

WELCOME TO THE DELIVERING SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH CHILDCARE STRATEGY CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire aims to provide you with an opportunity to comment on the development and potential content of a draft Childcare Strategy. It is intended that through this document you will have an opportunity to put forward your views to help inform this draft Strategy. This questionnaire should be completed in association with the consultation document available on the [OFMDFM website](#).

Additional copies of both this questionnaire and the consultation document can be obtained from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister by:

Telephone: (028)90 528659

Email: childcare.consultation@ofmdfmi.gov.uk

Writing to:

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
Childcare Strategy Team
Room E3.18
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SR

The documents can also be viewed and downloaded from the [OFMDFM website](#). Alternative formats of the document can also be made available on request and you should forward any such requests using one of the methods detailed above.

Responses should be received no later than **Friday 13th November 2015**.

Please note that all responses will be treated as public, and may be published on the [OFMDFM website](#). If you do not want your response to be used in this way, or if you prefer for it to be used anonymously, please indicate this when responding (see Statement of Confidentiality and Access to Information at the end of this questionnaire).

Following consideration of all responses, a report will be published on the [OFMDFM website](#). A number of consultation events will also be held during the consultation period and details of these will be available on the [OFMDFM website](#) in due course.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this consultation questionnaire and for giving us your views.

I am responding...

As an individual

On behalf of an organisation

PLEASE ONLY ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON THIS PAGE IF YOU ARE RESPONDING ON BEHALF OF AN ORGANISATION

Please tell us your organisation's name:

Barnardo's NI

Details:

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Your Name: | Donna Kernaghan |
| Role within Organisation: | Research and Policy Officer |
| Organisation Address: | 542/544 Upper Newtownards Road |
| Organisation City/Town: | Belfast |
| Organisation Postcode: | BT4 3HE |
| Email Address: | donna.kernaghan@barnardos.org.uk |
| Phone Number: | 028 90672399 |

Which best describes your organisation.....

Childcare Provider

Childcare Stakeholder

Other (please specify)

*** Do you want your organisation's name to be included in the response to the consultation?**

Yes

No

PLEASE ONLY ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON THIS PAGE IF YOU ARE
RESPONDING AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Are you.....?

- Male
Female

What is your age?

- 0-15
16-19
20-24
25-34
35-49
50-64
65+

Are you.....?

- Single, that is never married
Married and living with husband/wife
Living as married with a partner
Married and separated from husband/wife
Divorced
Widowed
Civil Partner in a legally recognised Civil Partnership and living with civil partner
In Civil Partnership - legally dissolved
In Civil Partnership - partner since died
Other (please specify)

Are you.....?

- Heterosexual
Bisexual
Gay
Lesbian
Other (please specify)

What is your country of birth?

- Northern Ireland
England
Wales
Scotland
Republic of Ireland
Elsewhere (please write the name of the country)

PLEASE ONLY ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON THIS PAGE IF YOU ARE RESPONDING AS AN INDIVIDUAL

What is your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply)

- White
- Chinese
- Irish Traveller
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Black Caribbean
- Black African
- Black Other
- Other (please specify)

What is your religion?

- No religion
- Catholic
- Presbyterian
- Church of Ireland
- Methodist
- Baptist
- Free Presbyterian
- Brethren
- Protestant - not specified
- Christian - not specified
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Any other religion (please specify)

Do you have any dependants in your care (tick all that apply)?

- Child/Children
- Elderly Relative
- Sick or Infirm Relative
- Disabled Relative
- None
- Other (please specify)

The Equality Act (2010) defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' (more than 12 months) negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. Under this definition, do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes
- No

THE VISION FOR THE CHILDCARE STRATEGY

A potential Vision for the Executive's Childcare Strategy is that by 2025:

Every child, parent and family will have access to affordable, integrated, quality childcare. Through childcare, we will support the transformation of our society, promoting both equality and social inclusion. We will use childcare as a stepping stone to lifelong achievement, from formal education into adult life. Through childcare, we will instil lifelong respect for diversity. By making affordable childcare services more widely available, we will enable all parents, but especially mothers, to join the workforce. In this way, childcare will contribute to greater gender equality. Finally, by developing local childcare services, we will create childcare jobs and develop the skills of people working in the childcare sector.

