



Assembly Update:
October 2016

Prepared by WRDA Women's Sector Lobbyist

Assembly Questions – answered in October 2016

Issue	Question	Answer
Fresh Start: Women's Participation in Community Development	Clare Bailey (Green Party) asked the Minister for Communities, pursuant to AQW 3432/16-21, to outline the organisations involved in the strand one co-design process of the action plan to increase the participation of women in community development in order to address paramilitarism, as outlined in the Fresh Start Agreement.	<p>As outlined in AQW 3432/16-21, my officials are taking forward activity to increase the participation of women in community development in order to address paramilitarism, as outlined in section A, paragraph 3.9 of the Fresh Start Agreement through two related strands of activity. Strand one relates to a detailed co-design process. Through this, my officials are engaged with key stakeholders from the statutory and voluntary and community sectors, including my Department, the Department of Justice, the Executive Office, Co-operation Ireland, the Training for Women Network, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, the Women's Resource and Development Agency, the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, the Women's Support Network, the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network, the Rural Community Network, the Foyle Women's Information Network and Intercomm. This work between my officials and key stakeholders has been ongoing since June this year, and it is planned that the output from the co-design work will form the basis of a Northern Ireland-wide consultation process, with the implementation of an agreed programme early in 2017-18.</p> <p>For official report and full discussion see: http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2016-10-24&docID=277639#AQO 530/16-21</p>
State Pension Inequality	Carla Lockhart (DUP) asked the Minister for Communities to outline if his Department relayed the Assembly's views following the debate on Women Against State Pension Inequality.	I have written to Richard Harrington MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Pensions at the Department for Work and Pensions requesting that the motion agreed by the Assembly be carefully considered to see what can be done to assist the women affected.
Disproportionate impact of closures of the rural office network on	Naomi Long (Alliance) and Colin McGrath (SDLP) both asked the Minister for Communities to detail the percentage of females that will be affected by the reorganisation	<p>Based on the latest available figures, the gender breakdown for each of the potentially impacted offices is:</p> <p>Ballynahinch: 66.7% Female – 33.3% Male Cookstown: 88.5% Female – 11.5% Male</p>

women's employment	and closures of the rural office network, broken down by office.	Newcastle: 85.7% Female – 14.3% Male
Access to early pregnancy units	Carla Lockhart (DUP) asked the Minister of Health what plans her Department has to introduce seven-day access to early pregnancy units for women presenting with difficulties in early pregnancy.	<p>Ensuring that the right services are in place for treating and supporting women and their families during what can be a very distressing time is of great importance to me. I am pleased to be able to say that, following work by the Public Health Agency (PHA) with trusts and patient groups to consider issues of variation across early pregnancy services, a commissioning intention and a referral pathway were developed and issued in June this year. The commissioning intention asks the trusts to ensure that they have appropriate arrangements in place to facilitate rapid access to care for women with problems at any stage of pregnancy.</p> <p>In line with NICE guidance, trusts have been asked to ensure that, for problems in early pregnancy, a system is put in place to enable women referred to an early pregnancy assessment service (EPAS) to attend within 24 hours if the clinical situation warrants that. Those arrangements are now in place in two trusts, and the PHA will be reviewing progress with all trusts in December this year.</p>
Domestic abuse: Women's Aid criminal justice workers	Pat Sheehan (SF) asked the Minister of Justice whether she plans to build on the work of the Women's Aid funded criminal justice workers that provide onsite support to victims of domestic abuse.	<p>I have identified Domestic Violence and Abuse as one of my key priorities and my Department is responsible for delivering the 'Protection and Justice' strand of the 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse' Strategy. I recognise that not all victims of domestic violence feel able to come forward and report abuse and thereby wish to acknowledge the valuable role of Women's Aid criminal justice workers in PSNI stations. As the PSNI is the first point of contact for many victims of domestic violence, I appreciate the importance of ensuring victims are appropriately supported at this critical time.</p> <p>As part of the action plans associated with the Strategy, I will therefore be considering how best to provide advocacy and support to all victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>This will provide the opportunity to examine existing support measures such as Women's Aid funded criminal justice workers in PSNI stations to inform consideration of what initiatives might suitably be replicated across Northern Ireland.</p>

<p>Childcare: the Women's Centres Childcare Fund</p>	<p>Nichola Mallon (SDLP) asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the Women's Centre Childcare Fund</p>	<p>It is proposed that the provision of childcare, as provided under the Women's Centre Childcare Fund, will be taken forward through the Childcare Strategy, currently being considered by the Department of Education. Department of Education officials have advised that the alternative funding measure being brought forward under the Strategy, which will likely only fund a percentage of, rather than the full childcare costs provided under Women's Centre Childcare Fund, is unlikely to be in place before April 2017.</p>
<p>Women in Community Development: Fresh Start</p>	<p>Chris Lyttle (Alliance) asked the Minister for Communities for an update on the Women in Community Development Programme.</p>	<p>My officials are taking forward activity to increase the participation of women in community development in order to address paramilitarism, as outlined in Section A Paragraph 3.9 of the Fresh Start Agreement through two related strands of activity. Strand one relates to a detailed co-design process involving key stakeholders from the statutory and voluntary and community sectors to develop a framework proposal for public consultation and delivery from April 2017. Strand two identifies the need for early intervention in identifying and engaging potential participants for the strand one programme and is planned to take place between October 2016 and March 2017.</p>
<p>Abortion: fatal foetal abnormality working group</p>	<p>Paula Bradshaw (Alliance) asked the Minister of Justice how the working group on fatal foetal abnormality differs from previous policy development processes taken by her Department.</p>	<p>Previous policy development was undertaken unilaterally by the Department of Justice. The current working group operates on an inter-Departmental basis with the Department of Health and its terms of reference focus on health care provision for women with a diagnosis of fatal fetal abnormality.</p>

Motions – tabled during period of June – October 2016

Issue	Date	Tabled by	Motion
Early Years Development and Preschool Childcare	7/6/16	SDLP Claire Hanna Alex Attwood Nichola Mallon	<p>Proposed:</p> <p>That this Assembly recognises that the experience of children in the early years of life has multiple impacts on development, health and educational achievement; believes that there should be a common, cross-departmental approach to funding, inspection, registration and access to child and family support services; calls on the Minister of Education to develop and bring forward an early education and care Act and a care and early childhood development strategy with resourced and supported training, qualifications and a professional development strategy for the entire early years workforce; and further calls on the Minister to bring forward proposals for the provision of free preschool childcare for children aged three and four years to a minimum of 20 hours per week to be in place in the 2016-17 financial year, and for an increase in provision to 30 hours per week from the 2017-18 financial year.</p> <p>Motion carried.</p> <p>For official report see: http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2016/06/07&docID=265615</p>

<p>The draft Welfare Supplementary Payment Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of Disability Living Allowance - Loss of Disability Related Premiums - Loss of Carer Payments 	<p>27/6/16</p>	<p>Paul Givan – Minister for Communities</p>	<p>That the draft Welfare Supplementary Payment (Loss of Disability Living Allowance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.</p> <p>That the draft Welfare Supplementary Payment (Loss of Disability-Related Premiums) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.</p> <p>That the draft Welfare Supplementary Payment (Loss of Carer Payments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.</p> <p><i>I seek the Assembly's approval for the Welfare Supplementary Payments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016. The regulations are being brought in under article 137 of the Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015 and will make provision for mitigating changes to welfare benefits introduced under article 82 of the Order. The three draft statutory rules were approved by the Communities Committee on 16 June.</i></p> <p><i>(Mitigations proposed as a result of the welfare reform working group's report led by Eileen Evason.)</i></p> <p>All 3 motions carried.</p> <p>For official report see: http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2016/06/27&docID=268132</p>
<p>Impact on Women of Changes to the State Pension</p>	<p>26/9/16</p>	<p>UUP Andy Allen Rosemary Barton Jo-Anne Dobson Sandra Overend Jenny Palmer</p>	<p>Proposed:</p> <p>That this Assembly acknowledges the Women Against State Pension Inequality campaign; recognises its call for fair transitional state pension arrangements for women born in the 1950s who have been negatively impacted by changes made to the state pension age under the Pensions (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 and the Pensions Act 2011; accepts that the changes were poorly communicated; appreciates the impact of the changes on post-retirement planning; and calls on the United Kingdom Government to re-examine its position and bring forward fair transitional arrangements for the women affected.</p> <p>Motion carried.</p>

			<p>For official report see: http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2016/09/26&docID=273114</p>
Domestic abuse, rape and sexual crime	17/10/16	<p>SF Jennifer McCann</p> <p>Amendment: Green Party Clare Bailey</p>	<p>Proposed:</p> <p>That this Assembly expresses deep concern at the levels of domestic abuse, rape and sexual crime; encourages victims of these crimes to come forward; welcomes the increased reporting of domestic abuse, rape and sexual crime but recognises that a high level of underreporting still exists; further welcomes the commitment from the Minister of Health and the Minister of Justice to prioritise addressing this type of crime; and calls on the Executive to work together to support victims and survivors and address domestic abuse, rape and sexual crime.</p> <p>Amendment proposed by Clare Bailey, Green Party</p> <p>Motion carried with the amendment as follows:</p> <p>That this Assembly expresses deep concern at the levels of domestic abuse, rape and sexual crime; encourages victims of these crimes to come forward; welcomes the increased reporting of domestic abuse, rape and sexual crime but recognises that a high level of under-reporting still exists; notes that an analysis of final prosecutorial decisions between 2010 and 2014 shows that in 83% of rape cases no prosecution was recommended; and calls on the Executive to work together to address domestic abuse, rape and sexual crime and to support victims and survivors of such crimes; and further calls on the Public Prosecution Service to work to improve rape prosecution and conviction rates.</p> <p>For official report see: http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2016/10/17&docID=276626</p>

The draft Welfare Supplementary Payment (Benefit Cap) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016	24/10/16	Paul Givan – Minister for Communities	<p>Proposed:</p> <p>That the draft Welfare Supplementary Payment (Benefit Cap) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 be approved.</p> <p><i>The regulations are being brought in under article 137 of the Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015 and will make provision for mitigating changes to welfare benefits introduced under article 101 of the Order.</i></p> <p><i>(Mitigations proposed as a result of the welfare reform working group’s report led by Eileen Evason.)</i></p> <p>Motion carried.</p> <p>For official report see: http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2016/10/24&docID=277639</p>
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Petitions

Title	Date	Presented by:	Tabled by:
Public Petition: Campaign Against the Harsh Introduction of Equal State Pension Requirements	26/9/16	Women Against State Pension Inequality http://www.waspi.co.uk/northern-ireland	Colin McGrath (SDLP) Presented to assembly and passed to the Department for Communities For official report see: http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2016/09/26&docID=273114

November Assembly Business of Interest to Women

Please forward any forthcoming events at Stormont that you think should be added to the list to info@wrda.net

Type	Date	Event:
All Party Group	8/11/16	All Party Group on Human Life 1:00pm Senate Chamber For details contact Chair Alban Maginness, 02890521705
All Party Group	22/11/16	All Party Group on Domestic Violence 1:00pm Room 315