

## **Introduction**

Government has decided that Northern Ireland is to have a ten-year strategy for all children and young people up to the age of 18, or 21 if they have a disability or are care experienced\*. A strategy is a plan which sets out what you intend to do about a particular issue.

*(\*care experienced: this could be you if you are/have been in foster or residential care).*

The Children and Young People's Unit which is part of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister has been working on this strategy for some time already. We have involved nearly three thousand adults, young people and children - some as young as three years old, to find out what the issues are and how people would like them dealt with. The strategy is nearly finished, but before it is published, we want to find out what you think of the proposals in the strategy.

The strategy will outline the key issues for all children and young people who live in Northern Ireland and will also set out plans, or Actions, for how Government intends to address these issues. We hope you will respond to these Actions and let us know if the Actions are suitable and meet all your needs!

We asked a group of young people from the Young Citizens in Action programme, a Voluntary Service Bureau initiative ([www.youngcitizens.org.uk](http://www.youngcitizens.org.uk)) and some members of the Young People's Advisory Forum, which is a group of young people who work with the Children and Young People's Unit (CYPU) to help design these fact sheets and we'd like to say a 'big thanks!' for all their hard work.

**You can send your views in lots of ways:**

**by using the reply form in the back of the pack, or  
email: [cypu@ofmdfmni.gov.uk](mailto:cypu@ofmdfmni.gov.uk)**

**This strategy is for you. We need to know what you think – good or bad!  
We need to know if you think the actions will make life better for  
children and young people.**

**Also, if you have other ideas, please let us know! We need to receive  
your views by 28 February 2005.**

**This is your chance to have your say – don't let it pass you by....**

## 1 Vision

### “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For...”

Most people have a vision for their own future, so it seems only fair that we, the young people of Northern Ireland, get to have one too!

The following statement captures what Government wants to achieve for children and young people:

**“A Northern Ireland in which children and young people thrive and look forward with confidence to the future”.**

We will have achieved this when every child and young person:

- lives in a secure and peaceful community;
- is free from poverty;
- has the opportunity to realise his or her maximum potential;
- is enabled to exercise his or her rights and fully participate as an active citizen;
- experiences being valued, respected and understood;
- is free from commercial exploitation;
- has a voice in how he or she lives and is cared for; and
- feels happy, safe, cared for and supported by family, community, government and wider society.’

Do **you** agree with this?

It does seem like a tall order or an ideal, but you have to set high standards to achieve real goals or a model that we can strive to obtain!

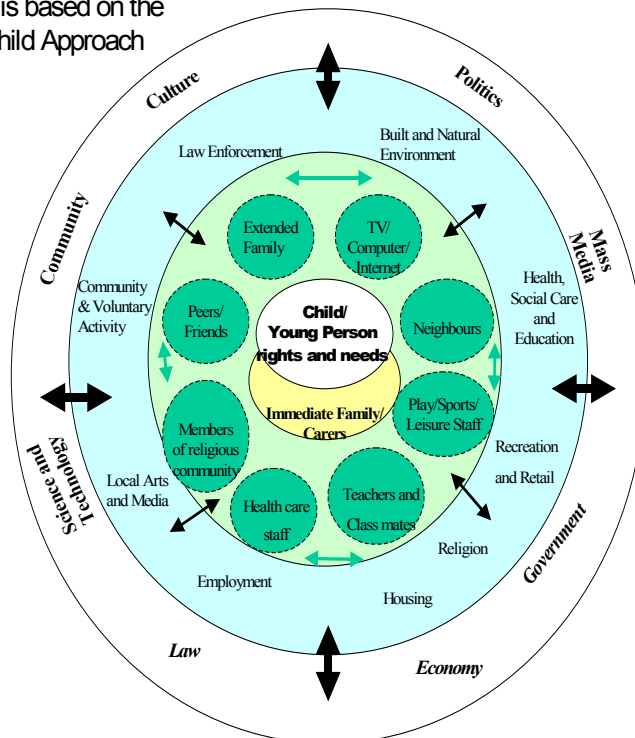
## “Who Do You Think You Are?”

So why should children and young people get a vision? Well, here are a few good reasons!

