

From: The Minister



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Minister of Health
Castle Buildings
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Dear Robin

CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL COVID-19 VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

Thank you for sharing the draft of the above plan. Having considered the plan I have a few suggested amendments and comments, as set out below:

- The Executive Paper makes no reference to the particular issues faced by young people who attend - or would need to be able to access - Knowing Our Identity (KOI) services regarding children's gender identity.
- The vulnerabilities of, and barriers faced by, children and young people who would have attended KOI or need access to related support would be considered appropriate for inclusion in this plan.
- Although there is a mention of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), that is in the wider context of mental health support and is not specific to gender identity support.
- A glossary of acronyms at the end of the plan would complement the plan significantly.
- In relation to page 1, I suggest that "*Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children*" could also include children whose parents had no recourse to public funds. They may already be covered under some of the other more generic categories but it would make sure that as a special interest group, they were being cared for by authorities. It would also reassure advocacy groups that we were heeding their concerns.
- In relation to page 2:

- I suggest clarifying point 4 by adding “of services” after “...make preparations for future rebuild.”
 - Also, replacing “data and intelligence” under Monitoring and Reporting of Plan with “facts, statistics and anecdotal evidence” would make the sentence clearer to the ordinary reader.
- In relation to page 3, 1.1, i. & ii. – These actions may now be out of date.
 - In relation to page 6:
 - 1.4, vii. – I suggest that this is amended to: “An agreement is in place with the Housing Executive and Housing Associations that any social housing tenant facing rent difficulties due to the COVID-19 emergency will not be evicted”.
 - 1.4, ix. – I suggest that this is amended to: “In moving into a recovery phase, the Department’s aim is to support and enhance a more sustainable approach to help those who need help to access food. The Department will be providing an additional investment of up to £875k to Fareshare, a national network of charitable food redistributors, to deliver an increased supply of food to community food providers. In addition, the pilot programme with Social Supermarkets has shown positive outcomes to date and has been extended to allow consideration for a full programme to be rolled out. This reflects the value of wraparound supports alongside access to food, as well as offering a possible platform for pathways to employment. The Department is currently developing a supporting business case with the aim of having the appropriate network established by October 2020. In the longer term the Department will factor in the findings from this emergency programme into the development of the overarching Anti-Poverty Strategy to include a clear set of actions on food poverty/insecurity.”
 - 1.4, xi. – I suggest that this action is linked with action ii. as both are led by the Health & Social Care Board.
 - 1.5 – As not all low income families have IT/Wi-Fi or the space for children to do their school work, I suggest an action for the provision of libraries’ IT facilities to help in this regard.
 - In relation to page 7, 1.6, viii. – I suggest a link to the website, if available, be provided.
 - In relation to page 8, 1.6, xii. – It may be helpful to specify what: “...key programmes of grant funding...” is referring to, e.g. Neighbourhood Renewal, Areas at Risk and Small Pockets of Deprivation programmes.

Yours sincerely

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Minister for Communities