



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Council response to OFMDFM 'Delivering Social Change for Children and Young People' consultation
<b>Date:</b>	21 March 2014
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<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inform Members of the consultation exercise by OFMDFM on Delivering Social Change for Children and Young People (DSC CYP); and</li><li>• Seek approval subject to committee amendments or additions and retrospective Council ratification on the draft officer response due for submission on 31 March 2014 (Originally 5 February 2014).</li></ul>
1.2	<p>The stated purpose of the DSC CYP document is to provide 'an integrated policy framework encompassing policy on children and young people, including child poverty and children's rights' bringing together the Executive's commitment to reducing child poverty and delivering improved outcomes for all children and young people and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Represents the Executive's child poverty strategy as required under the Child Poverty Act 2010;</li><li>• Providing the required annual Child poverty report to the Assembly;</li><li>• Delivers its commitments under the Our children and young people – our pledge, the Executive's ten year strategy for children 2006-16; and</li><li>• Further implements its obligations under the UNCRC rights of the child.</li></ul>
1.3	<p>The Strategy proposes a broad remit in that the 'Delivering Social change for Children and Young People' following consultation will be 'laid in the assembly, providing the annual progress report on the measures under the Child Poverty Act and a strategy which brings together all the policies and strategies dealing with child poverty and improving children's lives' for those that need it most.</p>
1.4	<p>The consultation exercise was circulated by Council policy officers to form departmental responses and the Young Person's version was shared with members of the youth forum.</p>

1.5	The document has four main areas to be considered which are the vision and outcomes; report on progress for the Child Poverty Act; a proposed way forward using an outcome based approach and proposals for governance.
1.6	The draft response (attached at Appendix 1) generally welcomes the desire and direction to provide a clear focus on child poverty and the attempt to integrate a joined up approach across the Executive departments. However, there are instances where further clarity and involvement from the council would benefit the framework; these have been outlined in this report.
1.7	<p>Council has an agreed position and vision for children and young people and tackling poverty and disadvantage reflected throughout the response and summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and Young People (CYP) are a corporate priority and an outcomes framework is being embedded in the development of the council's CYP services, refining implementation for transition through local government reform (LGR) and transformation corporately towards community planning in 2017. In so doing, the council's approach is aligned with the global and regional direction for promoting the rights of the child;</li> <li>• The Investment Programme for Belfast sets out the council's commitment to deliver for the city, through a prospectus for partnership, to help its citizens realise their potential and focus on reducing inequalities and tackling disadvantage;</li> <li>• As part of the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge which focused on the issue of persistent deprivation and poverty, the council is committed to creating a collaborative environment (and management system) with clear accountability and leadership to implement an evidence-based decision-making model;</li> <li>• Council is an active partner in addressing poverty and disadvantage through the Belfast Strategic Partnership and the delivery of the Framework for Tackling Life Inequalities. The Council is a key partner in the development of an action plan to tackle health inequalities and promote an active Belfast;</li> <li>• Council recognises that a strategic and inclusive approach is essential to maximise the level of impact and resources required to tackle elements of poverty. This was endorsed at a Civic Forum on Poverty hosted by The Lord Mayor in January 2014. Key themes discussed included: employment &amp; jobs, fuel poverty, food poverty and finance. The feedback from this event is currently being analysed to inform the way forward and provides the opportunity to revisit the Council's existing Framework on Tackling Poverty and Social Inequalities.</li> <li>• As part of its Leisure Transformation Programme, the council is committed to investing £105 million over the next ten years, to transform the leisure centres across the city to ensure that they are modern fit for purpose, attractive and welcoming. The transformation programme marks the biggest change to the council's leisure provision since the 1970s and is a unique opportunity to provide services that will help drive health, social and economic outcomes for the city. The Leisure Transformation Programme will therefore contribute greatly to the strategy's third outcome, 'Children and families thrive and have a healthy future' and further collaboration is welcomed in this area.</li> <li>• Council is a key delivery agent within the Together; Building a United Community strategy where an Action Plan for 2014-15 is in development;</li> <li>• Council is the lead partner with Policing and Community Safety Partnerships for a safer city;</li> <li>• Member led local area working has been implemented within the council in the last year and focuses on collaborative working to address all issues, primarily in areas of disadvantage and deprivation.</li> </ul>