Children and young people:

- have dignity as human beings and are worthy of respect;
- have rights as individuals;
- need loving and supportive families or carers to enable them to develop fully;
- are unique with a valuable and diverse contribution to make to society;
- are active participants in society;
- are important in their own right both now and in the future;
- are entitled to both adult protection and opportunities to exercise their independence;
- are entitled to live in a peaceful and non-threatening environment;
- need support to explore and achieve their individual potential; and
- need support and encouragement through the transition from childhood to adulthood, enabling them to express respect for others and take increasing responsibility for their actions and decisions.

Strategy is based on the Whole Child Approach



The everyday world of a child or young person is made up of:

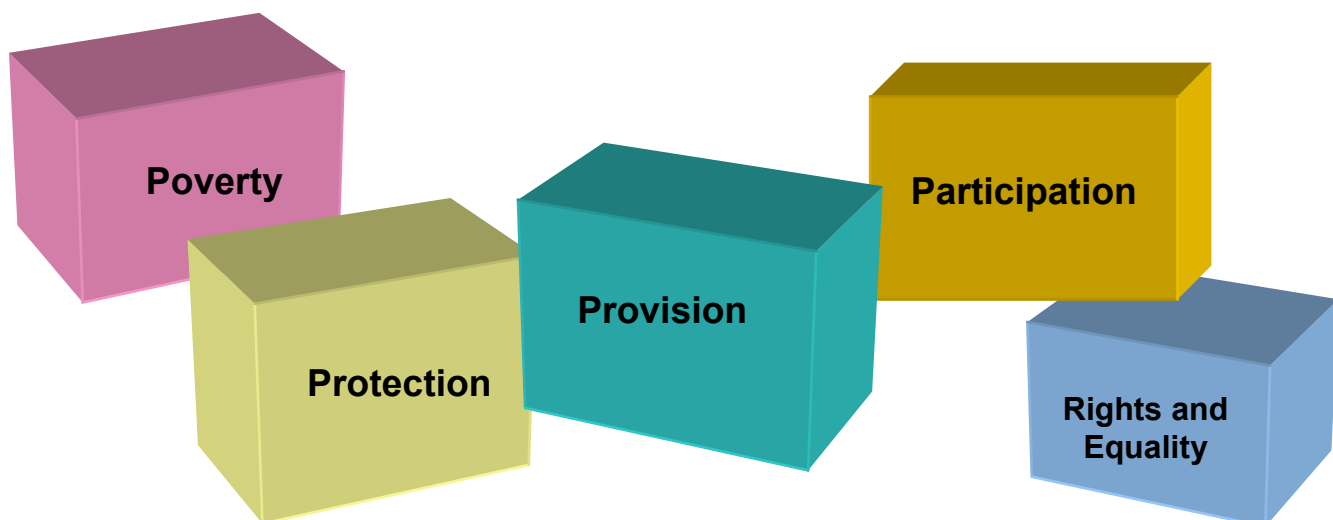
**close relationships** – e.g. family, friends, youth leaders, teachers, GP etc..

**And physical conditions** – e.g. home, school, community centre, shopping centre, church, etc..

These relationships and places form a two-way relationship with young people. Young people’s lives are shaped by their relationships and physical conditions, but in turn other people and the environment is shaped by young people!

## Actions

There are 5 areas for **Action**:



Actions should:

