

EMAIL

Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP
Chair
Work and Pensions Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Ref: 21/CJS/MMcC/120

13 September 2021

Dear Chair

Re: Children in Poverty: No Recourse to Public Funds

The Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) was created 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.

The remit of the Commissioner – Koulla Yiasouma - includes children and young people from birth up to 18 years, or 21 years if the young person has a disability or has experience of being in the care of the State. In carrying out her functions, the Commissioner's paramount consideration is the rights of the child or young person, having particular regard to their wishes and feelings. In exercising her functions, the Commissioner has regard to all relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The Commissioner welcomes the Committee's Inquiry into Children in Poverty: No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and wishes to highlight that, due to concerns about children and families affected by NRPF in Northern Ireland, NICCY has commissioned a scoping study on this issue. While the study and NICCY's accompanying recommendations will not be published until 7 October 2021, we would like to note that the following key concerns have been central to the development of our work in this area:

- Lack of official data in the public domain concerning numbers of children and families who are affected by NRPF situations;
- Lack of information in the public domain providing assurance that affected children and families have access to appropriate referral and assessment processes; and

- Lack of information available providing assurance that associated services and supports to ensure that statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare, health and development of children are being effectively discharged.

The Commissioner will ensure that the Committee is provided with a copy of the paper and recommendations at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely



Mairéad McCafferty PQH LLM
Chief Executive