

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**

**20**

**Children  
in Northern  
Ireland**





**Children  
in Northern  
Ireland**

Our vision is to make Northern Ireland a society where all children are **valued**, treated **fairly** and are able to **flourish**.

## **INFLUENCING**

putting children at the centre of policy making

## **LEARNING**

capacity building across the sector and innovating best practice

## **COLLABORATION**

working with others to increase impact

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# Chair & CEO Report

**During a year that has been characterised by global upheaval and a challenging economic environment for our children, young people and their families, Children In Northern Ireland and our members continue to work to place the needs and rights of children at the centre of our collective efforts to support families through difficult times.**

We have achieved this by:

- ✓ Expanding and developing the Learning and Development programme to include School Based Anxiety and Baby Yoga & Massage.
- ✓ Strengthening support to parents from Parentline, with award winning podcasts, parent peer discussion groups and workshops covering topics from 'School Avoidance', 'The Formative Years' and 'Parenting Through Disability'.
- ✓ Developing Parent Participation, under CYPSP, with the Passionate Parents Network and parent-led engagements on disability and school avoidance.
- ✓ Supporting our Youth Advisory Group to develop a local government manifesto, hold hustings and produce peer research on poverty.

- ✓ Supporting 6 locality groups in the Southern Trust, alongside CYPSP, to roll out school uniform recycling toolkit and Feel Good events for young people in Armagh.
- ✓ Launched the Children's Policy Forum and supported the children's sector to ensure the continuation of core grant funding.

We would like to sincerely thank our members, staff, Board, funders, and partners for all their incredible support. We will continue to advocate for children, young people and their families, and to work, collaborating in partnership with members and supporters, to make NI a society where all children are valued, treated fairly and are able to flourish.



**Marie Cavanagh**  
Chair



**Pauline Leeson**  
Chief Executive

# Learning & Development



**CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRAINING**  
✓ 100 EVENTS  
✓ 1,900 TRAINED



**1-2-1 ORGANISATION TRAINING**  
✓ 121 SESSIONS  
✓ 1,582 TRAINED



**98%**  
**OF ATTENDEES RATED OUR CST TRAINING OVERALL AS 4-5 OUT OF 5 (GOOD - EXCELLENT)**



**93%**  
**OF ATTENDEES RATED THE CONTENT, MATERIALS AND DELIVERY OF OUR CST TRAINING AS 4-5 OUT OF 5 (GOOD - EXCELLENT)**



# TRAINING FEEDBACK

**“ THE COURSE WAS  
DELIVERED IN SUCH A  
WAY THAT IT WAS EASY  
TO UNDERSTAND HOW  
IT IS RELATED TO MY  
CURRENT ROLE.**

DESIGNATED OFFICER



**AN AMAZING COURSE WHICH  
EXCEEDED MY EXPECTATIONS.  
THE TRAINER WAS AN  
AMAZING FACILITATOR AND  
MAINTAINED MY INTEREST  
THROUGHOUT.**



LIFE STORY



**THIS WAS A WELL-  
STRUCTURED  
TRAINING  
SESSION THAT  
WAS LED BY  
AN EXTREMELY  
COMPETENT  
TRAINER IN  
AN ENGAGING  
MANNER. THIS  
WAS INCREDIBLY  
USEFUL.**



CHILD PROTECTION



**THE TRAINER'S  
KNOWLEDGE  
AND EXPERTISE IS  
SECOND TO NONE.  
THEY ARE ABLE TO  
COMMUNICATE THE  
KEY ELEMENTS OF  
A REALLY COMPLEX  
TOPIC IN A CLEAR  
AND ACCESSIBLE WAY,  
WHICH MAKES IT EASY  
TO APPLY IN PRACTICE.**



SUPERVISION FOR  
SUPERVISORS PRACTICE

# Policy: What We Do



## Members

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- » Convened the Child Poverty Alliance and Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance in June and September 2023. Coordinated correspondence to the Permanent Secretary at the Department of Education challenging the decision-making regarding funding cuts. Engaged with Education Authority on transformation and reform of Special Educational Needs support, and presented research and recommendations to senior officials on children not in school.
- » Facilitated engagement between Members and the Department of Health as part of the consultation on recommendations from the Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services. Supported the 'Reimagine Children's Collective' report and response to the Review.
- » Launched the Children's Policy Forum in March 2024, providing a space for all Members to discuss government strategies, legislation and policy and facilitate opportunities for collaboration.

