

CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

Consultation Document

December 2010



**Northern Ireland
Executive**

www.northernireland.gov.uk

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CHAPTER 1 – CONSULTATION

1.01 Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this consultation document is to seek your views on the draft Child Poverty Strategy, the content of which is detailed in Chapter 2. It is intended that through this document you will have an opportunity to consider the draft strategy, put forward your views on the content and also comment on how the Executive might take forward its implementation. This will be used to help inform the final Strategy and its future implementation.

1.02 Pre-consultation

OFMDFM has committed to active engagement with stakeholders during the development of the child poverty strategy. We are keen to ensure that it will be firmly evidence based and informed by the views of those working closely with children and young people and their families experiencing poverty. We have carried out extensive pre-consultation with key stakeholders, including discussions with key government departments, non government organisations representing children and young people and a number of sectoral umbrella organisations. An overview of the types of organisations engaged is included at Appendix 1 (this list is not exhaustive).

As part of the pre-consultation we also issued a paper entitled “Starting the Discussion” seeking views and comments on:

- the development process of the strategy, in particular any views on how best to engage with stakeholders and particularly children and young people on key issues;
- how stakeholders consider the ‘building blocks’, identified by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (see diagram para 2.1), as being critical to meeting the 2020 targets and minimising socio-economic disadvantage for children, apply in the Northern Ireland context;

We consolidated this discussion with stakeholders, including key children's organisations, and government departments with a workshop event in Grosvenor House on 23 September 2010. The input we received from the day was extremely useful and has helped to assist our thinking with the development of this draft strategy document.

1.03 How to respond

A consultation questionnaire has been developed as part of this document to assist you in submitting your views. If you do not agree with the content of the draft strategy, please say so and state exactly what it is you do not agree with and, if possible, what you think should be considered instead. The consultation questionnaire is contained in Section 4 of this document and you should feel free to answer as many or as few questions as you wish. Indeed you need not answer any of the specific questions. The questions have been provided as a guide to help you think about the issues. Please tell us what you think in whichever way you feel best communicates the information you wish us to consider.

In addition, during the consultation period OFMDFM will be arranging a series of consultation events in several locations. We would very much welcome your attendance at these events. If you are interested in attending one of these events, please let us know and we will advise you of the details when they are finalised. You can also obtain details of events from our website at: www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk or by contacting the Child Poverty Team (contact details are below). Details of these events will also be provided to the main children's sector representative groups.

Alternative formats of the document can be made available on request and you should forward any such requests using one of the methods detailed below.

Additional copies of both the questionnaire and this consultation document can be obtained from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister by:

Telephone 028 90 523194
Fax 028 90 523272
Text phone 028 90 522526
Emailing policysec@ofmdfmni.gov.uk

Writing to: Policy Secretariat, OFMDFM, Room E3.19, Castle Buildings,
Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SR

The documents can also be viewed and downloaded from the OFMDFM website at www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk or the NI Direct Website at www.nidirect.gov.uk. **Responses must be received no later than 6th February 2011** and should be posted to the above address or emailed to childpovertystrategy@ofmdfmni.gov.uk

CHAPTER 2 – DRAFT CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

2.01 INTRODUCTION

The Child Poverty Act 2010 (The Act), enacted on 25th March, places a statutory obligation on the Executive to develop a child poverty strategy and lay it before the assembly by 25th March 2011.

Child poverty is not a new issue or indeed one which can be tackled in the short term. There are many factors which can impact on our ability to lift children out of poverty here and we appreciate the challenges we face in the current economic climate. We further recognise that to tackle child poverty we must consider wider family circumstances and work to provide parents or legal guardians with the necessary support to raise their children. This can include financial and/or other support such as advice and information.

Evidence suggests that poverty can be cyclical with today's children who are living in poverty often going on to have children of their own who in turn experience poverty. We want to break that cycle by raising aspirations, increasing access to opportunities through education, supporting parents into work, and, providing the necessary support to those most in need such as children with disabilities, lone parents and others.

This Strategy therefore sets out the key areas that we believe are crucial in addressing the causes and consequences of child poverty and in meeting our obligations as detailed in The Act. In considering all of these, there are effectively two key strands of work emerging relevant to the causes and the consequences of child poverty:

1. reducing worklessness amongst adults with children
2. promote longer term outcomes through child based interventions which are designed to tackle the cyclical nature of child poverty

Whilst the key areas identified in strand one focusing on supporting parents into work are adult centred, those relevant to strand two attempt to tackle the

cyclical nature of child poverty by increasing the future prospects for the child. Some of these key areas will have to focus on a longer term impact.

Whilst the Executive has fully endorsed and is committed to this strategy, we all appreciate the uncertainties in respect of budgets and future spend. At the time of drafting this strategy it is still unclear as to how the spending review will impact on the work of the Executive. Therefore we must recognise that the content of this high level strategy is based on current priorities and commitments and that there may be other means of delivery not currently envisaged due to the uncertain financial situation. The emphasis of this strategy is therefore on highlighting the key areas which we believe will impact positively on child poverty and on which the Executive can take action.

The full implementation of the strategy, including the development of specific initiatives and signature projects will be taken forward following publication of this draft strategy and will be informed by the consultation.

In the current economic climate it is vital that opportunities for improved Inter Agency, cross-sectoral and cross-departmental working are fully exploited and that we ensure that the statutory obligations placed on Departments within The Act are afforded the highest priority.

OFMDFM will take the lead in driving forward its delivery through co-ordinating the development of delivery plans and progress reports.

The Strategy is separated into four sections:

Section 1: Framework for tackling child poverty

- Aim
- strategic priorities
- priority action areas
- monitoring

Section 2: The Child Poverty Act and associated measures

- The Act
- Child Poverty Targets
- Child Relative Income Poverty
- Child Absolute Income Poverty
- Combined Low Income and Material Deprivation

Section 3: The rationale for a child poverty strategy

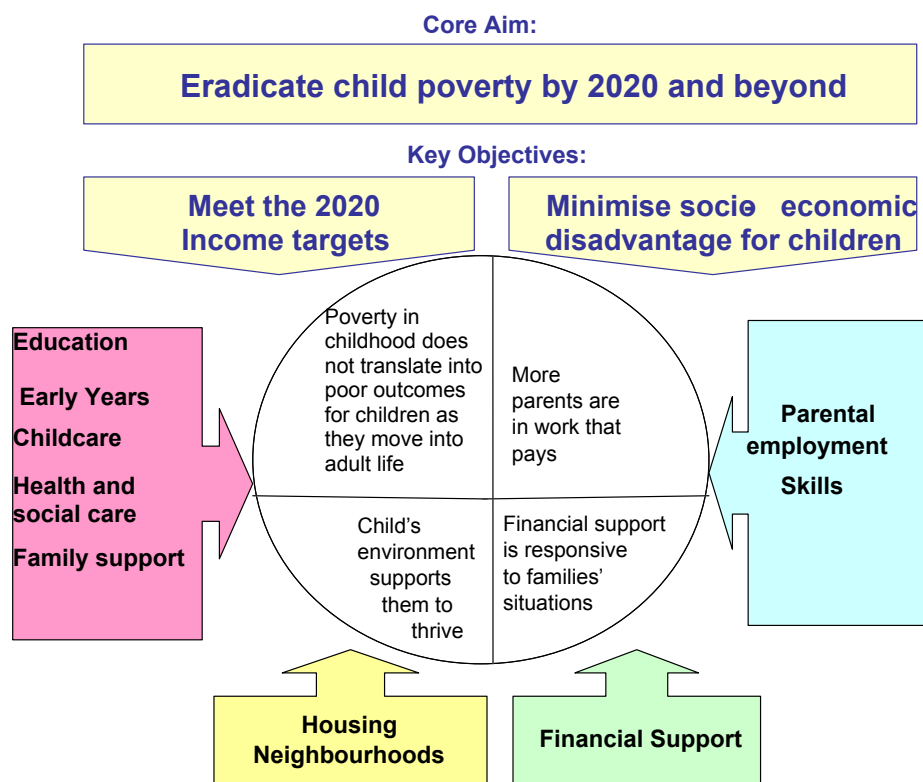
- The effects of poverty on children and young people
- Groups in Northern Ireland currently more vulnerable to poverty
- Current position in Northern Ireland
- The need for a Child Poverty Strategy

Section 4: Policy and Legislation

- The 10 Year Strategy for Children and Young People, 'Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge'
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Lifetime Opportunities (LTO) – Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy
- Draft Northern Ireland Economic Strategy
- Families Matter Strategy
- Every School a Good School
- Literacy and Numeracy Strategy
- Fuel Poverty Strategy
- Neighbourhood Renewal
- Play and Leisure Policy Statement
- Draft Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy
- Rural Proofing

2.1 FRAMEWORK FOR TACKLING CHILD POVERTY

The Executive has adopted the framework for tackling child poverty, produced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) although in recognising the Northern Ireland context, we have separated childcare and education as these are not represented by one service here, as is the case in other areas. We have also associated social care with health given the integration of policy delivery here. By using this, we do not intend to replace or replicate existing strategies or work but rather to provide the strategic direction for the eradication of child poverty here. We are also mindful of the current financial climate and the uncertain Budget allocations, therefore this is a high level strategy intended to bring focus to the issue and promote a common aim.



