



Northern Ireland  
Executive

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Children and  
Young People's Strategy

# Children & Young People's Strategy

# 2020-2030

Working together to improve the well-being  
of children and young people, and to achieve  
positive, long-lasting outcomes



# Contents

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	Page
Foreword	i.
1. Introduction	1.
2. Context of the lives of our children and young people	5.
3. The Big Picture	9.
4. Aim of the Strategy	15.
5. Values and principles	19.
6. Outcomes for children and young people	27.
Children and young people:	
➤ Are physically and mentally healthy	33.
➤ Enjoy play and leisure	43.
➤ Learn and Achieve	51.
➤ Live in safety and stability	61.
➤ Experience economic and environmental well-being	71.
➤ Make a positive contribution to society	77.
➤ Live in a society which respects their rights	83.
➤ Live in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted	89.
7. How the Strategy will be taken forward	95.
8. Delivering positive long lasting outcomes – an outcomes based approach	99.
Annex A List of Children's Authorities	103.
Annex B Abbreviations	105.
Annex C Summary of outcomes and areas of greatest focus	107.
Acknowledgements	109.



The government should talk to the children in a read.



# Foreword

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The Northern Ireland Executive approved the Children and Young People's Strategy on 10 December 2020. The Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 requires the Executive to adopt a Children and Young People's Strategy. This Strategy sets out how we propose to improve the well-being of children and young people.

In the absence of the Executive, a cross-departmental strategy was published on 16 December 2019 (Children and Young People's Strategy 2019-2029). The Executive returned in January 2020 and this Executive Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030 replaces the 2019-2029 strategy.

There are few things more important for a country than improving the well-being and life chances of its children and young people and there has never been a more crucial time in recent history for us to focus on their well-being.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic changed our children's world in a matter of weeks. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation officially declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic. On 18 March, the Executive announced a package of measures to mitigate the worst effects of Covid-19 and protect the most vulnerable in society. This included imposing a 'lockdown' on many aspects of society, including closing schools and other education settings to most children and young people from 20 March and asking everyone to stay at home except for specific essential reasons.

The pandemic has greatly tested our health and social care, educational and welfare systems as well as our economic and social resilience. The pandemic has had a significant impact on children and young people, exacerbating existing challenges and creating fresh ones associated with uncertainty, isolation, fear and bereavement. The pandemic has increased the risk to children and young people's emotional and mental well-being, safety, educational achievement, social development and economic well-being and impacts on all eight outcomes in the strategy.



On 12 May 2020, the Executive published a phased five-stage plan for slowly moving out of lockdown and on 3 June the Minister for Education announced plans for restarting education. Other welcome steps to benefit children include the reopening in July of public outdoor play facilities. As we begin the process of recovery, we must ensure that our children and young people are given the help they need to understand and deal with what has happened and adjust to the new situation we are all living in. In doing this, we must listen carefully to what they are telling us.

The 'New Decade, New Approach' document reaffirmed the Executive's commitment to the development of an outcomes-focused Programme for Government and the Executive have agreed to have a strategic, multi-year Programme in place by April 2021. The existing draft Outcomes Framework includes the outcome that we give our children and young people the best start in life, ensuring that they grow up in a society which provides the support they need to achieve their potential. This includes good health; a secure family and community environment including an adequate standard of living; education; a good physical environment; opportunities for cultural and artistic expression and to make a positive contribution to society; physical exercise; space to play; and protection from violence and harm.

This Strategy aims to support the rights and improve the well-being of all our children and young people.

We want our children and young people to enjoy their childhood and adolescence and to learn and explore, so that they grow to become resilient, confident young people who are well equipped to take on the challenges and opportunities that adulthood brings.

Many of our children and young people are already flourishing and we will continue to provide effective services to support them and their families so they can continue to be the best they can be.

Equally, for those children and young people in our community who are more vulnerable, have fewer opportunities or who are experiencing difficult circumstances and challenges in their lives, we are determined to provide the extra help and support they need to achieve their maximum potential.



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Issued on behalf of the Executive



# Introduction





# 1.

## Introduction

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- 1.1 This Strategy is designed to improve the well-being of all children and young people in Northern Ireland.
- 1.2 The Strategy has been developed in line with the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 which requires the Northern Ireland Executive to develop and adopt a strategy setting out how it proposes to improve the well-being of children and young people. The strategy aligns with the Programme for Government and the Consultation Document on the Children and Young People's Strategy approved by the former Executive in December 2016.
- 1.3 There is no standard definition of children and young people's well-being; the Strategy therefore uses the definition in the Children's Services Co-operation Act which says that the well-being of children and young people includes::
- Physical and mental health
  - Enjoyment of play and leisure
  - Learning and achievement
  - Living in safety and with stability
  - Economic and environmental well-being
  - Making a positive contribution to society
  - Living in a society which respects their rights
  - Living in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted.
- This is a broad definition which covers almost all aspects of children and young people's lives.
- 1.4 The Act says that the Strategy must set out:
- What outcomes it is intended should be achieved to improve the well-being of children and young people.

- What actions will be taken by the Northern Ireland Departments (among others) to achieve the outcomes.
- How it will be determined whether and to what extent the outcomes have been achieved.

1.5 This document is the core Strategy which sets out the outcomes we aim to achieve for children and young people, to help every child develop to their full potential. The outcomes are based on the definition of well-being in the Children's Services Co-operation Act.

1.6 The Strategy also sets out specific issues affecting children and young people's lives which have been identified as requiring particular focus if the outcomes are to be achieved, and the groups of children and young people who have been identified as being in greatest need of help or support.

1.7 The outcomes and areas of greatest focus have been selected based on evidence and what stakeholders and children and young people told us in the public consultation. The evidence was detailed in the consultation document and can be viewed at the link below.

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/education/Children%20and%20young%20people%27s%20strategy%20%284%29.pdf>

1.8 The report on the analysis of the consultation responses can be found at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/node/32976>

1.9 The core Strategy will be supported by two additional documents, to be published separately:

- a Delivery Plan which will set out the actions which will be taken to achieve the outcomes; and



- the population indicators that will be used, or which will be developed, to show whether the outcomes are being achieved. The indicators will reflect the indicators for the outcome in the Programme for Government relating to giving children and young people the best start in life, supplemented by indicators specific to this Strategy.



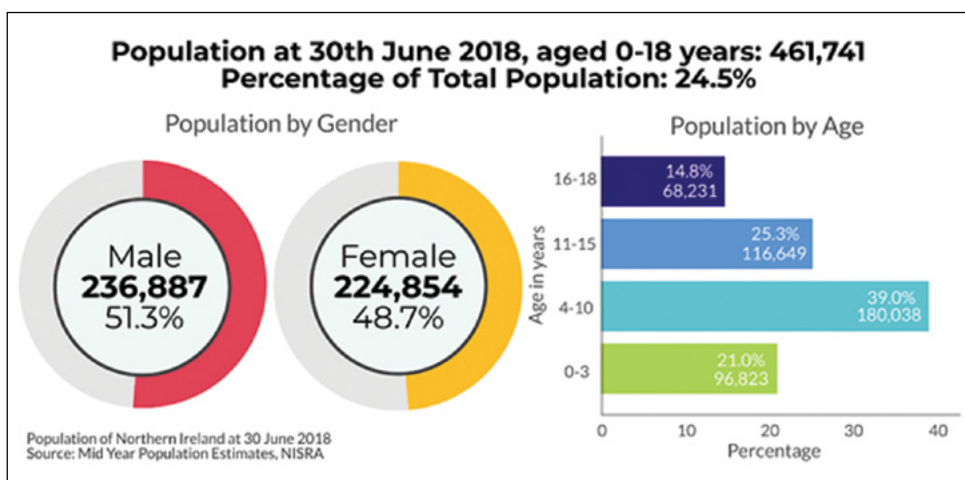


Context of the lives of our children and young people

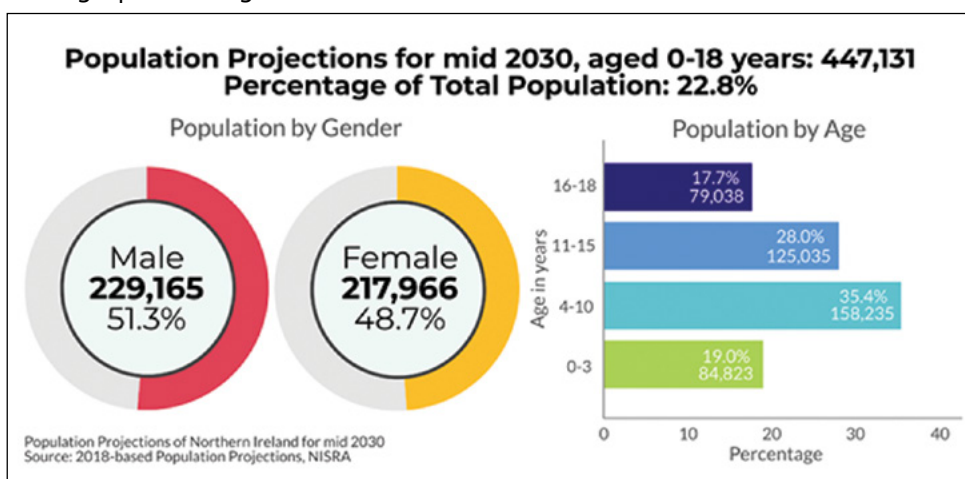
## 2.

# Context of the lives of our children and young people

2.1 The population of Northern Ireland is increasing and at 30 June 2018 was estimated to be 1.882 million people. The number of children and young people (aged 0-18 years) was estimated at just under 462,000 – 24.5% of the total population.



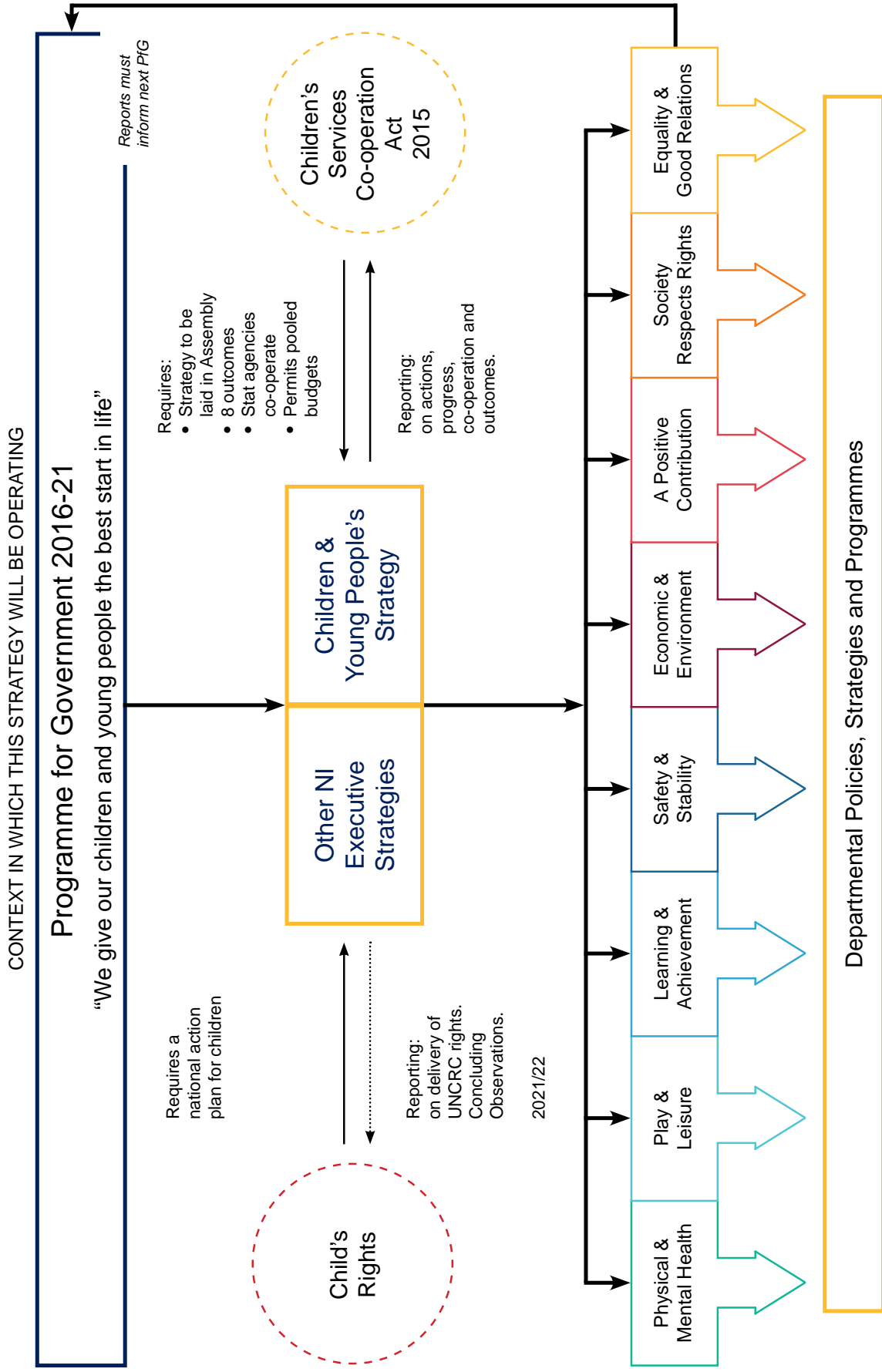
2.2 By 2030 the population of Northern Ireland is projected to increase to 1.959 million people. The number of children and young people (aged 0-18 years) is estimated to fall to 447,131; they will make up a slightly smaller percentage of the total population – 22.8%. The proportion of children and young people aged 11 and over is estimated to increase and the proportion under 11 to decrease. Public services, particularly those which focus most on children and young people, will need to be responsive to these demographic changes.



- 2.3 Given the pace of change seen over the last ten years, the conditions and environment that children and young people experience are likely to change significantly. The challenges of a modern economy, developments in science and technology, changing political landscape, the many and varied make ups of family, evolving use of social media and a population with a higher proportion of older people living in it will all help to shape the world in which they grow up. It is vital therefore to ensure that they are equipped to deal with the challenges and opportunities the next ten years will bring and that the services provided for them are responsive, high quality and shaped around their needs.
- 2.4 Many children and young people achieve very positive outcomes in relation to the areas of well-being set out in the Children's Services Co-operation Act and enjoy life to the full. Over the past number of years there have been major improvements in respect of educational attainment, community relations, road safety and reduced infant death rates.
- 2.5 We also know that too many children and young people can still experience poor emotional well-being, low self-esteem and mental ill-health, experience poverty and grow up in insecure and unsafe environments. Children who are routinely exposed to stressful and traumatic experiences or events during childhood can, depending on the prevalence of experiences they encounter and their individual resilience, be vulnerable to poorer outcomes which can last well into adulthood. Such traumatic experiences, sometimes referred to as adverse childhood experiences (ACE) can include, but are not limited to, physical, sexual or emotional abuse; physical or emotional neglect; growing up in a home with domestic violence; breakdown in family relationships; having a parent in prison; having a family member with mental illness, drug or alcohol misuse; or being exposed to the intergenerational impact of the Troubles. Exposure to these experiences can impact on the development of a child, their ability to trust and form social relationships and to focus and learn.
- 2.6 It is important therefore that through pro-active prevention both in pre-natal services and services from the earliest point in a child's life we provide positive awareness raising and knowledge for children and parents, and provide them with early help and support; that the people working in public services are trauma-informed regardless of the model or intervention they use; and that, when necessary, services intervene early to respond to childhood adversity and provide children, young people and parents with advice, support and protection, building the skills they need to cope with and mitigate the effects of adverse experiences.