Do you agree with the Vision as outlined above?

Yes

No

Please provide any further comment below:

The stated vision is very wide in scope and while the sentiments expressed in the childcare definition are agreeable, we are unsure who the audience is for this definition. In our view, a more succinct vision would be more helpful to the wide range of parents the Strategy is intending to help.

THE AIMS OF THE CHILDCARE STRATEGY

The strategy has two high-level, long-term aims, as follows:

- **Developmental:** To give all our children the best start in life, preparing them for lifelong wellbeing and achievement, thereby creating the basis for a better, more prosperous future.
- **Employment:** To enable parents to join the workforce thereby enhancing prosperity, and to improve gender equality by enabling mothers to join the workforce, return to work, remain in work, work the hours they want and progress in their careers.

For each of the proposed strategic aims - please tell us to what extent you agree that these are appropriate for a Childcare Strategy?

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Developmental | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Employment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above Strategic Aims and your responses:

Barnardo's NI broadly agrees with the two high level aims of the Childcare Strategy. It is well documented that affordable, flexible childcare provides parents with the opportunity to seek out training and employment opportunities to increase household income. Conversely, the lack of affordable childcare has been identified as a key factor in child poverty as it poses obvious barriers to parents' employment options.

However, in our view, greater emphasis is needed on child development throughout the Childcare Strategy. Detail around how child development will be supported in a consistent way across a variation of childcare provision is needed particularly if a child's performance in their first years of formal education is to be used as an indicator of evaluating the Childcare Strategy (as seems to be suggested in paragraph 5.8). We recommend that a review of early years curriculum in other countries be conducted to provide a framework to enhance child development in child care settings in Northern Ireland.

EMERGING OBJECTIVES

Seven objectives, which if adopted, would contribute to a supporting framework for the Strategy are outlined below. These emerging objectives would shape the delivery and review of policy relevant to any final Strategy.

- Childcare services that are **available** to all children, regardless of where they live, their needs or circumstances with a registered and appropriate childcare place for every child that requires one
- Childcare services that are **affordable**—no longer taking a disproportionate share of average household incomes
- Childcare settings that aim to become **sustainable**, able, eventually, to cover their costs from the fees they charge
- Childcare settings that foster lifelong respect for **diversity**, thereby laying the foundations for a more tolerant and inclusive future
- Childcare services that are of high **quality**, meeting or bettering the current minimum standards and with all staff and managers trained to the appropriate level
- Detailed and up to date information on the childcare sector that is readily available to parents, allowing them to make **informed choices** regarding the childcare services they use
- Childcare services that are **integrated** with, and complementary to, educational and youth services.

For each of the proposed emerging objectives – please tell us to what extent you agree that these are appropriate to the delivery of a Childcare Strategy.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Available | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Affordable | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sustainable | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Diversity | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Informed Choice | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Integrated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please provide any further comment you may have on the emerging objectives which are outlined above

Availability: It should be clear that this also applies to being accessible in terms of location and opening times.

Affordable: In our view this objective is crucial in order to make childcare assessable for families. We support the stated aim that the Childcare Strategy will work to reduce the percentage of local household income that goes towards childcare costs.

Sustainable: We believe sustainability of childcare services should be less of a priority at this stage as the NI Executive should invest in high quality childcare in order to provide benefits to children, parents and the wider community.

Diversity: While we agree that childcare settings may be well placed to

promote positive cooperation and understanding about diversity amongst children, it is unclear how this would be achieved through childcare settings without a framework to ensure consistency across various childcare settings and age groups.

Quality: Barnardo's NI believes high quality provision is an essential priority for any childcare setting.

Informed Choice: Barnardo's NI agree with the analysis that there is a lack of information on childcare services and support for parents. We recommend that a communication action plan is drawn up to ensure parents in NI are informed of upcoming changes to childcare vouchers and tax credits as well as new services and childcare places.

An Integrated Approach: Barnardo's NI strongly advocates a model of increased integrated childcare provision within the school estate, at both a primary and post primary level. There is a clear evidence base highlighting the significant health, educational and social benefits to children and young people of delivering quality education alongside other services, particularly in disadvantaged areas. Adopting a full-service community school approach this can include health and other support services, such as childcare, ensuring community access to school facilities which are used flexibly to meet local need (see also below point regarding further objectives).

Are there any further objectives which you think should be considered for inclusion in a Childcare Strategy that are not included here?

We recommend that flexibility should be adopted as a distinct objective in the Strategy. Evidence from OFMDFM's own consultation found that 15% of parents stated that childcare was not available at the times they required it. In our own experience working with families across Northern Ireland the lack of local, flexible childcare is a significant issue for many. Furthermore, our research, 'Believe in Childcare?' which investigated the childcare needs of ethnic minorities found that 79.3% of parents surveyed rated flexibility as an important factor in choosing childcare. This research also found that those who worked shift patterns including evening/nights and weekends reported difficulty in arranging childcare outside of typical working hours. Moreover, those on zero hours contracts reported that they were unable to make childcare arrangements at short notice which affected their ability to work additional hours. Due to the changing nature and pattern of working hours a successful Childcare Strategy should allow for some flexibility in order to reflect the needs of working parents.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS IN THE CHILDCARE SECTOR

The consultation document outlines a series of proposed actions to increase and improve the provision of childcare services by increasing existing provision where it is required. For ease of reference, each action (or intervention) has been given a roman numeral identifier and the 22 actions have been grouped under the following themes:

Theme 1: Supporting increased childcare provision

Theme 2: Improving childcare services

Theme 3: Joined up childcare

Theme 4: Changing the childcare context

The questions below will ask to what extent you agree or disagree with each proposed intervention and your reasons for this.

Theme 1: Supporting Increased Childcare Provision

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following proposed interventions:

Intervention i: School Age Childcare Grant Scheme (18,500 places)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

Barnardo's NI currently works in over 200 schools and, with reference to our previous point, particularly supports Strand 2 of the scheme for childcare within the school estate. As identified in RSM McClure Watters survey, childcare for school aged children is the most prevalent area for unmet demand with an estimated 19 school age children for every registered school age childcare place. The school estate in Northern Ireland has been traditionally underused and is well placed to provide a site for local childcare.

In our experience, greater use of the school estate for childcare purposes could bring a number of other benefits. Benefits may include an increase in parental contact with schools through crèches/playgroups at an early stage, an increase in parental engagement with school and greater links between community and schools.

We are particularly interested in the results of the proposed evaluation of the School Age Grant Scheme and the potential for this scheme to be expanded. We also suggest that work is done to align school hours and holidays in order to make arrangements for childcare easier for parents with children in different age groups.

Intervention ii: Meeting the needs of 12-14 year olds

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

We believe that the needs of 12 – 14 years old should be specifically addressed in the Strategy with an age appropriate alternative to the types of childcare typically provided for younger children. This may include activities held after school, homework clubs or a drop-in type provision until 6pm. Barnardo's NI recommends that a consultation with parents and children of this age group is conducted to ascertain which types of provision would best meet their needs.

Intervention iii: Supporting Childcare for the 0-4s (3,000 places)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

As outlined in the consultation document, the provision for 0 – 4 years in NI is relatively good with three children in this age group for every registered place. However, as noted this provision can be expensive and unavailable to some rural areas. We believe high quality childcare for this age group is vital for children's social and learning development, speech and language acquisition and school readiness. In addition, childcare provision for this age group encourages parents to return to work and seek new employment opportunities.

Intervention iv: Supporting Private Sector Childcare Providers (1,500 places)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

Intervention v: Supporting Private Firms to Provide Childcare (1,500 places)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

Intervention vi: Supporting Community-Based Childcare Providers (750 places)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

As acknowledged in the consultation document, community based childcare services have provided excellent provision in many disadvantaged areas. We believe this is an area that the NI Executive should support and fund through the Strategy as an investment in our children. This should be in addition to raising awareness of a range of funding opportunities that this type of childcare provision could avail of. In this way, the number of places in community-based childcare provision could be increased from the suggested 750 places.

Barnardo's NI is also pleased to note that there are plans to facilitate the sharing of experiences between established providers and those interested in starting their own service. We would welcome the provision of further details on how this would operate.

Intervention vii: Supporting Cross Border Childcare Services (750 places)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

No supporting evidence was provided on this issue within the consultation document so we are unable to comment.

Intervention viii: Capital fund for Childcare (1,000 places)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

Intervention ix: Rural Childminding Services Model

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

It is well documented that availability of childcare in rural areas in NI is difficult. More detail on the proposed: (i) Childminding Shared Service Model; and (ii) Childminder Networks is required before we can comment. Barnardo's NI recommends that a full consultation is conducted amongst parents in rural areas to ensure that any model selected meets their needs.

Intervention x: Transport services supportive of rural childcare provision

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

Transport accessibility is also a known issue for those living and working in rural areas. Again, Barnardo's NI is unable to provide any comment due to the lack of supporting information in the consultation document.

Intervention xi: Childcare for Children with a Disability

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

Barnardo's NI is very disappointed about the lack of detail provided on how the Childcare Strategy will ensure appropriate high quality childcare for children with a disability. Through our own childcare settings we know that children with disabilities and special needs are a diverse group with a wide range of needs. This has a number of implications which need to be further considered within the Childcare Strategy. Resources are needed to ensure childcare staff are highly trained and qualified to meet the needs of children with a disability. In addition, a higher staff ratio is required to support the development of children with a disability or special needs and to ensure they can be included in activities with other children. These factors result in the need for more investment in training and higher staff costs which in our view should be invested in rather than based on a sustainability model.

Furthermore, the lack of high quality childcare to meet the needs of children with a disability can be a barrier to employment for parents who may already face additional costs associated with disability. It has also been the case that families with a disabled child are often charged more by childminders as given the child's needs, the childminder has to reduce the number of children they can accommodate. Particular focus on how to support parents of disabled children into employment and or training should be considered in the final Childcare Strategy.

Intervention xii: Flexible Childcare (1,000 places)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

Barnardo's NI welcomes the recognition of the need for flexible childcare, however we do not believe this has been meaningfully addressed within the consultation document. Changes in working patterns are not currently reflected in the childcare options available to parents in Northern Ireland. This is problematic for parents who work outside traditional Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm, work shifts or are employed on zero hours contracts. In our view, flexible childcare should be a priority, key objective of the Childcare Strategy. It should be understood as both the need for greater choice in the times that childcare providers are available, such as evenings and weekends, and the notice required to make childcare arrangements in order to facilitate parents who work on zero hours contracts and may be offered additional work at short notice.

We are concerned that the exclusion of flexibility as a key objective of the Childcare Strategy would significantly weaken the Strategy in its ability to meet the needs of modern working parents. It could also increase the risk of children being left unattended for periods of time or increase the use of unregistered childcare.

Intervention xiii: Public Sector Franchises (1,000 places)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

Intervention xiv: Childcare places for low income families (3,000 places)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

your response:

From our research and experience, Barnardo's NI is aware that many families find the cost of childcare too expensive and we welcome all interventions that enable low income families to access childcare. The recent Employers for Childcare survey found that the cost of a full time place is £164 per week. Furthermore, an estimated 45% of earnings were allocated to childcare in 2015. With these costs in mind, many families struggle with paying for childcare. Further detail is needed in the consultation document to understand the definition of 'very low income families'.

Barnardo's NI recommends that the NI Executive should consider models of childcare provision and subsidies in other countries and examples of good practice across the UK in supporting families to better take up available financial help which would reduce the burden of childcare costs on families.

Theme 2: Improving Childcare Services

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following proposed interventions:

Intervention xv: Improvements to Information (5,000 places)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

Barnardo's NI recognises the improvements made to the Family Support NI website and is particularly pleased to note the range of languages the website can be translated into. Barnardo's NI believes that the Family Support NI website is a good example to provide parents with further information about Child Benefit, Working Tax Credits and Childcare Vouchers. In our view, it is crucial that parents can access up to date information about childcare services in order to make informed choices. Results from the Employers for Childcare Survey (2014) found that around one third of parents reported that information about financial help with childcare costs was difficult or very difficult to access while over forty percent of parents found information relating to family benefits or entitlements difficult or very difficult to access. Furthermore nearly half of the parents surveyed were unsure that they were aware of all of the family benefits and entitlements that could be available to them.

