



Annual Report

2012

Children in Northern Ireland



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Chair's Report

Once again we have seen a challenging year for CiNI and the Children's Sector. Changing personnel within government and the difficult economy continue to have significant influence on the development of the sector generally and service provision specifically. Moving forward we anticipate 'more of the same' as budget constraints continue to impact.

CiNI has been working hard to influence decision-making in Government and to provide a wide range of information to organisations within the sector. The election of the new assembly in 2011 and the publication of its Programme

for Government was somewhat disappointing in that it left many unanswered questions in relation to children's issues. This lack of strategic vision prompted CiNI to press for the introduction of a Statutory Duty on Government Departments to work together. This development was supported by the publication of updated manifestos for the Early Years Strategic Alliance and the Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance, which we hope will provide momentum for government to address both issues.

There has also been significant input from CiNI into the embedding of the Regional Children and Young People Strategic Partnership and the development of area based Outcome's Groups, which provide a unique opportunity to create a single action planning and commissioning process which will deliver locally. This has been exemplified in CiNI's involvement in the Locality Planning in the Southern Area. CiNI has also representation on the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland, which we hope will ensure the effectiveness of agencies involved in child protection. This will undoubtedly develop as time moves forward.

Over the course of the year, there were high levels of demand in relation to the delivery of training to both the Voluntary and Statutory Sector. CiNI has also endeavoured to increase the level of participation of young people in the development of legislation and policy which impact on them. This work is currently under review and we hope it will continue.

CiNI's involvement with Eurochild was instrumental in bringing a wide range of leading children's experts from around Europe to Belfast this year to participate in a high level seminar on improving the quality of life for children and young people.

The organisation's membership continues to grow, incorporating both Statutory, and Voluntary and Community Organisations, all of which helps to contribute to the comprehensive understanding and appreciation of the needs of the Children's Sector across Northern Ireland.



**Marie Cavanagh
Chair**

In conclusion, I would like thank my fellow Board Members for their commitment and dedication; Pauline and her team for the calibre of work produced and for their professional and genuine approach; and not least CiNI's funders whose confidence in the organisation enables the work to be carried out.

The following pages outline the extensive work programme that has been undertaken in the past year. I would encourage you all to read it.



Chief Executive's Report

Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) co-hosted the Peer Review Seminar on Early Intervention and Prevention in Family Support with Eurochild in May 2012. The event highlighted the excellent work undertaken by Family Support Hubs in Northern Ireland.

INFLUENCING

CiNI continues to service the All Party Group on Children and Young People which is strongly supported by all Political Parties in Northern Ireland. The key themes this year have been Early Intervention and Prevention. CiNI welcomed the reinstatement of a dedicated policy function

for children and young people within OFMDFM and the development of the Delivering Social Change Framework.

PARTICIPATION

The Participation Network continues to support Government Departments, Local Government and Statutory Agencies to effectively engage with children and young people in public decision making through the ASK FIRST standards.

Engagement strategies have been developed with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and the Regional Child Protection Committee to ensure that they listen to the views, experiences and ideas of children and young people. Demand for child friendly versions of policies/service developments, engagement support materials and consulting has increased across the public sector.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

CiNI continues to co-host seminars on Integrated Outcomes Based Planning with the Improving Lives Initiative, QUB, Health & Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency, based on the 10 year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006 – 2016.

CiNI continues to deliver its training programme to support the children's sector to develop their expertise, skills and knowledge to improve the quality of services for children, young people and their families, particularly in partnership with the Health Care Trusts.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

CiNI continues to play a key role in the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership to improve the lives of children and young people through integrated planning and commissioning. A key theme is Early Intervention, which CiNI promotes through its Locality Planning work.



Pauline Leeson
Chief Executive

CiNI is a member of the new Safeguarding Board (NI) and will work closely with colleagues to ensure an effective inter-agency partnership to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

Children's Services Planning

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) has made significant progress over the past year with regard to the development of integrated planning and commissioning across agencies and sectors, with the aim of improving outcomes and realising the rights of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

The CYPSP (www.cypsp.org) has set out key strategic themes for its work in The Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14:

- Early Intervention
- Communicating with Government
- Integration of Planning
- Optimisation of Resources.

The Partnership has agreed its definition of Early Intervention and commenced a mapping of all early intervention strategies and services. A focus on the optimisation of resources has seen progress in integrated planning and commissioning. Closer links are being developed with Government with regard to the key priority areas for action, as identified by the CYPSP.

Using an outcomes based planning framework, in line with international best practice, the implementation of the Plan is taking place at three different levels, with operational co-ordination of Early Intervention services in Family Support Hubs.

- Regional sub groups - CYPSP is working at a regional level to address issues related to specific groups of children.
- Outcomes groups - These groups are working in line with the geographical areas of the five Health and Social Care Trusts.
- Locality planning groups - These cross sector groups work in smaller geographical areas which local communities can identify with. Integrated outcomes based planning is currently being carried out in 21 areas with communities, children, young people, and parents.
- Family Support Hubs - The hubs provide co-ordination of early intervention services and easier access to services for children, young people and families.

The participation of children, young people and parents continues to be a priority for the Partnership. Work has continued to ensure these strategies support the approach outlined in The Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14 and that they are being actioned at all levels.

Details of the work being progressed can be found at www.cypsp.org. Leaflets outlining information on each of the above strands are also available on the website.

CiNI has played a key role in the development of this work. Over the course of the last year, members have demonstrated their dedication and commitment to all aspects of this planning process.



Children's Services Training

During 2011 – 2012, Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) delivered 76 workshops to 1,269 participants. The Children Order Training Strategy has focussed on supporting staff from our member organisations to develop their expertise, skills and knowledge to improve the quality of the services they deliver to children, young people and their families.

This is reflected in the workshops which included:

- Safeguarding Children
- Recording and Record Keeping
- Child Development
- How Children Learn
- Children's Law in Northern Ireland
- Training for Managers

Internally CiNI delivered 45 workshops to 741 participants, 95% of whom stated that "the learning needs set out in the objectives for the training had been met fully."

Staff working in the voluntary sector, are doing so in ever increasingly difficult circumstances. CiNI's training strategy supports their endeavours by tailoring our training services to meet specific agency, team and individual worker training needs. Tailored Training Services continue to be a vital resource for our members.

This year workshops delivered have included:

- Safeguarding Children
- Team Building
- Supervision Training
- Recording Skills

The joint training arrangement with our Health and Social Care Trust partners continues to be an area of growth for CiNI.

Workshops delivered this year included:

- Contributing to Case Conferences
- How to make a good referral (UNOCINI)
- Working with Neglect & Graded Care Model
- An Introduction to Mental Health and Children 13+

Externally, CiNI delivered 31 workshops to 528 participants, 97% of whom stated that "the learning needs set out in the objectives for the training had been met fully."



Locality Planning

Children's Services Planning Locality Groups currently running in Southern area are as follows;

Armagh, Banbridge, Dungannon Centre, Dungannon Rural and Newry

Locality groups in the Southern area have conducted an outcome based planning process, which examined statistical and qualitative data on children's outcomes sourced from local children, young people, families, community organisations and agencies.

This approach has allowed parents, young people and communities to play an active role in the planning process alongside statutory and voluntary organisations right from the start.

Areas of need identified through the outcome based planning have been incorporated into action plans grouped

under six high level outcomes. Information/updates on Planning Locality Groups in Northern Ireland can be viewed at www.cypsp.org.

Some examples of Action Plan priorities in the Southern area include:

- Increase knowledge of Family Support Services
- Increase the level attendance in primary school
- Address the number of young people leaving school with no GCSE's
- Increase dental registrations for 0-5 year olds
- Increase acceptance of all traveller and ethnic minority children and young people
- More positive perceptions of young people
- Increase positive images relating to young people
- Ongoing intergenerational programmes

Family fun and information events

The Planning Locality Group in Armagh/Dungannon identified that families may not be aware of available services and as a result they arranged family support information events. Four of these events have been held to date, with over 1,000 families attending.

Participation

180 young people in Armagh and Banbridge were involved in the CYPSP consultation on the Southern Area Action Plan.

What's next?

Locality planning is moving into the Craigavon, Portadown and Lurgan ward areas.



Participation Network

The Participation Network continues to support Government Departments, Local Government and Statutory Agencies to effectively engage with children and young people in public decision making.

Training

Over the past year, 218 participants from 28 agencies have benefited from 12 training workshops delivered by the Participation Network. During the year we undertook a review of training. As a result we have replaced our previous modular sessions with a full day's course, based on the ASK FIRST standards.

Workshops and bespoke training designed to meet the specific needs of a Department, Council or Agency were also delivered.

