

Barnardo's

NORTHERN IRELAND

GIVING CHILDREN BACK THEIR FUTURE

542/544 Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast, BT4 3HE

Telephone 028 9067 2366
Fax 028 9067 2399

Neighbourhood Statistics Unit
NISRA
McCauley House
2 – 14 Castle Street
Belfast
BT1 1SA

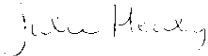
27th October 2004

Dear Sir / Madam

I am pleased to enclose a response to the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004:
Consultation Document from Barnardo's Northern Ireland.

Should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes



Julie Healy
Policy & Research Officer

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Barnardo's Northern Ireland Response to the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004: Consultation Document

Barnardo's works with 8 000 children and their families every year in Northern Ireland and provides over 40 distinct services across local communities. Our services include family centres, fostering, youth justice work, work with disabled children, work with ethnic minority children as well as support services for children leaving care and other disadvantaged children and young people.

Barnardo's welcome the information that the Multiple Deprivation Measures provides and have made substantial use of the 'Noble' Indicators in our research and policy work.

We welcome the introduction of the proposed new domains of Crime and Living Environment. The proposal to create two sub-domains for young people and adults within the domain of Education, Skills and Training Deprivation is also particularly welcome as it is important to highlight any differences between the two groups. From our experience deprivation sometimes adversely impacts on young people as opposed to adults, or that their experience of deprivation is qualitatively different. We would urge you to consider extending the creation of two sub-domains based on age to the other domains also. We feel this would provide valuable information regarding the situation of young people in Northern Ireland and enable a more specific and appropriate response to their needs.

We are concerned however that the new proposals will not include a Child Poverty Measure. Barnardo's have made extensive use of this information in our research and policy work and welcomed an officially recognised measure of children's circumstances.

In light of Government initiatives such as New TSN and the development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy which include targets and steps to tackle child poverty it is essential that a robust child poverty measure is in place. Such a measure should include a range of poverty-relevant social and economic factors. Without such a measure providing detailed geographical data, it is difficult to assess progress made and to identify where progress is most needed.

Children in Northern Ireland are over represented in terms of those living in a low-income household. However poverty is not just about surviving on a low income. The European Union defines relative poverty in terms of the extent to which a person's material, cultural and social resources are so limited that they are excluded from the minimum acceptable way of life. By creating an 'Income Deprivation Affecting Children Measure' rather than developing a Child Poverty Measure we are only measuring one dimension of poverty. We feel a more meaningful Child Poverty Measure could be created using the information being gathered in other domains such as Geographical Access to Services, Crime, Health Deprivation and Disability and Living Environment.

Children are identified within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act as a potentially vulnerable or disadvantaged group and we have a duty to act on information and examine evidence of their circumstances. In terms of experiencing the impact of poverty – children are at particular risk. The absence of a standard Child Poverty Measure will greatly hinder this process.

We would strongly urge you to develop a Child Poverty Measure to enable further steps to be taken to tackle child poverty.

For further information please contact the Policy & Research Team at 028 90672366 or email margaret.kelly@barnardos.org.uk or julie.healy@barnardos.org.uk.