

# Untapping the potential

**NICVA Policy Manifesto  
2016**

# The voluntary, community and social enterprise sector is good for Northern Ireland.

Individual organisations and groups make life-changing contributions to the people and communities they work with.

The collective impact of the sector is an important asset that wider Northern Ireland society can be proud of. And yet the sector is capable of so much more.

The untapped potential of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations to contribute to social good in Northern Ireland is incredibly exciting.

All across Northern Ireland the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector workforce, both paid and voluntary, are raising issues, identifying need and stepping up to deliver services that government or other sectors can't. Individually they are genuine social innovators.

Collectively the sector is a factory of ideas and experience.

This document is rooted in that experience. We looked at key social, economic and environmental issues both now and in the near future.

Through research, focused conversations and practical experience we have developed headline activities we think will make a real difference.

Our manifesto isn't an alternative budget or Programme for Government. It is a collection of ideas and recommendations. Some are interlinked and some stand alone, but all present politicians and their parties with positive solutions to a range of important challenges.

Where our recommendations require significant new or increased public spending we have estimated these costs and listed how we have arrived at them in the reference section. We have also listed the numerous documents and reports we have referred to in making our recommendations.

Our recommendations are by no means a complete collection of the ideas and opinions of the sector.

Many other organisations are campaigning on their own priorities and areas of expertise and that itself is a good thing. Nor can we in NICVA expect full agreement across all of our members. That's rarely possible from the tumbling mass of ideas that comprise our sector.

However, we are confident that our recommendations present a positive agenda to untap the potential of the voluntary, community & social enterprise sector and of the people and communities we work with.

# Summary of Recommendations

## 1 Prevention and Early Intervention in Key Areas of Public Spending

We are making recommendations on how to deliver better outcomes across a series of key public policy issues and major areas of public spending.

- Early years provision for all 0-4 year olds
- Reduce obesity levels
- A cross sectoral approach to better health
- Prepare for an ageing population
- Adopt a positive approach to relationships, sex and sexual health
- Reduce the harm caused by alcohol and drug addiction.
- Radically reduce reoffending
- Protect our environment
- Support the move from STEM to STEAM

## 2 Reducing Poverty and Making Work Pay

We are making recommendations on steps that can be taken in Northern Ireland to positively transform public and personal finances.

- Introduce universal childcare for 1- 14 year olds by the 2022-2026 Assembly Term
- A living wage for all workers
- Ensure equal access to skills development, training and education for all ages
- End the educational attainment gap
- Ensure everyone has quality, appropriate and affordable housing

## 3 Good Government and a strong society

We are making recommendations that will strengthen the scope and impact of devolution and support a healthy civic society.

- Effective devolution for 2016 and beyond
- Open data and open the policy making process
- Introduce a rating system based on land not buildings
- Maximise the impact of public procurement
- Support active citizenship and voluntary action
- Legislate for fairness and equality

# 1 Prevention and Early Intervention in Key Areas of Public Spending

There is a strong financial and social case for shifting the focus of public spending towards investing early so as to avoid expensive, less effective remedial interventions.

Reducing budgets mean every penny government spends needs to be spent as effectively and efficiently as possible. Services should be fit for purpose and deliver the best possible outcomes for the people who rely on them. While rhetoric indicates most

political parties agree with this approach, we know that prevention and early intervention programmes were hit first in recent budget cuts.

Based on research, expert advice and good practice already developed in Northern Ireland, we are making recommendations on how to deliver better outcomes across a series of key public policy issues and major areas of public spending.

## 1.1 Universal early years provision for all 0-4 year olds

Investment in 0-4 year olds leads to better educational, health, social and economic outcomes for individuals and Northern Ireland as a whole. There is a compelling public finance case for focusing investment in early years as opposed to more costly interventions later in life. Traditionally early years provision has been focused on areas of deprivation. However access to early years provision will have a positive impact on all children in Northern Ireland.

- There should be universal early years provision for all 0 – 4 year olds in Northern Ireland.

Using current government spending on Sure Start as a basis, it is estimated that access to pre-school provision for all 0-4 year olds would cost an additional £36.9million per annum.

## 1.2 Reduce obesity levels

Obesity costs the Northern Ireland economy £370million per year. 61% of adults and 28% of children in Northern Ireland are obese or overweight. Around 20% of the health budget is spent on obesity and related conditions.

To reduce obesity levels in Northern Ireland we should:

- Embed healthy eating habits in families through universal early years provision.
- Establish good eating habits early in life and ensure children have a healthy start to the school day by expanding breakfast clubs.
- Follow the example of London Borough Councils, such as Tower Hamlets, and reform Planning Policy to take a strategic public health approach to the location of fast food provision.
- Support moves at EU level to introduce calorie labelling on all alcoholic drinks. In the interim the Public Health Agency should develop an awareness raising campaign on this issue.

## 1.3 Take a cross sectoral approach to better health

The key challenges facing health and social care in Northern Ireland mean that cross-sectoral working makes more sense than ever before. Each sector has a role to play in developing a shared vision of a world-class health service and a healthy, fit population.

- Introduce a cross sectoral approach to achieving better health outcomes. Government should work with environmental NGOs and other organisations to develop a social prescription programme, through which patients can be prescribed nature related activities, self-help groups and other community based projects to tackle mental and physical health conditions.

## 1.4 Prepare for an ageing population

Declining birth rates and increasing life expectancy are radically altering the age profile of Northern Ireland. In the next 15 years 28% of people living in Northern Ireland will be over 60 years old. This has implications for public finance which we need to begin planning for now. Research has shown that the most effective way to deal with the financial pressures of an ageing population is to invest in ensuring older people are healthier, financially secure and able to remain independent as long as possible.

To prepare for an ageing population we should:

- Work collectively across the health and social care family to invest in prevention and early intervention and ensure people stay well for longer.
- Develop a specific employment scheme for people over 50 years old based on the learning from the three year pilot scheme funded by Atlantic Philanthropies.

## 1.5 A positive approach to relationships, sex and sexual health

Young people are becoming sexually active earlier. Youth workers and other professionals are reporting worrying trends on what is considered acceptable behaviour in relationships. It is clear that Northern Ireland needs to adopt a more positive and realistic approach to sex, relationships and talking about and treating STI's.

To adopt a positive approach to relationships, sex and sexual health;

- Schools in Northern Ireland should be required to provide standardised Relationship and Sex Education.
- Relationship and Sex Education should be part of teacher and youth worker training.
- An online Health and Social Care approved one stop shop for information on sex, relationships and STI's should be developed.
- Following the public health approach developed by organisations like the Brook Clinic and Rainbow Project expand provision of STI testing.

## **1.6 Reduce the harm caused by alcohol and drug misuse**

In Northern Ireland, alcohol-related harm is estimated to cost society up to £900 million every year, around one-tenth of the entire block grant the NI Executive receives from Westminster. The annual cost of alcohol misuse to the Health and Social Care (HSC) sector alone is estimated to be around £250 million.

Drug misuse is also a significant and growing problem in Northern Ireland.

To reduce addiction related harm we should:

- **Review and examine referral and treatment pathways to all alcohol and drug services:** NI Executive should review how funding is spent on alcohol and drugs services and whether current referral pathways are client centred. This review should cover both the voluntary and community sector and statutory sector provision.
- **Make every contact count:** Commissioners should ensure effective screening for alcohol and drug misuse and ensure that frontline staff are effectively trained to deliver advice and are aware of local referral pathways to specialist support. This should take place in every GP practice and at all other available 'gateways' where alcohol misuse can be identified. If identified, an integrated care pathway should be introduced.

## 1.7 Radically reduce reoffending

To increase public safety and mitigate trauma for victims of crime we need to reduce offending. 45.8% of adults who have been released from custody in Northern Ireland will reoffend within 12 months. Its costs around £58,000 per year to keep a person in prison in Northern Ireland. Research has shown that housing, employment and social support are crucial in preventing reoffending.

To radically reduce reoffending:

- Everyone leaving custody and serving community supervision sentences in Northern Ireland should have access to a comprehensive support programme for at least 12 months from date of release. Based on similar programmes run by NIACRO we estimate this will cost £2.8million.

## 1.8 Protect our environment

2.8% of the UK population live in Northern Ireland yet we produce 4% of UK's greenhouse gas emissions and are the only region with no climate change legislation of our own. Rising sea levels mean we will see increased coastal erosion and flooding which will impact significantly on those who live, work and visit the coast. Just as our coast is an important asset so too is land, and both are under pressure from increasing and competing demands. Our system of overall environmental regulation is not sufficiently independent or efficient as responsibility lays across a number of departments and agencies.

To protect the environment in Northern Ireland we should:

- Introduce a Northern Ireland Climate Change Act.
- Create an independent Environmental Protection Agency.
- Produce a Land Use Strategy for Northern Ireland.
- Establish shoreline plans for Northern Ireland and map coastal erosion.

## 1.9 Support the move from STEM to STEAM

Northern Ireland has always been internationally recognised for our contribution to music, arts and sport. We now have an unprecedented opportunity to capitalise on this success at home and abroad. The Creative Industries ranging from film and fashion to technology and research contribute £800million GVA to the Northern Ireland economy and provide 43,000 jobs. However the potential contribution of arts and creative industries is being undermined by cuts to funding and differing policy priorities, pitting one type of art against another.

- The focus on and resources for STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and maths) should be enhanced to include arts and creative industries, moving from STEM to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and maths).
- A talent development plan should be implemented to support local artists and attract international talent.

## 2 Reduce Poverty and Make Work Pay

It is right that people who cannot work should be supported by the welfare system to have a decent standard of living.

Most people in poverty in Northern Ireland are in work. We have the largest percentage of workers earning below the living wage in the UK and

high levels of children living in poor families.

Alongside the introduction of an anti-poverty strategy, as a matter of priority, there are some steps that can be taken in Northern Ireland to positively transform public and personal finances.

### 2.1 Universal childcare for 1- 14 year olds by 2022

Access to universal affordable childcare will transform both the Northern Ireland economy and finances of families. On average families in Northern Ireland spend 45% of their weekly earnings on childcare. The cost and availability of childcare have consistently been cited as significant barriers for parents who want to move from social security into employment. This is particularly the case for women and lone parents. Yet no strategy or programme so far has been able to comprehensively deal with this issue.

It is also true that the introduction of universal subsidised childcare will transform women's finances as well as opening a range of new opportunities at home and at work. In fact it is hard to think of another economic proposal with such potential to radically transform the choices open to women across Northern Ireland.

Research has also shown the potential of universal childcare provision in Northern Ireland to lift 30,000 children out of poverty.

While the economic and social benefits of universal childcare have been proven, our research has shown that additional positive outcomes in areas such as child development are dependent on quality of the childcare provided.

- Northern Ireland should aim to introduce universal childcare for 1 – 14 year olds in the 2022-2027 Assembly term.

- However it is unrealistic to assume we could implement this aim immediately. And given the relatively high public expenditure outlay we need to be certain of what will work and what will not. With this in mind, a pilot study of universal childcare across Neighbourhood Renewal and equivalent rural areas should be carried out in the 2016-2021 Assembly term.

## 2.2 A living wage for all workers

The high levels of low wages are a drain on both personal and public finances. We recommend that all workers Northern Ireland should be earning at least the Living Wage. However, we recognise that achieving this is much easier for some employers than others. Also, despite our research showing a long term net gain in employment should a Living Wage be introduced in Northern Ireland, there is a need to be careful to ensure that an increase in wages does not simply translate into job losses in the short term.

- A Northern Ireland Low Pay Commission should be established. Like the UK LPC, the NILPC would bring together employers, employees and independent advisors.

However it would differ from the existing LPC in three main respects:

- It would have the power to set a Living Wage that recognises the economic circumstances of Northern Ireland including the relatively high number of jobs dependent on public expenditure.
  - It will have the long term objective of ensuring that all workers in Northern Ireland are paid the Living Wage.
  - It would adopt a proactive approach to realising this goal by advising government and employers on how the conditions could be created to enable firms to pay the Living Wage.
- Use of zero hours contracts in Northern Ireland should be reviewed. No one seeking work should be required to move from benefits to a zero hours contract and should not face benefit sanctions for refusing to do so.

## 2.3 End the educational attainment gap

As shown by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2013 review, the retention of academic selection maintains and accentuates social division in Northern Ireland. Additionally the present system of multiple unofficial academic selection tests places undue stress on the shoulders of teachers, parents and most notably children.

Low income families struggle to meet the costs of education such as school uniforms, books and other required equipment like sports kits. The cost associated with certain subjects, such as art and music, mean children from low income families cannot afford to participate.

As the success of free school meals has shown, children from low income families will do better at school if they are able to participate in all aspects of school life on an equal basis. Schools have a responsibility not to place undue financial pressure on the families of children.

- We could reduce the cost of school for low income families by ensuring that children entitled to free school meals receive financial assistance to meet the costs of school uniforms, books, supplies and equipment.
  - Free school uniforms: additional £8.7million per annum
  - Books and supplies: £5.2million per annum
  - Sports kit: £6.6million per annum
- The Department of Education should also provide stronger guidance to schools on their uniform and equipment requirements.
- The Department should robustly enforce its decision to end academic selection at eleven years old including, if necessary, taking steps to prohibit publically funded schools from introducing their own selection tests.

## **2.4** Ensure equal access to skills development, training and education for all ages

In order to meet the social and economic challenges ahead Northern Ireland needs a skilled workforce. This will involve providing citizens with a range of training, education and skills development options. In recent years funding to community based education and training delivered by voluntary sector organisations has been rolled back in favour of more 'mainstream' provision. This is despite the fact that community based education can achieve better results.

In order to ensure equal access to skills development, training and education for all ages, we should:

- Stop the move towards the centralisation of education and training provision to statutory providers.
- Recognise the importance of adult learning as part of anti-poverty policies and the social pillar of Programme for Government.
- Equalise recognition and resources for all levels of qualifications both academic and vocational.

## **2.5** Ensure everyone has quality, appropriate and affordable housing

Helping people live independently in the community is an important part of the solution to many public policy and health issues such as an ageing population and the delivery of better outcomes for people with disabilities. We know from research into Supporting People that it also makes good financial sense. Supporting People saves the public purse £125.05m per annum, compared to its 2013/14 cost of £65.6m

One key aspect of the drive towards providing more social and affordable housing is the need to identify and release more land for building.

To ensure everyone who lives here has an appropriate home we should:

- Develop a land use strategy.
- Protect and uplift the Supporting People budget.
- Increase the new build programme to meet the target of 2,000 new homes per annum.
- Include a commitment to end homelessness in the Programme for Government and facilitate this by multi agency needs assessment and information sharing.

# 3 Effective government and strong civil society

Northern Ireland in 2016 is a very different place to when the Good Friday Agreement created the structures of our government. After two successive full terms of the NI Assembly, now is the time to revisit how the structures work in practice and their capability to deliver better outcomes for the people of Northern Ireland.

The strength of civil society is an internationally recognized measure of the health of a democracy.

2015 was a difficult year for the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland. Organisations were first in line for cuts from the public sector and faced job losses on an unprecedented scale. Our recent survey found that organisations across the sector are deeply worried about their future.

We are making a number of recommendations which will strengthen the scope and impact of devolution and support a healthy civic society.

## 3.1 Devolution for 2016 and beyond

Reducing the number of government departments, while welcome, does not guarantee cooperation. The current fiscal relationship with the UK government means that many of the financial benefits of new public spending in areas such as job creation and raising incomes for people revert to the Treasury. This could act as a barrier to any new public spending programmes in Northern Ireland such as more spending on childcare as suggested in this document.

To secure effective devolution for 2016 and beyond:

- An independent commission should be established to review the fiscal powers available to the Northern Ireland Executive.
- The Northern Ireland Executive should reform its fiscal relationship with HMT to retain the public finance benefit of new spending programmes.
- The Northern Ireland Assembly should be reformed to include an official opposition.

- The use of Petitions of Concern should be reformed.
- Cross-departmental collaboration should be hardwired into the culture, budgets, operating systems and performance management of government and its agencies.
- The Northern Ireland Executive should operate with collective responsibility for the decisions it takes and the implementation of the Programme for Government.

## **3.2** Open data and open the policy making process

Government policy decisions should be based on robust data and evidence. Across the world the open data movement is driving innovation in the public, private and voluntary and community sectors and creating closer links between citizens and the decisions that affect them. New and exciting Open Policy Making techniques have been tested and are now being mainstreamed across Whitehall Departments.

To open data and the policy making process we should:

- Establish an Open Policy Making Team in the Executive Office.
- Ensure local and central government publish the data and evidence they have used to make policy decisions.
- Train relevant staff in local and central government in data publication.
- Make Land and Property Services NI Pointer Data open and freely available.
- Carry out a data audit to fill information gaps in key areas such as the economy and land ownership and use.
- Ensure that NI specific data can be disaggregated from UK level government data.
- Ensure the Government Funders Database records all funding to voluntary and community organisations.

### **3.3 A rating system based on land not buildings**

The current rating system is based on the value of property not the land it is built on. Changing this to tax land not buildings encourages development and reduces dereliction; reflects the cost of public investment in infrastructure; guards against unsustainable increases in the value of land; and discourages land banking.

NICVA research shows that in Northern Ireland, Land Value Tax would be a progressive tax when measured against multiple deprivation indicators. Like all taxes, Land Value Tax may include exemptions based on NI policy objectives.

- A feasibility study should be conducted to establish the cost of adapting the present system to a system of Land Value Tax.
- The next revaluation from Land and Property Services should include a disaggregation of land and building values and include non-developed land.

### **3.4 Maximise the impact of public procurement**

Government in Northern Ireland spends around £2.6billion on procuring goods and services every year. This spending power could drive innovation and target effective services that produce better results and ultimately save money. When used well and introduced early in the procurement process, Social Clauses have been effective in maximising the impact of contracts. However, we know from research that procurement in Northern Ireland has become focused on short term costs at the expense of quality and overall value for money. The bureaucratic and risk averse nature of procurement acts as a barrier to innovation in public service delivery.

To release the potential of procurement we should:

- Introduce a Social Value Act.
- Establish a cross departmental Executive Innovation Fund.
- Create an online Social Innovation Platform where suppliers and buyers can engage.

- Arrange a series of sector specific Meet the Buyer days.
- Establish an independent administrative complaints procedure for procurement to provide an alternative to litigation for anyone who wants to challenge a procurement process or decision. It could provide independent, low cost advice to suppliers before going to the expense of a full legal challenge. This has been successful in other European Countries.

## **3.5** Support active citizenship and voluntary action

Active citizenship and voluntary action are key components of a healthy society. Social movements shape public opinion. Voluntary and community organisations develop and deliver services in areas and with groups where the state and the market have failed. Government should have a framework for supporting voluntary action.

To support active citizenship and voluntary action we should:

- Issue clear guidance on appropriate use of grant, grant-in-aid and procurement for funding voluntary and community organisations.
- Stop the erosion of core and grant funding for voluntary and community organisations.
- Produce a White Paper on Active Citizenship and Voluntary Action.
- Establish the Civic Advisory Panel agreed in 'A Fresh Start.'

## 3.6 Legislate for fairness and equality

There are a number of key areas in which new legislation or changes to existing legislation could promote equality and fairness for people across Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland is now the only place on these islands where same sex couples cannot get married. It is clear that public opinion in Northern Ireland supports same sex marriage with an Ipsos MORI poll from July 2015 showing 68% support same-sex marriage, with just 28% against.

Recent proposals to extended protection from discrimination in the provision of goods and services to cover older people is warmly welcome. However the failure of this piece of anti-discrimination legislation to cover under 16s was a missed opportunity.

In a similar vein, how we treat children within the criminal justice system is different to how we treat them in other areas of life. While the law in most areas recognises that children do not have the same capacity as adults to make decisions, when it comes to criminal law, we bestow adult type responsibility from the age of 10.

With over 500,000 older people abused in the UK each year there is increasing awareness of the risks and impacts of elder abuse. Elder abuse can occur anywhere. This includes in someone's own home, a residential home, or a hospital. Both older men and women can be at risk of abuse, though a majority of victims are women over the age of 70. Yet, in Northern Ireland we do not have adult protection legislation and elder abuse is not defined as a specific crime.

In order to legislate for fairness and equality we should:

- Introduce Marriage Equality Legislation.
- Introduce Age Discrimination Legislation relating to goods, facilities and services and ensure it includes people under 16.
- Introduce legislation to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12.
- Introduce a legal definition of elder abuse, define elder abuse as a specific crime and introduce Adult Protection Legislation.

## References

### **Universal early years provision for all 0-4 year olds.**

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### **Reduce obesity levels**

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### **Prepare for an ageing population**

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### **Adopt a positive approach to relationships, sex and sexual health**

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- [In the ten years since 2004 Northern Ireland has seen a 47% increase in new cases in contrast to the UK overall where there has been a fall of 20%: PHA \(2015\) HIV Surveillance in Northern Ireland 2015 p5](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/directorates/files/HIV_surveillance_report_2015.pdf#page=5) [http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/directorates/files/HIV\\_surveillance\\_report\\_2015.pdf#page=5](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/directorates/files/HIV_surveillance_report_2015.pdf#page=5)

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## Protect our environment

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## Support the move from STEM to STEAM

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### **Introduce Universal childcare for 1- 14 year olds by 2022**

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NICVA CEE

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- The Annual Survey for Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2014 results show that 27.6 per cent of PAYE-registered workers in Northern Ireland earn below the Living Wage, higher than for any other UK work region (the next highest, the East Midlands, is at 24.7 per cent)
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### **Ensure everyone has quality, appropriate and affordable housing.**

- [http://www.nihe.gov.uk/northern\\_ireland\\_housing\\_market\\_perspectives\\_2015-2018.pdf](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/northern_ireland_housing_market_perspectives_2015-2018.pdf)
- <http://qppl.qub.ac.uk/meeting-housing-need-in-northern-ireland/>

### **Effective devolution for 2016 and beyond**

- PWC, ( )Review of the Fiscal Powers of the Northern Ireland Assembly  
<http://www.nicva.org/resource/review-fiscal-powers-northern-ireland-assembly> NICVA CEE

### **Open Data**

- Cabinet Office, What is Open Policy Making? <https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/what-is-open-policy-making/>
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[http://www.nicva.org/sites/default/files/d7content/attachments-resources/economic\\_data\\_march2014.pdf#page=24](http://www.nicva.org/sites/default/files/d7content/attachments-resources/economic_data_march2014.pdf#page=24) NICVA CEE
- Hutton J, (2015)Towards a Land Use Strategy for Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Land Use Taskforce p30 [http://www.nienvironmentlink.org/cmsfiles/Towards-a-Land-Strategy-for-NI\\_2015-Main-Report.pdf#page=30](http://www.nienvironmentlink.org/cmsfiles/Towards-a-Land-Strategy-for-NI_2015-Main-Report.pdf#page=30)

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### **Maximise the impact of public procurement**

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[http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/niao\\_general\\_report\\_2014.pdf#page=37](http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/niao_general_report_2014.pdf#page=37)
- Social clause progress: RSM McClure Watters (2013)Social Clauses in Northern Ireland p8  
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- CEE Procurement paper (unpublished)
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[http://www.nicva.org/sites/default/files/d7content/attachments-resources/nicva\\_cee\\_report\\_eleven\\_finalwebv.pdf#page=24](http://www.nicva.org/sites/default/files/d7content/attachments-resources/nicva_cee_report_eleven_finalwebv.pdf#page=24) NICVA CEE
- Innovation Fund: Envision (2015) Fostering Innovation Through Public Procurement p38  
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- CEE Procurement paper (unpublished)
- <http://www.buysocialni.org/>
- RSM McClure Watters (Consulting) (2014) The Realities of Public Procurement for SMEs in Northern Ireland, FSB <http://www.fsb.org.uk/docs/default-source/fsb-org-uk/the-realities-of-public-procurement.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

### **Support active citizenship and voluntary action**

- <http://www.civicus.org/csi/>

### **Legislate for fairness and equality**

- <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/northern-ireland-68-back-equal-marriage-higher-irish-referendum-amnesty-calls-law>
- <http://includeyouth.org/news/event/conference-raising-the-minimum-age-of-criminal-responsibility>
- <http://elderabuse.org.uk/northern-ireland/>

## Costings.

### Costs of a Universal Childcare pilot in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas

The NICVA Centre for Economic Empowerment research report 'Universal Childcare in Northern Ireland' (authored by PricewaterhouseCoopers) carried out an economic cost-benefit analysis of three international options for publicly subsidised childcare models as applied to Northern Ireland.<sup>1</sup>

For one of the models selected for study, using data on childcare costs per place in the Canadian Province of Quebec, an average cost of **£4,080** per childcare place from ages 1-14 was estimated, assuming a take up rate of 43.7% of eligible children (all children in the age ranges in the NRA).<sup>2</sup>

### Number of childcare places:<sup>3</sup>

Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) is a cross-government strategy that aims to bring together the work of all Government Departments in partnership with local people to tackle disadvantage and deprivation in all aspects of everyday life. There are 36 NR areas, they are the 20% most deprived urban wards in Northern Ireland.

Single year of age data on populations in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas is not available, however, a broad age band of 0-15 gives rough numbers. From these, indicative childcare places can be calculated under the assumed take up rate.

NRA	NRA Code	Persons: 0-15 years	Childcare places (43.7% take up rate)
Andersonstown	95BRO_01	1,728	755
Colin	95BRO_02	5,599	2,447
Crumlin / Ardoyne	95BRO_03	3,682	1,609
Falls / Clonard	95BRO_04	3,725	1,628
Greater Shankill	95BRO_05	3,882	1,696
Inner East Belfast	95BRO_06	5,072	2,216
Inner North Belfast	95BRO_07	2,552	1,115
Inner South Belfast	95BRO_08	1,529	668
Ligoniel	95BRO_09	734	321
Outer West Belfast	95BRO_10	1,839	804
Rathcoole	95BRO_11	1,569	686
South West Belfast	95BRO_12	1,107	484
Tullycarnet	95BRO_13	547	239
Upper Ardoyne / Ballysillan	95BRO_14	756	330
Upper Springfield / Whiterock	95BRO_15	2,835	1,239
Limavady	95NWDO_01	405	177
Outer North Derry	95NWDO_02	4,363	1,907
Outer West Derry	95NWDO_03	1,914	836
Strabane	95NWDO_04	1,024	447
Triax - Cityside	95NWDO_05	3,328	1,454
Waterside	95NWDO_06	1,958	856
Armagh	95RDO_01	1,287	562
Ballyclare	95RDO_02	260	114
Ballymena	95RDO_03	904	395
Bangor	95RDO_04	690	302

<sup>1</sup> PwC (2015) *Universal Childcare in Northern Ireland*. NICVA.