- 2.7 We know too, that even in areas of well-being where a majority of children and young people are doing well, some groups of children require additional help to experience the same opportunities as others and reach their full potential. It is important that we identify these children and young people, so that we can improve outcomes for everyone across all eight areas of well-being.
- 2.8 This Strategy seeks to build on the many positive outcomes children and young people already experience whilst focusing on those areas of concern where outcomes are poorer or specific groups of children and young people face particular barriers to achieving positive outcomes.
- 2.9 It is essential that we do this with the active participation of our children and young people, and their families, and that Children's Authorities, other public services and the community, voluntary and private sectors work collaboratively to improve the well-being of children and young people.

# The Big Picture





## 3.

# The Big Picture: Context In Which This Strategy Operates

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- 3.1 The Strategy for Children and Young People 2020-2030 is the overarching Strategy from which will flow a variety of cross-departmental, multi-agency plans and more detailed topic-specific strategies and programmes.
- 3.2 The Strategy sits within the context of the United Nations international human rights conventions including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the rights of children and young people with disabilities which are encompassed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government; the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015; and the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.
- 3.3 The Strategy is for all children and young people. The Children's Services Co-operation Act defines children and young people as persons who are under the age of 18; or 21 years for those who have a disability or experience of being in care; and 24 years for those who have experience of being in care and are receiving support relating to expenses connected with their employment, education or training.
- 3.4 The Strategy recognises however that in policy and service provision there can be variation in definitions of a child or young person – for example many young people aged over 18 will still be in school and the youth work age range extends to age 25 – and it accepts the need for a practical approach and flexibility as regards age when defining a 'young person'.

### Children's Rights

- 3.5 All children and young people have rights. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty which has been signed by the UK Government and sets out a range of rights for children. Article 4 of the UNCRC requires Governments to take all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures to implement children's rights.

*States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.*

*(Article 4 of the UNCRC)*

- 3.6 The Children and Young People's Strategy is Northern Ireland's strategy to deliver improved well-being for children and young people and it is rooted in the UNCRC. The Strategy has been developed, and will be delivered, in a context where legislative and administrative measures must be considered and co-operation is essential. Article 4, and General Comment 5 which provides further context, will be considered in the delivery of this Strategy. A Delivery Plan will be developed to ensure its implementation.
- 3.7 Children and young people with a disability also have rights that are set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This is an international human rights treaty which aims to make sure that people with disabilities and people without disabilities are treated equally. The main objective of the UNCRPD is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and freedoms by all people with disabilities, including children and young people.

### Giving Children and Young People the Best Start in Life

#### **The Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government**

- 3.8 'New Decade, New Approach' set out a possible outline of a Programme for Government (PfG) and a new strategic PfG is to be developed for 2021/22 and beyond. The Children and Young People's Strategy will align with the new PfG and this section will be updated following publication of the new PfG.
- 3.9 The Programme for Government (PfG) will consist of a number of high level outcomes, which are expressed as succinct high-level statements of the societal impacts the Executive wants to make. The approach taken in the development of the Programme for Government provides a blueprint for cross-cutting and collaborative working – and not just within central government.

- 3.10 It is anticipated that one of the high-level PfG outcomes will be based around "giving children and young people the best start in life". The Children and Young People's Strategy seeks to deliver primarily upon that outcome but also within the context of the other PfG outcomes as appropriate and will support the wider delivery of the PfG.
- 3.11 The Children and Young People's Strategy follows a similar approach to that used in the development of the Programme for Government, having eight high level outcomes and specific headline indicators which will be used to monitor progress. These are not additional outcomes but, rather, describe PfG outcomes in terms which relate to children and young people.
- 3.12 The Children and Young People's Strategy complements and is supported by existing NI Executive Strategies and a range of Departmental Strategies. The PfG will establish the budget priorities which will reflect and drive the Executive's improvement agenda. Within this context funding for this Strategy will come from within departmental budget allocations.

### The Legislative Context

#### **The Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015**

- 3.13 The Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 places a number of duties on the Executive and other bodies delivering services for children and young people – these other bodies are referred to as 'Children's Authorities'. The Children's Authorities are listed in Annex A of this Strategy. The Act requires the Executive to promote co-operation across relevant bodies and to adopt a Strategy to improve the well-being of children and young people.
- 3.14 The Act requires that the Strategy is developed in consultation with stakeholders, children and young people and parents, carers and guardians. This requirement has been met through an extensive co-design process for the Strategy and the public consultation.
- 3.15 In line with the duty of co-operation set out in the Act, this Strategy seeks to promote co-operation between the Children's Authorities and between them and other children's service providers to improve the lives of children and young people across the eight areas of well-being set out in the Act. Any government organisation which provides a service to children but is not listed as a Children's Authority can also be involved in co-operation as a children's service provider.

## Everyone Working Together – A Framework of Co-operation

### Delivered by all Government Departments

3.16 This Strategy will be delivered by all nine government Departments. Children's lives cannot be compartmentalised and policy responsibility for children and young people therefore cannot be placed on a single Department. Departments must be aware of the connections and interdependencies between their areas of work and those of other Departments and public sector bodies. The Department of Education will lead in overseeing the effective delivery of the Strategy, however all Departments have important roles to play.



3.17 There are many different Departmental strategies, programmes and services already in place which impact on the lives of children and young people. This Strategy sits above those work areas and requires all Departments to ensure the linkages with its outcomes are identified. This, in turn, will allow the Departments to better understand how effective their interventions are.



### Scrutinised by the Children's Commissioner

3.18 The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) has a statutory responsibility to 'safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people'. In accordance with the Commissioner's statutory duties and powers, NICCY has provided considerable advice and guidance throughout the development of the Strategy and will continue to scrutinise its delivery and the adequacy and effectiveness of services impacting on outcomes for children and young people

**Informed by stakeholders, including children and young people**

- 3.19 The Strategy was informed by an initial co-design process and a subsequent formal public consultation process which involved engagement with Departments, community and voluntary sector representatives, statutory bodies, parents, carers and guardians and children and young people.
  
- 3.20 The views of stakeholders will be used in the preparation of a Delivery Plan which will detail the suite of actions to be delivered to improve outcomes. The Plan will be developed following publication of the Strategy.
  
- 3.21 The comments and feedback from young people, parents and stakeholders are greatly appreciated and engagement with them will continue over the lifetime of this Strategy.



Aim of the Strategy

# 4.

## Aim of the Strategy

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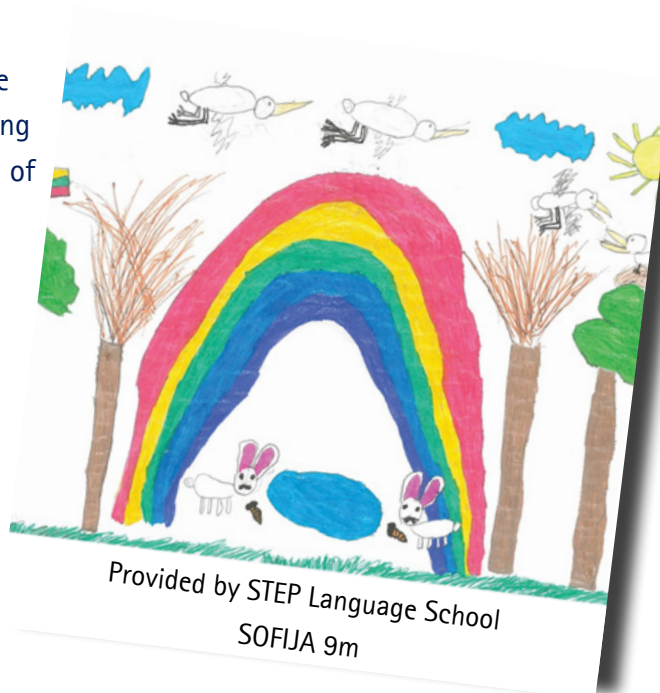
Working together to improve the well-being of children and young people living in Northern Ireland and to achieve positive, long-lasting outcomes.

### 4.1 Working together means....

- Government Departments actively listening to the voice of children and young people, parents and guardians and stakeholders when considering children and young people's issues.
- Ensuring all those who have a role or interest in improving children's lives co-operate with each other and are involved in contributing to the delivery of the Strategy.
- By working together effectively, Departments will be delivering on the duties within the Children's Services Co-operation Act but, more importantly, will be providing better services that are joined up and do not allow any child or young person to fall between the gaps.

### 4.2 To improve the well-being of children and young people living in Northern Ireland means....

- Focusing efforts on the eight areas of well-being defined in Section 1(2) of the Children's Services Co-operation Act.
- Having concern for all children and young people living in Northern Ireland and ensuring a better quality of life for everyone.





- Recognising that some children and young people face greater adversities and barriers to well-being and therefore more effort and support are required to improve their well-being.
- Having regard to provisions in the UNCRC, and the UNCRPD where this applies, in designing and providing services for children and young people.

4.3 **To achieve positive, long-lasting outcomes means....**

- Focusing on the impact that policies, strategies or programmes have on the well-being of children and young people, rather than on the amount of money spent or the activity delivered.
- Measuring progress against population level outcomes through key headline indicators and gathering more data as needed.
- Identifying where actions are working and not working – taking remedial actions as required.





# Play Matters



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Aim of the Strategy

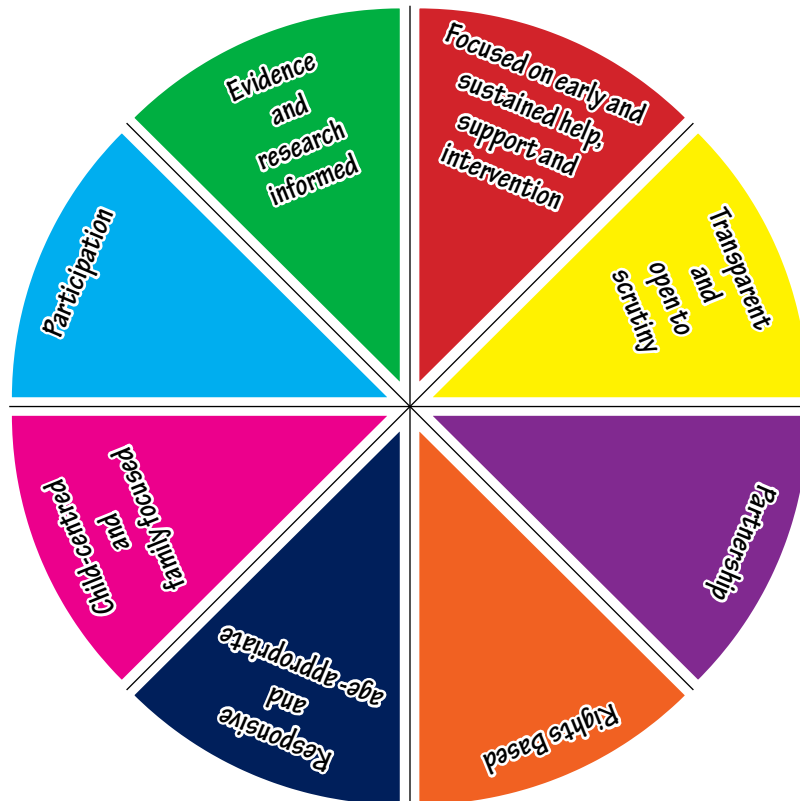


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# 5.

## Values and Principles

5.1 Based on the co-design process and responses to the consultation, the implementation of this Strategy will be guided by the key principles set out below.



### Participation

5.2 In implementing the Strategy for Children and Young People and considering what actions are required to deliver on it, children and young people's views must be taken into account. This will involve ongoing engagement with a diverse range of children and young people, including those whom we find difficult to reach or whose voice is seldom heard. Engagement must include informing them about how their views have been taken into account.

*To make sure this happens:*

- We will establish a framework of participation structures, utilising existing fora, to ensure the voices of children and young people will be considered as this Strategy is implemented.

- Through the framework we will provide opportunities for all Children's Authorities to engage meaningfully with children and young people prior to the introduction of relevant policies, programmes or strategies, at the co-design and consultation stages.
- We will reinforce the principle that effective participation is an ongoing process which includes providing feedback to children and young people about how their views have been used and what the next steps are.

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People has issued advice on how public sector bodies can best engage with children and young people. The publication 'Participation with Children and Young People: Advice to Public Bodies can be found at: <https://www.niccy.org/media/2979/niccy-participation-advice-to-public-bodies-jan-18.pdf>.

### Partnership

- 5.3 To improve the well-being of children and young people, a range of individuals and bodies must work in co-operation. For the outcomes in this Strategy to become a reality, all Children's Authorities must deliver improved, complementary services; parents, carers and guardians must recognise their role in securing positive outcomes for their children; and children and young people must be involved in decision-making about matters which affect them. There must be joined up working between central and local government, with regional policies and community planning complementing each other.

*To make sure this happens:*

- We will promote co-operation in line with the Children's Services Co-operation Act and report on how it is being implemented.
- We will establish structures to ensure all Children's Authorities work co-operatively towards the delivery of children's policy and services.
- We will ensure children's service providers and parents, carers and guardians are involved in the delivery of this Strategy.

### Evidence and research informed

- 5.4 It is important that data and research about children and young people is shared and used to inform policy development. Furthermore, there are areas

of children and young people's lives where the availability of more relevant and robust data would facilitate more informed policy decisions. We need to promote an appropriate data development agenda that will support future decision making in relation to all relevant strategies, policies and programmes.

*To make sure this happens:*

- We will establish systems to facilitate the sharing of information, research and data across Departments and other public sector bodies, consistent with data protection legislation, to better inform policy development and service delivery.
- A data development agenda will be advanced to support the implementation of this Strategy, where new baselines can be established in relation to key outcome areas.

## Rights based

5.5 The Children's Services Co-operation Act requires regard to be had to relevant provisions within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child when considering the meaning of well-being. In addition to the UNCRC, there is a range of legislation and policies to guide policy makers and service providers when engaging with children and young people, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and, in respect of the provision of education, the Special Educational Needs & Disability (NI) Order 2005.

*To make sure this happens:*

- Departments will take into account the UNCRC and the recommendations in the 2016 Concluding Observations in their policies, planning and service delivery.
- Consistent with Article 3 of the UNCRC, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all decisions and actions that affect children and young people.
- Departments will work with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People to promote greater awareness and understanding of the UNCRC.

- Departments will take into account the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the recommendations in the 2017 Concluding Observations in developing their policies and services.

### Focused on early and sustained help, support and intervention

5.6 Evidence clearly demonstrates that providing help and support at an early stage, and intervening early and focusing on preventative actions, can improve outcomes for children and young people and result in reduced public expenditure. It is more difficult and more costly to intervene later when issues have become more entrenched or complex. Successful, sustainable implementation requires: adequate resources, quality training of the appropriate duration, quality supervision of delivery, peer support, programme fidelity, leader accreditation, the appropriate agency infrastructure and evaluation.



5.7 Help, support and intervention can be short or long term. It can take the form of universal interventions which promote the development and well-being of all children, or specialist interventions to help certain groups or individual children and young people who may be facing particular challenges.

5.8 In this Strategy, 'early intervention' means both intervening in the early years of children's lives to give them the best start in life, and intervening early and as soon as possible to address problems that are emerging for children and young people at any point in their lives.

*To make sure this happens:*

- We will ensure going forward, that Children's Authorities' policies and programmes focus appropriately on the provision of help, support and early intervention – both universal and specific – and that services are structured to support children and young people as long as necessary, working to promote self-resilience and strength in children and young people and their families.