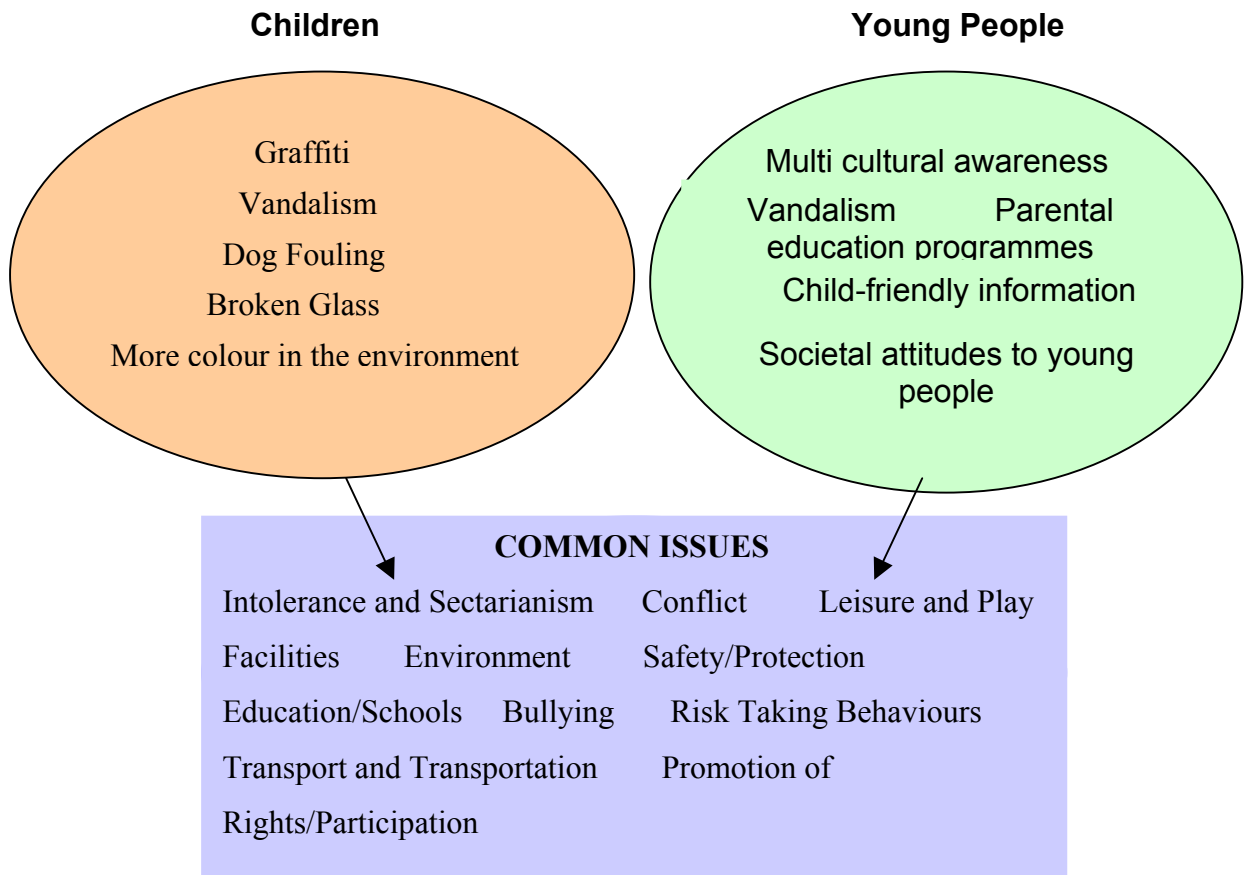
- Be centred on the child: encouraging empowerment, decision making and confidence
- See children in the context of family, and support the young person's family
- Empower communities to take responsibility for young people's development
- Take note of the host of diversity in young people e.g. race, culture, lifestyle, disability, location, etc..
- Reflect current information e.g. statistics, good practice
- Adhere to the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)
- Encourage all those offering services to young people to work together

These **Action** areas, and the ways in which progress can be measured, are explained in the coming fact sheets.

It is vital that the **Actions** identify ways in which progress can be measured. Children and young people and their families want to see clear differences in their own lives.

Some of these **Actions** will happen immediately, others will take more time – don't forget this is a **ten-year** strategy.

**These Actions have arisen from the following lists of issues identified by Children, Young People and Adults**



'Bullying in schools: A Northern Ireland study' October 2002 by the Department of Education.

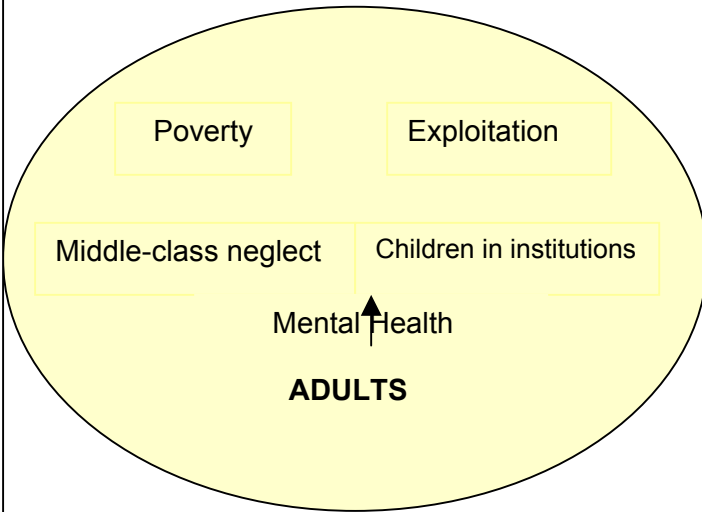
Boys were more likely to have been bullied than girls;

Girls held a more pro-victim and pro-teacher attitude than boys;

Boys were more likely to be bullies than girls.

Children as young as three and four years old have been found to identify with their 'own side' and by ten and eleven years old are expressing fear and antagonism of the 'other side'.

'Too Young to Notice?' Paul Connolly, Alan Smith, Berni Kelly (June 2002)



The Young Persons Behaviour and Attitude Survey surveyed over 6,000 pupils aged 11-16 in the year 2000.

**Alcohol** – A significantly higher proportion of boys (58%) compared to girls (52%) have taken an alcoholic drink.

**Physical activity** – A higher proportion of boys (81%) than girls (64%) exercise at least 2 to 3 times a week outside school hours.

**Nutrition** – Almost a fifth of girls (19%) compared to 7% of boys, were on a diet to lose weight.

**Self Image** - Almost three quarters (73%) of girls, compared to 50% of boys would like to change something about their bodies.

## Poverty

### **Key On all pages)**

- Action
- How we can monitor and evaluate if the Action is working

Simplifying and raising awareness of how families with low income can get financial support

**Increased take up of financial support, including free school meals, to which families are entitled**

22% of pupils attending school in Northern Ireland were in receipt of free school meals in 2001/02 (Department of Education)

Addressing the barriers to services particularly in relation to health, social services and education eg NHS waiting lists, price of school uniforms, price of school trips.

**Number of children and young people reporting barriers to accessing services**

Assessing the quality of accommodation, including owner-occupied, social housing, traveller sites and specifically targeting the needs of homeless young people