Our 'Believe in Childcare?' research recommended that public information campaigns on childcare should give particular consideration to providing a combination of ways to target information to those that have limited or no written or spoken English language. Respondents from our research suggested a number of ways in which it would be effective to communicate information about childcare including:

- **Letters posted to home**
- **Leaflets available from a range of public places**
- **Public information meetings about childcare**
- **Better signposting to access local information online**

Results found that there is the potential to use existing points of contact such as schools, health centres and community centres to disseminate and signpost parents to information on childcare services.

Barnardo's NI recommends development of a cross departmental communication strategy aimed at raising parents' awareness across a range of settings about the financial support available for childcare, different types of childcare and how to access provision, issues relating to unattended children, and the right to request flexible working hours.

Intervention xvi: The Childcare Strategy will support a training programme to improve and enhance skills across the workforce

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

Barnardo's NI agrees that the development of a high quality workforce is essential in ensuring positive developmental outcomes for children. Results from our 'Believe in Childcare?' research found quality to be the most important factor to parents when choosing childcare (95.7%) which highlights the need for continual professional development for those in the childcare workforce. In our view, training in cultural competency and working with children with disabilities are crucial training elements for workforce training; both these issues should be clearly incorporated into and supported within the Childcare Strategy framework.

Intervention xvii: The Strategy will work with other programmes to ensure good quality training of unemployed people as a pathway to work in childcare

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

It is clear that improvements to the perception of childcare as a career need work and could be better promoted more generally. Currently DEL has been tasked with actions to take forward the promotion of childcare as a pathway to employment – we are unsure where this will sit once the reconfiguration of Executive Departments has taken place. We would also be interested in the criteria used to select potential additions to the childcare workforce.

Intervention xviii: It will seek to align and promote existing initiatives to encourage greater diversity in the workforce – with particular reference to males and individuals from ethnic minority communities

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

Barnardo's NI is delighted that a key recommendation from our 'Believe in Childcare?' research to address training and workforce development of underrepresented groups such as ethnic minorities has been included in the Childcare Strategy. However, it is disappointing that there is a lack of detail about how this will be promoted to under-represented groups. In our experience, information and support should be supplied in a combination of ways to raise awareness of existing initiatives and inform potential workers about training and working opportunities and financial incentives.

It is also important to highlight that in collaboration with NICEM, we intended to support 10 people from an ethnic minority background to become registered childminders as an outworking of our 'Believe in Childcare?' research. In our experience, we found this extremely problematic to navigate between different training organisations and to estimate a complete cost of the training. Barnardo's NI recommends that steps are undertaken within the Strategy to ensure the pathway for under-represented groups to enter the workforce is simplified and well sign posted so that they have the correct information in a timely manner.

Intervention xix: Childcare Stakeholders' Panel

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

Barnardo's NI welcomes the establishment of the Childcare Stakeholders' Panel with representatives from the community and voluntary sector and volunteer to take part on the Panel.

Theme 3: Joined Up Childcare

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following proposed interventions:

Intervention xx: Promotion of registered childcare (5,000 places)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

We strongly agree that a public campaign is required to increase parents' awareness of the benefits of registered childcare including emphasis on the awareness about minimum standards, trained staff, safeguarding and a child's social and emotional development. Parents may be encouraged to choose registered childcare if they could access information about how they have been inspected and have a way of understanding how good the childcare provider is.

In parallel, work could be done with unregistered childminders to become registered. More specific detail is needed to outline the ways in which the Strategy will 'persuade' unregistered childminders to become registered.

Theme 4: Changing the Childcare Context

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following proposed interventions:

Intervention xxi: Regulation and Inspection (1,000 places)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

While we agree that regulation and inspection are necessary, we believe that there is a capacity issue in achieving this. Experiences amongst some Barnardo's NI practitioners suggest that the current regulation and inspection arrangements are far from ideal as they have experienced lengthy delays in inspection and little consistency in approach. As the safety of children in childcare settings is paramount Barnardo's NI recommends a review of the approach and capacity of regulation and inspection teams, particularly as a major aim of the

Strategy is to increase the number of childcare places over a range of settings.

