



# ParentingNI

Response to  
Northern Ireland Executive Draft  
Programme for Government  
2011-2015

February 2012

## THE ORGANISATION

Parenting NI was established as Parents Advice Centre in 1979, the International Year of the Child. It is now a leading support organisation committed to delivering high quality services.

Parenting NI has a regional remit to promote positive parenting by providing support, training and information on family issues and influencing policy, provision and practice at all levels.

### **Parents Helpline**

Providing support and guidance to parents and families facing difficulties through a free helpline and outreach appointment service.

**Parenting Education** providing parenting education programmes and resources to parents and practitioners.

### **Parenting Forum**

Lobbying on behalf of parents to influence policy, practice and equality of parenting services.

## VISION

**Parenting NI's vision of the future is one where parenting is highly valued, and family members receive the support and resources they need to provide a happy and safe environment in which children and young people can achieve their potential.**

## MISSION

**To support parents.**

## AIMS

To contribute to the well being of children and young people by supporting parents.  
To influence policy and practice on parenting.

Parenting NI is a member of Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI), the regional umbrella body for the children's sector in Northern Ireland.

A representative of Parenting NI participated in a consultation workshop, hosted by CiNI, on the draft Programme for Government. The workshop included input from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and the Children's Champions from DE, DARD, DSD and DETI. The consultation event provided member organisations an opportunity to consider and discuss the draft Programme for Government consultation document. The workshop informed CiNI's response that we have attached.

As members of CiNI we strongly endorse the views and recommendations contained within their response to the consultation on the draft Programme for Government 2011-2015.

Children in Northern Ireland



**Northern Ireland Executive  
Draft Programme for Government 2011-  
15**

**February 2012**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) is the regional umbrella body for the children's sector in Northern Ireland. CiNI represents the interests of its 150 member organisations, providing policy, information, training, participation and advocacy support services to members in their direct work with and for children and young people.

CiNI's membership is open to colleagues in the children's statutory sector recognising that the best outcomes for children are increasingly achieved working in partnership with all those who are committed to improving the lives of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

CiNI hosts the Participation Network, an initiative supported by OFMDFM, which offers direct training, consultancy and sign posting services to government departments and public sector agencies to help them develop the knowledge, skills and expertise to engage directly with children and young people when carrying out their functions.

As part of our commitment to partnership working CiNI is a member of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (the Partnership) and also the interim regional Child Protection Committee.

CiNI welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Northern Ireland Executive's Draft Programme for Government 2011-15.

CiNI held a consultation workshop to brief members on the draft PfG. The workshop included input from OFMDFM and Children's Champions from DE, DARD, DSD and DETI. The consultation event provided those 20 member organisations in attendance with an opportunity to consider and discuss the draft PfG consultation document. The workshop discussion has informed CiNI's submission to the consultation. Please see appendix for list of members in attendance.

## **GENERAL COMMENTS**

### **Equality, Fairness and Inclusion**

It is positive to see that there is now a recognition, which was absent in the last PfG, of the intrinsic link and indeed inter-dependency between social progress and growing the economy. This

connection is vitally important and requires concerted efforts to ensure that the Executive, through PfG, accords high priority to identifying, and tackling the level and extent of inequalities which exist across society and which place real barriers in the way of all members and sections of society contributing to re-building the economy and enjoying a fair share of progress that can be made in moving society forward.

However, CiNI is not convinced that there is the required commitment to and, indeed, evidence of equality of opportunity, fairness and inclusion permeating and underpinning the draft PfG. We struggle to see a clear, purposeful strategic intent within the commitment plan, given that it appears as an erratic mix of some high level commitments and other commitments carried over from existing strategy and policy initiatives where implementation remains outstanding.

### **Sequencing and relationship with the Budget**

CiNI has previously raised concerns regarding the sequencing and inter-relationship between the PfG and Budget/Spending Review processes.

This is an issue which has received much attention and raised significant concern amongst commentators and indeed legislators.

A 2011 PWC Overview Report commissioned by NICVA, commenting on the draft Budget 2011-15, stated that it was *'less than ideal'* that a Budget should be agreed before a new Programme for Government is in place<sup>1</sup>. The agreement of a budget ahead of targets and outcomes for public services is *'a reversal of what ideally should be the sequence of decision making, i.e. agree desirable outcomes and then assign budget lines as necessary.'*

Furthermore, CiNI would highlight that the Committee for Finance and Personnel in its First Report of the Inquiry into the Scrutiny of the Executive's Budget and Expenditure 2008-11 did recommend that *'that there should be a closer alignment between the PfG and the Budget documents; in particular a more visible linkage between PfG priorities and goals, PSA objectives and the allocations, departmental objectives and spending areas in budgets'*.<sup>2</sup> In its Second Report on the Inquiry into the Role of the Northern Ireland Assembly in Scrutinising the Executive's Budget and Expenditure the Committee further recommended *'whilst recognising that the availability of resources will have a bearing on the targets underpinning the PfG, the Committee is strongly of the view that budget allocations should be driven by priorities and not the other way around. The Committee concurs with*

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<sup>1</sup> NICVA Overview of the NI Draft Budget 2011-15. PWC. Belfast p.31

<sup>2</sup> Committee for Finance and Personnel (2008) First Report of Inquiry into the scrutiny of the Executive's Budget and Expenditure 2008-11 para 7

the DFP view that "there should at least be a clear indication of broad priorities at the beginning of the Budget process" and that the development of the PfG should precede the Budget<sup>3</sup> [own underlining].

**Therefore, we would again recommend that urgent attention is directed toward ensuring that the PfG, Budget, Departmental Delivery and Spending Plans and accompanying Equality Impact Assessments are tied together seamlessly in order to allow for the development of a robust, coherent and cohesive vision and plan for moving Northern Ireland forward.**

The sequencing issues have made it particularly difficult to comment in an informed and considered manner. This was an issue raised by those who attended the CINI consultation workshop when it was highlighted that the draft PfG, rather than being solution focused and outcome driven, raised many more questions regarding the intent and strategic direction of the Executive. Many of the questions relate to the detail that is lacking in relation to the commitment programme and which is ultimately crucial to the delivery process.

We note that it is intended by the end of the consultation period on the draft PfG that each of the Government Departments will have produced detailed delivery plans setting out how they will take forward delivery of PfG. However, it is our firm view that in the interests of optimal transparency and accountability these delivery plans should have been developed alongside the draft PfG and made available for full public consultation as part of the PfG consultation.

We would ask the Executive to provide details of its plans for publication of all of the draft departmental delivery plans including the arrangements for public consultation, screening and equality impact assessment as required by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

However, given that these draft delivery plans are being developed in light of the draft PfG they will also require amendment in line with the outcome of the consultation and agreement of the final PfG. Therefore this is likely to lead to a lengthy period of time before final agreement is reached on delivery of the PfG.

## **Programme Arrangements and Delivery Framework**

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<sup>3</sup> Committee for Finance and Personnel (2010) Second Report of Inquiry into the Role of the Northern Ireland Assembly in Scrutinising the Executive's Budget and Expenditure para 17

CiNI notes Annex 1 to the draft PfG outlines the programme arrangements and delivery framework. We note that the Executive is to agree on the approach to delivery and the mechanisms to support this, and detailed guidance will be produced<sup>4</sup>. Again we believe that the delivery arrangements are a fundamental element of the entire PfG process and would suggest that these arrangements will provide the crucial bridging mechanism between PfG and the departmental delivery. Therefore, we strongly believe that these arrangements and the delivery framework should have been developed and integrated within the PfG and included as part of the overall consultation. We assume that Departments are in the process of developing detailed delivery plans and therefore would be in receipt of and using the detailed guidance on delivery. This guidance must be produced and published as part of consultation on department delivery plans.

**Given that the draft PfG asserts that *'all departments of Government must work together to produce policies, plans and strategies – the building blocks – that are consistent with the priorities we (the Executive) have identified'*<sup>5</sup>, it is crucial that the delivery framework *explicitly* builds in and includes a mechanism through which to monitor, assess and evaluate the level, extent and outcome of this 'working together' both across and between Government departments and with the voluntary and community sectors.**

While the draft PfG consultation document does not make reference to detailed departmental delivery plans, it is our understanding, as we have indicated above, that these will be produced by each department at the end of the consultation period. A strong view from the CiNI consultation workshop was that these delivery plans would be critical in providing the answers to many of the questions raised by the draft PfG. Again we would highlight that it is essential all of the delivery plans are subject to full public consultation, screening and equality impact assessment in line with the requirement to promote equality of opportunity under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

At the CiNI consultation workshop it was highlighted that the children's sector was keen to support and inform the development of these delivery plans. The imperative to involve and engage children and young people was also highlighted in line with requirements of section 75 and article 12 of the UNCRC. Particular regard must also be given to ensuring direct engagement and involvement of children and young people with disabilities in line with the Executive's obligations in respect of article 7 of the UNCRPD.

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<sup>4</sup> NI Executive Draft PfG 2011-15 p.54

<sup>5</sup> NI Executive Draft PfG 2011-15 Consultation p.27



We note also that reference is made to a legislative programme, however we are unaware of the existence of this programme and would recommend that it is included as part of the final, agreed PfG.

### **Collaboration and Partnership Working**

It is welcome that the First and Deputy First Ministers have stated that they are *'conscious of the importance of collaboration ... working more effectively across Government Departments and working in partnership with the private and the voluntary and community sectors in ways that will deliver tangible outcomes'*<sup>6</sup>.

However, we are disappointed and concerned that there is limited evidence within the draft PfG of any follow through on or mainstreaming of collaboration and partnership working across the commitment programme. The majority of the commitments across the priorities are tagged to individual departments and, therefore, the draft PfG has missed a crucial opportunity to embed a more holistic outcomes focused approach to how the Executive does its business, an approach that we would suggest could ensure optimal use of scarce resources. For example, while commitments to increase the numbers of primary and secondary school pupils opting to walk to school as their main mode of transport are positive and welcome, tagging commitments to one lead department fails to see the holistic impact for children and young people and the benefits that could be derived by other Government departments in taking forward their commitments to children and young people. Clearly increased numbers of children walking to school can also support the DHSSPS commitments to tackling obesity.

CiNI firmly believes that given the welcome recognition from the First and Deputy First Minister of the importance of collaboration and working more effectively across Government Departments, there is now a need for a more pro-active approach by the Executive to making effective collaboration a reality. Given the nature of how the draft PfG commitment programme has been constructed we do not believe that there exists the required impetus to follow through and deliver on effective collaboration. However, we do acknowledge that there are real and positive examples of Government departments collaborating and working across boundaries on issues of common concern. Unfortunately this is not a mainstream, required or expected priority for departments when examining their budgets, identifying their priorities and delivering on common agreed outcomes.

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<sup>6</sup>NI Executive Draft PfG 2011-15 p.12

CiNI believes that it is now essential that a mechanism is put in place to secure and deliver on collaboration and co-operation so that it can be embedded in the functioning of Government departments.

In this regard, CiNI would highlight there is now a broad based and growing consensus emerging on the need for a statutory duty on Government departments to co-operate, a duty which must transcend all levels and layers of Government. This has been evidenced in research commissioned by NICCY and conducted by QUB on Barriers to Effective Government Delivery for Children<sup>7</sup>. The views expressed by NGOs, statutory agencies, government representatives and MLAs are worth noting.

The research noted that while there was some evidence of good practice on collaboration at intra-agency level through the work of Children's Services Planning, this was not always replicated at central government level.

*'For the majority of interviewees, the problems associated with joined up working at central government level were viewed as the main barrier to effective government delivery for children' [own underlining].*

It is interesting to note how joined up working is currently perceived as operating:

*'... joined up working between departments was perceived to be based primarily upon goodwill, and the prior existence of good working relationships between individuals in respective departments was viewed as a particular issue resulting in inconsistency of practice across the Ten Year Strategy areas (NGO and Statutory Agency representatives).'*

As we have highlighted above the key point is that collaboration and joined up working is not a mainstream experience or indeed the requirement or expectation in relation to the functioning of departments. In other words, some children will be the beneficiaries of the 'goodwill' and 'good working relationships' where there is joined up working on policy areas that impact upon them; but, worryingly, the inconsistency means that the majority of children will not experience the impact of the joining up of policy areas which ultimately aligns with a holistic approach to service design and delivery and which supports better outcomes for children and young people.

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<sup>7</sup> Byrne, B. and Lundy, L. (2011) Barriers to Effective Government Delivery for Children in Northern Ireland 2011, NICCY.

This differential and discriminatory treatment of children and young people in respect of policy development which impacts on their lives can no longer be justified.

The findings from the NICCY research are clear:

*'For the majority of interviewees, the only effective solution to these ongoing issues lies in the urgent need for the establishment of a statutory duty to co-operate'.*

In drawing its conclusions the research recommends that there is a need within Government for a statutory duty to co-operate at both central government and intra-agency level. CiNI would echo and wholeheartedly support these findings and recommendations.

### **Concordat between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector**

CiNI welcomes that the Executive has signalled the intention to work in partnership with the private and the voluntary and community sectors in ways that will deliver tangible outcomes<sup>8</sup>. However, again there is a need for much greater detail on precisely how the intention will be delivered on. We would strongly advocate that to turn intent into reality the PfG must include an explicit commitment to upholding and delivering on the Concordat between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland<sup>9</sup>. It is only through focused and joint delivery on the series of commitments made in the Concordat that true partnership can be enabled to support delivery on the PfG.

### **A PfG for Children and Young People?**

CiNI does acknowledge that across the draft PfG commitment programme there are a significant number of positive commitments directed toward children and young people. We are, however, disappointed that the draft PfG has not seized the opportunity to provide a coherent strategic vision that places children and young people at the heart of PfG, and thereby recognises and seeks to support and enable children and young people as key contributors to building the Executive's better future for Northern Ireland.

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<sup>8</sup> NI Executive Draft PfG 2011-15 Consultation p.12

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nicva.org/sites/default/files/ConcordatConsultation.pdf>

We are disappointed that the international children's rights standards of the UNCRC and the Executive 10 Year Strategy for Children and Young People, which are the 'critical enablers' that could ensure children and young people sit at the heart of PfG, are not recognised as enablers by the draft PfG or given a particular status beyond that of building blocks. As a result their significance is not properly understood and acknowledged in terms of how these could be utilised by the Executive in support of the PfG.

### **International Children's Rights Standards**

CiNI would highlight in particular the Executive's obligations with regard to international binding agreements on children's rights and in particular the UNCRC, which has been ratified by the UK Government and which it is obliged to implement through legislation, policy and service delivery for children and young people across all aspects of their lives.

We would highlight that these international binding agreements must over-arch and inform the development of the PfG. The UNCRC is much more than a building block that can support PfG priorities, its binding standards and obligations are pivotal to informing and guiding identification and development of the Executive's priorities in relation to children and young people. The Executive is examined by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child with regard to its delivery on the UNCRC every five years and subsequent to these examinations the Committee issues its Concluding Observations and Recommendations to Government on what it must do to ensure compliance and delivery on the principles and provisions of the Convention. The most recent Concluding Observations were issued in 2008 and the Executive is due to report again to the UN Committee in 2014, that is, within the period of the current PfG.

**We therefore strongly recommend that the PfG give proper recognition to the status of the UNCRC as an international binding agreement and include a commitment from the Executive to addressing the Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations. We would recommend that part of this commitment should be a direction to Government departments to address the Concluding Observations in their delivery of PfG.**

### **Executive 10 Year Strategy for Children and Young People**

CiNI would strongly advocate that the draft PfG recognise the significant cross cutting and over-arching remit of the 10 Year Children and Young People's Strategy as a vehicle through which to take

forward Executive implementation of the UNCRC. The significance of the 10 Year Strategy goes far beyond that of a building block that currently informs only one of the draft PfG priorities<sup>10</sup>.