**Quality of accommodation**  
**Number of households with at least one child that live in homes that are unfit**

**Numbers of homeless young people**

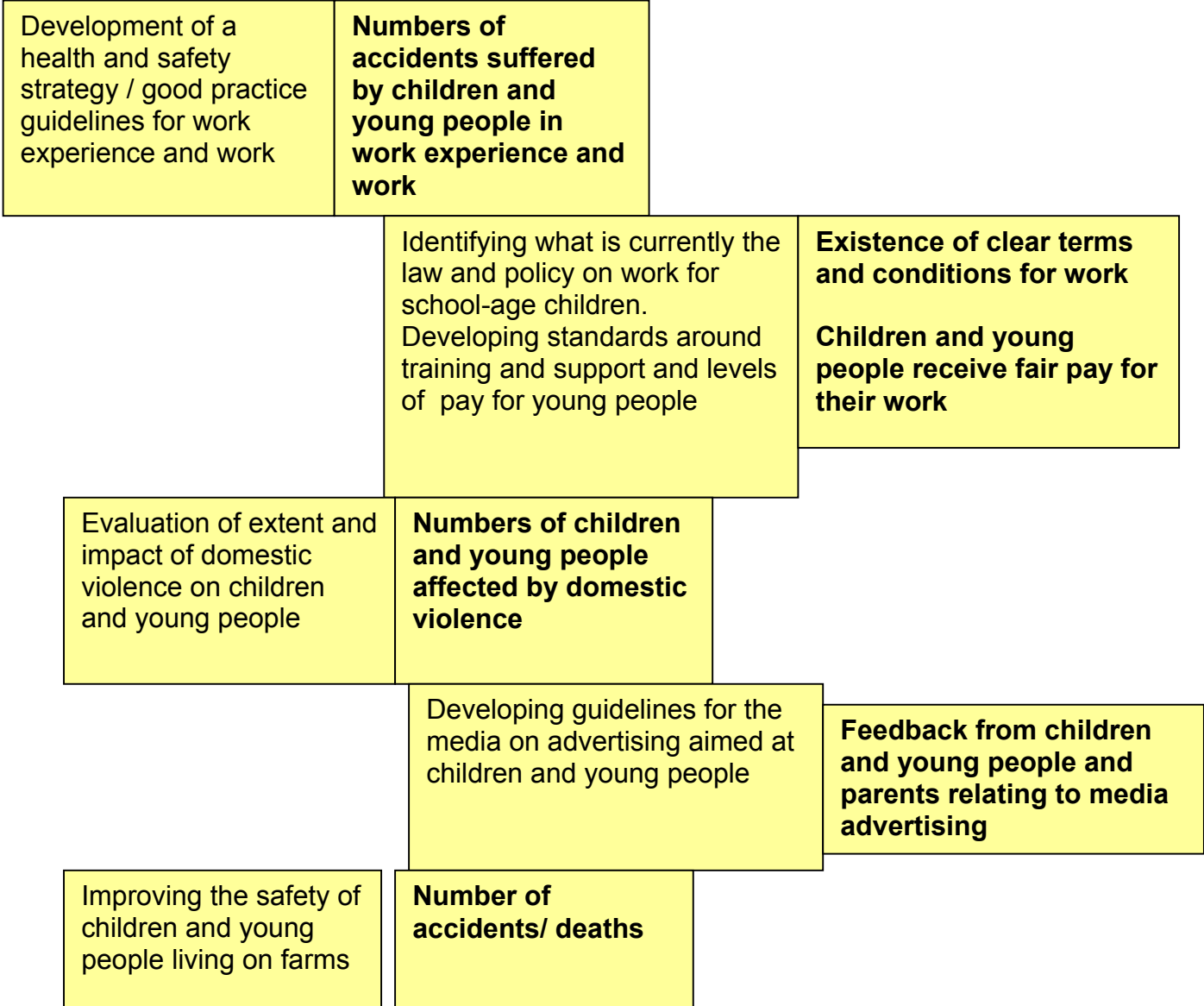
38% of all households presenting as homeless in 2001/02 were families with children (Northern Ireland Housing Executive)

### **Questions:**

**How can we best help people understand the difficulties facing individuals who are experiencing poverty?**

**Will these Actions actively help people already experiencing poverty?**

**Protection**



**Questions:**

**Will these Action plans lead to the protection of all young people?**

**How else might children need to be protected?**

**1,531 of children and young people were on the Child Protection Register in March 2002, 625 of these were in the category of neglect, 359 physical abuse and 159 sexual abuse (Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety).**

