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Communities
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Depairtment fur
Commonities

From: Colum Boyle
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Our Ref: PSC 0034.25
Date: 12 February 2025

Via email: committee.publicaccounts@niassembly.gov.uk

Dear Daniel,

MEMORANDUM OF REPLY ON CHILD POVERTY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

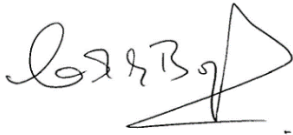
I refer to your letter of 27 January which sought more detail as to why Recommendation 2 was partially accepted rather than fully in the Memorandum of Reply (MoR).

I can assure the Committee that the draft of the Anti-Poverty Strategy presented to the Executive for consideration will be outcomes-based, with clear and comprehensive monitoring and accountability mechanisms. It will be up to the Executive to agree the final measurements to be used in the Strategy, and officials will be providing advice on a potential range of measures that will consider poverty levels against population groups, health and educational gaps and employment indicators. It is important, however, to draw a distinction between the measurement of outcomes and targets. It can be argued that the setting of targets can have unforeseen and/or negative impacts, for example, and it was for this reason that the MoR, signed by the Minister for Communities and Minister of Finance, emphasised that it will be the Executive's decision as to whether to include poverty reduction targets, not

to rule them out or avoid accountability, hence the partial acceptance. I can assure the Committee that the Department will provide balanced advice in relation to this matter, highlighting the benefits and the disadvantages. It is the Minister's intention to have the draft Strategy with the Executive for approval before the end of March.

I trust you find this reply helpful. However, should the Committee feel that further clarification on the Department's MoR is needed, particularly in relation to the response to Recommendation 2, officials will be available to provide this on 10 April, if required.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colum Boyle', followed by a stylized flourish or checkmark.

Colum Boyle

PERMANENT SECRETARY