



Department for

**Communities**

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# ANNUAL REPORT ON CHILD POVERTY

## 2015-2016

A REPORT TO THE ASSEMBLY AS REQUIRED BY  
ARTICLE 12(7) OF THE LIFE CHANCES ACT

# CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i> .....	3
<i>Purpose of this Document</i> .....	4
<b>1. OUR APPROACH</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>2. ACTIVITY OVER THE PAST YEAR</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>3. CHILD POVERTY IN NI</b> .....	<b>44</b>
<b>4. NEXT STEPS</b> .....	<b>59</b>

## **FOREWORD**

Last year, the Departments Bill was introduced to reduce the number of government departments from twelve to nine to create a more streamlined and efficient Government in Northern Ireland. As a result, the policy on Child Poverty, previously within the remit of OFMDFM, transferred to the Department for Communities on 9 May 2016.

The new Department for Communities is unique in that it brings together, for the first time, the key policy and delivery levers that can bring about real and lasting societal change. Our challenge lies in the opportunity this presents for us to deliver more seamless services to those who need them. In the Department for Communities, we will be focussing on outcomes that support the most vulnerable; tackling poverty, disadvantage and inequality and ensuring all our citizens benefit from renewed and revitalised communities. Our focus is now firmly on delivering better outcomes for people, outcomes that matter most and can make a real difference.

As we begin this work, it is apt that we look back on what has been accomplished in the previous mandate. Focusing on the period 1 April 2015- 31 March 2016; this Annual Report sets out a summary of the approach taken, activity carried out and a look at some of the key statistical indicators in terms of child poverty. As well as providing a useful look at where we are now, this Report fulfils our obligations under the Life Chances Act 2010 to provide annual reports on our Child Poverty Strategy. I look forward to working together with my Executive colleagues to build on the good work already taken and make even further strides to ensure that children here do not experience socio-economic disadvantage. Our next steps will be set out in the final chapter of this Report.

**PAUL GIVAN MLA**  
**Minister for Communities**

## PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

[The Life Chances Act 2010](#), enacted on 25 March 2010, required us to publish and lay before the Assembly a Child Poverty Strategy by 25 March 2011. A Child Poverty Strategy, 'Improving Children's Life Chances,' was published in March 2011, annual reports have been produced and published and a review of the strategy was completed in its third year. A new Child Poverty Strategy was published on 25 March 2016.

[The Welfare Reform and Work Bill](#), received Royal Assent on 16 March 2016. This Bill amends the Child Poverty Act and renames it the Life Chances Act. While this Bill removes the UK targets set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010, it does not remove the obligation for the NI Executive to publish a Child Poverty Strategy, report annually on that Strategy and review and revise the Strategy every three years. The legislation requires that we publish an Annual Report which describes the measures taken by the Northern Ireland departments in accordance with the Northern Ireland strategy and describes the effects of those measures that contribute to the purpose of ensuring as far as possible that children in Northern Ireland do not experience socio-economic disadvantage.

**This document is the Executive's Child Poverty Annual Report 2015-16 – a Report to the Assembly as required by Article 12(7) of the Life Chances 2010**

**The Executive's approach to work to tackle child poverty over 2015-16 is set out in the next section. The measures taken by NI departments over the past year are summarised in Section 2 and the effect of those measures on the key indicators of child poverty is set out in Section 3.**

# 1. OUR APPROACH

## Programme for Government

The Programme for Government sets the general objectives and direction for the Executive in tackling poverty. It is also the means for integrating the activities of Government departments and Agencies and utilising and allocating resources between them so as to meet these objectives.