However, CiNI has been encouraged by the renewed impetus which has now being directed at getting the 10 Year Strategy moving forward, with work commencing on the development of a new action plan for 2012-2016. For some time the absence of a dedicated strategic focus on children and young people within OFMDFM and the subsequent lack of activity on the Strategy's implementation caused grave concern for the children's sector and created a perception, real or otherwise, of children and young people being pushed down the agenda of the Executive. However, we trust that with close and ongoing engagement and partnership with the sector, and placing children and young people themselves at the centre of the process, a positive momentum can now be created to look at how the Strategy can be effectively implemented in support of the Executive's delivery of the UNCRC.

**However, it is imperative that the 10 Year Children and Young People's Strategy, its outcomes framework and commitment to the UNCRC are acknowledged, recognised and firmly established by the PfG as *the* lead over-arching strategic framework for the development of *all* of the Executive's strategic policy developments affecting children and young people.**

### **Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP)**

CiNI is greatly encouraged that OFMDFM in developing its plans for taking forward the 10 Year Children and Young People's Strategy has recognised that the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership is key to effective delivery<sup>11</sup>. In its representations to Government CiNI has consistently highlighted the need for closer alignment between the Strategy and regional arrangements for integrated planning and commissioning of supports and services through the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and its Children and Young People's Plan.

It is significant to note that the Partnership has adopted the UNCRC and the 10 Year Strategy's outcomes framework as the over-arching strategic context for its work on integrated planning for children and young people.

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<sup>10</sup> NI Executive Draft PfG 2011-15 Consultation p.35

<sup>11</sup> OFMDFM Presentation to APGCYP Meeting 07.02.12

**CiNI would strongly advocate that the PfG recognise and support the Partnership as the optimal vehicle through which to drive forward implementation of the PfG commitments for children and young people. Each Government department, in development of their PfG delivery plans, must be encouraged and supported to consider how they can utilise and link to the Partnership to deliver and take forward their commitments to children and young people. We would recommend that guidance to this effect is explicitly provided within the delivery framework which is currently being developed.**

### **Early Intervention and Prevention**

CiNI is particularly disappointed that the draft PfG has not acknowledged and responded to the growing momentum within and across Government in support of early intervention and preventative spending to secure better outcomes for children, young people and families. The research evidence in support of such an approach continues to grow and the economic case in support of utilising scarce resources to best effect is well acknowledged across Government.

CiNI would highlight the RLS Research Paper<sup>12</sup> which, reflecting on the Scottish Finance Committee Inquiry into Preventative Spending, notes that while Northern Ireland is one of the most economically deprived regions of the UK, each year Government spends a significant amount of money treating the outcomes associated with deprivation rather than on preventative solutions aimed at breaking the cycle. All of the evidence to the Scottish Inquiry attested to preventative spending as the key to breaking the cycle of deprivation, expressed concern regarding the insufficient investment in preventative spend, and pointed to the real and lasting savings that are possible if Government were to adopt a preventative spending approach.

The Scottish Inquiry identified three ideas for financing preventative spending:

- A proportional shift in the emphasis of government spending towards preventative programmes, with the savings increasingly reinvested in preventative schemes
- Greater use of 'pooled' cross departmental budgets set aside to tackle issues
- Frontloading social investment with the issue of social impact bonds

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<sup>12</sup> RLS (2011) Preventative Spending NIAR 19-11

Critically the RLS Research Paper concludes that *'cross-departmental partnership and joined up government are the required foundations for preventative spending interventions'*.

Given these conclusions, it is therefore encouraging to note that much of the work to promote and embed early intervention and prevention is now being lead by the cross-sectoral and multi-agency Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. Indeed, its role and potential contribution to this work is increasingly receiving endorsement. The recent report from the Independent Review of Youth Justice has recognised that:

*The most promising route for developing early intervention and family support would seem to be at the more local level, through the recently formed Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.*

In its draft plan for 2011-14 the Partnership commits to bringing an increased focus on early intervention. It is notable that the Partnership has taken the view that early intervention must be a joint Government priority.

**CiNI would recommend that the PfG establishes early intervention as a joint government priority. In the absence of a mandate from the Executive and through PfG for a focus on early intervention, CiNI is fearful that all of the existing good work on early intervention, which is in place at local level, will continue on a disparate basis, with separate funding streams that are not joined up to best effect.**

However, again we are greatly encouraged that OFMDFM in developing its plans for taking forward the 10 Year Children and Young People's Strategy has indicated that at a strategic level there will be a focus on the promotion of early intervention<sup>13</sup>.

CiNI would recommend that responsibility for championing early intervention and prevention should be located at the highest level of government, that is, within a proper functioning and robust Ministerial Sub Committee on Children and Young People that includes all of the relevant and appropriate Government departments. This Ministerial Committee must have at its core responsibility for examining mainstream budgets to look at how these can be re-aligned to support and enable a drive for early intervention and prevention, with the appropriate disaggregation of

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<sup>13</sup> OFMDFM Presentation to APGCYP Meeting 07.02.12

spend to support the specific forms of early age and early stage interventions that are required for particular vulnerable groups.

### **Child Poverty**

CiNI notes the OFMDFM commitment to *fulfil our commitments under the Child Poverty Act to reduce child poverty*. We are extremely concerned that given the legislative obligations on the Executive to address child poverty the draft PfG does not contain more robust, specific and measurable targets for a reduction and eradication of child poverty. This is of particular concern given the targets included in the Executive's previous PfG for 2008-11. It is all the more concerning given the that the Delivery Report on PfG 08-11, which has considered progress made up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011<sup>14</sup>, indicates that targets to eliminate severe child poverty and reduce overall child poverty were not delivered. **There is a need for a renewed and concerted effort by the Executive to prioritise its obligations under the Child Poverty Act and ensure that specific and measurable targets, including on severe child poverty, are an integral part of the Child Poverty Action Plan.**

### **Children and Young People with Disabilities**

CiNI is disappointed that children and young people with disabilities are invisible within the draft PfG and its commitment programme. This is of particular concern given the evidence which continues to emerge of the disproportionate negative impact which the current economic downturn is having on children and young people with disabilities and their families. The Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance<sup>15</sup> has pointed to evidence that would suggest that children with disabilities and their families are being adversely and disproportionately affected by Government spending decisions with funding for some disabled children's services being withdrawn or reduced<sup>16</sup>.

CDSA has called on the Executive to make children and young people with disabilities a priority in PfG and Budget/Spending processes. To accurately and appropriately inform PfG and Budget/Spending processes from the perspective of children with disabilities and their families, the Alliance has called for a broad strategic review of all aspects of services for disabled children and young people to ensure that the current configuration of disabled children's services meets their needs and that gaps in current provision and unmet needs are identified. CDSA has indicated that the review should be undertaken in partnership with the disability and children's sector and ensure that the role played by the sectors in developing innovative child and family centred approaches is recognised and adequately resourced. A review of this nature has been undertaken in Scotland with

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<sup>14</sup> Building a Better Future The NI Executive's PfG 08-11 Delivery Report on Progress up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ci-ni.org.uk/docs/CDSA%20Manifesto%20No%20CropIld.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.familyfund.org.uk/news/news-and-announcements/funding-northern-ireland-1>



the intention that actions emanating from the Review could help support key elements of the Scottish Government's performance framework and deliver practical improvements to the well-being of children with disabilities and their families<sup>17</sup>.

In addition, to accurately inform the PfG, departmental delivery plans and subsequent spending decisions from the perspective of children with disabilities and their families, there is an urgent need for the Executive to address the lack of disaggregated data and information on the circumstances and situation of children with disabilities, including the lack of information on the prevalence of particular disabilities/conditions. As recommended by CDSA, the Executive must develop a cross Government data gathering system that allows for the collation and monitoring of all aspects of the lives of children and young people with a disability. Such data would allow for a comprehensive assessment of the level and extent of inequalities experienced by children with disabilities in accessing and benefiting from public services, and ensure that policies and resources effectively enable the promotion of equality of opportunity.

**The PfG must make children with disabilities and their families a visible priority by ensuring that the commitment programme is inclusive of children with disabilities and includes specific, focused commitments that can promote equality of opportunity for children with disabilities and their families. It is essential that this prioritisation is carried forward into the departmental delivery plans and these must be monitored to ensure children with disabilities have equal access to and benefit from support and services.**

### **Early Childhood Education and Care**

CiNI notes the commitment to implement an integrated and affordable childcare strategy. The commitment is very much welcomed, however more detail is required. In particular we are keen to explore further and support the development of an *integrated* childcare strategy.

**It is our firm view that a future childcare strategy must be fully integrated within an overall strategic approach by the Executive to Early Childhood Education and Care Services (ECEC) for Northern Ireland<sup>18</sup>.**

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/02/25151901/1>

<sup>18</sup> This is also the view of the Early Years Strategic Alliance (EYSA) as outlined in its Manifesto published in November 2011.

**We would highlight that the previous PfG for 2008-11 did recognise the need for co-ordination and integration to bring early years care and education together and we would advocate that this is carried forward into the current PfG, given that the target remains outstanding and requires further work and much greater prioritisation.**

ECEC services are established and well recognised across Europe. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, ECEC usually means all services providing education and care to children below compulsory school age or before starting school. It reflects a broad, holistic, integrated and coherent approach to early years. The term reflects new attitudes and understandings about ECEC such as:

- An acknowledgement that all types of services which provide education and care to children under school age belong to the same policy field
- A shared desire to identify, understand and overcome barriers that have obstructed integrated action i.e. philosophy, objectives, management, regulation
- A shift from selective and exclusive to universal and inclusive
- A right for all children and families

However, the ongoing parallel development of strategic responses to early years and childcare and the failure to establish lead ministerial responsibility for this area militates against and acts as a barrier to effective integration; and most fundamentally undermines efforts to protect and promote the best interests of children and families. With parallel strategic approaches there is the potential for duplication of processes and procedures which increases the likelihood of scarce resources being wasted. Children from birth to age 3 are particularly disadvantaged by the failure to effectively integrate early childhood care and education systems.

The Early Years Strategic Alliance (EYSA) has recommended that the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety take lead ministerial responsibility for fully integrated ECEC services<sup>19</sup>. This must be underpinned by a commitment from all Executive Ministers to co-operate and work in partnership on early years and childcare through the mechanism of the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People. Critical to this partnership working is the pooling of resources in support of ECEC. The Alliance has recommended that the Executive incentivise the pooling of resources for early years and childcare provision.

EYSA has expressed its concern at the neglect of our current childcare infrastructure which has resulted in a lack of childcare provision, particularly in rural areas and also more expensive childcare provision, with limited awareness amongst parents of the availability of support for childcare costs.

**Therefore, within a fully integrated approach to Early Childhood Education and Care Services**

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.ci-ni.org.uk/docs/EYSAManifestoFINAL.pdf>

**(ECEC) there must be specific attention given to ensuring high quality, accessible, affordable and appropriate childcare services.**

## **CONSULTATION WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

CiNI is concerned at the delay in the production of a child friendly version of the draft PfG consultation and EQIA. We would highlight that to comply with the Section 75 equality duty child friendly consultation material should have been prepared alongside the original draft PfG document and published at the outset of the consultation period.

Given the delay in the production of a child friendly consultation document we would strongly recommend that the consultation period is extended to facilitate real and meaningful direct engagement with children and young people including those children and young people across the section 75 equality categories.

We would ask for information and details of the arrangements made by the Executive to carry out direct engagement with children and young people on the draft PfG. Where engagement has occurred we would ask that the outcome of this engagement is published, with an indication of how the Executive intends to respond to and act on the views from children and young people.

## **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Contrary to the view expressed in the EQIA consultation document it does not appear that the EQIA has been undertaken simultaneously with the development of the PfG given that the EQIA consultation document was published five weeks from the PFG consultation deadline and on the basis that views would need to be submitted within this timeframe in order to actually inform PfG. This is entirely unsatisfactory and contrary to obligations in respect of the section 75 duty to promote equality of opportunity.

For the purposes of accurately and comprehensively informing EQIA processes, including that of the PfG and Budget, there is an urgent need for concerted efforts by Government to develop and put in place a data gathering system that can collate a range of disaggregated information on the lives of children and young people. In particular it is imperative that any system include specific information on small populations of children and young people whose experience is of multiple disadvantage and discrimination and who therefore will require specific focus and attention from Government to ensure they can access and benefit from universal public services as well as specific and targeted interventions that can meet their particular needs.

## **CONCLUSION**

CiNI trusts this submission can usefully inform the ongoing development of the Executive's PfG. We look forward to receiving a summary of responses to the consultation which addresses the issues raised in this submission. At this point we would ask for information on the system that will be used to analyse the responses including the degree of weight which will be given to individual and group based responses. This is essential in securing transparency and advancing the promotion of equality of opportunity, ensuring that particularly marginalised and disadvantaged individuals and groups have their voices heard.

As we have indicated we are particularly interested in engaging with, informing and supporting the development of departmental delivery plans. Again the delivery framework will be critical to this process and must be open to stakeholder input. We would ask that the Executive provide a timeline for these processes and outline how it intends to take forward direct engagement with stakeholders, including children and young people, on the development of the delivery plans.

## **Appendix – CiNI Consultation Workshop Attendees (19.01.12)**

- 1. Action for Children**
- 2. AFASIC**
- 3. Ballynahinch Sure Start**
- 4. Dry Arch Family Centre**
- 5. Early Years**
- 6. Family Care Society**
- 7. Gingerbread**
- 8. HSCB**
- 9. Include Youth**
- 10. Integrated Services for CYP**
- 11. Lifestart Foundation**
- 12. Newstart**
- 13. NI Cancer Fund for Children**
- 14. NICVA**
- 15. Opportunity Youth**
- 16. Parenting NI**
- 17. RASDN – Belfast Reference Group**
- 18. Save the Children**
- 19. Voypic**
- 20. Womens Support Network**

## Parkinson's UK

PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT – 2011-15 – CONSULTATION REPLY PROFORMA	
Name:	
Organisation:	Parkinson's UK
Contact Details:	3 Wellington Park, Belfast BT9 6DJ <a href="#">i</a>

0.1 We have opted not to take the questions one by one, but rather to respond in general to the Programme for Government (PfG) and the other relevant documents published at the same time (the Budget, the Economic Strategy and the Investment Strategy – clearly the former is of most interest to us).

### 1 Introduction

1.1 Parkinson's UK is a membership organisation, representing an estimated 3,500 people with Parkinson's in Northern Ireland (120,000 across the UK) and their carers. Although diagnosis tends to come later in life, we represent people of all ages, all backgrounds, and from all walks of life.

1.2 We are structured into local groups – of which there are twelve across Northern Ireland – with our own local activities and local 'champions'.

### 2 Campaigns

2.1 Politically, Parkinson's UK is currently campaigning in three main areas:

- 'Fair Care' – the campaign for more specialist Parkinson's nurses in Northern Ireland, which would serve to deliver savings across the Health Service;
- 'Get It On Time' – the requirement for people with Parkinson's to receive their medication on time at the right time (including when in care or hospital), which has a significant impact on their quality of life throughout the day; and
- Carers and Welfare – the campaign for adequate respite for carers alongside the campaign for fluctuating conditions to be recognised throughout the implementation of the forthcoming Welfare Reform Act.

### 3 PfG Commitments

3.1 We welcome the commitment to *'reform and modernise the delivery of Health and Social care to improve the provision and quality of services'*, although naturally we need more detail as to precisely how this will be done and what recognition will be given to fluctuating and long-term conditions such as Parkinson's.

3.2 We have some concerns about the increasing percentage of the Health Budget going specifically to public health, given that this could be taken to mean a decreasing percentage for vital social care services. We would seek clarification of precisely what this means.

3.3 We welcome the commitment to *'improve access to new treatments'* through reconfiguration of services, although again we would wish to see more detail as to how this will be done.

3.4 We are naturally very interested in the idea of a voluntary but guaranteed *'specialist chronic condition management programme'*, but would wish again to see more detail as to how this will be delivered, and precisely who will qualify.

3.5 We welcome the fundamental recognition that improving health and well-being is an important aspect to improving the overall economy.

