

Via email: fuelpovertystrategy@communities-ni.gov.uk

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Re: Response to the consultation on a Fuel Poverty Strategy

While Barnardo's Northern Ireland welcomes the consultation on the Fuel Poverty Strategy, we are disappointed that this strategy is being developed in the absence of an overarching Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy. The children, families and individuals that struggle to pay for electricity, gas or oil, are the same people that cannot afford school uniforms, that need to use a food bank to put food on the table, or skip meals so that they can make ends meet.

Without an overarching Anti-Poverty Strategy, a Fuel Poverty Strategy is merely a sticking plaster over a problem that is deepening in severity and widening in its impact. Barnardo's NI urges the Minister for Communities and officials within the Department for Communities to prioritise the development and publication of an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland.

The Anti-Poverty Strategy Group recently held a launch event in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings to underscore the urgent need for a strategy. While it will not be quick or easy to address poverty in Northern Ireland, this is all the more reason why we need to finalise a strategy with urgency. Northern Ireland needs a plan to tackle poverty on a structural and systemic basis, with fuel poverty forming one piece of that plan.

I have attached the briefing from the Anti-Poverty Strategy Group (currently chaired by Barnardo's NI) to this submission, and we would be happy to facilitate further engagement between the Department for Communities and the Anti-Poverty Strategy Group, with a view to ensuring an Anti-Poverty Strategy, and within that, a Fuel Poverty Strategy, meets the needs of the people in Northern Ireland living in, or at risk of, poverty.

Yours sincerely,

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Chair, Anti-Poverty Strategy Group

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