Consultancy

Throughout this year Participation Network has supported 17 agencies to engage with over 1,600 children and young people. The Network has also provided advice

and guidance to 32 public sector agencies and produced young person friendly engagement materials on 20 policies/service developments.

Development

The Participation Network has been operational for five years. During that time we have focussed on building good working relationships across the public sector. The success of this work has been reflected in an increased demand for our training and consultancy services, particularly in relation to producing young person friendly versions of policy documents and engagement support materials.

We have begun to develop more in-depth work with key agencies, supporting them to produce agency wide engagement strategies. In particular, we worked closely with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership to develop their engagement strategy. The implementation of that work will help to ensure that the views, experiences and ideas of children and young people are placed at the heart of Children's Services Planning across Northern Ireland.

We also undertook an extensive project with the Communications and Public Relations sub-group of the Regional Child Protection Committee. This involved the development and piloting of, not only a comprehensive strategy, but also an implementation exercise to test the proposed model. This work has now been endorsed by the Regional Child Protection Committee (RCPC) and passed on to support the work of the new Safeguarding Board of Northern Ireland. The University of Kent has also recorded a presentation which provided an overview of this work, in order to assist students studying for their Masters in Child Protection.



CiNI Policy Service

A newly elected Assembly and Executive presented an opportunity to reignite the agenda for children and young people in Northern Ireland. After a lengthy policy vacuum in Government Departments in terms of delivering for children, the new administration generated movement on many areas of concerns such as the Early Years Strategy; the Review of Special Educational Needs; and the Children and Young People's Strategy.

CiNI has been greatly encouraged by the renewed impetus directed at the children and young people's agenda. The Policy Service welcomed the reestablishment of a

dedicated policy function for children and young people's issues within OFMDFM. This has brought a much needed and refreshed outlook to the delivery of the Children and Young People's Strategy. The Junior Ministers are currently reviewing the structures and processes in relation to the Children's Strategy including the Ministerial Sub Committee on Children and Young People and we look forward to seeing the outcome of that review. The fact that OFMDFM is implementing plans for taking forward the 10 year strategy and has recognised that the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) is key to effective delivery is also a welcome development.

We believe that the CYPSP provides a unique opportunity to create a single action planning process for integrated planning and commissioning of services championed by government and delivered through local partnership working. In the current environment of scarce resources CiNI will continue to advocate for this model as the optimal mechanism through which to share resources and deliver the best outcomes for children. CiNI also welcomed the publication of the Partnership's Children and Young People's Plan 2011- 2014 which calls for a Joint Government strategy in relation to Early Intervention. CiNI believes there is a need for a champion for Early Intervention and Prevention at the highest level of government within a proper functioning and robust Ministerial Sub Committee on Children and Young People that includes all of the

relevant and appropriate Government Departments. The Committee led by Junior Ministers must also have core responsibility for examining mainstream budgets to look at how these can realign to ensure particular vulnerable groups of children and young people are targeted.

Work being undertaken by UNESCO (commissioned by OFMDFM) to develop a set of child rights based indicators to support the Executive's report to the UNCRC in 2014 was also warmly received.

Instead of laying the foundation for the Executive's strategic direction for the next four years, the Programme for Government (PFG) left many unanswered questions in relation to children's issues. We were informed that Departmental Delivery Plans would contain the detail however these have yet to be published for full and proper consultation.

CiNI noted the Delivering Social Change Framework (DSCF) which is the delivery framework for the implementation of the Programme for Government. Whilst the details of this framework have yet to be developed we will keep a critical eye as it progresses. We hope that Government uses the DSCF as an opportunity to address the critical issues of accountability, delivery, engagement and transparency to bring coherence and cohesion to the delivering of a

strategic cross Government vision for children and young people that is firmly rooted in the UNCRC.

With the lack of strategic vision for children and young people in the PFG, CiNI believes that there is an absolute imperative for a Statutory Duty on Government Departments to co-operate and work together in planning, commissioning and delivering services for children and young people. This duty must be owned and championed at the highest level of Government and cascade through all the levels and layers of planning, commissioning and local delivery for children and young people. A Statutory Duty would bring a shared focus to providing a holistic response to the needs of children and young people through alignment of policy areas, shared objectives, integrated planning and commissioning of services, and pooling of departmental budgets and resources which would ultimately lead to better outcomes for children and young people.

