

# Child Rights Impact Assessment template

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## STAGE 1: SCOPING (Background and Rights Framework)

<b>Question 1: Name the measure / proposal being assessed and describe the overall aim</b>
Priorities for Youth Policy Review – Emerging themes and Recommendations identified to help inform the development of a new youth work policy
To ensure the new policy aligns with young people’s needs, TransformED NI and other education strategic priorities and wider cross-departmental policies and responsibilities including Programme for Government outcomes.

<b>Question 2: Which children’s human rights instruments and articles are relevant to the measure / proposal?</b>		
Human Rights Instrument	Article	Further analysis on the expected / actual effect
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	Article 2 – Non-discrimination Article 3- Best interests of the child	The new policy will support Article 2 of the UNCRC. The policy review has placed children and young people at the centre of the process with a Young People’s Reference Group (YPRG) established to lead on the consultation with young people to ensure young people can actively participate in the design and delivery of youth services.

	Article 12- Right to be heard	
Equality Impact Assessment	The EQIA will examine the rights of all Section 75 Groups as required by the NI Act 1998.	

<b>Question 3: Which groups of children are most likely to be affected by the measure / proposal?</b>		
Group of children	How are they likely to be affected?	How will you engage with them?
All children age 4-18 will be affected as the youth service is open to all and is attended on a voluntary basis. Noting the age bracket for accessing youth services runs from age 4 to 25.	Positively affected as the youth service provides a range of learning opportunities and environments for children and young people with the overarching aim of developing personal and social skills.	A co-design approach has been central to the review process. This has included the establishment of a number of Working Groups including a Policy Reference Group (PRG), made up of statutory and voluntary youth providers, five thematic sub-groups and a cross-Departmental Group and Project Board. The YPRG (see above) have shared their findings with the Minister, Senior Departmental officials and PRG reflecting our commitment to engage and understand young people's needs.

**Question 4: Which stakeholder groups should be engaged during the policy development process? (e.g., parents/carers, NGOs, unions, NICCY, academics, etc.)**

Stakeholder group	What can they contribute to the process?	How will you engage with them?
<p>The Department has already established Working Groups with a range of stakeholders (see above with regards co-design approach). These include public sector organisations (Education Authority), youth service providers (including community and voluntary sector), youth workers, volunteers, academics and young people.</p>	<p>Each stakeholder/organisation has its own individual ideas and input on the direction of travel for the new policy and these have been considered as part of the policy process and for the Minister to consider.</p>	<p>The public consultation will provide an opportunity for all stakeholders and interested parties to input their views on what the draft policy will deliver for children and young people, youth workers, wider youth sector organisations (both statutory and voluntary providers). An analysis of consultation responses will be collated and used to provide further advice for the Minister's consideration.</p>

## STAGE 2: CONTEXT AND COLLABORATION

<b>Question 5: Which Programme for Government outcomes does this policy aim to impact on?</b>	
PfG Outcome	The PfG is intended to impact positively on a wide range of policy areas, and upon equality issues and matters. The Programme is intended to have fairness and inclusion of all citizens at its core and therefore, this includes children and young people. Previous work on outcomes has helped to inform a Wellbeing Framework which has been published alongside the PfG. There are around 47 indicators spread across ten domains (including for example, Thriving Children) contained within the Wellbeing Framework.

<b>Question 6: Which Children and Young People’s Strategy outcomes does this policy aim to impact on? Resource: CYPS</b>	
Children’s Strategy Outcome	Way in which the policy will have an impact
In relation to their wellbeing the youth service provision will continue to support all of the following outcomes in the Children and Young People’s Strategy 2020-2030: Children and young people learn and achieve; Children and young people live in safety and stability; Children and young people are physically and mentally healthy; Children and young people make a positive contribution to society; Children and young people live in a society which respects their rights; Children and young people live in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted	Youth services provide safe, inclusive spaces for children and young people to attend voluntarily. The policy will provide direction on youth work as part of the education system and will impact on those involved in the delivery of youth services and those children and young people who participate in youth services, their parents/guardians, Youth Service providers (including statutory and voluntary, outdoor education, outreach, uniformed and church-based providers, managers, youth workers and volunteers).

