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15 May 2007

Sean Holland  
Family Policy Unit  
DHSSPS  
Room C3.5  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast BT4 3SL

Dear Sean

**RE: Families Matter: Supporting Families in Northern Ireland**

The Western Health and Social Services Board has considered the consultation paper "Families Matter: Supporting Families in Northern Ireland" and endorses fully the responses made to you by the Western Children and Young People's Committee and Western Area Child Care Partnership.

In the context of our Family Support Strategy, we are in agreement with the overall direction of the paper. Parents and carers are central to the achievement of better outcomes for children and can be helped to do so through the five priority themes identified in the document:-

- Parental support
- Access to information
- Assessment of needs
- Information sharing
- Integration and multi-agency working

The themes particularly the final one of integration and multi-agency working reflects the Children's Services Planning process. There is a strong support for the suggested direction contained in the proposal forwarded by the 4 Children and Young Peoples Committees in their paper "The Joint Planning and Commissioning of services for Children and Young People following the Review of Public Administration". Underpinning this paper, is the belief that an integrated approach to planning and commissioning at different levels (government, regional and local) can achieve best outcomes in keeping with the overall strategy for children and young people.

In conclusion, I welcome the positive indications within the Consultation Paper of an intention to improve outcomes for children by assisting parents and carers. The resultant strategy should clearly link this with the other strategies published recently and build on the local and regional relationships developed through Children's Services Planning. Adequate investment will also be needed to turn the positive intentions into positive action, particularly at a local level through collaborative activities.

Yours sincerely

Eamon McTernan  
Director of Children's Services  
WHSSB