



Press Release – 25th October 2016

We warmly welcome Minister O’Neill’s commitment to the Health and Wellbeing of children, young people and their families. The children’s sector make a significant and invaluable contribution to meeting the health and social care needs of children, young people and families living in Northern Ireland.

In a rapidly changing and challenging funding environment we are delighted that the Health Minister sees merit in working in partnership and co-production of services which meet the needs of all families and children and young people.

Early Intervention & Family Support Hubs

We are delighted the Minister recognises the excellent work undertaken by Family Support Hubs and the Early Intervention Transformation Programme; Family Support Hubs provide early intervention support services to vulnerable families and children. We believe the Early Intervention Transformation Programme is a means by which to tackle systemic issues linked to deprivation within communities and to ensuring children and young people have the best start in life.

We already know a large volume of evidence exists to illustrate better outcomes for children when investment is targeted during the very early years. We are grateful to the Health Minister for aligning efforts and resources to make early intervention initiatives such as the Early Intervention Transformation Programme and Family Support Hubs a priority. This gives Early Intervention a sense of clarity and an agreed understanding that Early Intervention is both early age

and early stage intervention (irrespective of age) and is inclusive of parents, families and children and young people.

Children with Disabilities

As co-chair of the Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance, we understand the circumstances and situation of children and families with a disability are often overlooked. Children with disabilities and their families are more likely to experience poverty than their non-disabled peers. Children with disabilities and their families are at greater risk of social exclusion. Many need additional services to support them and this can 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 which is why we are pleased the Health Minister is committing to improving outcomes for children with disabilities.

Looked After Children

Looked After children remain one of the most vulnerable groups in our society today; the number of children subject to care proceedings has also increased. Compared with their peers, looked after children generally have poorer outcomes in relation to many aspects of their lives, we are therefore delighted that Minister O'Neill has made a commitment to improving the lives of looked after children particularly educational outcomes.

Pauline Leeson comments:

"I am personally delighted to hear Minister O'Neill today and her support for Early Intervention and working in co-operation and co-production of services with the community and voluntary sector. A perfect example of what works is indeed the Family Support Hubs, the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership and the Early Intervention Transformation Programme, which works to improve co-ordination of Early Intervention family support services by

creating collaborative networks of community, voluntary and statutory providers. We have worked tirelessly with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership to create these conditions for major societal change in children's lives".

"Not only does this improve services and meet local need but it also achieves outcomes in helping families at points of crises in their lives but also helping them build resilience and social capital in order to deal with issues in the future."

"It is by working in co-operation, collaboration and co-production of services that we can make a positive difference in the lives of children and young people and their families."

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Notes to Editors:

Enquires to Pauline Leeson, Chief Executive, Children in Northern Ireland 028 9040 1290

About Children in Northern Ireland

Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) is the regional umbrella organisation for the children's sector across Northern Ireland. CiNI provides information, policy, training, participation and advocacy services to support our 160 members in their direct work with and for children and young people. Our membership is drawn from across the voluntary, statutory and independent children's sector.