The Executive's overall number one priority set out in the Programme for Government 2011-15 was to grow the economy whilst at the same time tackling social and economic disadvantage. The Executive committed to:

- *Fulfil our commitments under the Child Poverty Act (now the Life Chances Act) to reduce child poverty; and*
- *Deliver a range of measures to tackle poverty and social exclusion through the Delivering Social Change framework.*

The Programme for Government 2011-15 also included a range of work to deliver on our priority to tackle child poverty, such as commitments to: support the promotion of 25,000 new jobs; upskill the working age population by delivering over 200,000 qualifications; and improve literacy and numeracy levels among all school leavers, with additional support targeted at underachieving pupils.

## Delivering Social Change

Through the Executive's Delivering Social Change framework, work was undertaken across departments to tackle poverty and social exclusion. A wide range of holistic interventions were provided through a number of Signature Programmes. Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes were initiated to improve literacy and numeracy levels, offer increased family support and to support job creation within local communities; all of which were identified as being key priorities. The impact of the six initial Signature Programmes is still under evaluation and in some cases the outcomes may not be apparent for a number of years. However, as of March 2016:

- *Over 5,300 families have been accepted by the Family Support Hubs and signposted to support services;*
- *Around 450 primary school children have been supported by 20 Nurture Units funded under the Delivering Social Change Signature Programme;*
- *Over 100 social enterprises have either tested or started up as a new business with the support of Social Enterprise Hubs;*
- *Over 18,600 primary and post primary children received additional Maths and English support through the Literacy and Numeracy Programme;*
- *720 families participated in the Community Family Support Programme;*
- *Over 700 families have been helped and supported through Parenting Support Programmes; and*
- *Over 300 health professionals developed their skills for delivering parenting programmes (improving infant mental health and reducing childhood behavioural problems).*

**More information on these programmes can be found in Section 2.**

## Child Poverty Strategy

The Executive's Child Poverty Strategy, *Improving Children's Life Chances*, was published on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2011. This strategy set out the key areas considered crucial to address the causes and consequences of child poverty. This Strategy focuses on the priority policy areas of education, early years, childcare, health and social care, family support, housing, neighbourhood, financial support and parental employment and skills.

**A report on the work undertaken in the past year in relation to each of these policy areas is set out in Section 2.**

In addition to this work, considerable effort has been undertaken since 2014 to develop a new Child Poverty Strategy which was published on 25 March 2016. We aim to reduce the number of children in poverty and reduce the impact of poverty on children. The Child Poverty Strategy 2016-19 focuses on four high level outcomes:

- *Families experience economic well being;*
- *Children in poverty learn and achieve;*
- *Children in poverty are healthy; and*
- *Children in poverty live in safe, secure and stable environments.*

The strategy sets out our goals to: ensure programmes and policies provide extra support for children in poverty and to improve outcomes for children in low-income families and take children out of poverty; encourage joined up working across departments and with stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of this work; and evaluate this work, using Outcomes Based Accountability, to measure the impact of programmes and policies, to ensure that we are doing the right things.

## Children and Young People Strategy

The Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People, '*Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge*' was published in June 2006. The aim of the strategy was to produce improved outcomes for all children and young people over the ten year period.

The *2015 Update to the Children and Young People's Indicators* was published in October 2015. The indicators were developed under the high level outcomes of the *Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People* (Healthy; Economic and Environmental Well-being; Enjoying, learning and achieving; positive and valued contribution; and safety and stability.) These outcomes have informed the proposed outcomes for the new Child Poverty Strategy.

The Executive's Children and Young People's Strategy was placed into legislation through the Children's Services Co-operation Act which received Royal Assent in December 2015.