## Responsive and age appropriate

- 5.9 The lives of children and young people are constantly changing and the challenges they might face which impact on their well-being are likely to change over the lifetime of this Strategy as society and technology evolve. New challenges can and do emerge which potentially affect children's well-being, while current problems or concerns may be resolved or decrease in significance. It is important that this Strategy and the actions resulting from it are regularly monitored and reviewed and that the Strategy can respond promptly to relevant developments and change.
- 5.10 It is also important that the Strategy and any action taken to improve the well-being of children and young people take account of their stage of development and age, recognising that the needs of young children are very different from teenagers, and vice versa. An important aspect of this principle is the need for children's and adult services to work together to ensure flexibility in respect of young people transitioning into adult life or adult services, so that this is managed effectively with a focus on supporting the young person.

*To make sure this happens:*

- The structures we establish to monitor the implementation of the Strategy will support the identification of new and emerging issues that impact on the well-being of children and young people.
- We will report on the operation of the Children's Services Co-operation Act in line with the timescales set out in the Act. This will include identifying any ways in which the well-being of children and young people can be improved and, if appropriate, areas where the Strategy could be revised.
- We will work with children and young people, parents, carers and guardians and stakeholders to ensure that the actions we take to implement the Strategy are age-appropriate.

## Transparent and open to scrutiny

5.11 The delivery of this Strategy will be subject to scrutiny by the Northern Ireland Assembly, who will to this end seek the views of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People and many interested stakeholders. The Children's Services Co-operation Act requires that the implementation of the Strategy is formally reported on, within specific timeframes – firstly within 18 months of adoption of the Strategy and at periods of no more than 3 years thereafter. This reporting process will be an opportunity for formal and detailed scrutiny.

*To make sure this happens:*

- We will regularly publish information regarding progress in relation to the headline indicators in the Strategy.
- We will report on the operation of the Children's Services Co-operation Act in line with the timescales set out in the Act.

## Child-centred and family focused

5.12 The focus of the Strategy is to improve the well-being of children and young people. However the majority of children do not live in isolation but as part of a family. Any issue affecting a child can have an impact on parents, carers, siblings and the wider family; conversely, an issue with a parent or carer can have an impact on the children in a family. In implementing this Strategy we must therefore be mindful of the need to adopt a child-centred and family focused approach where appropriate and possible, in the best interests of the child.



5.13 When we refer to 'family', we use the definition in the draft Family and Parenting Support Strategy (FPSS) which currently says that a family consists of any child or young person under the age of 18 (21 for young people leaving care and disabled young people) and their primary caretakers. A primary caretaker can be a parent, an expectant mother or other biological relative or any person involved in bringing up the



child or young person. Some children do not live with their biological parents, but are brought up by grandparents or other family members and others are cared for in foster care (both kinship and non-kinship) or in residential homes. When we mention parents it incorporates a parent, a guardian, a person acting in the place of the parent, such as a grandparent or step-parent with whom the child lives, or a person who is legally responsible for the welfare of the child. It should be noted that the FPSS has not yet been finalised and the strategy, including its definition of family, may be subject to change as the strategy progresses and is consulted upon.



5.14 Government will through the FPSS collectively support family units through the parents that make them up, and recognise the critical role they have in helping children achieve good outcomes. Government will engender a more systemic focus on the role of all relevant strategies in enabling and supporting families to deliver the best outcomes possible for the children they care for.

*To make sure this happens:*

- The structures we will establish to implement the Strategy will ensure that parents, carers and guardians are involved and their voices are heard.
- We will develop a cross-Departmental Family and Parenting Support Strategy.
- Where intervention is needed to promote or protect the well-being of a child or young person, we will require services to adopt a child-centred and family-focused approach that will support the child and their family, where this is appropriate and possible.



Outcomes for children and young people

# 6. Outcomes for children and young people

6.1 To improve well-being, the outcomes we want for our children and young people are:



- 6.2 In line with the Programme for Government, the Children and Young People's Strategy takes an outcomes-based approach. The outcomes-based accountability (OBA) model is designed to focus attention on the results or outcomes we plan to achieve through the services delivered, rather than focusing on the amount of money spent or the number of programmes delivered. More information about OBA can be found at page 76.
- 6.3 Using OBA will keep a focus on the main issues and challenges and will provide a system of consistent reporting and monitoring. Through the agreement and prioritisation of high-level outcomes and by monitoring a small number of headline indicators, we remain focused on the most important factors which impact on the well-being of children and young people. This approach does not identify an indicator for all of the issues and groups of children and young people that stakeholders are concerned about, but that does not mean these are unimportant. A smaller number of key headline indicators keeps the focus on delivering the most important actions.
- 6.4 The Strategy focuses on eight high-level outcomes for children and young people which align with the eight areas of well-being set out in the Children's Services Co-operation Act. By achieving these outcomes we will have improved the well-being of our children and young people.
- 6.5 The outcomes are interconnected and overlapping. Together, they express what is meant by children's well-being in holistic terms. For example, a positive outcome in one area will lead to further positive outcomes, just as a negative outcome in one area may lead to further negative outcomes. A child who feels safe and respected is more likely to go out, play more, feel healthier, be happier in school and be ready to learn. A child who does not experience economic well-being and lives in poverty will be more likely to have poor health, be exposed to environmental harms, feel isolated and experience educational inequalities and poorer outcomes.
- 6.6 Although some issues or groups of children have been associated with a particular outcome as an issue or group requiring particular effort, this does not mean the issues or groups of children and young people will only be addressed under one particular outcome. For example, the needs of children with a disability have been highlighted under health, play and education as these are areas where stakeholders have indicated there are particular

issues to be addressed, but regard should be had to their needs across all the outcomes.

6.7 The issue of bullying appears under safety and stability but is equally relevant to the education, play and equality of opportunity outcomes.

6.8 For each outcome area we have set out:

- **What the outcome means** – explaining why the outcome is important to children and young people and outlining key issues in the area of well-being.
- **Where we will focus our efforts** – setting out the areas to which we give particular focus and direct our effort. In the consultation document we asked the question 'Based on evidence, where is the greatest effort needed?' These are issues which stakeholders have identified as requiring particular attention, or groups of children and young people they have identified as being in greatest need. It is our intention that these issues and groups of children and young people will be the focus of our efforts during the lifetime of this Strategy.
- **Who will help achieve the outcome** – listing the main Children's Authorities, other organisations and people who can work together to achieve the outcome.

# How the outcomes apply in children's lives...

Outcomes for children and young people



courtesy of the pupils from

# Bunscoil Phobal Feirste



Outcomes for children and young people

**Outcomes for children and young people**  
Children & Young People are Physically and Mentally Healthy





# Children and young people are physically and mentally healthy

## Programme for Government Outcomes

4. We enjoy long, healthy, active lives

8. We care for others and we help those in need

12. We give our children and young people the best start in life

### What does this mean?

- 6.9 The World Health Organisation defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.
- 6.10 The UNCRC says that every child and young person should enjoy the best possible standard of physical health and mental well-being and have access to appropriate health care and support when they need it (*Article 24*); and that a child with a disability should have special care and support, so that they can lead full and independent lives (*Article 23*).
- 6.11 Experiencing the best possible physical and mental health and emotional well-being is vitally important for all children and young people. Physical and mental health was significantly highlighted by young people and other stakeholders during the co-design process and its importance was reinforced in the responses to the consultation.
- 6.12 The Health and Social Care system in partnership with parents, carers and guardians has a central role in meeting the health and social care needs of children and young people. Health and Wellbeing 2016: Delivering Together, the Department of Health’s 10-year vision to transform health and social care includes specific actions to improve the health and well-being of children and young people, including the full delivery of the child health promotion programme (Healthy Child Healthy Future) and bringing forward proposals



in respect of family and parenting support, looked after children, care leavers and implementation of the Paediatric Strategies (2016–2026). Children and young people will also benefit from the vision's broader actions which include addressing waiting lists and investing in primary care and social care.

- 6.13 However, the Department of Health cannot improve the health and well-being of our children and young people alone: as recognised by Making Life Better, the cross-cutting strategic framework for public health, and the Programme for Government, ensuring that our children and young people experience the best possible standard of health and well-being will require effective co-operation between departments and local government, the health and social care sector, the education and further/higher education sectors, other statutory partners, employers and the community and voluntary sector.
- 6.14 A huge amount of public resources is directed towards meeting the health and social care needs of children and young people and those services must continue to improve and provide support. The Children and Young People's Strategy will focus on those areas which have been identified as requiring the greatest support – where proactive investment at a particular stage of a child's or young person's life will bring maximum benefit in later years and prevent them from reaching a stage where intervention becomes necessary, or at an early stage within an issue, and where specific effort is required in order to meet the needs of particularly vulnerable or marginalised children and young people, or to address current gaps in service provision.

### **Where will we focus our efforts?**

- 6.15 From the co-design process and the responses to the consultation, the following areas of need and groups of children and young people have been identified as requiring the greatest attention.
- i. **Infants and Early Years**
- 6.16 It is widely recognised that the foundations of good health and well-being are established before birth. The best way of improving the overall health of our children and young people is to ensure that babies and children are as healthy as possible from the outset. Healthy pregnancy and positive support from parents, carers and guardians in a child's early years establish the foundations for positive health and well-being outcomes at an early age.



It is also widely recognised that the foundations for early childhood development are laid at the prenatal stage and all the way up to the baby being 2 years old; this is a really critical period. The best way of improving the overall well-being of our children and young people is to ensure that babies are as healthy and well cared for as possible from pre-birth and through those early years. A healthy pregnancy and positive support from parents, carers and guardians in a child's early years can establish sound foundations for the rest of the child's life. Maternity services, postnatal care, health visitors and baby clinics provide vital support to parents and infants. These services can ensure both early diagnosis of any paediatric health or developmental difficulties as well as identifying other challenges that some children may face. Early interventions with the right type of support are key at this time.

- We will continue to support parents/guardians antenatally and during their child's early years to establish and nurture good health and positive well-being habits, and provide them with information about how they can help to promote their child's development and positive physical and emotional well-being and mental health. This includes encouraging mothers – indeed, the whole family – to eat a healthy, balanced diet; to look after their teeth; to do physical activity; to look after their mental health and well-being; not to drink alcohol during pregnancy; not to smoke during pregnancy and continue not to smoke.



We will promote breastfeeding and encourage parents, carers and guardians to promote health and well-being in their children.

- We will continue to ensure that everyone gets the help, support and intervention they need during pregnancy and children's early years as reflected in existing strategies including the Maternity Strategy, the Breastfeeding Strategy, the 'Getting Ready for Baby' programme, the Family Nurse Partnership, the Infant Mental Health Strategy, Rub-a-Dub Hub programme, Healthy Child Healthy Future and the Happy Smiles Programme.
  - We will support parents to better understand the need for, and physical impact on their child's brain development of, responsive and sensitive parenting, sensitive stimulation from the earliest age, repeated many, many times.
  - We will ensure that all parenting programmes are evidence-based interventions of the highest standard with clear outcomes and sustainable implementation.
  - We will continue working to reduce childhood obesity in line with 'A Fitter Future for All', the framework for preventing and addressing overweight and obesity, focusing on its outcomes for babies, children and young people.
- ii. **Children and young people's mental health and emotional well-being**

6.17 Poor mental health and emotional well-being remains a major issue for many children and young people. In the co-design process children and young people told us they felt very concerned their emotional well-being and mental health and that of their peers was becoming significantly worse. Some of the biggest concerns relate to the increased number of children and young people who consider themselves to be suffering from mental health problems; low

self-esteem and self-worth, depression, stress and anxiety; eating disorders; were victims of abuse (physical, sexual and/or emotional); drug and alcohol related problems; and suicidal ideation and self-harm.

- 6.18 In the responses to the consultation, stakeholders highlighted the significant pressure on mental health services; lengthy waiting lists; the need to improve accessibility to specialist services; the need to remove the stigma of mental illness so that children and young people feel comfortable to discuss it and seek help; and the need to tackle the root causes of mental ill-health.
- 6.19 The best way to improve children and young people's mental health and emotional well-being is by building resilience and promoting awareness of positive mental health for all children while providing specialist help and support for those who need it.
- We will work to ensure a greater awareness of, and focus on, children and young people's mental health and emotional well-being. We will work to raise awareness of the likely harmful impact of domestic violence, parental drug and alcohol misuse and separation and divorce on the physical and emotional well-being of children and young people and promote a nurturing environment within all services.
  - We will endorse the importance of positive mental health and emotional well-being and seek to build resilience in children from an early stage, at home, in early years settings, in schools, sports clubs, libraries and other leisure and cultural activity settings, in youth work settings, further and higher education colleges and in our wider society. We will encourage children and young people's participation in school and community based activities which supports them in achieving their goals. We will ensure children and young people are aware of where they can find help and support and work to reduce the stigma and taboos associated with mental health issues.
  - Where children and young people develop mental health-related problems, we will, in support of the child or young person and their parents, carers and guardians, ensure intervention and effective help and support is provided in a timely way. In addressing the child or young person's mental health and emotional well-being, we will aim to provide a family-focused response, for example through family support networks such as the Family Support Hubs, Think Family, through

pastoral care and counselling in schools and community settings, make information available including through Shelf Help, Libraries NI and ensure that parents are supported to look after a child or young person experiencing mental ill-health. We will also ensure that a child or young person is supported when a parent, carer or guardian is experiencing mental health issues.

- We will work to improve emotional well-being and mental health services for children and young people within the resources available, including the provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services; progressing the Drug and Alcohol Strategy and Protect Life Strategy; improving the transition to adult services; and continuing to support school programmes such as i-Matter, the Independent Counselling Service and School Nursing service.
  - We will work to address the emotional well-being and mental health needs of groups of children and young people whom evidence has shown to be at greater risk of poor mental health.
  - Consistent with the aim of the Children's Services Co-operation Act, we will focus on initiatives, programmes and frameworks which effectively integrate children and young people's services, build and strengthen connections between children's authorities and other children's service providers and ensure effective responses to children presenting with emotional, behavioural and mental health issues.
- iii. **Children and young people with a disability and/or complex health needs, including life limiting conditions**

6.20 Children and young people with a physical and/or mental disability and with/or complex health care needs and/or life-limiting conditions should be fully supported to have access to the same opportunities and life experiences and services as other children. It is important to recognise that children with disabilities are first and foremost children, and they require support not only to manage their disability/condition, but also to ensure their disability/condition does not become a barrier to the realisation of other outcomes, including learning and achieving, enjoying play and leisure, contributing to society, respect for their rights and equality of opportunity.

6.21 Extra effort is required to ensure that children and young people with a disability and with complex health care needs and/or life limiting conditions, and their families and carers, receive support which is tailored to their individual needs and allows the child or young person to develop to their full potential. This includes providing support and training for parents, carers and guardians who can often feel alone and unsupported, particularly when their child is first diagnosed.

- We will work collaboratively to improve services for children and young people with a disability and with complex health care needs and/or life limiting conditions, and their families and carers, including:
  - early identification, diagnosis, help, support and intervention;
  - better collaboration between health and education sectors to meet their educational needs;
  - joined-up services and information sharing across disciplines and organisations;
  - consideration of children and young people's particular needs at key transition points in their lives;
  - promoting greater awareness of the need for suitable play and leisure facilities and activities;
  - improving the information provided to parents and families about the pathways, financial and other supports available to the child and families;
  - providing appropriate health and well-being support, tailored to the needs of children and young people with a disability; and
  - ensuring the needs of children and young people with a disability are taken into consideration in the development of policies and strategies.