CiNI supported Steven Agnew's Private Members Bill which would place a Statutory Duty on Government Departments to cooperate to deliver on six high level outcomes of the 10 Year Children and Young People's Strategy. Steven Agnew, MLA was commended by the children's sector for his forward thinking and visionary approach and CiNI will continue to work with him as the Bill is drafted in early 2013.



All Party Group on Children and Young People

With the newly elected MLAs finding their feet at the Assembly, the All Party Group on Children and Young People (APG) bid farewell to two true children's champions, Dawn Purvis and Mary Bradley. Their dedication to championing children and young people's issues at the Assembly will be truly missed.

In relation to this Assembly's mandate, the Group decided that the forward work plan should be thematic, with an overarching focus on early intervention whilst highlighting the needs and circumstances of specific groups i.e. children with disabilities and children who are not in education

training or employment (NEETs). The Group received presentations throughout the year with a core message that Early Intervention works.

It was clear that the Programme for Government (PFG) and Budget could be strengthened by transparent and accountable tracking of expenditure on children and young people and their families. This highlighted the need to put in place a children's budgeting process which would show whether specific investment is making a positive difference in children and young people's lives. This recommendation was detailed in a joint position paper drafted by the All Party Group to influence the draft PFG 2011- 2015.

Alongside Early Intervention, collaborative working across government was another issue that was consistently raised throughout presentations to the Group. A lack of collaborative working was highlighted by NICCY in their research 'Barriers to Effective Government Delivery for Children and Young People' which identified some of the key barriers in Government initiatives for children and young people and why they failed to deliver effectively.

The Group welcomed a presentation on Early Intervention work in practice from the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. The Partnership, a model of best practice for collaborative working, focuses on integrated planning and commissioning of services for children and

young people. The Partnership includes senior leadership of key agencies working with children and young people to deliver better outcomes for children and young people. Their approach is to ensure that support services are put in place at an early stage before problems become more complex. This was welcomed and supported by the All Party Group.

The Group also hosted the launches of the Early Years Strategic Alliance Manifesto in November 2011 and the Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance Manifesto in February 2012. Central to both documents is the core message of Early Intervention and Prevention.

With the stagnation of the Children and Young People's Strategy, the action planning process and the implementation structures, the Group wanted to see a revitalized approach to the whole process. The Group met with staff of the newly established Children and Young People's Branch within OFMDFM to determine its current position and planned developments. The Group welcomed the branches refreshed approach to implementing the strategy and their willingness to engage with the APG at a future date when proposals have been developed further. The Group also looks forward to further engagement with the Junior Ministers on their review of the Ministerial Sub Committee, Children's Strategy Action Plan and the implementation structures.



Michelle McIlveen MLA
Chair

The Review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion was also published mid-year. The All Party Group on Children and Young People and the All Party Group on Learning Disability came together in a joint meeting to highlight the detrimental impact of the current proposals on Children and Young people. The turnout from across the sector and from parents showed how significant these issues are. The Group received presentations from the Children's Law Centre, the Special Educational Needs Advice Centre and the South Eastern Education and Library Board.



Children with Disabilities

Strategic Alliance

With the newly elected Assembly and Executive firmly in place, the Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance (CDSA) undertook a review and update of its Manifesto to accurately reflect the circumstances of children with disabilities in 2012.

Throughout the Manifesto, examples have been highlighted where children with disabilities are absent or invisible from Government policy and specifically the Budget and the Programme for Government 2011- 2015. Whilst there have been positive developments in areas such as child protection, many of the issues identified in the Manifesto

continue to be prevalent and indeed, in some cases issues have deteriorated. The Manifesto identifies barriers that children with disabilities and their families encounter and seeks to provide solution based actions to address these.

The Manifesto calls for Government to refocus its commitment to disabled children through the Programme for Government 2011- 2015 and subsequent spending decisions. Cooperation and joint working on strategic policy initiatives, planning and commissioning, and delivery arrangements is required to ensure positive outcomes are achieved for all children.

Clarification on government spending would also enable disaggregated analysis of expenditure, which in turn would facilitate measurement to determine the achieved impact and benefit to children and their families. As part of its campaign, CDSA has and will be meeting with the various departments and statutory agencies to discuss the issues identified within the Manifesto.

In September 2011, the Report on the Review of Youth Justice in Northern Ireland was published for consultation. CDSA members with expertise in the area were keen to respond to highlight specific issues for children and young people with disabilities, who may come into contact with the youth justice system, to seek priority consideration of these issues by the Department of Justice (DOJ).

The response also outlined DOJ's international obligations under UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) and UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities).