This is even more important given that no one department has the authority, the power or the resources to meet in full the objectives of this Child Poverty Strategy and it is imperative that we work jointly towards a common aim if we are to achieve maximum impact. This Strategy will provide the means to encourage an effective and joined up approach to address and eradicate child poverty. This is further recognised in The Act which places a statutory duty on

the Executive to publish this strategy but also specifies that it must set out the measures that **the Northern Ireland departments** propose to take to contribute towards achieving the UK targets and to ensure as far as possible that children here do not experience socio-economic disadvantage. We also appreciate the role and good work of other agencies and non government organisations, including the private sector, in tackling child poverty and the need to work together to build on the successful work to date and future initiatives to realise the core aims of this strategy.

2.11 THE EXECUTIVE'S AIM

The overarching aim of this strategy is

To provide the opportunity for all our children and young people to thrive and to address the causes and consequences of disadvantage

To make this aim a reality the Executive will renew efforts and target interventions to support children and their families living in poverty and experiencing disadvantage. Whilst recognising that the tax and benefits system is led by the UK Government centrally, the Executive will continue to strenuously advocate for the appropriate level of income resources on behalf of our children and their families. In addition, we can also ensure that, as far as possible, families are aware of their full benefit entitlements, and support them in accessing these alongside targeting policy and priorities across government to support low income families and those most in need.

2.12 KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To achieve its aim the Executive has adopted the following four strategic priorities as detailed in its framework:

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

These priorities will be achieved by focusing on key policy areas including; education, childcare, health, family support, housing, neighbourhoods, financial support and parental employment and skills.

2.13 UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

A number of principles will underpin and support the delivery of this strategy:

- A shift towards tackling the root causes of poverty and not just treating its symptoms;
- Putting children at the centre of the Strategy and taking into account their views when developing policies and programmes to tackle child poverty;
- Adopting a Life Cycle approach, breaking the cycle that results in children born into poverty becoming working age adults in low income;
- Promoting excellence in support across a range of key policy areas including employment and skills, education, childcare, health and family support, housing and neighbourhoods, and financial support;
- A gradual shift towards the use of preventative measures to tackle child poverty and, when families face difficulties, intervention at an early stage, reducing the likelihood of more serious problems developing in the future;
- Applying an evidence based approach;
- Adopting a whole family approach which concentrates on all members of the family - children, young people, and their parents and supporting family life;

- Empowering and enabling parents on low income into work and make work pay for those on low pay;
- Promoting partnership working across all sectors including public, private, voluntary, and community sectors;
- Recognising the current economic climate and the need for the Strategy to be balanced against existing financial limits.

2.14 PRIORITY ACTION AREAS

The Executive has identified a number of priority areas for action to take forward the key policy areas and deliver the strategic priorities.

Strategic priorities	Priority policy areas	Priority action areas
<p>Ensure, as far as possible, that poverty in childhood does not translate into poor outcomes for children as they move into adult life</p>	<p>Education</p> <p>Early Years</p> <p>Childcare</p> <p>Health and Social Care</p> <p>Family Support</p>	<p>Provide all children and young people with opportunities to reach their educational attainment regardless of background and address barriers to pupils achieving their full potential.</p> <p>Support disadvantaged families to promote the physical, social, intellectual and emotional development of their children so that they flourish at home and when they get to school.</p> <p>Target young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) to support them to re-engage.</p> <p>Create training and employment opportunities for young people.</p> <p>Support the delivery of an accessible, flexible and quality childcare sector, so that it is effective in reducing barriers to employment, particularly those experienced by disadvantaged groups, and supports child development and well being”.</p> <p>Improve health outcomes and target those groups who are particularly at risk or vulnerable, in order to tackle health inequalities of children and</p>

		<p>young people.</p> <p>Strengthen and improve prevention and early intervention for all children and their families, particularly in the first three years of life to maximise future outcomes in health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Help support those families that are experiencing food poverty so that they can acquire the food and nutrition required for good health.</p> <p>Provide family support and intervention services to children in vulnerable families.</p> <p>Improve school readiness and Increase participation in formal and non-formal education, youth services and sports through accessible and affordable culture, arts and leisure services.</p> <p>Address socio-economic disadvantage in children and maximise access to key services for children and young people.</p>
Support more parents to access reasonably paid work	Parental employment and skills	<p>Continue to exert leverage on the UK Government to maximise the income of families with children.</p> <p>Support parents in low-income families to gain education, training and job-ready skills to avail of paid employment.</p> <p>Grow the local economy, to improve employment opportunities and the value of the employment, and promote enterprise, entrepreneurship, and the social economy.</p>
Ensure the child's environment supports them to thrive	<p>Education</p> <p>Childcare</p> <p>Health</p> <p>Family Support</p>	<p>Promote affordable, accessible play and leisure provision for all children and young people.</p> <p>Provide different learning environments through youth services which complement</p>

	<p>Housing</p> <p>Neighbourhoods</p>	<p>formal learning and are focused on the personal and social development of children and young people.</p> <p>To improve opportunities for low income families to participate in arts, cultural, sporting and leisure activities.</p> <p>Ensure that parents can access information and services, including the Regional Family Support Database in their local areas to support them in carrying out their parental responsibilities.</p> <p>Make public transport more accessible and affordable to all children including those with a disability in both urban and rural areas.</p> <p>Continue to take action to address fuel poverty in vulnerable households.</p> <p>Ensure children and young people are living in homes which achieve the Decent Homes Standard.</p> <p>Increase social housing and employment opportunities through regeneration.</p> <p>Support statutory and voluntary agencies, including local councils, to provide services and programmes which meet the needs of local communities, particularly disadvantaged communities.</p> <p>Continue to address the underlying causes of disadvantage and improve the physical environment of the most deprived neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Reduce the risks to children which have been identified as increased due to living in deprived neighbourhoods, including for example road safety.</p>
<p>Target financial support to be responsive to family situations</p>	<p>Parental employment and skills</p> <p>Financial Support</p>	<p>Persuade and influence the UK Government to maximise the income of families with children.</p>

		<p>Maximise access to and uptake of grants, benefits and services, including social security benefits.</p> <p>Increase the level of financial competency in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Ensure that, as far as possible, children living in low income families are not materially deprived i.e. they have the things they need such as warm home and adequate goods and services as outlined in page 21 and further defined in The Act.</p> <p>Provide support to families with specific needs eg families with disabled children, lone parents etc.</p> <p>Prevent people/families in NI from becoming homeless as a consequence of housing related debt.</p> <p>Implement redesigned child support arrangements.</p>
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It is fully recognised that all of the issues cannot be tackled at once and in order to make a real difference there is a need for a targeted approach and the identification of a smaller number of priority issues on which to focus efforts first.

The action areas detailed above are strategic and high level. There is already work progressing around many of these which will continue during the period of this strategy. However, there remains a need for additionality and renewed effort to tackle the complex issues around child poverty.

The Executive will therefore develop a delivery plan detailing those key initiatives and signature projects to progress the strategic priorities. This will be published as soon as possible after the strategy when the financial position should be clearer and the Executive is better placed to produce a robust plan.

2.15 MONITORING

A monitoring and reporting framework will be developed within the first year of the strategy to ensure that we can see progress, to make sure the priority actions are making a difference, and to reflect the agreed strategic approach and delivery plan. Development of the monitoring and reporting framework will be informed by similar developments elsewhere and we will build on existing monitoring frameworks such as that for Lifetime Opportunities and the indicators detailed within the 10 year Strategy for Children and Young People.