*The UNCRPD defines persons with disabilities as including "those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others".*

iv. **Children and young people living in areas of deprivation**

- 6.22 The health outcomes of our children and young people can be significantly affected by where they live and whether their family is experiencing disadvantage and poverty. Children and young people born into areas of deprivation have a lower life expectancy at birth, higher rates of mental ill-health and are more likely to suffer from drug and alcohol related problems than those living in more affluent areas. By the age of 3 years children from low income families have heard on average 30 million fewer words than children in high income families and have half the vocabulary of children in higher income families.
- 6.23 During the consultation, stakeholders stressed that poor quality environments can have a negative impact on health and well-being. Children and young people living in more socio-economically deprived circumstances often live in lower quality environments and can be exposed to a greater range and intensity of environmental risks. Family unemployment, families who are experiencing 'in-work' poverty or who are living with disability, poor quality housing, poor diet and higher levels of pre-existing disease, as well as less access to environmental resources such as green spaces, quiet places and safe spaces in which to play and exercise, are all stresses that interact to modify health and well-being. These inequities are often compounded by the limited opportunities for people in more deprived communities to improve or escape their environments.
- We will work collaboratively across departments and agencies towards achieving the outcome in the Child Poverty Strategy that 'Children in poverty are healthy'.
  - We will continue to work to improve the physical and mental health of children and young people living in poverty and in areas of deprivation, working with those who live and work in these communities, with schools and youth settings, and with a range of organisations through the community planning process, to create health promoting local environments and opportunities for being physically active.
  - The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy seeks to improve the life chances and opportunities for those living in our most deprived urban areas as identified using the Multiple Deprivation Measures. Across the 36 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas which comprise around 280,000 people there are a number of projects supported which are designed to



address social issues such as low educational attainment, worklessness and health issues. These projects, commonly delivered in partnership with various key statutory and third sector organisations, include interventions such as:

- **Health** - Disability Services; Neighbourhood Health Programmes; Health and well-being programmes; and Parenting and family support.
- **Education** - Parenting programmes; Literacy and numeracy programmes; Programmes with the aim of improving pupils' behaviour; Extended Services; and Youth services.
- **Worklessness** - Careers advice; Job specific and non-job specific training; Adult education and skills; and Childcare.

### Who will help achieve this outcome?

6.24 The main partners in achieving this outcome will be:

Key Children's Authorities	Other partners
All Government Departments – in particular	Children and young people
● Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (NI Environment Agency)	Parents, carers and guardians
● Communities	Community planning partnerships
● Economy	Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP)
● Education	Healthcare Professionals
● Health	Royal Colleges – including Paediatrics and Child Health, Nursing, General Practitioners and Psychiatrists
Health and Social Care Trusts	Libraries NI
Health and Social Care Board	Community and voluntary sector
Education Authority	Youth workers / Youth organisations
District Councils	Sure Start services
Police Service of Northern Ireland	Schools, further education settings
Probation Board for Northern Ireland	



**Outcomes for children and young people**  
Children and Young People Enjoy Play and Leisure

# Children and young people enjoy play and leisure

## Programme for Government Outcomes

4. We enjoy long, healthy, active lives

5. We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential

12. We give our children and young people the best start in life

### What does this mean?

- 6.25 Rest and leisure are as important to children's development as the basics of nutrition, housing, health care and education. The UNCRC says that all children and young people should have the time, space and opportunity to enjoy rest and leisure; engage in play and recreational activities; and participate in cultural life and the arts (*Article 31*).
- 6.26 Evidence shows that participation in such activities brings lifelong benefits for children and young people's well-being. Participation can lead to a wide range of interrelated beneficial outcomes for children and young people, including promoting good physical, mental and cognitive health and development; happiness and emotional well-being; positive social development; and the development of risk management skills and resilience through experiencing and responding to unexpected or challenging situations.
- 6.27 Furthermore, these activities are powerful mediums for supporting children to develop important socialisation and interaction skills which will stand by them in the future. Play also has an important role in helping children to adjust and cope with the restrictions imposed upon them by the measures to deal with Covid-19.
- 6.28 It is vital that our children and young people are encouraged and supported to engage in play, leisure, rest and relaxation and are able to participate



in cultural life and the arts and engage in wider recreational and sporting activities appropriate to their age or stage of development. Opportunities for children to have access to unstructured play (play that is freely chosen by the child) are also very important.

- 6.29 During the Strategy's co-design process and in the consultation responses, concern was expressed that the right to play and leisure opportunities is being diminished. Children and young people, and their parents, told us that barriers to play included a lack of time, the speed and volume of traffic, lack of suitable accessible outdoor spaces within communities, pressure from school work, increased screen time, the perceived fear of strangers and new parental working patterns. The negative attitudes of adults towards children and young people playing was also a factor.

### Where will we focus our efforts?

- 6.30 We will continue to promote the right of all children to have access to play and leisure opportunities; however, from the co-design process and the responses to the consultation, the following groups of children and young people have been identified as requiring the greatest attention.

#### i. Early Years

- 6.31 Whilst the impulse to play is innate for a child, it still needs to be encouraged, guided and supported by parents, carers and guardians and other family members from birth through to teenage years. Play is an essential part of early development and it is through play that a child begins to understand the world around them, learns to form attachments, communication, negotiation, take risks and overcome obstacles. Play is wide-ranging and is one of the most powerful and important elements of childhood; it can contribute to children's enjoyment, health and well-being and is a natural, instinctive behaviour which should be encouraged and supported throughout childhood.



- 6.32 The importance of play should be understood by those who are expected to promote it and parents, carers and guardians may need support to enhance their skills and understanding to enable them to facilitate play with their children and to make it an essential part of their child's life.
- We will continue to promote the value of play for infants and young children and support measures to promote awareness of the importance of play in the early years. Where appropriate, we will aim to equip parents with the skills and knowledge about how important play is for children's health and well-being and how to play confidently with their children, including building on the work of the Play Matters project and supporting programmes which promote play such as Positive Playgrounds and Taking Outdoor Play Seriously.
  - The 'Sport Matters' NI Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019 has consolidated the importance of play opportunities for pre-school children through its objectives to develop and deliver physical literacy skills for very young children and to encourage and sustain those skills into the physical education curriculum in key stages 1 & 2. This Strategy is due to be replaced with a new 10 year Strategy for Physical Activity and Sport.

ii. **Children and young people with a disability**

- 6.33 Evidence shows that participation in leisure activities by children and young people with a disability decreases as they get older, and particularly children with lower levels of motor function and those with additional disabilities such as a learning disability, sensory impairment or communication difficulty. Stakeholders who responded to the consultation pointed out that children with different types of disability have different needs, for example the needs of children with sight loss are very different from those with autism. They



highlighted the need to promote the inclusion of children with disabilities without limitation.

- We will work to maximise opportunities for the inclusive participation of children and young people with a disability, and their families, in all play, leisure, sports and cultural activities.

- We will continue to promote awareness of the needs of children and young people with a disability so that these are taken into account by those facilitating, promoting or designing play or leisure activities, services and facilities.



- The implementation of the 'Sport Matters' NI Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019 highlighted the significant gap in provision of physical activity and sports opportunities for people living with disabilities. The Active Living-No Limits Action Plan is an innovative set of objectives flowing from 'Sport Matters' that aims over the next 3 years to ensure that everyone (including children and young people with disabilities) with a disability has an equal opportunity to access sport and active recreation leading to a healthier and more active lifestyle. This Plan will be implemented through to 2021.
- The Department for Communities facilitates a cross-departmental funding arrangement that supports Special Olympics Ulster in the provision of fundamental movement, physical activity and sports opportunities in the context of competitive events from local level to World Games standard. This holistic approach includes the athletes' personal and social development, health maintenance as well as the competitive element. The majority of interaction is with children and young people and all activities include parents and carers and support by community volunteers.

iii. Children and young people in poverty

6.34 Research studies have shown that children from more affluent backgrounds spend a considerable proportion of their 'out-of-school' time at structured activities, such as sports, cultural or arts-based activities (e.g. music, dance or drama). However, children from less affluent backgrounds are much less likely to participate in these activities because their families cannot afford fees or costs of using leisure centre facilities or they cannot provide transport to activities.

- We will consider ways in which children from families living in poverty can access play, recreational and other activities, for example through sports clubs, youth organisations, after-school clubs or local libraries.

iv. Young People

6.35 As children get older they spend less time at play. Reasons for this include the increased use of technology, part-time employment, caring responsibilities, pressures to achieve in education or negative perceptions of young people in public spaces. It is important that teenagers are given the freedom, time and space to enjoy self-directed play and leisure time as they wish. This includes just spending time together with their friends 'hanging out'.

6.36 In the responses to the consultation, stakeholders told us that more appropriate, safe, social places were required, along with more opportunities for young people to participate in leisure activities. The needs of young people with a disability should be given particular consideration.

- We will continue to support youth work provision for young people. We will explore opportunities to challenge negative stereotyping about young people and we will consider how school/leisure balance might be redressed.
- *Priorities for Youth –Improving Young People’s Lives through Youth Work* sets the overall policy framework for delivery of Youth Services. The policy commits to delivering needs based youth provision that reflects the Department of Education’s Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy. The Youth Service non-statutory curriculum *Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice* is based on the core values of

Equity, Diversity and Interdependence which provides opportunities to challenge stereotyping and promote mutual respect and inclusion.

- The implementation of the 'Sport Matters' NI Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019 identified a significant gap in provision of physical activity and sports opportunities for women and young girls. Through Sport Matters, support is provided to the Female Sports Forum to deliver the main aims of its Active, Fit & Sporty Strategy which focuses on sustaining participation and engaging new participants through the provision of physical activity opportunities for women and girls.
- The consultation exercise to inform the development of a new Strategy for Sport, replacing Sport Matters, will include significant engagement with young people, representative groups including those providing support through sport and physical activity to physically and/or intellectually disabled young people, those from socially deprived areas, new communities and other key stakeholders.

6.37 We recognise that there are other groups of children and young people whose circumstances limit their access to play and leisure – for example, looked after children, young carers, children living in rural areas and those within the youth justice system. We will encourage policy makers and service providers to take account of the specific play and leisure needs of such children and young people when planning and delivering services which impact on their lives.



Rhythm and Rhyme: <http://bit.ly/RhythmandRhyme>

Children's services: <http://bit.ly/LibrariesToday>



**Who will help achieve this outcome?**

6.38 The main partners in achieving this outcome will be:

Key Children's Authorities	Other partners
Government Departments – in particular <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs</li> <li>● Communities</li> <li>● Economy</li> <li>● Education</li> <li>● Health</li> <li>● Justice</li> </ul> District Councils Public Health Agency Health and Social Care Trusts Health and Social Care Board Education Authority	Children and young people Parents/guardians Community and voluntary sector Schools and teachers Sport Northern Ireland Youth Workers/Youth organisations Early Years settings, Community planning partnerships Libraries NI Childcare Partnerships Woodlands Sports Clubs Drama Societies, Theatre Groups Musical Societies Arts Council Arts Care PlayBoard Young at Art

**Outcomes for children and young people**  
**Children and Young People Learn and Achieve**



# Children and young people learn and achieve

## Programme for Government Outcomes

3. We have a more equal society

5. We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential

12. We give our children and young people the best start in life

### What does this mean?

- 6.39 We recognise that all our children and young people are unique. The preparation of our children and young people for a responsible and fulfilling life in society begins in the home and extends far beyond the formal education system.
- 6.40 The UNCRC says that all children and young people should have access to an education which will develop their personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential (*Articles 28 and 29*). To empower them to do this, we must support them to lead an enriched life and reach their fullest potential by actively promoting a broad range of life experiences, exploration, adventure and learning.
- 6.41 The immediate priority will be the safe and effective restarting of education in August/September 2020, in line with the Northern Ireland Executive's decision of 6 August and taking into account the medical and scientific evidence.
- 6.42 Looking beyond that, we want our education system to be child-centred, inclusive and child-friendly. By providing children and young people with opportunities to participate in school or college about issues that affect them, for example through school councils or other forms of student participation in decision-making processes, we will help develop their understanding and

confidence and provide them with the tools to engage with and enjoy learning.

- 6.43 We want children and young people to feel safe and respected while they are in school or college, and to feel part of their school or college community. By teaching respect for others we will help to address bullying and violence in educational settings and relationships, and encourage children and young people to be inclusive and tolerant towards others, particularly those from disadvantaged or marginalised groups.
  
- 6.44 When our young people leave formal education, we want them to be resilient and equipped for what comes next, and to have the skills they need to continue to grow as individuals and meet the challenges, demands, opportunities, financial and economic challenges and setbacks of a modern economy. We want them to be prepared for adult life, future training, education life chances and employment opportunities – whatever they choose to do. We must consider how the curriculum can continue to be enhanced to provide young people with the practical life skills they will need in adult life.
  
- 6.45 The education system in Northern Ireland has an excellent international reputation, with Northern Ireland schools and settings, teachers and children and young people often outperforming their peers in literacy, numeracy and science. We will continue to work together to provide our children and young people with a well-rounded formal and non-formal education system that helps them to be the best they can be across all aspects of their lives.
  
- 6.46 The Department of Education will lead a programme designed to transform the school education system and deliver better outcomes for all our children and young people. The Programme will seek to build upon



the many areas of excellence within the existing system whilst identifying and tackling the barriers to improved educational outcomes.

- 6.47 This ambitious programme of transformation will cover a range of key challenges including how we prepare our children for education and equip our young people for careers; how we tackle persistent levels of underachievement; how we support schools, parents and children and young people through the Special Educational Needs (SEN) process; how we ensure our schools are governed effectively and funding allocated efficiently; and how we embrace and utilise technology to deliver education services.
- 6.48 Changing the education system will require collaboration and commitment not only from partners within education but also, importantly, working closely with colleagues in the Departments of Health, Economy, and Communities. If the education system is to continue to deliver an excellent service, strategic actions are required to improve sustainability and efficiency.
- 6.49 For many children and young people their time in school or college is a very positive experience, but we must boost our efforts to reduce inequality of outcomes in education and ensure equality of opportunity, particularly for those children and young people who are not fulfilling their potential.



- 6.50 It is important to recognise that the education environment is not just about academic attainment; when we consider how well children and young people learn and achieve, we should not measure success solely by exam results, but also consider how well a child performs based on their individual circumstances and abilities. Formal and non-formal education includes the development of children and young people's skills, talents and abilities in non-academic activities as well as the development of linguistic abilities, cultural awareness and respect for diversity. It is important that our educational and pre-school childcare environments support and nurture these. Children and young people who enjoy education will perform better.

Roots of Empathy  
Racines de l'empathie

- 6.51 The Department of Education invests in youth work to support and encourage children and young people to mature and reach their potential as valued individuals and responsible citizens. Non-formal education, in the form of youth work, encourages children and young people's participation to develop their personal and social skills, encouraging them to engage or re-engage in positive learning within a non-formal setting.
- 6.52 Over £70m per annum is distributed to schools for the purposes of Targeting Social Need. This is allocated directly to schools to target the learning of socially disadvantaged pupils and those at risk of educational underachievement.
- 6.53 The Department of Education is also continuing to provide funding targeted at disadvantaged communities and at improving school-community links. This includes initiatives such as the Sure Start Programme; the Pathway Fund; Full Service Programmes in north and west Belfast; the West Belfast Community Project and the West Belfast Partnership Board's 'Sharing the Learning' Programme.
- 6.54 As part of its ongoing efforts to tackle educational disadvantage the Department of Education is looking at the factors associated with educational underachievement. As part of that work, it aims to:
- identify and communicate the good practice which is already happening within schools;
  - determine what more can be done to reduce the impact of social disadvantage;
  - continue to invest in programmes which are evidence-based and which we know are having a positive impact on outcomes;
  - deliver the "Engage" programme. Given the unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, all primary and post primary schools in Northern Ireland will be provided with funding in 2020/21, to provide additional teaching resources.