**Question 7: What opportunities are there to promote joined up outcomes for children? Resource: CSCA**

Department and policy area	Shared outcome / cross cutting issue	How will you engage with them? (eg joint working, keep informed, consultation, etc)
<p>It will be for DE and other departments to consider where policies may intersect and join up relying on cross departmental engagement already embedded through existing youth sector structures. The aim will be to identify cross cutting issues and promote joined-up government, as required by the CSCA.</p>	<p>Participation in youth services is voluntary. The youth service is open to all young people. The revised policy is aimed at ensuring proportionate targeting of services assessed as needed, for all of those young people who access the youth service, with an emphasis on those most in need of additional support and at risk of achieving poor educational outcomes. Therefore some individuals' and groups' needs, experiences or priorities have been taken into consideration in the revised policy.</p>	<p>Engagement across departments and relevant organisations has been key to the policy review. All departments, who are members of the Cross-Departmental Working Group, are interested in more effective collaboration across government and across sectors with regards youth work and resources. This work will continue as part of policy implementation.</p>

### STAGE 3: EVIDENCE GATHERING

Question 8: What quantitative evidence have you used to inform your assessment? What does it tell you?		
Evidence collected	Evidence source	Explanation of the importance
<p>Thorough engagement processes outlined above to gain a detailed understanding of the needs of children and young people, evidence gathering through surveys, consultations, research, the EA's Assessment of Need, and two key ETI reports on the EA's funding scheme and the implementation of existing youth policy, as well as examining youth service frameworks in England, Scotland, and Wales.</p>	<p>Evidence collected through the review of Priorities for Youth.</p>	<p>Young people have told us that their vision for youth work is “to ensure that all young people have access to consistent, convenient and inclusive youth provision. Youth work should offer a balance of fun and learning opportunities that are adaptable to the needs of individuals and groups”. Young people have told us they want youth services to be delivered by adults, including qualified youth workers, who understand the complexity of young people's need and how to help them. They want more frequent and accessible services (e.g., 3+ nights a week, weekends). All stakeholders strongly advocate for continued support for Section 75 groups and other vulnerable cohorts, which would include SEN children and children looked after. Young people in rural areas highlighted that they face significant barriers to engaging with youth services due to transport issues and a lack of local facilities. Food poverty was also highlighted by many of the young people and other stakeholders with a desire to have food available free in youth settings.</p> <p>The EA takes a public health approach to the strategic planning of youth services. This involves addressing issues through a focus on preventing problems and promoting overall wellbeing at a population level, rather than just treating individuals who are already experiencing issues. This approach emphasises evidence-based strategies, multi-agency collaboration, and a focus on the social determinants that impact children and young people.</p>

**Question 9: What qualitative evidence have you used to inform your assessment? What does it tell you?**

Evidence collected	Evidence source	Explanation of the importance
<p>See Question 8. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative data sources was used.</p>	<p>See Question 8. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative data sources was used.</p>	<p>A mixture of quantitative and qualitative data sources has been used in developing the revised policy. The Working Groups established provided a valuable opportunity to collate qualitative evidence to support further assessment of impacts, including face-to-face and online meetings with groups and children and young people.</p> <p>The YPRG was established January 2024, comprising fifteen individuals from across Northern Ireland. Their primary function was to provide advice to the Department on how DE consult with CYP throughout this process and to facilitate consultation sessions within youth centres / organisations / schools etc. A key part of the consultation with CYP captured their views on what the vision and purpose of youth work in Northern Ireland should be.</p> <p>Three wider engagement events were held on 29 June (Belfast), 17 August (Omagh) and 7 September (Londonderry). A total of 61 targeted consultation sessions were held with CYP within various settings across Northern Ireland. Through the process the YPRG met fortnightly (on-line and in-person) facilitated by staff from the Department’s Youth Work Policy Team. A number of YPRG members have remained in their role to assist with finalising and providing advice on implementation of the policy review.</p> <p>A Youth Work Practitioners’ Survey was undertaken between January and April 2025 and received 393 responses from staff and volunteers working with children and young people in the youth sector in Northern Ireland. Based on survey feedback, consultation sessions were facilitated to gain more detailed feedback. Engagement with Management Committees of CVS youth work providers also took place.</p> <p>The Regional Assessment of Need (RAoN) is the process by which the Education Authority’s Youth Service identify the priority needs of children and young people by listening to their voice and considering facts about their lived experiences. This allows the EA to prioritise key actions to support children and young people and allocate resources for youth work delivery throughout Northern Ireland. The RAoN 2026-2029 is informed by a detailed online survey and focus groups engagement with the Voice of Children and Young People.</p>

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**Question 10: What key missing information / evidence would have been beneficial to your analysis?**

Our work on the revised policy will be informed by a public consultation which is scheduled to take place shortly. As part of that work, it will be important to listen to the views of children and young people, not yet involved in the policy review process, which we will use alongside other consultation input to ensure that the views of children and young people are captured as part of the formal engagement process. Impact assessments, including this CRIA, will be taken forward as appropriate by individual policy areas as policy development and implementation progresses.

