

Executive Children and Young People's Strategy 2020 - 2030 – Delivery Plan April 2021 – March 2024 – Background information and Explanation

What is the Children and Young People's Strategy?

- The Children and Young People's Strategy is our plan for making life better for all children and young people in Northern Ireland and giving them the best start in life.
- This means providing good support and services for all children and young people, with extra help for children and young people who need more support or care in their lives.
- The Children and Young People's Strategy was developed over time by talking to a range of people and listening to what they thought mattered. This included many young people and other people who work to support them.
- The Children and Young People's Strategy was agreed by the leaders of the main local political parties in December 2020. It is now what is called an Executive Strategy. This means it is owned by all of government and not just any one part.

Why it was developed/What we plan to do

- The Children and Young People's Strategy was developed to help us make things better for children and young people by encouraging everyone to think of better ways of working together – this includes government departments, local councils, organisations that provide services to the public, voluntary and community groups, schools and youth organisations.
- If a child or young person needs help, we will look at how we can help them and their family, so that everyone works together to make life better for the child or young person.
- As part of this we will make sure that children and young people get to have a say about issues that affect them. Parents, guardians and carers will also be able to tell us what they think about things that affect their children.

How and why we are going to monitor what we do to improve the wellbeing of children and young people.

- On behalf of government we are going to publish a plan called a Children and Young People's Strategy Delivery Plan that tells people in detail what we will do to improve things for children and young people.

- To help us improve the wellbeing of children and young people we will keep checking whether or not things are getting better. This work will be overseen by a special group who will be responsible for making sure the actions in the Delivery Plan are happening and doing what they are supposed to do.

What part the delivery plan plays in our monitoring and reporting

- There are eight main things that we want for children and young people. We call these outcomes. The eight outcomes and what we mean by them are listed below, we want to ensure children and young people;
 - **Are physically and mentally healthy** – we want to make sure that every child and young person has the best possible physical and mental health and gets the right health care and help when they need it.
 - **Enjoy play and leisure** – we want to make sure that every child and young person has time and space to enjoy rest and fun activities. We want them to be able to play, enjoy their free time and take part in sport, culture and the arts. “Arts” means activities like music, drama, art and dance.
 - **Learn and achieve** – we want to give our children and young people the best education possible and develop their talents and skills so they are the best that they can be.
 - **Live in safety and stability** – we want all children and young people to be safe from harm in the place where they live including their home, in school and the areas they live and play in. We want all children and young people to feel safe and secure in the care of parents, guardians, carers and any other grown-ups who are responsible for looking after them.
 - **Experience economic and environmental well-being** – we want children and young people to have enough food and clothing and a decent place to live. We want them to be able to find jobs and be able to take care of themselves when they grow up. We want them to live in a country where the air, land and sea are not polluted.
 - **Make a positive contribution to society** – we want all children and young people to be able to say what they think about things that affect them and to know that their views will be listened to in school, at home, in their local area and by the people who are in charge and whose job it is to make decisions about things that affect children and young people’s lives.
 - **Live in a society which respects their rights** – all children and young people have rights. Rights are things that people are entitled to and they are set out in laws or agreements that the government has signed up to. Everyone has rights and everyone should respect the rights of other people.

- **Live in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted** - we want all children and young people to live in a country where everyone gets an equal chance and everyone can get along well together.
- As well as the outcomes, there are a number of areas which we will give particular focus and direct our efforts. They are issues which stakeholders have identified as requiring particular attention, or groups of children and young people identified as being in greatest need. It is our intention that these issues and groups of children and young people will be the focus of our efforts.
- We call these 'Areas of Greatest Focus'. We have included a list of these at the end of this document at [Annex A - Areas of greatest focus](#).
- The Delivery Plan has been created to show what actions we are taking to address these outcomes and for groups of children and young people that have been identified as requiring the greatest focus.
- The Delivery Plan has eight sections, one for each of the outcomes listed above. The Delivery Plan has many actions within it, some are things we are working on or planning to do while others are actions we are taking now.
- To decide if and how well the outcomes have been reached, we will be using indicators to measure and report progress in improving the well-being of children and young people.
- We will continue to monitor these indicators to find out if these actions are having an impact, how the outcomes are being achieved and if children and young people are better off as a result. We will also identify what actions are not working, taking action as and when needed.
- The Delivery Plan will be updated regularly to include new actions to help improve how we provide support and help for children and young people. Old actions will be removed.