On 28 July 2020, Minister Weir appointed an Expert Panel under the 'New Decade, New Approach' agreement which set out the requirement for an expert group to examine and address links between persistent educational

underachievement and socio-economic background, including the long-standing issues facing working-class, Protestant boys.

- 6.55 Recognising the limitations of measuring success by academic achievement alone, we will develop an education system evaluation framework which contributes to the improvement of student outcomes.
- 6.56 There is some evidence to suggest that high quality school infrastructure can have a positive impact on pupil outcomes. The "Iliad" report produced by Queen's University of Belfast and Stranmillis University College identified "New and Improved school buildings and facilities" as one of the common factors at structural/policy level that could positively enhance educational achievement. When deciding to extend and refurbish a school, or take forward a new build solution, the protocol applied to select projects for funding includes deprivation indicators such as percentage of pupils with free school meals entitlement and percentage of SEN statemented pupils.

### **Where will we focus our efforts?**

- 6.57 Education is a universal service and we will continue to deliver a quality service to everyone; however from the co-design process and the responses to the consultation, the following groups of children and young people have been identified as requiring the greatest focus.
- i. **Children and young people from families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage**
- 6.58 It is important that our most disadvantaged learners are given particular attention; evidence clearly demonstrates that social disadvantage has the greatest single impact on educational attainment. Given the link between poverty and poor educational outcomes, we will continue to prioritise raising attainment and simultaneously closing the attainment gap. Closing the attainment gap is a significant challenge generally, but particularly so in areas where there are large pockets of deprivation and the problems related to disadvantage are deep rooted.
- We will undertake a range of actions aimed at tackling educational disadvantage as outlined above, including intervention programmes designed to support those most in need.

- We will work collaboratively across departments and agencies towards achieving the outcome in the Child Poverty Strategy that 'Children in poverty learn and achieve'.

ii. Children and young people with Special Educational Needs

6.59 Whilst the educational attainment gap between pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in mainstream schools and those without SEN, has narrowed over the last ten years, work needs to continue to ensure that all pupils with learning difficulties receive a high quality education and fulfil their potential. This is particularly important given the increase in children and young people presenting with SEN.



- We will progress the implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 to enable a new, more responsive and effective SEN Framework to be put in place. As part of this Framework, new SEN Regulations are being finalised and a consultation will take place on both the new Regulations and the associated Code of Practice, which provides practical guidance on how the law applies for practitioners. A full training programme is being delivered by the Education Authority in advance of the new Framework being implemented.
- We will work collaboratively to deliver services that are joined up and support children and young people with SEN, particularly at periods of transition in their school lives.

iii. Children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties

6.60 Children who have missed some normal early-years nurturing experiences may start school unable to relate appropriately to their peers or other adults. Nurture groups are a targeted short-term intervention to support young children who have experienced these attachment difficulties. By providing a safe, nurturing environment, the child can learn to develop positive and trusting relationships and gain a sense of connectedness and belonging to



the school. This helps to remove barriers to effective learning and can help to address acting out, withdrawal or other challenging behaviours.

6.61 The children maintain close links with their mainstream class and active parental involvement also features heavily in Nurture practice. This allows parents/carers to understand the support their child is receiving at school and how they can help reinforce this learning within their own home environment.

- We will work collaboratively to continue to deliver nurture provision within the 31 pilot nurture groups until proposals are progressed for any new phase of the Nurture Programme.
- We will explore the introduction of whole school nurturing with those Primary Schools who wish to develop this approach within their school.

#### iv. Care experienced children and young people

6.62 By 'care experienced children and young people' we mean those who are in care (looked after children) and those who have left care and are still in need of some support, including those who have been adopted and those who are supported in independent living in early adulthood.

6.63 Evidence shows that children and young people leaving care are at greater risk of not transitioning well to employment, education or training. This can have a consequential effect, with these young people being more vulnerable to homelessness, poor health and poverty or becoming involved in crime. It is therefore important that care experienced children and young people are supported during their education and as they transition out of education and out of care, to ensure they experience positive outcomes.

- We will support looked after children and young people at school and in non-formal education settings to achieve their full potential academically and to develop their personal abilities, skills



and talents, recognising the need to do this in a sensitive manner that respects the child or young person's personal circumstances.

- We will progress a new strategy for looked after children, 'A Life Deserved: "Caring" for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland', the aims of which include supporting children and young people returning home from care, and their families, and extending support for care leavers to help them make a successful transition into independent living as adults.
- As they move on from their education setting, we will provide support to help the young person move forward into adulthood, third level education, apprenticeships or employment.

v. **Newcomers, Travellers and Roma children and young people**

6.64 There is a clear and demonstrable educational attainment gap for children and young people who are newcomers to Northern Ireland, or from the Traveller or Roma communities. Schools currently receive additional funding for these pupils in order to provide appropriate support to meet their needs. They can face difficulties in transitioning to a school environment and coping with language barriers and, traditionally, have experienced a higher rate of absence.

- We will explore how the school experience and non-formal educational experience of children and young people who are newcomers to Northern Ireland, or from the Traveller or Roma communities can be improved. This will include engagement with their parents/families and undertaking work to further support inclusion.
- The Department of Education is reviewing its existing Newcomer policy and examining the support currently being provided to all Newcomer pupils including those from the Roma community. Initial engagement



and evidence gathering from schools, Newcomer pupils and their parents is now concluding and proposals for change should go out for public consultation in early 2019-20.

vi. **Children and young people in custody**

6.65 The education centre in Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre is now operating as an EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) setting. This arrangement is designed to enhance the education opportunities for young people in custody, ensuring that these young people receive education provision to the same standards, under the same legal basis, as any other young person.

- We will work to provide educational support to young people in custody which will help to break the cycle of repeat offending and improve their outcomes.

**Who will help achieve this outcome?**

6.66 The main partners in achieving this outcome will be:

Key Children's Authorities	Other partners
Government Departments – in particular <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs</li> <li>● Communities</li> <li>● Economy</li> <li>● Education</li> <li>● Health</li> <li>● Justice</li> </ul> District Councils Education Authority Health and Social Care Trusts	Children and young people Parents/guardians Schools and teachers Youth Justice Agency/Juvenile Justice Centre Youth workers/ Youth organisations Community and voluntary sector Community planning partnerships Libraries NI Childcare partnerships

# RESPECT



Outcomes for children and young people  
Children & Young People Live in Safety and Stability

**End Bullying Now!**  
[www.endbullying.org.uk](http://www.endbullying.org.uk)



Northern Ireland  
Anti-Bullying Forum  
Acting Together To End Bullying

Anti-Bullying Week 2018 is supported by  **Translink**

# Children and young people live in safety and stability

## Programme for Government Outcomes

7. We have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other

8. We care for others and we help those in need

10. We have created a place people want to live and work, to visit and invest

12. We give our children and young people the best start in life

### What does this mean?

- 6.67 Living in safety and having stability in their lives is paramount for all children and young people's well-being, particularly in the context of the challenges presented by Covid-19. Every child and young person is entitled to live without fear of violence, intimidation or bullying, and be able to grow up in community which provides them with nurturing and positive environments. The UNCRC says that all children and young people must be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents, legal guardians or any other person who has care of the child (*Article 19*).
- 6.68 Evidence suggests that children who are routinely exposed to situations such as domestic violence, parental mental ill health and substance abuse problems, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect, loss or incarceration of a parent etc. can experience a negative impact on well-being and health which can last well into adulthood. Experiencing trauma during childhood increases a child's vulnerability to poorer outcomes in social well-being, educational attainment, employment and physical and mental health.

6.69 Parents, carers and legal guardians hold primary responsibility to provide a safe, secure, loving and stable environment for children. However, those who work with children, young people or families, in whatever capacity, also have a contribution to make to promote their welfare and ensure they are safe.

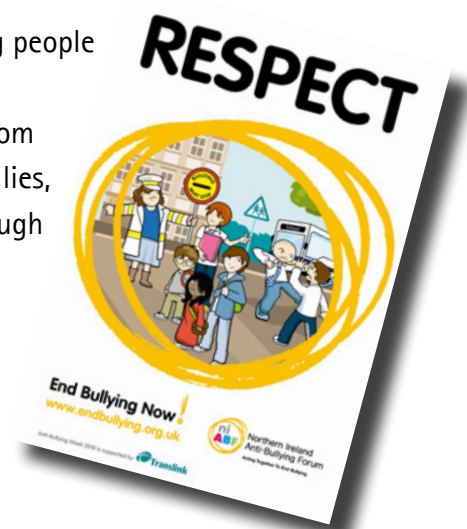


6.70 We are committed to working to support families and communities to protect children and young people from all forms of physical or mental abuse, injury or neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, in their homes, at school and in their communities.

6.71 'Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland' provides the overarching policy framework for safeguarding children and young people in the statutory, private, independent, community, voluntary and faith sectors. It outlines how communities, organisations and individuals must work both individually and collectively in partnership to ensure children and young people are nurtured and safeguarded as effectively as possible from domestic, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect and exploitation. While the Children and Young People's Strategy focuses on a number of areas relating to the safety of children and young people which have been identified as requiring greatest attention, government will also continue the ongoing work to safeguard children and young people across the entire range of activities and groups of children set out in the safeguarding policy.



6.72 In improving the well-being of children and young people in this outcome area, we are aware of the need to have in place a full range of integrated services from prevention and early intervention support for families, to protective and authoritative safeguarding, through to helping children and young people in their recovery from instability, violence and abuse.



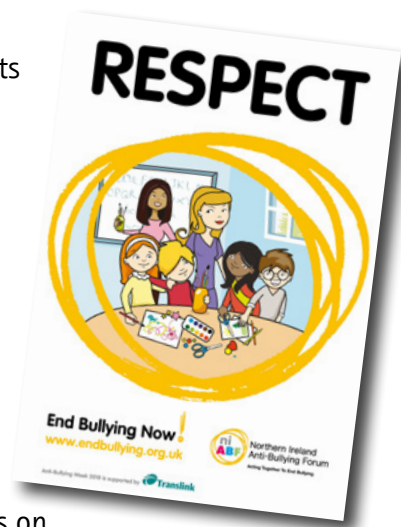
6.73 Children in Northern Ireland have the right to live in a peaceful community without fear of attack, violence, intimidation or influence; therefore we must intensify our efforts collaboratively to tackle all forms of violence against children by promoting human rights, including children's rights, peace and tolerance.

6.74 During the co-design process, a range of issues were identified which can potentially lead to children and young people experiencing insecurity or instability including seven areas of greatest effort. Responses to the consultation confirmed that the Strategy should indeed focus on these areas; however, for children and young people, the clear priority issue in relation to this outcome was bullying. Children and young people reported that they and many of their peers felt unsafe at school because of bullying or the impact of bullying. The issue of cyber bullying was also highlighted, with young people suggesting that many adults were unaware of and had little understanding of the problem. Prejudice-based bullying was also raised by young people.

6.75 Pressures created and exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic have created challenges for families and placed some children and young people at greater risk of harm. This can be due to factors including increased financial pressures, isolation, parental conflict and domestic abuse. With more time spent online, children and young people are also at greater risk of online harm. Children are also less visible to those services who normally play a vital role in identifying and referring children who may be in need of additional support or who may be at risk of harm.

### Where will we focus our efforts?

6.76 From the co-design process and the responses to the consultation, the following areas of need and groups of children and young people have been identified as requiring the greatest attention.



**i. Bullying**

6.77 There are many different ways that bullying can be displayed. It can include being called nasty names, teased, made fun of, threatened or put down; being hit, kicked, punched, tripped up or knocked over; having belongings stolen or damaged; having rumours or gossip spread behind someone's back; being left-out, excluded or isolated; being forced to do something you don't want to do or know that is wrong. Cyber bullying is bullying behaviour that is displayed through mobile/smart phones or the internet.

6.78 The damaging effect of bullying on children and young people's mental, emotional and physical well-being is well recognised and there are policies and legislation in place to promote an anti-bullying culture.

- We will continue to work to fully implement the Addressing Bullying in Schools (Northern Ireland) Act 2016, which is designed to strengthen schools' ability to tackle all forms of bullying.



- We will work with key partners to promote an anti-bullying culture amongst children and young people in schools and communities across Northern Ireland, providing support to children, young people and the adults who support them.

**ii. Online safety for children and young people**

6.79 We want our children and young people to be able to make the best use of the educational, social and economic benefits of the online world, while staying safe from potential harm. This means safeguarding children and young people in the online world and tackling all types of online abuse. We recognise that children and young people can face different online risks to their peers, and these risks change constantly depending on their age and circumstances and that some groups of children and young people, such as



those with learning disabilities, are particularly vulnerable in respect of online safety.

- We will work together to support children and young people, and their parents, to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to stay safe online and to be able to respond appropriately if they are subjected to online abuse.
- We will progress an Online Safety Strategy for keeping children and young people safe online.

### iii. Youth homelessness

6.80 A young person cannot feel safe or live with any stability if they do not have a place they can call home. Homelessness can impact on a young person's physical and mental health, education, employment opportunities and connection to society. Northern Ireland also has a population of 'hidden homeless' young people who manage by staying with friends ("sofa surfing") or occasionally sleeping rough.

- We will work to provide, where possible, help, support and early interventions to prevent a young person finding themselves without a home. However, when homelessness does occur, we will work to provide immediate support.
- We will also work to provide a more graduated/transitional approach for young people moving from supported accommodation to flexible support (providing housing related support).

### iv. Looked after and care experienced children and young people

6.81 Looked after children and care experienced children and young people often experience considerable instability in their early lives. Securing stability for them should therefore be a priority.

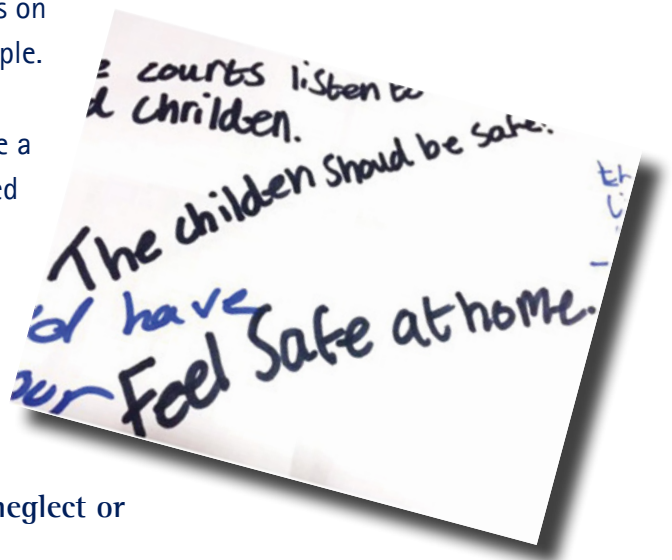
- We will progress a new Strategy for looked after children, 'A Life Deserved: "Caring" for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland', which aims to: support families at an early stage, providing intensive support for children, young people and their families where the risk

of entry into care is high; secure earlier permanence and stability for children and young people in care, enabling them to build positive and supportive relationships; support children and young people returning home from care, and their families; and extend support for care leavers to help them make a successful transition into independent living as adults.

v. Children and young people under the threat of paramilitary intimidation or recruitment

6.82 An ongoing legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland is the presence of paramilitaries in our communities. This was a focus in the *Fresh Start Agreement*, with the Executive committing to ending paramilitarism, tackling organised crime and challenging paramilitary attempts to control communities. The issue was raised consistently during the co-design process and in responses to the consultation, as an area of concern for young people living in certain areas. Organised crime and paramilitary intimidation will lead to feelings of instability and insecurity, causing the young person distress and leaving them isolated from family, friends and community.

