

## The Northern Ireland Assembly Education Service

Teaching citizenship in a divided society

Marina McConville

#### **Education Service**

Works with young people, to educate them about the work of the Assembly and encourage them to engage with their elected representatives and the democratic process.

## **Education Service - Why?**

Engagement Strategy

- Support for the NI Curriculum PDMU,
   Citizenship, Politics, History
  - 'Diversity and inclusion', 'Social Justice', 'Human Rights', 'Equality'

• Promotion of the Assembly and its work?





Out to schools



#### Inward and Outreach

#### **Schools** (75%)

Youth Groups Universities Adults

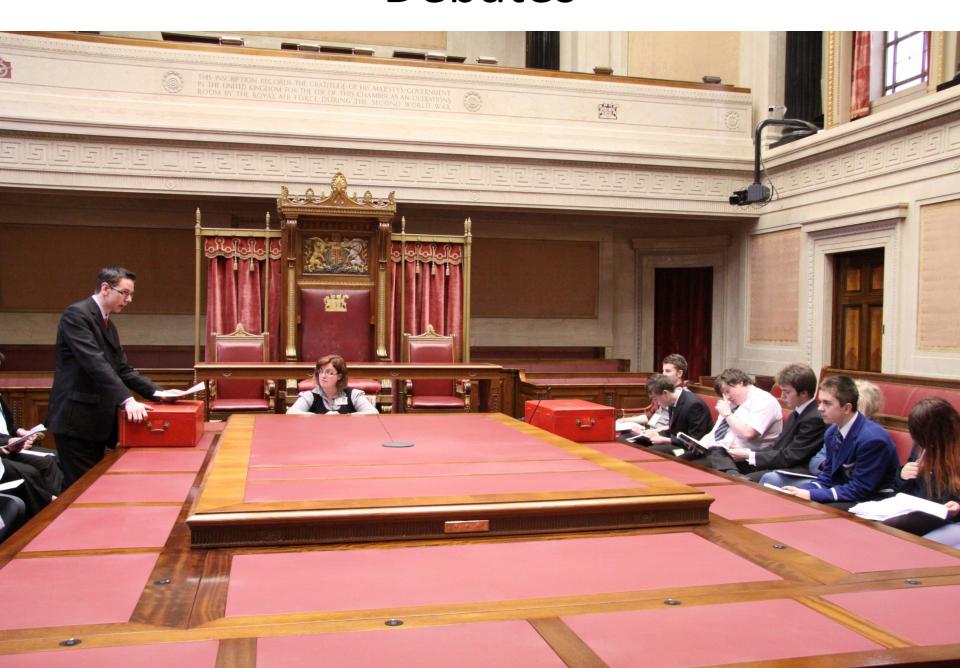
2013-14:

488 Groups

16,000 Participants

- Interactive Presentation
- Activity, eg mock election/ debate
- Tour visit to Public Gallery
- Meeting with MLAs/ Assembly staff

## **Debates**

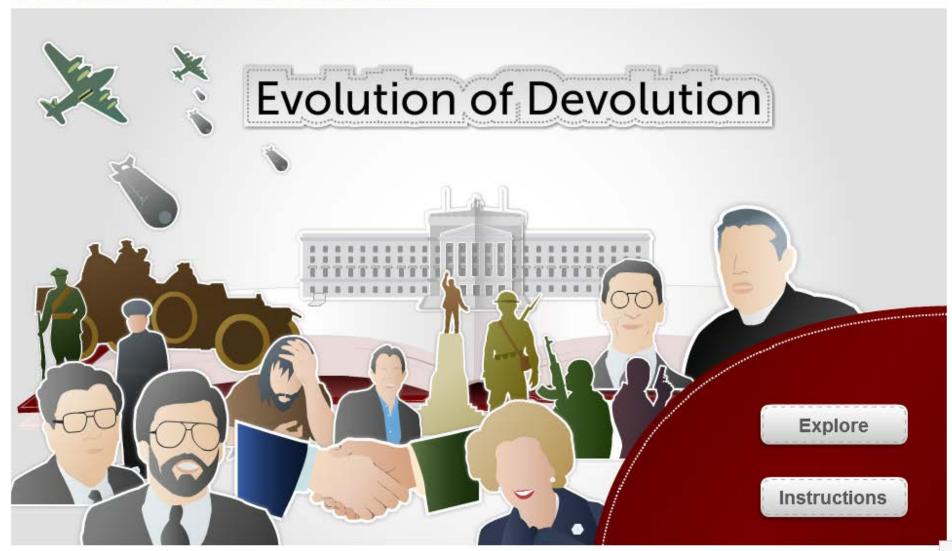


## 'Let's Talk'



#### Website

#### Evolution of Devolution



#### Principles

Accessibility to all
Impartiality – facts, not analysis
Partnership
Value for money

#### Our special context

- Post conflict
- Consociational model of democracy does it reinforce division?
- Outstanding issues parades, flags and the past (talks in progress)
- Current state of relations
  - No agreement on welfare reform
  - Failure to elect a new Speaker
  - Recent speeches
- The 'Irish dimension'
- Election fever 3 years in a row
- Equality and Good Relations

#### Future challenges for us

#### Political:

- Relationship between the main parties (issues such as the Irish language)
- Institutional Reform
- Outcome of talks flags, parades, the past
- Elections

#### • Financial:

- budget cuts Departments and the Assembly CSR
- Is Education Service a desirable, rather than essential service?
- a youth assembly for NI?

### What's happening elsewhere?

- Westminster
- Wales
- Scotland
- Ireland

# Challenges for all 5 parliamentary institutions?

- Public attitudes
- Role of the Media
- The cuts agenda
- Elections
- Under representation of minority groups
- Digital democracy
- Genuine desire to engage with young people?

#### Discussion

- 1. How effective is political/citizenship education in driving young people's engagement with democratic institutions?
- 2. What challenges do legislatures face in educating and engaging young people? What opportunities are there?
- 3. What types of support do teachers get to teach controversial issues if any? Does it reflect their needs?
- 4. How can teachers reconcile the possible contradictions between 'real life' and what they teach in the citizenship class?