It can be accessed at the following link: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ni/2015/10/contents/enacted>

Key Findings from the October 2015 update to the Children and Young People's Indicators include:

- ***Births to mothers aged under 17 reached a new record low in 2014 with 84 births recorded, a rate of 2.4 per 1,000 females aged under 17.***



- *More school leavers are tending to choose Further and Higher Education courses rather than enter employment or training with more than three out of four school leavers opting for this choice in 2013/14 (77.2%).*
- *The average waiting time for youth defendants going through our youth courts from date of summons to date of disposal was 13.0 weeks in 2014; this is down on the 2013 figure of 13.9 weeks.*
- *Over the 11 years of monitoring data there has generally been a downward trend in the number of children killed or seriously injured on our roads. In 2014 there were 81 fewer children killed or seriously injured than that recorded at baseline in 2004; 70 compared to 151.*

The full report can be found on the [Executive Office Statistics and Research Branch website](#). **Further indicators in relation to child poverty are set out in Section 3.**

Work is underway on the development of the new Children and Young People's Strategy. The new Strategy will be expected to consider the key issues facing children and young people and outline how Government will work collaboratively to improve the well-being of our children and young people. **More information on this work is set out in the Engagement section below.**

## RESEARCH AND STATISTICAL PUBLICATIONS

The approach to child poverty is informed by research commissioned from a range of sources. These research publications support the formulation and development of policy; assess impacts; provide a challenge perspective; and intend to facilitate broader societal debate. Research is also conducted to provide statutory authorities with data and information to assist in undertaking their statutory duty under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).

An example of one of these publications is: [The Lifetime Opportunities Monitoring Framework 2015 update](#). This publication comprises published data across a variety of subjects including poverty, economic activity and employment, education, health and housing. The report provides time series data for Northern Ireland as well as comparisons, where available, to the UK, RoI and the European Union.

## ENGAGEMENT

*The work to tackle poverty is informed by engagement with children and young people, parents and other stakeholders, including community, voluntary and charitable organisations which advocate on the behalf of children and young people.*

Following on from the considerable consultation undertaken in the development of the new Child Poverty Strategy, further work has been taken forward in 2015-16 to put in place monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

This work must be put in context of other work which has a direct impact on child poverty policy, including the approach to wider Children and Young People's policy and children's rights and work to develop a new wider strategy to tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation on the basis of objective need. Work has continued to seek to align all of this work. Development of a new outcome-based Programme for Government will be a major element of this.

### **New Programme for Government Framework**

In 2015, a series of engagements and community conversations took place with stakeholders and members of the public in order to learn from people's individual circumstances, capture their experiences and identify the recurring issues and worries facing people. The outcome of this engagement process is now feeding into the development of the new Programme for Government Framework. Those involved included: 42 Stakeholder organisations in one-to-one meetings, 85 stakeholder representatives in workshops and 190 individuals from a range of backgrounds, communities and perspectives.

Questions asked during community conversations were intentionally broad and open-ended. The questions asked were:

- *What sort of society would you like to live in?*
- *On a daily basis, what would you say are the main barriers that you face that stop you from having the life you would like?*

- *What has the potential to make a difference in the future?*
- *What are the main worries that you and your family have?*

In addition to the face-to-face engagement; existing statistics, data and research available and primary research in the form of questions (including in the January 2015 Omnibus survey) were used to gather representative views and issues facing people and inform the process of evidencing and identifying social priorities.

### **High Level Strategy for Children and Young People**

A substantial amount of work, consultation and engagement in the development of a new Strategy for Children and Young People has been carried out since June 2015. This has included reviewing the previous strategy; analysing and assessing relevant documents; engaging with stakeholders; and taking forward a co-design process. The co-design process was formally launched in September 2015 and feedback received has informed how the process moved forward. A project board was established which included the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People. Workshops, a series of meetings with NGOs and consultation with children and young people and parents (including guardians and carers) also took place.

### **Childcare**

The Executive's Childcare Strategy has two main aims:

- Child Development: quality childcare services can give children a better start in life, preparing them for lifelong wellbeing and achievement, thereby creating the basis for a better, more prosperous future; and

- Parental Employment: accessible and affordable childcare can be an enabler for parents wanting to join the workforce. Parental employment can augment family incomes thereby enhancing a family's prosperity. It can also contribute to greater gender equality by enabling mothers to join the workforce, or return to work, or remain in work.

Both of these aims—child development and parental employment—can help to address the negative effects of disadvantage.