**Question 11: What existing evidence on children and young people views has been considered in the development of the proposal or measure?**

Group of children	Source of Information	Please provide a brief description of process	What were the findings?
See question 9 – YPRG consultation events	See question 9	See question 9	YPRG was established to ensure young people's lived experience is central to the policy review and development process and to advise on how we engage with wider groups of young people through for example social media, focus groups, surveys and engagement workshops. Through evidence gathered from consultations with youth groups, the YPRG was tasked with creating a vision statement, incorporating what children and young people expect from youth provision.

**Question 12: What groups of children and young people have been directly involved in developing the proposal or measure?**

Groups involved [✓ if those affected by the proposal]	✓	How were they involved?	What were the findings?
See questions 3,9 and 10		See questions 3,9 and 10	See questions 3,9 and 10.

**Question 13: What stakeholder groups have been engaged in developing/reviewing the proposal or measure?**

Stakeholder group	How were they involved?	What were the findings?
Stakeholders included children and young people, the youth sector including youth workers, the Education Authority, the community and voluntary sector and other government departments. See Question 9 for further detail.	See Question 9 for further detail.	The findings are reflected in the draft policy statement which is issuing for consultation.

## STAGE 4: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

Complete questions 14-16 for each option being considered

Question 14: What impact will (or does) the proposal or measure have on children and young people's rights?		
Type of impact <i>[please highlight]</i>	Justification for Argument	likely or actual short/medium/long-term outcomes
<b>Positive</b> / Negative / Neutral	It is not envisaged that any of the themes to be included within the draft policy are likely to negatively impact on children and young people's rights but instead are more likely to promote and protect these rights. Children and young people's best interests must be the primary consideration of the revised policy and this has been the focus of the review of Priorities for Youth, the development of the draft policy and will remain so during the consultation process.	The voice of children and young people is a key component of the new policy moving forward that will positively impact on their rights.

Question 15: Will there be (or are there) different impacts on different groups of children and young people?		
Group of children affected	Initial analysis of the positive impact on rights	Initial analysis of the negative impact on rights
It is to be expected that the new policy will impact directly upon children and young people. These impacts are anticipated to be positive for the targeted groups and for equality purposes including those children and young people more	Improved understanding and availability of youth provision for targeted groups.	No negative impact anticipated.

<p>vulnerable and more likely to be differentially impacted, including people with disabilities, particularly learning disabilities; looked after children; people from a range of minority ethnic groups, including newcomer children; LGBTQ+ people; and young people with caring responsibilities. There will be monitoring processes in place to assess the impacts at a strategic level.</p>		
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<p><b>Question 16: If a negative impact is identified for any area of rights or any group of children and young people, what options are there to modify the proposal or measure to mitigate the impact?</b></p>	
<p>Negative impact</p>	<p>What options are there to modify the measure(s) or mitigate the impact?</p>
<p>Given that youth sector participation is on a voluntary basis some groups of young people may decide not to avail of youth provision.</p>	<p>Engagement and communication channels with young people will continue to ensure that all children and young people have an opportunity to contribute to and influence the design and delivery of youth provision.</p>

## STAGE 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Question 17: In summary, what are your key findings on the impact of the measure or proposal on children and young people's rights?**

It is expected that the new policy impacts will be positive in relation to young people's rights as follows:

- Implementation of and reference to the Children's Services Co-operation (Northern Ireland) Act 2015 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- safeguarding and protection of children and young people.
- consideration of vulnerable groups including those with special educational needs and disabilities.
- cross departmental working to better reflect the needs and rights of children including
  - (i) educational attainment,
  - (ii) increase mental health services for young people,
  - (iii) support for organisations delivering youth services,
  - (iv) ongoing engagement with young people and consideration of children's rights in policy making,
  - (v) acknowledgment of and wider responsibilities for the community and voluntary sector youth providers.