



Subject:	Draft response to Department for Communities Anti-Poverty Strategy Consultation
Date:	22 August 2025
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty Brian Carr, Portfolio Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this paper is to submit for the consideration of Members a draft corporate response to the Department for Communities (DfC) draft Anti-Poverty Strategy consultation.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. note the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy being consulted upon – CLICK LINK; ii. consider and provide feedback on the draft Council response attached at Appendix 1; and iii. agree that the draft Council response, subject to any amendments made by Members, be submitted to DfC.
3.0	Main report
3.1	The Department for Communities (DfC) recently launched a consultation on a draft Anti-Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland, which sets out a proposed framework for addressing poverty in a practical and sustainable manner.
3.2	DfC defines poverty as the inability of individuals and households to afford the essentials of life, including food, housing, heating, and other basic needs. It is influenced by factors such as low income, high living costs, employment insecurity, health inequalities, and access to services. When people experience poverty, it can lead to poor mental and physical health, reduced educational outcomes, social isolation, and intergenerational cycles of disadvantage.
3.3	<p>This strategy proposes a vision of eradicating poverty sustainably, supported by principles of collaboration, dignity, inclusion, and respect. It is structured around three pillars, each with associated outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimising risks; 2. Minimising impacts; and 3. Exiting poverty
3.4	Key outcomes include improving education and skills, addressing health and disability barriers, supporting vulnerable groups (e.g., ethnic minorities, carers, and children in care), enhancing employment quality, tackling place-based deprivation (e.g., transport poverty and access to green spaces), and promoting civic engagement. The strategy also commits to involving those with lived experience, developing indicators aligned with the Programme for Government, and establishing an Anti-Poverty Strategy Board for oversight.
3.5	As part of the recent refresh of the Belfast Agenda, a key and immediate area of concern emerging from key stakeholder groups, community and voluntary sector representatives, citizens, communities of interest, and elected Members was the growing poverty crisis facing the city and communities. There was a strong call to action for community planning partners to work with NICS Departments to move quickly to bring forward immediate and integrated measures to support vulnerable people, alongside helping inform the development of long-term and sustainable approaches and underpinning strategies, policies, and programmes.
3.6	There is little doubt that the scale and complexity of challenges, with a dangerous combination of rising living costs, stagnant wages, insecure employment, inadequate access to essential services, and systemic barriers for groups like disabled people, single mothers, and ethnic minorities, could create the perfect storm and push many households further into poverty. These pressures come at a time when many household budgets are already stretched thin, exacerbated by issues such as the two-child benefit limit, long health service waiting times, and in-work poverty. Living in poverty can severely affect a person's life in a wide range of ways, on physical and mental health, household finances, the economy, and ultimately on people's quality of life.

3.7	Members will be aware of the significant investment made by the Council over recent years in helping to alleviate the impact of poverty and the cost-of-living crisis, including initiatives aligned with our Inclusive Growth agenda to create a more compassionate city. Officers would highlight the collaboration which has taken place with DfC, and the role of Council working closely with community partners to get significant funding and support to those impacted by poverty across the city. There is no doubt of the effectiveness and impact of central and local government working together with communities in responding together in times of emergency.
3.8	While we understand and embrace the fact that its causes are complex and its consequences are multiple, there is an opportunity through community planning to create the environment and bring the key stakeholders together to develop achievable actions. Whilst immediate and practical interventions and support can be brought forward to help mitigate the effects of poverty, we would commend that a broader and integrated programme and longer-term strategy and associated resources are required to seek to eradicate poverty within Belfast and the wider region.
3.9	<p>Attached at appendix 1 is a proposed draft response which has been informed by feedback received from across Council departments. Overall, the Council supports the strategy's vision, broad areas of focus and outcomes which mirror good practice in terms of prevention approach, supporting those experiencing poverty, and creating pathways out of poverty. However, there are concerns raised in the draft response in relation to the about the absence of any detail on specific actions, timelines, SMART targets, and a robust performance management framework. Some of the key points included in the draft response include e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider adding a fourth pillar on prevention/eradication of poverty; ▪ The need to develop and embed measurable targets (e.g., reducing child poverty by a specific percentage by 2030) ▪ The need to ensure clear accountability for delivery through assigning departmental leads. ▪ Need for multi-year funding to be put in place. ▪ Adopting a poverty mainstreaming approach with an intersectional lens ▪ Seek to maximise the opportunities presented through new technologies and inclusive innovation to help understand the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and bring forward new technology and digital solutions to address poverty and reduce inequalities. ▪ Involvement of lived experience through models like Scotland's Experience Panels ▪ Establishing an independent Poverty and Inequality Commission ▪ Enhancing monitoring by disaggregating indicators by Section 75 groups and geography. ▪ Additional outcomes suggested cover the working poor, dual diagnosis services, transport poverty, green spaces, and civic voice. ▪ Feedback also emphasises integration with other strategies, co-design with vulnerable groups, and alignment with local initiatives like the Belfast Business Promise for greater synergies and effectiveness.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.10	There are no financial or human resource implications arising directly from this report.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

3.11	There are no equality/ good relations or rural needs implications arising directly from this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Draft Council response to DfC Anti-Poverty Strategy