

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Children and Young People's Action Plan

2010 – 2012

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Department of
**Agriculture and
Rural Development**

www.dardni.gov.uk

AN ROINN

**Talmhaíochta agus
Forbartha Tuaithe**

MÄNNYSTRIE O

**Fairms an
Kintra Fordèrin**

Why do we have an Action Plan?

Our Department's vision is for "a thriving and sustainable rural community and environment" and here in N Ireland children and young people form a substantial part of the rural community. There are 161,000¹ under 18's living in rural areas, which represents 27.9% of the rural population. If the rural community and environment are truly to thrive and be sustained, then we need to ensure that the children and young people who live there and who may become its future caretakers are supported to develop to their full potential.

DARD shares responsibilities to deliver on our obligations under the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**², with its four General Principles of; non-discrimination, survival and development, the best interests of the child; and participation. The importance of participation, and our engagement with children and young people, is also highlighted through their inclusion in **Section 75** of the Northern Ireland Act 1998³, within the age category.

We also share responsibility for children and young people through the Executives over-arching **10-Year Strategy for Children and Young People**⁴. We are committed to playing our part in realising the vision set out in that strategy "that all children and young people living in Northern Ireland will thrive and look forward with confidence to the future".

We hope that in setting out a detailed action plan for our work with children and young people that we will, as a Department, also have a means of measuring our progress towards the broader objectives set out in the UNCRC, Section 75, and the 10-year Strategy for Children and Young People.

¹ 2001 Census. Urban / Rural as defined in the 'Report on Settlement Service Classification NISRA

² The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people (aged 17 and under) a comprehensive set of rights. It came into force in January 1992.

³ Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities to increase user involvement and engagement in policy development and to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity

⁴ Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006 – 2016. The strategy sets out six outcomes - 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.

A word from our Champion

Wendy Johnston is DARD's Children's Champion. Wendy is Director of Corporate Policy and European Issues, and has overall responsibility for DARD's equality agenda and for the development of this action plan. She works to raise awareness of the key issues with senior staff, and to help ensure that our business areas regularly engage and involve children and young people on shaping up those policies and services that impact on their lives and well-being.

A few words from Wendy -

"I am pleased to present DARD's first Children and Young People's Action Plan which sets out our work over the next 2 years. DARD is fully committed to its obligations and is working hard to encourage greater participation and engagement with children and young people across our business remit on issues that have the potential to impact on them.

My thanks to those who contributed to the development of this Action Plan, and to the many organisations that work closely with us. I urge you to read this Plan and to assist us in delivering on all of the actions outlined in it"

Our Action Plan

We have developed this draft Plan in partnership with key organisations representing the interests and views of children and young people. This has included the Participation Network, the Young Farmers Clubs, and the Youth Forum. Young people have highlighted their issues of concern to us and have also suggested some actions for us to include. Our Plan includes these suggested actions as well as others that already appear in other Departmental plans and strategies.

We want your views

We are consulting on our proposals in this draft Action Plan until **22 January 2010** and are keen to know what you think about it. You might have some ideas about how we could make it even better, and we would love to hear from you. Here's how you can contact us

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How does our work impact on children and young people?

DARD has 5 main goals, and each of these can impact on the well-being and future lives of children and young people. These are -

To improve performance in the market place – we will support rural businesses to help them become more economically successful. This goal will help increase opportunities for rural young people who choose to live and work within their local communities.

To strengthen the social and economic infrastructure of rural areas – we will help create more businesses and jobs in rural communities and help more farms to have varied sources of income. This goal will help increase career choices and future employment opportunities for children and young people in rural areas.

To improve animal, fish and plant health and welfare – we are working towards a reduction in animal diseases and towards free movement of animals within the whole island. This goal will help develop a more stable and sustainable rural economy providing greater security for children and young people as they grow up.

To develop a more sustainable environment – we aim to plant more trees and forests, to increase the variety of plant and animal life; to reduce the number of agriculture-related pollution incidents and flooding incidents along our coasts and rivers. This goal will help to create a more stimulating environment for children and young people to visit and enjoy, learn about and appreciate.

To deliver effective services to all our customers – we will train our staff to help ensure that our services for our customers are fully accessible, promptly provided and meet their needs. This goal will benefit the future of rural children and young people who will depend on a safe and sustainable rural environment to help support their development, career choices and future lifestyle.