The final framework is likely to be structured around three layers:

- Child Poverty targets
- Child Poverty indicators which will be developed
- Related Public Service Agreements (PSA)

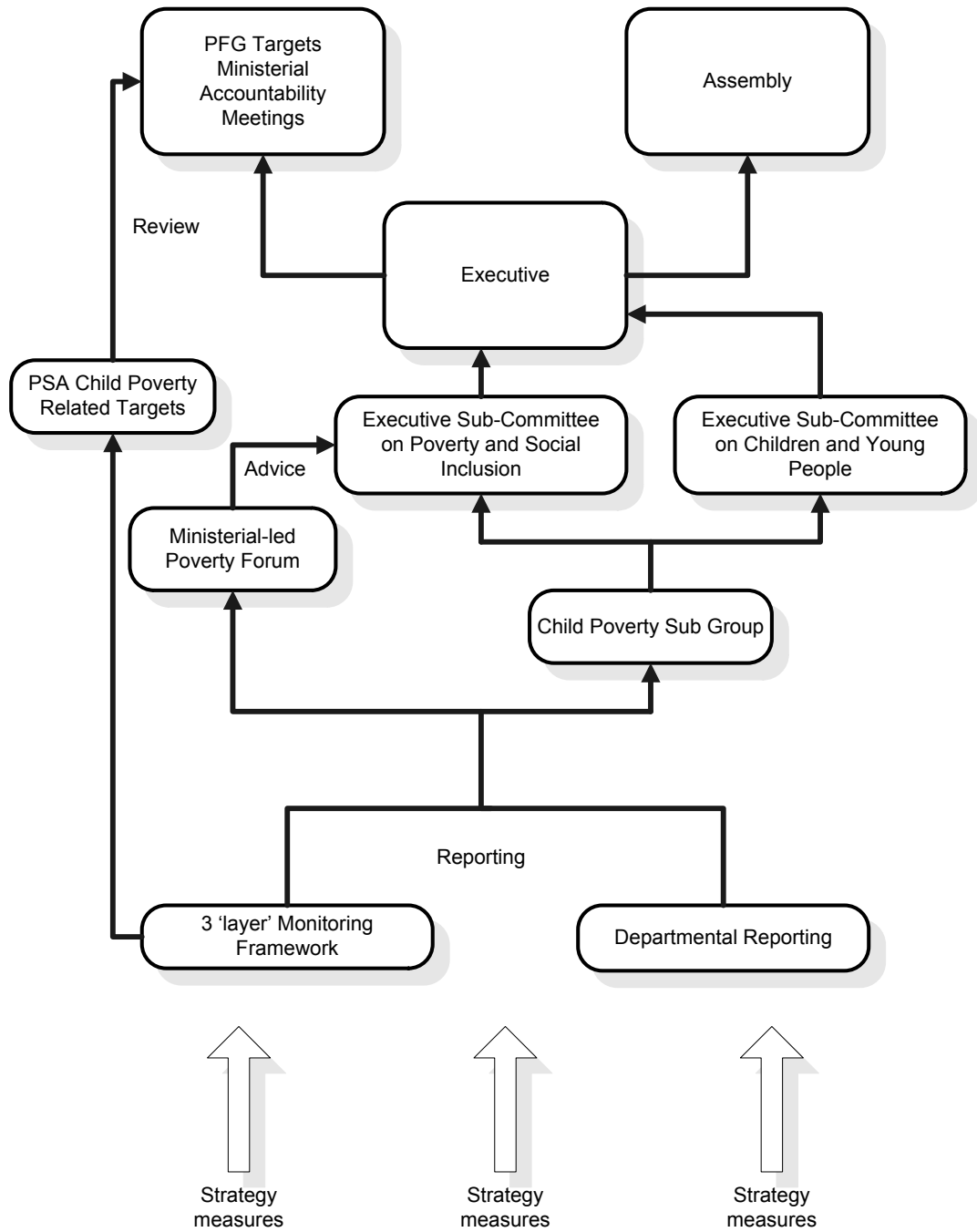
In considering what constitutes a good statistical indicator, the following guidelines apply:

- Be relevant to the Government's strategy
- Be related to the outcomes
- Be based on publicly available and statistically robust data
- Be subject to unambiguous interpretation

All departments will be expected to report annually and OFMDFM will co-ordinate this work with a view to bringing a composite report to the Assembly in line with the legislative requirements.

The overall proposed Governance and Delivery framework is detailed below.

Proposed Governance and Delivery Framework



2.2 THE CHILD POVERTY ACT

The Child Poverty Act 2010 was enacted on 25th March and requires the relevant department to publish and lay before the Assembly the first Northern Ireland child poverty strategy by 25th March 2011. It further specifies that the strategy must set out the measures that **the Executive departments** propose to take to contribute towards achieving the UK targets and to ensure as far as possible that children here do not experience socio-economic disadvantage.

In developing the Strategy OFMDFM is required to request the advice of the Child Poverty Commission, a UK-wide body to be set up under the Child Poverty Act and to specify a date by which the advice must be provided. It is further required to have regard to the Commission's advice in the development of the strategy and to consult the Secretary of State and such children and organisations working with or representing children, as they think fit; and such parents, and organisations working with or representing parents, as they think fit. At the time of drafting this strategy the Commission has not yet been established and we are continuing to liaise with our counterparts in the UK Government to progress this.

The Strategy is for a period of three years and by 25th March 2014 OFMDFM must review the Strategy and publish and lay before the Assembly a revised strategy. Strategies for NI Child Poverty must be published every three years and revised strategies must describe: the measures taken by the Executive departments in accordance with the previous strategy, the effect that those measures had on progress towards meeting the targets in sections 3 to 6 of the Act and other effects of those measures that contribute to the aim of ensuring as far as possible that children here do not experience socio-economic disadvantage.

In order to monitor progress, OFMDFM is required to lay before the Assembly an annual report describing: the measures taken by the Executive departments in accordance with the strategy; how those measures have

contributed to meeting the targets in sections 3 to 6 of the Act and the aim of ensuring as far as possible that children here are not affected by socio-economic disadvantage.

2.21 CHILD POVERTY TARGETS

The Act sets out child poverty targets for all children in the UK and as outlined above, this strategy must set out the measures the Executive departments propose to make to contribute to the meeting of the UK targets which include:

- Relative low income
- Combined low income and material deprivation
- Absolute low income
- Persistent poverty

The targets around these in section 3 of the Act are calculated, and success in meeting them measured, solely on a UK wide basis. No separate targets for here, or any devolved region, are included in the legislation.

However, the Executive in Lifetime Opportunities, the Government's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy, and the associated Public Service Agreement 7 set out in the Programme for Government (PfG), sets targets for the reduction in child poverty here to benchmark whether our children have the same outcomes as England, Scotland, and Wales. Within the PfG, Public Service Agreement 7 supports these targets by setting out actions to reduce the levels of child poverty. Reporting on these targets will form an important contribution to the requirements of The Act as they mirror the UK wide targets in the Act¹.

2.22 CHILD RELATIVE INCOME POVERTY

Child Relative Income Poverty: Child relative income poverty is the proportion or number of children who live in households below the income poverty line in each year. The income poverty line in a particular year is set at 60% of the median level of household income in the UK

¹ The Child Poverty Act has a persistent poverty measure as one of the four measures of child poverty. There is uncertainty about the potential reliability of this measure at the NI level.

The relative income poverty measure reflects the extent to which the incomes of the poorest households with children are keeping pace with the UK population as a whole.

Lifetime Opportunities, as described in para 2.43, contains a specific focus on children in poverty underpinned by the Programme for Government (2008 - 2011). The accompanying Public Service Agreements (PSA) reflect this specific focus on children and their families in poverty through PSA 7 'Making Peoples' Lives Better' objective 1 which commits to:

"Take forward action to provide for measurable reductions in the levels of poverty and particularly child poverty".

The target in support of this PSA objective states the intention to:

"Work towards the elimination of poverty in Northern Ireland by 2020 and reducing child poverty by 50% by 2010".

The commitment to achieve a child relative poverty rate of less than 10% by 2020/21 mirrors that set out in The Act. However the likely impact of the economic downturn and the consequential problems associated with it must be considered for the future.

Child relative income poverty rates have fallen from 29% in the baseline year (1998/99) to 25% in 2008/09. Progress has, as with the UK as a whole, not maintained the earlier momentum seen between 1998/99 and 2004/05. On the basis of current trends it is unlikely that, even with significant progress, the Public Service Agreement target to halve child relative income poverty by 2010/11, that is, to achieve a child relative income poverty rate of around 15%, will be achieved.

