



ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY GROUP

**WE'RE CALLING FOR A
COMPREHENSIVE
ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY
THAT WILL ERADICATE
POVERTY IN NI**

#ANTIPOVERTYSTRATEGYGROUP

Media statement from The Anti-Poverty Strategy Group following the publication of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy 18 June 2025

The Anti-Poverty Strategy Group has rejected the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy published by Minister Gordon Lyons as not fit for purpose after carefully considering its proposals. In the coming weeks, the group will set out its updated recommendations for a meaningful and effective Anti-Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland and bring them to the Minister.

The strategy was shared with the group, which represents 21 organisations committed to working constructively with the government to tackle poverty across Northern Ireland, in late May. After careful analysis the group has unanimously agreed the document is not fit for purpose and does not outline the steps necessary to eradicate poverty in Northern Ireland.

Trása Canavan, Chair of the group, and Senior Policy and Public Affairs Lead at Barnardo's NI, said, "We are hugely disappointed with the content of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy, given the volume of work that has gone into the Expert Advisory Panel's report and the Co-Design Group's recommendations which have been disregarded and a different path taken.

"Our group had outlined a set of key principles that any strategy must contain to be effective but none of these are evident in the draft strategy. This included clear and time-bound targets, a lifecycle approach, new actions and clear funding commitments, rather than counting work that is already underway.

"We had hoped that by meeting and discussing this with the Minister in early June, he would be able to provide reassurance that the draft strategy could be changed significantly, however we did not receive those assurances.

“Our group remains committed to working constructively with the government to tackling poverty in Northern Ireland. However, our political leaders need to lead that change and make the brave decisions to drive change forward.”

NICVA commented, "For too long now, the voluntary and community sector has been standing in the gap where a robust Anti-Poverty Strategy should be - providing crucial early intervention, prevention and crisis support across Northern Ireland. The NI Executive must deliver a braver, more courageous and fully co-designed long-term plan to eradicate poverty that is cross-departmental, targeted, and supported by ring-fenced funding. NICVA will continue to work constructively with Government to make this a reality."

Quotes from other organisations in the Group:

Rural Community Network said, ““This draft strategy does not address the structural drivers of poverty in our society, it makes no attempt to address low wages, irregular work, regional balance or the additional cost to rural communities in accessing services. This was a chance to get upstream, and our co-design work was carried out with lived experience of poverty from the work we do day to day at its core; to not see this reflected in this current draft is very disappointing.”

Children’s Law Centre said, “A 2024 report by the NI Audit Office found that the cost to the NI government of not tackling child poverty is £1bn a year – investment to tackle the root causes of poverty would allow society to get ahead of the issues and significantly reduce these costs. The draft strategy does not consider structural causes of poverty which will continue to affect many in society if not addressed urgently. The proposals set out in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy will have no meaningful impact on the children, families and communities in Northern Ireland living in poverty.”

Statement Ends