



**Northern Ireland
Executive**

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ANNUAL REPORT ON CHILD POVERTY

2014-2015

**A REPORT TO THE ASSEMBLY AS REQUIRED BY ARTICLE 12(7) OF
THE CHILD POVERTY ACT 2010**

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FOREWORD

Tackling social and economic disadvantage is a key priority of this Executive. The Programme for Government 2011-2015 set out our commitment to create opportunities, tackle disadvantage and improve health and well-being and we have been working since 2011 to do so.

We launched Delivering Social Change – a new framework to co-ordinate key actions between government departments to deliver a sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues and improve children and young people's health, well-being and life opportunities, breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

We have provided nurture units in primary schools to allow for additional support for children who are struggling in mainstream classrooms and have employed additional teachers to help pupils in primary and post-primary schools struggling with English and Maths. We have been able to see the difference this is making in the lives of these children and young people.

This Executive has also committed to providing high quality universal services which are available to all –we have ensured that there are no increases in student fees beyond the rate of inflation and that at least one year of pre-school education is available for every family that wants it.

This annual report for 2014-15 sets out a summary of some of the work we have undertaken to tackle child poverty. However, as the publication of the 2013-14 report was delayed, we took the opportunity to update the figures with the most recent available. Consequently, given data availability lags, this report covers progress in 2014-15.

Over the last year, we have been working hard to develop a new strategic approach to child poverty. Following extensive consultation with children and young people, parents and other stakeholders last spring; we have been working to develop a new strategy which sets out a more focused plan to reduce both the number of children in poverty and the impact which poverty

has on their lives and life chances. We want a strategy which will help us evaluate what we are doing – to make sure what we are doing is making a difference in the lives of those who need it most. This is an important development for us and a big step forward in our work to tackle child poverty. We look forward to launching, and more importantly, delivering this new approach.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Emma Pengelly', written over a horizontal line.

Emma Pengelly MLA

JUNIOR MINISTER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jennifer McCann', written in a cursive style.

Jennifer McCann MLA

JUNIOR MINISTER

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is the Executive's Child Poverty Annual Report 2014-15, a Report to the Assembly as required by Article 12(7) of the Child Poverty Act 2010.

The Child Poverty Act

The Child Poverty Act 2010, enacted on 25 March 2010, required us to publish and lay before the Assembly a Child Poverty Strategy by 25 March 2011. The Child Poverty Act 2010 also requires that we prepare and publish annual reports on the strategy and revise the strategy every third year.

A Child Poverty Strategy, 'Improving Children's Life Chances,' was published in March 2011, annual reports have been produced and published and a review of the strategy was completed in its third year.

The 2010 Child Poverty Act requires that Annual Reports set out the:

- measures taken by departments in accordance with the child poverty strategy; and
- effect of those measures in contributing to meeting the UK targets and ensuring, as far as possible, that children here do not experience socio-economic disadvantage.

1. OUR APPROACH

The Executive's overall number one priority, as set out in the Programme for Government 2011-15, is to grow the economy whilst at the same time tackling social and economic disadvantage.

In the Programme for Government, the Executive specifically committed to:

- Deliver a range of measures to tackle poverty and social exclusion through the [Delivering Social Change](#) framework; and
- Fulfil our commitments under the [Child Poverty Act](#) to reduce child poverty.

Throughout the 2014-15 reporting period the Executive approached tackling poverty and social exclusion through:

- [Lifetime Opportunities](#), and
- [The Child Poverty Strategy](#).

An overview of these policies, strategies and legislation is set out in this Chapter.

Programme for Government 2011-15

The Programme for Government identifies the actions the Executive will take to grow the economy whilst at the same time tackling social and economic disadvantage.

The Programme for Government 2011-15 sets out the strategic context for both the Budget and the Investment Strategy.

The Programme for Government includes specific commitments to:

- Contribute to rising levels of employment by supporting the promotion of over 25,000 new jobs
- Increase the proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who achieve at least 5 GCSEs at A*-C or equivalent including GCSEs in Maths and English
- Upskill the working age population by delivering over 200,000 qualifications
- Deliver 8,000 social and affordable homes
- Introduce and support a range of initiatives aimed at reducing fuel poverty across Northern Ireland including preventative interventions
- Improve thermal efficiency of Housing Executive stock and ensure full double glazing in its properties
- Provide £40 million to address dereliction and promote investment in the physical regeneration of deprived areas through the Social Investment Fund
- Invest £40 million to improve pathways to employment, tackle systemic issues linked to deprivation and increase community services through the Social Investment Fund
- Publish and implement a Childcare Strategy with key actions to provide integrated and affordable childcare
- Deliver a range of measures to tackle poverty and social exclusion through the Delivering Social Change framework

- Support people (with an emphasis on young people) in to employment by providing skills and training
- Ensure no additional water charges for households during this Programme for Government
- Ensure there are no increases in student fees beyond the rate of inflation for NI students studying here
- Improve literacy and numeracy levels among all school leavers, with additional support targeted at underachieving pupils
- Ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it
- Invest £7.2 million in programmes to tackle obesity
- Bring forward a £13 million package to tackle rural poverty and social and economic isolation in the next three years
- Include social clauses in public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction
- By the end of 2014/15, to have implemented new structures to support the improved delivery of housing services to the citizens of Northern Ireland

Delivering Social Change

The Delivering Social Change framework was set up by the Northern Ireland Executive to tackle poverty and social exclusion. It represents a new level of joined-up working by Ministers and senior officials across Executive departments to drive through initiatives which have a genuine impact on the ground.

The framework aims to deliver a sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues across all ages and to improve children and young people's health, well-being and life opportunities thereby breaking the long term cycle of poverty.

Delivering Social Change recognises that child poverty can only be addressed effectively through an integrated and comprehensive suite of social policies and associated interventions built around the life cycle approach which are closely monitored and related to outcomes.

A series of Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes are being delivered on the ground.

In September 2014, the Economy and Society Paper was published, providing a high-level overview of our economy and society based on a range of selected indicators that measure welfare and economic success, covering poverty; health; education; employment; income and wealth; home ownership; economic participation; and family, household and personal well-being. This and other publications relating to the work of Delivering Social Change can be found on the OFMDFM website.

A report on some of the work undertaken through these programmes, is found in Chapter 3.

Child Poverty Act

The Child Poverty Act 2010 sets out UK-wide targets relating to the eradication of child poverty. It provides that it is the duty of the UK Government to ensure that the child poverty targets are met in relation to the year commencing 1 April 2020. The Child Poverty Act defines four child poverty targets for 2020 (set out below).

Measure	Definition	UK Target
Absolute low income	Number of children in households with income less than the poverty line (60% of the UK median) for 2010-11 (adjusted year on year for inflation)	5%
Relative low income	Children living in households with income less than 60% of the median UK income (in the year in question)	10%
Combined low income and material deprivation	Children in households with an income below 70% of the contemporary UK median household income and with a material deprivation score of 25 or more (measured by a lack of adult and child goods and services)	5%
Persistent Poverty*	Children in households with an income less than 60% of the UK median household income (before housing costs) in at least three years out of four.	7%

On 31 December 2014, the UK Government set a persistent poverty target, in accordance with the Child Poverty Act, of below 7 percent by 2020.

*There has never been an official measure of persistent poverty here and we await official data from the UK Government. We will report on this target when this information is available.

Progress against these targets is set out in Chapter 2.

Lifetime Opportunities

Lifetime Opportunities defines specific goals and targets for each stage of life. It recognises that children who are born into poverty are at greater risk of underachieving, growing into adults living on low incomes and becoming parents of children born into poverty.

For children in the Early Years (0-4 years), the goal is to ‘ensure that every child should have a chance to develop their full potential in infancy, regardless of social background.’ It includes assisting mothers with healthy pregnancies, providing post natal support, educational programmes on parenting skills, provision of pre-school education, financial support for parents through welfare benefits, legislation governing maternity leave and pay and better access to child care facilities, enabling parents to remain within the workforce. A specific intervention referred to is the Sure Start Programme.

For children and young people (5-16 years), the goal within Lifetime Opportunities is ‘to allow all children and young people to experience a happy and fulfilling childhood, while equipping them with the education, skills and experience to achieve their potential to be citizens of tomorrow.’ The strategy recognises that the best chance for children to escape from poverty is through education. Interventions for children in this age group are focused heavily upon breaking the link between educational under-performance and poverty and also by ensuring access to high quality education and skills. It also recognises the need to

In October 2015, an updated Lifetime Opportunities Monitoring Framework Report was published. The Report presents a range of statistical targets and indicators which illustrate the direction of travel in terms of key poverty-based indicators for NI.

support parents to help their own children maximise their experience of the education system. **The Executive's Child Poverty Strategy seeks to implement these goals specifically in relation to children and young people and their families.**

Some of the key points of progress reported in Lifetime Opportunities Monitoring Framework Report include:

- The employment rate for individuals aged 16-64 years in NI increased by 2.8 percentage points between 2000 and 2013.
- The long-term unemployment rate (unemployed for 12 months or more) for the economically active population aged 16 years and over in NI decreased from 3.1% in 2000 to 1.3% in 2008 and rose to 3.8% in 2013.
- There was a decrease in the proportion of households where all the adults in the household were in employment (work rich households) between 2010 and 2013.
- The proportion of working-age adults who were economically inactive was 29.1% in 2010 and 27.4% in 2013.
- Between 2000/01 and 2013/14, the proportion of all school leavers that had no formal qualifications decreased from 4.8% to 0.8 %. For children entitled to free school meals (FSM), the figure decreased from 10.4% to 2.0%.
- The proportion of adults aged 20-64 with no formal qualifications decreased from 27% in 2000 to 17% in 2014.
- The age specific fertility rate for young mothers aged 15-19 in NI shows a downward trend over time and is below that for other countries of the UK.
- The standard of the housing stock improved between 2001 and 2011 (the most recent year for which data is available), and the proportion of households living in overcrowded homes has decreased from 4.1% in 2000/01 to 1.7% in 2014/15.

A summary of other research published over the past year is found on page 14.

Child Poverty Strategy

The Executive's first child poverty strategy, *Improving Children's Life Chances*, was published on 24th March 2011. This strategy set out the key areas considered crucial to address the causes and consequences of child poverty. Two key strands of work emerged relevant to the causes and the consequences of child poverty:

- Reducing poorly paid, work and unemployment amongst adults with children; and
- Improving longer term prospects through child based interventions which are designed to tackle the intergenerational nature of child poverty.

Focusing on the priority policy areas of education, early years, childcare, health and social care, family support, housing, neighbourhood, financial support and parental employment and skills; the strategy identified four strategic priorities to reduce child poverty. These strategic priorities are to:

- Ensure, as far as possible, that poverty and disadvantage in childhood does not translate into poorer outcomes for children as they move into adult life;
- Support more parents to access reasonably paid work;
- Ensure the child's environment supports them to thrive; and
- Target financial support to be responsive to family situations.

In 2014, a review of the Child Poverty Strategy and public consultation on a proposed new Strategy was completed. Following public consultation, further work was undertaken over 2014-15 to develop a new Child Poverty Strategy.

A report on the work undertaken in the past year in relation to each of these priority policy areas is found in Chapter 3.

RESEARCH

Our approach to child poverty is informed by research commissioned from a range of sources. These research publications support the formulation and development of policy; assess impacts; provide a challenge perspective; and intend to facilitate broader societal debate. Research is also conducted to provide statutory authorities with data and information to assist in undertaking their statutory duty under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).