The first phase of the Executive's Childcare Strategy was launched in September 2013. Its principal initiative is the Bright Start School Age Childcare Grant Scheme which has, to date, supported some 3,000 low cost childcare places. Disadvantaged communities have been a notable beneficiary of this Scheme.

Development of the full Childcare Strategy has been underway since early 2014 and has involved ongoing engagement with the main childcare stakeholders as well as extensive consultation. Consultation on a draft Childcare Strategy took place in the second half of 2015. Public consultation events were held throughout Northern Ireland along with specialist events for children and parents.

In addition, more than 300 people commented outside of these organised consultation events, either via an online questionnaire or by submitting a written response. All of these responses have since been analysed to inform the final version of the Strategy which is expected to be launched before the end of 2016.

The draft Strategy, issued for consultation in July 2015, included a number of proposals specifically targeted at children from disadvantaged families, including the proposal that childcare places for the most disadvantaged families be fully funded.

## **Social Strategy**

We have begun to develop a new Social Strategy which will also meet our requirements under Section 28E of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) to adopt a strategy to “tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation based on objective need”.

**The approach to child poverty going forward is set out in Section 4 – Next Steps.**

## 2. ACTIVITY OVER THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2015 – 31 MARCH 2016

### *Parental Employment and Skills*

#### **Social Investment Fund**

The Social Investment Fund (SIF) is an £80 million Executive Fund focused on improving communities and the lives of the people within them. SIF has adopted a community led and community driven approach to addressing social issues. As of February 2016, £61 million has been committed to 44 Social Investment Fund projects.

The Fund's delivery mechanism is firmly rooted in the community. There are 9 Social Investment Fund zones, each with a cross sectoral steering group which took responsibility for developing an Area Plan, in consultation with the wider community. The area plans included a range of prioritised projects, aligned to the zonal budget and developed to specifically address the identified needs in local communities. Most Social Investment Zones have prioritised an employment project to bridge the skills gap between unemployment and work for local residents in areas of high unemployment. We anticipate that the benefits of all these projects will not be limited to participants, but will also have positive impacts on their families, friends and the wider community as they gain skills, experience and, above all, self-belief. Those projects that were operational in 2015-16 are as follows:

### EmployAbility Belfast South Project

The £2.2million EmployAbility Belfast South project, launched in November 2015, is designed to develop the skills, confidence and work readiness of the long-term unemployed in the area. In practice this means that up to 375 participants can avail of training opportunities specifically linked to local employers' needs complimented by tailored support and advice from mentors. After completion, participants will have 13-week paid work placements with a range of local employers including Allstate NI, Deloitte and Alliance Pharmacy.

### Work Ready West

The £2.2million Work Ready West project, launched in June 2015, aims to help the long term unemployed into paid work and training. It will offer support for 160 long term unemployed in Fermanagh and South Tyrone; West Tyrone and parts of East Londonderry (Western Social Investment Zone). Participants will receive 50 weeks paid full-time work placements with a local employer to enhance and develop their employability skills. The overall objective is to help participants improve their skills, build their confidence and achieve their potential, in short, improve their future employability.

### West Belfast Works

In December 2015, the £3.29million West Belfast Works project was launched. It is designed to give up to 300 long term unemployed the opportunity to develop and enhance their employability and will, over a three year period, provide up to 300 paid work placements of up to 51 weeks with a range of employers. In addition, up to 500 training opportunities will be provided for people who are either working part-time or are in a post where they could develop further in their career, and earn more given the right training.



### Work It project

The launch took place in September 2015 of the £2.7million Work It project designed to support the long term unemployed in Newry and Armagh; Upper Bann; and parts of South Down, Lagan Valley, Fermanagh and South Tyrone and Mid Ulster (Southern Social Investment Zone). Over two years the project will provide 160 unemployed people aged between 16 and 65 with 48 weeks of paid temporary contract work together with enhanced training, personal development and job search support. Links with the local community will also be strengthened as during training/team development days participants will potentially complete 500 community projects. A long-term strategic legacy is also planned as lessons learned about participant skill gaps will be shared with the Southern and South West Workforce Development Forums. This would allow the design of complementary localised on the job training programmes.

