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ANTI-POVERTY

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RECEIVED

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Dear Ms McMeekin

**Re: New TSN the Way Forward – Towards an Anti-Poverty Strategy Second Phase Consultation**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Phase 2 Consultation. The Commission is content that this Second Phase document takes recognition of many of our initial concerns. In particular, we welcome the information relating to the Anti-Poverty Forum and the related action planning for which the Forum will have responsibility. The recognition that further work is required with respect to linking the equality agenda to the strategy is also welcomed. We also consider that the proposals with respect to the development of targets and associated indicators as positive developments.

However, the Commission has a continued concern that the ownership of the strategy by the government departments (and OFMDFM), to the exclusion of wider NIO and Northern Ireland Court Service, may diminish the impact and general reach of the strategy. One of the criticisms of Phase One of the consultation related to a lack of information on access to services. This Second Phase has addressed this by stressing the importance of crosscutting issues that are central to general policy development. The Commission considers access to legal services to be integral to such wider social inclusion policy development. In the absence of devolved justice function in the short to medium term, the Commission believes that the ownership of the final strategy must be extended to include those with responsibility for access to legal aid and indeed wider justice related services.

Yours sincerely



Dr Jeremy Harbison  
Chair Reform Committee