2.23 CHILD ABSOLUTE INCOME POVERTY

Child Absolute Income Poverty: Child absolute income poverty is the proportion or number of children who live in income poor households based on the income poverty line for 1998/99.

This measure reflects the extent to which the poorest household incomes here are rising in real terms after adjusting for price rises.

In the Lifetime Opportunities Monitoring Framework, a child absolute poverty target for NI was expressed in terms of:

“Two-thirds reduction in the number of children in absolute income poverty baselined at 1998/99 with a child absolute low income rate of 5% or less by 2020”.

The target to achieve a child absolute poverty rate of less than 5% is mirrored by The Act although the baseline year differs.

Child absolute income poverty rates have declined here compared to the 1998/99 baseline year. However, on the basis of current established trends, and particularly those seen between 2006/07 and 2008/09, it would appear unlikely that the 2010/11 Lifetime Opportunities target to achieve a two-thirds reduction in the number of children in absolute income poverty will be achieved.

The Act requires the baseline year for UK levels of absolute child poverty to be 2010/11. Data for 2010/11 is not yet available but when such data becomes available it will be possible to mirror the UK target at the NI level.

2.24 COMBINED LOW INCOME AND MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

Combined Low Income and Material Deprivation: A child is defined as poor on this measure if the household in which they live has an income below 70% of the contemporary UK median household income and has a material deprivation score of 25 or more reflected by enforced lack of adult and child goods and services.

This mixed measure provides an insight into the wider living standards of households with children. Children in households defined as poor on this measure lack goods and services such as enough money to keep a home in decent décor; a hobby or leisure activity and holidays away from the home one week a year (not staying with relatives).

In the Lifetime Opportunities Monitoring Framework, this mixed measure was expressed in terms of:

“establish a downward trend by 2010/11 and establish a rate of 5% or less by 2020/21”

Whilst only 5 years of data are available with this measure there is some uncertainty as to whether the Lifetime Opportunities 2010/11 target will be achieved. It is possible that a marginal downward trend may be achieved by 2010/11 however this may not represent a strong enough trend in terms of the 2020/21 target.

2.25 PERSISTENT POVERTY

Within the Act, development of a measure of persistent poverty will be taken forward by subsequent regulations before 2015 utilising data from the UK-wide Understanding Society longitudinal Survey. There is currently some uncertainty as to whether the Northern Ireland sample contained within the Understanding Society Survey will be large enough to provide separate robust persistent poverty estimates for Northern Ireland.

2.3 RATIONALE FOR A CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

2.31 THE EFFECTS OF POVERTY ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The evidence, whether it be local, national or international is unambiguous. The outcomes for children who experience relative disadvantage, whether that comprises social or economic disadvantages, are relatively worse. Recent research published by OFMdfM (Sullivan et al. 2010)², indicates clearly that the negative impacts of relative disadvantage on the educational, cognitive, behavioural, general health and obesity outcomes for children was measurable at the age of 5. These negative impacts represent a continuing hurdle which many children will struggle to overcome. These hurdles can translate, in later years, into: lower educational achievement and aspirations; increased risk of welfare dependency; chaotic family and personal lifestyles and risk behaviours; and continuing or worsening poorer health. This evidence further underlines the importance and potential efficiencies of the earliest possible support and intervention to children and their families in need and, for example, in the case of childhood health and obesity, support provided to parents based on clear and established risk factors who present pre-nataly.

2.32 GROUPS IN NORTHERN IRELAND CURRENTLY MORE VULNERABLE TO POVERTY

Children in certain groups or communities are more vulnerable to the effects of poverty than others. These are described in the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) Northern Ireland 2008/09 report. Among those at greatest risk are:

- **Children living in lone parent households:** In 2008/09, children living in lone parent households had a higher risk of poverty³ (39%) than children living in couple households (21%).

² See:

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/the_consequences_of_childhood_disadvantage_in_northern_ireland.pdf

³ The risk of poverty is defined as the proportion of a particular group that live in poverty. For example if 39% of children in lone parent households live in poverty then the risk of poverty for children in lone parent households is 39%.

- **Economic status of households:** The more adults that are in employment in a household, the lower the risk of poverty for children. In 2008/09, 60% of children living in households with no adults in employment experienced poverty. If one adult is employed the risk of poverty for children in the household reduces to 31% and if all adults in the household are employed the risk of poverty reduces further to 10%.

- **Social welfare:** Children living in households in receipt of social security benefits have a significantly above average risk of poverty. Fifty one percent of children living in households in receipt of Income Support live in poverty compared to 14% of children in households that do not receive benefits and / or tax credits.

- **Making work pay:** Child poverty can also be a feature of families in which there is paid employment. In 2008/09, 41% of poor children lived within a household in which at least one adult was in paid employment.

- **Large families:** The number of children in a household can influence the likelihood of children living in relative poverty. In 2008/09, a higher proportion of children living in households with three children or more were living in relative poverty (37%) compared with 19% or 18% for households with 1 or 2 children respectively.

- **Disability** The evidence over time indicates that the presence of a disabled adult in a household significantly increases the risk of poverty for children in such households. In addition, the research published by OFMdfM (Sullivan et al. 2010) clearly indicates a significantly strong relationship between the physical and mental health of parents and the developmental outcomes of their children.

- **Age:** The age of the mother influences the level of poverty in the family. Thirty-one percent of children living in households where the mother

was under 30 in 2008/09 were in relative poverty compared to 25% of all children.

- **Religion:** The proportion of children living in poverty varies according to the religion of the head of household. Thirty-two per cent of children living in households headed by a Roman Catholic lived in poverty in 2008/09 compared to 18% for children living in households with a Protestant head.

- **Racial group:** The number of minority ethnic people here is too small for any reliable estimates of poverty from a sample survey. However data for the UK as a whole indicates that certain ethnic minority groups are at risk of poverty.

- **Where children live:** Child poverty risk can vary according to where children live. One third of children living in the west of the province, 29% of those living in Belfast, and 15% in the east of the province live in households experiencing poverty in 2008/09 compared to the Northern Ireland rate of 25% of all children experiencing poverty.

There are other vulnerable groups of children that we understand are not captured by a private household survey such as the Family Resource Survey (FRS) including children in care, Irish Travellers, and homeless children who are known to be extremely disadvantaged.

- **Children leaving care:** Children leaving care are particularly vulnerable to poverty as young adults. In 2008, the proportion of former care leavers in education, training or employment was 43% compared with 90% of all 19 year olds here (Former Care Leavers in Northern Ireland Statistical Bulletin, 2009). The proportion of former care leavers in 2008/09 known to be in education, training or employment (52%) was lower than the rate for their counterparts in England (63%); it also compares poorly with that for all 16-18 year olds (90%) in here in 2008 (Former Care Leavers in Northern Ireland Statistical Bulletin, 2009).

- **Irish Travellers:** Irish Travellers have a high level of disadvantage in, for example, employment, economic activity, and accommodation needs. (ECNI Statement on Key Inequalities in NI, 2007).

- **Homeless children or children living in poor housing:** A substantial proportion of families are becoming homeless every year (Northern Ireland Housing Statistics, 2009). This may be due to a wide range of factors. Children who live in bad housing or are homeless are more likely to suffer from poor health or long term illness (Chance of a Lifetime: the impact of poor housing on Children's lives, Shelter, 2006).

2.33 CURRENT POSITION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The levels of relative income poverty for children have declined since 1998/99 both here and for the UK as a whole. However, the rate here has decreased from 29% to 25% in 2008/09 and for the UK as a whole from 26% to 22%. NI now has a rate of child relative income poverty above the UK average.

Similarly in relation to absolute income poverty for children rates here have decreased from 29% in 1998/99 to 17% in 2008/09. The rate of 17% in 2008/09 is again above the UK average of 13%.

The combined measure of low income and material deprivation for children was first estimated in 2004/05. In 2004/05 the rate here was 21% and by 2008/09 there had been no significant decrease in this rate (20%). Over the period 2002/03 to 2008/09 the rate of mixed low income and material deprivation here has been consistently above the rate for the UK as a whole.

Children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are often more vulnerable to poverty and its effects.

In relation to education outcomes for primary school children disadvantaged primary schools⁴ have worse outcomes in relation to English and Mathematics

⁴ A disadvantaged primary school is defined as having at least 25% of children entitled to free school meals

than schools that are less disadvantaged. In 2008/09, 72% of pupils in disadvantaged primary schools achieved level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 English compared to 80% of children in less disadvantaged schools. For Mathematics comparable figures were 74% and 81% respectively⁵. Education outcomes for the looked after children population were worse again in comparison to the general school population. For Key Stage 2 assessments, 34% and 37% of eligible, looked after children, attained Level 4 or above in English and Maths respectively. General school population figures were 80% and 81% respectively (Children in Care in Northern Ireland 2008/09 Statistical Bulletin, 2010).

