



Tom McCabe: To ask the Scottish Executive when referrals for mental health services will be guaranteed within 18 weeks, as they are for other specialisms.

***S3M-2616 Robin Harper: National Deaf Children's Society Scotland's Pick a Number Campaign**—That the Parliament commends the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) Scotland's campaign report, *Pick a Number*, which highlights gaps in data collection on deaf children in Scotland; notes with concern that the number of deaf children in Scotland is currently unknown; acknowledges that this information, broken down by local authority area, would make it easier for partners in health, education and social care to plan effective interventions in a deaf child's life; is further concerned that, in the absence of this data, it is also difficult for the Scottish Government to monitor accurately the progress of deaf pupils in Scotland's schools; is disappointed that no national information has been collected on the number of children in Scotland diagnosed with a hearing loss at birth since the introduction of Universal Newborn Hearing Screening tests in 2005; further notes that the annual Scottish pupil census, *Pupils in Scotland*, collects data only on those deaf children who have a statutory support plan in place, where hearing impairment has been stated as a reason for additional support; acknowledges the NDCS's concern that parents of deaf children in Scotland are having difficulties in accessing such statutory support plans for their deaf children; notes that while *Pupils in Scotland, 2007* records 905 deaf pupils in Scottish schools, the NDCS estimates that there are at least 1,800 school-aged children in Scotland with a severe to profound hearing loss, with many more who have mild to moderate losses, and therefore calls on the Scottish Government to improve data collection mechanisms on deaf children from NHS and education sources to form the basis of a nationally agreed register of deaf children in Scotland.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/businessBulletin/bb-08/bb-09-29f.htm>

Voluntary Sector

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it is concerned by the analysis of the Fairer Scotland Fund in Third Force News on 29 August 2008, which stated that "the voluntary sector is being squeezed out of the social inclusion process." (S3W-16212)

Stewart Maxwell: The voluntary sector is a valued partner in tackling poverty, inequality and deprivation in Scotland. The Scottish Government would be concerned if voluntary organisations were being denied involvement in dialogue aimed at reducing inequality.

Voluntary organisations are making a huge contribution at national and local level in areas such as financial inclusion, income maximisation and the promotion of employability. Well developed relationships with a wide range of client groups is a crucial element of this.

The voluntary sector has a key role to play, working in partnership with local authorities and other community planning partners, in taking forward the anti-poverty framework and delivery of the government's Solidarity target.

We are committed to ensuring that the entire third sector, which includes voluntary organisations and social enterprises, plays a central part in our overarching purpose to create a successful country where all can flourish.

Our commitment to the third sector is underpinned by a funding package worth £93 million over the three year period 2008-11 to support development and capacity building in the sector. This represents a 37% increase in funding.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive, further to the answer to question S3W-16026 by John Swinney on 11 September 2008, whether it will detail all funding applications from voluntary organisations since May 2007 that were agreed in principle by the First Minister and subsequently agreed by officials. (S3W-16248)

John Swinney: The information sought could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Police

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab) (Date Lodged Tuesday, September 16, 2008): To ask the Scottish Executive what guidelines there are for police forces in relation to the translation into English of evidence in other languages. (S3W-16320)

Kenny MacAskill (Wednesday, September 24, 2008): The translation into English of evidence in other languages is an operational matter for individual chief constables to determine. The Working Group on Interpreting and Translation, whose members include the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, the Scottish Court Service, and the Scottish Legal Aid Board, considers issues and shares best practice on interpretation and translation across the criminal justice system in Scotland.

Police

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab) (Date Lodged Tuesday, September 16, 2008): To ask the Scottish Executive what guidelines there are for police forces in relation to the independent scrutiny of the translation into English of evidence in other languages. (S3W-16321)

Kenny MacAskill (Thursday, September 25, 2008): I refer the member to the answer to question S3W-16320 on 24 September 2008. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/webapp/wa.search>

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what guidelines there are for procurators fiscal in relation to the translation into English of evidence in other languages. (S3W-16322)

Frank Mulholland QC: The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) has provided guidance to procurators fiscal on commissioning translations. Where translation is required an appropriate translation agency will be instructed. The guidance instructs that, where possible, a translation agency provides translators who hold a valid certificate from Disclosure Scotland at Standard level and who hold relevant qualifications.

On instruction, translators are required to sign a "Code of Conduct" which sets out the standards expected when accepting interpreting and translation assignments from COPFS.

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what guidelines there are for procurators fiscal in relation to the independent scrutiny of the translation into English of evidence in other languages. (S3W-16323)

Frank Mulholland QC: The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) has provided guidance to procurators fiscal on commissioning translations. Where translation is required an appropriate translation agency will be instructed. The guidance instructs that, where possible, a translation agency provides translators who hold a valid certificate from Disclosure Scotland at Standard level and who hold relevant qualifications.

On instruction, translators are required to sign a "Code of Conduct" which sets out the standards expected when accepting interpreting and translation assignments from COPFS.

As a matter of routine, a copy of the translated document is provided to the defence who will consider whether the translation of the document should be reviewed by an independent party.

