



Northern Ireland
Executive

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Children

&

Young People's Strategy

EASY READ

2020-2030

Working together to improve the well-being of children and young people, and to achieve positive, long-lasting outcomes

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Children and Young People's Strategy (Plan)

The Children and Young People's Strategy is our plan for making life better for all children and young people in Northern Ireland and giving them the best start in life.

This means providing good support and services for all children and young people, with extra help for children and young people who need more help or care in their lives.

There are eight main things that we want for children and young people. We call these "outcomes". The eight outcomes are shown on the next page.

Listen to the kids





Children And Young People's Strategy (Plan)

THE EIGHT OUTCOMES

We will make things better for children and young people by everyone working together - including government departments, local councils, organisations that provide services to the public, voluntary and community groups, schools and youth organisations.

If a child or young person needs help, we will look at how we can help them and their family, so that everyone works together to make life better for the child or young person.

We will make sure that children and young people get to have a say about issues that affect them. Parents, guardians and carers will also be able to tell us what they think about things that affect their children.

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We will have a special plan called a Children and Young People's Strategy Delivery Plan that tells people in detail what we will do to improve things for children and young people.

We will keep checking whether or not things are getting better for children and young people and will have a special group to make sure the things in the Delivery Plan are happening and doing what they are supposed to.



MAKING LIFE BETTER



Children and young people are physically and mentally healthy

We want to make sure that every child and young person has the best possible physical and mental health and gets the right health care and help when they need it.

What we will do:-

We will work together to help all children and young people get the help they need at an early stage. By "early stage", we mean helping them when they are babies and young children, to stop them from having physical or mental health problems later on. It also means we will help children and young people of all ages as soon as possible if they start to have worries or trouble with their health or how they feel.

There are some problems that we need to look at very urgently and some groups of children and young people who need our greatest help. These are:-

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i. Babies and young children

We will help mothers who are expecting babies and support them so they know how to give their children the best start in life. We will give information and help to mums, dads and families about:-

- breastfeeding;
- not drinking alcohol or smoking when expecting babies or when they are around babies and children;
- looking after babies' and young children's physical and mental health and development;
- how important it is to talk to babies and young children and spend lots of time with them;
- parents and children eating healthy and looking after their teeth;
- parents and children getting plenty of exercise and play; and
- how to deal with the changes that having babies and children make to parents' lives, including the importance of getting help if they feel worried about how they are coping.

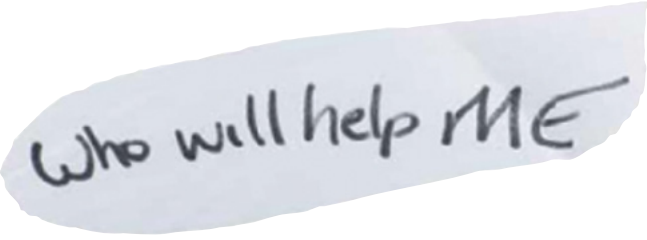
ii. Children and young people's mental health and emotional well-being

"Mental health and emotional well-being" is about how we feel inside, how in control we feel and how well we can cope. Poor mental health and emotional well-being is seen as a big problem by many young people. Around 1 in 10 young people will go through problems to do with their mental health and well-being.

We will work to make sure that everyone knows about the things that can make children and young people feel worried or unhappy or afraid, such as bad things going on at home or in school.

We will work with parents, schools and other people who look after or

work with children to help children develop good mental health and coping skills from an early age. We will work to make sure that children and young people feel ok to talk



Who will help ME

with family and friends about worries or problems they may be having.

When children and young people do start feeling down and unhappy, we will work together to provide and improve services that give them and their families help to see what can be done to make them feel better.

- iii. **Children and young people with a disability and/or lots of healthcare needs, or who have an illness or condition that will affect how long they live**

We will support these children and young people, and their families and carers, so they can experience and enjoy the same sort of things other children do, like learning and being able to play.



We will work together so they have better services that suit their needs and lots of information about things and people that can help them.

iv. Children and young people living in poorer areas

The health of children and young people can be greatly affected by where they live. Children and young people living in poorer areas are more likely to suffer from things like noise and air pollution, and less likely to have access to parks, nature, quiet open areas and fresh air.

We will work together to have more open green areas and places of play for children and young people, and help families in poorer areas improve their health, enjoy learning and get better chances to find jobs.



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Children and young people enjoy play and leisure

We want to make sure that every child and young person has time and space to enjoy rest and fun activities. We want them to be able to play, enjoy their free time and take part in sport, culture and the arts. "Arts" means activities like music, drama, art and dance.

What we will do:-

We will work so that all children can play and enjoy leisure time and activities. We will work to create new opportunities for play and leisure, especially for those who need it most.

There are some groups of children and young people who need our greatest help. These are:-

i. Babies and younger children

Play is very important for children's development and happiness. It helps babies and young children learn to talk, make new friends, play with other children and find out what's risky and what isn't. We will help parents understand how important play is when their children are growing up. Some parents need extra help with this and we will support projects and plans that help parents learn about playing with their babies and children.

ii. Children and young people with a disability

We will tell people that plan and run places with sport and arts activities and play areas that they must think about how children and young people with disabilities can join in and have fun with others, or have special play areas that meet their needs and keep them safe. We will support opportunities for children and young people with disabilities to take part in sport and activities such as the Special Olympics.



iii. Children and young people living in poorer families

Families that don't have much money may not be able to pay the money for their children and young people to play games or take part in sports, music, dance or drama, or pay for transport to get to them. We will look at ways in which children from families with very little money can get to use leisure centres, sports clubs, youth groups and after-school clubs.

iv. Young people

It is very important for teenagers to have time, space and freedom to enjoy their own play and leisure time, including just hanging out. Young people spend less time playing than little children for reasons like a lot of school work or part-time jobs, but they still need to have time and safe places to relax, enjoy sport and the arts, and spend time with their friends. Young people with a disability might need extra support or help.

We will work with schools and people who run youth clubs, other clubs and groups and leisure places to find ways that young people can be given the freedom, time and space to enjoy leisure, sports, music, art and recreation, and be able to meet up with their friends safely.





Children and young people learn and achieve

We want to give our children and young people the best education possible and develop their talents and skills so they are the best that they can be.

We want our schools to be friendly places where children and young people feel safe and are respected by grown-ups and each other. We want them to enjoy school and be well-prepared to move on to further education, training or work when the time comes for them to leave school.

What we will do:-

We will work to make sure that all children and young people have the best education. We will make our schools better by making changes to a lot of what we are already doing including: helping little children (and their parents) to get ready to start primary school; supporting children and young people with special needs who learn in different ways, or need more time and help to learn in ways they can understand; making sure young people are ready for leaving school and getting a job or

apprenticeship or going on to further education or university; and making school buildings nicer.

There are some groups of children and young people who need our greatest help. These are:-

i. Children and young people from families that don't have much money

Children and young people from families that have very little money often do not do as well as others in their learning at school.

We will work with families and schools to help those children and young people learn to the best of their abilities and get the best results they can.

ii. Children and young people with Special Educational Needs

Some children and young people need extra help with their learning compared to other children their age. A law was passed in 2016 called the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Act and we will use this to

put in place new and better ways to support these children and young people and help them to learn in ways they understand.

We will work together to make sure children and young people with special educational needs get support to help them achieve their full learning ability, and help when they are moving to other schools or leaving school.



iii. Children starting school who cannot mix with others well or have behaviour issues

Some children find it hard to talk to and make friends with other children when they start primary school. They don't understand how to share or take turns or talk about how they feel. This can affect their learning and behaviour if they do not feel happy in school and do not know how to mix with other children without getting angry and upset.

We will work with parents and schools to help young children feel safe and happy in school and to teach them skills to be able to build friendships.

iv. Children and young people in care or who have been in care

When there are problems in a family and parents cannot care properly for their child or young person, social workers or other carers will look after them.

We will make a special plan called a strategy explaining to everyone how we will look after these children and young people and take care of them.

We will work together to make sure that children and young people in care do well at school, and help them with learning skills in school and colleges and/or finding jobs to make them ready for life and to be able to live on their own when they leave school.



v. Children and young people who do not have a settled home or are from another country



RIGHT TO
EDUCATION

Children and young people born in another country may not understand what we say to them and the things we do in our country. This can be frightening, confusing and affect their learning. Families who move around from place to place often means that their children and young people may have to go to lots of schools or might not attend school at all.