- We will continue to work together to prevent vulnerable young people from being drawn into organised crime and paramilitary activities. We will also support the initiatives within the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme which focus on children and young people.
- We will seek to promote a shared future and shared spaces, and raise the aspirations of young people to avoid criminal activity.



vi. Children and young people experiencing neglect or domestic violence

6.83 Neglect and domestic violence have terrible effects on children and young people and can be deeply traumatic. Domestic abuse can take many different

forms, including being subject to or witnessing physical violence as well as psychological, verbal or emotional abuse. The negative impact of such abuse on children and young people can be significant and long-lasting.



- We will continue to work together to implement the 'Seven Year Strategy for Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland'.

vii. **Children and young people who are victims or at risk of sexual exploitation**

6.84 Addressing child sexual exploitation (CSE) remains a priority. Children and young people who are victims of sexual exploitation face huge risks to their physical, emotional and psychological well-being. There has been a significant programme of cross-departmental work undertaken in connection with CSE to implement the recommendations made in the Marshall Inquiry (2014), and significant changes to how CSE is addressed.

- We will continue to progress the work undertaken in response to the recommendations of the Marshall Inquiry and will determine what additional action is required to protect children and young people who have been sexually exploited or may be at risk of sexual exploitation.

viii. **Children and young people in contact with the youth justice system**



6.85 We must work to ensure that children and young people who come into contact with the youth justice system are not destined to have poorer life chances. We must also recognise that there are specific demographic groups of young people who are at greater risk of offending and therefore an integrated approach to preventative work should be effectively targeted.

6.86 We must also consider the interests of children and young people who experience a parent in prison. Evidence suggests a child with a parent in prison may be more likely to experience mental health problems, be vulnerable to negative influences and drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour and be less likely to achieve positive educational outcomes.



- We will continue to progress the work begun by the Youth Justice Scoping Study to improve outcomes for all children in, or at risk of entering, the youth justice system.

ix. **Supporting children and young people experiencing the impact of family breakdown**

6.87 Family breakdown is recognised as having a traumatic impact on children and young people's lives, and can have a significant and sometimes lasting impact on children and young people. Children and young people have the right to preserve their family relationships and a right to maintain direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, if that is their wish and if it is in their best interests. We must ensure that the views, wishes, feelings and aspirations of children and young people with regard to contact with parents and their extended family should be listened to and respected, and help parents to work through their difficulties in a way that does not cause additional trauma, stress and harm.

- Following the Review of Family Justice, the Shadow Family Justice Board, which replaced the Children Order Advisory Committee, has been meeting since December 2017. Among the current priorities for Family Justice relevant to family breakdown are: separation, divorce, mediation and the needs of vulnerable witnesses, including child witnesses. The use of video evidence is an area of some interest to the Family Justice Board and will be explored in due course.
- We will develop a cross-departmental Family and Parenting Support Strategy, which aims to help improve the quality of families' lives. In particular, it will help build resilient, stable and strong families, where relationships are positive, healthy and nurturing, and promote

competent, confident, positive parenting. In line with recommendations arising from the Review of Family Justice, the new Strategy will support actions which help parents work together in the best interests of their child, whether together or separated.

### Who will help achieve this outcome?

6.88 The main partners in achieving this outcome will be:

Key Children's Authorities	Other partners
Government Departments – in particular <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Executive Office</li> <li>● Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs</li> <li>● Communities</li> <li>● Economy</li> <li>● Education</li> <li>● Health</li> <li>● Justice</li> </ul> District Councils Education Authority Health and Social Care Board Health and Social Care Trusts Public Health Agency Northern Ireland Housing Executive Police Service of Northern Ireland	Children and young people Parents/guardians Schools and teachers Youth Justice Agency Community and voluntary sector Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Housing associations/private rental sector Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum



**Outcomes for children and young people**  
**Children & Young People Experience**  
**(a) economic and (b) environmental well-being**

# Children and young people experience

## (a) economic and (b) environmental well-being

Programme for Government Outcomes
2. We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment
3. We have a more equal society
6. We have more people working in better jobs
12. We give our children and young people the best start in life

### What does this mean?

#### a. Economic well-being

- 6.89 Parents have primary responsibility to ensure their children are provided for but, when necessary, the public sector must also help, particularly in relation to meeting basic needs such as a place to live, food and clothing. The UNCRC says that all children and young people must have a standard of living adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development; and that families who cannot provide this economic well-being should be supported by government (*Article 27*).
- 6.90 We will intensify our efforts to ensure suitable measures are in place to assist parents and families with their knowledge of financial capacity and debt management in order to protect their children from the effects of poverty, by providing appropriate assistance and support particularly with regard to housing, heating, nutrition and clothing.
- 6.91 We recognise too, that children and young people from economically disadvantaged families may be unable to fully access opportunities around education, health and play. Living in poverty can also impact on their emotional well-being, self-esteem and confidence, leading to isolation and an inability to actively participate in society.

6.92 We will work to equip young people with appropriate knowledge and financial capacity skills so they can thrive in a modern and rapidly changing economy. Where necessary, we will provide extra support to help young people realise their full potential so that they do not experience poverty as adults, along with the negative effects this can have on their health and life chances.

### Where will we focus our efforts?

6.93 From the co-design process and the responses to the consultation, the following areas of need and groups of children and young people have been identified as requiring the greatest attention.

#### i. Families experiencing poverty



6.94 Of major concern are families who are experiencing poverty and the impact this has on children and young people. Families can face pressures in relation to housing, food, fuel and childcare costs and debt repayment etc. By helping families experiencing poverty, children and young people affected can experience a range of better outcomes.

- We will work collaboratively across departments and agencies towards achieving the outcome in the Child Poverty Strategy that 'Families experience economic well-being'.
- Affordable childcare is an important factor in helping families who are struggling financially, including those experiencing 'in-work' poverty. We will continue to provide support to parents to access childcare through the tax and benefit systems and will develop a revised Childcare Strategy.

#### ii. Children and young people in need of education, employment or training

6.95 It is important that children and young people have opportunities to develop appropriate knowledge and skills so that they can become economically active, find gainful employment and avoid poverty. It is crucial that every child and young person is given the support, knowledge, encouragement and





opportunities to overcome barriers and avail of education and/or training opportunities.

6.96 We recognise the challenges presented by the current and future economic and political environment.

- We will work to shape our education system so that young people have the skills they require to respond to a modern, rapidly changing economy.

6.97 There is a clear link between this area of greatest need and the outcome relating to learning and achievement, including tackling educational underachievement.

- We will continue to support our young people beyond formal education, helping them to transition into further education, training or employment.
- We will take into account the needs of certain groups of young people who may require greater support to ensure that they remain engaged in education, employment or training, such as those with a disability, those who have experienced care and those within the youth justice system.

### iii. Rural young people

6.98 Children and young people living in rural areas often face additional challenges in the area of economic well-being. There are pockets of deprivation in rural areas and young people living there often have fewer opportunities and have to travel further to access education, training or employment, as well as social activities. Infrequent public transport provision can also pose additional challenges and costs.

- We will work to identify opportunities to improve access to employment and social activities for young people living in rural areas, for example improving rural transport provision, internet/



broadband access and the use of online or virtual learning training opportunities and rural leisure facilities and children's play parks.

**b. Environmental well-being**

6.99 Our health and well-being are directly affected by the quality of the environment around us. Positive and negative impacts can occur throughout a lifetime from pre-birth, infancy and early childhood, all the way through the adult years to older age. Children can be particularly



susceptible to harm from environmental hazards because their bodies are still growing and developing and any harm can last far into the future. For the same reason, any environmental improvements that protect health or encourage more healthy lifestyles will have long-lasting benefits.

6.100 The UNCRC says that all children and young people must be provided with a clean environment (*Article 24*) and the draft Programme for Government identifies key actions aimed at improving and protecting the environment which will benefit everyone in Northern Ireland, including children and young people.

6.101 Children and young people often have a greater appreciation and understanding of issues such as pollution, climate change, recycling or waste management than adults. The schoolchildren protests across the world to call for action on climate change, a movement inspired by Greta Thunberg, a 16 year old Swedish student, highlighted that young people understand that it is their generation that will be most affected by the impacts of climate change. Priorities identified by children and young people during the co-design and consultation processes included green spaces, open spaces, clean and safe environments, liveable and connected communities and reduced traffic.

6.102 Other environmental exposures and risks may be less well understood by children and young people and it is the responsibility of the relevant agencies to raise awareness and take action to reduce the likelihood of lasting harm. Air pollution from vehicles and home heating, indoor air pollution, including exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke, noise, lead in drinking water, home accidents and UV exposure from the sun and from the use of sunbeds, are all

examples of environmental factors that can impact disproportionately on the health of children and young people.

### Where will we focus our efforts?

6.103 From the co-design process and the responses to the consultation, the following area of need has been identified as requiring the greatest attention.

#### iv. Environmental quality and access to the natural environment

6.104 It is important that children and young people have an understanding of and respect for the environment; that they have access to the natural environment; and that they live in environments which promote their health and well-being.

- We will seek to build on the interest that children and young people already have in the environment and provide opportunities for them to access and interact with the natural environment at home, in school and in daily activities; and work to improve and enhance the quality of the environments in which they live, learn and play.

### Who will help achieve this outcome?

6.105 The main partners in achieving this outcome will be:

Key Children's Authorities	Other partners
Government Departments – in particular <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs</li> <li>● Communities</li> <li>● Economy</li> <li>● Education</li> <li>● Health</li> <li>● Infrastructure</li> </ul> District Councils Education Authority Health and Social Care Board Health and Social Care Trusts Public Health Agency Northern Ireland Housing Executive	Children and young people Parents/guardians Schools Youth workers / Youth organisations Early Years Settings Community and voluntary sector



**Because everyone  
can do something**

"Thank you to the Women's Aid Federation NI for loaning us the Helping Hands kids."

# Children and young people make a positive contribution to society

## Programme for Government Outcomes

5. We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential

12. We give our children and young people the best start in life

### What does this mean?

- 6.106 Children and young people are resourceful citizens, capable of shaping a better society for all. To function well in any society, children and young people need to feel they belong, that their contribution is valued and respected and that they can freely express their views in school, at home and within the wider community. Young people and children can and do make critical contributions to family, community and civic social society in a range of ways.
- 6.107 We must actively encourage and support children and young people to contribute to society and to ensure they are part of decision making and planning processes on issues which affect them. The UNCRC says that all children and young people should be able to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them and have these views respected and given due consideration (*Article 12*).
- 6.108 By promoting meaningful participation and identifying appropriate opportunities for active citizenship, children and young people are more likely to feel confident to engage in discussions about issues affecting them, to participate in activities in school and outside school, and to actively contribute to the life of their communities.
- 6.109 It is important that children and young people are supported to develop socially and emotionally, to build self-confidence and develop skills which will enable them to deal effectively with significant life changes and challenges.

We also need to ensure that children and young people who are unable to contribute to society are nurtured and encouraged to participate as far as is possible, taking their individual circumstances into account.

- 6.110 Discussions with children and young people during the co-design and consultation processes, showed that they were keen to participate in decisions about issues and services affecting them. It is important that adults ensure children and young people's views are heard and that they are informed how their views have influenced subsequent decisions and actions.



- 6.111 We will therefore ensure that children and young people, and their parents are engaged in the delivery of this Strategy, ensuring that the structures established to deliver it allow them to participate in its delivery, monitoring and review.
- 6.112 Building the arenas for contribution and acknowledging them more clearly is inextricably linked to the co-design and co-production processes to which all government agencies are committed. We will develop mechanisms through which public sector organisations can find advice on good practice and sources of help to improve the participation of children and young people in shaping policy and delivering services.

### Where will we focus our efforts?

- 6.113 From the co-design process and the responses to the consultation, the following areas of need and groups of children and young people have been identified as requiring the greatest attention.

#### i. Youth Work (youth organisations and groups)

- 6.114 The value of youth work to children and young people is well recognised. Delivered through uniformed and non-uniformed organisations and a wide range of statutory and voluntary groups, it offers many young people

opportunities outside of school to develop their abilities and talents and to cultivate a range of personal and social skills. Youth organisations and clubs can provide young people with opportunities to contribute to, discuss and debate issues of interest and to engage with people from different backgrounds or opinions.

6.115 Youth work should be flexible and, in line with the Department of Education's 'Priorities for Youth' policy, the age range of children and young people for whom youth work is relevant extends beyond 18 years of age, to accommodate young people aged 19-25 with particular needs.

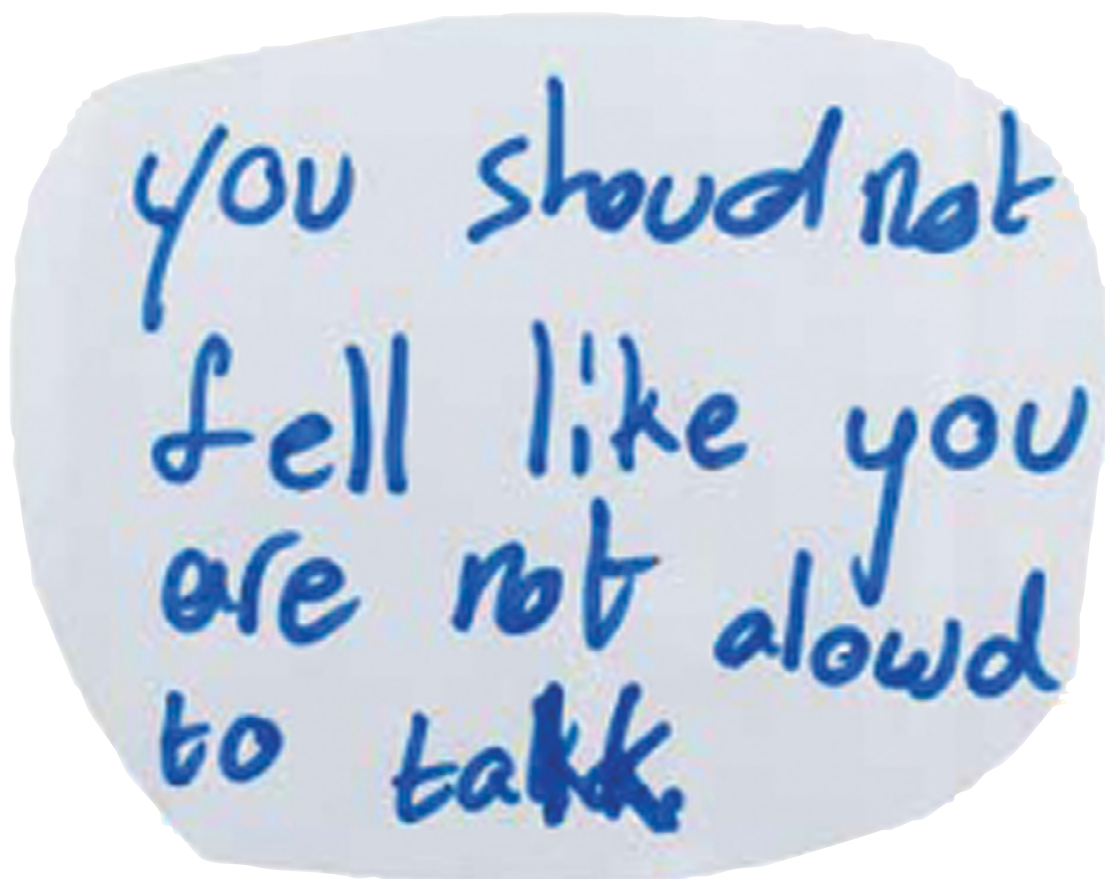
- We will continue to promote and support a thriving youth work sector in Northern Ireland, to ensure our young people become active citizens, contributing to our society and making their voices heard.

ii. **Children and young people acting as carers**

6.116 There are many young carers at present in Northern Ireland and their invaluable contribution to their families must be recognised, acknowledged and supported. Children and young people who undertake a substantive caring role for a member of their family need extra support and could be classed as a priority group across every outcome. A young carer's personal development, physical and mental health, education, play and social opportunities can all be affected by their family situation and the care they undertake.