<b>Provision</b>	<b>Built and Natural Environment</b>
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Putting into action the Northern Ireland Road Safety strategy, further developing road safety education and targeting groups with additional needs	<b>Number of road collisions involving children and young people</b>
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Promoting environmental education within the school system and youth focused programmes	<b>Numbers of young people engaging in cultural activities and environmental projects</b>
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Develop opportunities to improve the lives of children and young people in rural areas	<b>Assessment and review of the level of financial provision to children and young people's groups in rural areas</b>
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<b>6.4% of children and young people under 16 live on family farms (DARD Farmers and Families in Northern Ireland 2001/02)</b>
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<b>Provision</b>	<b>Family and Community Support</b>
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Making families more aware of existing family support provision	<b>Implementation of children's information system</b>
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Provision of quality, affordable and accessible childcare, after school and play care	<b>Numbers of children in childcare, after school and play care settings</b>
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<b>Provision</b>	<b>Research and Information</b>
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a website/web portal for the dissemination of research and information	<b>Existence of a website/web portal</b>
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<b>Questions:</b> Do you think young people like to access information using the web? How else do young people like to get information?
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<b>Provision</b>	<b>Achievement, learning and Enjoyment</b>
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Improving the quality of school buildings etc., e.g. mobile classroom provision, changing facilities, school toilets	<b>Number of mobile classrooms</b>  <b>Pupil satisfaction surveys into condition of toilets and changing facilities</b>
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Looking into the extent to which schools could be resourced to become multi-agency centres with out-of hours usage	<b>Use of centres</b> <b>Reduction of vandalism and petty crime in local areas</b>
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Age appropriate imaginative play / leisure facilities	<b>Numbers of children and young people with access to appropriate play and leisure opportunities</b>
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<b>Provision</b>	<b>Physical, Mental and Emotional Well-being</b>
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Developing and carrying out a programme of confidence building and assertiveness in relationships – appropriate to the age of young people	<b>Numbers of children and young people engaging in risk-taking behaviours</b> <b>Levels of reported bullying</b> <b>Reported instances of abuse of children and young people</b> <b>Numbers of children and young people receiving mental health services</b> <b>Suicide rates amongst young people, especially young males</b>
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Carrying out a teenage pregnancy strategy, and drugs strategy	<b>Numbers of births to mothers aged under 18</b> <b>Low birth weight</b> <b>Numbers of young people engaging in risk taking behaviours</b>
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Taking measures to tackle obesity amongst children and young people	<b>Numbers of children and young people reported as clinically obese.</b> <b>Numbers of children and young people engaging in play and leisure activities</b>
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**Questions:**  
**Which form of Provision is most relevant to you? Is it covered by these Actions?**

**Participation**

<p>Involvement of children and young people in making decisions across a range of areas that affect them such as planning, transport, environment, health, social care and education</p>	<p><b>Numbers of children and young people involved</b></p>
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<p>All young people able to easily access information they need using the internet, and mobile phones etc</p>	<p><b>Availability of information in child and young people-friendly formats</b></p> <p><b>Numbers of children and young people accessing information</b></p>
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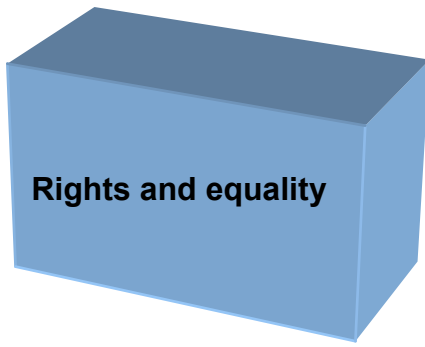
<p>Involving young people in the designing and distribution of understandable, user-friendly information for use by other young people</p>	<p><b>Numbers of young people involved in direct working with public bodies and agencies and voluntary organisations</b></p>
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<p>Checking out what types of ways of participating (having a say) already exist, e.g. schools councils, identifying gaps and developing new structures</p>	<p><b>Feedback from children and young people on existing structures</b></p> <p><b>Number and range of participation structures in place</b></p>
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**Questions:**  
**Will these Actions lead to genuine participation for young people?**

**Do you think these Actions will lead to the views of young people being taken seriously at an early stage?**

**Do you think young people will want to be involved in writing young person friendly information leaflets?**



**Rights and equality**

Making sure that the rights and needs of children and young people are reflected in the carrying out of a Racial Equality Strategy	<b>Monitor racial inequality including racist bullying, experienced by young people</b>
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Formal and informal education will fully reflect and promote rights in relation to equality and diversity	<b>Numbers of young people undertaking citizenship studies at school and/or receiving a citizenship qualification</b>
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59% of young people do not know who to ask for help and advice with a consumer complaint (General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland 2003)

- Section 75 categories

Religious Belief

Political Opinion (eg Unionist, Loyalist, Nationalist, Republican, Socialist)

Racial Group (eg Indian, Travellers, Chinese)

Age (young and old)

Marital Status (eg married, single, divorced, separated)

Sexual orientation (eg gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual)

Gender (male or female)

People who have a disability and those who don't

Whether or not they have dependants (dependants are children or older people who might rely on you to care for them)

