



Priorities for Social Investment Funding Groups

Collaboration and Integration

CiNI believes an integrated and joined up working approach on children and young people's issues should be championed by the Social Investment Fund Steering Groups. It should be a key commitment to acknowledge the existing strategic planning, commissioning and delivery processes for children and young people and to ensure collaboration and integration with these structures and processes in the interest of securing best outcomes for children and young people.

This can be achieved by working alongside the regional Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) which is responsible for the statutory process of Children's Services Planning and which operates as a cross-sectoral strategic partnership consisting of the leadership of all key agencies who have responsibility for improving outcomes for all children and young people. The agencies represented include health, social services, education, local government, policing and housing, including representatives from the voluntary and community sector. The purpose of the Partnership is to put in place integrated planning and commissioning across agencies and sectors, which is recorded through the Children and Young People's Plan, aimed at improving wellbeing and the realisation of the rights of children in Northern Ireland.

CiNI therefore call upon all SIF Steering Groups to ensure a strategic approach by working in collaboration with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership to ensure priorities for children and young people are delivered in a coordinated way.

Investment in children and young people

CiNI is fully aware of the current budget challenges and subsequent reduced public spending, however investment in children and young people must be maintained to ensure their protection and appropriate access to services. The concept of investing in children has been accepted by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), as the best guarantee for achieving equitable and sustainable human development and a fundamental requirement for social and economic priorities of any government.¹

Figures from 2010/11 show that 21% of children in Northern Ireland were living in relative poverty² and more than 12%, or approximately 50,000 children, live in severe poverty.³ Child poverty can seem complex and multi-faceted, however much can be done to lift children out of poverty such as implementing a comprehensive mix of programmes, accessible quality services, allocating adequate resources and working in collaboration.

CiNI recommend the SIF steering groups make children a priority in application budgetary allocations. Investment in children and young people makes sense. It is key to overcoming social and economic inequalities, and achieving child poverty reduction.

Children with Disabilities

There is a need to recognise the importance of reaching out to those individuals and groups who are dispersed throughout the whole of the SIF Investment Zones, and who are further away from the support and services that would be targeted within a particular deprived area.

The circumstances and situation of children and families with a disability must be given priority. Children with disabilities are more likely to experience poverty than their non-disabled peers. It is estimated that 57% of disabled children are living in poverty compared to 37% of children without disabilities.⁴ Children with disabilities and their families are at great risk of social exclusion. Many need additional services to support them and this can

¹ CRC (2007) Day of General Discussion "Resources for the rights of the child – Responsibility of States" para 27

² NISRA, 'Poverty in Northern Ireland: 2010/11', available at: http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/ni_poverty_bulletin_2010-11__release_document_.pdf

³ Delivering Change for Children, Save the Children, June 2012

⁴ Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance Manifesto 2012

lead to further isolation. A wide range of evidence shows that early intervention and the provision of appropriate support can reduce the impact of these pressures.

SIF Steering Groups must effectively reach and address the needs of children with disabilities. Investment in programmes that support children with disabilities will underscore a commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and addressing the inherent inequalities faced by children with disabilities.

Early Intervention

CiNI notes that early intervention is proposed as one of the aspects of tackling systemic issues linked to deprivation within SIF. It is essential that Steering Groups have a sense of clarity and an agreed understanding of the concept of early intervention which must embrace early age and early stage intervention (irrespective of age).

There is a large volume of evidence to illustrate the positive outcomes for children when investment is targeted during the very early years, it is also important to note that some children and families will need additional supports and interventions at different points in a child's life.

The Young People's Strategic Partnership's commitment to early intervention has had real gains through aligning efforts and resources to direct and target early intervention initiatives where these can have optimal impact for children, young people and families. ***CiNI would again direct the Steering Groups to work in collaboration with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership to identify gaps in services for families that need additional support thus ensuring early intervention has a joint priority.***

Engagement and Consultation with Children and Young People

The Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People (Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge 2006) stated its intention to 'develop a culture where the views of children and young people are routinely sought in matters which impact on their lives.'⁵ It is therefore important that the SIF Steering Groups consider how they will engage with children and

⁵ <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/ten-year-strategy.pdf>

young people. It is essential to enable genuine engagement with in decisions which impact upon their lives.

CiNI would welcome information on how the views of children and young people will be factored into the ongoing development of proposals.

Children's Rights

CiNI firmly believes that each SIF Steering Group should fully recognize and give due regard to the principles and articles contained within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities(UNCRPD) which will ensure a child rights framework for the ongoing process. A child rights approach starts from a position of recognising all young children as citizens and holders of all the rights enshrined in UNCRC and UNCRPD.

It is imperative that the Steering Groups fully grasp both the international and domestic obligations contained within each Convention. CiNI would strongly advocate for recognition and integration of the following four core principles of the UNCRC that underpin all other Convention rights namely non-discrimination (article 2), best interests of the child (article 3); survival and development (article 6) and respect for the views of the child (article 12).

Children & Young People Strategic Partnership

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