CDSA noted the publication of the UK State Party's views on the implementation of the UNCRPD to the United Nations on 24 November 2011. We were disappointed at how the lives of children with disabilities were reflected in the report. There was little information on the context and current situation for children and young people with disabilities. This is part of a wider concern for CDSA that there is insufficient research on the needs and circumstances of children and young people with a disability in Northern Ireland. There is also a lack of research on the prevalence of different conditions or disaggregated analysis of Government spending linked to disabled children and young people. This lack of information means that 'needs planning' for services can be weak.

CDSA also noted the publication of the OFMDFM Disability Strategy which is intended to be the roadmap for the implementation of the UNCRPD in Northern Ireland.

In January 2012, the Department of Education published its policy proposals for the way forward for the Reform of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) system. This year CDSA has spent a considerable amount of time campaigning in

this regard. The Education Sub Group has met with the Education Minister and the Education Committee. Whilst reform of the system was required and long overdue, many of the proposals were deemed retrogressive under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For example; if a child was moved from a statement to a Personal Learning Plan because they didn't meet the criteria threshold for a Coordinated Support Plan there would be a loss of appeal rights. This would be a retrogressive step under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Group was encouraged by the Minister's willingness to listen and take on board issues raised in relation to the proposed two stage framework which was proposed in the initial consultation. After sectoral representations including CDSA, this was revised to a three stage framework. As the Minister pushes ahead with primary legislation, CDSA will continue to lobby to ensure that there is no dilution of rights of children and young people with SEN.

The Group will continue to engage with the Department of Education in the coming months as the legislation and subsequent regulations and statutory guidance is drafted and developed to ensure that the rights and best interests of children and young people and their families central in this process.



The Children's Order

Advisory Committee

Children in Northern Ireland have been represented on the Children's Order Advisory Committee (COAC) by Kathryn Stevenson from the Children's Law Centre throughout the reporting period.

COAC was established to:

- Advise ministers on the progress of Children Order cases through the court system with a view to identifying special difficulties and reducing unavoidable delay; and
- To promote through Family Court Business Committees, commonality of administrative practice and procedure in Family Proceedings Courts and County Courts and to advise on the impact of Children's Order work on other family initiatives.

COAC is chaired by the by the Judge of the Family Division of the High Court of Justice in Northern Ireland, Mr Justice Weir. Its members are drawn from a broad range of professions and disciplines working with children and young people.

During this reporting period a number of key initiatives have been developed and implemented under the recommendation and guidance of COAC including:

- The second edition of the COAC Best Practice Guide was launched on 22nd April 2010. The guidance is available by free subscription on the Servicing the Legal System Programme (SLS) website. This guide is designed to be a living document and is under constant review by the COAC Best Practice Review Panel.
- During this period, a conversion table of legislative provisions in the Children's Act 1989 and the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 was developed by a group of bar pupils and approved by COAC for inclusion in the guidance.
- Care Plans for the child have been updated.
- The Legal Aid Pro-forma for the instruction of experts has been reviewed and work is ongoing to finalise a section on adoption, for inclusion in the guidance.
- Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for looked after children and young people have been disseminated to the judiciary and lay magistrates and have been included in the guidance.

The preparation and use of PEPs will be implemented in future care proceedings. Mr Michael Long QC has also agreed to assist the COAC Best Practice Review Panel in drafting a Private Law Pre-Proceedings Protocol.

A protocol for concurrent civil and criminal proceedings was developed by Judge Stephens and a multi-disciplinary work group which included the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Public Prosecution Service (PPS) and Health and Social Care Trusts. The protocol was launched on 26th April 2012 and is to be included in the COAC Guidance.

In May 2011, COAC was informed of a proposed operational decision by the PSNI to withdraw from serving non-molestation orders in 2012. It was confirmed that the Northern Ireland Court Service would be required to engage in a public consultation process prior to any change being implemented in relation to the policy on service of these court orders. A public consultation was scheduled to commence in Autumn 2011. COAC was advised at the October 2011 meeting that the PSNI had decided to continue to serve non-molestation orders.

In January 2012, COAC was consulted on the issue of transporting young people from Lakewood Secure Unit to participate in Secure Accommodation Order proceedings. The Committee was also asked to consider whether live video-links should be used for Secure Accommodation Order proceedings under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The Department of Justice is shortly due to issue a consultation paper on the use of live links. Current legislation relating to the use of live video links does not

include Secure Accommodation Order proceedings and therefore such proceedings are not included within the scope of this consultation.

At COAC's meeting in May 2012, a presentation was provided to Committee members by Christine Smyth, Project Manager for the Improving and Safeguarding Social Wellbeing Strategy which was launched by the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) on 16th April 2012. This is the first strategy for social work in Northern Ireland and reflects the DHSSPS' commitment to social work as a valued professional service for individuals, families and communities. The strategy includes a vision and framework for social work practice. Ten strategic priorities have been identified which will inform an Action Plan to strengthen the capacity of the workforce and improve social work services now and into the future.

Also at the May meeting, Mr Williamson (NIGALA) presented an options paper on the progress of public law proceedings in Northern Ireland, taking account of the recommendations for legislative change arising from the Family Justice Review in England and Wales and the Access to Justice Review in Northern Ireland. It was agreed that a multi-disciplinary COAC task group be established to bring forward recommendations with a view to reducing avoidable delay in public law proceedings. Judge Smyth was appointed Chair of this task group.



Early Years

Strategic Alliance

This year the Early Years Strategic Alliance (EYSA) launched its road map for the development of early years, childcare and family support services over the lifetime of the new Executive and Assembly.

The Alliance updated the manifesto to reflect the developments that have taken place since its original launch in 2007. The updated manifesto consists of eight thematic areas and an overarching objective of 'seeking greater integration and collaboration in early years' education and childcare'.

EYSA has continued to build on the success of the launch

with the development of a targeted action plan to support the dissemination of key messages within the manifesto: this has included providing an oral briefing to the Education Committee and also engaging with OFMDFM officials.

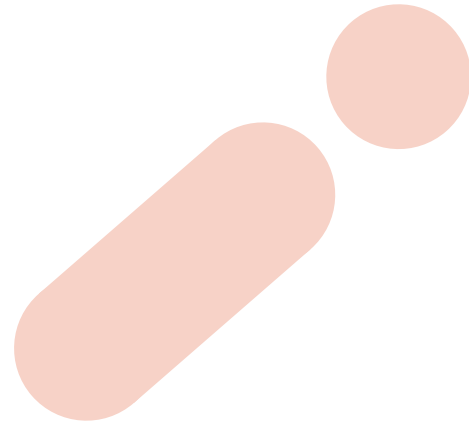
The Group welcomed the publication of the Policy and Economic Appraisal of Childcare Options in Northern Ireland in November 2011 which recommended that a lead department takes responsibility for childcare policy, integrating care and education systems, providing a holistic approach for the benefit of children, a high level of 'accountability and coherence' and promoting a degree of partnership working. Following on from this publication the EYSA anticipated the development of a truly integrated childcare strategy which was highlighted as an Executive Commitment in the PFG 2011-2015. However, the childcare strategy will not be out for full public consultation until December 2012.

EYSA is concerned that Government Departments will bid for the £12m Childcare Fund, which has been earmarked to address identified needs or improve provision without a strategic vision for what childcare provision should look like in Northern Ireland. Without a strategic approach or action plan EYSA is concerned that Government will not be able to assess the difference this intervention will make in families lives.

It is welcome that this funding is additional and will not replace existing baseline provision. However, EYSA would strongly advocate that when the strategy is published for consultation and a subsequent action plan is put in place, it should be fully resourced by a realistic financial package.

The summary of consultation responses to the Department of Education's (DE) 0-6 Strategy was finally published in January 2011. Over 90% of responses indicated that the proposals in their current form were not fit for purpose. Whilst the ongoing delay is frustrating for the sector, DE's willingness to engage is encouraging and proposals are currently being redrafted in consultation with their Early Years Stakeholder Advisory Group. This is a unique opportunity to produce a cross departmental strategy which adopts a model of Early Childhood Education and Care which reflects the holistic needs of the child.

One of the key drivers of the Programme for Government (PFG) is the 'Delivering Social Change Framework' which aims to achieve a sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues across all ages, as well as an improvement in children and young people's health, well-being and life opportunities. Evidence shows there is a strong connection between integrated systems of early years' education and care and lower levels of child poverty.



There is an opportunity with a revised 0-6 Strategy and the Delivering Social Change Framework for the Executive to demonstrate leadership through collaboration and integration of strategic frameworks for children and young people. By creating one single coherent model of Early Years Education and Care, and by identifying a lead Department who would be best positioned to take forward a coordinated response to early years and childcare, this would ensure that responsibility is matched by a Statutory Duty of Cooperation between all relevant Government Departments.