Some of the research publications published over the past year include:

- 'Getting by', coping and resilience in difficult times: initial findings – January 2014

Authors: Paul Hickman, Elaine Batty, Chris Dayson and Jenny Muir

This research aims to:

- (i) Further understand and generate robust evidence of the longitudinal impacts of the recession and public finance reductions on different types of neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland;
- (ii) Understand how the trajectories, dynamics and outcomes of neighbourhoods are affected by risk, resilience and recovery factors; and
- (iii) Use this understanding to inform policies which promote the resilience and recovery of deprived communities and facilitate the rebalancing of the social economies of neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland.

The research uses a mixed methods approach in four case study areas (three deprived areas: Lower Castlereagh/Short Strand in East Belfast, Irish Street /Top of the Hill in Derry/Londonderry and Sion Mills and one comparator 'better off' area: Erinvale in Finaghy).

- A Review of the Legislative and Policy Context in relation to Looked After Disabled Children and Young People in Northern Ireland – March 2014

Authors: Berni Kelly, Sandra Dowling and Karen Winter

This research provides a review and policy context in relation to the OFMDFM funded research “Addressing the over-representation of disabled children and young people in public care in Northern Ireland”, which is due for publication in 2015. The purpose of the overall research is to provide baseline data on the needs and experiences of disabled children and young people in public care, identifying the reasons for their over-representation in public care, and highlighting the policies and practices that lead to the best outcomes for this population.

- Disabled Children and Young People who are looked after: A Literature Review – March 2014

Authors: Berni Kelly, Sandra Dowling and Karen Winter

This research provides a review of literature relevant to the OFMDFM funded research “Addressing the over-representation of disabled children and young people in public care in Northern Ireland”, which is due for publication in 2015. The purpose of the overall research is to provide baseline data on the needs and experiences of disabled children and young people in public care, identifying the reasons for their over-representation in public care, and highlighting the policies and practices that lead to the best outcomes for this population. This report includes a review of 58 empirical and theoretical papers in total, with contextual background provided by a further 72.

- Financial Resilience and Security: Examining the impact of falling housing markets on low income homeowners in Northern Ireland – April 2014

Authors: Alison Wallace, Anwen Jones and David Rhodes

This research examines the significant fall in house prices in Northern Ireland since 2007 and, following a period when housing equity had become increasingly important to household finances, considers what the loss of housing equity has meant for homeowners in Northern Ireland. The research has a focus on lower income homeowners, following a period when research suggested that housing equity had become increasingly important to households finances.

- Northern Ireland Economy in Transition: Future Drivers, Challenges, Impacts and Issues for Policy – June 2014

Author: Oxford Economics

This report, prepared for OFMDFM by Oxford Economics, explores local economic forecasts, examining the issues that may be faced over the next few years coming out of the recession and the potential challenges that may need to be addressed.

- OFMDFM Childcare Research: Final Report – June 2014

Author: RSM McClure Watters (Consulting)

This research aims to contribute to the evidence base informing OFMDFM's forthcoming Childcare Strategy by:

- (i) Providing an up to date assessment of the supply of childcare in Northern Ireland;
- (ii) Providing an assessment of the current and future demand for (formal and informal) childcare;

- (iii) Identifying key factors determining demand and supply of childcare;
- (iv) Determining the nature and extent of market failure associated with childcare provision; and
- (v) Assessing the potential economic/employment impacts of addressing any gaps in provision.

- Childminding in Northern Ireland: an exploration of practice, quality and the impact of vertical placements on children – June 2014

Author: National Children's Bureau Northern Ireland

This research examines issues such as quality in childminding practice and the benefits and challenges of vertical grouping (i.e. children of different ages being cared for together). It also provides a profile of childminders in terms of age, gender, qualifications held and access to training and support.

- Lifetime Opportunities Monitoring Framework Report – October 2015

Author: OFMDFM Statistics and Research Branch

See pages 11 and 12.

- Children and Young People's Strategic Indicators – October 2014

Author: OFMDFM Statistics and Research Branch

This report provided an update on the set of strategic indicators which are used to measure the outcomes set out in the *Executive's Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People 2006-2015*. The high level outcomes in the Strategy are: healthy; enjoying, learning and achieving; living in safety and with stability; experiencing economic and environmental well-being; contributing positively to community and society; and living in a society which respects their rights. This report

highlights some of the findings from the indicators and provides an indication of the trend identified from analysing the data. The indicators were published in the strategy document in 2006 with the purpose to measure the success of the strategy.

- Child and working-age poverty in Northern Ireland over the next decade: an update – November 2014

Author: Institute for Fiscal Studies

This work provides an update on previous reports by the Institute for Fiscal Studies providing projections of how child poverty in Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole are likely to evolve between 2013-14 and 2020-21.

ENGAGEMENT

Our work to tackle poverty is also informed strongly by our engagement with children and young people, parents and other stakeholders, including community, voluntary and charitable organisations which advocate on the behalf of children and young people.

Following on from engagement with children and young people, parents and other stakeholders during public consultation on the proposed new strategy to tackle poverty and social inclusion in early 2014, our proposals changed considerably to take on board the comments and views of stakeholders. After consultation closed, engagement took place with representatives of key stakeholder groups to discuss their views and proposed way forward in more detail and plans to develop a new strategy for child poverty have been developed over 2014-15.

The Executive and government departments also continue to be involved in the work and research of external organisations which aim to inform the development and implementation of policy and wider societal debate on child poverty. For example, during 2014-2015, OFMDFM Ministers participated in and supported the launch of the Child Poverty Alliance's Report on Child Poverty in Northern Ireland, *Beneath the Surface*, and events such as the 50th Anniversary of the Housing Rights Service.

We continue to meet with the Commissioner for Children and Young People on a regular basis. We have held meetings with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and representatives of the Child Poverty Alliance, the largest stakeholder umbrella group advocating for children and young people in poverty in Northern Ireland to discuss our work to tackle poverty and to inform a new approach to child poverty on several occasions.

We are working to deliver a partnership approach to our work on child poverty and hope to increase our engagement with these groups and other stakeholders going forward. Our approach to child poverty going forward is set out in Chapter 4 – Next Steps.

2. CHILD POVERTY IN NI

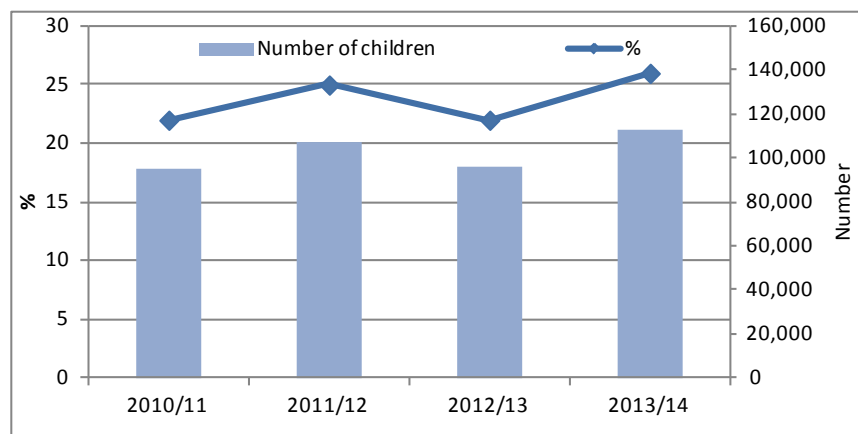
The latest official child poverty figures for 2013-14 for the targets in the Child Poverty Act 2010 are set out in this report. These data are taken from the Family Resources Survey Households Below Average Income Report (HBAI).

Over the past decade poverty in Northern Ireland has followed broadly the same trends as in the UK. Many of the levers which influence Child Poverty are held at Westminster. The UK Government retains key policy responsibility for fiscal and macro-economic policy. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) published 'Child and Working Age Poverty in Northern Ireland 2010-2020' in November 2014. This research suggests that child poverty will rise over the coming years to 2020.

PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS SET OUT IN THE CHILD POVERTY ACT

Absolute Poverty - Before Housing Costs (BHC) - *Children living in households with income less than 60% of the UK median for 2010-11 (adjusted year on year for inflation)*

Figure 1: Percentage and number of children in absolute poverty (BHC), 2010-11 to 2013-14



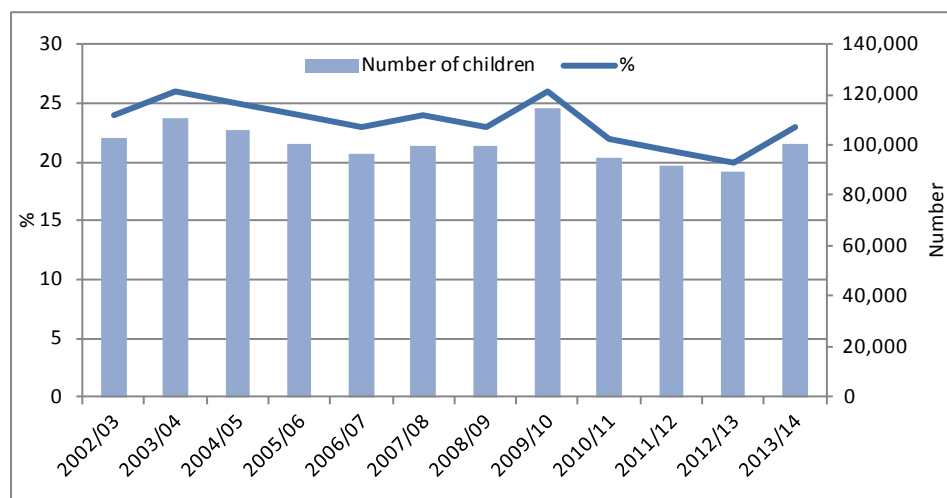
In 2013-14 there were approximately 112,000 children in absolute poverty BHC, which represents 26% of children in Northern Ireland. As shown in Figure 1, this rate has increased by four percentage points from 2012-13.

Relative Poverty - Before Housing Costs (BHC)

Children living in households with income less than 60% of the median UK income in that year

In 2013-14, relative child poverty was 23% (approximately 101,000 children) BHC, an increase of three percentage points from the previous year. As shown in Figure 2, this is the first increase in child poverty since 2009-10.

