



Department of the
Environment

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Dear Kathy

The Children's Services Co-operation Bill – Committee Stage

I am replying to your letter of 5 February 2015 to the Department regarding the Committee Stage of this Bill.

As you will be aware, OFMDFM has a coordinating role across Executive Departments in this area and the Department is content that OFMDFM includes in its submission to the Committee, issues that are common to Departments.

The one specific area of concern to the Department in the Bill is in Clause 4, in particular the quite extensive additional powers for the Health & Social Care Board to prepare a children's and young people's service plan, which will place requirements on a wide range of public bodies. The bodies listed in Clause 4 include district councils. The Committee will be aware that the Local Government Act places, from 1 April 2015, a statutory duty on a council to initiate, maintain, facilitate and participate in community planning for its district. A key element of such plans will be considering the needs of children and young people, both in terms of active participation in the preparation of the plan and in the broader identification of issues that will impact on the lives of children and young people – indeed, the draft guidance on community planning includes specific reference to these requirements, and references NICCY guidance material.

Given the new duties around community planning, the Department is concerned to ensure that any additional statutory regimes such as those set out in Clause 4 of the Bill do not cut across community planning in unintended ways; I would therefore ask that this specific issue is taken into account during the Committee's consideration of the Bill.

I trust this information is of assistance, should you require anything further please contact me directly.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Richmond
DALO
[by e-mail]