- We will ensure children and young people acting as carers receive the support they need to fully undertake their education and have opportunities to relax, socialise and have breaks from their caring responsibilities.





iii. 'Seldom heard voices' of children and young people

6.117 Whilst there are many children and young people who are actively involved in youth activities or other ventures which enable their voices to be heard, there are others who encounter greater challenges in this respect.

- We will seek to develop mechanisms to facilitate and actively seek out the contribution and voice of young people who are seldom heard including those living in rural areas; those not involved in youth organisations/clubs or volunteering; newcomer children and young people; and children and young people with a disability and/or special educational need.



**Who will help achieve this outcome?**

6.118 The main partners in achieving this outcome will be:

Key Children's Authorities	Other partners
Government Departments – in particular <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Executive Office</li> <li>● Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs</li> <li>● Education</li> <li>● Health</li> </ul> District Councils Education Authority Health and Social Care Board Health and Social Care Trusts Public Health Agency	Children and young people Parents/guardians Community and voluntary sector The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) Community Planning Partnerships Youth workers / Youth organisations Schools Early years settings



## **Outcomes for children and young people**

**Children et Young People Live in a Society Which Respects their Rights**

# Children and young people live in a society which respects their rights

## Programme for Government Outcomes

9. We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity

12. We give our children and young people the best start in life

### What does this mean?

- 6.119 As introduced on page 10, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, or UNCRC, is an international human rights treaty which has been ratified by the UK Government. It sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children and young people and applies to everyone under 18. It is vital therefore that all children and young people are made aware of their rights (*Article 42*) and how they can exercise them.
- 6.120 In responding to the consultation, children and young people told us that government should do all it can to make sure that they know about their rights and are given the knowledge and confidence to help them assert those rights.
- 6.121 Adults too need to be made aware of children's rights including: parents, carers and guardians, who often act as advocates of the rights of their children; community leaders; and those developing policies and delivering programmes and services for children and young people and their families. The challenge is that attitudes to children's rights should never be tokenistic.
- 6.122 There is a need to ensure that adults generally, have a greater awareness and understanding of children's rights and that negative public attitudes towards children, especially adolescents, are effectively addressed. It is essential that adults both acknowledge children and young people as rights holders in themselves, and take the lead in encouraging and enabling approaches that can mediate tensions between everyone's exercise of their respective rights.
- 6.123 The Children and Young People's Strategy and its implementation/delivery plan will be instrumental in progressing children's rights in Northern Ireland. The

structures described in Section 7 will oversee and monitor the implementation of the Strategy. An important element of these structures will be ongoing engagement with children and young people, aimed at ensuring their right to express their views on matters affecting them is realised.

- 6.124 In order to raise the profile of children's rights, we will work to promote awareness and understanding of the UNCRC in schools, public sector organisations, parents, carers and families and the wider public.
- 6.125 We will seek opportunities to promote positive images of our children and young people and address negative stereotyping.

### **Where will we focus our efforts?**

- 6.126 Some groups of children and young people are at greater risk of not having their rights respected or enforced. This risk links strongly to the outcome that 'Children and young people live in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted' because a failure to respect their rights may also include them experiencing unequal treatment or discrimination, or not getting equal access to services they are entitled to.

- We will continue to work to promote greater awareness of the rights of all children but will focus in particular on the needs of the following groups of children and young people who, from the co-design process and the responses to the consultation, have been identified as requiring the greatest attention.

#### **i. Children and young people who experience racism**

Government has put on record its commitment to tackling all forms of intolerance including racism and has stressed its commitment to tackle racism in all its forms. The Racial Equality Strategy 2015-25 provides a framework for action for government departments (and others):

- to tackle racial inequalities and to open up opportunity for all;
- to eradicate racism and hate crime; and
- along with the Together: Building a United Community policy, to promote good race relations and social cohesion.

Children and young people from ethnic minorities can find themselves subject to direct or indirect discrimination or racism, which can have an adverse impact on their physical or emotional health, education and well-being. It

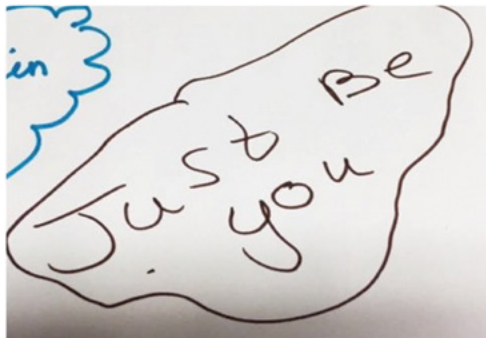
is important that these children and young people are made aware of their rights and the support available to them; and that public sector organisations actively mainstream anti-racism into their policies, programmes, practice and decision-making, including identifying the barriers to racial equality and good relations and taking action to overcome them.



Departments and public authorities need to have explicitly recognised and acknowledged the barriers to racial equality and good race relations and have taken action to overcome them.

## ii. Children and young people who are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB)

Children and young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, are perceived to be, or have a parent who is, can face a range of discriminations and pressures in their daily lives. These children and young people can feel that their rights and LGB issues are largely ignored in their education, communities and wider society. Ignoring the rights of these children and young people can impact on other aspects of their lives, including their mental health. Children and young people who are LGB can experience bullying in schools and there is evidence of disproportionate levels of depression, anxiety, self-harm and



suicide ideation among young LGB and transgender people. 'Outing' or fear of 'outing' has resulted in homelessness and social isolation. Concern about accessing public services and the need for inclusion and participation are often issues for young LGB people.

## iii. Children and young people who identify as Transgender

Children and young people who identify as transgender can also face similar pressures and challenges in their daily lives and are at risk of not having their fundamental rights respected – especially the right to non-discrimination. These challenges may also be experienced by children and young people with a transgender parent. Services need to be flexible in dealing with children and young people who identify as transgender, and ensure they do not face

discrimination – direct or indirect – based on their identity. Ignoring the issues faced by these children and young people, including the issue of gender recognition, can impact on other outcomes and affect their mental health and well-being.

**iv. Children and young people for whom English is not their first language**

There are more than 90 different languages spoken across Northern Ireland. Where possible, services should be provided in a range of languages to widen access for all children and young people.

**v. Children and young people who seek to practise their faith**

Children and young people who seek to practise their faith in their daily lives and in social contexts often face a range of pressures and are at risk of not having their fundamental rights respected. Representation in the media and in social fora can marginalise, belittle or stereotype faith-based values and beliefs, with children and young people who are living out their faith in practical ways at risk of being labelled as radicals or bigoted. This is unacceptable. They should be encouraged to share their views and beliefs; further, they are fully entitled to have their own faith-based views respected by their peers, wider society and in the media.

**vi. Children and young people who have no faith**

These experiences also apply to children and young people who have no faith and who class themselves as atheist or humanist. There are different circumstances or situations where these children are not afforded equal respect for not having a faith, perhaps being forced to comply with activities or practices with which they fundamentally disagree. They should also be encouraged to share their views and beliefs and have these respected by others.

**vii. Children and young people who have a learning difficulty, autism or communication barrier**

Good communication is vital to ensure that children and young people's rights are respected. Some children and young people have a disability or other communication barrier which can make it harder for them to explain things

to other people. The JAM Card was created to allow people with learning difficulties and communication barriers to ask for Just A Minute of patience when in customer service situations.

- The Northern Ireland Civil Service will become a JAM Card friendly organisation.



### Who will help achieve this outcome?

6.127 The main partners in achieving this outcome will be:

Key Children's Authorities	Other partners
<p>Government Departments – in particular</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Executive Office</li> <li>● Communities</li> <li>● Education</li> <li>● Health</li> <li>● Justice</li> </ul> <p>District Councils</p> <p>Education Authority</p> <p>Health and Social Care Board</p> <p>Health and Social Care Trusts</p> <p>Public Health Agency</p> <p>Police Service of Northern Ireland</p>	<p>Children and young people</p> <p>Parents/guardians</p> <p>Community and voluntary sector</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY)</p> <p>Equality Commission for Northern Ireland</p> <p>Early years settings</p> <p>Schools</p> <p>Youth workers / Youth organisations</p>



## **Outcomes for children and young people**

Children & Young People Live in a Society in which  
Equality of Opportunity & Good Relations Are Promoted

Provided by STEP Language School

MONIKA 11m



# Children and young people live in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted

## Programme for Government Outcomes

9. We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity

12. We give our children and young people the best start in life

### What does this mean?

- 6.128 The UNCRC says that all children and young people should be treated equally without discrimination, irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, language, religion, political opinion, family background, abilities or other status (*Article 2*). By challenging discrimination and promoting equality, particularly for the most vulnerable in society including disadvantaged, marginalised and minority ethnic groups, we will ensure we celebrate the diverse experience, skills and talents of all our children.
- 6.129 There are two elements to this outcome. **Firstly, all children and young people should be treated fairly and equally.** This is related to the outcome that 'Children and young people live in a society which respects their rights'. We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all children and young people at school, at home, in training, employment and within the wider community.
- 6.130 We know however, that many children and young people experience unequal treatment or discrimination. An individual's identity is complex and will be made up of all sorts of different factors or characteristics, for example their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background, political opinion, age, social or economic background. A child or young person may be vulnerable to discrimination on the basis of one or more of their characteristics (multiple discrimination). To eradicate discrimination from society we must promote and facilitate through policy, as well as in practice, an awareness and understanding of, and respect for, the contribution and rights of others. Government departments and other public services

must set an example by ensuring that equality in all its forms is integral to their work and is mainstreamed into their policy, practice and organisational culture. Being open to, and respectfully acknowledging difference, in the spirit of understanding, respect, peace, tolerance, and friendship will prepare children and young people to live more positively and responsibly in a fully inclusive society.

- 6.131 **Secondly, children and young people should be encouraged and supported to develop positive attitudes and good relations with those from backgrounds different to their own.** Children and young people have a central role in creating a society in which diversity is respected and where people of all backgrounds are acknowledged and feel valued. But they cannot do it by themselves – it is essential that adults, including government, local communities, parents and guardians, their wider families and society must encourage, help, support and set an example to children and young people so that together we create a shared society where people feel welcome and accepted, and difference is accepted.

**Where will we focus our efforts?**

- 6.132 From the co-design process and the responses to the consultation, the following areas of need and groups of children and young people have been identified as requiring the greatest attention.

**i. Children and young people most likely to experience inequality**

- 6.133 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act lists groups of people that require equality of opportunity. This includes children and young people.



- We will ensure children and young people are not treated unfairly due to their age; and that children and young people who fall within the Section 75 groups are treated fairly and equally.
- We will work to implement the actions proposed in the Racial Equality Strategy 2015–25 which are relevant to children and young people including identifying ways to tackle racist bullying in schools; researching where ethnic monitoring (i.e. collecting information about ethnicity to identify gaps and monitor whether racial equality work is

having any impact) should be introduced; and review the Race Relations (NI) Order.

ii. Promoting diversity and mutual understanding

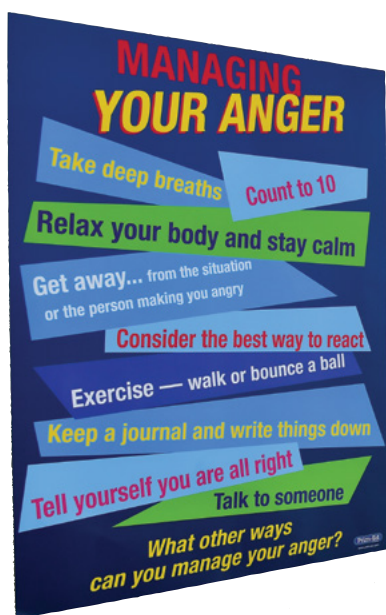
6.134 In responding to the consultation, young people told us that the concept of promoting good relations should extend beyond the traditional religious and sectarian divisions. Many felt strongly that the strategy should be fully inclusive and they identified a need to learn more about the range of religious faiths, nationalities and cultures.

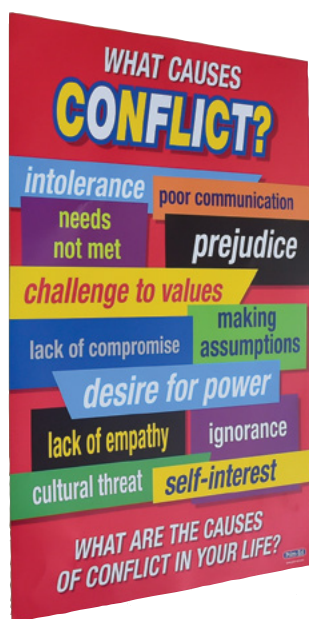


- We will promote awareness of other faiths, cultures and nationalities among our children and young people and help them to develop positive attitudes to difference, for example through the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC), Community Relations, Equality & Diversity (CRED) Policy and the Priorities for Youth and Shared and Integrated Education strategies.
- The Executive Office, under the T:BUC strategy, fund a number of projects within their good relations funding programmes where children and young people are the beneficiaries. The key programmes in this regard are the T:BUC Camps Programme, Central Good Relations Fund and Planned Interventions Programme. The promotion of good relations between young people from our two traditional communities in

Northern Ireland is central to any good relations project involving children and young people; however, we also strongly encourage projects to include young people from other communities including ethnic minority communities and those of different racial backgrounds. Good relations projects which include a diverse range of young people have proved to be very successful and we will continue to encourage this.

- Whilst many of the T:BUC projects are delivered to children and young people living in interface areas, its programmes are spread right across Northern Ireland, in all Council areas and in both rural and urban communities. The funding





programmes seek to provide opportunities for young people to learn about each other's communities and build respect for each other.

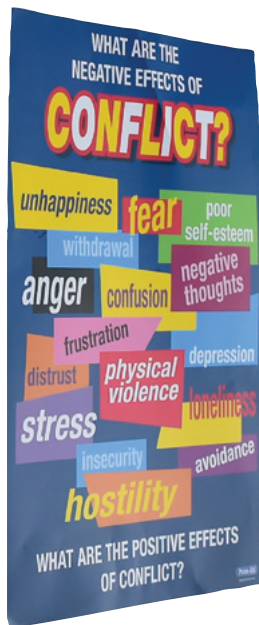
iii. Children and young people living in interface areas

6.135 In spite of significant work and progress over the past two decades to promote respect and reconciliation, prejudice and sectarian perceptions still exist at all levels of society and across the country. Bias can exist anywhere, and although children and young people who live in interface areas are no more disposed to be prejudiced than children and young people who live in other areas, the legacy of the Troubles impacts upon and can be seen more acutely in areas which are or historically have been more segregated, exacerbated by the fact that many of these areas also have high levels of socio-economic deprivation.

6.136 Children and young people in these areas need targeted support to help create the conditions for greater participation in the ongoing peace process, and to develop opportunities to live in communities free from fear or obstacle to interaction and improved respect.

6.137 In the consultation responses it was noted that improving community relations between adults was an important element in making Northern Ireland a safer and more inclusive place for children and young people. The draft Programme for Government includes promoting reconciliation and respect as one of its key areas.

- We will therefore continue to work to provide children and young people with more opportunities to learn and socialise together, and build respect for themselves and each other through policies and programmes such as Together: Building a United Community, the Uniting Communities sport and creativity programme, shared and integrated education, and the promotion of shared spaces.
- The Department of Education's Sharing Works: A Policy For Shared Education aims to encourage and facilitate collaborative working across educational providers on a cross sectoral basis. Its objectives include providing all children and young people with an opportunity for sustained participation in Shared Education, promoting good relations, respect for diversity and community cohesion.



- Such opportunities will be provided, for example, through the delivery of the Strule Shared Education Campus, Omagh which is a pioneering programme representing a major investment in the delivery of education in Northern Ireland. The Campus, which has been designed to cultivate cohesion, collaboration and partnership, will bring together six schools from across the community drawn from the Controlled and Voluntary school sectors. Over 4,000 children and young people, including those with special educational needs, will come together on a vibrant and dynamic campus to gain the best start in life through consistent, varied and accessible shared experiences that will deliver a high quality of education for all. The sharing of facilities, skills and resources will enable a more flexible approach to learning with enhanced curriculum choices, encouraging and supporting young people to flourish and to become the best that they can be.

### Who will help achieve this outcome?

6.138 The main partners in achieving this outcome will be:

Key Children's Authorities	Other partners
Government Departments – in particular <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Executive Office</li> <li>● Communities</li> <li>● Economy</li> <li>● Education</li> </ul> District Councils Education Authority Police Service of Northern Ireland	Children and young people Parents/guardians Schools and teachers Community and voluntary sector Equality Commission for Northern Ireland The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) NI Community Relations Council Youth workers / Youth organisations Early Years settings



## 7.

# How the Strategy will be taken forward

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- 7.1 The Strategy sets out eight high level outcomes that we want to achieve for children and young people and which we will work towards in relation to the policies, programmes and services we provide.
- 7.2 The outcomes apply to all children and young people and we will continue to provide universal services to help and support everyone; however the Strategy focuses on specific issues which stakeholders have identified as requiring particular attention, and vulnerable or marginalised groups of children and young people who have been identified as being at greater risk of not achieving the outcomes.
- 7.3 Publication of this core Strategy is only the beginning of the process. There are a number of steps to take forward as we begin to put it into operation.

### Monitoring and Reporting Structures

- 7.4 All Departments are collectively responsible for this Strategy. The Department of Education will have a co-ordinating role but each Department has responsibility for their respective departmental and policy areas.
- 7.5 A Children and Young People's Strategy Monitoring and Reporting Group comprising senior managers from each Department will support the collaboration and co-ordination of all policy matters affecting children and young people and monitor the progress of the Strategy against the outcomes and indicators.
- 7.6 The structures will be reflective of all key stakeholders including Children's Authorities, the community and voluntary sector and academia/practice-based researchers. There will be ongoing engagement with children and young people and parents/guardians to ensure that they have the opportunity to provide their views regarding policies, programmes or the delivery of services that affect them.

## Delivery Plan

- 7.7 Following the publication of the Strategy, Departments will contribute to the development of a Delivery Plan which will set out the actions we will take to achieve the outcomes.
- 7.8 The Delivery Plan will not attempt to encompass the full range of ongoing services and supports that we provide for children and young people and their families, but will focus on actions that will address the issues and groups of children and young people that have been identified as requiring the greatest focus.

## Monitoring and reporting

- 7.9 To determine whether and to what extent the outcomes have been achieved, a small number of high level population level indicators will be used to measure and report progress in improving the well-being of children and young people. These will be linked with all the relevant outcomes. While some indicators will be clearly associated with one particular outcome, other indicators will be cross-cutting and relevant across a number of outcomes.
- 7.10 There will be ongoing monitoring of the indicators to determine whether the actions we are taking are having an impact, how the outcomes are being achieved and whether children and young people are better off as a result.
- 7.11 Reporting will be proportionate and meaningful, so it can clearly be seen whether the Strategy is making an impact. It is the intention that, as far as possible, reporting arrangements will be aligned with the reporting arrangements for the PfG and other departmental strategies. Data will be made available to our stakeholders and the public so they can see what progress is being made.

## Data development

- 7.12 Many of the indicators to be used can be measured using existing data sources, however we must consider if there are better sources of data which could be used, or there are areas for which data does not currently exist or is not available in an appropriate format. We will therefore advance a Data



Development Agenda that will support the collection of additional data which can then be used in the development of future indicators.

## **Regular Review**

- 7.13 Regular reviews of the Strategy will be considered as part of the formal reporting process on the operation of the Children's Services Co-operation Act. The periodic reports on the Act will include identifying any ways in which the Children and Young People's Strategy should be revised in order to contribute better to improving the well-being of children and young people. This will ensure that the Strategy takes account of new issues affecting children and young people that might emerge over its lifetime.



## 8.

# Delivering Positive Long Lasting Outcomes

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### An Outcomes Based Approach

- 8.1 In a similar approach to the PfG, this Strategy has been developed using the Outcome Based Accountability (OBA) model. As not everyone will be familiar with OBA, this section explains more about it and how it is being used in the development, implementation and monitoring of the Children and Young People's Strategy.
- 8.2 The OBA approach has been informed by the work of Mark Friedman.<sup>1</sup> OBA is designed to focus our attention on the results or outcomes we plan to achieve through the services we deliver. Through the agreement and prioritisation of high-level outcomes and by monitoring a small number of headline indicators we remain focused on the most important factors which impact on the well-being of children and young people.
- 8.3 Friedman describes OBA as "about getting from talk to action quickly. It provides a method of thinking and taking action together that is **simple** and **common sense**, that uses **plain language**, produces **minimum paper** and is actually **useful** to community members, managers and decision makers. It is about making a difference, not just trying hard and hoping for the best."<sup>2</sup>
- 8.4 This approach does not identify an indicator for all of the issues that stakeholders are concerned about, but that does not mean that those issues are unimportant. By setting the priorities and keeping focused on the high-level issues, we believe we can impact on all of those challenges and barriers to children and young people.
- 8.5 Using OBA will keep a focus on the main issues/challenges and will provide a system of consistent reporting and monitoring that will ensure we are

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<sup>1</sup> Friedman M (2005) *Trying Hard is not Good Enough: How to produce measurable improvements for customers and communities*. Trafford Publishing.

<sup>2</sup> Friedman M (2005) *Trying Hard is not Good Enough: How to produce measurable improvements for customers and communities*. Trafford Publishing. (Page 1)

accountable for our actions. It will also allow us to be flexible and proactive – looking at data trends, identifying concerns and taking remedial action.

- 8.6 OBA uses a number of different terms, which will be used in our delivery, reporting and monitoring. Some of these terms are explained below.

### **Population Accountability**

- 8.7 Population accountability refers to the condition of well-being of whole populations. In the case of this Strategy it relates to children and young people. The condition we want to achieve is improved well-being for all our children and young people. This is a broad statement, with many different elements and can only be achieved through the sustained, co-ordinated action of a wide range of organisations.

### **Outcomes**

- 8.8 Outcomes are clear statements of the condition of well-being we want to achieve e.g. all children and young people live in safety and with stability. The Strategy outlines our 8 outcomes and what this outcome means in practice. The use of outcomes aligns with the requirements of the Children's Services Co-operation Act which requires that the Strategy must set out the outcomes that should be achieved.

### **Indicators**

- 8.9 Indicators are a tool to quantify how we are doing in terms of realising the population outcome. A smaller number of key headline indicators keeps our focus on delivering the most important actions. That is not to say we will ignore other pertinent information that is recorded, but for reporting purposes we will remain focused on a smaller number of indicators.

### **Performance Accountability**

- 8.10 Performance accountability describes how well particular services or programmes perform and whether or not they are achieving the outcomes they are supposed to be achieving. Departments will need to consider which programmes or services they can deliver to support the outcomes. These programmes and services will then have a set of performance measures which

would relate to whether children or young people are any better off as a result.

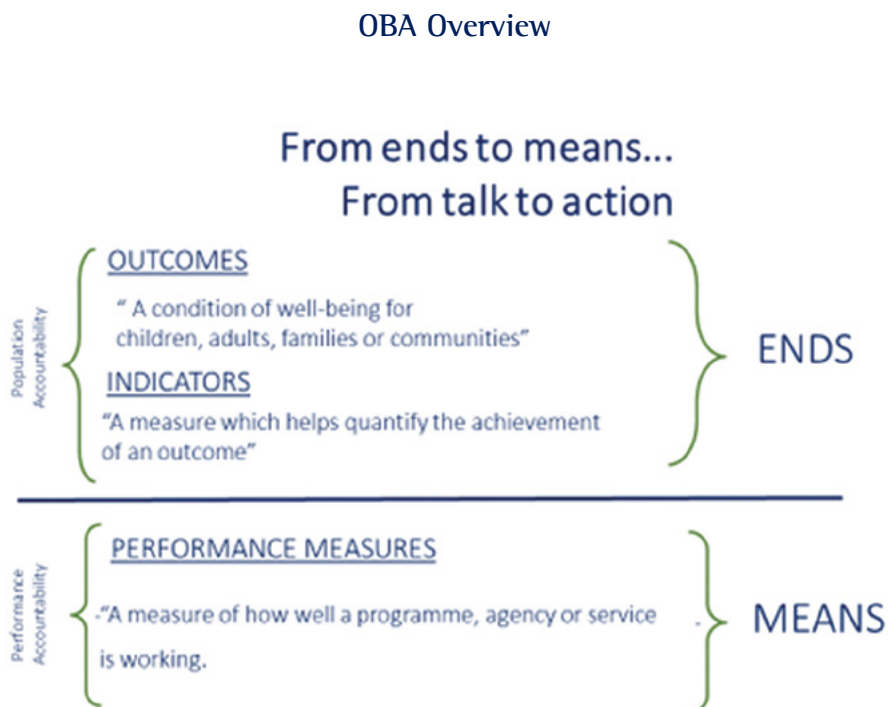
## Performance Measures

8.11 Performance measures are indicators of how well an individual programme or service is performing. This is measured using three questions:

- How much did we do?
- How well did we do it?
- Is anyone better off?

8.12 Performance measures will be developed for each key action in a future implementation plan. This will demonstrate the impact of actions and their contribution to the population level indicators. Figure 1 demonstrates how the actions set out in this strategy contribute to the high level outcomes identified.

Figure 1



## Turning the Curve

- 8.13 An implementation plan will be produced for the outcomes. Monitoring and reporting of progress towards meeting those outcomes will take the form of report cards that outline the outcome to be achieved, the indicators being used (and baseline data) and how we will make progress or turn the curve. 'Turning the curve' refers to the actions we need to take to improve the well-being of children and young people.
- 8.14 Performance measures must also be developed to measure the impact of the actions and their contribution towards the overarching outcomes. As previously stated, this Strategy is subject to review; the outcomes, indicators and actions will be reviewed regularly using the OBA's Turning the Curve methodology.



# List of Children's Authorities

(Children's Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015, Section 9(1))

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- Northern Ireland Government Departments
  - The Executive Office
  - Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
  - Department for Communities
  - Department for the Economy
  - Department of Education
  - Department of Finance
  - Department of Health
  - Department for Infrastructure
  - Department of Justice
  
- District Councils
  - Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
  - Ards and North Down Borough Council
  - Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon
  - Belfast City Council
  - Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
  - Derry City and Strabane District Council
  - Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
  - Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
  - Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
  - Mid Ulster District Council
  - Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
  
- The Health and Social Care Board

- The Public Health Agency
- Health and Social Care Trusts
  - Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
  - Northern Health and Social Care Trust
  - Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust
  - South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
  - Southern Health and Social Care Trust
  - Western Health and Social Care Trust
- The Education Authority
- The Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- The Police Service of Northern Ireland
- The Probation Board for Northern Ireland



## Abbreviations

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CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CRED	Community Relations, Equality and Diversity
CSCA	Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CYPSP	Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership
EA	Education Authority
EOTAS	Education Other Than At School
FPSS	Family and Parenting Support Strategy
FSME	Free School Meal Entitlement
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
JAM Card	Just A Minute Card
LGB	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual
LGB&T	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
NICCY	Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
NI	Northern Ireland
NI Executive	Northern Ireland Executive
OBA	Outcomes-based Accountability
PfG	Programme for Government
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND Act	Special Educational Needs and Disability Act
T:BUC	Together: Building a United Community
The Strategy	The Children and Young People's Strategy
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WHO	World Health Organisation



## Summary of outcomes and areas of greatest focus

Outcomes
Children and young people are physically and mentally healthy
Children and young people enjoy play and leisure
Children and young people learn and achieve
Children and young people live in safety and stability
Children and young people experience (a) economic and (b) environmental well-being
Children and young people make a positive contribution to society
Children and young people live in a society which respects their rights
Children and young people live in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted

Areas of greatest focus
Infants and early years – establishing health and wellbeing from the outset
Children and young people's mental health and emotional well-being
Children and young people with a disability and/or complex health needs, including life limiting conditions
Health outcomes of children and young people living in areas of deprivation
Early years – importance of play for infants' and young children's development
Inclusive participation of children and young people with a disability in play and leisure opportunities
Improving play and leisure opportunities for children and young people living in poverty
Increasing and improving play and leisure opportunities for young people in their teens
Improving educational achievement for children and young people from families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage
Improving educational experience for children and young people with Special Educational Needs
Nurturing children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
Improving educational and personal achievement of care experienced children and young people

Improving educational support for Newcomers, Travellers and Roma children and young people
Improving educational support for children and young people in custody
Bullying
Online safety for children and young people
Youth homelessness
Securing stability in the lives of looked after and care experienced children and young people
Children and young people under the threat of paramilitary intimidation or recruitment
Children and young people experiencing neglect, sexual abuse or domestic violence
Children and young people who are victims of, or at risk of sexual exploitation
Children and young people in contact with the youth justice system or who have a parent in prison
Supporting children and young people experiencing the impact of family breakdown
Families experiencing poverty
Improving opportunities for young people in need of education, employment or training
Improving access to education, training, employment and social activities for young people living in rural areas
Improving children and young people's access to the natural environment and the quality of the environments in which they live, learn and play
Extending youth work opportunities (youth organisations and groups)
Improving support for children and young people acting as carers
Creating an environment where the 'Seldom heard voices' of children and young people can be heard
The rights of children and young people who experience racism
The rights of children and young people who are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual
The rights of children and young people who identify as Transgender
The rights of children and young people for whom English is not their first language
The rights of children and young people who seek to practise their faith
The rights of children and young people who have no faith
Improving communication with children and young people who have a learning disability, autism or communication barrier
Improving equality of opportunity for all children and young people and those most likely to experience inequality
Promoting diversity and mutual understanding
Improving opportunities for children and young people living in interface areas to learn and socialise together

# Acknowledgments

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The Principals, Staff and Pupils of:

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Bunscoil Phobal Feirste, Béal Feirste  
Drumnamoe Nursery School  
Enniskillen Integrated Primary School  
Victoria Primary School Nursery Unit, Carrickfergus

The staff and young people of the Education Authority's Youth Service

Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

Children in Northern Ireland (CINI)

College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise / Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Department of Education

Department of Health

Department for Infrastructure

EITP Play Matters project

The Executive Office

Family Mediation NI

JAM Card

Libraries NI

Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum

Pathway Fund

SBNI (Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland)

STEP Language School, Dungannon (funded by STEP, SHSCT, Children's Services and DFC/EA)

Strule Shared Education Campus, Omagh

Sure Start

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY)

Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland - Thank you to the Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland and to the children and families who provided their artwork and quotes.

Youth Justice Agency / Department of Justice

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