How it may be used in future and how as part of the CYPS process we want to hear from young people.

- Reports will be clearly written so it can be easy to tell if the Strategy is making an impact.
- The Strategy will be reviewed regularly to help ensure that any new issues affecting children and young people will be taken into account.

- Once the Delivery Plan is completed and we have consulted with people to hear what they think we will update the plan and publish it on the Department of Education website.
- Through this process, we want to actively encourage and support children and young people to contribute to society and to ensure children and young people are part of the decision making and planning process on issues which affect them. We want to ensure children and young people's views are heard and that they are informed how their views have influenced or changed decisions and actions.

The questions we would like you to answer

- To help us with this work we have provided an online questionnaire which asks for your thoughts on the Delivery Plan and the actions it includes. We want to hear what you think.
- The reason we are asking the questions is to see what you think about the Delivery Plan, the main things we want to hear your views on are:
 - We think the Children and Young People's Strategy Delivery Plan shows how Government Actions will support improvements for each of the eight outcomes – by looking at the actions included in the Delivery Plan– how much would you agree or disagree with what we think?
 - Are there any actions missing from any of the eight outcomes in the Children and Young People's Strategy Delivery Plan?
 - We think the Children and Young People's Strategy Delivery Plan shows how government actions will support the Areas of Greatest Focus. By looking at the actions included in the Delivery Plan – how much would you agree or disagree with what we think?
 - We also want to hear whether or not you think the Delivery Plan and the documents we have provided are easy to read and if not what we could do to make them better.
 - The last question provides a space for you to add any other things you think we need to hear.

Annex A - Areas of greatest focus

The areas of greatest focus are all equally important and not in any order of priority.

Areas of Greatest Focus

1. Impact of the global pandemic.
2. Infants, early years and primary school: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• establishing health and wellbeing from the outset• the importance of play for infants' and young children's development
3. Nurture provision for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
4. Young people (teenagers): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• play and leisure opportunities• living in rural areas• youth homelessness• in need of education, employment and training
5. All children and young people's mental health and emotional well-being
6. Children and young people with a disability and/or complex health needs, including life limiting conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• improved services for them and their families• inclusive and tailored play and leisure opportunities• rights and equality of opportunity
7. Children and young people (and their families) living in poverty or in areas of deprivation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• improved economic well-being• better health outcomes• play and leisure opportunities• educational achievement• family homelessness
8. Improved experience for children and young people with Special Educational Needs
9. Improving educational and personal achievement of care experienced children and young people and providing stability in their lives
10. Improving educational support and the rights of Newcomers, Travellers and Roma children and young people for whom English is not their first language and/or who face racism. Promote diversity and mutual understanding.
11. Children and young people within or in contact with the justice system, or in custody: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• early intervention• support• educational achievement
12. Address bullying and Internet Safety for children and young people.
13. Children and young people under the threat of paramilitary intimidation or recruitment.

Areas of Greatest Focus

14. Children and young people experiencing neglect, sexual abuse or domestic violence and/or who are victims or at risk of sexual exploitation.
15. Supporting children and young people experiencing the impact of family breakdown.
16. Improving children and young people's access to the natural environment; and improving the quality of the environment in which they live, learn and play.
17. Extending youth work opportunities (youth organisations and groups).
18. Improving support for children and young people acting as carers.
19. Creating an environment where the 'Seldom heard voices' of children and young people can be heard.
20. Protect and promote the rights of all children and young people, and particularly those who <ul style="list-style-type: none">• are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual• identify as Transgender• who seek to practise their faith or who choose to have no faith
21. Promote diversity and mutual understanding and improve equality of opportunity for all children and young people and those most likely to experience inequality, including those who live in interface areas.