



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

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From: Stella McArdle, Clerk, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development
To: Kathy O'Hanlon, Clerk, Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Date: 11 March 2015
Subject: Children's Services Co-operation Bill

At its meeting on 10 March 2015, the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development received a response from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development about its views on the Department's response to the Children's Services Co-operation Bill.

Although DARD will respond directly to the consultation, the Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for information.

Regards
Stella McArdle



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Our Ref:
Your Ref:
Date: 3 March 2015

Dear Stella

COMMITTEE MEETING 17 FEBRUARY 2015

Your letter of 18 February 2015 refers.

Children's Services Co-operation Bill.

The intention of the Bill is consistent with the collective aim for Departments and external agencies to co-operate closely in the delivery of children's services.

In terms of the Department's response to the Bill itself, there is a concern that the duty to cooperate is too loosely specified, as it is not clear who will lead on cooperation or how it will be achieved. It will be very difficult to force Government Departments to cooperate together, for example, in relation to Clause 3, Sharing Resources and Pooling Funds, to achieve the desired outcomes and the reporting requirements will increase administrative burden.

From the perspective of EU programmes, DARD is the designated Managing Authority for the EU Rural Development fund. Our funding priorities are agreed with Europe at the start of the programme and DARD is the responsible body for those funds. Introducing a requirement to co-ordinate with other Government Departments makes accountability of the EU funds and the associated national match funding difficult. The Sharing Resources and Pooling Funds clause is one area that needs further consideration.

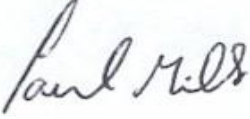
The Committee will be aware that the Department is currently in the process of developing a second three year Children & Young People's Action Plan (2015-2017) and we are once again working closely with the sector and Departmental colleagues in this

process. We will seek to work in partnership with others as we take this Action Plan forward.

DARD currently works in partnership with other departments. An example of this is the BOOST project, a Youth Employability Programme, approved for implementation through the Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation Programme. This is supported by both DARD, who have committed £220k in total, and DEL.

In addition, key DARD officials are also currently working with OFMDFM and the Health and Social Care Trust to consider the types of interventions that could help to enhance childcare provision in rural areas.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Mills". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light blue rectangular stamp.

Paul Mills
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer