



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

An Roinn
**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Families Matter: *Supporting Families in Northern Ireland*

**The Department of Health, Social Services and
Public Safety's Proposals on a Regional Family
and Parenting Strategy**

Response Document

January 2007

Consultation Questions

Please respond to the consultation document by e-mail, letter or fax.

Responses should be sent to:

e-mail: familypolicyunit@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Family Policy Unit
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Room C4.22
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Fax: 02890 520529

Responses must be received no later than **30th March 2007**.

(Please tick a box)

I am responding: as an individual on behalf of an organisation

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Supporting Families

1. Do you agree that the aims stated are the right aims? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

2. Do you agree that the vision stated is the right vision? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

3. The document lists 10 principles that underpin the strategy. Do you agree with the principles stated? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

4. **The document lists 7 outcomes from the Children and Young People’s strategy, ‘*Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge*’. Do you agree that these are the right outcomes for this strategy? (Please tick)**

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

5. **The focus of this strategy is primarily on preventative and early intervention to support parents at particular times of need and at particular stages in the development of their child. Do you think that this is the appropriate scope for the strategy? (Please tick)**

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

Priority Themes

6. Do you agree that Theme 1 – Parental Support is an appropriate theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

7. Do you agree the actions suggested in Theme 1 are appropriate actions to take under this theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

8. Do you agree that Theme 2 – Access to Information is an appropriate theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

9. Do you agree the actions suggested in Theme 2 are appropriate actions to take under this theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

10. Do you agree that Theme 3 – Assessment of Needs is an appropriate theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

11. Do you agree the actions suggested in Theme 3 are appropriate actions to take under this theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

12. Do you agree that Theme 4 – Information Sharing is an appropriate theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

13. Do you agree the actions suggested in Theme 4 are appropriate actions to take under this theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

14. Do you agree Theme 5 – Integration and Multi-Agency Working is an appropriate theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

15. Do you agree the actions suggested in Theme 5 are appropriate actions to take under this theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

Equality Implications

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires Departments and other public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- Between men and women generally;
- Between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- Between persons with dependants and persons without.

In addition, without prejudice to the above obligation, public authorities must also in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, have regard to

the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Where there is evidence or an indication that an existing policy is having an adverse impact on equality of opportunity, or that a proposed policy may cause an adverse impact, an **Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)** may need to be carried out on the policy. The process used by a public authority to determine whether an existing policy or new policy needs an EQIA is called **screening**.

The Department is now screening the proposals set out in this consultation document and as part of the screening process, the Department invites you to consider the following questions.

The Department is inviting responses to the following questions:

- 17. Are the actions or proposals, which are set out in this document likely to have an adverse impact on any group of people in terms of the nine equality dimensions? (Please tick)**

YES

NO

If yes, please state the reasons why.

- 18. Are you aware of any indication or evidence – qualitative or quantitative – that the actions or proposals in this document may**

have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity or good relations? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If yes, please state the reasons why and how these might be mitigated.

19. Does the proposed strategy and actions afford an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

Additional Comments

20. Do you have any other comments, which you think might be relevant to the development of the strategy?

Family and Child Care Services Manager's Comments:

- Priority Theme One: Parental Support - Point 5.10 - It is important that the children and families living in the more deprived pockets of Northern Ireland are included in this programme.
- Priority Theme Two: Access to Services and Information - Question 8 - An effective way of offering a helpline for parents to obtain advice and support is often training parents themselves in this role, and integrating them with other staff, to answer to the helpline.
- Priority Theme Three: Assessment - Question 10 - To ensure the common assessment process is implemented across the range of agencies, across the region, an information system is required to be able to share the assessments with other agencies in a responsive and timely manner. In doing so, this system will be most effective in communication between professionals and agencies.

Child Protection Nurse Advisor's Comments:

- Point 1.5 - There is no reference to neglect, only the other forms of abuse. Given that this is the main reason for social services involvement I feel that it should be included.
- Question 3, Point 3.4 - In relation to the principles the services should be available when families need the support and not when it reaches a crisis situation.
- Chapter 4, Point 4.4 - The definition of a family should be at the beginning of the document.
- Chapter 5, Priority Theme One: Parental Support - As women between the ages of 25 to 44 years are at the highest risk of developing mental health illness there should be more on mental health support for parents included in Theme One: Parental Support.
- I would endorse the idea of children's centres provided they are adequately resourced.
- Other agencies such as health visitors and mental health professionals should be able to access resources for families without having to refer to social services.

Equality Manager's Comments:

- The opportunity to promote equality of opportunity, by developing a strategy from this policy and then putting programmes and actions into practice, is great. The principle of putting parents at the heart of the policy and working with voluntary and community organisations has the potential to greatly enhance the principles of Article 8 of the Human Rights and those of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.

This strategy is welcomed by the Trust.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMENTS