

HEAD OF POLICY ON POVERTY, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND DISABILITY

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Dear

ENGAGING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - ERADICATING CHILD POVERTY

I am writing to advise you about the work which OFMDFM is involved in to develop a Child Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland by 25 March 2011, and of my plans to engage with children and young people, their families and their representatives. I would like to hear your thoughts and their thoughts on the development of this important Government policy.

As you are probably aware the Child Poverty Bill gained Royal Assent on 25 March 2010 and is now law. The Act provides a statutory basis to the commitment made by the UK Government in 1999 to eradicate child poverty by 2020. A three-year UK wide strategy must be produced by March 2011 setting out the measures the Secretary of State proposes to take to meet the targets set out in the Act. We are also required to develop a child poverty strategy for Northern Ireland. The strategy will set out the actions that all Government Departments here are taking to contribute to meeting the targets in the Act and must be laid before the Assembly by 25 March 2011.

In preparing the strategy OFMDFM must consult the Secretary of State, children, parents and organisations working with or representing children or parents. We intend to have a three-month consultation from October to December 2010 and I plan to hold a number of stakeholder events across NI including events and engagements specifically with children and young people. These events will include workshops to allow stakeholders and children and young people to participate in the process and

will facilitate discussion on the content of the Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan.

In advance of the formal consultation period in October I intend to issue a draft outline discussion paper in July 2010 for your consideration over the summer months and early autumn. As part of a pre-consultation exercise I would also intend to engage with you, and with children and young people to listen to views and thoughts on the discussion paper and to plan the most effective and appropriate way that children and young people can participate in the formal consultation process. I am particularly keen to hear from those children and young people who are the most vulnerable and marginalised in our society and to hear from you how we can provide the support needed to engage effectively with these children during the participative process and obtain their valued input.

To help you inform young people within your organisation I have enclosed a flyer which you may wish to display on your premises or distribute to your members. I have also enclosed a proposed engagement model showing our planned route to what we hope will be an effective, meaningful and credible strategy.

I look forward to working with you and the children and young people within your organisation over the next few months. As I am sure you will agree it is vital that we hear directly from children and young people, their families and their representatives and I very much value their input and your input to the development of this important strategy.

If you wish to discuss further any aspect of the Child Poverty Strategy my contact details are provided above, however, if I am unavailable you can also contact my colleague, Paul Galway, who will be working with me on the development of the strategy. He can be contacted on 028 90 523251 or email paul.galway@ofmdfmi.gov.uk

Patricia Carey

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