3.6 Naturally, we have no objection to the objective of improving health in deprived areas. However, it is important to note there are conditions such as Parkinson's which do not discriminate between people of different backgrounds or income levels. We would not wish to see perfectly well-meaning attempts at tackling ill-health only in certain parts of Northern Ireland impinge on overall policy improvements which would serve to benefit the entire population.

## **4 Budget**

4.1 We have a general concern that the Budget does not appear to match the PfG, in the sense that the commitments and actions in the PfG are not specifically funded over the period. We would wish to see a final version tying the two together, before we can assess the value for people with Parkinson's of public spending related to them.

4.2 We see nothing in the Budget which focused on the potential overall efficiency value of some spending. In Health Care, given the changes proposed in the proportion of budget allocated specifically to Public Health, this is particularly important. We would wish to see some recognition of ideas such as the funding of specialist Parkinson's nurses which, in England, has proved to save money in the rest of the service (through reduced referrals, consultancy etc).

## **5 Conclusion**

5.1 In the PfG commitments, we would wish to see more detail of how the commitments related to improved Health and Social Care are to be carried out, and who precisely would be targeted by them.

5.2 In the PfG priorities, although we have no objection to well-targeted attempts to tackle health inequalities, we would wish to see full recognition of the need to improve overall Health outcomes generally. For example, with Parkinson's, certain actions (such as the provision of more specialist nurses or improved medicines management to ensure medication is received on time) would have a positive impact for people with the condition of all backgrounds and from all walks of life.

5.3 In the Budget, we would wish to see a direct matching of how spending priorities within the overall Health Budget will change, alongside recognition of the potential value of investment in certain particular areas which may deliver efficiencies and an improved overall service.



## **Patient and Client Council**

Programme for Government Team

Office of the First and Deputy First Minister

Room E3.19, Block E

Castle Buildings

Stormont Estate

BLEFAST BT4 3SR

**February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012**

Dear Colleagues,

### **RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT 2011-2015**

This response is made on behalf of the Patient and Client Council.

The Patient and Client Council was established in 2009 by the Health and Social Care Reform Act to provide a powerful, independent voice for people in health and social care.

The Patient and Client Council has four main duties. They are to:

- Listen and act on people's views
- Encourage people to get involved
- Help people to make a complaint
- Promote advice and information

Since its establishment, the Patient and Client Council has spoken to over 17,000 people in Northern Ireland. It has published 26 reports on various aspects of health and social care. It has developed a membership scheme to promote dialogue with patients and the public which has over 3,800 members.

The views expressed in our response to this consultation reflect the priorities and concerns expressed by people to us and evidenced in our body of work. This response makes particular reference to two of our key reports:

The People's Priorities (2011)

Rural Voices Matter (2011)

Both of these reports can be accessed through our website at [www.patientclientcouncil.hscni.net](http://www.patientclientcouncil.hscni.net). The recommendations made by these report are appended to this response.

The consultation document asks respondents to consider whether the draft programme for government is balanced, fair to all, in tune with major sectoral issues and capable of delivering change.

We welcome the following aspects of the draft programme for government:

- The commitment to tackle deprivation through action across all departments of government
- Initiatives designed to alleviate poverty for children, older people and people living in rural areas
- The emphasis placed on the avoidance of ill health – through programmes to tackle obesity, for example
- Initiatives to support people in managing their own health and wellbeing – through support for an initiative on long term conditions

We are well aware of the challenges facing health and social care and the major review of services that is envisaged through the life of this programme.

An increasing emphasis on providing treatment and care in homes and communities coupled with increased specialisation of hospital services makes it imperative that this programme of government delivers genuine inter-departmental working.

A lack of co-ordinated working is a source of frustration for patients, clients and carers. There are many instances where Health and Social Care services can provide only a partial response to need:

- public confidence in the accessibility of urgent care depends significantly on the quality of roads and public transport.
- public anxiety among older people and their carers that home based services will lead to a sense of abandonment will be alleviated by support for community infrastructure, public transport and community safety.
- the impact on health and wellbeing of poor educational attainment and unemployment is well document and accepted.

The draft programme shows a clear understanding of these issues and a desire to address them. However, we are in no doubt that strong leadership by the Executive is a prerequisite of the success of this draft programme if an effective interdepartmental response to these issues is to be achieved.

With regard to specific commitments on health and social care.

We welcome the increased allocation of health and social care spending to public health. Support for the public in maintaining their own health and wellbeing is essential if the new configuration of services is to be capable of responding to need.

We welcome specific targets set in the following areas:

- Mental health and wellbeing
- Health inequalities
- The Family Nurse Partnership Programme
- Bowel cancer screening
- Access to drugs for specific conditions including cancer and arthritis
- Access to thrombolysis for people who have had a stroke
- Reduction in patient hospital stays
- Cardiac catheterisation

These specific commitments, however, represent only a small number of actions against a very wide range of needs and possible priorities. It should be clearer that commitment to these specific actions do not exclude priority or action in other areas.

We would recommend that these specific targets are viewed as an indicator of the wider success in meeting the commitments of this draft programme.

For example, reduced length of hospital stay should be more clearly tied to the capacity of a person's home and community to promote their recovery and rehabilitation. Focus on the family Nurse Partnership Programme should be clearly tied to the success of other initiatives on deprivation, including access to education and employment.

One of the key functions of the Patient and Client Council is to promote involvement by patients, clients and carers in all aspects of design and delivery of health and social care services. Involvement is a statutory duty on all Health and Social Care bodies, forming part of the HSC Reform Act of 2009.

We recommend that the Executive consider making a similar duty of engagement and involvement a requirement of all government departments.

The Patient and Client Council welcome and support the direction outlined by the draft programme. However, its success, in terms of health and social care, depends on the success of interdepartmental working and therefore on the leadership of the Executive.

The Patient and Client Council looks forward to playing its part in the implementation of this programme.

Yours Faithfully

Maeve Hully

Chief Executive of the Patient and Client Council

**Rural Voices Matter (June 2011)**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Patient and Client Council recommend that:

- The Department of Health and Social Care organisations must demonstrate evidence of rural proofing in the development of policy, commissioning and delivery of health and social care services. This should include the best use of resources both in terms of staff and available funding
- The Department should report on an ongoing basis to the public about targets on waiting times, how they are monitored and the performance achieved by Health and Social Care Trusts
- The Regional Health and Social Care Board and Health and Social Care Trusts should address the issue of increasing waiting times for care and treatment, the biggest area of concern identified in this study
- The Health and Social Care Board should review appointment systems for health care services taking into account the specific needs of rural dwellers
- The Health and Social Care Board should address the specific concerns of rural dwellers in the commissioning of GP Out of Hours services
- The Health and Social Care Board should commission a more extensive range of services through the community pharmacy services as a means of supporting the health needs of rural dwellers
- The Health and Social Care Board should address the need to provide an accredited source of information and advice on health and social care for the people of Northern Ireland
- The Department should address the particular issues of rural dwellers who do not have access to a car and need to attend Health and Social Care services

**The People's Priorities (November 2011)**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- A joined up approach to the future development of hospital care, out of hours services to include GP Out of Hours services, minor injuries units and accident and emergency services
- A greater focus on care in the community for the most vulnerable groups in society, such as the elderly, children, learning disabled and those with mental health problems. This will also require improved interdepartmental working by the Northern Ireland Executive, as well as better internal co-ordination and communication across health and social care organisations
- That there is a renewed commitment by the commissioners to the full achievement of the Department's Quality Strategy, including the five experience standards as outlined in the Department's document entitled "Improving the Patient and Client Experience". The five experience standards cover the following areas: respect; attitude; behaviour; communication; privacy and dignity
- The Department should report on an ongoing basis to the general public about targets, how they are monitored and the performance achieved by health and social care organisations
- Any decision to remove or change the targets implemented as a result of the Department's document entitled "Priorities for Action" should be openly communicated to patients, service users and their carers; and that they should be involved in the setting of future targets and standards against which the performance of the health and social care organisations are measured.
- The Department of Health and the Health and Social Care Board should address the need for an information and advice service for people in Northern Ireland that will provide accredited information on health and social care, the services available and the standards they should expect.
- The Department and the Commissioners should communicate with the public regarding the level of investment in administration and management required to deliver health and social care services and consider how to reduce costs and improve efficiency

## Patterson I

This is my response to the consultation on the Draft Programme for Government (PFG) 2011-2015.

I am most concerned that the Draft PFG lacks an overall vision and is light on key commitments for the natural environment. I believe that the Assembly needs to show the spirit and vision that is needed to make Northern Ireland a leader in sustainability and an example of what local democracy can achieve.

There is an intense focus in the PFG upon growing the economy but this should not be at the expense of the natural environment. Indeed, a healthy environment can directly contribute towards a healthy economy - two examples are sustainable tourism and creation of the jobs needed to deliver a low carbon economy.

Whilst there are some good things in the Draft PFG, such as a revised Biodiversity Strategy and an Invasive Species Strategy, the document fails to put in place measures to help deliver them. In addition, there a number of significant gaps in the document that must be filled. I request that the following targets be included in the PFG:

- A Northern Ireland Climate Change Act, with tangible and credible emissions reduction targets for each sector. Currently we are 99% reliant on increasingly expensive imported energy. If we move to a low-carbon economy with a thriving renewable energy sector our energy supply will be secure, and we will have created thousands of new jobs and attracted major investment. Committing to a Climate Change Act would help us deliver this low-carbon economy.
- The creation of an independent environmental protection agency. This would act as a champion for sustainability and environmental protection, and prevent costly indecision and slow action on safeguarding our environment which leaves Northern Ireland taxpayers repeatedly exposed to the risk of enormous fines for breach of EU environmental law.
- A Northern Ireland Marine Act which ensures a sound framework for healthy seas and protection for a range of marine species.
- A reformed planning system with sustainability at its heart. I want to see a planning system that can help deliver a thriving economy whilst protecting our natural, built and cultural heritage. All development must be truly sustainable and promote long-term societal benefits, and deliver improved health and wellbeing.
- Increased funding for rural development to allow all farmers to be brought into agri-environment schemes. These are one of the main ways of halting biodiversity decline and they also provide a range of other benefits, including helping support rural communities by providing financial support to farmers, and creating significant socio-economic benefits.

Finally, I want the Assembly to 'Step Up for Nature' by halting biodiversity loss by 2016 through a strengthened Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy and adequate resources to secure the delivery of biodiversity targets. Many of the recommendations above will help achieve this important target.

Yours sincerely I Patterson

## Peples L

I am concerned that the Draft Programme for Government (PfG) lacks in key commitments for our natural environment. I believe that the Assembly needs to show the spirit and vision that is Northern Ireland and become a leader in sustainability.

The draft PfG needs to focus on the natural environment to the same degree as it has on the economy. The economy and the environment are not separate entities... indeed a healthy environment directly contributes towards a vibrant economy - sustainable tourism and creation of the jobs needed to deliver a low carbon economy, are just two examples.

I feel there are some good things in the Draft PfG to do with Northern Ireland's biodiversity but the document fails to put in place measures to deliver on this. There are also two major environmental gaps in the document that I feel the government needs to include immediately! These are a Northern Ireland Climate Change Act and a Northern Ireland Marine Act.

Currently we are 99% reliant on increasingly expensive imported energy. If we move to a low-carbon economy with a thriving renewable energy sector our energy supply will be secure, and we will have created thousands of new jobs and attracted major investment. Committing to a Climate Change Act would help us deliver this low-carbon economy.

A Northern Ireland Marine Act would help ensure a framework for healthy seas and protection for a range of marine species and help coordinate all the people who invest in and rely upon our seas for a living.

And although we have other systems in place that are working well, there is always room for improvement ... How?

You can help create an independent environmental protection agency, and prevent costs to Northern Ireland taxpayers from enormous fines for breach of EU environmental law.

You can advocate a reformed planning system with sustainability at its heart. All development should be truly sustainable and promote long-term societal benefits, and deliver improved health and wellbeing.

You can increase funding for rural development to allow all farmers to be brought into agri-environment schemes. thus helping to halt biodiversity decline and provide a range of other benefits to rural communities and farmers.

The Assembly can 'Step Up for Nature' by halting biodiversity loss by 2016 through a strengthened Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy and provide adequate resources to the delivery of biodiversity targets.

The opportunities could be endless.

Yours sincerely  
L Peples



## Platform for Change

### Programme for Government Consultation Response

#### Platform for Change

Platform for Change was established in 2009, following initial research funded by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust on how best to promote a renewal and realignment of politics in Northern Ireland. The evidence from public-attitudes surveys, interviews and focus groups was that there was frustration with political deadlock and disengagement from participation. Initiated by a group of non-partisan activists and thinkers, Platform for Change was constituted as a democratic organisation, following a well-attended meeting in Belfast.

Our thoughts and agenda were distilled into our "Platform" document which is available on our website [www.platformforchange.net](http://www.platformforchange.net) and which has been assented to from a wide spectrum of signatories from across Northern Ireland society.

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#### Our Response

Our response to the draft Programme for Government (PfG) consultation is presented as follows:

- In Section 3 we provide a high level summary response.
- In Sections 4-8 we provide specific comment on each of the key priorities in the PfG. We address the priorities in the order of relevance to the mission of Platform for Change. Under each priority we highlight specific key commitments that are relevant to the mission of Platform for Change or against which we wish to challenge targets or assumptions. We have not commented on those key commitments which we broadly accept, so our contributions are deliberately critical in approach.
- In Section 9 we provide additional commentary in response to the consultation pro-forma questions.

## Summary of Our Analysis of the Draft Programme for Government

**Our major conclusion in analysing the Draft Programme for Government (PfG) is that it is reflective of the political structures underlying the operation of the Northern Ireland Executive and the broader functions of Government.**

**We note that the PfG has been presented in the context of a four year budget statement by the Minister for Finance for the period 2011-2015 made in the previous Assembly mandate (4<sup>th</sup> March 2011). We suggest that debate and consultation on the Executive Budget should flow from an agreed Programme for Government, rather than vice versa. We have concluded that the development of the PfG has been unduly constrained by the pre-existing four year budget.**

**While noting discrete legislative commitments in the PfG we note the absence of a detailed draft legislative programme aligned with the PfG and note the dearth of legislative activity within the Assembly in the current mandate.**

**We recognise that growing a sustainable economy has been identified as the top priority within the PfG. We note the additional long-term commitments to deliver a more peaceful and fairer Northern Ireland. To achieve these goals, we argue that economic metrics of general wellbeing, fairness and societal cohesion should be developed, used, targeted and monitored within Government.**

**We believe the plans to deliver public-service efficiency are unambitious. Beyond the structural changes flowing from the Reform of Public Administration and the tokenistic target of reducing civil service sickness rates, there is little in the PfG to suggest significant efficiencies will be delivered. We argue that a creative approach towards service delivery, leveraging voluntary and community organisations in 'co-production', could deliver improved services in certain sectors (eg childcare) even in the context of constrained public finances.**

**We argue that Priorities 4 and 5 are strongly interlinked when targeting community cohesion. While the work of building a shared society primarily takes place at the individual and community level we argue that the structures of Government in Northern Ireland currently perpetuate division. Our proposed changes set out below would have a positive, 'top down' contribution to developing community cohesion.**

**We believe there are significant absences in the PfG:**

*A lack of a strong commitment to a genuinely shared education system and to accrue the significant savings that would result.*

*An absence of a commitment to the Green New Deal programme which will deliver a virtuous mix of tackling fuel poverty, creating 'green collar' jobs and reducing the region's greenhouse gas emissions.*

*A lack of any proposed solution to the debacle around education selection at age 11 and the current situation of unregulated tests.*

*A lack of commitment to regional revenue raising, specifically indexing of the regional rate and a moratorium on additional water charges. We believe this shows a lack of leadership, a lack of political will and a lack of political and societal 'maturity'.*

**In summary, we do not believe the current political arrangements at Stormont can deliver a PfG which has collective support and real vision. This is evidenced by the draft document reading, as it does, as a list of current strategies and programmes and constrained, as it is, by the current four-year budget. We argue that it is absent any real vision, particularly in tackling sectarianism and its consequent impact on the availability of public resources. We suggest that the document is a Programme of the 'Permanent Government' (ie the Northern Ireland Civil Service) rather than a programme flowing from the collective will of a functioning Executive.**

#### **Priority 4: Building a Strong and Shared Community**

**Finalise the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy: we believe that the production of a revised CSI Strategy should be central to the PfG. The previous draft strategy needs to be completely rewritten with clear aims and objectives and concrete programmes and projects to realise them. We do not accept that the future for Northern Ireland is sustained segregation; rather we believe the only viable future is an integrated society in which individuals are free to define their unique identities in a culture of tolerance that enriches us all. We believe the continued arm's-length operation of the Community Relations Council should be a key component of the revised CSI Strategy.**

**4.2 Establish a Ministerial advisory group to bring forward recommendations to the Minister of Education to advance shared education: Platform for Change calls for the education system in Northern Ireland to be progressively integrated. This is not only because there is a compelling case for rationalisation but principally because it is essential to socialise a new generation into the values of a normal, civic society. The work of the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education should be supported, pioneering as it has the ethos of integrated schooling.**

### **Priority 5: Delivering High Quality and Efficient Public Services**

**We believe that the goals within Priority 5 should, in addition to targeting efficiencies, also have a clear vision of the kind of democracy that is envisioned for Northern Ireland. In the Platform for Change we note that participation rates in Assembly elections have gradually declined (2011 54.5%, 2007 62.3%, 2003 63%, 1998 69.9%). We believe that Government needs to be concerned about democratic participation. We argue that there should be a clear goal within the PfG to deliver:**

**‘A vibrant and participative democracy’**

**Establish new 11 council model: We suggest re-examining the proposed 11-council model and reflecting on the two-tier models of local government that pertain across Europe. We contend that a third level of cheap, genuinely local representative bodies (cf Parish Councils in England and Town Councils in the Republic of Ireland) could be established in Northern Ireland. Such a model, based on genuine local democracy, would provide an opportunity to rationalise the sub-regional tier along city and county boundaries and should be associated with a granting of a power of general competence to the latter, so that local authorities can provide genuinely ‘joined-up’ solutions.**

**Agree changes to post-2015 structures: Platform for Change has clear vision of revised political structures:**

- The Executive should be formed as an agreed coalition with collective responsibility to drive a negotiated Programme for Government.
- The Executive should be endorsed by a weighted majority of the Assembly.
- We believe there should be an end to communal designation in the Assembly.
- There is scope for a reduction in the number of MLAs to 80 but this should be addressed with an examination of alternative Assembly electoral systems which would maintain proportionality of representation.
- We are committed to a reduction of Northern Ireland government departments to around 8.
- There should be no extension of the current Assembly term.

- There should be full transparency in political donations legislation, in line with the rest of the UK.

## **Priority 2: Creating Opportunities, Tackling Disadvantage and Improving Health and Well Being**

**Implement an Integrated and Affordable Childcare Strategy (OFMDFM):** In our opinion universal access to professional childcare is a critical element of the PfG. It is the foundation of the prosperity, social comfort and relative equality characterising the Scandinavian countries. The earlier interventions are made in the life-cycle, starting with quality childcare, the more effective they will be and the greater will be the value for money they offer. On this basis we fail to reconcile the relatively low amount of £3m per annum afforded to the strategy and would argue for a substantial upwards revision.

**Use the Social Protection Fund to help individuals and families facing hardship:** We raise our concerns on the long-term sustainability of programmes funded under both the Social Protection Fund and Social Investment Fund. We fail to appreciate why longer term, sustainable approaches to tackling disadvantage would not be best administered by departmental ministers rather than OFMDFM. As with the proper relationship between the PfG and the budget, funds to promote social inclusion should not be abstracted from a strong, strategic policy envelope, to avoid fragmentary impact and the risk of clientelism.

**Support people (with an emphasis on young people) in to employment by providing skills and training:** A bespoke package of post-16 student finance should be developed to ensure that no young people become 'NEETs' (not in education, employment or training), that their progress is based on achievement achieved rather than ability to pay, and that they can enter the labour market at a reasonable level with prospects for career development.

**Ensure no additional water charges during this Programme for Government:** The cost of water and sewerage services is only partially covered by the regional rate and should be fully met by a rates supplement—as recommended by the Hillyard review commissioned shortly after devolution was restored—or by individual metering qualified by a social tariff to reconcile need with ability to pay.

## Priority 1: Growing a Sustainable Economy and Investing in the Future

**Press for reduction in corporation tax and reduce its level:** We maintain that the underpinning argument for corporation-tax reduction has been rejected by economists. Recent surveys have confirmed that workforce skills and competences are more important to inward investors. A reduction in corporation tax would provide a deadweight subsidy to large enterprises and create additional fiscal pressures which are hard to reconcile in the context of little regional revenue-raising initiative.

**Achieve £300m investment through FDI:** We find the inward investment target unreasonable in the global macroeconomic context. We also judge the 50/50 split between FDI and domestic investment as a crude balance and argue strongly for a greater emphasis to be given to supporting investment in and by local businesses. The FDI target should be reduced to £200m. A greater emphasis should be given to supporting R&D investment by domestic businesses. The investment and jobs targets could be maintained through investment in programmes such as the Green New Deal. Emphasis in economic development needs to be given to the development of clusters of skills and competence. The Investment and Economic Strategies must move away from a chase for 'industrial capital' to the development of 'informational capital'—the human resources, allied to sophisticated technological application, characteristic of the knowledge economy.

**Ensure 90% of large scale Investment planning decisions are made within 6 months and applications with job creation potential are given additional weight.** The Planning Service should exist for the public interest and strike the appropriate balance between economic development, local concerns and the environment. While there should be clear targets for the streamlining of the service, delivering real efficiencies in process, economic concerns should not outweigh the imperative for good planning, respecting existing Area and Local plans and the environment more generally.

**Hold the Regional Rates increase to the rate of inflation:** While not advocating a specific rate rise, we believe it is unreasonable for the Executive to commit to a four-year PfG that does not take tough decisions regarding the raising of local revenue, particularly with regard to revenue-raising for water and sewerage services. The current caps on rateable properties are regressive and should be removed.

**Progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5% against the 2003 baseline (DRD):** While acknowledging the commitment to 'promote' sustainable modes of transport under Priority 3, it is a concern that roads investment is seen as a critical contributor to sustainable economic growth. We believe that economic goals can be achieved through implementation

of a Regional Transport Strategy which focuses more heavily on public transport and walking/cycling, to deliver reduced congestion and improved journey times.

### **Priority 3: Protecting our People, The Environment, and Creating Safer Communities**

**Continue to work towards a reduction in greenhouse gases by at least 35% of 1990 levels by 2025: Platform for Change advocates enshrining a legislative target to reduce greenhouse gases by 40% of their 1990 levels by 2020. This target could be linked to economic development under the Green New Deal programme and provide a catalyst for Northern Ireland to be the leading UK region for low-carbon and renewable-energy technologies, renewing and reinvigorating its engineering tradition. We see no reasons why Northern Ireland cannot also lead the UK in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.**

### **PfG Consultation Response: Pro- Forma Questions**

**Do you agree that the Programme for Government is designed and balanced in a way that is appropriate in enabling the delivery of its priorities?**

Beyond providing lists of extant 'building blocks', the draft PfG does not provide enough detail to judge if the design will lead to successful delivery. Certainly there is no clear mechanism to show how competing priorities will be reconciled, particularly in the context of block-grant fiscal constraints and a lack of political will for regional revenue-raising. We judge the PfG to be a collection of discrete departmental strategies and programmes that displays a lack of overall coherence and vision. The balance of the design appears to be 'bottom-up' rather than being led by the Executive in a 'top-down' and collective manner.

**Do you agree that the Programme for Government sufficiently links the key commitments to plans for delivery?**

We agree that relevant building-block plans and strategies have been identified against each priority. Beyond the scant detail on the delivery framework in Appendix 1, little confidence can be gained that delivery plans will succeed in achieving the key commitments.

**Do you agree that, in general, the key commitments contained within the document are appropriate to the successful achievement of priorities?**

We have highlighted differences in emphasis and additional key commitments that we believe should be in the PfG.

**Do you agree the Programme for Government is appropriately balanced in terms of sub-regional recognition?**

We note the specific commitments to projects in Derry/Londonderry and the commitment to relocate DARD headquarters.

**Do you agree that the Programme for Government is appropriately balanced in terms of its recognition of major sectoral issues?**

The major sectoral issues have been appropriately identified. We would make different judgements in emphasis as highlighted in detail above. We also believe that the discrete nature of many strategies and programmes fails to recognise the cross-sectoral relationship of many issues, eg the Green New Deal programme could generate economic growth, reduce fuel and child poverty and contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gases. Further, it appears that little scope is given to achieving leverage through community and voluntary organisations through their involvement in programme co-production and delivery. Third-sector organisations should be identified against specific key commitments.

**Do you agree that the Programme for Government presents its priorities and commitments in a way that is fair and inclusive to all?**

We believe that there is a genuine commitment within the PfG to deliver a fairer society. However it is critical that specific economic metrics are developed and used to measure inequality in society. It is well established that the pursuit of economic growth alone will generate greater inequality in societies. The Northern Ireland Government should identify economic metrics for wellbeing, fairness and societal cohesion to measure within the timetable of the proposed PfG.

**Are there any other issues in the Programme for Government that you wish to comment on?**

Further detail provided, separately above.



# PlayBoard NI



## Response to Draft Programme for Government

February 2011-2015

**PlayBoard NI** – Northern Ireland's Lead Agency for Children and Young People's Play

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Co. Antrim

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 PlayBoard is the lead agency for the development and promotion of children's and young people's play in Northern Ireland. The organisation provides a range of innovative services designed to strengthen service delivery through advice, support, training and tailored provision. Since its inception in 1985, PlayBoard has campaigned, lobbied, raised awareness and developed partnerships in order to put play on the agenda of policy makers and resource providers.

1.2 PlayBoard is a membership organisation which exists to promote, create and develop quality play opportunities that aim to improve the quality of children's lives. This is achieved through a number of key functions:

- Having an inclusive and engaged membership voice
- Engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders to achieve increased recognition and understanding of the importance of play and playwork
- Research, Policy and Information services
- Supporting Playwork workforce development
- Driving Organisational growth and development

1.3 PlayBoard's vision is 'A society that respects and values the child's right to play as an intrinsic and essential right of childhood'

## **2.0 GENERAL COMMENTS**

2.1 PlayBoard welcomes the publication of the Northern Ireland Executive's draft programme for government, draft investment strategy and economic strategy. We welcome this opportunity to respond on behalf of our membership to the consultation. Having read and considered the consultation document we would like to offer the following general comments for consideration. Our comments focus on issues within the scope of our role as the lead agency for play in Northern Ireland.

2.2 We fully support the commitment of the Executive to focus on the five key strategic priorities:

- Growing a Sustainable Economy and Investing in the Future;
- Creating Opportunities, Tackling Disadvantage and Improving Health and Well-Being;
- Protecting Our People, the Environment and Creating Safer Communities;
- Building a Strong and Shared Community;
- Delivering High Quality and Efficient Public Services.

- 2.2 The links made between social progress and growing the economy are to be encouraged. This connection is vitally important and requires concerted efforts to ensure that the Executive, through PfG, accords high priority to identifying, and tackling the level and extent of inequalities which exist across society and which place real barriers in the way of all members and sections of society. We believe that a prevention and early intervention approach should be an additional guiding principle throughout the programme for government and across all departments.
- 2.3 PlayBoard fully endorses the commitment that 'all departments of Government must work together to produce policies, plans and strategies – the building blocks – that are consistent with the priorities we have identified. In addition, Government as a whole, must act collaboratively with partners in the private, community and voluntary sectors to assure, and positively maximise, the impacts of our work'. However despite the stated aspiration to work together, it is apparent that of the 76 commitments listed under the five priorities, only two have more than one department responsible for delivery.
- 2.4 PlayBoard would recommend that urgent attention is directed toward ensuring that the PfG, budget, departmental delivery and spending plans and accompanying Equality Impact Assessments are drawn together in order to allow for the development of a robust, coherent and cohesive vision. We would encourage the development of a coherent strategic vision that places children and young people at the heart of the PfG, and thereby recognises and seeks to support and enable children and young people to become key contributors to building a better future for Northern Ireland.
- 2.5 The majority of the commitments across the priorities are tagged to individual departments and, therefore, the draft PfG has missed a crucial opportunity to embed a more holistic outcomes focused approach to how the executive does its business. PlayBoard would suggest that the adoption of such a holistic approach could ensure optimal use of scarce resources. The strategy also needs to recognise and consider the spatial context and current local resource base that could support delivery of the priorities outlined. Furthermore, PlayBoard would highlight that the Committee for Finance and Personnel in its First Report of the Inquiry into the Scrutiny of the Executive's Budget and Expenditure 2008-11 did recommend that 'that there should

be a closer alignment between the PfG and the Budget documents; in particular a more visible linkage between PfG priorities and goals, PSA objectives and the allocations, departmental objectives and spending areas in budgets<sup>20</sup>.

### **3.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS**

3.1 The sequence of the development of the PfG have made it particularly difficult

to comment in an informed and considered manner to the consultation. The draft PfG, rather than being solution focused and outcome driven, raised many more questions regarding the intent and strategic direction of the Executive. We note that it is intended by the end of the consultation period on the draft PfG that each Government Departments will have produced detailed delivery plans setting out how they will take forward delivery of the PfG. It is our view that in the interests of optimal transparency and accountability these delivery plans *should have been* developed alongside the draft PfG and made available for full public consultation as part of the PfG consultation.

3.2 We would ask the Executive to provide details of its plans for publication of all draft departmental delivery plans, including the arrangements for public consultation, screening and equality impact assessment as required by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Information and details also need to be provided on the arrangements made by the Executive to carry out direct engagement with children and young people on the draft PfG. Where engagement has occurred we would ask that the outcome of this engagement is published, with an indication of how the Executive intends to respond to and act on the views from children and young people.

3.3 It is also crucial that the delivery framework explicitly incorporates a mechanism to enable the monitoring, assessment and evaluation of the level, extent and outcome of 'working together' both across and between Government departments and with the voluntary and community sectors. *Improved outcomes for children and young people can only be achieved by actual cross departmental working.* These delivery plans will be critical in providing the answers to many of the questions raised by the draft PfG and PlayBoard would be keen to support and inform the development of these delivery plans.

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<sup>20</sup> Committee for Finance and Personnel (2008) First Report of Inquiry into the scrutiny of the Executive's Budget and Expenditure 2008-11 para 7

#### **4.0 PLAY & LEISURE**

- 4.1 We are especially pleased to see the identification of the Executive's Play and Leisure implementation plan specifically referenced within the PfG under priority 2. *PlayBoard would however suggest that this policy initiative also has relevance to priorities 1-4 inclusive.* Play and leisure should also be included in the PfG as a commitment rather than a building block. Combining play strategies with wider programmes for health, education, regeneration, childcare, and youth justice provides a powerful platform for reducing inequalities and helping children to reach their potential.
- 4.2 In Northern Ireland children and young people face a myriad of issues which restrict their ability and deny them their right to access play opportunities. Changes in the pattern of family life; increased levels of traffic; fewer open, accessible spaces; fears for children's safety, perceived dangers and new working patterns have all contributed to our children and young people being increasingly denied their right to play. Denial of this right is further exacerbated for children living within rural communities, children with disabilities and/or particular needs and children with English as a second language.
- 4.3 PlayBoard would concur that the Play & Leisure Implementation Plan could be included in the PfG as a commitment, rather than a building block. The plan, which was endorsed by the Executive in March 2011, also needs to be prioritised and actioned.

#### **5.0 CHILD POVERTY**

- 5.1 Economic recovery and tackling disadvantage is a key theme running through the PfG. We are pleased to see the development of an integrated and affordable Childcare Strategy indicated as a key commitment. This must be developed as a matter of urgency and in partnership with the lead voluntary childcare agencies (PlayBoard, Early Years and NICMA), taking cognisance of existing high quality childcare structures such as the Regional Childcare Partnerships.
- 5.2 Tackling poverty, and in particular, child poverty is welcomed. This should be aligned with the development of a Childcare Strategy, the Social investment Fund and the Social Protection Fund. The lack of accessible, affordable, quality school age childcare is a huge area of concern for many parents, particularly those wishing to avail of training or employment opportunities.

5.3 Good quality school age childcare & play opportunities can help to reduce child poverty; promote social inclusion; and build stronger communities and neighbourhoods. School aged childcare provision (SAC) is essential to the regeneration and renewal of communities and is a crucial intervention that contributes to breaking the poverty cycle. SAC provides tangible benefits to individual families, it promotes access to training and employment for women and it contributes to the economic regeneration of areas of deprivation whilst also encouraging social inclusion.

## 6.0 INVESTING IN PLAY AND LEISURE DERIVES BENEFITS

6.1 It must be highlighted that the key benefits of play illustrate the complexity and interconnectedness of the relationship between play, well-being and the high level outcomes identified within the NI children and young people's strategy. Play has been shown to have a key role in:

- Positive physical and mental health development<sup>21</sup>;
- The development of brain capacity<sup>22</sup> in early years;
- Supporting a connection with nature and the environment<sup>23</sup>;
- Supporting broad holistic development incorporating areas such as physical literacy, cognitive skills and creativity<sup>24</sup>;
- Providing opportunities for children and young people to assess and manage risk for themselves<sup>25</sup>

6.2 Play can help to build resilience and the capacity for children to thrive despite adversity and stress in their lives. Key elements of resilience are the ability to regulate emotions, strong attachments and peer friendships, enjoyment, being able to cope with stress, and being physically and mentally healthy. The final report on the policy review on children and young people (HM treasury and DFES 2007a) and part of the comprehensive spending review, announced a new emphasis on building resilience, with a focus on three protective factors: high educational attainment, good social and emotional skills and positive parenting. We would like to highlight here that Play is an effective mechanism for achieving this.

6.3 In addition to the individual benefits children and young people get from taking part in play and leisure activities, there is further evidence that it has a significant role to play in cultural development and for the wider society. Play provides children with the opportunity to acquire valued 'social capital' and associated well being through

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<sup>21</sup> Hughes, B. (2001) *Evolutionary Playwork and Reflective Analytic Practice*, London; Routledge

<sup>22</sup> Prout, A. (2005) *The Future of Childhood*, Abingdon: Routledge Falmer

<sup>23</sup> Physical – Children's Play Council (2004) *Children's exercise and play A Children's*

*Play Council Briefing March 2004* London; Children's Play Council Mental –

Winnicott, D.W. (1971) *Playing and Reality*, Harmondsworth: Penguin

<sup>24</sup> Abbott, L. & Langston, A. (2005) *Birth to Three Matters*. O.U.P. Berkshire.

<sup>25</sup> Drummond, M.J. (2002) *Assessing Children's Learning*. David Fulton. London.

playing out in their immediate neighbourhoods. We need to work together to overcome the practical realities of creating places and spaces where all can enjoy health promoting and sustainable lifestyles.

## **7.0 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS & 10 YEAR STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**

7.1 The international children's rights standards of the UNCRC and the Executive's 10 Year Strategy for Children and Young People have the potential to be 'critical enablers', ensuring that children and young people sit at the heart of PfG. It is unfortunate that they are not recognised as key enablers by the draft PfG or given a particular status beyond that of building blocks.

7.2 We strongly recommend that the PfG give proper recognition to the status of the UNCRC as an international binding agreement and include within it a commitment from the Executive to addressing the Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations. We would recommend that part of this commitment should be a direction to Government departments to address the Concluding Observations in their delivery of PfG. PlayBoard would also recommend that the PfG establishes early intervention as a joint government priority – recognising that there are real and lasting savings that are possible if Government were to adopt a preventative spending approach.

## **8.0 CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP**

8.1 We are encouraged to note the importance placed upon working more effectively across Government Departments. We recommend that cross departmental working, alignment of strategies and shared resources be explored as a matter of urgency. This will be critical to the success of the PfG. The role of the voluntary and community sector is highlighted throughout the PfG. We are encouraged to see an indication of the intention to work in partnership with the voluntary and community sectors where a considerable skills and knowledge base exists, along with excellent examples of good practice.

8.2 There is now a need for a more pro-active approach by the Executive to make effective collaboration a reality. It should be a required or expected priority for departments when examining their budgets, identifying their priorities and delivering on common agreed outcomes. It is now essential that a mechanism is put in place to secure and deliver on collaboration and co-operation so that it can be embedded in the functioning of Government departments. There is a growing consensus emerging on the need for a statutory duty to be placed on Government departments to co-operate, a duty which must transcend all levels and layers of Government.

8.3 PlayBoard welcomes that the Executive has signaled the intention to work in partnership with the private and the voluntary and community sectors in ways that will deliver tangible outcomes<sup>(26)</sup>. However, again there is a need for much greater detail on precisely how the intention will be delivered. We would strongly advocate that to turn intent into reality the PfG must include an explicit commitment to upholding and delivering on the Concordat between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland<sup>27</sup>. It is only through focused and joint delivery on the series of commitments made in the Concordat that true partnership can be enabled to support delivery on the PfG.

## 9.0 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

9.1 The draft PfG milestone for introducing Local Government legislation is very welcome and removes uncertainty from this important area of reform. Two of the most important new responsibilities of local government will be (Land use) Planning and Community Planning. We would suggest that the PfG should include milestones for each of these key policy areas, recognising the importance of play and leisure within each.

9.2 The changes to local government structures and responsibilities will have major implications for local communities and the ways in which they engage with councils and other public bodies. It is essential that requirements in relevant Planning Policy Statement's, in relation to providing open space for play and leisure, are adhered to. A capacity building programme to enable communities to understand and prepare for the changes in local government should be delivered across the region. We recommend that this programme be included as milestones for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.

9.3 *Community Planning and the Power of Well-being* - The new councils will be required to facilitate Community Planning by engaging with communities and working in partnership with public sector agencies. Although this new power is central to local government reorganisation, it is not referred to in the draft PfG. This new responsibility is designed to deliver improved and more effective public services while also promoting community development and renewal. Statutory guidance on Community Planning will need to be in place prior to the new councils being formed. It should draw on the lessons being learned from pilot Community Planning projects supported by the Big Lottery Fund. To enable the shadow councils and community

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<sup>26</sup> NI Executive Draft PfG 2011-15 Consultation p.12

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.nicva.org/sites/default/files/ConcordatConsultation.pdf>



stakeholders to prepare for these new responsibilities capacity building should be provided. A capacity building programme for community stakeholders on local government reform and community planning should be milestones for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015

- 9.4 *Sufficiency measures* – As part of the sufficiency measures, PlayBoard would advocate that local councils should be required to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities for children within their area in accordance with regulations. The assessments should cover the range of factors that affect children and young people's opportunities to play and include demographic profiles of the area; an audit of open space and existing and potential play space; play provision; recreational provision and other factors that promote play opportunities including planning; traffic; transport; community initiatives, as well as workforce development.
- 9.5 A provision similar to the Children and families (Wales) measure 2010 section 11, play opportunities should be included. It allows Welsh ministers to place a duty on local authorities to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in their areas for children in accordance with regulations. Support also needs to be given to local councils in conducting the play sufficiency assessments and associated funding.

## **10.0 PLANS FOR INTERFACE AREAS**

- 10.1 The draft PfG includes a very welcome commitment to seeking local agreement to reduce the number of 'peace walls'. The associated milestones (for the Department of Justice) include developing action plans for prioritised individual areas. Action plans for four interface areas of Belfast have recently been completed. These were made possible through the support of Belfast City Council and the engagement of residents, community organisations and public agencies. The plans were endorsed by communities in each of the four areas, identified a series of actions for implementation and were presented to the Council's Good Relations Partnership.
- 10.2 The process used to secure community engagement and support for the four interface action plans provides a model which should be drawn on. It is also important that the skills mix (community development and engagement along with land use planning) brought to the process is utilised for the proposed action plans. We thus recommend that an additional milestone for 2012-2013 be: draw on recent models of interface action planning in Belfast to build locally agreed action plans for interfaces areas of which play and leisure should play a key part.

- 10.3 It is important to recognise and respond to the impact of the legacy of the conflict on play and leisure opportunities, for example by the segregated nature of much school and community based provision and the barriers to children and young people accessing facilities and provision in geographic areas outside their own communities. We would advocate the need for multi-agency approaches that embrace prevention and early intervention as the key to ensuring neighbourhoods and communities are safe areas where everyone can feel secure and meet their diverse needs.

## **11.0 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & CARE**

- 11.1 We would highlight that the previous PfG for 2008-11 recognised the need for co-ordination and integration to bring early years care and education together. Given that the target remains outstanding and requires further work and greater prioritisation, we would advocate that this is carried forward into the current PfG.

The ongoing parallel development of strategic responses to early years and childcare, and the failure to establish lead ministerial responsibility for this area mitigates against and acts as a barrier to effective integration; undermining efforts to protect and promote the best interests of children and families. There must be specific attention given to ensuring the provision of high quality, accessible, affordable and appropriate childcare services. The PfG where relevant should consider evidence and respond to it to support more effective policy making and improve outcomes for children and young people in Northern Ireland.

## **12.0 CONCLUSION**

- 12.1 PlayBoard welcomes the publication of the draft programme for government and the opportunity to provide an analysis of its commitments to the play and leisure needs of children and young people. PlayBoard would concur that the Play & Leisure Implementation Plan could be included in the PfG as a commitment, rather than a building block. As highlighted the plan which was endorsed by the Executive in March 2011 also needs to be prioritised and actioned. Local play strategies need to be adopted and firmly embedded within the wider top-tier plans and strategies for our cities and counties, coordinated within the overall vision of the PfG to create joined up children's services and child-friendly environments that genuinely place children and young people at the heart of their communities.
- 12.2 We look forward to receiving a summary of responses to the consultation which addresses the issues raised in this submission. As we have indicated we are particularly interested in engaging with, informing and supporting the development of the forthcoming departmental delivery plans.

## POBAL

### POBAL submission on Draft Programme for Government

#### The Irish Language Act

The proposed Programme for Government claims to offer a wide range of benefits for the people of the north of Ireland, in terms of economic renewal, educational reform, improved Public Services and an improved Shared Community, but there are few references to the Irish language in the draft document, and nowhere is the Irish language Act mentioned.

POBAL, the Irish language advocacy group, have led the campaign for the Irish language Act. The fact that it is not mentioned in the draft document is a cause of concern in the light of the commitment given in the St Andrews' Agreement to enact Irish language legislation. This Agreement is now more than five years old. The draft PfG will cover the period 2012-15. The PfG should take into account the overwhelming support for Irish language legislation expressed over two governmental consultations in 2007. The results of the first Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) consultation (2007) on the Proposed Irish Language Act for NI received 668 substantive replies and some 5000 petitions of various kinds. DCAL states that 93 % of replies favoured the legislation.<sup>28</sup> On 16 October 2007, Edwin Poots, the first of three DUP Culture Ministers to date, published the results of the second DCAL consultation on the Irish language Act in an official statement to the Assembly. He stated that of 11,629 responses received, 7,500 (68 per cent) supported Irish language legislation and 3,500 were opposed to legislation of any kind.<sup>29</sup> POBAL believes that the increase in negative responses during the second consultation period is due to well-publicised campaigns by some political parties during this period and a significantly altered method of counting responses from that used during the first consultation. Even given this, the vast majority of responses favoured the legislation, and over two consultations, 75 % of responses were supportive of rights-based legislation.

POBAL welcome the work being carried out by the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Carál Ní Chuilín on the scoping of Irish Language legislation. We believe that the Westminster government have key responsibility for the legislation it promised in 2006, but that leaving out the Irish language Act from the PfG at Stormont when the Minister has stated she will put proposals forward leaves a gap. We are calling for Irish language legislation to be brought in and be included in the Programme for Government, and for the Irish language to be interwoven with the different strands of the Programme.

#### The Irish Language Strategy

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<sup>28</sup> DCAL (2007) Consultation Paper on Proposed Irish language Legislation for NI, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2006, Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

<sup>29</sup> DCAL (2007) Summary of Responses, October 2007, Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, DCAL p. 4, point 5

POBAL also welcomes the work being carried out by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure into the development of a strategy for the Irish language. It is a positive indication that the strategy is referred to in the PfG. Of course, both the strategy and the Irish language legislation are mentioned in the St Andrews Agreement and it appears logical that they would both also be included in the PfG. Welcome though the reference to the strategy is, the draft PfG gives no detail of how this strategy might impact or what its effect might be on the main themes of the PfG. This is unfortunate, because although we understand that this work may not yet be complete, it is clear that an effective strategy will have implications in many area of relevance to the PfG and we would prefer to see these signposted more thoroughly in the draft document.

### **Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.**

The Third Report of the Advisory Committee contains a number of references to the Irish language. The Irish Language Act is recommended to protect the rights of Irish speakers, Irish language broadcasting is mentioned, as is public signage and, in addition, the issue of state funding for the Irish language.<sup>30</sup>

### **Growing a Sustainable Economy and Investing in the Future**

In terms of Economic Renewal, many businesses in the north now operate bilingually, or indeed, actively promote the Irish language in their everyday business dealings. The proposed PfG could cater for these, and other businesses, to help them promote the language aspect of their business. Irish, as an official working language of the European Union, should be seen as a viable and effective business language, and the PfG could reflect this through support for translation and interpretation services, specialist training and resourcing. In addition, the Irish language media is one of a number of growing areas where progress can and should be supported.

Irish speakers make up 10.4% of the population in the North (2001 Census), many of them young school leavers. Vocational Studies (as mentioned in ECRML, Article 8, Clause d.) for Irish speakers sends a positive message to young people that their future lies here at home, rather than abroad, where their skills are lost to the North. The PfG should include the development of Irish medium vocational training courses for young Irish speakers.

Investing in the Irish language now is an investment for the future.

### **Building a Strong and Shared Community**

The two main communities in the North have, over the years, been led to believe that the Irish language belongs to only one of them. But recent initiatives have shown that both communities have a strong connection with the language, although there is still some way to go to build trust. A strong support of the Irish language within the draft PfG would be a great stepping stone towards an understanding and acceptance of a shared culture and language, rather than one which divides.

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<sup>30</sup> ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES Third Opinion on the United Kingdom adopted on 30 June 2011

International legislation places a binding duty on government to undertake this type of initiative. Under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, government must ‘create appropriate conditions’ to enable Irish speakers to ‘express, preserve and develop their identity’. Article 2 of the FCPNM requires that the provisions of the FCPNM shall be applied ‘in good faith, in a spirit of understanding and tolerance and in conformity with the principles of good neighbourliness, friendly relations and co-operation between states.’

**The European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages**, in its Preamble, stresses ‘...the value of interculturalism and multilingualism...’, and in Article 7, states as an Objective and Principle, ‘the need for resolute action to promote regional or minority languages in order to safeguard them’

The PfG could, by including the Irish language as an integral part of its plans, ‘...undertake to eliminate, if they have not yet done so, any unjustified distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference relating to the use of a regional or minority language and intended to discourage or endanger the maintenance or development of a regional or minority language.’ (**ECRML, Article 7, section 2**)

The Executive, under Article 7, section 3, of the ECRML is charged to ‘...undertake to promote, by appropriate measures, mutual understanding between all the linguistic groups of the country and in particular the inclusion of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to regional or minority languages among the objectives of education and training provided within their countries and encouragement of the mass media to pursue the same objective.’

### **Delivering High Quality and Efficient Public Services**

The ECRML, Article 7, Section 1, sub-clause d. Urges ‘...the facilitation and/or encouragement of the use of regional or minority languages, in speech and writing, in private and public life’

With the enactment of Irish language legislation, Public Services could be accessed by Irish speakers more readily. There is no reason why the Irish language could not be included from the start in any new initiatives aimed at improving Public Services, thus avoiding the charge of ‘extra costs’ at a later date. Irish speakers exist at every level of all our Public Services. The PfG could identify these individuals at the start, and use this already existing resource to its advantage.

The visibility of the Irish language is a key means to promote diversity and to indicate the inclusion of Irish speakers in public services. The PfG should set out objectives in terms of improved Irish language usage in spoken and written forms.

The European Charter is quite specific in pointing out the role of the Executive in this field.

‘Administrative Authorities and Public Services

1. Within the administrative districts of the State in which the number of residents who are users of regional or minority languages justifies the measures specified below and according to the situation of each language, the Parties undertake, as far as this is reasonably possible, to:

- a. **iv. ensure that users of regional or minority languages may submit oral or written applications in these languages**
- c. **allow the administrative authorities to draft documents in a regional or minority language.**

2. In respect of the local and regional authorities on whose territory the number of residents who are users of regional or minority languages is such as to justify the measures specified below, the Parties undertake to allow and/or encourage:

- b. **the possibility for users of regional or minority languages to submit oral or written applications in these languages;**
- e. **the use by regional authorities of regional or minority languages in debates in their assemblies, without excluding, however, the use of the official language(s) of the State;**
- f. **the use by local authorities of regional or minority languages in debates in their assemblies, without excluding, however, the use of the official language(s) of the State;**
- g. **the use or adoption, if necessary in conjunction with the name in the official language(s) of traditional and correct forms of place-names in regional or minority languages.**

Although simultaneous translation equipment is available during debates at the NI Assembly, translation from Irish can only be heard by the Speaker and not by members, the press or the public. Thus, Irish speaking members must self-translate, leading at times to timed deadlines for answers curtailing either the information given or the self-translation.

3. With regard to public services provided by the administrative authorities or other persons acting on their behalf, the Parties undertake, within the territory in which regional or minority languages are used, in accordance with the situation of each language and as far as this is reasonably possible, to:

- c. **allow users of regional or minority languages to submit a request in these languages.**

4. With a view to putting into effect those provisions of paragraphs 1, 2 and 3

accepted by them, the Parties undertake to take one or more of the following measures:

- a. **translation or interpretation as may be required;**

5. The Parties undertake to allow the use or adoption of family names in the

## **regional or minority languages, at the request of those concerned. ' (ECRML)**

In terms of the Executive's specific plans, POBAL feel that the Irish language could be best served in the following ways.

### **Support the promotion of over 25,000 new jobs**

With 10.4% of the population (2001 Census) purporting to speak, or have an understanding of, Irish, it is only logical to assume that roughly the same percentage of applicants for these 25,000+ jobs will be Irish speakers. The PfG should reflect this, and invest time and money into creating jobs in the Irish language sector, in the Public, Private and Community sectors.

### **Make the Education and Skills Authority operational in 2013**

In general, some progress has been made in respect of Irish Medium education in recent years. However, there remain a number of key outstanding issues: responsibility in their early years for ensuring the viability of Irish Medium schools still depends to a disproportionate and unacceptable degree on the efforts of local parents; ensuring the progression from primary to post-primary education in all areas of the North remains extremely problematic, with strong debate on the benefits and disadvantages of current trends towards units or streams in English medium schools; resourcing remains inadequate; while some improvements have been made, funding, training and provision must be increased exponentially to address the specific areas of Special Needs provision in respect of immersion education. Irish is already recognised as a positive medium for the teaching of our children, and is the only section within Education which is actually growing in numbers. The PfG could, and should reflect this in its plans to reform areas of Education and Learning in the North. The Education and Skills Authority, proposed to be operational by 2013, should have the Irish language and its promotion as one of its core values. Developmental efforts and resourcing should be increased, and in respect of Area Based planning, it must be recognised that provision in English medium cannot be used to counterbalance Irish medium needs.

### **Support 200 projects through the Creative Industries Innovation Fund**

A percentage of these projects will inevitably come from the Irish speaking community. The PfG should reflect this, and allocate specific funding from the CIIF to Irish language projects.

### **Implement a strategy for Integrated and Affordable Childcare**

Many families now raise their children with Irish as their first language at home. Problems arise, however, when they seek adequate Childcare, where the only Childcare available, or affordable, is in an English medium setting. It is defeating the purpose of the parents to speak Irish at home, only to have the child minded in an English language setting. When implementing this strategy, the PfG should take into consideration the needs and wishes of Irish speaking families, and build the provision of Irish language Childcare into its plans.

## Porter N

This is my response to the consultation on the Draft Programme for Government (PfG) 2011-2015.

I am concerned that the Draft PfG lacks an overall vision and is light on key commitments for the natural environment. I believe that the Assembly needs to show the spirit and vision that is needed to make Northern Ireland a leader in sustainability and an example of what local democracy can achieve.

There is an intense focus in the PfG upon growing the economy but this should not be at the expense of the natural environment. Indeed, a healthy environment directly contributes towards a healthy economy - sustainable tourism and creation of the jobs needed to deliver a low carbon economy, are just two examples.

Whilst there are some good things in the Draft PfG, such as a revised Biodiversity Strategy and an Invasive Species Strategy, the document fails to put in place measures to help deliver them. In addition, there a number of significant gaps in the document that must be filled. I ask that the following targets are included in the PfG:

- A Northern Ireland Climate Change Act, with tangible emissions reduction targets for each sector. Currently we are 99% reliant on increasingly expensive imported energy. If we move to a low-carbon economy with a thriving renewable energy sector our energy supply will be secure, and we will have created thousands of new jobs and attracted major investment. Committing to a Climate Change Act would help us deliver this low-carbon economy.
- The creation of an independent environmental protection agency. This would act as a champion for sustainability and environmental protection, and prevent costly indecision and slow action on safeguarding our environment which leaves Northern Ireland taxpayers repeatedly exposed to the risk of enormous fines for breach of EU environmental law.
- A Northern Ireland Marine Act which ensures a framework for healthy seas and protection for a range of marine species.
- A reformed planning system with sustainability at its heart. I want to see a planning system that can help deliver a thriving economy whilst protecting our natural, built and cultural heritage. All development must be truly sustainable and promote long-term societal benefits, and deliver improved health and wellbeing.
- Increased funding for rural development to allow all farmers to be brought into agri-environment schemes. These are one of the main ways of halting biodiversity decline and they also provide a range of other benefits including helping support rural communities by providing financial support to farmers and creating significant socio-economic benefits.

Finally, I want the Assembly to 'Step Up for Nature' by halting biodiversity loss by 2016 through a strengthened Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy and adequate resources to secure the delivery of biodiversity targets. Many of the recommendations above will help achieve this important target.

Yours sincerely  
N Porter



## Potter M

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Whilst there are some good things in the Draft PfG, such as a revised Biodiversity Strategy and an Invasive Species Strategy, the document fails to put in place measures to help deliver them. In addition, there a number of significant gaps in the document that must be filled. I ask that the following targets are included in the PfG:

- A Northern Ireland Climate Change Act, with tangible emissions reduction targets for each sector. Currently we are 99% reliant on increasingly expensive imported energy. If we move to a low-carbon economy with a thriving renewable energy sector our energy supply will be secure, and we will have created thousands of new jobs and attracted major investment. Committing to a Climate Change Act would help us deliver this low-carbon economy.
- The creation of an independent environmental protection agency. This would act as a champion for sustainability and environmental protection, and prevent costly indecision and slow action on safeguarding our environment which leaves Northern Ireland taxpayers repeatedly exposed to the risk of enormous fines for breach of EU environmental law.
- A Northern Ireland Marine Act which ensures a framework for healthy seas and protection for a range of marine species.
- A reformed planning system with sustainability at its heart. I want to see a planning system that can help deliver a thriving economy whilst protecting our natural, built and cultural heritage. All development must be truly sustainable and promote long-term societal benefits, and deliver improved health and wellbeing.
- Increased funding for rural development to allow all farmers to be brought into agri-environment schemes. These are one of the main ways of halting biodiversity decline and they also provide a range of other benefits including helping support rural communities by providing financial support to farmers and creating significant socio-economic benefits.

Finally, I want the Assembly to 'Step Up for Nature' by halting biodiversity loss by 2016 through a strengthened Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy and adequate resources to secure the delivery of biodiversity targets. Many of the recommendations above will help achieve this important target.

Yours sincerely  
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I am concerned that the Draft PfG lacks an overall vision and is light on key commitments for the built and natural environment. I believe that the Assembly needs to show the spirit and vision that is needed to make Northern Ireland a leader in sustainability and an example of what local democracy can achieve.

There is an intense focus in the PfG upon growing the economy but this should not be at the expense of the built heritage or the natural environment. Indeed, a healthy environment directly contributes towards a healthy economy – sustainable tourism and creation of the jobs needed to deliver a low carbon economy, are just two examples.

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## Probation board for Northern Ireland



### Response to programme for Government

#### INTRODUCTION

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) welcomes this opportunity to comment on the draft Programme for Government.

Annex 1 outlines the work of PBNI and Annex 2 sets out some points about possible legislation.

PBNI believes that the devolution of responsibility for policing and criminal justice creates an exciting challenge to develop strategies and policies that are appropriate to Northern Ireland's needs. We welcomed warmly the references to offender management in the Hillsborough Agreement and in the DoJ addendum to the current programme for government.

We welcome also the significant reviews commissioned since devolution, particularly in respect of prisons and youth justice and the strategy for women offenders. We are grateful for the Ministerial endorsement of the strategic direction set out in PBNI's latest corporate plan published in autumn 2011. We support strongly the concept of a cross departmental strategic framework for reducing offending; an initiative we have urged for a number of years.

#### PRIORITY 3

PBNI strives to make the community safer through its work in assessing offenders and in seeking to challenge and change their behaviour. We believe that-

1. people who commit serious crimes should go to prison for a long time and very dangerous offenders should stay there until the risk that they might cause further serious harm has been significantly reduced;

2. the evidence- national and international- shows that short term prison sentences can often have poor outcomes in terms of preventing re-offending, changing offenders' attitudes and behaviours, and protecting the public; and
3. for many offenders, community sentences can be more effective as a punishment and in helping to make reparation and change attitudes and behaviour; they are not a soft option.

In England and Wales, Ministers have spoken about the need for a “rehabilitation revolution”. PBNI believes that Northern Ireland needs a similar- indeed even stronger- commitment to far reaching change and that priority 3 of the new Programme for Government should be strengthened to include a commitment to-

***“develop and implement radical and more effective approaches for dealing with offenders which will help to protect the public, reduce levels of re-offending, and help offenders to become more useful members of society.”***

This would include-

- building public confidence – especially amongst vulnerable groups like the elderly - in the benefits of a range of responses to offending;
- building awareness of the work probation does through programmes and supervision to prevent re-offending;
- developing an effective cross departmental strategy which results in genuine joined up action to address the causes of offending and targets resources to key areas like mental health , alcohol and drug abuse, housing needs, and low literacy and skill levels;
- more effective targeting of areas and families with high levels of offending;
- broadening the sentencing options available to the courts and making greater use of demanding community sentences as an alternative to short prison sentences; and
- ensuring that financial resources are managed to support this strategic shift.

## **OTHER PRIORITIES**

PBNI supports the focus and emphasis on growing the economy and tackling disadvantage. Analysis of offenders subject to PBNI supervision has shown that, compared to the general population in Northern Ireland, they are twice as likely to live in areas of high deprivation. This is particularly evident when deprivation is measured in terms of income, employment and education/skills. Therefore measures to tackle unemployment, and poor education are to be particularly welcomed.

Indeed a significant number of offenders have mental health problems, substance related problems and personality based deficits. Many present with low levels of literacy, a poor employment record, housing needs, and personal relationship and behavioural difficulties. Addressing these factors is

crucial to the reduction of offending. Therefore having in place commitments to improve employment opportunities, particularly amongst young people, improving literacy and numeracy, and dealing with housing needs are critical in preventing offending and reoffending.

However although the Bamford Review is referred to as a 'building block' we would have liked to have seen specific commitments in relation to improving mental health and increasing resources for this area of healthcare in Northern Ireland.

Finally, PBNI believes that a great deal of crime has links to the underlying divisions in the community. Success in "building a strong and shared society" would contribute significantly to reducing crime that arises from community divisions and hatred based on religion, political opinion, colour, sexual orientation and nationality

## **Annex 1 PBNI**

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) is a Non-Departmental Public body (NDPB). The PBNI was created in 1982 by the Probation Board (NI) Order 1982 and is a key organisation within the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice system.

PBNI seeks to make the community safer through its work in assessing offenders; challenging offending behaviour; and positively changing offenders' attitudes and behaviour. At the core of all the work we undertake, probation is about reducing the risk of people becoming victims of crime and preventing people becoming victims of crime

PBNI has a Board of 13 members drawn from across the community. The Chair of the Board is Mr Ronnie Spence and the Deputy Chair is Mr Jimmy Quinn. The Director of PBNI is Mr Brian McCaughey. PBNI employs 376 people, of various grades (including Probation Officers, Managers, administrative and support staff), based in 31 locations throughout Northern Ireland. PBNI staff are also based in Northern Ireland's prisons (40 in total). All Probation Officers hold a professional qualification in Social Work (DipSW or equivalent). The PBNI also has a forensic psychology unit, and a Victim Information Unit. PBNI provide grant aid to voluntary and community organisations in respect of rehabilitation services for offenders.

PBNI works at every stage of the criminal justice process; at court, in custody and in the community and

- Provides a Victim Information Scheme to any person who has been the direct victim of a criminal offence and the offender is supervised by PBNI.
- Works with partners to minimise the risk of harm posed by certain violent and sexual offenders.

- Delivers behavioural change programmes for offenders in custody and in the community.

There are 4 key elements in the work undertaken by the Probation Board to reduce offending:

- Ensuring sentence compliance;
- Challenging offending;
- Minimising harm; and
- Promoting responsible citizenship.

The PBNI provide around 9,700 reports for courts, parole commissioners and others every year. At any given time PBNI supervise over 5,000 court orders placed on offenders (4,100 under supervision in the community, 900 in custody). These offenders are supervised in relation to compliance against a wide variety of court orders, including probation orders; custody probation orders; combination orders; and community service orders. PBNI also supervise offenders released on licence from prisons and the Juvenile Justice Centre.

The PBNI delivers a wide range of challenging programmes tackling offending behaviour including specific programmes for those who perpetuate domestic violence and sexual offences, violent offending as well as programmes to address offending behaviour more generally.

With a presence in every provincial town in Northern Ireland and close working relationships with around 300 partners in the community and voluntary sector, PBNI supervises annually 160,000 hours of unpaid work to communities through the Community Service Scheme. This is partly achieved by providing over £1.25 million every year to voluntary and community groups to help deliver services in relation to the prevention of crime and supervision of offenders (Community Development funding).

In the next year, PBNI will play a direct role in the newly established local Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs). All PBNI activities are delivered to clear standards and service requirements and in accordance with best practice principles. These standards are agreed with the Department of Justice and Lord Chief Justice.



## Annex 2

### Legislative Programme

This Annex outlines PBNI's views on some of the legislative changes that might be considered in support of new approaches to managing offenders which would also provide better protection to the public and increase confidence in the criminal justice system. An added benefit would be increased efficiency in that system

**Supervised Activity Orders-** further to the CJI inspection on fine enforcement (March 2010), and the Prison Review Report (October 2011), there is merit in considering the extension of this disposal to all courts in Northern Ireland, and making this the presumption in cases of fine default. A six month pilot of Supervised Activity Orders commenced in one court area in January 2012. The introduction of this sentence could assist in reducing a significant proportion of prison receptions per annum.

**Statutory Time Limits-** The introduction of time limits may provide a mechanism for a step change in the way in which cases are dealt with, and thus reduce the avoidable delay in the justice system and ameliorating the effect of delay for victims of crime and the public more generally.