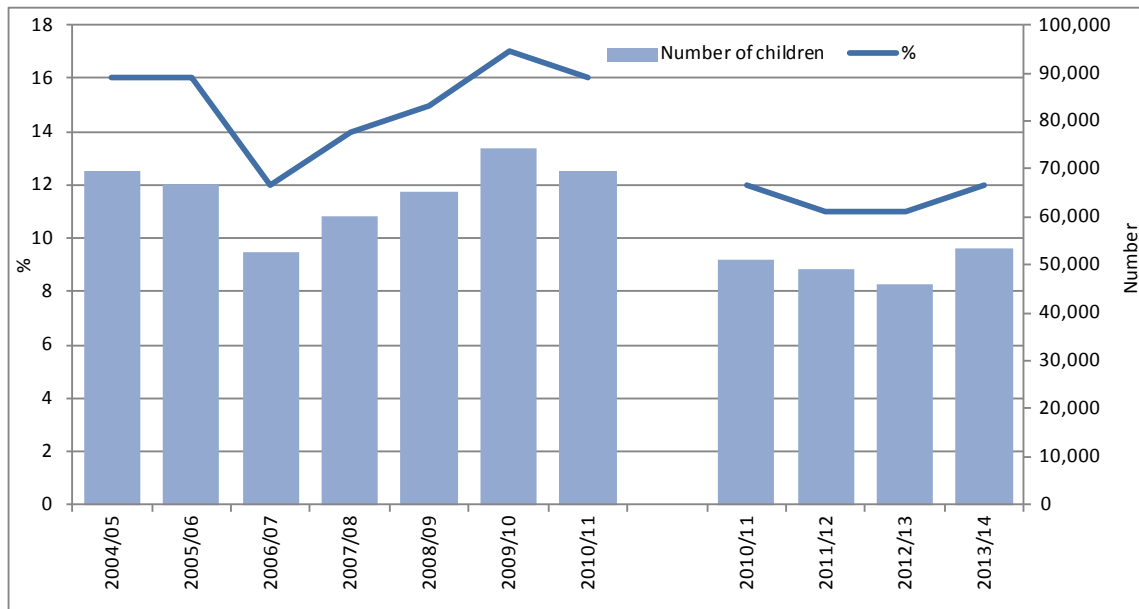
Figure 2: Percentage and number of children in relative poverty (BHC), 2002-03 to 2013-14



Combined Low Income and Material Deprivation

In 2013-14, 12% of children in Northern Ireland were in combined low income and material deprivation, which equates to 53,000 children. This has remained fairly stable for the past four years since a new suite of questions was introduced. This measurement is used to combine the measurement of low income along with material deprivation in families. It measures income poverty and also asks if a range of indicators apply. For example, some of the indicators under this measure include the ability of a family to replace broken electrical goods if something breaks down unexpectedly, or the ability to make choices such as going on holiday away from home one week a year (not at a relative's home). If a family has a household income below 70% of the median income and a certain number of these indicators are met, then that family is considered in combined low income and material deprivation.

Figure 3: Percentage and number of children falling below thresholds of low income and material deprivation 2004/05 to 2013/14

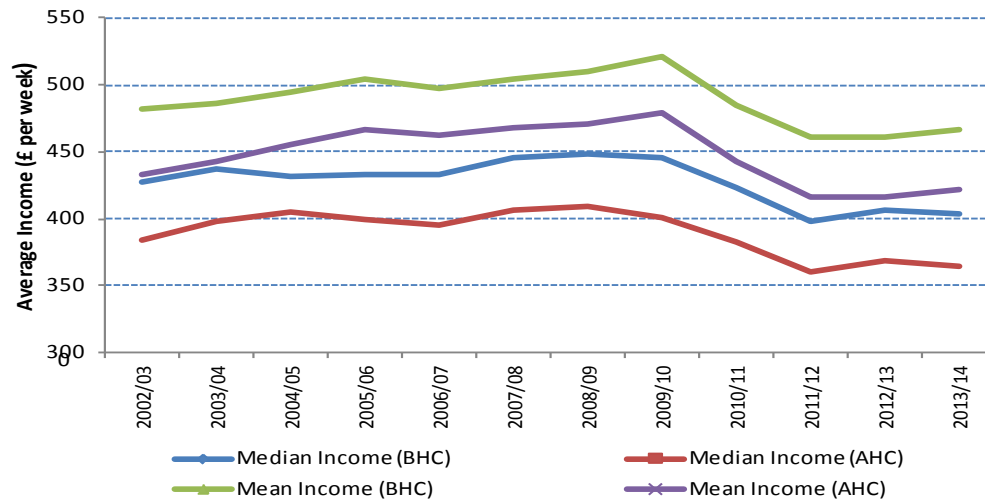


This measure attempts to demonstrate the everyday impact of low income on families and is an indication of wider living standards.

INCOME AND EARNINGS

Northern Ireland median household income in 2013-14 was £404 per week before housing costs and £364 per week after housing costs. Between 2012-13 and 2013-14 median income in Northern Ireland experienced a small decrease (approximately 1%), both before and after housing costs. Over the time series presented in Figure 4, median income levels in 2013-14 are comparatively low, with 2011-12 being the only year that recorded lower. Child poverty targets are based on those households earning 60% of the UK median income – in 2013-14 this was a figure of £272 per week before housing costs and £232 per week after housing costs. In annual terms this would be households earning £14,183 per year before housing costs and £12,097 per year after housing costs.¹

Figure 4: Average Incomes, 2002-03 to 2013-14, Northern Ireland (2013-14 prices)

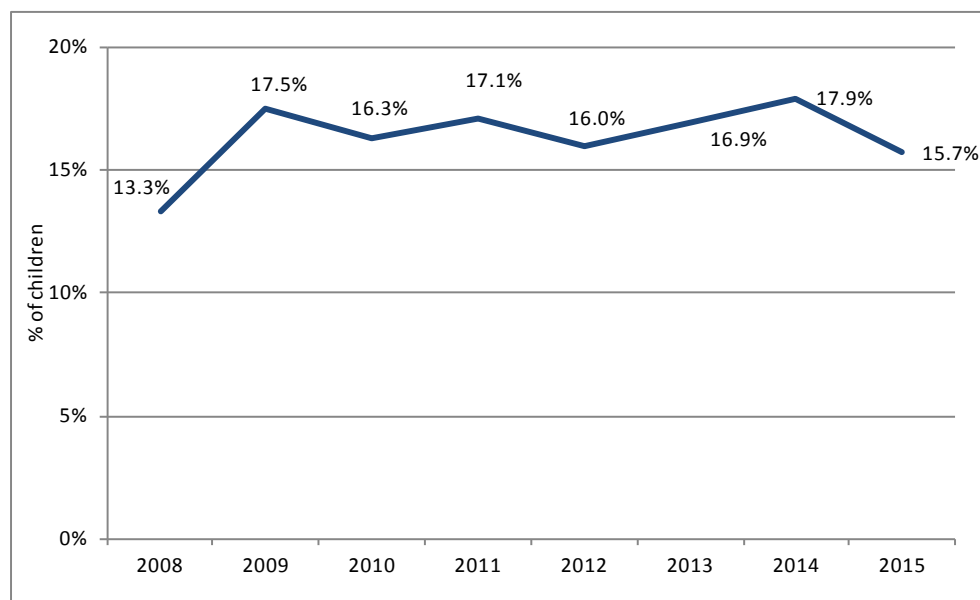


¹ Based on equivalised income - Equivalence scales conventionally take an adult couple without children as the reference point, with an equivalence value of one. The process then increases relatively the income of single person households (since their incomes are divided by a value of less than one) and reduces relatively the incomes of households with three or more persons, which have an equivalence value of greater than one. – source HBAI - <https://www.dsdni.gov.uk/topics/dsd-statistics-and-research/family-resources-survey>.

OTHER INDICATORS OF CHILD POVERTY

Worklessness

Figure 5: Indicator: Proportion of Children Living in Workless Households

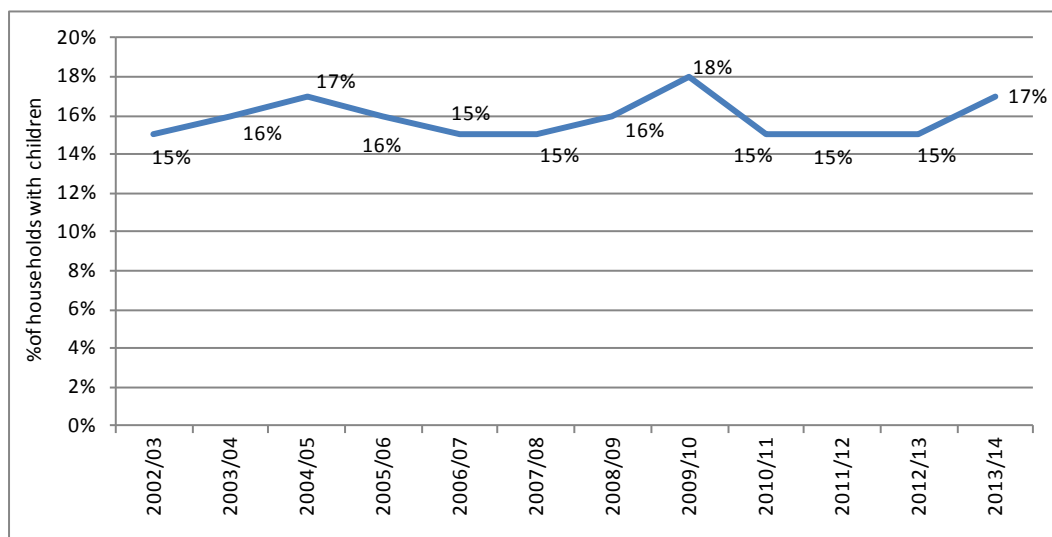


Source: DFP, NISRA, Economic and Labour Market Statistics, Labour Force Survey (Quarter 2 data used)

The proportion of children in workless households has fluctuated in recent years. In 2015, 15.7% of children in Northern Ireland lived in workless households, a decrease from 17.9% in 2014.

In Work Poverty

Figure 6: Indicator: Percentage of all households with children where at least one adult is in work and the household is in poverty ('in poverty' means that income is less than 60% of UK median income before housing costs)

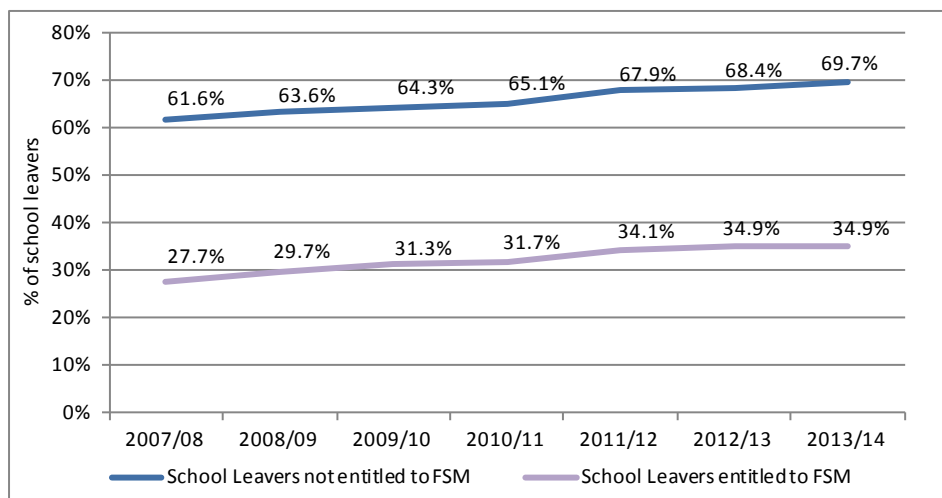


Source: DSD Family Resources Survey / HBAI report

The percentage of all households with children where at least one adult is in work and the household is in poverty has fluctuated between 15% and 18% over the time series presented in Figure 6; in 2013-14 the figure was 17%, an increase from 15% in 2012-13.

