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By email to: mcgoldricke@belfastcity.gov.uk

22nd February 2021

Dear Eilish

Child Poverty Task Force

Thank you for your email of 10th February 2021, to Minister Hargey, asking that she immediately convene a Child Poverty Task Force. The Minister has asked me to respond on her behalf.

The Department for Communities (DfC) is responsible for taking forward poverty policy on behalf of the Executive. On 24 September 2020, Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, former Minister for Communities, announced the commencement of work on the development of a suite of Social Inclusion Strategies, including an Anti-Poverty Strategy, as part of the commitments under New Decade, New Approach.

The Anti-Poverty Strategy will be developed using a co-design approach with meaningful involvement from stakeholders at all stages of the process. In October 2020, an Expert Advisory Panel was appointed and tasked with producing recommendations on the key themes, priorities and headline actions that the strategies should address; a Co-design Group with representatives from 27 voluntary and community sector organisations is helping to shape the development of the strategy; and a Cross-departmental Working Group will be responsible for developing the strategy action plan.



In September 2020 the Executive agreed to extend the 2016-2019 Child Poverty Strategy to May 2022. The purpose of this extension is to allow time for key stakeholders to be consulted on whether the Anti-Poverty Strategy covering all age groups is sufficient, or whether the development of a Child Poverty Strategy is also required.

The most recent Child Poverty Annual Report, for 2019/20, was published on the Department for Communities website in September 2020. It reports on the measures which departments are taking to ensure, as far as possible, that children do not suffer socio-economic disadvantage. The areas of focus and actions fall under four high level outcomes – health, education, safe/secure stable living environments and economic well-being.

With this work currently in hand, the Department would not propose convening an additional body such as a Child Poverty Taskforce at this time.

In the course of the development of the Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Department will of course continue to engage with, and listen to, the views and ideas of those impacted by poverty and their representative organisations, and will continue to work collaboratively across departments to address their needs.

The Anti-Poverty Co-design Group will be assisting the department to facilitate a number of feedback sessions in the coming months, where they will be actively seeking the views of stakeholders to inform their decisions on a range of specific areas of the recommendations.

The Department plans to run a session to obtain the views of district councils and we will be writing to SOLACE with further details shortly. If you have any queries, please contact us at povertypolicyteam@communities-ni.gov.uk.

There will also be a public consultation in the latter half of this year and we would welcome comments from the Council when this is published.

Subject to Executive approval, it is planned that the Child Poverty Annual Report for 2020/21 will be published in March 2021 and that an Anti-Poverty Strategy will be published in December 2021.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Yours sincerely



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