Children in Northern Ireland

GETS ACTIVE YOUTH ADVISORY

THE BEST START IN LIFE



THE GETS ACTIVE YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANIFESTO 2023

We are a diverse collective of young people from across Northern Ireland who meet regularly to discuss school holiday programmes; how to ensure children get enough healthy food and physical activity; and how to improve the lives of those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

ABOUT US

In December 2022, we began a research project looking at the impact of the rising cost-of-living on children, young people and their families. So far, we have surveyed over 200 young people across Northern Ireland, between 11 and 25 years old.[1] Initial findings show that:

- Roughly one in three young people are worried about their parents or carers not having enough money;
- Around 40% say their families have been using less heating;
- One in five young people say their families have cut back food shopping;
- One in ten experience feeling hungry more often; and
- One in ten have skipped meals because they could not afford it.

It is clear that the cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated levels of inequality and disproportionately impacted our most marginalised children and young people. Approximately one in every five young people in Northern Ireland is facing severe hardship.[2] Long-term trends show that children have a higher risk of living in poverty than other population groups (e.g. working-age adults and pensioners).

In the continued absence of a Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly, we are asking political parties and council candidates to prioritise the needs of children and young people at local government level. That is why we have produced this manifesto – in the hope that we can encourage politicians to invest in our future, and give our children the best start in life.

1] The survey is ongoing and the final number of respondents is not yet confirmed.
[2] Department for Communities (2023), The Northern Ireland Poverty and Income Inequality report (2021/22).

OUR KEY PLEDGES

The Gets Active Youth Advisory Group is calling on all parties and candidates, if elected, to:



1. Set up a cost-of-living hardship fund and distribute grants to families on low incomes in difficult circumstances.



2. Provide free breakfast and after-school clubs in council areas.



3. Offer work experience and paid internships to young people to help them develop skills and increase their employability.



4. Provide free therapeutic programmes to improve young people's mental health.



5. Provide free programmes that include food, activities and trips for all children and young people in the council area.

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THE DRY ARCH CHILDREN'S CENTRES

THANK YOU

If you have any questions or queries regarding this manifesto or the work of the Gets Active Youth Advisory Group please contact: ernest@ci-ni.org.uk