<sup>2</sup> PwC, pp 28-9. See footnote 62 (page 31) of for how this take-up rate was calculated.

<sup>3</sup> NISRA, *Mid-year population estimates by broad age band (2014)*

<b>Brownlow</b>	95RDO_05	2,464	<b>1,077</b>
<b>Coalisland</b>	95RDO_06	676	<b>295</b>
<b>Coleraine Churchlands</b>	95RDO_07	661	<b>289</b>
<b>Coleraine East</b>	95RDO_08	817	<b>357</b>
<b>Downpatrick</b>	95RDO_09	1,464	<b>640</b>
<b>Dungannon</b>	95RDO_10	427	<b>187</b>
<b>Enniskillen</b>	95RDO_11	585	<b>256</b>
<b>Lurgan</b>	95RDO_12	1,699	<b>742</b>
<b>Newry</b>	95RDO_13	2,361	<b>1,032</b>
<b>Omagh</b>	95RDO_14	581	<b>254</b>
<b>Portadown North West</b>	95RDO_15	660	<b>288</b>

### **Existing pre-school provision (3-4 year olds):**

The current cost of government spending pre-school provision in Northern Ireland is difficult to calculate, due to the presence of some spending by the Executive and tax benefits (for example, from WTCs and childcare vouchers). However, an annual figure of £129million spent by the devolved government has been arrived at, based on similar figures calculated for Scotland.<sup>4</sup>

Neighbourhood Renewal Areas together represent 17% of 0-15 year olds in the Northern Ireland population. An estimation of existing spending in this area that would be covered by the provision of universal childcare of £22m could be applied.

### **Increased revenue from currently devolved taxes:**

The PwC research report for NICVA estimated benefits to public finances of £260.4million, implied by the increased income tax take, and reduced benefits spending, by employed parents benefitting from the Quebecois model of universal childcare in Northern Ireland.

However, as many of the fiscal benefits occurring as a result of devolved policy spending do not actually accrue to Northern Ireland, a much smaller benefit in light of tax revenues currently devolved of £20m was calculated.<sup>5</sup> Based on Neighbourhood Renewal Areas population share of Northern Ireland of 15.8%, an increase in devolved taxes of £3.2m annually would result from the pilot.

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<sup>4</sup> PwC p 27.

<sup>5</sup> PwC, p 39.

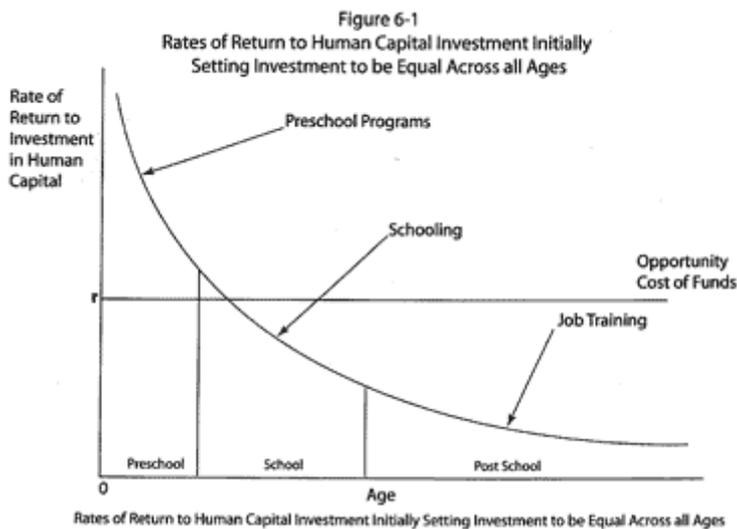
## Universal early years provision for all 0-4 year olds.

### Benefit

A UK Parliamentary study collated evidence which demonstrates that early intervention to improve the lives of children reduces the prevalence of social problems later in life and generates huge savings in public spending.<sup>6</sup>

Internationally the World Bank has shown through Early Childhood Development project research that children who participate are more successful in later school, are more competent socially and emotionally, and show higher verbal and intellectual development during early childhood. Ensuring healthy child development, therefore, is an investment in a country's future workforce and capacity to thrive economically and as a society.<sup>7</sup>

This is also a cost effective investment as Nobel Laureate in Economics, James J. Heckman, notes the 'highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through age five.'<sup>8</sup> The steep drop in return on investment as a child grows older is shown in the below table:



Source: Heckman & Carneiro (2003) *Human Capital Policy*

This is why we are calling for universal early years provision for all 0 – 4year olds in Northern Ireland.

<sup>6</sup> Graham Allen MP (2011) Early Intervention: Smart Investment; Massive Savings, Report to HMG

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/61012/earlyintervention-smartinvestment.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61012/earlyintervention-smartinvestment.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> The World Bank, Why Invest in Early Child Development (ECD)

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTCY/EXTECD/0,,contentMDK:20207747~menuPK:527098~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:344939,00.html>

<sup>8</sup> James Heckman (2012) Invest in Early Childhood Development: Reduce Deficits, Strengthen the Economy

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## Cost

There are a number of early years programmes throughout Northern Ireland. Figures from the Department of Education (DE) Independent Review of the Sure Start Programme<sup>9</sup> are used here. This model has been independently evaluated for a government department and this evaluation was completed recently therefore providing accurate and up to date figures for this estimate.

Approximately 35,300 children are registered with Sure Start in Northern Ireland, a 91% take up rate of eligible children in the current Sure Start areas.<sup>10</sup> Children can access Sure Start up to their fourth birthday. The total budget for Sure Start 2014/15 was £24,189,672 or just over £620,000 per Sure Start Project. The average cost per child was £658.<sup>11</sup>

Using the most recent mid-year population estimates by NISRA there are 100,432 0-3 year olds in NI.<sup>12</sup> Assuming the same 91% take up rate there would be needed an additional **56,095** places.

$$100,434/100 \times 91 = 91,394.94$$

$$91,394.94 - 35,300 = 56,095.94$$

Multiplying this number of additional spaces by the cost per child is an additional budget of £36.9m to Sure Start for 14/15. That would depend on providing exactly the same services as currently provided.

$$56,094.94 \times 658 = 36,910,470.52$$

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<sup>9</sup> RSM McClure Watters (Consulting) (2015) Independent Review of the Sure Start Programme Department of Education Northern Ireland  
<https://www.deni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/final-report-review-of-sure-start.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> RSM McClure Watters (Consulting) (2015) Independent Review of the Sure Start Programme Department of Education Northern Ireland  
<https://www.deni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/final-report-review-of-sure-start.pdf#page=50>

<sup>11</sup> RSM McClure Watters (Consulting) (2015) Independent Review of the Sure Start Programme Department of Education Northern Ireland  
<https://www.deni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/final-report-review-of-sure-start.pdf#page=23>

<sup>12</sup> NISRA (2015) Population by sex & single year of age (1961-2014)  
<http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp17.htm>

## Costs of radically reducing reoffending

The Department of Justice estimated the total economic cost of crime in Northern Ireland in 2006-07 to be £2.9 billion (£3.46bn in 2014-15 prices), with the majority of this cost falling to individuals, but also to business and the NI and UK Governments.<sup>13</sup> In 2014-15, Northern Ireland's criminal justice system has the highest average cost per prisoner place in the UK (£58,387), more than double the cost of the England and Wales average (£25,980).<sup>14</sup>

In 2012-13, adult offenders released from custody had one-year proven reoffending rates of 45.8% (comprising 726 cases), over half of which occur within only four months following their release.<sup>15</sup> 18.4% of reoffences are violence against the person, 14% public order offences and 12.7% are theft.<sup>16</sup>

The NIACRO 'Jobtrack' programme offered training, advice and work-sampling opportunities to prisoners (both during and after their imprisonment) and those serving community sentences through the Probation Board, with the aim of reducing their propensity to reoffend. The Department of Justice Data Lab's statistical analysis of the programme tracked custodial release and community supervision offenders through reoffending databases. One-third of offenders taking part in the Jobtrack programme completed it fully. The study found that Jobtrack significantly reduced reoffending rates for those who had fully completed the programme by up to 24 percentage points, and for partial completers by up to 18 percentage points, when compared to a closely matched sample of offenders with no such intervention.<sup>17</sup>

If all of the custodial releases during 2012-13 (i.e. 1,584 participants) had taken part in the Jobtrack programme and the results had been on par with those studied in the Data Lab analysis,<sup>18</sup> the number of those who reoffended at least once within one year could have been reduced by 158.<sup>19</sup>

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13 Oxford Economics (2007) Costs of Crime Against Government Departments in Northern Ireland. DoJ. <https://www.dojni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/cost-of-crime.pdf>

14 NI Prison Service (2015) Annual Report and Accounts 2014-15 [https://www.dojni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/ni-prison-service-annual-report-and-accounts-2014-15\\_0.pdf](https://www.dojni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/ni-prison-service-annual-report-and-accounts-2014-15_0.pdf) and Ministry of Justice (2015) Costs per place and costs per prisoner [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/471625/costs-per-place.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/471625/costs-per-place.pdf)

15 DoJ (2015) Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland (2012/13 Cohort), Table 8 and Table 2b <https://www.dojni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/17-2015-adult-and-youth-reoffending-in-ni-201213-cohort-01sep15.pdf>

16 Ibid, Table 10b.

17 DoJ (2015) Northern Ireland Data Lab Bulletin 1/2015 <https://www.dojni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/northern-ireland-data-lab-1-2015.pdf>

18 This is not an unrealistic target. In 2010/11, the Jobtrack programme, as budgeted for, had 1,116 participants.

19 Taking 1,584 offenders (the number release from custody in 2012-13) of which 726 (45.8%) reoffended within one year. If the completion rate of Jobtrack were fully realised, the number of reoffenders would have reduced to 568.

Based on reports of the cost of Jobtrack of £1,694 per participant, funding of £2.7million would have been required to achieve this reduction.<sup>20</sup>

Different types of reoffending have varying levels of financial cost associated with them, as well as different sentence lengths, making it difficult to calculate the cost to the criminal justice system of reoffending (notwithstanding other economic and social costs). However, given that the annual actual operating cost of a prison place in Northern Ireland is £58,387, only 46 year-long imprisonments out of 158 previous offenders (who tend to have longer sentences imposed for subsequent offences) need be avoided in order to make this intervention cost-effective.