Intervention xxii: Review options for statutory responsibility

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please provide any further comment you may have relating to the above proposed intervention and your response:

A primary objective of the Strategy is to ensure childcare services that are available to all children, regardless of where they live, their needs or circumstances with a registered and appropriate childcare place for every child that requires one. Barnardo's NI would question however to what extent this objective can be delivered and would recommend, as one way of supporting this, that the provision of childcare services in Northern Ireland should be on a statutory basis (in line with other UK regions) to ensure there is enough childcare to meet the needs of working parents in their local area.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

If you have any further comments you wish to make in response to this consultation please use the space provided below:

The spectrum of childcare needs in Northern Ireland has been well documented. The Childcare Strategy should effectively address the childcare needs of all parents and children in Northern Ireland. In order to achieve this, the Childcare Strategy should include a fully costed action plan complete with milestones to be achieved over the life of the Strategy. It is also important to understand that investment in childcare is essential in order for all families, including those with disabled children and those from low income backgrounds, to be able to access childcare which suits their needs.

As a general point Barnardo's NI would also like it noted that we found the format and layout of the questionnaire difficult to fully capture our views. For example, our response to Intervention xi should be interpreted that we are unhappy with the detail put forward around childcare for children with disabilities, not that we disagree that there is a need to better cater for children with disabilities in terms of childcare provision.

In conclusion, we would like to draw your attention to the recommendations made in the ['Believe in Childcare?'](#) research related to the NI Executive and the Bright Start Strategy. While these recommendations are particularly relevant for families from an ethnic minority background, they also have wider application to the general NI population. These recommendations include:

- 1. In line with other UK regions, the provision of childcare services in Northern Ireland should be on a statutory basis to ensure there is enough childcare to meet the needs of working parents in their local area.**
- 2. The NI Executive should consider models of childcare provision and subsidies in other countries; and examples of practice across the UK in supporting families to better take up available financial help.**
- 3. The 'Bright Start' Strategic Framework / NI Childcare Strategy should develop an associated Action Plan which addresses the specific needs of ethnic minority families in the following areas:**
 - a) The development of additional, flexible and affordable childcare provision at a local level to meet the needs of parents working atypical hours or zero-hours contracts.**
 - b) Greater information and awareness raising amongst ethnic minority communities about the financial support available for childcare; different types of childcare and how to access provision; issues relating to unattended children; and the right to request flexible working hours.**
 - c) The public information campaigns on childcare should give particular consideration to providing a combination of ways to target information to those that have limited or no written or spoken English language.**
 - d) The training and workforce development targeted at under-represented groups should include the creation of more opportunities for members of ethnic minority communities to become registered childminders.**
 - e) Professional development should include the provision of cultural competency training for professionals coming into contact with ethnic minority families.**
 - f) The creation of mechanisms for greater collaboration between the community/voluntary sector, statutory agencies and employers as beneficial in providing information, training and English classes to employees from an ethnic minority background.**

For more information, please contact Donna Kernaghan:

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Research and Policy Officer

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EQUALITY IMPACT

Any strategy is likely to have impacts beyond the specific areas and issues it may be targeting. We would welcome views on how delivering a Childcare Strategy may affect other groups in society. Please describe any effect you think the delivery of a Childcare Strategy may have on the nine groups contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act

| | Strongly Positive | Mainly Positive | No Effect | Mainly Negative | Strongly Negative |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Religious beliefs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Political opinion | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Racial groups | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Age | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Marital status | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sexual orientation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gender | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Persons with a disability and persons without | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Persons with dependants and persons without | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please provide further detail as to why you feel the Strategy will have negative/positive effects.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION LEGISLATION

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with access to information legislation: these are chiefly the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice (section 45) with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office on 028 9026 9380 or email ni@ico.gsi.gov.uk or see their [website](#).

Please tick the box below if you wish your response to be treated as anonymous:

I want my response to be treated as anonymous

THANK YOU

That completes the survey - thank you for your valuable input into this consultation.