**Conditional Cautions-** The commencement of this measure (contained in the 2011 Justice Act) would allow for lower level offending to be promptly addressed in cases where a person is willing to admit guilt, and conditions agreed for rehabilitative and reparative purposes. Consequently, the volume of cases being dealt with by courts may reduce, and assist in the speeding up of justice.

**Victim Information Scheme Amalgamation-**The recently published CJI report (December 2011) included the recommendation that all post-conviction Victim Information Schemes be merged. A revision to current legislation would enable processes to be reviewed and refreshed to provide a coherent, responsive service to meet the needs of victims.

**Professors Simon Bridge, Mark Durkin and Pauric McGowan,  
University of Ulster**



**CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT PLAN FOR  
GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY**

**A response from**

**Professor Simon Bridge**

**Professor Mark Durkin**

**Professor Pauric McGowan**

**MARKETING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP GROUP**

**ULSTER BUSINESS SCHOOL**

**UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER**

**February 2011**

## INTRODUCTION

At the end of November 2011 the Northern Ireland Executive published its long awaited draft Programme for Government. In response to the Executive's request for views on the draft the Marketing and Entrepreneurship Group at the Ulster Business School has prepared these comments designed to help find the best ways of achieving the declared number one priority of a vibrant economy. The paper is in two parts: first it comments on what is in the draft plan and economic strategy and then suggests some alternatives which aren't in but ought to be.

### Part i - THE DRAFT PLAN AND STRATEGY

From an economic development perspective the draft Programme for Government initially seems to be encouraging. It appears to recognise the importance of the economy and what needs to be done to improve it. For instance it emphasises that 'the Executive has taken the important step of making the economy the top priority of this Programme for Government' and the first of the specific commitments listed is 'support for the promotion of over 25,000 new jobs'. Then, in setting 'growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future' as the first priority, it indicates that:

'The primary purpose ... is to achieve long term economic growth by improving competitiveness and building a larger and more export-driven private sector'.

It is undeniable that over 25,000 new jobs would be welcome, and that increased competitiveness and more exports should help to get them, but the Programme for Government does not indicate whether this commitment for new jobs is a gross or a net figure. Is the target to be a net increase in 25,000 jobs, or just 25,000 jobs created irrespective of how many others are lost - because it is a net increase of at least 25,000 jobs which is needed? Also the Programme for Government does not indicate how its commitments of more competitiveness, a larger private sector and over 25,000 jobs will be achieved - referring only to a number of 'building blocks' including the Economic Strategy but also listing 14 other strategies and a further wide variety of supporting programmes.

It is presumably in recognition of the importance of the economy that the draft Economic Strategy is the second of the three documents which comprise the draft Programme for Government. Unfortunately, however, this strategy does not offer a credible approach to our economic problems. That might seem to be a harsh verdict for a document which clearly means well and does acknowledge the extent of the economic development task. But the strategy does not offer any workable ways to address the problems involved. Increasing the level of exports, GVA and competitiveness are aspirations not methods, and no credible methods for achieving those aspirations are specified. At this stage, rather than a glossy document, we need a plan that works and, if it is not going to work, that needs to be accepted now, and the plan changed, if there is to be

any improvement. Avoiding any acknowledgement of the weakness of the strategy, or hiding reservations about it, will not help. If the emperor has no clothes, the sooner that is pointed out and accepted the better.

The strategy talks about rebuilding and rebalancing and clearly we need actions which will rebuild and rebalance - but do they have to be addressed separately? Many actions, if they work, will do both - so why are they presented as separate initiatives? What is the difference between a job created by rebuilding and one created by rebalancing, yet they have separate targets?

As to how rebuilding and rebalancing will be achieved, the strategy indicates that 'an extensive review of global best practice in economic development' has provided evidence that:

- 'The clear conclusion is on the need is to strengthen our competitiveness by improving export performance';
- This can be done by means such as 'investing heavily in innovation and R&D', 'a low corporation tax strategy and a pro-business regulatory environment'; and
- 'In all cases, the need to develop a world class education and skills system is critical for economic growth'.

But there is nothing original in such findings (although it might be argued that strengthened competitiveness should lead to improved export potential rather than being a consequence of it) and neither is there anything new in the 'five strategic rebalancing themes' developed from them:

- Stimulating innovation, R&D and creativity;
- Improving employability and the level, relevance and use of skills;
- Competing in the global economy;
- Encouraging business growth; and
- Developing our economic infrastructure.

All those themes have been pursued in past economic development strategies but, to date, our efforts to address our problems in this way have not worked, certainly not to the extent needed. Yet essentially what the strategy proposes to do is more of the same.

The only new element appears to be a lower rate of corporation tax which, it is suggested, will be a key way of attracting inward investors who are targeted to provide 5900 jobs. However that is less than one quarter of the 25,000 new jobs commitment in the Programme for Government - so where will the rest come from? The draft Economic Strategy does not appear to recognise that jobs commitment because it makes no mention of the figure of 25,000. It does however indicate that, as well as 5900 jobs from inward investment, there will be 6300 jobs in locally owned companies, 6500

jobs in new business start-ups and 6300 rebuilding jobs (apparently including 4000 under the job fund and 1150 in rural areas).

The trouble is that the strategy proposes nothing new to encourage and/or assist the creation of these jobs and instead indicates old ways, including looking at best practice elsewhere and seeking inward investment jobs. The strategy itself proclaims the need for innovation and exporting yet, by advocating a continuation of the old ways while importing ideas and jobs, it appears to be unable to follow its own exhortation.

## **Part 2 - WHAT is Missing from the PLAN AND STRATEGY**

Part I indicates a negative conclusion about the likely effectiveness of the draft plan and strategy. Why do those responsible for the strategy appear to be so reluctant to recognise that more of the same won't work? Is it a form of escapism because to accept a conclusion of failure would lead to the discomfort of having to develop and try something new? Or is it because the people concerned think there are no alternatives?

Therefore, in an attempt to move the debate forwards and show that there are alternatives, this part of the Marketing and Entrepreneurship Group's response offers some different perspectives. While it is accepted that there are no implementation-ready approaches already on the shelf waiting to be adopted, nevertheless there are promising opportunities which appear not yet to have been given serious consideration. If we are prepared to carry out our own economic development R&D and innovation, these are some avenues which, it is suggested, should be explored.

### **The cultural dimension**

Last year William Dennis produced a two-part paper<sup>i</sup> in which he proposes a framework of typologies as a methodological tool for examining public policy in the area of entrepreneurship and small businesses. He suggests that in this area the two key factors in achieving economic change are institutions (formal rules) and culture (informal rules), each of which can be either favourable or unfavourable.

Favourable institutional support would, for instance, include tax breaks, the minimum of 'red tape', grants to encourage innovation and R&D and support schemes for business, whereas unfavourable support would include high entry barriers, no official support and even making self-employment

illegal. Favourable cultural support would be a social environment which encourages people to engage in business because it is a socially approved and lauded activity, whereas an example of unfavourable support would be a society which shuns entrepreneurs and instead accords much higher respect to people in other occupations. Dennis presents the interplay between these influences in the diagram in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 - Institutional and cultural dimensions**

		<i>Institutions</i>	
		<i>Favourable</i>	<i>Unfavourable</i>
<i>Culture</i>	<i>Favourable</i>	Entrepreneurial	Repressed (bottom up)
	<i>Unfavourable</i>	Led (top down)	Stagnant

Source: Dennis, W. J., 2011, 'Entrepreneurship, Small Business and Public Policy Levers', *Journal of Small Business Management* 49/1, p.96

Looked at in this way what is clear is that for our approach to economic development has been very largely institutional, including positive interventions both at the level of the business environment (planning, tax, skills etc) and at the level of the individual business (for instance business support programmes). As a result our institutional dimension is now relatively very favourable but that has not led to any change in Northern Ireland's economic position. Compared to others we wish to emulate we have at least as good, if not better, institutional support but we still have low numbers of start-ups and poor growth. Dennis however indicates why this might be by showing cultural influence as a different dimension and it is that dimension which we have not tried to change in any meaningful way.

The importance of culture was illustrated in a paper written over 20 years ago by William Baumol in which he suggested that the productive contribution of entrepreneurs to society varies less because of the total supply of entrepreneurs than because of the way that the available entrepreneurship is applied<sup>ii</sup>. By looking at historical evidence from ancient Rome, early China, the Middle Ages and

Renaissance Europe, he showed that the role entrepreneurs play is influenced by the 'rules' of the society in which they operate. Do the 'rules' of our society also encourage people to see things like medicine, the law and the civil service as particularly desirable careers, but not business enterprise - with the result that we have successful doctors, lawyers and public servants but too few people of ability applying their entrepreneurial talents to business? We have produced good businesses in the past, so there is evidence that we can do it - if we change the 'rules'.

### **We need to develop an entrepreneurial culture**

Cultural influence was what Baumol was talking about, and he pointed out how strong it can be. Dennis's diagram is interesting because, instead of showing culture as just one influence in a list of many factors, he puts it in a different dimension. The implication is that for somewhere in Dennis's 'Led' quartile, making any or all of the various institutional influences more favourable won't make much difference - instead moving into the entrepreneurial quartile will require cultural change.

The strength and predominance of the cultural dimension should not be a surprise. Those who have studied human behaviour have realised how socially influenced we are. As Mark Earls said in a radio interview when discussing his new book *Herd*<sup>iii</sup>: 'Independent thinking is to humans as swimming is to cats: we can do it if we have to'. A key theme of that book is that very largely 'we do what we do because of *other people and what they seem to be doing*<sup>iv</sup> (italics in original) and that that 'we are not a species of independent, self-determining individuals, whatever our brains and our culture tell us'<sup>v</sup>.

Society's 'rules' don't necessarily forbid productive entrepreneurship, but if they don't strongly encourage it then the extra people needed won't do it. Changing culture/social influence may not be easy - but that is not a good reason for not doing it if it is the answer. In some areas of government it is being recognised. Anti drink-driving campaigns now seem to emphasise the social unacceptability of driving when under the influence, instead of appealing to logic by concentrating on the penalties and the chances of getting caught. Even Belfast City Council's anti-littering posters appear to be trying to present discarding litter as a disgusting rather than an illegal activity.

We need policies that seek to build enterprise into social mores of Northern Ireland: that encourage us all to admire and support people who think and act more creatively and innovatively and who act entrepreneurially. We need to engender an entrepreneurial culture - to change mindsets and to nurture an environment that makes behaving entrepreneurially, in every walk-of-life the new accepted norm. However there is nothing of that in the draft Programme for Government.

## **Building an entrepreneurial economy**

We could also support an entrepreneurial culture by working to build an entrepreneurial economy. Audretsch *et al*, in a recently revised paper, have explored the difference between what they call the *entrepreneurial economy* and the *managed economy* which preceded it. According to them 'the *managed economy* is defined as an economy where economic performance is positively related to firm size, scale economies and routinized production. In contrast, the *entrepreneurial economy* is defined as 'an economy where economic performance is related to distributed innovation and the emergence and growth of innovative ventures'.<sup>vi</sup>

They suggest that, during the first three decades after the turmoil of the Second World War, the 'managed' economy appeared to be still in the ascendancy. It seemed to be performing very well, 'providing the engine for jobs, growth, stability and security'<sup>vii</sup> as it 'seemed that all countries were converging towards economies dominated by a handful of powerful enterprises, constrained only by the countervailing powers of the state and workers'<sup>viii</sup> (or, as Galbraith suggested, 'big business' balanced by 'big labor' and 'big government.'<sup>ix</sup>).

However, Audretsch *et al* suggest, two main factors changed that: globalisation and information and communications technology (ICT). These factors triggered the emergence of the entrepreneurial economy with its resurgence of opportunities for small businesses to be competitive globally but, according to Audretsch *et al*, policy has not followed appropriately:

'The impact of technological change and its many moderators on entrepreneurship is so complex and pervasive that the policy implications are beyond those of just creating entrepreneurship policy next to the existing avenues of policies. The ascendance of entrepreneurship policy, with its focus on promoting new firms and small firms, was certainly consistent with the characterization that the entrepreneurial economy had superseded the managed economy. However, identification of the factors underlying why this shift actually occurred leads to a rethinking of the policy conclusion. Rather than a narrow focus on promoting new firms and small firms, the appropriate response of public policy should be to re-think the policy approach in a broad and pervasive sense, so that the focus is not on developing entrepreneurship policy, but rather policy for the entrepreneurial economy.'<sup>x</sup>

## **Building on strength, rather than highlighting weakness**

A third suggestion of an alternative theme for economic development is to focus our thinking and emphasising our strengths rather than our weaknesses. The following description of Northern Ireland was written less than a year ago:



‘Northern Ireland suffers from a collective lack of confidence. The term “our wee country” is a symptom of this and should be outlawed immediately. It is based on the insulting assumption that while we are a plucky little backwater, we don’t actually hold out much hope of achieving anything significant. Yet we have an educated and enlightened population with big ideas. Look at the schools, colleges and universities we have, the vibrant arts scene in the Lyric, the MAC and the Ulster Hall, not to mention the brilliant sportsmen and women, scientists, manufacturers and business heads.’<sup>xi</sup>

That was actually written in a restaurant review - but might also describe the outlook of those responsible for the Economic Strategy. It reads as if, in reality, they do not hold much hope of achieving anything significant. The approach taken in the strategy is one of identifying and highlighting our weaknesses, and then talking about addressing them, instead of focussing on and utilising our strengths - possibly because the weaknesses have the advantage of offering an excuse for any subsequent policy failure? Thus we seem repeatedly to emphasise our supposed ‘fear of failure’ (although the identification of that ‘fear’ itself seems to be based on questionable analysis) and leave it to others to point out our strengths. Look at the series of recent articles describing how travel magazines and guides are putting Belfast and/or Northern Ireland at the tops of their lists on ‘must-see’ destinations and how people who had left have come back and discovered how attractive the place has now become. Yet our economic analysis seems almost to be designed to emphasise our drawbacks and thus limit our ambitions.

Richard Florida<sup>xii</sup> has suggested that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, being a place where creative people want to live can be a key regional advantage. If, in a managed economy, businesses were attracted to go to where labour was cheap, in an entrepreneurial economy they are attracted to places where they can find the knowledge workers they need. So, instead of trying to bribe businesses to come and then hoping we can then supply what they need why don’t we attract people to be knowledge workers here, because it is an attractive place in which to do it and then business will follow? But to encourage people to come or to stay we need both an attractive place - which we have - and to recognise that ourselves and to be proud of it. So encouraging us to believe in and be proud of our strengths is something that policy might try to address. If our problems are always emphasised we will come to believe that we are failures - and it will be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

## IN CONCLUSION

These ideas are not fully fledged implementation plans, and they have, in each case, been suggested by thoughts from elsewhere. However building on suggestions gleaned from elsewhere and turning them into workable plans is the essence of innovation and the three avenues suggested show that there are new approaches to be tried. Thus they indicate that there are opportunities for new thinking in this area if we want to develop a credible plan.

In contrast the draft strategy is not a credible plan. It follows too much the ethos and thrust of its antecedents which cannot lead to a successful action document – and in the same way the numerous strategies and priorities cannot represent a coherent roadmap for directed effort. If the Executive does not know the answer then it should at least ask the relevant question: what do we have to do to generate and sustain a more entrepreneurial culture?

This response to the draft Plan for Government and Economic Strategy has tried both to show why that is the right question, although it is missing from the current strategy, and to indicate some possible components of an answer. We could change our culture and thinking if we are prepared to try and we could build an entrepreneurial culture and economy if we are prepared to believe in ourselves. But for that we need an approach which builds self-confidence instead of an analysis which unnecessarily reinforces self-deprecation.

Professors Simon Bridge, Mark Durkin and Pauric McGowan

Marketing and Entrepreneurship Group, Ulster Business School

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**PSNI**

**JOHN McCAUGHAN BA (Hons)**  
**HEAD OF COMMAND SECRETARIAT**

19 February 2012

Our Ref: Com Sec 11\8068

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT**

Please find attached the Police Service of Northern Ireland response to the consultation on the Programme for Government.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John McCaughan', written in a cursive style.

