



Social Strategy Event

Wednesday 14th September 2016

Notes

Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) hosted a pathfinder workshop with Denis McMahon, Deputy Permanent Secretary from Department for Communities and CiNI member organisations on 14 September 2016 to discuss and influence of the Department for Communities new Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Pauline Leeson, Chief Executive of Children in Northern Ireland notes “Children in Northern Ireland were delighted to host an event for our members on the new Social Strategy. It is only through a collaborative approach to delivering on outcomes and sharing of ideas that we can truly improve the social and economic wellbeing of all our children. We very much welcome the approach taken by the Department for Communities, CiNI feels that co-production is the best approach to ensuring children are at the heart of policy. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with all Government Departments.”



The event was attended by over 30 delegates who were brought together to explore what interventions are achieving the greatest impact in addressing child poverty, health inequalities and educational attainment in Northern Ireland. Members included Children in Northern Ireland, Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership, Department for Communities, Family Conference Group NI

Family Fund, Mencap NI, Parenting NI, Pathway Activities NI, Quaker Service, RFCA, Start 360, Voluntary & Community Sector Forum and Women's Aid.

The recent draft Programme for Government framework contained a number of indicators around social and economic wellbeing. Children in Northern Ireland invited the Department for Communities, who is leading the work on a new Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy, including a Social Strategy Pathfinder programme, along to update our members on the strategy and to facilitate a discussion with the Department to enable a collaborative approach to deliver the strategic outcomes.

This event came about from a meeting with Denis McMahon, Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Department for Communities where we all agreed that the best approach to ensure an effective social strategy was to ensure a co-production and co-design process took place.

Children in Northern Ireland firmly believe this approach is an excellent way forward. Working in partnership with the Department for Communities to hold this event for our members allowed us to develop opportunities for cross-sectoral working that facilitated greater involvement for all in co-production, design, and development of the social strategy.

The Agenda for the event was as follows:

- Welcome: Pauline Leeson, Chief Executive Children in Northern Ireland
- Outline of the Social Strategy and Pathfinder Programme: Denis McMahon, Deputy Secretary, Social Inclusion, Department for Communities
- Group session: What interventions do you believe would and are achieving the greatest impact in addressing child poverty, health inequalities and educational inequalities? If you had to prioritise three interventions which ones would you choose?
- Feedback
- Next steps: Denis McMahon