Children and young people can benefit from our work in a number of ways:

- As visitors and users of local forest parks and the recreational opportunities on offer such as walking trails, eco-trails, caravan and camping; and cycling
- As nature lovers – enjoying wildlife and woodland walks
- As visitors to the countryside – for tourism, sports, education, leisure activities etc
- As pet owners
- As consumers of locally produced meat, vegetables and other food products
- As students at our College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)
- As users of local rivers and coastal waters for swimming, fishing, canoeing etc
- As children of families working in farming, growing, and the fisheries or food industries
- As children of families who will benefit through the Rural Childcare Programme
- As young people involved in local community activities, and various cultural, learning and leisure projects supported by the Rural Development Programme

DARD Children and Young People's Action Plan

Key Areas:	Actions: What we plan to do	Outcomes:	By when:
Participation and involvement	We will regularly meet and talk with young people and their representatives. We will also provide young people with opportunities for taking part in discussions and consultation exercises on those policies and services that impact on their lives	Young people will have a voice in key aspects of DARD's work	From 2010 onwards
	We will host events and activities for rural children and young people to help develop their knowledge about our work and their interest in those areas that impact on their lives	Young people will be invited to a DARD event in early 2010, and other activities during the year	March 2011
	The DARD College (CAFRE) will host nature trail tours on its grounds for pre-school and primary school children, and will deliver a "Feed your Mind" event for year 11 Home Economics and Science students.	Children and young people will be able to experience and learn about nature, the food we eat and to visit our college facilities	March 2011
	Forest Service will meet young people and their representative organisations to capture their views as part of its forest planning process.	Young people will have an opportunity to provide their views	From March 2010 onwards
Developing Young People	We will offer opportunities for young people to shadow senior staff, for mentoring, to learn about specific areas of interest across our work and to experience how Government works. We will also offer a limited number of placements for students wishing to gain practical work experience	Young people will be able to gain valuable and practical experience within a large government body	March 2011
	We will provide opportunities for CAFRE students to meet with industry representatives and to give their views and ideas for improvement to the CAFRE management team.	Young people will develop their confidence and skills at speaking to groups	March 2011

Key Areas:**Actions:** What we plan to do**Outcomes:****By when:****Developing
Young
People**

We will provide practical experience for young people to learn how to organise, chair and manage meetings.

Young people will learn skills they can apply in other settings

March 2011

We will offer opportunities for 16 and 17 year old school leavers to take part in an Apprenticeship Scheme. Trainees will be placed across our business areas one day each week over a 2-year period and will be able to develop useful skills to help them to gain an apprenticeship and employment.

Approximately 20 young people will benefit from this Scheme

Nov 2011

Key Areas:	Actions: What we plan to do	Outcomes:	By when:
Reducing Poverty and Exclusion	We will make sure that at least 5% of the total funding of the NI Rural Development Programme (2007-2013) is spent on projects that specifically benefit children and young people in rural areas	Young people will benefit from this funding allocation	RDP runs to 2013
	In NI, government is committed to ending child poverty by 2020. We have developed an Anti-Poverty framework which will provide opportunities for children and young people in rural areas to benefit from projects and schemes such as accessible rural transport, child care provision; and other initiatives that also support their parents as well as seeking to improve their overall quality of life.	Children and young people will benefit directly from measures under our Anti-Poverty Framework	Review progress March 2011
Improving Access to Transport	We are working alongside DRD to provide rural transport schemes which aim to assist rural dwellers who are socially isolated and cannot access local transport services.	Young people with disabilities will be able to access reliable rural transport	From Dec 2009 onwards
Leisure, Play and Culture	We are developing new plans for recreation and leisure activities in our Forest parks. This will include a new high ropes adventure area in Tollymore Forest Park.	Young people will be able to enjoy a high tree adventure activity in a safe place within a forest.	Spring 2010
	We will work with a partner organisation to facilitate them in arranging events in forests to meet their needs.	Children will be able to enjoy days out with families and carers	October 2010
	We will work in partnership with others to develop and pilot a 'Friends of Castlewellan Forest' scheme	As part of the Scheme, young people will have an opportunity to play an active role in the work of a forest park	March 2011

Key Areas:	Actions: What we plan to do	Outcomes:	By when:
Easy to Use Services and Clear Information	We will seek advice on how to improve our services for children and young people from key representative organisations such as the Participation Network. We aim to provide our information in Plain English and to develop Easyread versions at times too.	Young people will be better able to access and understand our information	Review progress in March 2011
	We will review the DARD and CAFRE websites and make sure that the sites are more appealing for a younger audience and that the information is relevant, easy to access and to understand.	Young people will be consulted in the review of the websites	March 2011
	We will also review the facilities available at our major forest parks to make sure that different groups of children and young people can access our services too. We will also tell their representative organisations about the services and facilities we have on offer.	Young people with disabilities, and those from under-represented groups will be encouraged to visit our forest parks	March 2011
Improving Health, Protection and Welfare	We will make sure that students at CAFRE and our own young staff are kept informed about the support services, groups and organisations available to assist them, if needed.	Improved awareness of support available	March 2011
	We will make sure that our young staff and customers know about the important policies we have in place; such as child protection and bullying; and about up-coming events to promote their good health and well-being.	Improved awareness of key policies	March 2011
Child and Family Friendly Strategies and Policies	We have policies in place to support our staff and their families; such as parental leave and special leave. Information for carers, and details about local childcare facilities and summer schemes is available on the intranet, and we will work to raise awareness of these family friendly policies with our staff.	Improved awareness of key policies	March 2010