

MEETING NOTE- HOCS MEETING WITH NICCY- 22 NOVEMBER 2021

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		TEO		
VENUE:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Zoom	Stormont Castle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER:	N/A
LIST OF ATTENDEES:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jayne Brady- Head of the Civil Service (HOCS) Koulla Yiasouma - NI Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) Mairéad McCafferty - Chief Executive NICCY 		
<input type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input type="checkbox"/> Spad	<input type="checkbox"/> PS		
OFFICIALS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karen Pearson, TEO Covid Recovery Team <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px;">NR</div> TEO Covid Recovery Team <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px;">NR</div> TEO Covid Recovery Team 			
OTHERS:				
<p>1. Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>Jayne opened the meeting and commented that she was delighted to have the opportunity to meet with NICCY and to look at their Report 'A New and Better Normal'. She also noted the impact that pandemic is having on our children and young people.</p> <p>2. 'A New and Better Normal'</p> <p>Koulla highlighted that the NICCY Report 'A New and Better Normal' identified a number of weaknesses in the system that Covid has exacerbated. Children most disadvantaged by the Pandemic include children living in poverty, children from BAME backgrounds and children who are disabled.</p> <p>Solutions require collaboration, they are not the responsibility of one department. Education is an example of this as children need a number of things including food and shelter to have the opportunity do well in school.</p>				

3. Children's Services Co-Operation Act

NICCY noted the importance of the legislation that is in place here namely the Children's Services Co-Operation Act.

Jayne confirmed that the NICS is looking at where Departments can work together, at areas of economic deprivation and how resources can be targeted.

Jayne sought views on why the NICCY feel that the Children's Services Co-Operation Act is not working here. Koulla highlighted concerns about a silo mentality within Departments and the NICS more generally. Departments may be talking to each other but this does not transfer into tangible actions.

4. Children and Young People's Strategy (CYPs)

NICCY is concerned that although the Executive's Children and Young People's Strategy was signed off in December 2020 there is not yet a Delivery Plan for this. NICCY have a meeting scheduled with DE to discuss this issue in the near future.

The Covid Recovery Plan needs to speak to these Strategies and work to help make them effective. There is an opportunity here to address poverty, quality of education and quality of life.

Much work goes into developing strategies and actions plans but failure in terms of transparent oversight to deliver with no transparent progress reports. There is a need to break down NICS silos and work together more effectively and ensure that the good work that does happen translates into action on the ground, the co-design process has had varying degrees of success.

Jayne sought the opinion of NICCY to consider if the right action plans have been identified? For the Children and Young People's Strategies so far the right action plans have been identified but we still need delivery plans. For the Anti-Poverty Strategy this is still in progress.

Their concern is that it is not that the wrong actions are identified but that the strategies do not seem to sufficiently change the system itself. The reality has not fulfilled the vision. The real question is how strong the line is between the words used in strategies and plans and the children on the ground.

What are the issues – what are the systemic failings? NICCY offered that that the environment and culture in NICS do not support joined up working.

There seems to be an inability to pool resources and funding to come up with one set of tangible criteria and actions, there can be duplication of funding in some areas and not enough in others, a perception of departments failing to communicate to address issues, although this approach is provided in the Children and Young People's Strategy. NICCY note that the issue is not a lack of intent or concern on the part of civil servants. NICS is full of good people wanting to do good things who are thwarted by the accountability system, which impacts creativity.

Karen highlighted that pooling funding is technically complicated and cannot happen quickly. An option maybe virtual pooling - we need to make sure that Programmes are

working well and do not pull in different directions but try and get closer to shared objectives.

5. Plans for the Future

Jayne outlined that her agenda/priority areas when becoming HOCS:

- Sustainable Economy
- Green Growth
- Health and Inequalities

These priorities link with PfG and the Covid Recovery Plan and will be addressed via 4 strands led by Permanent Secretaries:

- Delivery
- Innovation
- Communication and Co-design
- NICS Transformation

Mairead noted that investing for early intervention is key and suggested that the Children and Young People's Strategy provide an opportunity to test new delivery models for more effective working against the 8 outcomes of CYPs:

- Physical and Mental Health
- Play and Leisure
- Learning and Achieving
- Safety and Stability
- Economic and Environmental Well-being
- Contribution to Society
- Respect for Children's Rights
- Promotion of Equality and Good Relations

Karen contributed that in relation to the Covid Recovery Plan 6 themes have been identified where working collaboratively will aid delivery. The Themes identified are:

- Labour Market Recovery
- Rural and Communities
- A Green Recovery
- Health Inequalities and Poverty
- Impact on Young People
- Women

6. Conclusions

Jayne provided an overview of the current top level management structure for HOCS and TEO.

Koulla noted that this has been a very useful initial conversation. She is happy to consider attending and speaking at the next Covid Recovery Taskforce Meeting due to be held on the 6 December 2021.

ACTION POINTS / OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:	
Action point	Responsibility
Email an invitation for NICCY to attend the next Covid Recovery Taskforce Meeting which is due to be held on 6 December 2021.	TEO, Covid Recovery Team
NOTE WRITTEN BY:	DATE:
NR	22 November 2021