

EMAIL

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Department of Education

Ref:

17 November 2022

Dear Team

Re: The Department of Education's Draft Corporate Plan 2023 - 2028

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People ("NICCY") was established in accordance with 'The Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order' (2003) to safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people in Northern Ireland. Under Articles 7(2) and (3) of this legislation, NICCY has a mandate to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law, practice and services relating to the rights and best interests of children and young people by relevant authorities. Under Article 7(4), NICCY has a statutory duty to advise any relevant authority on matters concerning the rights or best interests of children and young persons.

NICCY's remit includes children and young people up to 18 years, or 21 years, if the young person has a disability or has experience of being in the care of social services. In carrying out NICCY's functions, the paramount consideration is the rights of the child or young person, having particular regard to their wishes and feelings. NICCY has regard to all relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ("UNCRC").

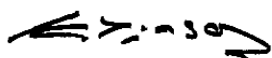
I welcome that the Department of Education (DE) are publishing, and consulting on, their draft 2023-2028 Corporate Plan, 'Every CHILD'. The draft Plan clearly indicates the range of areas that the Department will be working on in forthcoming years. I note and welcome the Department's high level objectives set out i.e.

- CHAMPIONING all our children and young people and the positive impact of education on all aspects of life;
- HELPING all our children and young people where they need support for their learning and well-being;
- INSPIRING all our children and young people to make a positive contribution to society;
- Meeting the LEARNING needs of our children and young people and developing their knowledge and skills, enabling them to fulfil their potential; and
- DELIVERING an effective, child-focused, collaborative, high quality education system.

I appreciate indicators will be set out in annual business plans going forward.

As you will know, NICCY provided advice in relation to many education areas of concern over recent years and will continue to do so throughout the lifetime of this Plan. I will not therefore be responding in detail to the draft Plan, however there is one important point that must be raised. I recognise that the DE draft Corporate Plan states that it will deliver on commitments within the 'Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030', along with 'A Fair Start', 'NDNA' and the 'Covid-19 Recovery Plan'. However, I would wish to see more explicit focus on the critical role of the Department, on behalf of the NI Executive, in leading on the delivery of the Strategy in adherence to the 'Children's Services Cooperation Act (2015)'. Linked closely to this is reporting on UNCRC implementation and the UN Committee's Concluding Observations - due in 2023, following the periodic examination process. This is an extremely important role for the Department, providing leadership across the other departments, and I advise that this should be reflected clearly in the Corporate Plan. NICCY, as you know, will also continue its biennial monitoring role. I look forward to further engagement on this important piece of work.

Yours sincerely



Koulla Yiasouma
Commissioner