We will work together to help families and schools on how we can help with learning for children and young people from another country. We will also help children and young people who have to move from school to school so that their learning does not suffer.

v. Children and young people in custody

We will work together to help young people in custody continue to learn as other school pupils do. We will prepare young people to feel better about themselves and





Children and young people live in safety and stability

We want all children and young people to be safe from harm in the place where they live including their home, in school and the areas they live and play in. We want all children and young people to feel safe and secure in the care of parents, guardians, carers and any other grown-ups who are responsible for looking after them.

What we will do:-

We will work to keep all children and young people safe but there are some groups of children and young people who need our greatest help and some problems that we need to look at very urgently. These are:-

i. **Bullying**

We will work with schools and local areas to help stop all kinds of bullying, in school and outside of school, whether

it takes place in person or using mobile/smart phones and the internet.

ii. **Online safety for children and young people**

We will work together to help children and young people learn how to stay safe when they are online or using social media. Children and young people with learning disabilities will need special help to stay protected from online harm.

We will provide information to grown-ups and children and young people about what children and young people need to know about staying safe online and who they should speak to if they see or hear anything bad online and on social media.

iii. **Young people who don't have a home**

We will work together to help young people who do not have a home find somewhere safe to stay until housing is found for them. We will help them get settled in and manage things for themselves.

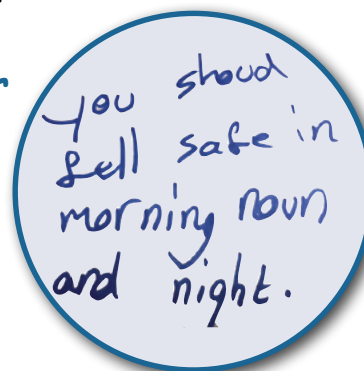
iv. Children and young people being looked after by others

We will have a special plan for children and young people who are being looked after by social services or other carers to help them feel more secure. Where possible, we will help their families at an early stage to prevent them having to leave, but if they do we will help the children and young people settle back into home life as soon as possible.

When young people who are in care are old enough to live on their own we will work together to help them get settled in and manage by themselves.

v. Children and young people in danger from paramilitaries

Young people living in some areas might be threatened by paramilitary and criminal groups or might be tricked or forced into joining them and doing bad things for them.



We will work together to help young people from getting into trouble and have a special plan to do something about this. We will work to have shared areas for all young people to be able to mix together and show them there are better things than being criminals and doing things which get them into trouble and hurt other people.

vi. Children and young people not being looked after properly or being ill-treated at home

If children and young people are not looked after properly or are being ill-treated, or if they see one of their parents being deliberately hurt by another person in their family, it can have a lasting effect on their mental and physical health. We will have a special plan to stop violence in the home.

vii. Children and young people who are at risk of or being used sexually

A lot of work is already happening to stop children and young people being abused sexually and help those who have been abused. We will keep on working to keep

children safe from bad people and stop them being hurt and taken advantage of.

viii. Children and young people who are in contact with the youth justice system

There are groups of children and young people who are at risk of getting into trouble or being arrested by the police. Some children and young people may have one or both parents in prison and be unhappy, upset or worried about this.

We will help children and young people to stop getting angry, doing bad things, or hurting other people. We will listen to them explain what happened to them. We will show them we care about them and to help them to learn how to believe in themselves, have respect for other people and have a better, happier life. We will work together to help children and young people whose parents are in prison.

ix. Children and young people whose parents live apart

We will help parents who break up to understand what this change means for their children and how it affects their lives and makes them feel. We will help parents to understand that even if they are cross with each other, they still need to show their children that they will continue to look after them and love them. We will help the parents to work together so that the health and happiness of their children and young people is not badly affected.

If parents decide to live apart, children and young people should still be able to see and speak to each parent as often as they want to as long as this doesn't affect the child or young person in a bad way.





Children and young people experience economic and environmental well-being

We want children and young people to have enough food and clothing and a decent place to live. We want them to be able to find jobs and be able to take care of themselves when they are older. We want them to live in a country where the air, land and sea are not polluted.

What we will do:-

We will help families who need help providing for their children and young people. We will make sure our schools teach all children and young people the skills they need to get good jobs.

There are some groups of children and young people who need our greatest help and some problems that we need to look at very urgently. These are:-

i. Families with not much money

There are families who cannot afford to pay rent for their house, heat their home or have enough money for

food and clothing or pay childcare costs. 'Childcare costs' means the cost of things like nurseries, childminders or after school care to allow parents to go out to work.

We will work together to help families to be able to provide for their children and help with childcare costs.

ii. Children and young people getting jobs

We will make sure our schools teach all children and young people the skills they need to get good jobs. We will work together to help young people stay on at school to do courses or training to learn new skills to be able to get into jobs.

We will give extra help to groups of young people who have disabilities, been in custody, have been cared for by social services or have left school without the exam results and skills they need to get a job.

iii. Young people who live in country areas

Children and young people who do not live in or near towns and cities often have to travel further to get to school,

work or to meet up with friends. Buses or trains may not always run very often and fares can cost a lot.

We will work together to find ways to improve transport for young people in country areas to travel to school, work or meet up with friends. We will work to get better internet service in country areas. We will set up online training for children and young people to learn and study and get new skills. We will seek to have more outdoor places and play parks for children and young people to go and play, relax and to meet up with their friends.

The environment and well-being

We want children and young people to grow up in safe places where they can play, exercise and have fun to stay healthy. We



want the places where children and young people live, play and go to school to not be affected by pollution.

We will work together to help provide more open spaces for children and young people to play. We will work to improve air and water quality, and encourage everyone to keep where we live clean, not drop litter or damage the environment and reduce single use plastic.

iv. Green places for children and young people to meet and play

We will give children and young people chances to explore the countryside and have areas where they can play and learn to understand, respect and care for nature, wild plants, trees, birds and animals.



Children and young people make a positive contribution to society

We want all children and young people to be able to say what they think about things that affect them and to know that their views will be listened to in school, at home, in their local area and by the people whose job it is to make decisions about things that affect children and young people's lives.

What we will do:-

We will make arrangements so that all children and young people can tell us what they think. There are some groups of children and young people who need our greatest help and some things that we need to look at very urgently. These are:-

i. Youth work (youth clubs and groups)

Youth clubs and youth groups allow children and young people to meet up with their friends and to be able to make new friends. We have a special plan called 'Priorities

for Youth' about how youth work will develop and make things better for children and young people aged from 4 to 25.

We will work with the people who run youth clubs and youth groups to support them in making it a place that children and young people can go and meet, and be able to express themselves and to be listened to.



ii. **Children and young people caring for family members**

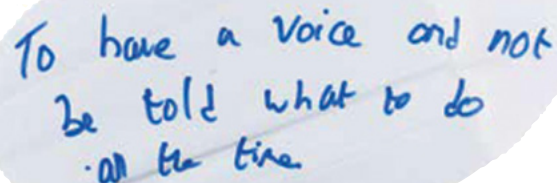
There are many children and young people who have a special role to care for one or two of their parents or other family members, but this means they may not have enough time to do school work or play with their friends.

We will work together to support children and young people who need to care for family members and enable these children and young people to do their school work and be able to spend time with their friends.

iii. **Children and young people who need help to say what they think**

It is harder for some children and young people to get a chance to tell grown-ups what they think about things that affect them, for lots of reasons. They may live in country areas or not be involved in youth clubs. They might feel no one thinks they are worth listening to or have never been asked what they think. Children and young people from another country may not be easily understood. A child or young person with a disability may not find it easy to meet in places that do not accommodate their needs.

We will work together to enable all children and young people to



To have a voice and not
be told what to do
all the time

have their say about things that affect them either in school, at home or where they live, and get government departments and other services to listen to them. We will get government departments and other services to tell children and young people what happens as a result of what they say.



Children and young people live in a society which respects their rights

All children and young people have rights. Rights are things that people are entitled to and they are set out in laws or agreements that the government has signed up to. Everyone has rights and everyone should respect the rights of other people.

Children have special rights which are set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the UNCRC). The UNCRC is a special group of rules which sets out how all children in the world should be treated. The UNCRC applies to all children under 18 years. There is lots of detail about the UNCRC at

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx>.

There are other laws and agreements too that give children and young people rights, including rights for people with disabilities and laws about treating people equally.

Children in this country have a special person to look after their rights called the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People. You can find out more about the Commissioner and children's rights at <https://www.niccy.org>.

What we will do:-

We will work to make sure that children, young people, grown-ups, government departments and public service organisations all know about children's rights and respect their rights. We will work to tell everyone about the good things children and young people do.