<p>Creating an awareness-raising campaign to alert children and young people to their rights and how to deal with any breaches of them; and to make adults aware of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the value of children and young people and their contribution;</li> <li>• the diversity of children and young people; and</li> <li>• the rights of children and young people</li> </ul>	<p><b>Number of complaints taken to the Commissioner for Children and Young People in relation to alleged breaches of rights</b></p> <p><b>Public better informed in relation to the rights of children and young people</b></p> <p><b>Changes in attitudes towards children and young people</b></p> <p><b>The levels of inequality experienced by children and young people in relation to each of the *Section 75 categories</b></p>
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**Questions:**

**Do you think these Actions are enough for us to see changes in prejudices and inequalities?**

**Can you think of anything else that might help?**

Additional Actions	How we can monitor
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A need to decide if separate health services are needed for young people	Talking to young people and finding out if they think they need different facilities in hospitals, etc..
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Removing the barriers to children and young people with disabilities entering and remaining in mainstream schools and colleges	Numbers of children and young people with disabilities in mainstream schools and colleges
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Identifying issues for children and young people from Traveller communities who want to enter and remain in mainstream schools	Numbers of Traveller children and young people in mainstream schools. Satisfaction survey of Traveller children and young people within the education system
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Development of an attendance and inclusion strategy for all children and young people	Number of children and young people suspended or expelled from school
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Developing an adoption strategy	Numbers of children adopted. Length of time for adoption process
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Having support services for children who have responsibilities as carers, including respite care, leisure opportunities, counselling (impact of the conflict)	Existence and take-up of support services
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**Questions:**

**Can you think of any disadvantages to mainstreaming schools?**

Have we left anything out? Are there any other actions you feel should be taken?

## END OF ACTIONS

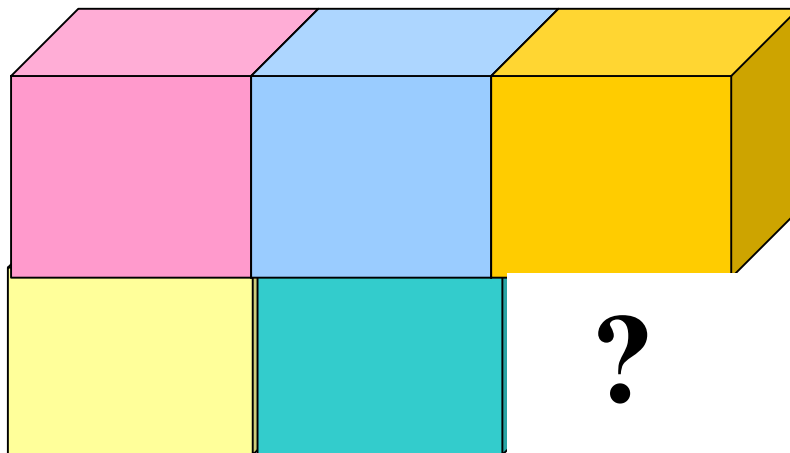
### DO YOU AGREE WITH THE ACTIONS?

We need to know what you think – Good or Bad!

The Strategy is for **ALL** children and young people who live in Northern Ireland .

If you think there is an **Action** missing in the strategy for children and young people in N.I., or if you feel unrepresented, you can take some action yourself!

Put your building block in its rightful place by sending us your views, using the reply form in this pack or email us at [cypu@ofmdfmi.gov.uk](mailto:cypu@ofmdfmi.gov.uk) .



# REPLY SHEET

## Now it's over to you!

We want to know what you think!  
Are the Actions proposed going to help?  
What are the Actions you feel should be taken?  
And most importantly – Are these Actions going to make life better for all young people?

Add your points here:

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Fill in this reply form, drop in an envelope and send it to:

Children and Young People's Unit,  
Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister,  
Block B, Level 3, Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate,  
Belfast, BT4 3SR

Or why not make a tape, a video or a work of art to let us know what you think about the actions Government is proposing to take. The closing date for responses is 28 February 2005.

This strategy is for you. We need to know what you think – good or bad! We need to know if you think the actions will make life better for children and young people.

**This is your chance to have your say – don't let it pass you...**

If you want to know more:

The full consultation can be viewed at [www.allchildrenni.gov.uk](http://www.allchildrenni.gov.uk)

If this document is not in a format that meets your requirements please contact the address or telephone number below:

Children and Young People's Unit,  
Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister,  
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Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SR

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