

**Cathie White
Clerk
Committee for Employment and Learning
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3XX**

21 December 2015

Dear Cathie,

INQUIRY INTO SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

Thank you for your letter dated 5 November 2015, seeking information for the Committee's Inquiry into Special Needs Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with learning disabilities.

With regards to Action 12 of the Bamford Action Plan 2012-2015, this action has been completed by the publication of the Executive's Disability Strategy, *a Strategy to improve the lives of people with disabilities 2012-2015*. Although the Strategy was due to run until 2015, due to the widely held concerns that it had not yet been fully implemented and that not enough had been done to improve the lives of people with disabilities over the period of the Strategy, in May 2015 the Executive extended the life of the Strategy until March 2017.

Under the strategy, all Departments are required to report annually on the actions they have taken to support the delivery of the Strategy and measurement of its impact on the lives of people with disabilities. The 2013 /14 Annual Report, which outlines the actions taken by Departments towards implementation, can be found on the OFMDFM website at: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/disability-strategy-report-2013-2014.pdf>

The department is also currently taking forward work to develop a set of indicators which will be used to measure progress on the implementation of the Strategy.

With regards to what actions OFMDFM has undertaken to assist the lives of individuals with learning disabilities as they transition from school to adult services,

officials were part of a cross-Departmental Group on Transitions, which was established to develop an Action Plan for young people with learning difficulties to transition from school to adult services.

As a result of this group, an action plan was developed and agreed at the Ministerial Group on Mental Health and Learning Disabilities on 13 May 2015. The following actions fell to OFMDFM to lead on (in conjunction with all Departments)–

- A thorough review by relevant departments of their existing content on NIDirect, to identify gaps and ensure accuracy of information; and
- Deliver a “gateway page” to signpost users to content which details opportunities for YP to engage in adult services, including employment, education/training, travel, benefits support, culture/arts and leisure.

These actions were taken forward by NIDirect on behalf of OFMDFM. Over the summer months, NIDirect requested all relevant Departments review their content and identify gaps regarding young people with severe learning difficulties aged 16 – 21 years of age (in some instances, up to 25 years of age).

I trust you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely

Signed Colette Kerr

Colette Kerr

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer