

25th August 2005

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ANTI-POVERTY

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I am writing to you on half of Lenadoon Community Forum, an umbrella organisation representing over twenty local thematic groups. The Forum would like to take this opportunity to record their concerns relating to the current consultation document New TSN - The Way Forward.

The Forum notes that the concerns raised and recommendations made at a previous seminar, in relation to the first consultation document, have for the most part been ignored, and are therefore resubmitting its thoughts and comments for consideration

- ❑ The past attempts at Targeting Social Need have been a resounding failure especially given the latest Noble Measures of deprivation that show that multiple deprivation in West Belfast has become even more compounded.
- ❑ There have been no consistencies in actions to date i.e. failure to provide long term funding in deprived areas.
- ❑ Poverty and deprivation has been compounded in the west Belfast area by the historical failure of the state to provide services and employment to the area.
- ❑ Interventions to date have all been 'window dressing' and have had no impact on poverty levels in the area especially child poverty.
- ❑ There is no mention of child poverty in the document, which is surprising given British government targets to eliminate child poverty. Groups were also concerned that the single domain of child poverty has been removed from the new Noble measures of deprivation and subsumed within the income domain. There is a belief that this will only serve to further hide the extent of child poverty in the north of Ireland and its concentration in constituencies such as West Belfast.
- ❑ There is a failure to strategically direct finance into deprived areas and to people who suffer poverty.
- ❑ The failure to subject this 'strategy' to an Equality Impact Assessment is indicative of a pattern of behaviour within departments as an attempt to evade their legislative responsibilities. An anti-poverty strategy with clear targets and timetable should be easy to subject to EQIA. This position is unacceptable.
- ❑ The proposed 'strategy' seems to believe that there is an acceptable level of poverty. There is not and we reject this approach outright.
- ❑ The document fails to establish clear targets and timetables.
- ❑ The document simply summarises what are already departmental actions and proffer nothing new to tackle poverty.

The Forum would also like it noted that the timing of this consultation period i.e. over the summer months would lead to a lack of response and this causes the Forum concern, taking Targeting Social Need is such a priority issue.

To conclude, this document does not give confidence that the government is committed to the radical changes that are needed to tackle structural poverty or social inequality.

Yours

Reneé Crawford
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Lenadoon Community Forum