Presentation by Denis McMahon

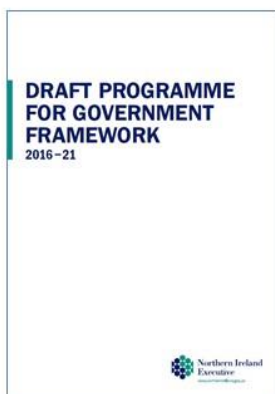


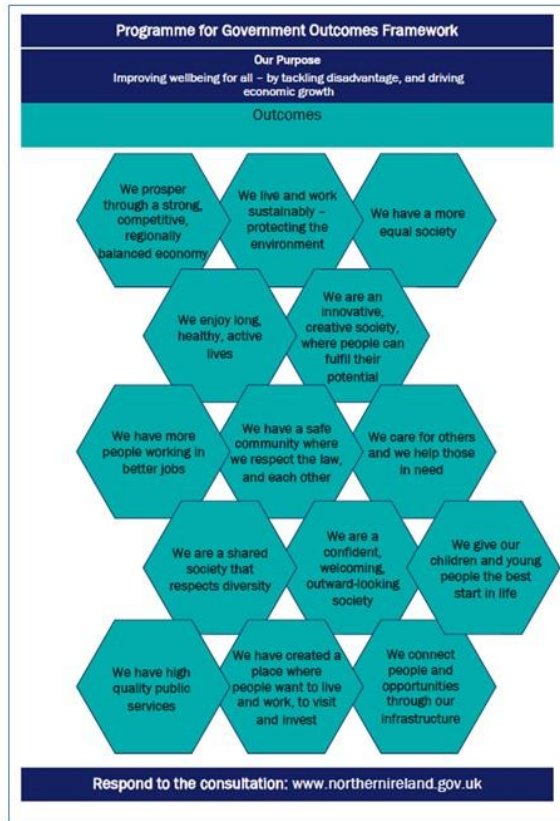
Programme for Government Pathfinder

Denis McMahon
Deputy Secretary

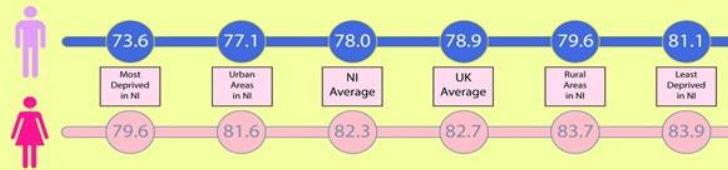


Programme for Government





LIFE EXPECTANCY 2011-13



HEALTHY LIFE EXPECTANCY 2011-13



ABSOLUTE POVERTY RATES BHC 2014/15



Life Expectancy Metro 8



8 – years difference in life expectancy

People in more deprived areas live much shorter lives than those from less deprived areas

Source: DHSSPS.

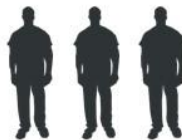


Health Inequalities

most deprived areas

least deprived areas

Suicide Rate



Treble



Mental health



Double



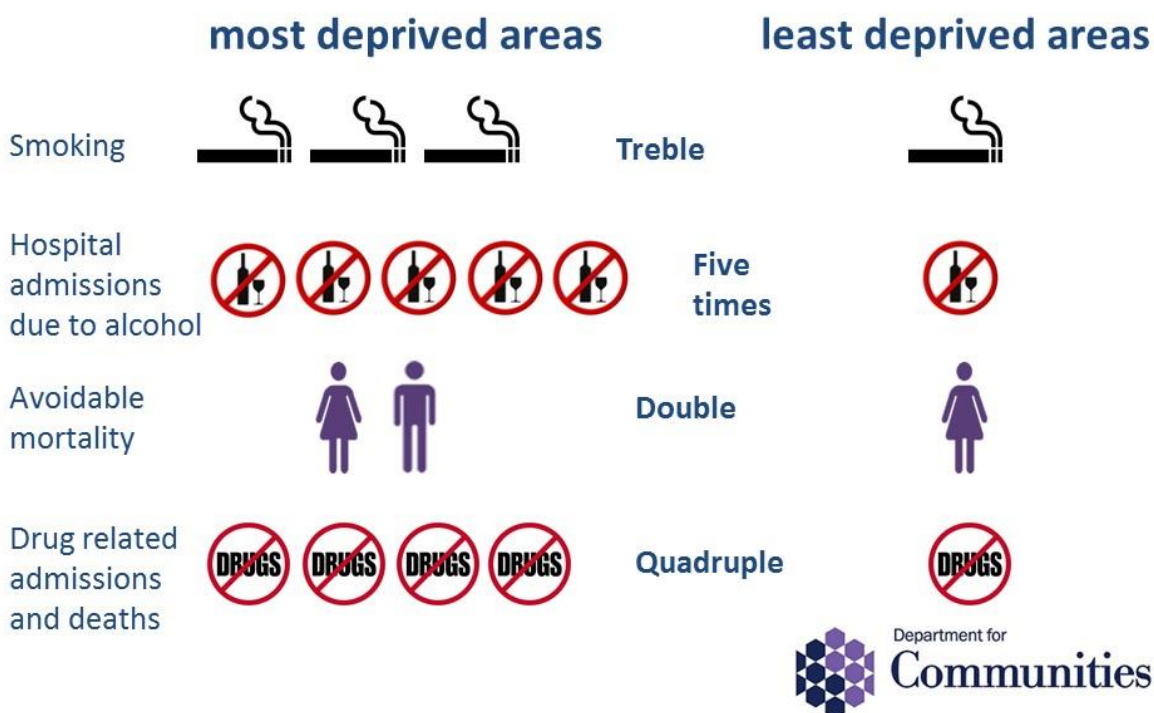
Prescription rate for mood and anxiety disorders