There remains a significant difference in the outcomes of all children and those from disadvantaged backgrounds in terms of attainment at GCSE level. Being in receipt of free school meals is a recognised indicator of disadvantage and in 2008/09 approximately six out of every ten children (57%) in year 12 entitled to free school meals achieved less than five GCSEs A*-C grade, compared to 30% of all year 12 children⁶.

In 2008/09, almost 16% of children looked after attained five or more GCSE/GNVQ at grades A* to C compared with 71% of the general school population in Northern Ireland and 15% of Looked after Children in England. (Children in Care in Northern Ireland 2008/09 Statistical Bulletin, 2010).

The Department of Health, Social Services, and Public Safety (DHSSPS) monitor inequalities in health between people living in deprived areas and NI as a whole. As in the rest of the UK, health outcomes for people living in deprived areas here are generally worse than country wide averages. Life expectancy at birth is the average number of years that newborns might expect to live if current mortality conditions persist for the rest of their lives. Boys born in deprived areas in the period 2006-2008 have a life expectancy of 72 years compared to 76.4 years for NI as a whole and for girls comparable figures were 78.7 years and 81.3 years respectively.

⁵ Key Stage 2 Assessments, DE

⁶ School Leavers Survey, DE

The infant mortality rate in deprived areas was 5.9 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2008. Here overall, the comparable figure was 5.2 deaths per 1,000 live births.

The proportion of Primary 1 school children that were obese was 5.0% across NI as a whole in 2007/08 and 5.6% across deprived areas here.

In relation to poor housing conditions in 2006⁷, 15% of households with children lived in homes that failed the Decent Homes Standard. Although this level was below the level for all households (21%) it is still of concern that a significant proportion of our children live in poor housing as measured by the Decent Homes Standard. However, since April 2008, all new build social housing has been built to a minimum of level 3 of the code for sustainable homes. This means that these houses are 25% more energy efficient. We are also building more houses with over 1800 new social houses started in 2009/10.

Twenty-seven per cent of households with children were living in fuel poverty in 2006. As with the proportion of households with children living in non Decent Homes the level of fuel poverty among households with children is below the level for all households (34%) and that for pensioners (50%).

In 2009, approximately one in five children (18%) here live in households in which no adult is in employment⁸. As employment is the best route out of poverty for most people this is a worrying level. Furthermore over recent years this proportion has increased from a low of 11% in 2007.

In light of these statistics, the Executive recognises the need to take specific action to reduce child poverty. This is outlined in the Programme for Government (PFG) and particularly the associated Public Service Agreement (PSA) 7, 'Making People's Lives Better'. This contains specific actions aimed

⁷ Northern Ireland House Condition Survey, 2006, NIHE

⁸ Labour Force Survey household datasets, 2009, 2007

at providing for measurable reductions in the levels of poverty and particularly child poverty.

2.34 THE NEED FOR A CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

There exists a significant amount of research and statistical evidence base including, for example, research published by OFMDFM⁹, and the considered and detailed Child Poverty Enquiry report produced by the OFMDFM Committee enquiry into child poverty. All of the issues emerging from this evidence base confirms the real need to tackle this issue here and has subsequently helped to form the drivers for our framework.

The Child Poverty Act was enacted on 25th March 2010 and the legislation places a statutory obligation on the Executive to develop a three year child poverty strategy. There is a further statutory obligation for all Executive departments to contribute to the strategy which will be reported on annually and kept under review.

This legislation has been introduced at an opportune time to enhance the Executive's existing commitment to improving the life chances of all children and young people here so that they are supported to reach their full potential. We recognise that poverty can act as a barrier for children and young people to achieve everything they aspire to and if we are to deliver the aims of the overarching 10 year Strategy for Children and Young People, as described in para 2.41 and deliver on our PFG commitments then child poverty is a fundamental issue which the Executive remains committed to addressing.

⁹ For example see "The consequences of childhood disadvantage in Northern Ireland at age 5, Sullivan et al, Institute of Education London, 2010" and "Child and Family Poverty in Northern Ireland McLaughlin and Monteith, 2006", These and other relevant research is available on the OFMDFM website at <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/equality/equalityresearch/research-publications/publication-az.htm#anc-c>

2.4 POLICY AND LEGISLATION

The development of a Child Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland sits within the context of existing policy and legislation. Some of the key policies which relate to this strategy are detailed below.

2.41 THE 10 YEAR STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, 'OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – OUR PLEDGE'

By working towards the eradication of child poverty, we can make lives better for those children and young people who experience poverty and provide every opportunity for them to excel and realise their own ambitions. The Executive remains committed to improving outcomes for all children and young people here so that they fulfil their potential. This is outlined in the Executive's 10 year Strategy for Children and Young People, 'Our children and Young People – Our Pledge', which aims to deliver improved outcomes in 6 key areas;

- Healthy
- Enjoying, learning and achieving
- Living in safety and with stability
- Experiencing economic and environmental well-being
- Contributing positively to community and society
- Living in a society which respects their rights

Evidence would suggest that poverty can impact on all of these areas. It can contribute to the health and well-being, education and future potential of children and young people and without support and intervention, many children living in poverty or at risk of poverty may not achieve their full potential.

This in itself can create a cycle; as put simply, children now are the parents of the future. By providing support and intervention to tackle poverty affecting our children today, they in turn will be able to provide opportunities for their children to achieve everything they aspire to without the barriers poverty may

create. This places an emphasis on early intervention which supports the underpinning theme of the 10 Year Strategy.

The 10 Year Strategy for Children and Young People also recognises the need to take action and target interventions to meet the needs of those children and their families who need our help most. In considering this we cannot ignore the impacts of poverty on children and young people with disabilities. **The UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities**, particularly articles 27 and 28, outline the need to ensure this group are not prohibited from fulfilling their right to work or to achieve an adequate standard of living, both of which relate to, impact on and can be affected by poverty.

To contribute to fulfilling our objectives under ‘Our Children and Young people – Our Pledge’ and particularly the economic and environmental well-being outcome, this Child Poverty Strategy intends to improve the lives of children and young people and their families through the eradication of child poverty.

2.42 THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC)

This Child Poverty Strategy intends to progress the rights of children and young people as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and particularly articles 26 and 27 of this convention:

- UNCRC Article 26

‘State Parties shall recognise for every child the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realisation of this right in accordance with their national law’

‘The benefits should, where appropriate, be granted, taking into account the resources and the circumstances of the child and persons having responsibilities for the maintenance of the child, as well as any other consideration relevant to an applicant for the benefits made by or on behalf of the child’.

- UNCRC Article 27

‘State Parties recognise the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual and social development’.

‘The parent(s) or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capabilities, the conditions of living necessary for the child’s development’.

‘State Parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing’.

‘State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to secure the recovery of maintenance for the child from the parents or other persons having financial responsibility for the child, both within the State Party and from abroad. In particular, where the person having financial responsibility for the child lives in a state different from that of the child, State Parties shall promote the accession to international agreements or the conclusions of such agreements, as well as the making of other appropriate arrangements’.

The concluding observations issued by the UN Committee in October 2008, following an examination of the UK State Party also made a number of recommendations specific to child poverty which includes:

- Allocating the maximum extent of resources for the implementation of children’s rights, with a special focus on eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities across all jurisdictions;
- Avoiding that children are taken into care as a result of parental low income;

- Adopting and adequately implementing the legislation aimed at achieving the target of ending child poverty by 2020, including by establishing measurable indicators for their achievement;
- Giving priority in legislation and in the follow up actions to those children and their families in most need of support; and
- When necessary, besides giving full support to parents or others responsible for the child, intensify its efforts to provide material assistance and support programmes for children, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.

2.43 LIFETIME OPPORTUNITIES (LTO) – ANTI-POVERTY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

Lifetime Opportunities LTO has been formally adopted by the Executive as its overarching strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion here and work is being progressed in this regard. The child poverty strategy will take account of work that is being advanced through LTO.

www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/antipovertyandsocialinclusion.pdf

LTO adopts a 'lifecycle' approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion recognising that in order to prevent a 'cycle' of deprivation persisting through generations, issues affecting early years, children and young persons are crucial and these are two of the identified lifecycle stages.