In addition to the positive impact on costs to the criminal justice system, reduced reoffending stops crime being committed in the first place. This also has significant economic and social benefits, which vary depending on the type of crime and are therefore more difficult to quantify in the case of a single reduction programme, but add to the business case for tackling reoffending.

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<sup>20</sup> Interventions during the Jobtrack programme cost £1,694 per participant, below the budgeted amount of £2,360 (NIACRO).

## Reduce the cost of school for low income families

Pupils with a parent/guardian on a low income are entitled to Free School Meals (FSMs) but still face the expense of school trips, school uniforms, sports gear, and books and stationary.<sup>21</sup> In order to ensure that all pupils can fully participate in school life without putting their parents in financial difficulty, NICVA recommends that FSM should be extended to cover these additional costs. This is known as a Free School Day.

### Costings

We estimate that the additional cost of a Free School Day would be in the region of £34.3m. This figure is primarily based on a [survey](#) undertaken by the Irish league of Credit Unions (ILCU) of what parents expect to pay in schooling costs in 2015/16, together with the number of [pupils](#) entitled to FSM in 2014/15. As the calculations are based on entitlement rather than receipt of FSM the figure of £34.3m is likely to be an upper estimate (the take-up rate for FSM is approximately 80%). More detail on the calculations is provided below.

**Table 1: Summary of Costings**

Item	Cost (£m)
School trips	13.7
School uniforms	8.7
Sports kits	6.7
Books/stationary	5.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34.3</b>

### *School Trips*

Schools are not supposed to charge for educational trips if 50% or more of the time spent on the trip is within school hours. However they are permitted to charge when less than 50% of the trip time is within school hours. The ILCU reports that on average parents expect to spend £86 on school trips for primary pupils and £224 for post-primary pupils. Multiplying these figures by the number of pupils entitled to free school meals results in an additional **£13.7m.**

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<sup>21</sup> See Willow (2001) Bread Is Free: Children and young people talk about poverty and Horgan (2014) [Child Poverty and Education. In Beneath the Surface: Child Poverty in Northern Ireland by the Child Poverty Alliance.](#)

**Table 2: Cost of School Trips**

	<b>FSM</b>	<b>Cost Per Pupil</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
<b>Primary</b>	55,526	86	4.8
<b>Post-primary</b>	39,895	224	8.9
<b>TOTAL</b>			13.7

**School Uniforms**

The Education Authority provides a grant towards the cost of a school uniform, called the School Uniform Allowance (SUA). The eligibility criteria for the SUA is similar to that of FSM.<sup>22</sup> Under the SUA primary school pupils receive £35.75, post-primary pupils under 15 receive £51, and post-primary pupils 15 or over receive £56.<sup>23</sup> However this does not fully cover the cost that parents reported in the ILCU survey of £96 for a primary school pupil and £180 for a post-primary school pupil. After the SUA is taken into account parents of primary school pupils have a remaining cost of £60.25 per child, parents with post-primary children under 15 face an outstanding cost of £129 per child, and parents with post-primary children over 15 have a shortfall of £124 per child. Given the numbers of pupils in each category that are entitled to the SUA and the outstanding cost of a uniform (after taking the grant into account) it can be estimated that it would cost the DENI an additional £8.7m to fully cover the cost of school uniforms.

**Table: School Uniform Grant**

	<b>Pupils Entitled to SUA 2014/15</b>	<b>Cost Per Pupil (£)</b>	<b>SUA Per Pupil (£)</b>	<b>Remaining Cost Per Pupil (£)</b>	<b>Total (£m)</b>
Primary	56,144	96	35.75	60.25	3.4
Post-primary (under 15)	28,562	180	51	129	3.7
Post-primary (over 15)	12,861	180	56	124	1.6
<b>TOTAL</b>					8.7

**Sports Gear**

The Education Authority supplies post-primary pupils entitled to SUA with a PE Allowance of £22 towards the cost of sports gear. However the ILCU

<sup>22</sup> FSM has an additional criteria for pupils with special dietary requirements.

<sup>23</sup> Data available at <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/parents/schools-learning-and-development/school-life-parents/school-uniform-grant.htm>

survey reports that the annual cost of sports gear was £53 for primary pupils and £114 for post-primary pupils. This results in an outstanding cost to the parents of post-pupils of £92 and means that parents of a primary school pupil would have to cover the full cost of £53. In total this comes to an additional **£6.7m**.

**Table: Sports Gear**

	<b>Pupils Entitled to PE Allowance</b>	<b>Cost Per Pupil (£)</b>	<b>Grant Per Pupil (£)</b>	<b>Remaining Cost Per Pupil (£)</b>	<b>Total (£m)</b>
Primary	56,144	53	0	53	3.0
Post-primary	41,423	114	22	92	3.8
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>6.7</b>

***Books and Stationary***

Schools are prohibited from charging for materials, books, instruments or other equipment. However the ILCU survey reported that on average parents of primary school pupils spent £46 on books, while the parents of post-primary pupils spent £69. If this cost was covered for pupils entitled to FSM it would come to £5.2m.

**Table: Cost of Books and Stationary**

	<b>Pupils Entitled to FSM</b>	<b>Cost Per Pupil (£)</b>	<b>Total Cost (£m)</b>
Primary	55,526	46	2.6
Post-primary	39,895	69	2.7
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>5.2</b>