## Public

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- » Contributed to BBC Radio Ulster's Evening Extra programme highlighting the impact of the Department of Education decision to cut funding for the School Holiday Food Grant Scheme.
- » Issued a range of press statements surrounding the NI Budget 2023/24 and the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.
- » Appeared on BBC NI's Sunday Politics, BBC Newsline, BBC Radio Ulster and Cool FM to highlight the impact of the NI Budget 2023/24 and the reduction in Core Grant funding for children's organisations.
- » Published a country report highlighting key issues in NI as part of Eurochild's 2023 Report, Children's Rights: Political will or won't?

## Politicians

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- » Coordinated and published an open letter, signed by over 100 organisations and experts, calling for the Secretary of State to use his budgetary powers to reinstate the School Holiday Food Grant Scheme.
- » Convened a Cross-Party Meeting of MLAs at Parliament Buildings to discuss the impact of the reduction in Core Grant funding for Community and Voluntary Sector organisations.
- » Engaged with the Shadow Secretary of State, Hilary Benn MP, and a wide range of MLAs to discuss current issues facing children, young people, and families.
- » CiNI's work to tackle child food insecurity through the Gets Active Project was acknowledged in an NI Assembly debate on ending holiday hunger in March 2024.

## Officials

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- » Submitted a comprehensive response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services and a subsequent response to the public consultation on the Review Recommendations.
- » Responded to the Department of Health and Department of Justice joint public consultation on the Draft Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023-2030.
- » Responded to the Department of Education and Department of Health Equality Impact Assessments of budget decisions.
- » Attended a number departmental stakeholder engagement events on the implementation of the Adoption and Children Act, Early Education and Childcare, and Infrastructure Support for the Community and Voluntary Sector.

# Policy: Youth Advisory Group

**Working closely with local delivery partners, including youth clubs and family centres across Northern Ireland, we continue to provide a range of food and activity programmes aimed at tackling disadvantage and food insecurity throughout school holiday periods.**

In 2023, our Youth Advisory group – comprised of young people from the four 'Gets Active' areas – developed a local government manifesto and held a hustings event with a panel of politicians representing the various parties across NI.

The group also responded to the Executive Office public consultation on Free Period Products and launched their cost-of-living report in November 2023, which summarised the findings of their peer research and highlighted serious challenges faced by young people growing up in poverty.



## KEY ASKS

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.



Children in Northern Ireland **GET'S 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.

**DOWNLOAD**

**THE IMPACT OF THE RISING COST-OF-LIVING ON CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, AND THEIR FAMILIES**

A Survey by the Gets Active Project's Youth Advisory Group in Northern Ireland

**GET'S ACTIVE YOUTH ADVISORY**

**NOVEMBER 2023**

Children in Northern Ireland

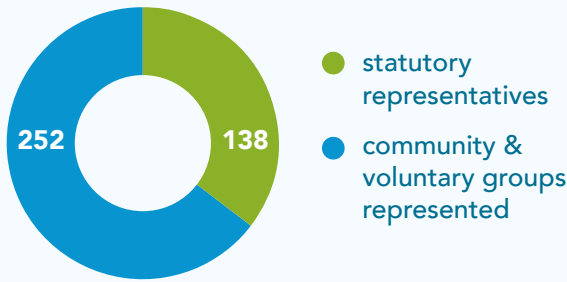
**DOWNLOAD**



Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership

# Locality Planning

## Southern Area LPG Meetings 2023-2024



*The meeting was incredibly informative and great to see so many groups represented. Thank you for all the many valuable updates received from the LPG.*



## 'FYI' Newsletter



*So uplifting to know there is such a variety of support available for families, and so handy to have it gathered in one easy source!*



# Key Successes During 2023/24

## FEEL GOOD ARMAGH



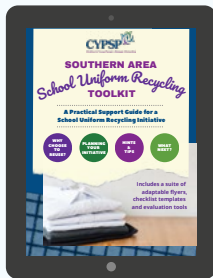
*Thank you for the opportunity for the Feel Good Armagh Weekend. It was absolutely fantastic and was a huge success. The young people have expressed how enjoyable it was.*



## SCHOOL UNIFORM RECYCLING INITIATIVE



*Parents love the School Uniform Recycling Initiative and we are delighted to be able to do something that helps parents, and make their finances stretch a little further.*



Scan this QR code to access the above resources and reports, along with all our information and latest edition of our fortnightly 'FYI' newsletter.



# Digital Communication

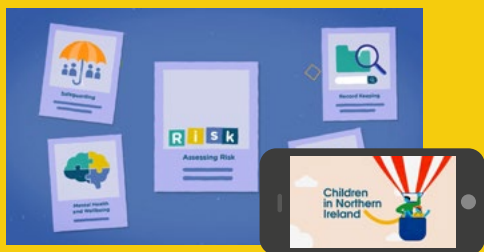
In the past twelve months, our social media following and online presence continued to grow and develop throughout the year, through various different pathways.

A mix of Training, Policy and Parentline content makes for a varied and diverse audience, as well as being able to keep content appealing to the sector.

Using graphics and video to promote and create awareness around all that we offer is an engaging and cost-effective way to reach out and get our messaging across.



## Animation



We developed two more animations; one based on CiNI's training function, and all that it encompasses, and another on CiNI as a whole. The latter was an excellent opportunity to bring to life all that CiNI stand for and undertake.

## CiNI Cast Studios

This year we launched our new podcast recording facilities - CiNICast Studios. This is a state-of-the-art podcasting space for our members to come and record their podcasting content.



# Parentline Podcast

The Parentline podcast has continued to deliver relevant, useful and topical episodes on a monthly basis. Kerry McLean is our established host, providing continuity and cementing the warm, engaging approach in our episodes. Our recent episodes included:

- » Managing Anxiety Based School Avoidance
- » Parenting through...our experiences with ADHD
- » Rediscovering the Magic of Christmas on a Budget
- » Breastfeeding - Making it work for you and your baby
- » Parenting through Vision Impairment and Sight Loss
- » Parenting through Meningitis and resulting disabilities.



# Irish Doctors Orchestra Event



In March 2024, we were the chosen charity partner for the Irish Doctors Orchestra concert in the Ulster Hall. The event went really well, the engagement was excellent, and the proceeds of the concert

were donated to us. We had a two-page spread in their programme and there were lots of Parents at the event. The funds raised provide us with a very welcome boost for our future.

# Social Media Engagement

Children in Northern Ireland



8.4K followers

Parent Line NI



7.6K followers

Children in Northern Ireland



1.5K followers

Parent Line NI



1.5K followers

Children in Northern Ireland



8.3K followers

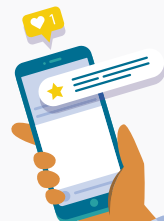


12K podcast downloads

Children in Northern Ireland



700 followers





Advice . Support . Guidance



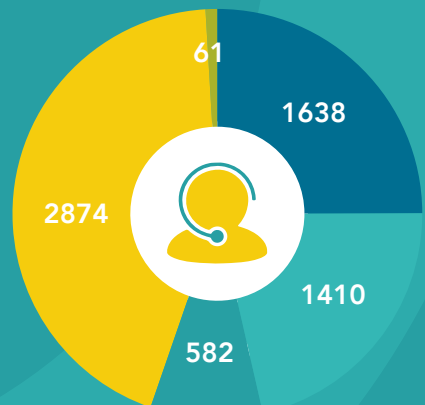
## MISSION

Every parent will feel **valued, respected** and **nurtured** on every call and are encouraged to both spend time **connecting** with their children and treating themselves with **care** and **compassion**.