Double

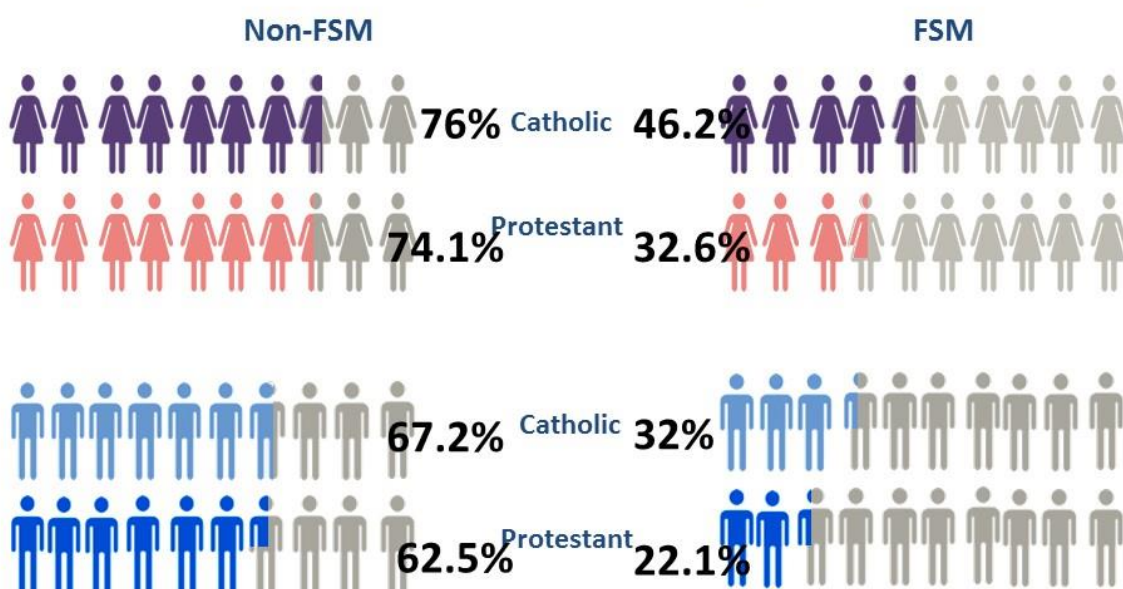


Health Inequalities



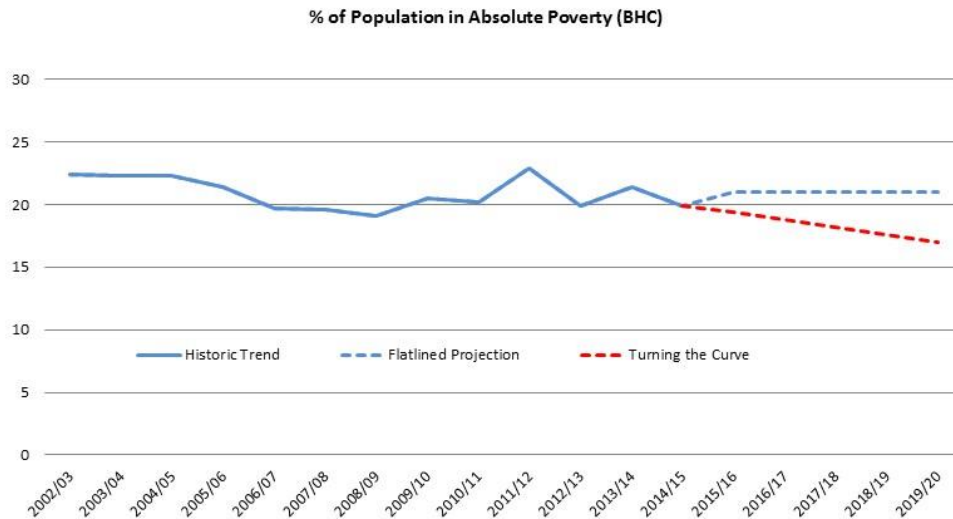
Education Inequalities

% achieving 5+ GCSEs including English and Maths

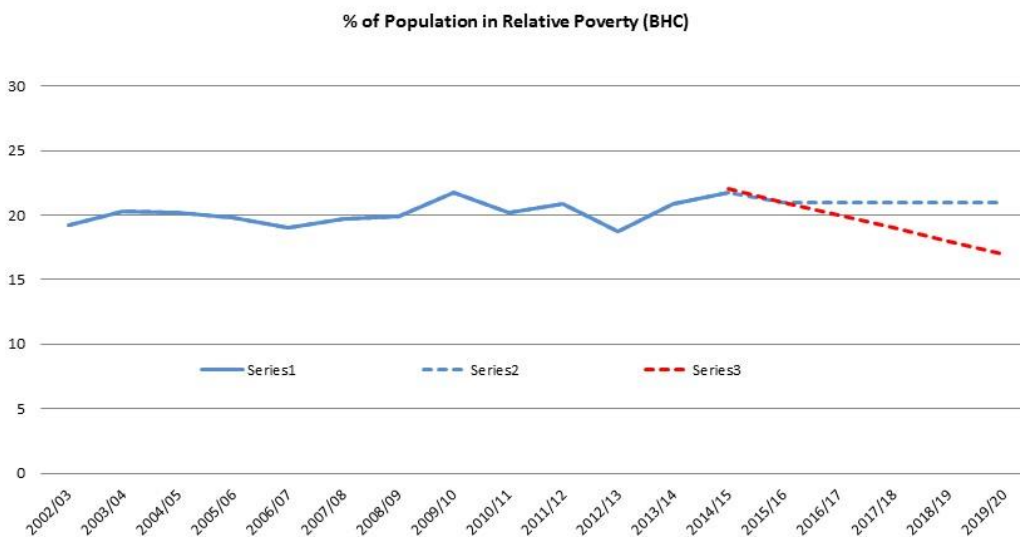


 Department for Communities

Turning the Curve of Absolute Poverty to achieve a statistically significant change



Turning the Curve of Relative Poverty to achieve a statistically significant change



The members worked in small groups to make the most of the time available. After which they fed back to other members and to the Department for Communities. Feedback received after the event suggest our members felt the session was extremely useful and this collaborative approach to influencing policy through co-design and an opportunity to share/exchange ideas was extremely beneficial.

Below are the broad themes which members talked about:

Early Intervention

The members talked about early intervention as a way of tackling systemic issues linked to deprivation. All agreed that 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.

Members also raised the issue of empowering families and building resilience and confidence. Some also noted the excellent work of the restorative work being undertaken in Hull which is underpinned by values of empathy, respect, honesty, acceptance, responsibility, and mutual accountability. Suggesting that Belfast could be a Restorative City helping individuals to deal with issues themselves which would improve self-confidence and self-advocacy.

There was a suggestion that programmes that were effective and no longer funded should be brought back such as Book Start.

Collaboration and Integration

Members believed more work needs to be done to ensure the implementation of the Children's Act and greater joined up working on children and young people's issues. 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.

Some members noted that on occasion organisations also work in silos. They also noted that some organisations / projects had been achieving positive outcomes are no longer funded or are unable to expand.

Members also thought the strategy should take account of the demographics of the people behind the statistics to plan interventions that suit the local area as the current system (top 25% disadvantaged wards) is not working.

Children with Disabilities

There is a need to recognise the importance of reaching out to those children and young people and families who are dispersed throughout the whole of Northern Ireland and not just those within the top 25% of deprived areas as some are missed.

Children with disabilities are more likely to experience poverty than their non-disabled peers.