GCSE performance

Figure 7: Indicator: Proportion of school leavers entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and Maths (*Children entitled to Free School Meals are compared to children not entitled to Free School Meals*)

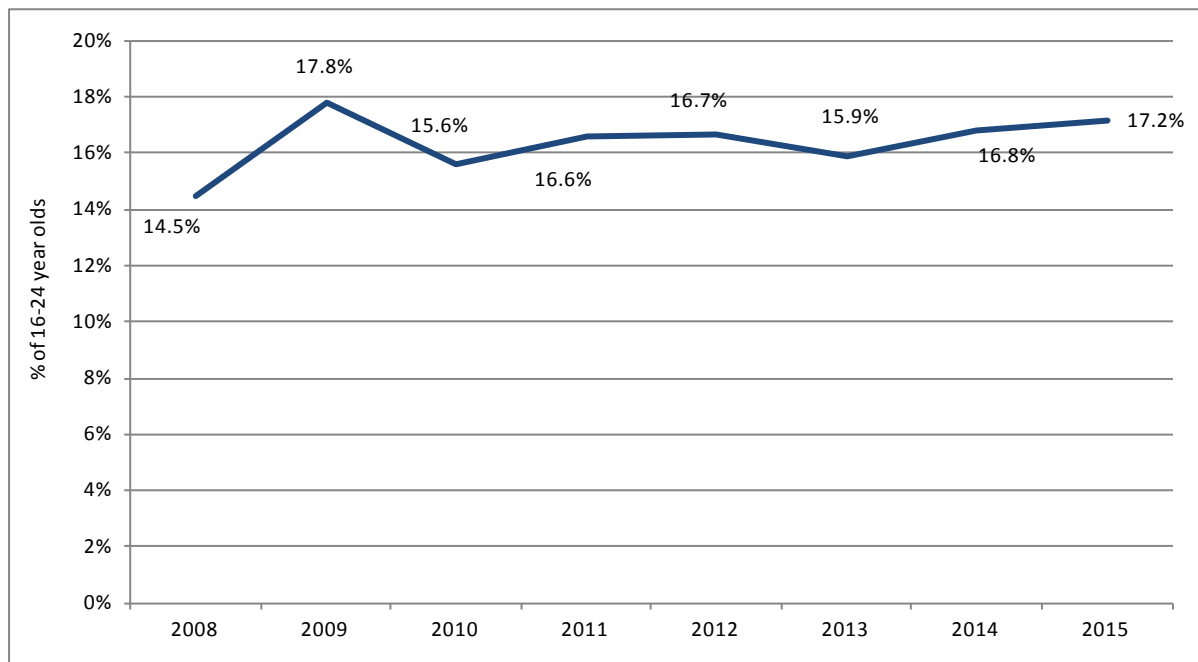


Source: DE, School Leavers Survey

The proportion of school leavers entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and Maths has increased from 27.7% in 2007-08 to 34.9% in 2013-14. The proportion of school leavers entitled to FSM achieving at this level is around half that of those not entitled to FSM (69.7% in 2013-14).

NEETs

Figure 8: Indicator: Proportion of 16-24 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

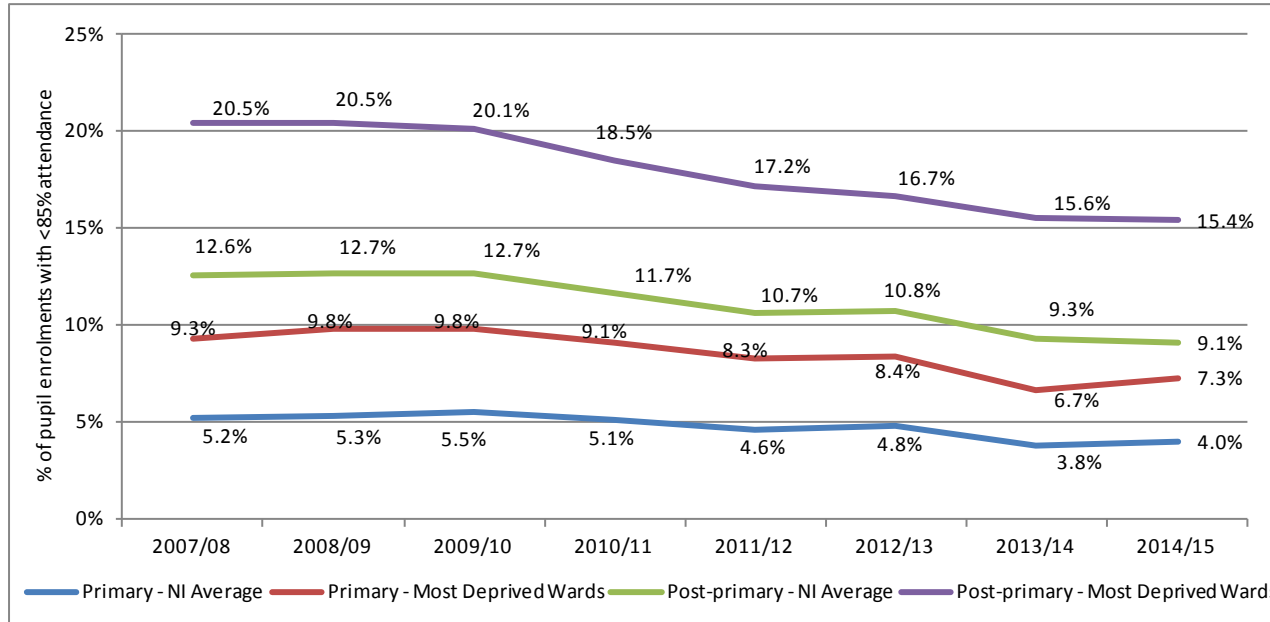


Source: DFP, NISRA, Economic and Labour Market Statistics, Labour Force Survey (Quarter 3 data used)

The proportion of 16-24 years olds not in education, employment or training has increased from 14.5% in 2008 to 17.2% in 2015, fluctuating in the intervening years.

School Attendance

Figure 9: Indicator: Proportion of pupil enrolments in primary and post-primary schools with less than 85% attendance (*The NI average is compared to the 20% most deprived wards based on the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure*)

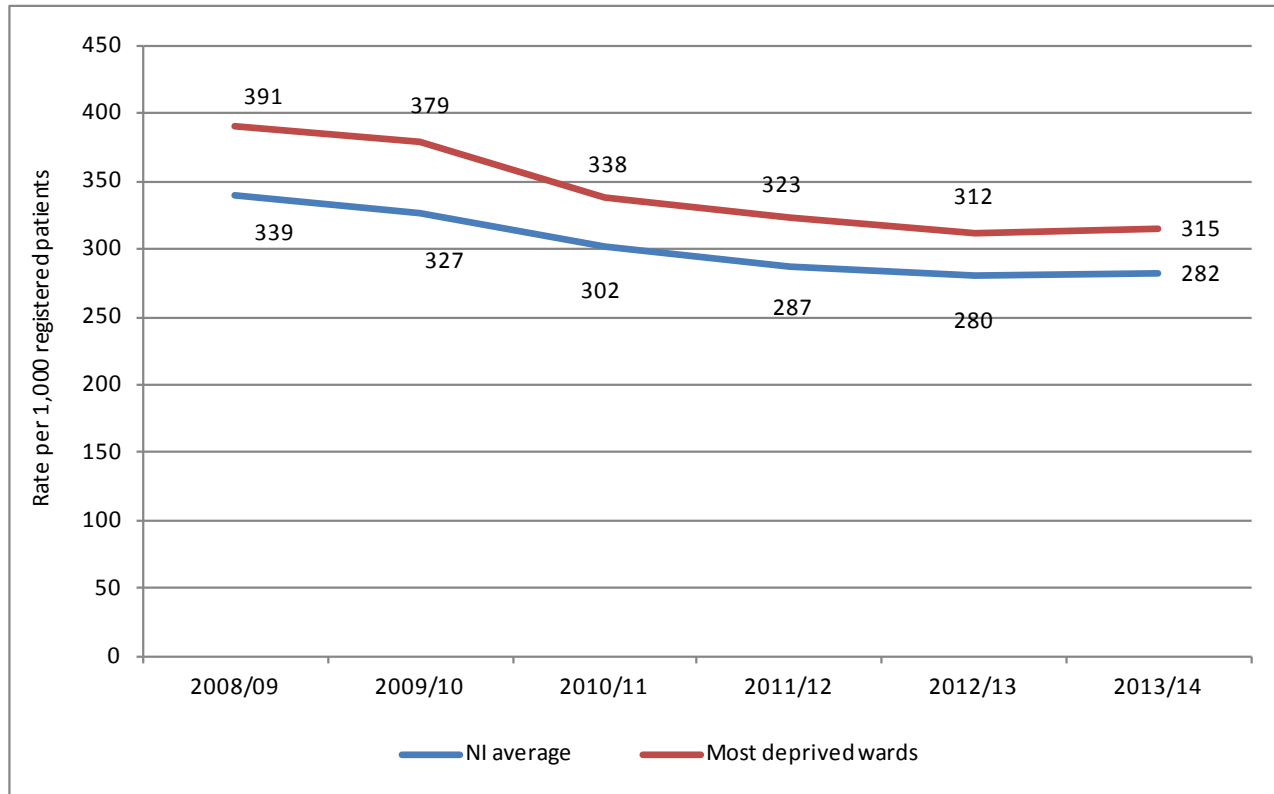


Source: DE School Census

While the proportion of pupil enrolments with less than 85% attendance has decreased since 2009-10 overall, the data show that the proportion of pupil enrolments with high absence levels is consistently higher in the most deprived wards than the NI average.

Dental Health

Figure 10: Indicator: Number of patients aged 0-17 (registered with a dentist and receiving dental treatment) who had at least one treatment for dental caries per 1,000 registered patients (*The NI average is compared to the 20% most deprived wards based on the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure*)

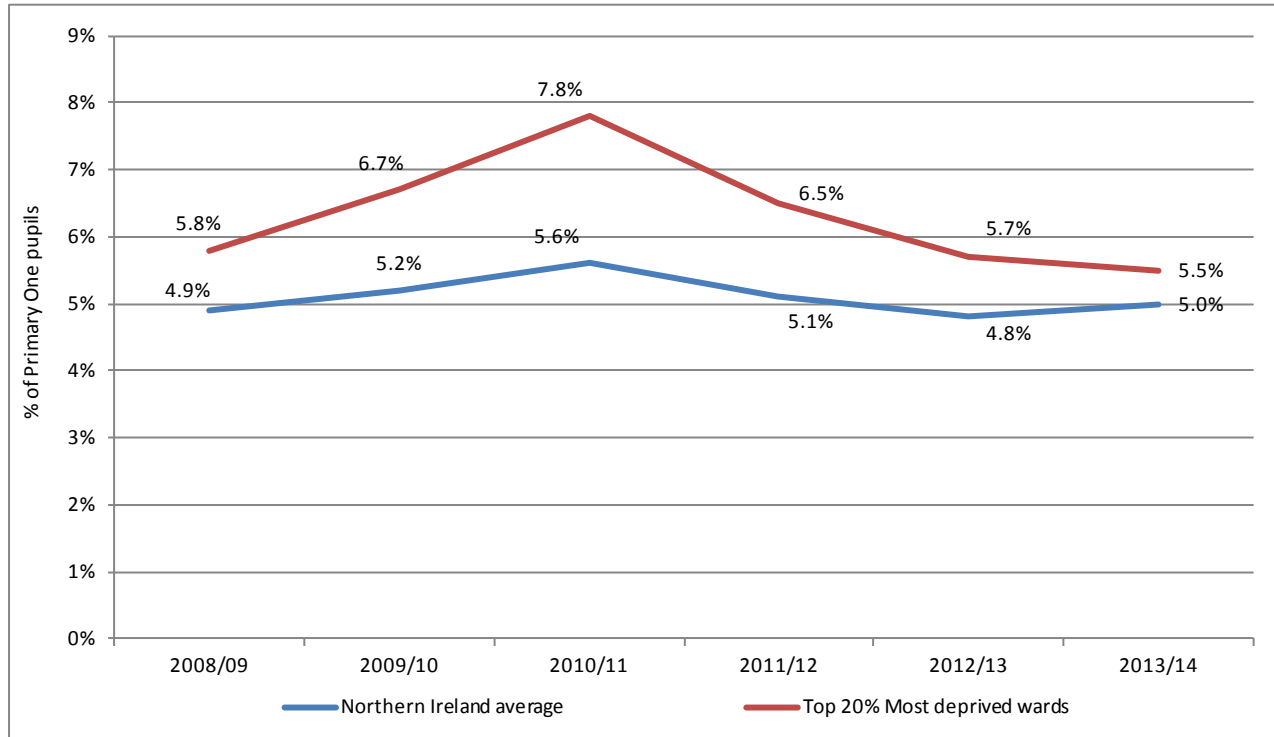


Overall in NI, rates for treatment of dental caries among those aged 0 to 17 have decreased between 2008-09 and 2013-14. However, there still remains a gap between the level of treatments in deprived areas and the NI average. This gap has, overtime, reduced but requires further closing.