## PRESENTING ISSUES CATEGORIES

Issues that parents have sought support with;

- Behaviour
- Emotional
- External States
- Health
- Harmful





**124%**

**ACHIEVEMENT ON TARGETS FOR ALL CONTACTS:**

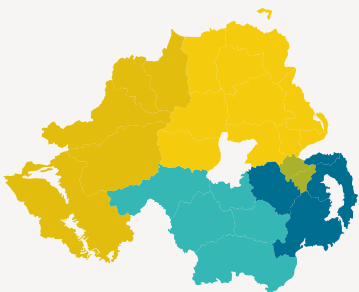
Annual Target: **5000**  
Parents reached: **6607**  
Increase of 4.7%  
on last year.

**153%**

**FACE TO FACE CONTACT:**

Annual Target: **500**  
Parents reached: **764**

**GEOGRAPHICAL REACH PER TRUST AREA**



- Northern: **1526**
- Belfast: **1692**
- South Eastern: **1185**
- Western: **1088**
- Southern: **1090**

**SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT**



Contact with Parentline NI prevented;

**3072** calls to Health Care professionals

**2328** calls to schools/EA

**1175** calls to social services

**SIGNPOSTING**




**656** parents were signposted to other local services




## WORKSHOPS


1295 parents registered  
18 online workshops delivered



12k downloads



Parentline were finalists at the Irish Podcast Awards in the family category.



### DISCUSSION GROUPS (PEER SUPPORT)

111 parents reached  
12 separate discussion groups





### REFERRALS

93 received and responded to within 5 working days. Up 15% from the previous year.

### SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

259.9K reaches. up 31.9% on the previous year.



“

Thanks so much for all your check ins, when I think back to when we first spoke it feels like a lifetime ago, I'm in a much better headspace now. In those early weeks when I either couldn't get through to GP or didn't have the courage to ring again you really were my lifeline, thank you.”

Parent

“

Just wanted to let you know the parents loved workshop that you delivered on Tuesday, so many of the parents got so much from it and we all agreed that Janice was so amazing at her job. We look forward to Parentline in our school again.”

Teacher, Redeemer PS.

# Parent Participation Service

## WHAT WE DID

### Developed resources:

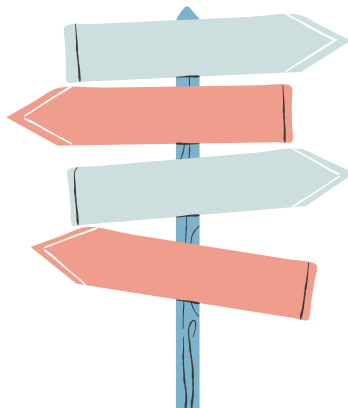
- ✓ Supported parents to co-produce 'Our Journey Through Disability' conclusion and participate at the launch at Stormont.
- ✓ Launched the Parental Participation Service tab on CiNI website
- ✓ Launched Story-boards co-produced with parents and FODC

### Direct Participation:

- ✓ Facilitated Q&A sessions with Parent Champions
- ✓ Recruited Passionate parents and launched the passionate parents network
- ✓ Held a joint parent mini-conference with parent champions, passionate parents and our CYPSP colleagues.
- ✓ Co-facilitated ASD cafes  
Supported parent focus groups with our parent led organisation

## HOW WE DID IT:

- ★ Engagement
- ★ Developed relationships
- ★ Built capacity
- ★ Promoted best practice
- ★ Innovative strategies



## KEY OUTCOMES



Directly engaged with over **12 parent-led community, voluntary groups** and organisations. Directly engaged with and recruited **11 parent champions**.



Launched the **passionate parents network** with direct engagement with 47 parents who expressed an interest.



Heard first hand **lived experiences of parents** who are and feel marginalised by their circumstances, including minority ethnic groups, parents of neurodiverse children, parents whose children avoid school, parents who have mental ill-health.