Children with disabilities and their families are at great risk of social exclusion so early identification is needed. Many need additional services to support them so members' believe signposting is key and should be at different points/stages in a child's life such as pre-school, school and after schools.

Members' believed this information and support would build knowledge and confidence in families.

Engagement and Consultation with Children and Young People & Families

Members pointed out there must be a culture where the views of children and young people are routinely sought in matters which impact on their lives. It is essential to enable genuine engagement in decisions which impact upon their lives.

Members also believe there should be more parental involvement in both schools and in programmes and that more work needed to be undertaken to involve schools in outcomes based accountability work so they can also help to “turn the curve”.

Childcare

Members noted that a robust Childcare Strategy and investment would ensure best outcomes overall for children and families.

Nothing this could have a positive outcome in terms of child poverty and helping people in to work.

Child Poverty

Members believed that to address child poverty we need both outcomes that help **ALL** children and young people and **TARGETED** services. It was suggested the issue of holiday hunger needed to be addressed, particularly for those on Free School Meals. This would aid in reducing the attainment gap but also feed children during school holidays – thus making a positive impact on child poverty.

Education was also raised in terms of the educational gap which is widening and that academic achievement of 5 GCSE’s is not necessarily the only indicator that should be used.

The data available between the relationship of children who are statemented and the correlation of how many children are in poverty was also noted as a particular information need that should be addressed.

Organisations represented at the event

Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership

Children in Northern Ireland

Department for Communities

Family Conference Group NI

Family Fund

Mencap NI

Parenting NI

Pathways

Quaker Service

RFCA

Start 360

Voluntary & Community Sector Forum

Women's Aid

Next Steps:

Denis McMahon, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Department for Communities closed the workshop event by thanking all participants for their input. The recommendations from the workshop will be considered as the Department move forward with further pathfinder workshops and Social Strategy.

Feedback received after the event suggest our members felt the session was extremely useful and this collaborative approach to influencing policy through co-design and an opportunity to share/exchange ideas was extremely beneficial.