1.8	The draft response reflects council's desire to work in partnership at every opportunity and to integrate our resources in order to ensure effective and collaborative delivery across Belfast. However there are areas we would welcome greater detail on to provide further clarity and inform how best we can become involved.
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<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p><b>Vision and outcomes</b> The document proposes a new vision which is "<i>that all children have the support and nurturing required to allow them to have a healthy, safe and active childhood and have access to quality education, which will provide them with the skills to gain employment and fulfil their potential as active engaged citizens</i>". The Council response recommends a reference to the rights of the child is included in the vision is added (this is already in the 10 year pledge). This is a fundamental tenet in the Council's approach to support children and young people in Belfast.</p>
2.2	<p>Council is a fully committed member of the current CYPSP Belfast outcomes group set up to deliver on 'Our children Our People Our Pledge 10 year strategy for children' (2006-16) and its 6 regionally agreed children and young people outcomes. We welcome further detail on the future status and governance hierarchy on this.</p>
2.3	<p>Given the broad remit proposed we welcome clarification on the level of accountability, roles and responsibilities and level of capacity being resourced to support the roll out of the approach across 11 new council districts in order to develop local government ownership of the outcomes and approach.</p>
2.4	<p>Council generally welcomes the outcomes in the document which can be traced back to the 6 regional outcomes in the CYPSP 10 year strategy however would note there is no hierarchy and some of the proposed outcomes suggest targeted benefit for all (Children and families thrive and have a healthy future) whilst others target those most in need (Children in poverty achieve good educational outcomes).</p>
2.5	<p>In the absence of any identified resources during the time of local government reform it may be useful to have a staged and resourced approach to developing the agreed outcomes.</p>
2.6	<p><b>Report on progress for the Child Poverty Act</b> The feedback on performance progress on child poverty identifies that absolute poverty continues to increase in spite of the interventions listed to date. The Council welcomes the opportunity for further involvement for greater alignment of efforts in Belfast to make a measurable difference especially in closing the gap for children and young people.</p>
2.7	<p>Members are aware of the DSC 6 signature projects and the additional 7 signature project which is the play and leisure plan (£1.6 million). Our response welcomes the play and leisure project and hopes to be able to influence how it is defined to shape its impact to meet the needs of Belfast. Officers have requested an update on the current position of this resource.</p>
2.8	<p><b>A proposed way forward using an outcomes based approach</b> An Outcomes approach is welcomed in principle however further involvement and information on whether or not the model meets the needs of all children and young</p>

	people and also whether or not it is most suitable for the sections of the community in greatest need e.g. traveller community is invited through a robust equality screening process.
2.9	<b>Governance, monitoring and reporting.</b> Whilst a fully co-ordinated approach to managing the outcomes is welcomed there is no detail on how the council and other partners will be supported to effectively capture, record and report the data to measure differences and performance at both a population and project level consistently.
2.10	Further commitment is encouraged on sharing data and making it publicly available and disaggregated to a local government district level (LGD2014). As a result of the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge, the Council is working with OFMDFM on developing a shared common metric around wellbeing which may be appropriate to incorporate as part of the strategy.
2.11	It is unclear how the strategy can practically be implemented into mainstream service delivery and the impact and resources involved. There is a heavy referencing of signature projects and other DSC initiatives which does not present how planning or accountability of all partners will be achieved.
2.12	The Council will support the delivery locally of OFMDFM's Together: Building A United Community Strategy which incorporates a series of targets relating to children and young people. This example and the various other CYP strategies or initiatives named in the progress report section of the document would benefit from a greater balance in the level of comment in the document to reflect the likely impact the proposals have on it and we would see this as an important gap to highlight in our response.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	There are no resource implications to report.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
4.1	OFMDFM have carried out a strategic level equality screening as part of the framework development; no relevant equality and good relations implications have been identified

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	Members are requested: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. To note the contents of the report and;</li> <li>ii. Following discussion agree any amendments or additions to finalise the Council's response and;</li> <li>iii. Agree for it to be submitted subject to retrospective Council ratification on the draft officer response by the submission date of 31 March 2014</li> </ul>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	CYP manager will ensure the final agreed response is submitted and monitor progress of the consultation.

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
BOG	Belfast Outcomes Group
DSC	Delivering Social Change
CYP	Children and Young People
CYPSP	Children and Young People Strategic Partnership
LGR	Local Government Reform
OFMDFM	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
TBUC	Together Building a United Community
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Appendix 1	Draft response document