### Community Work Programme

This £3.3 million project, launched in June 2015, is aimed at residents in Foyle and part of East Londonderry (Derry/Londonderry Social Investment Zone). The target group is young people aged 16+ not in education, training and employment and long term unemployed/economically inactive adults, who are disengaged from the labour market, have limited qualifications and may also have additional barriers to accessing/retaining employment. Over the period to June 2017 up to 100 places will be available on a 104 week pre-apprentice level - subsidised work placement programme that also provides mentoring, educational support programmes, work related training and skills development.

## Building to Employment Through Education

The £3.2million Building to Employment Through Education (BEE) project will launch in March 2016 for residents in Mid Ulster, South Antrim, East Antrim, and parts of East Londonderry and Mid Ulster (Northern Social Investment Zone). Its aim is to break the intergenerational transfer of disadvantage from parents with poor literacy, language and numeracy skills to their children and is based on research which indicates that low aspirations are transferred to children from parents due to the quality of the home learning environment. This coupled with parent's own qualification levels are noted to be the most important background factors relating to a child's attainment.

## *Education*

### **Nurture Units**

At end March 2016, the Department of Education was supporting 30 Nurture Groups in primary schools located in socially disadvantaged areas, 20 of which were created through the Delivering Social Change Programme. Nurture groups aim to bridge the gap between home and school by supporting the social, emotional and behavioural development of young children in the early years of school, helping them to settle and fully engage with learning. From September 2013 to June 2016, over 700 children have attended a nurture group on a full-time basis. Over the same period, a further 800 children received part-time or short-term support from the nurture groups and all pupils have benefited from the nurturing ethos embedded within their whole schools. An evaluation carried out by Queens University Belfast has provided robust evidence that nurture groups have been

highly successful in achieving improvements in the children's development. The full evaluation is available on the Department of Education's website at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/nurture-provision-primary-schools>.

### **Delivering Social Change Literacy and Numeracy Programme**

The Programme has contributed to the improved attainment levels in literacy and numeracy with participating schools reporting improved pupil outcomes at Key Stage 2 and Year 12 School Annual Examination Results (SAER) for 2014/15 indicating improved GCSE outcomes in English and maths amongst participating schools. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) evaluation found that "A significant strength of the programme has been the impact it is having on bringing greater cohesion to the other initiatives operating currently in schools to effect overall improvement in the literacy and numeracy standards attained by the pupils". A Legacy Programme (November 2015 to March 2016) is being delivered across the school system to share the innovative learning and best practice identified through the Programme.

Over 18,600 primary and post primary children received additional Maths and English support through the Literacy and Numeracy Programme, which ran from September 2013 to June 2015.

### **Inclusion and Diversity Service**

Extra support is provided to schools to help children from newcomer and traveller families to achieve their full educational potential.

## **Extended Schools Programme**

The Extended Schools programme continues to be a key vehicle in delivering the core priorities of tackling educational inequalities and disadvantage. Underpinning the Extended Schools programme is a clear focus on raising standards and closing the achievement gap and providing additional support to help improve the life chances of disadvantaged children and young people. In 2015/16, £10.6m additional resources were allocated to close to 550 schools for services and activities designed to respond to the needs of pupils, parents, families and wider school communities as identified by eligible schools.

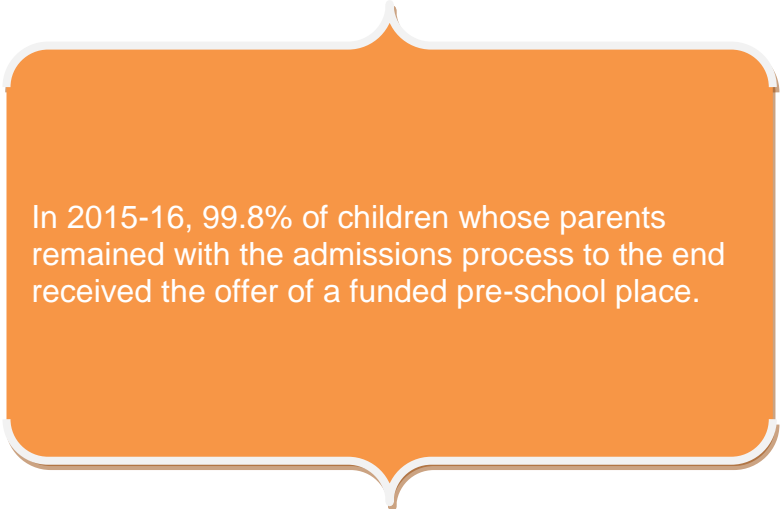
The Department of Education continues to support 2 Full Service programmes operating in North and West Belfast as part of ongoing efforts to tackle underachievement and address the needs of disadvantaged communities. The Full Service approach provides comprehensive additional support programmes and interventions on a range of social issues, delivered through partnership working between key agencies. £385k has been provided to support each programme in 2015/16.

### After School Film Club

After School Film Club is a Northern Ireland Screen extended schools initiative funded by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and is managed by Cinemagic and the Nerve Centre with key support from Into Film. Into Film gives pupils and teachers in schools within the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland the chance to explore the world of film with free weekly screenings, online reviewing, industry events, film-making experiences and hands-on support. 286 After School Film Clubs are running in Extended Service Schools with a total membership of 4,817 children and young people.

## Education Works Campaign

The first phase of the 2015/16 Education Works Campaign (September – October 2015) was aimed at parents of nursery and primary school-age children. The campaign provides authoritative information on the importance of education and the simple steps parents can take to support their child's education. Further information is available on the [NI Direct – Education Works website](#) including tips on how parents can get involved in their child's education and ideas on how they can help their child learn through play.



In 2015-16, 99.8% of children whose parents remained with the admissions process to the end received the offer of a funded pre-school place.

## Pre-School Education

The Department of Education works closely with the Education Authority and provides resources to help 'ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available for every family that wants it' (PfG 2011-15 Commitment 43). Children from socially disadvantaged circumstances are given priority within the pre-school admissions process as part of wider efforts to tackle educational underachievement. Figures for 2014-15 admissions suggest that 16% of all pre-school children had been admitted on this basis.

Additional funding is also provided to eligible voluntary/community pre-school settings delivering the Pre-School Education Programme in areas of the highest social disadvantage to identify and address underdeveloped social, emotional, communication and language skills of the young children in the settings. Funding of a similar nature is already available to statutory nursery schools and nursery units through Extended Schools funding. In the 2015/16 financial year there was

£158,250 funding and 102 eligible settings. The pre-school settings determined how they utilised the funding and interventions varied and included resources for the setting, parent workshops, and staff training.

### **Out and About: Museums in Your Community**

National Museums launched, in September 2015, a radically new community engagement programme entitled 'Out and About: Museums in Your Community, 2015-19'. The launch was designed to coincide with Community Relations and Cultural Awareness Week. The 'Out and About' programme is intended to give communities, especially in areas of deprivation, opportunities within their own localities to access museum and other publicly held cultural assets. As stage 1 in the process, National Museums, working initially in partnership with Libraries NI, is hosting workshops and exhibitions from its collections in five libraries that fall within the 'Urban Villages' identified under the Executive's 'Together Building A United Community' Strategy. The programme is still ongoing and National Museums plans to extend the partnership with Libraries NI to other Arms Length Bodies, including NI Screen and the Arts Council.

