

ANTI-POVERTY

19 SEP 2005

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**DERRY CHILDREN'S COMMISSION  
RESPONSE TO NEW TSN – THE WAY FORWARD  
PHASE 2**

Derry Children's Commission is a multi-agency partnership involving the statutory, voluntary and community sector as well as children and parents in the Derry City Council area. Derry Children's Commission was set up to influence and support change towards a culture which values children.

While we welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation, we are extremely disappointed that the proposed strategy does not specify targets, actions or timescales for tackling child poverty in Northern Ireland.

In response to your request for comments on this strategy, we recently facilitated a very productive meeting between a group of children from Derry and representatives from the Anti-Poverty Unit of OFMDFM. Subsequently we forwarded our publication 'Wise Up to Child Poverty – a guide for decision makers' which provides an overview of child poverty in Northern Ireland in general and the Derry City Council area in particular. We would now like to highlight a number of the key findings from 'Wise Up to Child Poverty' along with our recommendations.

**Wise up to Child Poverty: Key Facts**

- The adult poverty rate for Northern Ireland is 18%.
- Children are more at risk of being in living in poverty than adults. The latest child poverty figures confirm that Northern Ireland has one of the highest child poverty rates in Europe at 25%.
- The Derry City Council area has among the highest rates of child poverty in Northern Ireland at 32%.
- In some areas of Derry over 80% of children are affected by income deprivation.
- The North West has 23% higher child death rates compared to the Northern Ireland average
- Child poverty affects educational attainment: 9.35% of school leavers in Derry have no GCSE results compared to 5.68% in Northern Ireland
- The economic inactivity rate in Derry (39.9%) is almost double that of the UK (21.4%)
- The unemployment rate in Derry (10%) is more than twice the Northern Ireland and UK average (4.7%).
- In Derry average weekly earnings are £347.70 which is 14% lower than the Northern Ireland average

## **Wise up to Child Poverty: the issues**

The UK and the Republic of Ireland have among the highest rates of child poverty in Europe.

Poverty has a very negative impact on the lives of children.

The UK government has made a pledge to eradicate child poverty by 2020 and has taken active steps to address child poverty in Britain by setting targets and monitoring indicators of child poverty.

The Northern Ireland Assembly promised to put children at the centre of governance. Before the Assembly was suspended, it initiated work which has continued under Direct Rule to look at the problem of poverty in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland economy is beginning to show some signs of growth, but because there already is a wide disparity here between rich and poor there is a real danger that the divide could widen as has happened in the Republic of Ireland.

‘New TSN - the Way Forward Towards an Anti-Poverty Strategy’ has been criticized for focusing almost exclusively on welfare to work solutions without addressing issues such as low pay and inadequate benefits. Phase 2 of the Anti-Poverty Strategy (which has just been published for consultation) does not specify how child poverty in Northern Ireland will be eradicated by 2020. No funding has been allocated for the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Although it reiterates the objective to eradicate child poverty by 2020, the Draft Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland does not outline how child poverty will be reduced nor has any funding has been allocated to this Strategy.

Other countries like Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway have shown that if more money is spent on children and young people through benefits and services this will greatly reduce the number of children living in poverty.

Northern Ireland needs clear targets and resources in order to break the unacceptable cycle of child poverty which exists generally in Northern Ireland and which is particularly concentrated in Derry.

## **Wise up to Child Poverty: Recommendations**

- Northern Ireland needs a clear strategy on how child poverty is going to be eradicated by 2020.
- The Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy should incorporate the key messages from the recent UNICEF study on Child Poverty in Rich Countries.
- There should be an annual review of child poverty in Northern Ireland.