Looked After Children

Sub Group

The Looked After Children (LAC) Sub-Group provides a valuable forum for CiNI members involved in the oversight and management of frontline provision, to come together to share and exchange information on key strategic policy initiatives impacting on looked after children.

Throughout the year the Group engaged with the DHSSPS Child Care Directorate on its work in relation to looked after children and more specifically the Care Matters Strategy. The Department provided updates on areas of work such as the proposed Adoption and Children's Bill; Implementation of the Safeguarding Board in Northern Ireland; Implementation of the Vetting and Barring Scheme; Kinship Care Standards; and the Review of Residential Care. The Group noted the renewed focus from the Department to make the implementation of the Care Matters Strategy a priority and ensuring that the recommendations have been fully achieved.

Whilst the long awaited introduction of the Adoption legislation is frustrating, for many members amongst

the Group it is a welcome development that the Health Minister has committed to introducing the legislation in 2013.

The Group welcomed the Department's intention to review the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The Group looks forward to engaging with the Department during this process on the issue of Kinship Care which needs to be included in the legislation; the definition of disability which needs updated to reflect the UNCRPD; and the social model of disability.

The Group welcomed the consultation on, and publication of, the Kinship Care Standards. Through providing a standardised regional approach to service provision these standards will place the child at the centre of the process and ensure their welfare is paramount at all times.

The publication of 'Pathways to Success' was welcomed. This is the Executive's strategic response to addressing the needs of young people not in education, training or employment and has a specific commitment to double the proportion of young people leaving care who are in training, employment and education. The joined up approach to dealing with the issue means the needs of young people facing barriers that prevent them from engaging in learning and employment are addressed in a holistic manner. However, the Group has highlighted that a narrow age focus could result in any intervention with 16-19 year olds delivering little tangible change. Instead, there needs to be greater understanding and appreciation of key transition points for children and young people, which if not carefully planned and prepared for, with full involvement of the child or young person, can result in a young person disengaging from education at an early age.



Joint Government, Voluntary and Community

Sector Forum

This year saw the Joint Forum working on the delivery of the Concordat's commitments and what exactly these mean for Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

One of the commitments of the Concordat is the presentation of an annual progress report by the Minister for Social Development to the NI Executive and Assembly. The annual report was published in June 2012 and outlined progress towards the implementation of each of the commitments as set out in the Concordat. The report welcomed the publication of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report 'Creating Effective Partnerships between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector' in September 2010 and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report 'Creating Effective Partnerships between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector January 2012' which clearly recognises the importance of establishing and implementing a formal process of engagement between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

The Joint Forum decided that four out of the twelve commitments within the Concordat would be prioritised for advancement. These addressed issues of process that needed to be resolved in order for other commitments, which focused on policy issues of concern to government and the voluntary and community sector, to be progressed.

For each commitment a formal Commitment Action Team (CATs) was established. Project Management templates were developed to define the scope of the Commitment Action teams: Structural Reform; Outcome Focussed Approach to Funding; Bureaucracy and Influencing; and Examining Government Policy.

Each CAT has produced terms of reference, which have been agreed and endorsed by the Joint Forum. Each team reports formally on their progress at Joint Forum meetings. The work of each CAT is managed using project control methodology, which ensures that objectives are properly specified, outputs are identified and progress is made within an agreed, specified time frame.

Whilst the work of these teams is still in its infancy, it has been established that progress reports are process heavy and therefore, these will change to be more output focussed.

The Terms of Reference and membership for the Joint Forum have been reviewed to provide clarity amongst current and new members in terms of responsibilities. It is anticipated that in the coming months there will be wider public sector representation from health and education disciplines on the Forum.



Child Policy

Information Service

The Child Policy Information Service (CPIS) continues to be an invaluable service for Children in Northern Ireland members and CPIS subscribers. The free 24 hour trial provides an excellent opportunity for potential new members to experience and sample the service and find out what type of information will be available to them when then sign up.

To support members in their policy and lobbying work they can access the most up to date information on Government Ministers, Departments and Assembly Committees which is helpful, especially when there is a reshuffle amongst Committees or Ministers for example.

SOCIAL MEDIA

In February 2012, CiNI entered the world of social media to coincide with the launch of the Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance Manifesto. Since the launch of our profile on Twitter and Facebook, we've continued to grow our presence through connecting and engaging with our audience online. It is an exciting development and opens up new opportunities for CiNI to engage with different audiences.

