

**Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister**

**Children's Services Co-operation Bill Response pro forma**

For your convenience the Committee has prepared the attached pro forma to assist in responding to the main clauses of the Bill. The Bill can be found at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/current-non-executive-bill-proposals/childrens-services-co-operation-bill-as-introduced/>

Please respond by Friday 27 February 2015 to [committee.ofmdfm@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:committee.ofmdfm@niassembly.gov.uk).

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**I wish for my organisation to be considered for oral evidence sessions in relation to the Committee's scrutiny of the Bill: Yes**

Clause	Comments (200 words)
<p data-bbox="188 312 383 339"><b>1. General Duty</b></p> <p data-bbox="188 384 539 411"><b>Please provide comment on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="188 456 555 699">• <b>The six specified outcomes relating to the well-being of children and young people as listed in the 10 Year Strategy for Children and Young People 2006 - 2016</b></li> <li data-bbox="188 743 555 954">• <b>The duty on Northern Ireland Departments to co-operate with each other in order to further the achievement of these objectives</b></li> <li data-bbox="188 999 533 1098">• <b>The mechanism in place for amending the specified outcomes</b></li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="580 312 1144 339">PlayBoard fully supports the Children’s Bill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="580 392 2040 539">• The outcomes listed in the Strategy for Children and Young People were arrived at following extensive engagement with the children’s sector in the run-up to 2006. As we near the end of the current strategy we maintain the position that the sixth outcome ‘living in a society which respects their rights’ is an overarching outcome that <i>should</i> underpin the other five.</li> <li data-bbox="580 592 2040 818">• As the lead organisation for play, PlayBoard grapple with the difficulties presented by a lack of co-operation and lack of awareness between departments of each other’s strategic and operational activity. Through our ‘Let us PLAY’ campaign we have engaged across departments, encouraging greater co-operation to enhance play opportunities. This has led to cross-departmental action, for example DoE co-operating with OFMDFM to develop natural play within Crawfordsburn Country Park under the Play and Leisure Policy meeting dual objectives. A duty to co-operate would enhance delivery potential and maximise achievement of objectives.</li> <li data-bbox="580 871 2051 970">• As we approach 2016 it is important that the specified outcomes are subject to focused review in order to establish whether they should remain as the key outcomes for the post-2016 strategy. This should be carried out through robust engagement with the children’s sector.</li> </ul>

Clause	Comments (200 words)
<p data-bbox="188 244 472 272"><b>2. Co-operation Report</b></p> <p data-bbox="188 316 539 344"><b>Please provide comment on:</b></p> <ul data-bbox="188 387 539 887" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="188 387 539 632">• <b>The requirement for OFMDFM to publish periodically a report on the progress of departments towards achieving the specified outcomes</b></li> <li data-bbox="188 675 539 887">• <b>The requirement for other Northern Ireland Departments to co-operate in the preparation and publication of the report</b></li> </ul>	<ul data-bbox="577 244 2047 432" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="577 244 2047 432">• We agree with the need for periodic reporting on progress towards achieving specified outcomes in order to ensure the duty is implemented. With regards to reporting, there are a number of current mechanisms which could lend themselves to supporting this without the need to develop additional reporting. One primary example is the commitment of the Executive to report on progress towards delivery of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="622 480 2047 668">Approximately every 7 years OFMDFM collate and report on a cross-departmental basis to the UK Government on the progress of the Executive towards achieving the articles contained within the UNCRC. A similar annual report would go some way to reporting on the duty to co-operate and would meet both reporting requirements for the duty to co-operate and enhance the evidence base supporting the wider UNCRC State Party report.</p> <ul data-bbox="577 716 2047 904" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="577 716 2047 904">• Requiring other Departments to co-operate in preparing and publishing a Co-operation Report is essential and, as outlined above should be possible through the enhancement of existing cross-departmental reporting processes into the UNCRC. A Co-operation Report should be viewed as a positive undertaking, capable of measuring progress and changing mind-sets and organisational cultures regarding the delivery of children’s services.</li> </ul>