Source: HSC Business Services Organisation, Dental Statistics Dataset

Obesity

Figure 11: Indicator: Proportion of year one pupils who are obese (*The NI average is compared to the primary one population in the 20% most deprived wards based on the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure*)

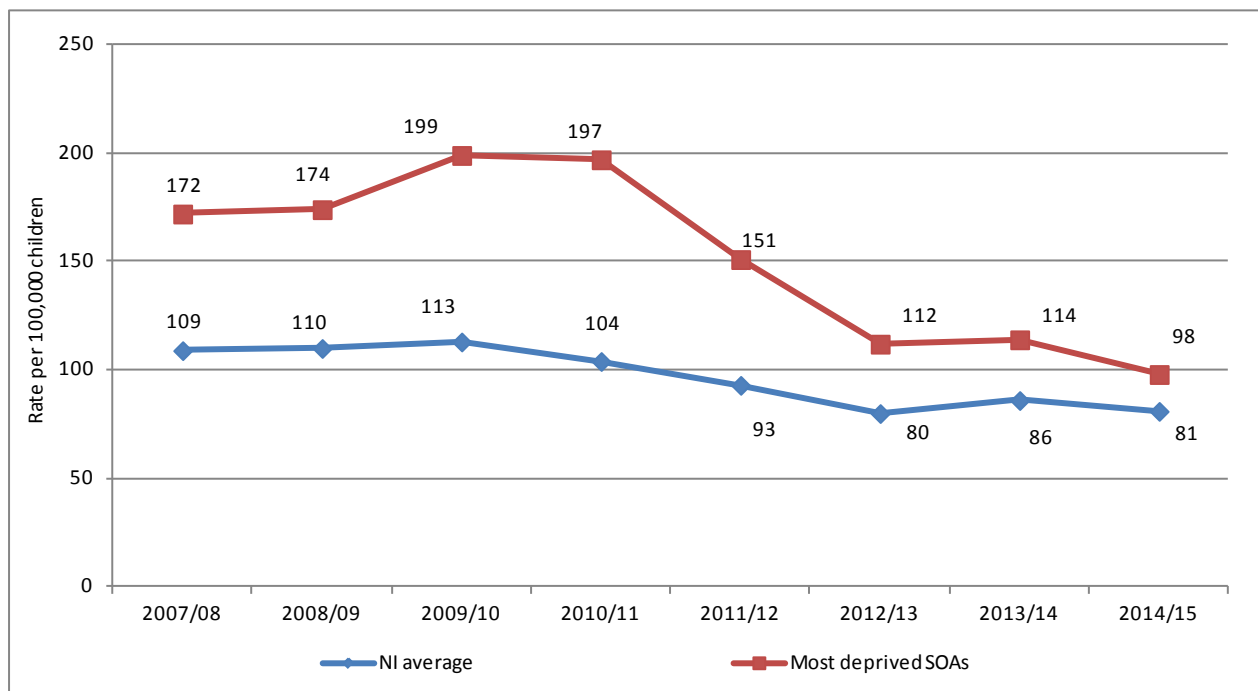


Source: DHSSPS, Child Health System

Over the period 2008-09 to 2013-14, there has been higher levels of obesity among year one pupils from deprived areas compared to Northern Ireland as a whole. Since 2010-11, however, rates have decreased in deprived areas, reducing the gap to the Northern Ireland average.

Self-Harm

Figure 12: Indicator: Number of hospital admissions of those aged 0-17 with self-harm diagnoses (rate per 100,000) (*The NI average is compared to the 20% most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs)² based on the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure*)



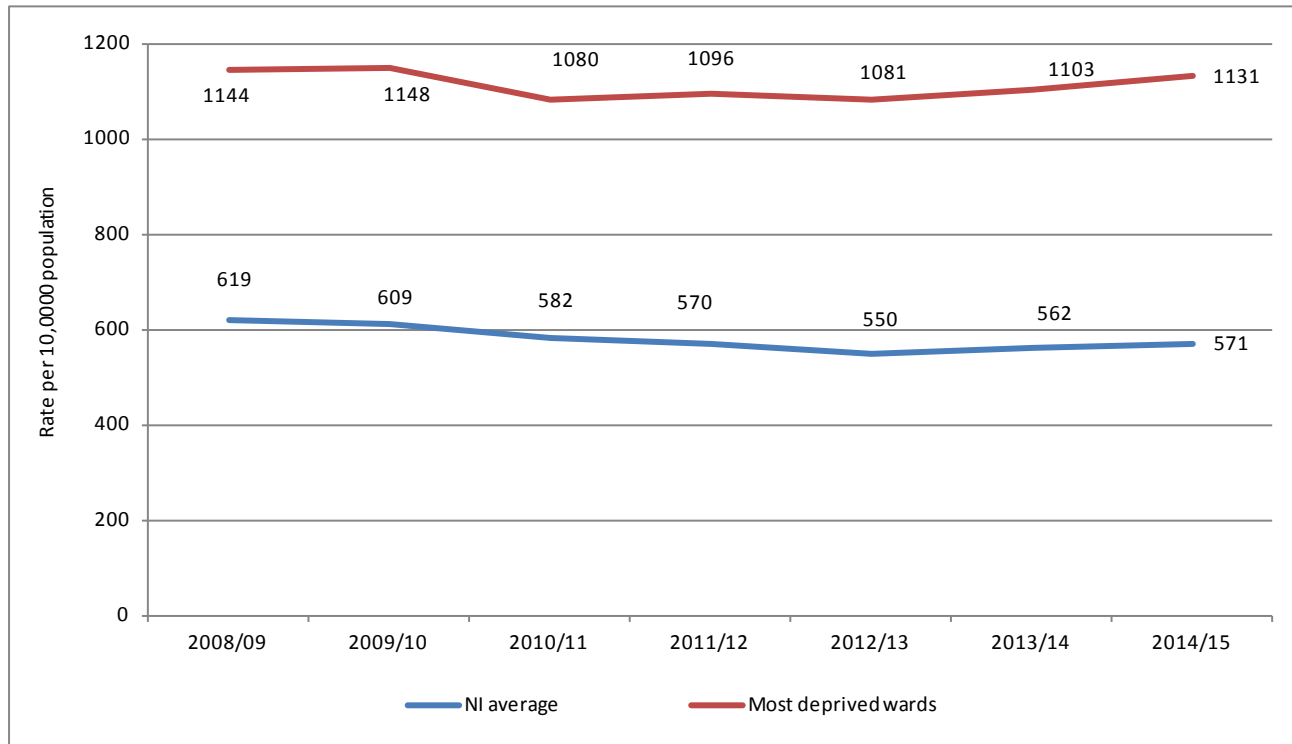
Source: DHSSPS, Hospital Inpatient System

Over the period 2007-08 to 2014-15, the self harm admissions rates among 0 to 17 year olds from deprived areas have been consistently higher than the Northern Ireland average for this age group. These rates have declined since 2009-10, with the rate among those from deprived areas declining faster, thus reducing the gap between the most deprived areas and NI as a whole.

² For information on Super Output Areas, see: <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/geography/SOA.htm>

Crime

Figure 13: Indicator: Recorded number of criminal offenses per 10,000 population (*The NI average is compared to the 20% most deprived wards based on the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure*)

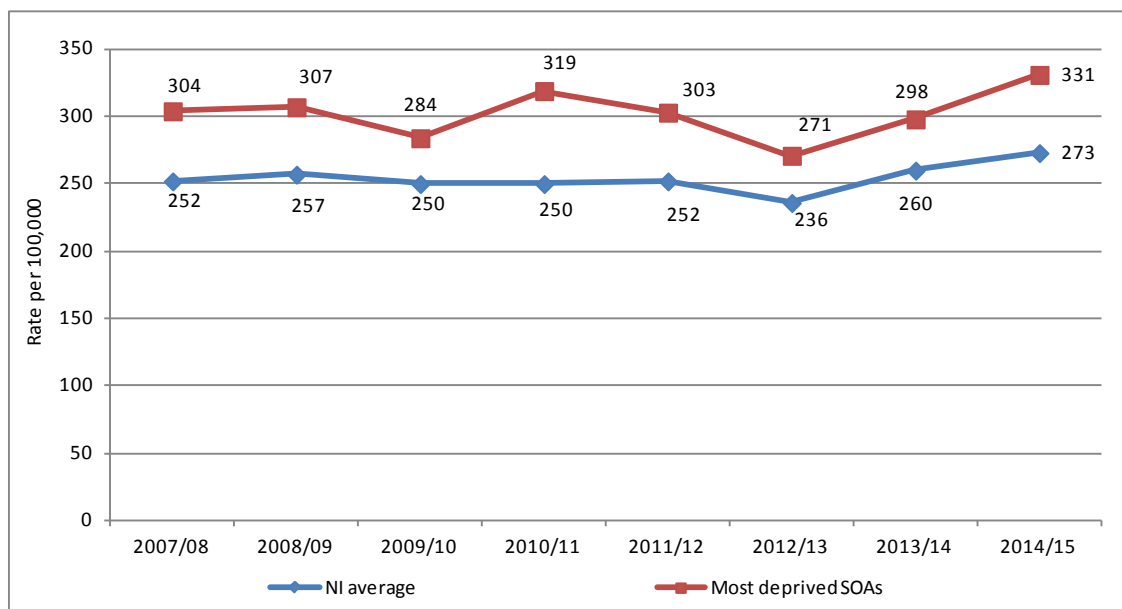


Source: PSNI, Crime Recording System

The number of recorded criminal offences per 10,000 population dropped slightly between 2008-09 and 2014-15, although it has increased since 2013-14. The crime rate in the 20% most deprived wards has been consistently higher than the NI average over this period.

