

UPDATE

Development of the Next Children and Young People Strategy – March 2016

We continue to co-design our strategy by engaging with stakeholders. In March we have spoken with organisations who work with children with disabilities and their families; in order to understand what issues they think need to be considered within the strategy. We would like to say a big thank you to the children and parents who attend the Angel Eyes NI Youth Club for letting us join them on Saturday 19 March at Jordanstown Schools and for sharing their views and experiences with us.

An inter-departmental Children's Champion meeting was held to brief Departments on the new Children's Services Co-operation Act. The role of lead Department for the strategy for Children and Young People is moving from OFMDFM to the new Department of Education (DE) in May as part of the departmental restructuring down to nine departments. Katrina Godfrey, Deputy Secretary, DE explained that this signalled a significant change and wider role for the new Department. The meeting sought the departmental views on the many emerging themes/priorities, and outlined the role each Department will have in measuring the progress of their actions through measurable indicators which will be developed through co-design. Through the strategy, Departments will also outline how Government and stakeholders may work better together to support better delivery.

We also continue to meet with Department policy leads to discuss current implemented strategies and potential future strategies that will support improving the lives of our children and young people.

Many thanks to the many people who have already made a valuable contribution to date. Please don't miss your opportunity to give your views on the shape of the next Children and Young People's strategy. We welcome your contribution and urge anyone who is interested in this work area to please get in touch with the **Children and Young People's Unit**, OFMDFM at CYPU@ofmdfmi.gov.uk or telephone **Alastair Carroll** on **02890 523423**.

The UN Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The UK State party comprising of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is currently preparing for its oral examination by the UN Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in Geneva in May 2016.

The oral examination is scheduled over a two day period commencing on 23 May, whereby the UN Committee will hold constructive discussions with the UK in order to make an accurate assessment of the child rights situation and make recommendations to the state to fulfill its obligations and advance child rights.

The UK Government has the lead role in communicating the work of the four jurisdictions in relation to any Treaties, periodic reviews or public examination by the UN. They also have the responsibility to determine the composition of UK delegations and as such, have sought nominations from the devolved administrations to participate at the oral examination.

In advance of the hearing and in identifying the key areas of focus by the UN Committee, the Children and Young People's Unit (CYPU) in OFMDFM, who are responsible for taking this work forward, have sought suitable nominations from Departments to ensure our support to the UK Government in Geneva is high level, knowledgeable and fully representative of the views of the NI Executive.

Delegates will be required to attend on both days of the oral examination and will be obligated to address a list of key questions from the UN Committee on the implementation of child rights in the UK and in the Devolved Administrations.

While submission of the UK State party report back in May 2014 will have a significant bearing on proceeding, the involvement of children and young people, Human Rights organisations and the Children's Commissioners are also important parts of this reporting process, as the list of questions will be drawn by the UN Committee from submissions by these organisations, as well as, responses by the UK to a List of Issues published by the UN Committee in November 2015.

The Review will end with the publishing of the UN Committee's 'Concluding Observations' in June 2016 on how the UK can improve its compliance with the UNCRC. Departments and Agencies will then be required to ensure that due consideration is made in policy development and delivery to the rights of children as set out in the Concluding Observations and the UNCRC. The Concluding Observations will also inform the development of the next Children and Young People's strategy.