, cervical and bowel) to community groups, again targeted at those less likely to participate in screening. Since June 2015, 32 community facilitators have been recruited and are presently completing their peer facilitator training with WRDA.

AQO 9705/11-16 – Mr Trevor Lunn (Alliance Party, Lagan Valley)

Q. To ask the Minister for Social Development for an update on the allocation of funding for advice services in advance of the Welfare Reform Bill receiving Royal Assent.

A. The Welfare Reform Mitigations Working Group Report contains proposals for additional services from the advice sector to support the implementation of welfare reform. The report indicates that £8 million would be required over 4 years. Currently there is no funding allocated. This will be a matter for the NI Executive and will be discussed at the appropriate monitoring round.

Bills

1. Employment Bill

This Bill will strengthen the Government's ability to charge deposits for people wanting to take racial discrimination complaints before industrial tribunals. It passed the final stage on the 1st of March and is now awaiting Royal Assent.

2. Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill completed further consideration on the 7th of March and its final stage is scheduled for the 15th of March. This Bill will require schools to record incidents of bullying, including racist bullying, that occur within or when travelling to the school.

3. Houses in Multiple Occupation Bill

This Bill completed the further consideration stage on the 7th of March and its final stage is scheduled for the 15th of March. It will introduce some regulation of houses with multiple occupants, including houses occupied by seasonal workers.

4. Shared Education Bill

The Shared Education Bill aims to provide a legislative definition of shared education, and to promote and facilitate shared education of children of all religious backgrounds. This bill completed its final stage on the 8th of March and is now awaiting Royal Assent.

Consultations

1. Consultation SEN Regulations

A consultation has been launched by the Department of Education on the draft special education needs regulations. The proposed new regulations include changes to the Education Authority Plan for special educational provision, regulations for the qualifications of school education support providers, and new mediation arrangements. If you want to have your say on this issue, visit their website at:

<https://www.deni.gov.uk/consultations/draft-special-educational-needs-sen-regulations>

2. Domestic Abuse Offence and Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme – A Consultation

This Consultation has been launched by the Department of Justice, and seeks views on whether a specific crime of ‘domestic abuse’ should be recognised. It also seeks opinions on the idea of disclosing a person’s history of domestic violence to any new partner, and a potential model for this. To add your voice to the consultation, visit their website at:

<https://www.dojni.gov.uk/consultations/domestic-abuse-offence-and-domestic-violence-disclosure-scheme>

The Department is particularly interested in hearing from survivors of domestic abuse.

3. Health and Social Care Innovation Scheme

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has launched a consultation on an Innovation Scheme, which will fund projects and organisations that come up with new ways of addressing health issues. This includes schemes for addressing the health needs of particular groups and advocacy on reducing health inequalities. For more information or to make a response, visit their website at:

<https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/consultations/health-and-social-care-innovation-scheme>