Home and Road Accidents

Figure 14: Indicator: Number of child admissions to hospital due to an accident in the home or on the road (rate per 100,000) (*The NI average is compared to the 20% most deprived SOAs based on the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure*)

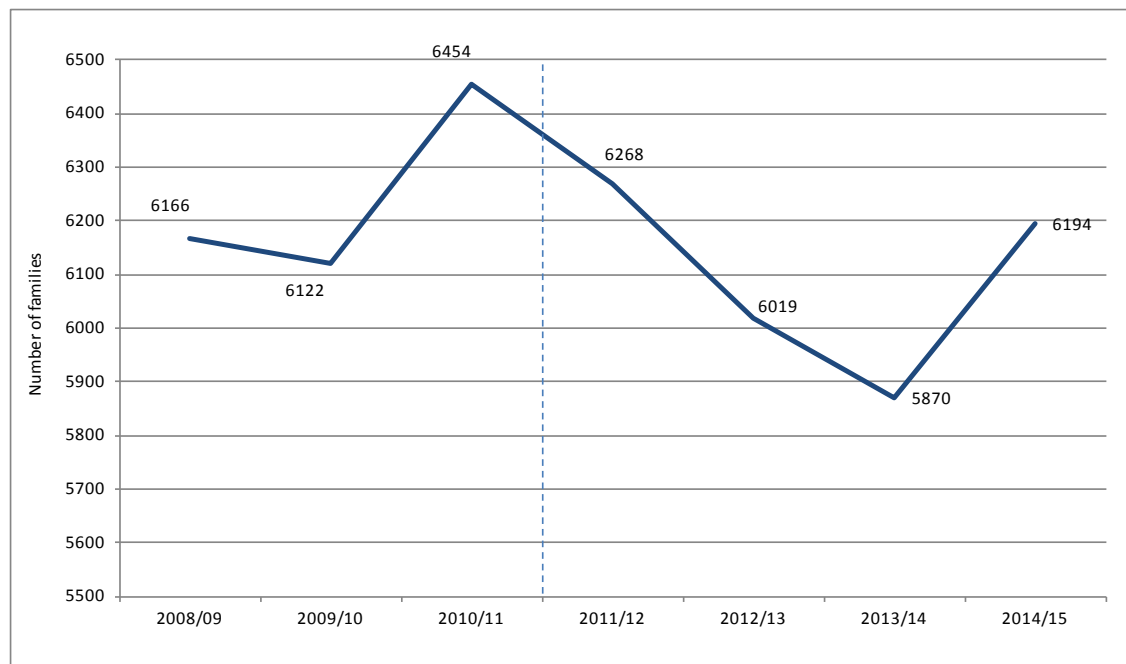


Source: DHSSPS, Hospital Inpatient System

Over the period 2007-08 to 2014-15, the number of child admissions to hospital due to an accident in the home or on the road per 100,000 populations, has been consistently higher in the most deprived areas compared to NI as a whole. Over this period, this rate has fluctuated, with the rate for 2014-15 being the highest over the time series for both the most deprived areas and NI as a whole.

Homelessness

Figure 15: Indicator: Number of families presenting to the NI Housing Executive as homeless



Source: DSD, Northern Ireland Housing Statistics

Please note: The time series of data in the table from 2011-12 onwards are not fully comparable with other published figures. The Housing Management System (HMS) went live in July 2011, replacing the previous 'PRAWL' information management system. While the data captured through the HMS are essentially the same as those captured by the PRAWL system, data migration and coding variations in the period following the change of systems have had a small impact on the comparability of homelessness statistics. Hence figures from 2011-12 onwards are not directly comparable with those reported in previous years.

The number of families presenting as homeless decreased between 2011-12 and 2013-14 (from 6,268 to 5,870), before increasing to 6,194 in 2014-15.

3. ACTIVITY OVER THE PERIOD 2014/15

PRIORITY POLICY AREAS

Education

Delivering Social Change Literacy and Numeracy Programme

In total some 18,653 primary and post primary children received additional Maths and English support as a result of the DSC Literacy and Numeracy Signature Programme. By way of this programme we appointed some 310 teachers to Primary and Post-Primary Schools, with the aim of improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy by providing additional teaching support in schools targeting those pupils at risk of underachieving at Key Stage 2 and GCSE in both English and mathematics. OFMDFM committed funding of £13.8m over three financial years 2013-14 to 2015-16 and DE provided an additional £2m to expand the programme and provide funding for an additional 36 teaching posts.

80% of pupils at Key Stage 2 achieved or exceeded their individual target level in literacy and numeracy.

The Delivering Social Change Literacy and Numeracy Signature Programme ended at 31 August 2015. However in light of the positive outcomes associated with the Signature Programme, the Education Minister has agreed to fund a Legacy Programme which aims to harness the success of the Signature Programme, by way of sharing the innovative learning and best practice identified across the school system. The Legacy Programme is being delivered during the 2015/16 academic year from November 2015 to March 2016.

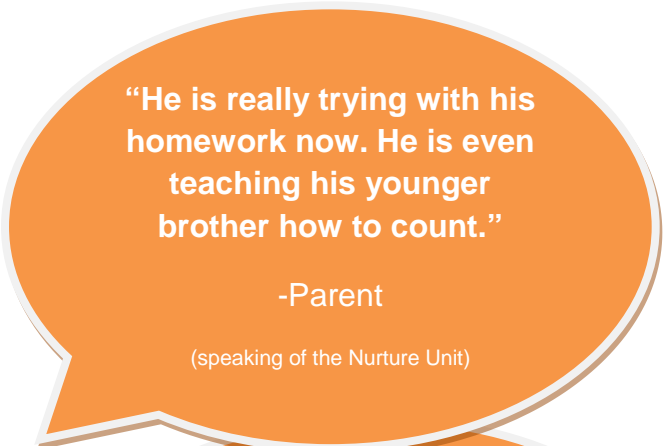
Delivering Social Change Nurture Units

We rolled out 20 new Nurture Units to help support the social, emotional and behavioural development of our young children and provide an opportunity to challenge some of the barriers that contribute to low educational achievement. £3million has been allocated to the Nurture Unit Signature Programme. Around 400 of our youngest and most vulnerable children were supported in the nurture units. Early feedback from schools and the Education Authority has indicated the powerful impacts of Nurture Group support and the difference it has made to the lives of children and their families. Clear improvements are evident in children's emotional wellbeing enabling them to engage with learning, with parents reporting positive benefits for the child and their family.

A formal external evaluation of the nurture groups is being undertaken by Queen's University and initial findings also suggest that the Units are proving highly effective. DSC funding ended in June 2015 but additional support has been secured to allow the continued operation of the funded groups up to 31 March 2016. Options around the future funding of the Units will be considered upon receipt and consideration of the evaluation report from Queens University.

Extended Schools

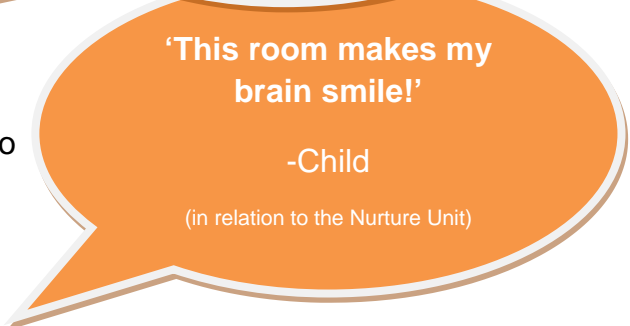
Additional funding was made available via the Extended Schools (ES) programme to support schools serving areas of greatest social disadvantage. Extended Schools resources allocated in 2013-14 have enabled over 470 eligible schools to provide for additional learning opportunities and a wide range of interventions and support activities-services outside of the normal school day which focus on improved educational outcomes.



“He is really trying with his homework now. He is even teaching his younger brother how to count.”

-Parent

(speaking of the Nurture Unit)



‘This room makes my brain smile!’

-Child

(in relation to the Nurture Unit)

Care to Learn

The Care to Learn (NI) scheme provides financial support towards registered childcare provision for Further Education (FE) students who are parents and aged 16 -19.

University Tuition Fees

In the period of the current Programme for Government 2011-15, we have ensured that there are no increases in student fees beyond the rate of inflation. A student can now expect to pay almost £16,000 less to study for a degree here than in England and Wales.

Education

In the period of the current Programme for Government 2011-15, we have:

- Provided 700 extra places on Science and Technology courses – to give our students the skills to access high-quality employment;
- Improved literacy and numeracy levels among all school leavers;
- Provided at least one year of pre-school education to every family that wants it;
- Significantly progressed work on a new shared education campus at Lisanelly (now known as Strule Shared Education Campus, Omagh) – to transform the educational experiences of young people, including beginning construction of the first school (Arvalee School & Resource Centre) which will open in September 2016; and
- Developed plans to ensure that every school, and therefore every child, has opportunities to participate in shared education programmes by 2015.

Early Years

Pre-School Education

The Department of Education works closely with the Education Authority and provides additional resources to help 'ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available for every family that wants it' (PfG Commitment 43). Pre-school providers are required by law to prioritise the admission of children from socially disadvantaged circumstances.

Sure Start

39 Sure Start projects provide services to over 34,000 children under four and their families within at least the top 20% most disadvantaged wards. The Department of Education currently invests £25m per annum in the Sure Start Programme. Sure Start Services are being expanded to the top 25% most disadvantaged wards (as defined by the Multiple Deprivation Measures 2010 (NIMDM 2010) on a phased approach as budgets allow, by April 2015.

At the end of the 2013/14 pre-school admissions process, 99.9% of target age children whose parents fully engaged with the process were offered a funded place in a pre-school setting.

DE has made provision for a Sure Start Developmental Programme for 2-3 year olds in all Sure Start projects to enhance social and emotional development, build on communication and language skills and encourage imagination through play. Sure Start centres offer a means by which to co-ordinate the delivery of health, education and parenting support services within these communities. They offer both a location at which these services can be delivered, together with advice and assistance for individuals to access services provided by other statutory public bodies. Core services include: outreach and home visiting, family support, primary and community healthcare, opportunities for play, learning and childcare experiences for children.

Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP)

The EITP is part of the Delivering Social Change / Atlantic Philanthropies Signature Programme and aims to improve outcomes for children and young people through embedding early intervention approaches. Work is ongoing to develop programmes aimed at transforming mainstream early years services to better equip parents to give their children the best start in life. Consultation has taken place with parents and professionals working with children (i.e. midwives, early education practitioners and health visitors). The programme will include support for parents focused on Getting Ready for Baby, Getting Ready for Toddler and Getting Ready to Learn. The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety leads on the overall EITP, the Department of Education leads on Getting Ready to Learn.

Childcare

New Childcare Strategy

The first phase of the Executive's Childcare Strategy was launched in September 2013 and included 15 Key First Actions to address the main needs and priorities identified during an initial round of consultation and research (December 2012 to March 2013). Delivery of the Key First Actions was underway by the end of March 2014 including the *Bright Start* School Age Childcare Grant Scheme which was launched in March 2014. Work to develop the full, final version of the Childcare Strategy is also in progress and is being taken forward on a co-design basis with ongoing input from the local childcare sector and childcare stakeholders. Consultation on a draft version of the full Childcare Strategy ran from July to November 2015. We received 300 responses to the general consultation in addition to the read-out from specialised consultation events organised for children and

parents. We are currently analysing all of the consultation responses received and are aiming to finalise the draft Childcare Strategy later in 2016.

Bright Start School Age Childcare Grant Scheme

The *Bright Start School Age Childcare Grant* scheme is the most ambitious intervention under the first phase of the Executive's Childcare Strategy. It aims to address the need for affordable and accessible school age childcare (after school clubs, breakfast clubs and summer schemes) by creating or sustaining up to 7,000 school age childcare places over the next three years. (Sustained places are those that are at risk unless the provider is supported. School age childcare places that need to be sustained are typically those in low income areas serving disadvantaged communities). OFMDFM Junior Ministers launched the Grant Scheme in March 2014. There have been three calls for applications to the SAC Grant Scheme. The first two calls are complete - applications have been assessed and successful projects funded. These have resulted in some 80 projects being awarded funding of some £3 million over a three year period). These projects will create or sustain more than 2, 200 childcare places, mainly in disadvantaged areas. The third call closed for applications at the end of January 2016 and applications are being reviewed by HSCB. A key objective of School Age Childcare Grant Scheme is to create or sustain childcare services that are located in the top 25% most disadvantaged Super Output Areas and that benefit disadvantaged communities. Most settings supported to date are located in disadvantaged areas and/or will serve disadvantaged communities.

Promotion of Financial Assistance for Childcare

We are also, through the School Age Childcare Grant Scheme, promoting all forms of financial assistance with the costs of childcare. All childcare settings that receive a grant under the Scheme must demonstrate that they are successfully promoting

uptake of government financial assistance with the costs of childcare (tax credits and vouchers, and Tax Free Childcare when it is introduced) among the parents who use their services.

In addition, we have made improvements to the Health and Social Care Board's Family Support website (www.familysupportni.gov.uk) to enhance it as a central source of information on childcare and providers operating at local levels. This has included creating a link to the Employers for Childcare website which offers parents access to detailed information on all current financial assistance with the costs of childcare.

Following some delays due to a legal challenge, the Tax-Free Childcare Scheme is due to be launched by HMRC in early 2017. The Assembly has agreed that the provisions of the new scheme can operate in Northern Ireland. The new scheme will provide working families with 20% of their childcare costs up to a maximum of £2,000 of government support per child, per year. This is the equivalent of basic rate tax relief on childcare cost of £10,000.

We believe that Tax Free Childcare will be a generally more advantageous form of assistance than the Childcare Vouchers scheme—more families here will benefit and the amount they receive will tend to be greater.

Health and Social Care

Free School Meals

Funding of £39.4m to provide free school meals and £5.1m for school uniform grants was provided to reduce financial barriers facing children from low income families to participate and remain in education and obtain formal qualifications in the 2014-15 school year.

Eligibility for Free School Meals was extended to post-primary pupils from September 2014.

Meals provided in schools must comply with the “Nutritional Standards for School Lunches” which ensures children receive healthy, nutritious meals.

Parents do not have to pay for school lunches if they receive any of the following:

- Income Support;
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- support under the Immigration and Asylum Act;
- Child Tax Credit, or Working Tax Credit and have an annual income of less than £16,190*;
- Working Tax Credit “run-on” – the payment someone may receive for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit;
- the Guarantee element of State Pension Credit; or if
- their child has a statement of special educational needs and is designated to require a special diet, or he, or she, is a boarder at a special school.

Children who receive Income Support, income-based Job Seeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance in their own right qualify as well.

Family Nurses Partnership

The Family Nurses Partnership provides a voluntary preventative programme for teenage mothers, offering intensive and structured home visiting, delivered by specially trained 'family nurses' from early pregnancy until the child is two. The aim of the programme is to improve the health and wellbeing of our most disadvantaged families and children, and to prevent social exclusion.

Family Support

Parenting Support Programmes

Through the Delivering Social Change Framework, we developed a suite of Parenting Support Programmes to provide additional, high quality intervention support to both new and existing parents living in areas of deprivation with a particular focus on vulnerable families. Up to 1,200 families will benefit from the programmes, for which £2million was allocated. The programmes provide guidance, training and information to parents. There is also a focus on early years workforce development and improving standards and quality of parenting programme implementation across Northern Ireland.

The Parenting Support Programmes being delivered are as follows:

Incredible Years

Incredible Years (IY) aims to reduce behaviour problems and to promote problem solving skills, social competence and emotional regulation. Programmes are aimed at parents or teachers of children aged 0-12. The PHA programme aims to increase the number of organisations who deliver the programme in NI to the highest quality and adherence to programme fidelity standards. A regional strategic coordination organisation was appointed, a database of IY practitioners and delivery agents has been established and a schedule of networking, training and product development is being implemented with organisations currently delivering Incredible Years programmes.

By way of the programme 54 delivery organisations were supported through a two year implementation support programme and 69% of 125 identified Incredible Years (IY) practitioners availed of peer support and practice sharing opportunities

Infant Mental Health Training

Infant Mental Health Training is based on the compelling evidence of the negative impact of adverse childhood experiences, particularly in infancy. Infant Mental Health Training programmes will develop the capacity of those in contact with vulnerable families and babies to identify and act on risk factors for the infant's mental health including the mental illness of mother and father. A more confident and trained workforce will support the likelihood of improved health and wellbeing, prevention of mental illness and enhancement of later life outcomes of those at risk. By way of this Programme , a total of 337 early years and HSC professionals had undertaken training through one of three new training programmes including Solihul Approach for early years workers, Video Interactive Guidance for staff working with families in contact with Social Services and the M9 Infant Mental Health Diploma aimed at

A suite of Parenting Support Programmes has been developed by the Public Health Agency following engagement with the Child Development Programme Board and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

professionals working with families with at risk infants. An additional five staff have also been supported to access the two year M7 Early Years Diploma again allowing advanced practitioners including Health Visitors and Sure Start staff to have expert input on child development. . By way of this Programme 65 out of 77 sampled Solihull Approach trained staff reported improved knowledge of Infant Mental Health, 44 out of 77 sampled Solihull Approach trained staff reported improved ability to observe for positive child/parent interactions and 81.8% of the Infant Mental Health 2 year Diploma practitioners reported improved knowledge of Infant Mental Health.

The investment in Infant Mental Health Training has also enabled the establishment of a regional Infant Mental Health Plan that will determine the level of investment required beyond the current scale of training resourced under Delivering Social Change.

Strengthening Families Programme

Strengthening Families Programme is designed to reduce risk factors for children in families with a history of parental drug and alcohol abuse and/or families experiencing difficulties. The core aim is to improve the family environment by helping parents to develop discipline techniques and to understand the importance of rewards and positive attitudes in their children. The DSC investment enabled programmes in three Trust localities to expand and continue and facilitated new local service development for two years in Belfast and Southern localities from December 2013. 370 families across NI supported and undertook the evidence based 'Strengthening Families Programme'. Based on a sample of 50 families completing the programme 90% reported a reduction in family conflict, 96% reported an increase in positive family cohesion and 100% reported improved family communication

Parenting UR Teen

Parenting UR Teen is an eight week programme developed by Parenting NI and has the key purpose of improving the parent/adolescent relationship and is based on an authoritative parenting style.

28 Odyssey Parenting Programmes were delivered to 368 families and 719 children/young people. 89% of families completed the programme in 2013/14 and 93% of parents completed the programme in 2014/15.

Specifically by way of the Parenting UR Teen Programme

- A total of 92% of parents improved their skills in resolving problems and 26% of young people reported that their levels of emotional distress had been improved.
- 94% of parents increased awareness of the importance of using the authoritative parenting style
- 89% improved skills in resolving problems
- 92% increased understanding and overall confidence as a parent
- 87% increased ability to deal with conflict
- 92% improved communication skills with their teen
- 84% improved ability to understand their teen's feelings

All of the £2m of central funding has now been allocated to the Parenting Support Signature Programme and the PHA is currently finalising investment priorities for 2015/16 and from its own budget is considering investments to sustain DSC-initiated

developments. Infant Mental Health Training, Parenting Ur Teen/Odyssey and Strengthening Families Programmes are recognised priorities.

My Space

My Space is a digital arts project being delivered in partnership with Wheelworks and their (DCAL funded) ArtCart. Working directly with young people aged 12 – 18; the project has full support from the Northern Health Trust in facilitating access to the youngsters residing at the Ardrath House care facility in Magherafelt. By artists working directly with children in care, it is possible to open a dialogue and capture their thoughts and feelings about their identity, and where they associate their sense of belonging. A film piece is being made by the children which can be used for communication purposes with healthcare professionals or others new to working with young people within a care setting. Approximately 15 young people are involved.

Delivering Social Change Family Support Hubs

Family Support Hubs help families to navigate the system and get access to the services they need. There are 26 Hubs operating across Northern Ireland. The Hubs provide assistance to families in a friendly, local environment and help them to overcome challenges which could otherwise be overwhelming and unmanageable. They bring together representatives from statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations who work in the local area to provide early intervention support services to families living in the local community. Three million was made available for this Delivering Social Change Signature Programme. Family Support Hubs offer a unique service tailored to meet individual needs in order to make a real difference to those families who benefit from the service. With an emphasis on prevention and early intervention, many families have been getting the necessary help to benefit them both in the short and long term. Between April and March 2015, 2,461 families were referred to the Family Support Hubs and 2,461 referrals were accepted and signposted to support services. Very positive feedback has been received

from those families who have been signposted through Hubs. Families overall report that having one point of contact for the support they need, with a range of issues which is accessible, flexible and responsive works very well for them.

Delivering Social Change/Atlantic Philanthropies Signature Programme

The First Minister and deputy First Minister announced three new Signature Programmes in September 2014. These new Programmes are jointly funded by the Executive and The Atlantic Philanthropies. One of the three Signature Programmes will deliver early intervention services for young families in need of support – working with young families to identify the particular issues that they have, and providing the right sort of assistance to become successful parents. The total value of the three programmes is £56.2 million, of which £22.5 million will come from the Executive's Delivering Social Change Fund and £22.5 million will be provided by The Atlantic Philanthropies. The remaining £11.2 million will be provided by contributions from DHSSPS, DE, DEL, DSD and DoJ.

Early Intervention Transformation Programme

Following on from initial design work; extensive consultation with parents, front-line staff including pre-school settings, midwives and health visitors; and a detailed review of the evidence base; a new Early Intervention Transformation programme has been developed in partnership with Atlantic Philanthropies. The programme includes strands focused on Getting Ready for Baby, Getting Ready for Toddler and Getting Ready to Learn; an Early Intervention Service; and support for specific groups of vulnerable children, such as looked after children; children who are on the 'edge' of care, custody, homelessness and/or education exclusion; and young parents coming out of prison.

The Belfast Intensive Family Support (BIFS) Project

The Belfast Intensive Family Support Project is engaging with the most vulnerable / complex families across Belfast. As of September 2014, 223 children were in receipt of this service with 28 families referred from BELB, 37 jointly from Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) / Youth Justice Agency / Probation Board NI, 25 from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and 5 from the NI Housing Executive.

Community Family Support Programme

We introduced an intervention to help 720 families and to support parents and young people who are not in education, employment or training. The Programme Delivery had three cycles each of 26 weeks supporting 240 families in each cycle, £4million of central funds was made available for the programme including support from the Early Intervention Programme.

Since the completion of the Signature Programme element the Department for Employment and Learning has continued with the delivery of the Community Family Support Programme - 40% of the required funding being obtained through the new NI European Social Fund with the remaining 60% being made up of DEL and DHSSPS (through the Early Intervention Transformation Programme) contributions.

A total number of 1,821 family members including 540 adults with parenting or caring roles, 385 young people aged 16-24 years and 896 children under 15 years have received help and support on the programme.

“My voluntary placement on the programme has given me so much confidence.....I am now going to start a Steps to Work placement, and I am also looking for a job.” - Participant, Community Family Support Programme

Data captured through the programme's outcome related funding (ORF) model recorded a total of 490 voluntary family referrals were made to a range of specialist provision to address the particular needs of each family. There were 299 recordings of increased social inclusion, 512 improved family relationships and 731 engagements in positive motivational and miscellaneous activities. Family members completed 135 short accredited training courses, 105 essential skills, educational or training programmes, 32 participated in work placements and 6 entered employment. Data was also captured independently at the end of cycle 1 & 2 showed that, of the 319 NEETs participating on the programme, 206 (65%) progressed to positive destinations in education, employment and training. A total of 312 potential NEETs were supported with issues such as school punctuality, attendance, behaviour, homework and academic performance.