INFLUENCING THE ASSEMBLY

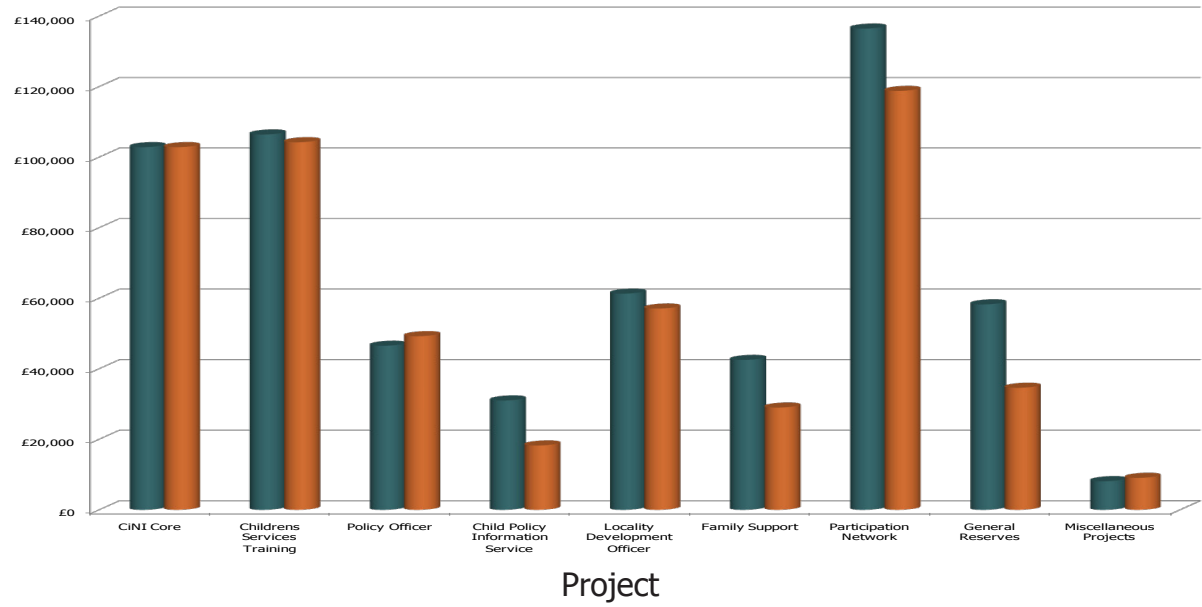
The service was showcased as part of an 'Influencing the Government' masterclass with Dawn Purvis (former MLA and Chair of the All Party Group on Children and Young People) which took place in December 2011 for CiNI members. Dawn drew on her experience and provided an insider's guide to effective lobbying and influencing, in order to get your message heard at the Northern Ireland Assembly. Workshop attendees were guided through the service and all of the content the service and website had to offer to support them in their lobbying work. Feedback from the workshop was extremely positive with members indicating an interest in attending future events on this area.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Social Media is a new and exciting development for CiNI and in the year ahead we look forward to connecting with new audiences via these media.

Financial Activities

Income Expenditure (£)





CiNI Staff 2012

Pauline Leeson
Chief Executive

Ethel McNeill
Children's Service Trainer

Elaine Conway
Policy Officer

Paula Quinn
Office Manager

Melissa Adair
Training Administrator

Robyn McCready
Policy Information Assistant

Roberta Johnson
Participation Network Coordinator

Gail Neill
Participation Advisor

Claire Paterson
Participation Network Administrator

Lynsey Dempster
Administration Assistant

Julie Patton
Locality Development Officer



CiNI Board Of Directors

Chair, Marie Cavanagh
Gingerbread NI

Vice Chair, Brenda MacQueen
The Dry Arch Children's Centre

Treasurer, Pauline McClenaghan
Lifestart Foundation Ltd

Pip Jaffa
Parenting NI

Dawn Shaw
Action for Children

Dave Weir
NIACRO

Fionnuala McAndrew
Health & Social Care Board

Koulla Yiasouma
Include Youth

Joan Davis
Family Mediation NI

Joy Poots
Inner City South Belfast Sure-Start

Rosie McNaughton
Cedar Foundation

John Hunsdale
Ascort

Catriona Regan
Banbridge District Council
(appointed January 2012)

Ian Sutherland
South Eastern Trust
(appointed January 2012)

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CiNI

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