*I'm feeling more knowledgeable and excited after mini conference and looking forward to helping as many children as possible in Northern Ireland. Love all the tender loving care touches."*

Passionate Parent

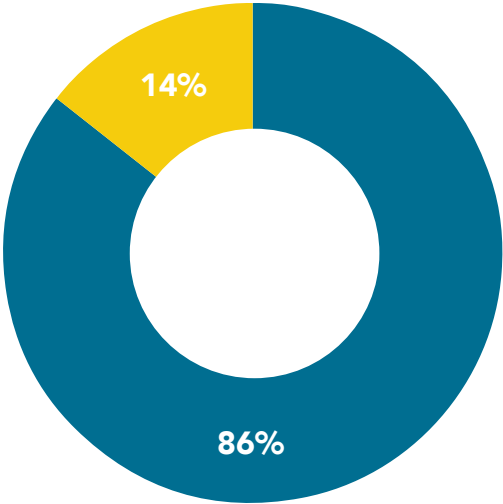
# Finances

## Statement of Financial Activities

### INCOME

for the  
year ended  
31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

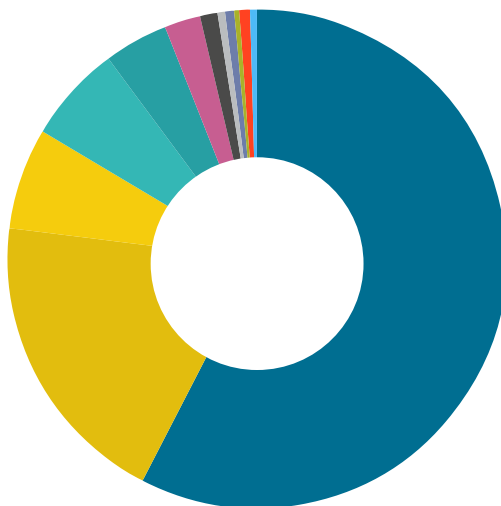
INCOME	AMOUNT
● Grants	£801,934
● Other Income	£134,730
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>£936,664</b>



## EXPENSES

for the  
year ended  
31<sup>st</sup> March  
2024

EXPENSE	AMOUNT
● Salaries, Pensions & Social Security	£554,127
● Project Materials	£186,631
● Legal, Professional & Trainers	£63,173
● Property Rent & Upkeep	£60,645
● IT Expenses	£39,968
● Utilities	£22,528
● Publications & Promotion	£10,909
● Sundries & Other	£4,596
● Insurance	£5,774
● Stationery, Printing & Postage	£3,089
● Travel Expenses	£5,229
● Subscriptions	£1,579
● Room Hire & Catering	£4,125
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>£962,373</b>
<b>Net Deficit</b>	<b>£25,709</b>



# CiNI Staff & Board of Directors 2023/24

## STAFF

Pauline Leeson	Chief Executive
Ernest Purvis	Policy Officer
Roger Gowdy	Finance & Office Manager
Ciarán Traynor	Learning & Development Officer
Susan Wallace	Learning & Development Officer
Jenny Groves	Office & Training Coordinator
Darren Curtis	Locality Development Officer
Joanne Patterson	Locality Programme Support Officer & Office Coordinator
Laurel Littlewood	Digital Marketing & Engagement Coordinator
June Onyekwelu	Head of Service, Parentline NI
Tricia Monroe	Service Manager, Parentline NI (Maternity Leave)
Olivia Garrett	Service Manager, Parentline NI
Gemma Robinson	Service Coordinator, Parentline NI
7 Parent Support Officers	
2 Community Connectors	
2 Parent Participation Workers	

## BOARD MEMBERS

Marie Cavanagh	Chairperson
Paul Morgan	
Alison Beattie	
John Hunsdale	
Brenda MacQueen	
Liam Hannaway	
Colin Hayburn	



# Children in Northern Ireland



Unit 9  
40 Montgomery Road  
Belfast  
BT6 9HL

**T:** 028 9040 1290

**F:** 028 9070 9418

**W:** ci-ni.org.uk



 @ChildreninNI

 /childreninni

 Children-in-northern-ireland

# 20

# 24

**CHILDREN IN NORTHERN IRELAND  
THANKS OUR FUNDERS FOR THEIR  
CONTINUED SUPPORT**



Delivered by  
THE NATIONAL LOTTERY  
COMMUNITY FUND