**JOHN McCAUGHAN**

Superintendent

for Chief Constable

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**Organisation:** Police Service of Northern Ireland

**Date:** 19 February 2012

**To:** The Programme for Government Team

I have been asked to respond to the consultation upon behalf of the Chief Constable.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland welcomes the draft Programme for government, and an opportunity to comment upon it. Given the devolution of policing and justice, we believe that significant opportunities now exist to develop a justice system and policies that reflect the current needs of Northern Ireland.

Our specific comments relate to Priority 3, "Protecting our people, the environment and creating safer communities":

<i>Key Commitment</i>	<i>Milestones/Outputs</i>		
	<i>2012/13</i>	<i>2013/14</i>	<i>2014/15</i>
Substantially complete the construction of the new Police, Prison and Fire College.	Award Construction Contract	At least 25% of the Programme Capital Budget will be utilised	At least 66% of the Programme Capital Budget will be utilised
COMMENT: Progress on the new College is included in the 2012-15 Policing Plan as a priority initiative under the "Professional Policing" heading. It is also highlighted as a Continuous Improvement measure.			

<i>Key Commitment</i>	<i>Milestones/Outputs</i>		
	<i>2012/13</i>	<i>2013/14</i>	<i>2014/15</i>
<p>Reduce the level of serious crime (Deliver a targeted reduction in criminality and serious crime – including violent crime. This is measured in terms of the number of incidents of violence with injury. Violent domestic crimes are recorded and addressed separately due to the desire to increase reporting of such incidents)</p>	<p>Publish final Cross departmental Strategic Framework on Reducing Offending</p> <p>A decrease in the level of violent crime</p>	<p>Implement 90% of agreed Youth Justice Review recommendations</p> <p>A decrease in the level of violent crime</p>	<p>Deliver joined up oversight, evaluation and publication of reducing offending interventions.</p> <p>A 3% decrease in levels of violent crime from 2010/11 baseline</p>
<p>COMMENT:</p> <p>1. We believe that this commitment needs to be more clearly defined, as it has the potential to be confusing. It is unclear why a reduction in Serious Crime is identified as the key commitment but the concentration then shifts to Violent Crime. Having made the distinction between domestic and non domestic violence with injury in the commitment narrative, the target at 2014/15 reverts to "Violent Crime". As PSNI and the Policing Board continue to focus upon increasing the confidence of victims to report domestic abuse, we would suggest that a target to reduce overall violent crime may be counter productive. It would be more consistent with the Policing Plan to include a target to reduce non domestic violence with injury crimes. We would recommend further consultation with the Department of Justice, PSNI and the Policing Board to set a target that is consistent with the Policing Plan and the Long Term Policing Objectives.</p> <p>2. There appears to be no rationale for the figure of 3% as a target for reduction. We have already achieved a 2% reduction on the baseline figure for non domestic Violence with Injury offences. The Policing Board and the Police Service have avoided where possible, devising numerical targets for specific offence types, preferring a wider strategic approach to improving performance.</p> <p>3. Progressing the Reducing Offending in Partnership programme is a priority initiative of the 2012-15 Policing Plan under the "Personal Policing" heading and is highlighted as a Continuous Improvement measure.</p> <p>4. The Police Service of Northern Ireland will "respond positively to any recommendations resulting from inspections [by oversight bodies]" NI Policing Plan 2012-15, App 2. This will include agreed recommendations relevant to the service from the Youth Justice Review.</p> <p>5. The 2012-15 NI Policing Plan also contains an initiative to benchmark, analyse and evaluate the relationship between alcohol consumption and crime. This will form the basis for a subsequent plan of action aimed at reducing the harm caused by alcohol related crime. It is assumed that this relationship is particularly pertinent to violence with injury crimes. Whilst the analysis has yet to begin, there are obvious linkages to other sectors, particularly health and social care and it would be useful if this work could be reflected in the PFG. Perhaps consideration could be given as to how best to weave this into the desire to reduce the number of non domestic violence with injury crimes that are recorded</p>			

<i>Key Commitment</i>	<i>Milestones/Outputs</i>		
	<i>2012/13</i>	<i>2013/14</i>	<i>2014/15</i>

<p>Improve community safety by tackling anti-social behaviour (DOJ)</p>	<p>Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) fully operational.</p> <p>Establish baseline for percentage of people affected by Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)</p>	<p>Monitor quarterly and publish annually NI Crime Survey findings in respect of:</p> <p>percentage who agree that police and other agencies are dealing with ASB and crime issues that matter in their local area;</p> <p>percentage who perceive the level of ASB in their area to be high;</p> <p>percentage whose quality of life is affected by ASB</p>	<p>Increase the percentage of people who agree that police and other agencies are dealing with ASB and crime issues that matter in their area;</p> <p>a reduction in the percentage of people who perceive the level of ASB in their area to be high;</p> <p>and an improvement in the percentage of people whose quality of life is affected by ASB</p>
<p>COMMENT:</p> <p>1. The Police Service is fully contributing to the transition from District Policing Partnerships to Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs).</p>			
<p>2. The 2012-15 Policing Plan includes a further reduction in the level of recorded ASB incidents as an outcome and several priority initiatives aimed at bringing this about. The percentage of those who perceive ASB to be high in their area has continually reduced over the past few years, and we must be mindful of this in setting any targets.</p>			
<p>3. The Police Service continues to utilise the various NICS measures contained in the above milestones as indicators of performance alongside our own statistics on ASB incidents. However, confidence figures for policing alone have shown considerable improvements in recent NICS surveys, yet the single confidence measure focussing upon partnerships as contained in the PFG remains relatively low. PSNI cannot deliver an improvement in that target alone, and it will rely upon partnerships being seen to deliver real and meaningful outcomes. Whilst the introduction of PCSPs is welcome, we remain disappointed that clause 34 of the Justice Bill was not enacted, as we believe this was a missed opportunity to deliver more effective partnership working. It was in this context that the target to “Increase the percentage of people who agree that police and other agencies are dealing with ASB and crime issues that matter in their area” was removed from the Policing Plan to be replaced by targets more focussed upon policing specifically.</p>			

February 2012

# Consultation Response on the draft Programme for Government 2011 – 2015

## 1. Introduction

The Public Health Agency (PHA) was established in 2009 to improve and protect public health and reduce inequalities. The PHA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the draft Programme for Government, 2011 – 2015.

This consultation process enables us to comment on various aspects of the draft Programme for Government which impact on areas of work and to suggest ways in which government can work collaboratively. We hope that this response will help inform and enhance the process of formulating government policy on public health issues within the current economic and social context.

## 2. Draft Programme for Government – PHA perspective

The PHA welcomes the draft Programme for Government as a blueprint which sets out the key goals for government over the next three years. The document places a strong emphasis on public health issues and gives firm backing to the work which the PHA, departments and other key stakeholders are undertaking on this front.

While the Executive is faced with significant financial constraints, we recognise the twin track approach of stimulating the economy and creating new jobs, and welcome the commitment to placing a key emphasis on public health and to ensuring that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society are protected. The proposals contained within the draft Programme for Government will help us develop our work further.

Obesity is one of the big challenges our society faces, and addressing this issue from a young age will maximise the likelihood of tackling this problem effectively. We welcome the commitment of £7.2 million to invest in programmes to tackle obesity, which highlights the issue and provides an opportunity to address it through a framework which involves a range of sectors working together.

We also welcome the acknowledgement in the draft Programme for Government that inequalities exist and that the Executive will work hard to eliminate these. The Strategic Priorities and overall goals give a sense of coherence to this.

However, we would suggest that the Strategic Priorities could be more meaningful and better understood by everyone in Northern Ireland if they were summarised into outcomes that individuals can relate to in their daily lives. For example, 'A Northern Ireland that is a shared and sharing society which is wealthier, healthier, smarter, greener, fairer for all residents and connected to others', thus capturing the essence of the Programme, but in a way that 'makes it real' to people.

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## 3. Improving public health – useful principles

Many of the actions proposed in the draft Programme for Government will improve the health and wellbeing of people here and reduce inequalities, as they address not only "ill-health services", but also the determinants of health, including job creation, better housing, public transport and education, and safe, sustainable, connected communities. These are very welcome.

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We would also suggest the consideration of actions that have been shown internationally to be effective in transforming outcomes for a population. These may be considered in the context of the work of the World Health Organization, and the six Marmot principles which have been developed. These include giving every child the best start in life; enabling all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives; creating fair employment and good work for all; ensuring a healthy standard of living for all; creating and developing healthy and sustainable places and communities; and strengthening the role and impact of ill health prevention.

It would also be worth examining in more detail the potential role of preventative spending, which has already been focussed upon in Scotland.

These principles provide very practical building blocks for the outworking of the Programme for Government, and could provide a framework for a shared agenda on public health with interdepartmental working and joined-up legislative provision.

#### **4. Helping individuals make healthier choices**

Changing public health-seeking behaviours and influencing lifestyle choices form a major part of the PHA's unique role. This is advanced through the PHA's high profile public relations messaging and unique development, production and implementation of high quality public information campaigns.

Evaluation shows that PHA efforts, based on evidence of what works, are having a positive impact on thousands of lives. However, there are circumstances where these tried and tested approaches have limitations and need to be applied in the context of a range of interventions such as legislation.

We know from experience elsewhere, and from research, that legislation can reduce the effects and costs of key public health challenges such as smoking, alcohol misuse and obesity.

The Public Health Agency would advocate a legislative and policy programme aimed at encouraging healthy choices, which would include:

- Further consideration of legislation on tobacco and smoking e.g. at point of sale and in cars;
- A minimum price per unit of alcohol;
- Executive agreement with major food manufacturers to have simple front of pack red, yellow, green labelling;
- Supporting efforts to tackle obesity, such as physical activity;
- Providing targets for councils and government departments to increase provision of traffic-free cycle lanes and greenways (a minimum number of miles relative to the size of the council), and targets to promote usage of those cycle lanes and greenways;
- Provision of a greater number of safe public spaces for physical activity.

The legislation outlined above would make it easier for people here to choose healthier options. It therefore represents a balanced approach, with government meeting its responsibilities to help the population to meet their individual responsibilities. It also requires the involvement of local government, such as is already underway with the PHA and all the local councils, which enables public health issues to be tackled together.

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#### **5. Protecting and Preparing children for life**

While some parents are able to provide the requisite support and guidance to their children, the breadth and complexity of issues and the skills and knowledge required mean that we need an organised way to provide information consistently and help parents to assist children in developing necessary skills.



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Cumulative research of children in early years demonstrates that the care provided from pregnancy onwards and appropriate intervention particularly for that stage, when needed, significantly influences life chances and the child becoming a stable and contributing member to society.

This work, in the past, was largely left to the education authorities, but now there is a need for greater intersectoral working to provide guidance and support to children, young people and their parents on issues such as relationships, sexual health, smoking, alcohol, mental health and physical activity.

Work has already been done to shift the balance of the education system here from one that is primarily focused on meeting academic targets to one that prepares children for life, and we would advocate that this approach continues, with a focus on self-esteem, self-control, confidence, skills to manage relationships and deal with bullies, looking after mental, physical, sexual and emotional health, managing household and personal budgets, presenting and articulating views, understanding how to maintain a healthy weight, and having a regular opportunity to engage with, help and support others through local community groups.

The development of parenting programmes and Family Support Hubs are taking the stigma out of the old concept of the 'welfare'. Inter-agency co-operation in the will be the main driver for this change in approach. Clearly this will need cross-departmental endorsement and ownership.

It is also worth noting that evidence suggests that preventative spending programmes, when targeted at the early years (0-3) age group, are some of the most effective in delivering long-term savings.

## **6. Tackling disadvantage**

We welcome the allocation of an additional £10 million over next three years to tackle disadvantage. The document recognises that government departments will need to work more effectively together. We need this to provide strategic direction and leadership, with accompanying funding that enables various agencies and organisations to work in collaboration to deliver schemes and services that provide tangible outcomes for our population and to achieve a complete 'whole systems' approach to change. It would be imperative to set challenging but achievable targets to reduce Child Poverty.

## **7. Safe clean water supply**

A safe, clean water supply is a basic requirement for good public health and prevention of infectious diseases. In this context, the PHA also welcomes the commitment to maintaining a high quality drinking water supply.

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## **8. Opportunity for public involvement**

The draft Programme for Government provides an opportunity to give consistent commitment to involve people in decision making processes. From a HSC perspective this is known as Personal & Public Involvement (PPI). It would add value to the document were there to be a commitment to the active involvement of people in decisions that impact on their lives. It could readily be recognised as a building block for effective and efficient policies and decisions under Priorities 3, 4 & 5.

## **9. Wider considerations – protecting the public**

There is a commitment to a number of major events in the coming year – the 2012 Olympics, the Irish Open golf tournament, the UK City of Culture and the Police and Fire Games 2013. These all have potential Health Protection implications, including response to major disaster, importation to Northern Ireland of serious diseases (including multi-drug-resistant organisms), outbreaks of infection such as respiratory infections, and food

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poisoning outbreaks. The PHA will play its full role in the preparation and delivery of activities around this to maintain the health of visitors, participants and citizens, and advocates a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary approach to this to maximise its effectiveness.

## **10. Conclusion**

The PHA believes this draft Programme for Government provides strong foundations on which real progress can be delivered in the field of public health, and the PHA is determined to play a key role in developing this vital work in collaboration with government, agencies, charities, community organisations and other key partners.

There is clear potential to build on international evidence and best practice to deliver collective, shared outcomes which involve a range of stakeholders and the PHA will play a full and active part to progress this.

This desired joint approach can also be reflected in a strong, multi-faceted legislative programme which interconnects effectively to deliver on the ethos and goals of the draft Programme for Government. Key examples of where this approach could be effective are on smoking, alcohol, and obesity, which will require a broad range of interventions and stakeholders working together to effect progress. Essentially, this will need to be owned and promoted by an inter-ministerial group and with clear leadership and accountability invested in the First and deputy First Ministers.

In the challenging context of the reform of Health and Social Care, the PHA welcomes the commitment to allocate an increasing percentage of the overall health budget to public health. This strengthening of the PHA agenda will ultimately contribute to the transformation required from an illness service to one that focuses on prevention and keeping people healthy.

The PHA agrees that a strong modern economy is built upon a healthy, well-educated population backed by high-quality public services and a commitment to use prosperity as a means of tackling disadvantage, and will play its role in leading in partnership to deliver this.

We also support the commitment to make real improvements to people's health and wellbeing, both physically and mentally, enhancing community safety, achieving improved safeguarding outcomes for children and adults most at risk of harm and protecting and improving the environment in which we live.

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Overall, we welcome the proposals contained within the draft Programme for Government and look forward to working closely with the Executive, DHSSPS and other relevant departments and agencies to help bring it to life and ultimately deliver improved health and wellbeing for the people of Northern Ireland and a measurable reduction in inequalities in our society.

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## Pyzik N

This is my response to the consultation on the Draft Programme for Government (PfG) 2011–2015.

I am concerned that the Draft PfG lacks an overall vision and is light on key commitments for the natural environment through vegetarianism and veganism. I believe that the Assembly needs to show the spirit and vision that is needed to make Northern Ireland a leader in sustainability and an example of what local can achieve.

People need to be just very much aware of the impact of the western diet on the environment, our health and of course animal welfare. Some people begin to look out to impact of industrial live farming and in fact we just cannot sustain the western style diet. The world population is predicted to grow from 7 billion at this moment to 9 billion at 2050. And even if we don't reach this level of population growth, even if we stick to current level, its estimated if everyone adopted western style diet we'll need 3 planets of size of earth to sustain ourselves.

Vegan diet is very sustainable because on an average it requires less water and less land to produce vegan based diet than we need to produce animal based diet.

For me one of the most important things is welfare of animals. Many of us lives with our animals such a dogs, cats, rabbits. We consider them as a member of family while we kill and eath other animals. But if we think about it they are not diferent from ones we love.

People should be very much aware of that.

Yours sincerely. N Pyzik.