

Barnardo's NI

**Response to the Housing Executive's
Chronic Homelessness Action Plan**

July 2019

Barnardo's NI is the largest children's charity in Northern Ireland. We work with approximately 11,000 children, young people and families across more than 40 different services and programmes. We are also a leading provider of schools-based child support services in Northern Ireland with a presence in approximately 250 schools, reaching more than 12,000 children. We deliver a wide range of services across Northern Ireland, from providing family support and early intervention, to working directly with children and families who have experienced adversity and need our support. We believe that every child deserves the best possible start in life, and our service provision reflects that philosophy.

Barnardo's NI welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Housing Executive's Chronic Homelessness Action Plan. Our comments are informed by our experiences of supporting children, young people and families who are vulnerable and/or at risk of experiencing homelessness, particularly through our significant experience of working with young people in and leaving care, as well as our work with unaccompanied children in Northern Ireland through our delivery of the Independent Guardian Service.

Barnardo's NI welcomes the aims and objectives set out in the Action Plan, particularly the commitment to early intervention, prevention and identification of risk indicated across Aims 1 and 2. In addition, we welcome the recognition of the lasting impact of childhood trauma and adversity: further to this, we recommend that a trauma-informed approach is adopted throughout this Action Plan.

We also particularly welcome Objectives 1 -4, which look at data collection and how that data will be used to tackle chronic homelessness. We strongly believe that effective, comprehensive data collection is vital to identifying the most vulnerable groups, and understanding the challenges that this community faces to prevent homelessness. We recommend that data collection includes information about whether the individual was previously in care ("Looked After"), and whether they were identified as an unaccompanied child. We believe that comprehensive data collection will

allow identification of the most vulnerable groups, and support the development of targeted early intervention and prevention services, as highlighted in Objective 4. Children in and leaving care, and unaccompanied children, are among the most vulnerable groups in Northern Ireland and there is a clear need to recognise and address the challenges they face. We believe there is an opportunity within this Action Plan to do so.

Barnardo's NI welcomes the commitment of NIHE to tackling chronic homelessness; we believe it is crucial to adopt a multi-agency approach to understand and address the causes of chronic homelessness by working with the community and voluntary sector and other government agencies.

We hope our comments are useful and Barnardo's NI is happy to engage further as this Action Plan develops.

For further information, please contact:

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