Clause	Comments (200 words)
<p data-bbox="188 312 557 376"><b>3. Sharing resources and pooling funds</b></p> <p data-bbox="188 419 557 448"><b>Please provide comment on:</b></p> <ul data-bbox="188 491 557 770" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="188 491 557 770">• <b>The enabling power which will permit Northern Ireland departments to establish pooled budgets and shared resources to achieve the six outcomes in clause 1</b></li> </ul>	<ul data-bbox="580 312 2047 504" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="580 312 2047 504">• PlayBoard fully support an enabling power permitting departments to establish pooled budgets and shared resources to achieve the six outcomes. This is particularly pertinent at a time of significant pressure on public finance and we believe that only by pooling budgets and resources across departments can we achieve real, lasting progress against outcomes. We agree with CiNI that this power should be extended to include agencies and adopt an approach to the joint commissioning of services.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="624 547 2024 659">There are examples of good practice in the pooling of budgets or sharing of resources, for example through Delivering Social Change £58 million has been allocated to support 7 signature projects through pooled resources from a number of departments.</p> <p data-bbox="624 702 2047 893">In the January Monitoring round DoE received £0.02m to deliver enhanced natural play at Crawfordsburn as part of the DSC Play and Leisure Signature Programme. As the Agency with responsibility for Country Parks, in this instance it is in a better position to deliver enhanced play than the lead department, OFMDFM. This is an example of where resources can help achieve against a number of the six outcomes – being healthy; enjoying learning and achieving; environmental well-being; and living in a society which respects their rights.</p>

Clause	Comments (200 words)
<p data-bbox="185 240 557 308"><b>4. Children’s Services Planning</b></p> <p data-bbox="185 352 557 379"><b>Please provide comment on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="185 424 557 847"> <p data-bbox="185 424 557 632">• <b>The requirement for the Health and Social Care Board to review and publish a children and young people’s plan, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="286 639 434 667">○ <b>Content</b></li> <li data-bbox="286 675 479 740">○ <b>Review mechanism</b></li> <li data-bbox="286 748 524 847">○ <b>Co-operation between public bodies</b></li> </ul> </li> <li data-bbox="185 892 557 957">• <b>The public bodies listed at Clause 4 (7)</b></li> <li data-bbox="185 1002 557 1174">• <b>The duties placed on the Health and Social Care Board particularly with regard to monitoring and reporting</b></li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="575 240 2049 472">PlayBoard welcome the intention of the Children’s Bill to amend 2A of Schedule 2 of the Children’s Order (Northern Ireland) 1995 but we would highlight that as it stands the Children’s Order, the only legislation enacted in Northern Ireland pertaining to children, is outdated. We would urge that the relevant steps are taken to update and bring the Children’s Order (Northern Ireland) 1995 into line with similar legislation in England. To reiterate we agree with the development of Children’s services plans which are fit for purpose however this requires that the legislation be updated and extended beyond 2A of Schedule 2.</p> <p data-bbox="575 517 2049 703">As noted elsewhere, the adoption by the third sector of an outcomes focus has allowed the children’s sector to lead the way on the delivery of children and young people’s services. Likewise the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), which was set up by the Health and Social Care Board to put in place integrated planning and commissioning across agencies and sectors, is well positioned to record through the Children and Young People’s Plan, the state of wellbeing and the realisation of the rights of children in Northern Ireland.</p>

**Do you have any suggested amendments to the Bill? (200 words)**

No

**Do you have any other comments? (200 words)**

We believe the children and young people's sector is leading the way in the implementation of services for children and young people. The sector's focus on outcomes, evidence-informed approaches and the use of child rights perspective is, in our view ahead of Departments, who regrettably all too often lack the imagination, creativity and resourcefulness to make the best possible and most significant difference to children's lives.

Therefore, we believe it is paramount that Departments are required to consider not only how they co-operate together but how a culture, based around the concept of no-regressive measures in children's services can be promoted and in doing so complement each other's strategic and operational activity.

We would urge the government to take a similar perspective to the voluntary sector. Rather than focusing on statutory remits and 'ticking boxes' we would suggest that departments should focus on the outcomes they are seeking to achieve and then work backwards to determine which departments and which cross-departmental connections will best position them to deliver the desired outcomes.