The *Lifetime Opportunities Monitoring Framework Baseline Report* published on 14th October 2010, presents a range of statistical targets and indicators in support of the Executive's anti-poverty and social-inclusion strategy 'Lifetime Opportunities'.

Building on similar developments at EU and UK levels but designed to reflect local circumstances, the Monitoring Framework is structured around three 'layers' comprised of:

- Child poverty targets including the three poverty measures of: relative income poverty; absolute income poverty and mixed low income and material deprivation poverty
- A basket of poverty and social exclusion indicators covering: income inequality and income poverty; economic activity; education and qualifications; health; and housing
- Selected Public Service Agreement targets outlined in the *Programme for Government* (2008 to 2011) supportive of the aims and objectives of 'Lifetime Opportunities'.

This framework will also facilitate the reporting requirements under the Child Poverty Act. The report is available on the OFMDFM Research Branch website at: www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/equality/equalityresearch/research-publications/esn-pubs/publications_2010.htm

2.44 DRAFT NORTHERN IRELAND ECONOMIC STRATEGY

The Executive took the important step of making the economy the top priority in the Programme for Government (PfG). We committed to growing a dynamic and innovative economy, with the private sector contributing more to wealth creation than it has to date. Important progress has been made, but it is clear that more needs to be done. Furthermore, the recession has also meant that the overarching economic goals contained in the PfG will now take longer to achieve than first envisaged.

In response to the recommendations made in the Independent Review of Economic Policy, a sub-committee to prioritise action on the economy and oversee the production of an economic strategy for NI was set up. The sub-committee is chaired by the DETI Ministers, and consists of other Ministers involved in key aspects of economic development policy (the Ministers of DRD, DEL, DFP, DE and the Junior Ministers from OFMDFM).

The intention of the sub-committee had been to significantly develop the economic strategy by the end of this year. However, the outcome of the UK Government exercise into rebalancing the local economy has the potential to significantly influence the content of the economic strategy. In light of this, there will be a two-stage consultation process with the first phase designed to gauge the views of stakeholders on the proposed framework for the economic strategy that the Executive sub-committee has drawn up. The second phase will follow as early as possible in 2011, and this will also reflect the outcome of the UK Government's consultation on rebalancing the local economy.

The framework for economic growth aims to incorporate the twin goals of rebalancing the economy towards higher value added private sector activity, and the need to undertake a more immediate rebuilding phase, to address the impact of the global downturn on the local economy and labour market.

The Executive believes that the central focus to deliver on these challenges should be to drive export-led economic growth. Encouraging exports and supporting firms in doing business outside of NI will provide access to larger and more sophisticated markets. Exploiting such opportunities will enable the private sector to grow and increase wealth and employment and help contribute to improving society's wider social and equality concerns.

2.45 FAMILIES MATTER STRATEGY

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety's (DHSSPS) regional family and parenting strategy – Families Matter (see link below), launched in March 2009, provides the recognised priority needed in respect of early intervention and prevention services to support all families to parent confidently and responsibly and help give their children the best start in life and to realize their potential.

The importance of appropriate prevention and early intervention services for parents particularly in the first three years of a child's life should not be under-

estimated. Evidence shows that effective support at this key time for all families will secure outcomes for children in later years in relation for example to health, social well-being, educational attainment, access to employment as well as reduction in child abuse, prevention of offending and better management of challenging behaviours.

Early intervention also needs to occur with older children when parents and families are facing particular stresses and pressures and so contribute to supporting parents and help prevent family breakdown.

The Families Matter strategy focuses on the availability of appropriate information about family support and access to local services for all families as well as more targeted services for families who are experiencing particular difficulties.

In particular, the Families Matter strategy promotes parenting education and parenting support which helps families deal with a range of issues including financial and debt management which can adversely impact on families and how they cope. Parenting education also provides information regarding childcare options and issues for working parents which help support parents' participation in the workplace and contribute to governments overall drive to tackle poverty.

The strategy also supports the establishment and publicising of a Regional Family Support database to enable parents to quickly enquire about and access the parenting and family support services available in their local area.

The Families Matter strategy complements and supports the OFMDFM "Our Children and Young People, Our Pledge" strategy, focusing upon the need for

- Parenting Support
- Early Intervention
- Preventative Services
- Partnership, Inter-sectoral and Cross-Departmental working

- An Integrated approach to the delivery of family Support
- The promotion of the UNOCINI Assessment tool as a means of appropriately identifying childrens' and young people's needs taking account of Family and Environmental factors, including Housing, Employment and Income

In addition DHSSPS *Priorities for Action 2010/11*(see link below) states the following:-

- Family support interventions (PSA 5.1): by March 2011, the HSC Board and Trusts should provide family support interventions to 3,000 children in vulnerable families each year many of whose difficulties can be compounded by low family income and poverty.
- Improve the Health Status of the Population and Reduce Health Inequalities (PSA 1): by March 2011, the Public Health Agency should ensure that the updated Child Health Promotion Programme is fully implemented. By this date all families will receive an updated programme which provides support for all and identifies need at the earliest opportunity.

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/families_matter_strategy.pdf

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/microsoft_word_-_priorities_for_action_2010-11.pdf

2.46 DRAFT EARLY YEARS 0-6 STRATEGY

The purpose of the new Strategy is to set out a vision and plan for ensuring better outcomes for children by improving the provision and quality of services to the youngest children, their parents and families for the next 5 years.

The draft Early Years (0-6) Strategy document sets out a proposed vision, aims and Objectives that will link the range of early years' services for children (0-4) from Education and Health with the new Foundation Stage in the first years of Primary School. It will reflect the drive for cohesion in the policies and services affecting early years so that children and parents get the best outcomes possible.

2.47 EVERY SCHOOL A GOOD SCHOOL

There is a powerful and untenable relationship between underachievement and socio-economic disadvantage. It is recognised that for a number of reasons, many children and young people will experience greater difficulties in learning and progressing than their peers. These children may be experiencing social or personal circumstances such as child poverty or special educational needs which may create a barrier to learning. These barriers to learning and the additional needs they present need to be taken into account and appropriate interventions put in place if the children and young people are to fulfil their individual potential. Tackling barriers to learning combined with high expectations for all learners is one of the keys to raising overall educational outcomes.

The Department of Education's policies are therefore designed to operate in an integrated and coordinated fashion. In relation to raising standards there are a number of key policies which contribute to this such as Every School a Good School which is the over-arching policy for raising standards and tackling under achievement.

Every School a Good School – a policy for school improvement (ESaGS) was launched in April 2009 and is the Department of Education's overarching policy for raising standards and tackling underachievement. ESaGS is a pupil-centred policy and is based on the premise that every school is capable of improvement and that schools themselves are best placed to identify areas for improvement and to implement changes that can bring about better outcomes for pupils.

“The ESaGS policy reflects that too often, underachievement is related to socio-economic disadvantage and compounded by poverty of aspiration; it therefore stresses the importance of having high expectations for every child and promoting a culture of aspiration and achievement. While the challenge may be greater for schools serving disadvantaged communities, we also know that schools in similar circumstances are already achieving good outcomes for their pupils. The challenge is to share and embed this good practice, and the

characteristics of a good school (identified as child-centred provision, high quality teaching and learning, effective leadership and a school connected to its community), in all our schools”.

The policy therefore puts a clear focus on high-quality support to help schools improve and to help teachers overcome the various barriers to learning faced by children in the classrooms. There will also be a need for more-formal intervention in cases where inspection evidence shows that provision is less than satisfactory to safeguard the educational interests of pupils.

Other key policies include the Entitlement Framework, the introduction of a new curriculum, the ending of academic selection, the forthcoming Early Years Strategy and the Pre-School Expansion Programme. The department also has a range of key policies designed to tackle barriers to learning including, for example, the SEN and Inclusion Policy which is under development, Sure Start, Extended Schools and Full Service Schools Policies, the forthcoming Priorities for Youth as well as policies to address newcomer, Traveller and Roma/Gypsy children. In addition DE has a range of support initiatives for meals, uniforms and transport.

These policies are designed to complement each other and to produce a framework of policies which will enable the department to deliver its vision of ensuring that every learner fulfils his or her full potential at each stage of development.