Concessionary Travel

George Foulkes (Lothians) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive, further to the answer to question S3W-15225 by Stewart Stevenson on 28 August 2008, whether it will guarantee that free travel for elderly and disabled people will be maintained for the same times of day, seven days per week, for the next three years for all people aged 60 and over, for the whole of Scotland (S3W-15875)

Stewart Stevenson: We have already confirmed that the eligibility criteria, for all those people who currently benefit from the scheme, would be maintained.

Sensory-Impaired People

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how many unfilled vacancies there are in each local authority area for rehabilitation officers who work with sensory-impaired people. (S3W-16263)

Adam Ingram: The information requested is not held centrally. Information is collected annually by the Scottish Government on the local authority social work services workforce. The latest information is available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/25090222/0>.

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what provision has been made to train rehabilitation officers who work with sensory-impaired people. (S3W-16264)

Adam Ingram: Between 2004-08, the Scottish Government provided £300,000 to Guide Dogs for the Blind to support training. The Scottish Government also worked alongside Guide Dogs for the Blind, the Scottish Social Service Council and groups representing those with a sensory impairment, to develop National Occupational Standards for community care staff working with people with a sensory impairment. The standards include levels of competency around rehabilitation work.

The Scottish Government is also providing £38,000 this year to Deafblind Scotland to support training.

In addition, the Scottish Government is providing record levels of funding to local government, the majority of which is provided by means of a block grant. Local government, as part of our shared commitment to developing strong public services, invests significantly in the development of the social services workforce as a whole.

Questions and Answers	Period ending 19 th Sept
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S3W-16321 Patricia Ferguson: To ask the Scottish Executive what guidelines there are for police forces in relation to the independent scrutiny of the translation into English of evidence in other languages.

Questions and Answers	Period ending 12 th Sept
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People with Disabilities

Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with COSLA on developing a framework for supported employment. (S3W-15635)

Fiona Hyslop: The Scottish Government is currently working in partnership with COSLA in relation to the development of a Supported Employment Framework for Scotland. A task group has been convened that will oversee the development of the framework and it is expected to report its findings in 2009. The group is chaired by Councillor Ronnie McColl, COSLA Spokesperson for Health and Wellbeing and membership includes representation from the Scottish Union for Supported Employment, the Association of Directors of Social Work, the Scottish Local Authority Economic Development Group, Skills Development Scotland, the Department of Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus.

Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what support is currently available to assist disabled people in finding employment. (S3W-15636)

Fiona Hyslop: Employment and job search are matters reserved to Westminster. The responsibility for delivering services to assist disabled people into employment lies with the Department for Work and Pensions. Through Jobcentre Plus it offers a range of employment support services for disabled people including Pathways to Work, Disability Employment Advisers, Access to Work and New Deal for Disabled People.

Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive how much funding has been allocated to helping disabled people find employment in each of the last five years. (S3W-15637)

Fiona Hyslop: Allocation of funding to help disabled people find employment is a matter reserved to Westminster. Further investment in disability employment services is currently commissioned at a local level in Scotland and is a responsibility for local authorities.

Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what measures it intends to take to support more disabled people into employment. (S3W-15638)

Fiona Hyslop: Officials are working on a number of approaches to support disabled people into employment. A Supported Employment Framework is currently being developed by the Scottish Government and COSLA as a result of recommendations from the Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee.

Further support is also provided to local employability partnerships through a Workforce Plus Learning Disability Co-ordinator and the Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health.

Concessionary Travel

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what impact fare increases for bus passengers will have on the amounts bus operators are expected to claim as reimbursement from the concessionary travel budget in (a) 2008-09 and (b) 2009-10. (S3W-15539)

Stewart Stevenson: The concessionary travel budget is a limited budget that is increased year-on-year using a cost escalator based on bus industry running costs rather than the fare increases implemented by each operator. The full impact of any fare increases are not therefore necessarily reflected in the level of reimbursement made in any given financial year.

Concessionary Travel

George Foulkes (Lothians) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions have taken place with bus operators over the last six months regarding the continued provision of free bus travel for elderly and disabled people.

Holding answer issued: 26 August 2008 (S3W-15227)

Stewart Stevenson: Ministers met representatives from the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) on 11 March 2008 and this meeting included discussion on free bus travel for elderly and disabled people. A steering group and working groups have been set up to review free bus travel for elderly and disabled people. As part of this process, officials and CPT have met a number of times to discuss a variety of issues relating to the scheme.

Children with Disabilities

Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how much of the £34 million allocated to it by HM Treasury for disabled children and their families has been spent on disabled children and their families. (S3W-15886)

Adam Ingram: Consequentials due to Scotland as a result of HM Treasury's announcement of £340 million to support families with disabled children were included within the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 Settlement and were not hypothecated. The allocation of appropriate levels of support for disabled children, young people and their families is a matter for local authorities.

Questions and Answers	Period ending 5th Sept
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Blood Transfusion Service

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when the results of the recent consultation on the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service strategy for the next five years and beyond will be published. (S3W-15488)

Shona Robison: The Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service plan to publish the results of the consultation on their strategy for the next five years by the end of September 2008.

Concessionary Travel

Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive how effective the Thistle Travel Card scheme has been and whether there are plans to increase awareness of it. (S3W-15659)

Stewart Stevenson: An evaluation of the Thistle Travel Card Scheme in 2006 showed that, in large part, the scheme failed due to poor publicity and marketing. In September 2007 the government offered grant funding of £4,550 to ENABLE to allow them to re-launch the scheme. This offer was declined.