Parental Employment and Skills

First Start

DEL developed a temporary employment strand which was delivered under the Steps to Work programme. This initiative, known as First Start, offers job opportunities for up to 26 weeks, in the private, public or third sector for 18 to 24 year olds. Whilst these job opportunities initially were temporary, it was anticipated that in many cases they may lead to permanent employment. First Start was available to those aged 18-24 years old who had been unemployed at least 6 months and who were in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance. First Start was introduced on 7 November 2012. Official Statistics show that at the end of March 2015 when referrals to First Start ceased, over 1,600 young people had availed of supported employment through this initiative.

Steps 2 Success

DEL introduced the Steps 2 Success (S2S) employment programme in October 2014. Steps 2 Success has been designed to build on the success of the Steps to Work Programme and has been developed to allow the three organisations delivering the programme increased flexibility to meet the individually assessed needs of each of the participants. Each participant will develop a Progression into Employment Plan that will identify the activities the S2S participant and the contractor will undertake to assist them find and keep employment. Challenging targets have been set for the delivery organisations and the first performance figures will be released at the end of February 2016. S2S is mainly targeted at people in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance. People aged 18 – 24 will be required to participate on S2S after 9 months receipt of the benefit and those aged 25 plus after 12 months receipt.

Youth Employment Scheme

The Youth Employment Scheme, a 3 year initiative, which ended in March 2015, secured 15,720 short work experience, training and subsidised employment opportunities for 18 – 24 year old unemployed young people. Of these, 10,725 were filled, at a cost of £33 million, (costs to 31st Jan 2016).

Training for Success

The Department for Employment and Learning provides a guarantee of a training place through its Training for Success programme for all 16 and 17 year olds, with extended eligibility up to 24 years, for persons with special circumstances. Participants receive a non means tested EMA allowance of £40 per week for the duration of the programme, which is 104 weeks, or 156 weeks for persons with a disability. Travel and Childcare costs are also payable, if required, including progression/bonus payments for attendance. The most recent occupancy figure (at 31st July 2015) was 4,967 participants.

Jobs and Skills

In the period of the current Programme for Government 2011-15, we have:

- Promoted over 37,000 new jobs and achieved more than £2.7 billion of investment in the economy;
- Delivered 298,000 new qualifications to working age people – enhancing their ability to access better employment opportunities; and
- Supported 151, 100 people into employment by providing skills and training.

In the first 5 months of this financial year (2014-2015), 2,695 boilers have been replaced. The scheme has been extended until 31 March 2016.

Housing

Boiler Replacement Scheme

The boiler replacement scheme, which is available in Northern Ireland only, helps owner occupiers to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. The scheme is open to owner occupiers whose household income is less than £40,000 and who have an inefficient boiler of at least 15 years old. Up to 31 August 2014, 2,160 Warm Homes measures were completed. The Boiler Replacement Scheme continues to attract a high level of interest and in the first 7 months of this financial year (2014-2015), 4,555 boilers have been replaced. The scheme has been extended until 31 March 2016.

HEAT Programme

Design of a potential Household Energy and Thermal Efficiency (HEaT) Programme is currently being developed. The proposed project aims to boost economic activity through the retrofitting of energy efficiency into homes. Market testing with potential consumers was completed in March/April 2014. Since then, ongoing consultation with a wide range of stakeholders has taken place and pre-market engagement sessions have been held to gauge market capacity to deliver such a programme. These sessions were designed to inform the industry of the potential opportunities that will arise and to enable businesses to develop their delivery capacity and capability. Funding retrofit measures will provide a boost to the local economy via employment and investment opportunities, including the recruitment and training of people to provide energy efficiency advice and through the installation of energy retrofit measures in local homes.

Decent, Affordable and Sustainable Housing

In the period of the current Programme for Government 2011-15, we have:

- Delivered 10,066 social and affordable homes (6,101 social and 3,965 affordable);
- Supported the delivery of a range of energy saving measures to over 24,000 homes with the investment of £34.9 million with 2,470 local installers benefiting from this work; and
- Ensured there are no additional water charges for households.

Neighbourhoods

Social Investment Fund

The £80 million Social Investment Fund (SIF) aims to make life better for people living in targeted areas by reducing poverty, unemployment and physical deterioration. Local Steering Groups developed plans which identify priority projects for each Social Investment Zone. Projects up and running include Bryson Street Surgery in Belfast East Zone and the Northern Zone's Causeway Rural and Urban Network (CRUN) project.

The Social Investment Fund is focused on supporting communities to:

- increase employment opportunities by addressing things such as educational underachievement, lack of skills, access to jobs and making it appealing for businesses to start up in areas which have suffered deprivation
- tackle issues such as mental and physical health, use of drugs and alcohol, becoming a young mother, young people's involvement in antisocial behaviour and the ability of communities to work together which can all be associated with deprivation
- increase services in the community by improving existing facilities, making the environment better and providing additional facilities where needed and possible
- address dereliction in order to make areas more appealing for investment and for those living there

Building on the £36.8 million committed in 13 capital projects and 11 revenue projects announced in 2014, a further £13.4 million to be invested in a further seven capital projects and two revenue projects was announced in January 2015, aimed at tackling poverty and deprivation by providing improved community services and facilities. The fund is being delivered in partnership with communities across nine Social Investment Zones. Each zone has a steering group with up to 14 members from the business, political, statutory and voluntary and community sectors.

Social Clauses

All relevant Social Investment Fund projects where procurements were undertaken in 2014/15 for architectural design teams for capital build projects and delivery organisations for revenue projects included social clauses as part of contract requirements. These social clauses related mainly to the provision of work experience placements, usually four to six weeks duration, and paid work experience opportunities, usually 26 weeks duration, for young jobseekers.

Neighbourhood Renewal

Neighbourhood Renewal Programmes brings together Government departments in partnership with local people delivering projects at a local level to address the social and economic problems faced by deprived neighbourhoods, including high levels of worklessness, low levels of skills and lack of educational attainments. One of the aims of the renewal strategy is to help close the gap between Neighbourhood Renewal Areas and non Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. This is measured on an annual basis by a number of key outcome indicators relating to education, health, crime and worklessness. The 2014 Neighbourhood Renewal Measurement of Outcomes Reports is available online.

Together: Building a United Community

We have launched a challenging programme of work under Together: Building a United Community – the Executive's strategic framework to tackle sectarianism, racism and intolerance, and to build a genuinely shared society. We have put in place seven major headline actions to develop good relations within our society. These include commitments to create 10,000 one year placements in the United Youth Programme; establish four urban villages, develop 100 summer schools/camps and create neighbourhoods, amongst other actions.

United Youth Programme

The United Youth Programme is an integrated good relations programme and represents a new way of engaging with young people through a range of activities, volunteering and work experience to provide them with an opportunity to achieve the best possible outcomes. In developing the programme there has been comprehensive and detailed engagement with youth related organisations and the young people themselves to ensure the programme has maximum buy-in and consensus. A draft outcomes framework for the Programme has been developed in conjunction with all the stakeholders, including the young people, and informed a call for concept proposals to deliver pilot projects, which issued in early September 2014. Following a development phase in autumn 2014, over 150 pilot applications were submitted in December 2014 and assessed with assistance from the programme's Design Team. As a result, 50 successful organisations (57 proposals) were selected to proceed to a further development stage, following which 13 pilot projects will progress into delivery mode during 2015/16. It is envisaged that the pilot will test a range of approaches with a view to developing a service design framework for the Programme as well as test the Outcomes and Principles Framework. It is expected that the pilot projects will be aimed at the 16 – 24 age group who are not in education, employment or training and offered to approximately 300 young people.

Three new Urban Village projects have been announced in 2015 - the Markets, Sandy Row and Donegall Pass area of South Belfast and Fountain area of Derry/Londonderry were announced in January followed by Ardoyne and Ballysillan in February. The urban village projects present a holistic way to grow social capital, develop local amenities and provide areas with a new community heart.

Urban Village Projects

Urban Villages are being established to create and stabilise change within communities. Colin and Lower Newtownards Road were announced as the first two Urban Villages in 2014. Three new Urban Village projects in the Markets, Sandy Row and Donegall Pass

area of South Belfast and Fountain area of Derry/Londonderry were announced in January followed by Ardoyne and Ballysillan in February. Through co-design with local communities, we see this as providing real momentum, changing environments and giving people hope.

Public Realm Schemes

Urban Regeneration strives to make cities attractive places to live, work and invest in order to grow our economy, create opportunities and tackle disadvantage in all parts of the region. DSD makes use of a number of regeneration measures to achieve this purpose. One of the most important measures is public realm improvement schemes, which deliver a range of economic, social and environmental benefits. DSD continues to build on achievements last year, with 16 new schemes being completed so far in the 2014/2015 financial year.

Financial Support

Child Maintenance Service (CMS)

CMS encourage and support parents to collaborate to help separated families become strong and stable so that children continue to thrive. By assisting parents to keep supporting their children, means an increase in monetary flow to more of them.

- In 2014/15, CMS collected or arranged a record £27.4m benefitting over 21,000 children across Northern Ireland. A further 3,041 children were estimated to benefit from a family based arrangement after our intervention.
- CMS reduced non-paying cases by 36% and the outstanding debt balance of Child Maintenance owed in Northern Ireland fell by nearly £10m as 9 out of 10 parents with a Child Maintenance liability were making payments.

Reducing Household Costs

We have attempted to protect people from the worst effects of the recession through measures such as the freezing of the regional rate increases in real terms, and by not introducing water charges, thus ensuring that household charges are lowest in the United Kingdom.

Educational Maintenance Allowance

DE and DEL jointly changed the means tested Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for 16-19 year olds in full time education at school or FE College from the start of academic year 2013-14. Better targeted Education Maintenance Allowance support at low income households encourages these students to stay on in post compulsory education.

4. NEXT STEPS

Over the past year, a lot of work has been undertaken to develop a new approach to Child Poverty. This has followed on from consultation with children and young people; parents; community, voluntary and charitable organisations and other stakeholders; a review of the current Child Poverty Strategy; and research commissioned to assist government departments in understanding their role in terms of reducing child poverty.

A new strategy to reduce the number of children in poverty and reduce the impact of poverty on children has been developed and is expected to be published shortly.

It is proposed that the new strategy uses Outcomes Based Accountability as a method of planning and accessing performance. It is our intention that this approach will help us to: set the baseline information relative to where we are at present in relation to meeting our outcomes; ensure that the actions taken are measurable, through clearly established indicators; and observe emerging trends and respond accordingly and, if need be, reconsider the actions to take.

Considerable work has been undertaken to agree a set of proposed outcomes we would like to achieve and indicators we will use to measure performance. This work has been undertaken with engagement with children and young people, parents and other stakeholders.

We recognise that it takes sustained and concerted action from many agencies and organisations and key stakeholders through effective partnership working to achieve better outcomes for children and young people in poverty.

The next steps to this work will involve:

- Publishing a new Child Poverty Strategy which sets out our new approach to Child Poverty, a set of agreed outcomes and indicators;
- Establishing groups which will monitor and implement this work, to include external delivery partners and representatives of relevant stakeholder groups; and
- Working with partners to agree, implement, evaluate and review our actions to reduce and mitigate child poverty.

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Child Poverty Unit

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