2.48 LITERACY AND NUMERACY STRATEGY

A revised literacy and numeracy strategy will be launched in autumn 2010. It aims to raise overall literacy and numeracy standards and close the gaps between the highest and lowest achievers and the most and least disadvantaged pupils. The strategy sets out how teachers will be supported in ensuring pupils develop the literacy and numeracy skills that are fundamental to their education and future employment prospects. Literacy and numeracy are at the heart of the

revised curriculum and its assessment arrangements. The strategy will stress the importance of early intervention to address underachievement and to support pupils with special educational needs or who face barriers to learning (such as disadvantage). It will also emphasise the importance of linking with parents, families and communities to support pupils to help them support their children.

2.49 FUEL POVERTY STRATEGY

The Fuel Poverty Strategy provides the overall policy context for Government to eradicate fuel poverty, and the direction for all our partners to help achieve that aim. Northern Ireland has the highest rate of fuel poverty in the UK, with 1 in 3 households suffering its effects. Fuel poverty damages health and social well being, and those who suffer most are people in vulnerable groups. Through this Strategy, Government highlights its commitment to tackling this problem by addressing each of its main causes: high fuel costs, low income and poor energy efficiency.

2.50 NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL

This long term (7 – 10 year) strategy targets those communities here suffering the highest levels of deprivation. Neighbourhood Renewal is a cross government strategy and aims to bring together the work of all Government Departments in partnership with local people to tackle disadvantage and deprivation in all aspects of everyday life. Neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10% of wards across Northern Ireland were identified using the Multiple Deprivation Measure. Following extensive consultation, this resulted in a total of 36 areas, and a population of approximately 280,000 (one person in 6 here), being targeted for intervention. The areas include:

- 15 in Belfast,
- 6 in the North West, and
- 15 in other towns and cities across Northern Ireland.

Neighbourhood Partnerships have been established in each Neighbourhood Renewal Area as a vehicle for local planning and implementation. Each Neighbourhood Partnership should include representatives of key political, statutory, voluntary, community and private sector stakeholders. Together,

they have developed long term visions and action plans designed to address the underlying causes of poverty.

2.51 PLAY AND LEISURE POLICY STATEMENT

The Play and Leisure Policy Statement intends to highlight the value and benefits of play and deliver on the core aims of the 10 Year Strategy for Children and Young People and article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Its vision is '*To recognise, respect and resource play is to recognise, respect and value childhood*'. The policy recognises that particular groups of children, such as those in poverty and those with disabilities, may need additional support to gain maximum benefit from play.

2.52 DRAFT STRATEGY FOR COHESION, SHARING AND INTEGRATION

The public consultation exercise on the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration ran from 27 July 2010 until 29 October 2010. The document sets out a vision for a new era in which we work together to build a shared and better future, a future where fairness, equality, rights, responsibilities and respect are acknowledged and accepted by all. The aim of the Programme is to bring about positive changes for people of all ages throughout our society. These changes will include providing and expanding safe and shared spaces; creating a society where cultural diversity is celebrated; and tackling the conditions that lead to division and segregation. Empowering the next generation is a key aspect of the document and the Programme aims to address those issues that impact most on young people within our community.

2.52 RURAL PROOFING

All government departments have been required to rural proof their policies since 2002. Rural proofing is the process by which proposed policies are routinely and rigorously scrutinised, in the policy making process, to ensure both fair and equitable treatment of rural communities and that even with best intent, that a policy does not indirectly have a detrimental impact on rural dwellers and rural communities.

CHAPTER 3 – DRAFT EQUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OF THE CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

The four strategic priorities of the Child Poverty strategy are:

- 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 be in work that pays
- Ensure the child's environment supports them to thrive
- Target financial support to be responsive to family situations

This draft Equality Impact Assessment carried out at a strategic level considers the impacts which may be associated with these strategic priorities.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires all public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between –

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependants and persons without.

In addition, without prejudice to the above obligation, public authorities must also, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The Executive has determined that the strategic priorities as set out in the Child Poverty Strategy should be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment carried out at a strategic level to fulfil its obligations under the Act.

Public authorities within NI have a statutory duty to produce an equality scheme and undertake screenings and Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) were required.

The equality assessment of the strategic priorities below builds on the equality implications of the policy and measures contained within the Child Poverty Strategy and wider research into poverty and social exclusion.

The Child Poverty Strategy establishes the strategic framework that aims to eradicate child poverty by 2020 but the reduction of child poverty is the responsibility of all departments. The Strategy sets the strategic direction and key measures which departments will pursue over the next three years but does not contain a list of all programmes and policies which departments will pursue. The Child Poverty Strategy is set at the strategic level therefore the focus of the assessment of the potential equality and good relations implications of the strategy is appropriately at the strategic level. It aims to consider the overall impacts which may be associated with the strategic priorities of the Strategy.

The delivery of policies and programmes at the departmental level will be informed by the outcome of this assessment. However, recognising the strategic focus of the Strategy, the equality impact of individual policies, and programmes which departments will delivery will not be considered here. These will continue to be subject to equality screening and, where appropriate and in line with the statutory duty, full EQIA by departments. Details of NI Government Departments' equality schemes and any EQIAs relevant to the strategic priorities contained within the Child Poverty Strategy can be found on the relevant Departmental website.

The analysis of the potential strategic level impacts of the strategic priorities as set out in the Child Poverty Strategy has led the Executive to propose that the delivery of its priorities has the potential to provide benefits across all the equality categories identified by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and would have no detrimental impacts on any one group. In particular, it is considered that there is the potential for positive impacts to accrue to the following Section 75 groups:

- persons of different religious belief;
- political belief;
- racial group;
- age;
- marital status;
- sexual orientation;
- men and women;
- persons with disabilities; and
- persons with dependants.

These potential positive impacts result primarily from the focus of the Executive's Child Poverty Strategy on addressing the barriers to tackling poverty experienced by children and their families.

Any equality implications arising from a specific Departmental action are the responsibility of that Department and any queries relating to the equality implications should be directed to the relevant Department. Queries relating to the equality assessment of the strategic objectives should be directed to OFMDFM.

The strategic equality impact assessment is summarised below.

Child Poverty Strategy Strategic Objectives: to meet the 2020 poverty targets, and to minimise socio-economic disadvantage for children

Section 75 Group	Equality positive reduce differentials for;	Rationale
Religious belief	Children in Roman Catholic households	Due to higher risk of poverty than the population as a whole and in comparison to Protestants.
Political opinion	Children in nationalist households and in households that did not state a political preference	The Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey NI indicated that the persons with the referenced political affiliations had the highest rates of poverty.
Racial group	Children in ethnic minorities / Irish Traveller households	Data from GB indicates that ethnic minorities are at high risk of poverty. There is no comparable NI data. Irish Traveller households have high levels of disadvantage in for example employment, economic activity, and accommodation needs.

Section 75 Group	Equality positive reduce differentials for;	Rationale
Age	Children in households headed by younger people	Younger adults with children at higher risk of poverty.
Marital status	Children in single / widowed / divorced households	Children in lone parent households at higher risk of poverty.
Sexual orientation	Unclear however equality impact is likely to range from neutral to positive	There is a lack of data in this area and problems associated with sampling error, although one major comprehensive study in the US found gay men were at a higher risk of poverty. There is no comparable NI data.
Men and women generally	Children in households headed by single females	Lone parents as above.
Persons with a disability and those without	Children living in households headed by adults with a disability	Higher risk of living in a household in poverty.
Persons with children and those without	Not applicable	Not Applicable as Strategy relates to children.

Rural proofing

Enhanced proposals for rural proofing were agreed by the Executive in July 2009 to ensure that proposed policies are routinely and rigorously scrutinised, in the policy making process, to ensure both fair and equitable treatment of rural communities and that even with the best intent, that a policy does not indirectly have a detrimental impact on rural communities.

The four strategic priorities of the Child Poverty strategy are:

- 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 be in work that pays
- Ensure the child's environment supports them to thrive
- Target financial support to be responsive to family situations

This draft Rural Proofing assessment carried out at a strategic level considers the impacts which may be associated with these strategic priorities.

The rural proofing analysis is summarised below but having considered any impact of the strategic priorities, the Executive has proposed that the delivery of the child poverty strategy has the potential to provide benefits across all areas and there is therefore unlikely to be any rural specific impact at this stage.