To make sure children and young people's rights are respected, grown-ups need to listen to them.

There are some groups of children and young people who need our greatest help to make sure they are treated properly and have their rights respected. These are:-

i. Children and young people who are treated badly because of other people's racism

Racism is where someone treats you badly or unfairly because of your skin colour or the racial group, culture or country you come from. Children and young people who are treated badly for these reasons may be hurt or forced to work, or they may become ill and unhappy and this can affect their school

work and their mental health and well being. We will work together so that children and young people know how to get help if they are being treated badly or unfairly by others because of racism.



ii. Children and young people who are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB)

Children and young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, or have a parent who is, are often bullied or treated badly or unfairly. Many feel their rights and the things they

care about or want to talk about are ignored in school and their communities. This can hurt their feelings, affect their lives and mental health and well-being, and they might be afraid about what family and friends might say if they tell them how they feel. We will work together so that children and young people can get help and support when they need it, and everyone knows children and young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual have the same rights as other children and young people.

iii. Children and young people who see themselves as Transgender

Children and young people who are transgender or who have a parent that is transgender are often bullied or treated badly or unfairly. Transgender children and young people can suffer from mental health issues and be unhappy if they not allowed to be treated and live as the gender they feel they really are. We will work together to support transgender children and young people if they need to talk to people about their feelings and receive help and support.

iv. Children and young people who cannot speak English or are still learning it

Children and young people from another country may not be able to speak English or may find it hard to understand what we are saying to them. We will help them by providing interpreters or information in other languages.

v. Children and young people who have their own religious beliefs

Children and young people often have their feelings hurt if other people and the internet and television say bad things about their religion or make fun of what they believe or how they worship. Sometimes they can be wrongly labelled radicals or bigoted. Children and young people's religious beliefs must be respected and they should be allowed to talk about and share their religious beliefs without fear.

vi. Children and young people who have no religious beliefs

Children and young people who have no religious belief should also be allowed to talk about and share their views

without fear. They should not be treated differently from other children and young people.


vii. Children and young people who need extra help or time to communicate

If we respect children's rights and want to make sure they are treated fairly, we must listen to what they have to say. Some children and young people have a disability which makes it harder for them to explain things to other people and they may need extra help or time to communicate.

If a child or young person has a disability that makes it harder for them to tell people things, they can use the JAM (Just A Minute) card and government departments and other public services will take extra time to listen to them.



JAM Card



Children and young people live in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted

We want all children and young people to live in a country where everyone gets an equal chance and everyone can get along well together.

Children and young people should not be treated badly or unfairly because they are a male or a female, because they have a disability, because of who they love or who they want to be, or because of their race, language or religion, political beliefs or who their family are.

What we will do:-

We will make sure that being different is seen as a good thing. We will stand up for children and young people who are not being treated fairly. Grown ups should be a good example and support children and young people.

There are some groups of children and young people who need our greatest help and some problems that we need to look at very urgently. These are:-



i. Children and young people not treated the same as others

The law says that every child and young person should be treated fairly and the same as others. We will work together to ensure that every child and young person is given the same opportunity and treated equally as other children and young people.

ii. Mixing and sharing with people from other countries

Children and young people told us that they want to be able to mix and learn about children and young people from other parts of our society and from other parts of the world who are living here. We will work together to enable children and young people to learn about the different cultures and beliefs in our country and in other

countries. We will help encourage children and young people to mix and to share their own culture with children and young people from other parts of our society and with those who have come here from other parts of the world.

iii. **Children and young people living in interface areas**

Some people in this country treat others differently, unfairly or in a bad way because of their religion, culture or political beliefs. In some areas in Northern Ireland families living there are nearly all from one religion or cultural background and this prevents children and young people from different backgrounds being able to mix, get to know each other, listen to and understand each other's thoughts and views on matters which affect them. Many of these places are areas where people have a lot of other problems to cope with such as no jobs and not much money. We will work to help children and young people mix together by having shared education and shared spaces where they can mix, relax, talk and play.

Children and young people should be examples for all of us when they say it's ok to be different. Grown-ups should

learn from the children, be good examples to them and encourage and support them.





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Department of Education

Department of Health

Department for Infrastructure

EITP Play Matters project

Family Mediation NI

JAM card

SBNI (Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland)

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