Policy Stage	Rural issues
Design	The draft child poverty strategy intends to provide the opportunity for all our children and young people to thrive and to address the causes and consequences of disadvantage. The strategy is intended to contribute to meeting the child poverty targets as outlined in the Child Poverty Act 2010 and whilst it is recognised that poverty exists in both urban and rural areas, the strategy intends to outline how the Executive will address child poverty regardless of where children live. The strategy is a high level document setting the strategic

	<p>direction for tackling child poverty in Northern Ireland. It is not therefore expected to have specific rural or additional impacts that will differ from the regional impact. However further consideration will be given to the rural impacts when developing the delivery plan for the strategy.</p> <p>As there are no specific rural impacts identified at this stage, it is proposed to screen out the document .</p>
Evidence	<p>Evidence exists to suggest that poverty exists both in urban and rural areas. The Household below average income survey NI includes a number of statistics around poverty, including rural poverty. These statistics and emerging research will be used to inform the development of the delivery plan to ensure rural issues are considered in identifying key initiative and signature projects.</p>
Consulting	<p>Any rural impacts identified as part of the consultation will be considered in finalising the child poverty strategy.</p>
Monitoring and outcomes	<p>Monitoring and outcomes will be considered in developing the delivery plan and monitoring framework.</p>

CHAPTER 4 – CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire aims to provide you with an opportunity to comment on the draft Child Poverty Strategy which sets out the Northern Ireland Executive's vision for tackling child poverty and improving the lives of children and their families. It should be completed in association with the consultation document.

Additional copies of both this questionnaire and the consultation document can be obtained from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister by:

Telephone 028 90 523194
Fax 028 90 523272
Text phone 028 90 522526
Emailing policysec@ofmdfmi.gov.uk

Writing to: Policy Secretariat
OFMDFM
Room E3.19
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SR

The documents can also be viewed and downloaded from the OFMDFM website at www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk or the NI Direct Website at www.nidirect.gov.uk

Alternative formats of the document can also be made available on request and you should forward any such requests using one of the methods detailed above.

Responses must be received no later than 6th February 2011 and should be posted to the above address or emailed to childpovertystrategy@ofmdfmi.gov.uk

Please note that all responses will be treated as public, and may be published on the OFMDFM website. If you do not want your response to be used in this way, or if you would prefer it to be used anonymously, please indicate this when responding (see Statement of Confidentiality and Access to Information Legislation at the end of the document).

Following consideration of all responses, a report will be published on the OFMDFM website www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk

A number of consultation events will also be held during the consultation period and details of these will be available on the OFMDFM website.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and for giving us your views.

Appendix 1

Organisations that attended the stakeholder workshop event in Grosvenor House on 23 September 2010.

Organisation
Artillery Youth Centre
Association for Spina bifida & Hydrocephalus
Atlantic Philanthropies
Barnardo's
Belfast City Council
Belfast Health Development Unit
Carers Uk Belfast Branch
CINI
Community Foundation for Northern Ireland - Communities in transition programme
Consumer Council
Contact a Family
Department of Culture Arts and Leisure
Department for Agriculture and Rural Development
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Department of Finance and Personnel
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Disability Action
Department of the Environment
Department of Justice
Department for Regional Development
Department for Social Development
Employers for Childcare
Fermanagh District Council
Integrated Services for Children and Young people
Ionad Uibh Eachach
Irish League of Credit Unions
Law Centre NI
NCB Northern Ireland
National Deaf Children's Society
Newry and Mourne District Council
NICCY
NICVA
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Parents Advice Centre
Parents Advice Centre (Parenting Forum NI)
Participation Network
Playboard NI
Public Achievement

Queen's University
Salvation Army
Save the Children
Shelter NI
The Princes Trust
Upper Springfield Development
West Belfast Partnership Board
Women's Resource & Development Agency
Woman's Support Network

Appendix 2 Draft EQIA Information Sources

Democratic Dialogue (2003): *Bare Necessities Poverty and Social Exclusion in Northern Ireland – Key Findings*. Democratic Dialogue, Belfast

DSD (2009, 2010): *Households Below Average Income Northern Ireland 2007/008, 2008/09*. Department for Social Development, Belfast

DSD (2010): *Family Resources Survey 2008/09*. Department for Social Development, Belfast

DWP (2010): *Households Below Average Income 2008/09*. Department for Work and Pensions, London.

DETI: *Labour Force Survey Quarterly Supplement Winter Various*. Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment, Belfast.

DETI: *NI Labour Market Report Various*. Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment, Belfast.

DETI: *Women in Northern Ireland*. Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment, Belfast.

JRF (2004): *Routes out of Poverty, A Research Review*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York.

ECNI (2007): *Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland*. Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Belfast.

EHRC (2008): *Sexual Orientation Research Review*. Equality and Human Rights Commission, Manchester.

DHSSPS (2009): *Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Inequalities Monitoring System: Third Update Bulletin*. Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Belfast.

NIHE (2002): *Travellers accommodation 2002 Needs Assessment in Northern Ireland*, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Belfast

OFMDFM (2003): *A Response to the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers*. Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, Belfast

OFMDFM (2010): *2009 Labour Force Survey Religion Report Update*. Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, Belfast

OFMDFM (2005): *Labour Market Dynamics*. Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, Belfast

OFMDFM (2007): *Indicators of Equality and Diversity in Northern Ireland*. Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, Belfast

OFMDFM (2010): *Lifetime Opportunity Monitoring Framework: Baseline Report*. Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, Belfast

Information Sources; Internet

NI Departmental websites.

www.jrf.org.uk

www.nisra.gov.uk

www.nicensus2001.gov.uk

www.statistics.gov.uk

Appendix 3 Glossary of Terms

Child: Under the Child Poverty Act a "Child" means

(a) a person under the age of 16, or

(b) a person who is a qualifying young person for the purposes of Part 9 of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 or Part 9 of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 (child benefit), in other words if a parent is entitled to or in receipt of child benefit.

Under the Family Resources Survey a child is defined as those aged under 16 years or aged 16-19 years in full-time education.

Child Absolute Income Poverty: Child absolute income poverty is the proportion or number of children who live in income poor households based on the income poverty line for 1998/99 for the Lifetimes Opportunities Strategy and for 2010 for the Child Poverty Act.

Child Relative Income Poverty Measure: Child relative income poverty is the proportion or number of children who live in households below the income poverty line in each year. Income is net equivalised before housing costs.

Child Mixed Low Income and Material Deprivation Measure: A child is defined as poor on this measure if the household in which they live has an income below 70% of the contemporary UK median household in which they live has a material deprivation score of 25 or more reflected by enforced lack of adult and child goods and services. . Income is net equivalised before housing costs.

Decent Homes Standard: To set national targets and provide for standardised measurement of housing conditions a common definition of Decent Home Standard is needed. A home meeting the Decent Home Standard is one which meets modern standards of fitness, structure, energy efficiency and facilities. Further details are provided at the link below:

http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/about-us-home/our_objectives/decent_homes_standard.htm

Equivalised: Equivalisation is the process by which household income is adjusted to account for the variation in household size and composition.

Food Poverty: Food Poverty has been defined as the inability to acquire or consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so –
PROVIDED BY DHSSPS

Fuel Poverty: A fuel poor household is one that spends more than 10% of household income on fuel.

Index of Multiple Deprivation: The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 is made up from 52 indicators mostly relating to the period 2007-2009. The indicators are grouped into seven types or 'domains' of deprivation weighted as follows:

Income Deprivation 25%

Employment Deprivation 25%

Health Deprivation and Disability 15%

Education, Skills and Training Deprivation 15%

Proximity to Services 10%

Living Environment 5%

Crime and Disorder 5%

Looked After Children: Provided by DHSSPS - **The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 interprets any reference to a “Looked after Child” as a child who is looked after by an authority and who is in the care of the authority, or provided with accommodation by the authority.**

“Accommodation” means accommodation which is provided for a continuous period of more than 24 hours.

Median/Average: Median Household income is the income level for the household that is in the middle of the distribution. In other words half of all households in the UK have an income above the median income and half have an income below the median income. Along with the mean and the mode the median represents 3 measures of central tendency or averages.

NEETS: Those not in Education, employment or training.

Workless household: A workless household is one in which no adults work. A mixed household is one in which at least one but not all adults work. A work rich household is one in which all adults work.

Additional copies of both the questionnaire and this consultation document can be obtained from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister by:

Telephone 028 90 523194
Fax 028 90 523272
Text phone 028 90 522526
Emailing policysec@ofmdfmi.gov.uk

Writing to: Policy Secretariat, OFMDFM, Room E3.19, Castle Buildings,
Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SR

The documents can also be viewed and downloaded from the OFMDFM website at www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk or the NI Direct Website at www.nidirect.gov.uk. Alternative formats of the document can be made available on request and you should forward any such requests using one of the methods detailed above.