### **Creative Learning Centres**

The Creative Learning Centres in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry and Armagh deliver creative digital technology skills programmes for community and education groups, with a focus on marginalised and the most disadvantaged schools and communities. 79% of the Creative Learning Centre programmes in creative digital technology have focused on schools with children and young people experiencing disadvantage.

4,953 children and young people have been involved in Creative Learning Centre programmes in school and in community settings since April 2015.

## **Counselling in Schools**

Independent counselling support has been accessible to all grant aided post primary schools that choose to use it from September 2007 and, from 2011, those special schools that have a secondary age cohort. Counselling provides support for pupils, particularly those facing problems that may affect their capacity to learn and in turn raise standards. Access to counselling support contributes to tackling barriers to learning which may result from personal trauma, difficult home circumstances, stress, bullying and child abuse. Specific policy areas which it would link into are: Anti-bullying Programme, Child Protection, Pupils' Emotional Health and Wellbeing Programme, Suicide and Self Harm, Drugs and Alcohol, Looked After Children and Critical Incidents Response.

## **University Tuition Fees**

In the period of the Programme for Government 2011-15, there were no increases in student fees beyond the rate of inflation.

## **Social Investment Fund**

### Early Intervention – Transitions project

This project, launched in November 2015, is a programme of innovative education interventions (Incredible Years, Partnership with Parents and Mentoring for Achievement) designed to support children and their parents at key times in their young lives. It is being run by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust for parents and children living in North Down, Strangford and parts of South Down, Lagan Valley and Belfast West (South Eastern Social Investment Zone). Delivery is a collaborative effort between Barnardo's, YMCA, Colin Neighbourhood Partnership and Resurgam Community Development Trust and many others.

### SATCHEL (Schools and Community Helping Education and Learning) project

The £1.3 million SATCHEL (Schools and Community Helping Education and Learning) project, launched in March 2016, is targeted at families and children in Fermanagh and South Tyrone, West Tyrone and parts of East Londonderry (Social Investment Western Zone). It is designed to provide support during the transition from pre-school to Primary 1 and 2 with the overall aim of improving educational outcomes and increasing parental involvement in their school life and education. Twenty seven schools will support local families on sixty courses and there will be home visits and speech and language support provided as required.

### **Sign Language Partnership Group Fund**

In 2015/16, the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) funded a series of projects to provide support for deaf children and young people, including tailored early years' intervention Sign Language classes to parents and families with deaf children. These programmes were provided to improve communication within the family and to provide deaf children with early vocabulary and language which is considered key to improving their chances of academic achievement on a par to their hearing peers. Formal structured British Sign Language (BSL) classes to parents of deaf children to help them develop their BSL knowledge to support their child as (s)he develops their language skills was also funded. In addition, funding provides for BSL qualifications for deaf children, young people and Children Of Deaf Adults (CODAs) to provide academic qualifications in BSL and to promote social inclusion within the family and the wider community. DCAL recognises that a Deaf friendly learning environment for deaf children and young people is crucial to redressing the academic under-achievement of Deaf people through the generations therefore we have provided funding for projects in selected primary/secondary schools, further education colleges and University of Ulster to encourage this. These outcomes also develop a wider community understanding of sign language users and their communication needs that can lead to better life outcomes for deaf children and young people.



They were delivered by DCAL funding for a range of projects, for example:

- National Deaf Children's Society Family Sign Language course to families with deaf children to improve communication within the family and to provide their deaf children with early vocabulary and language which is key to improving their chances of academic achievement on a par to their hearing peers; and
- British Deaf Association Family Sign Language courses in the home to families with deaf children to improve communication within the family and to provide their deaf children with early vocabulary and language which is key to improving their chances of academic achievement on a par to their hearing peers

## *Early Years*

### **Sure Start**

Expansion of the Sure Start Programme to the top 25% most disadvantaged areas was substantially completed within 2015-16. Sure Start provides additional support to help children from disadvantaged areas who are at greater risk of not achieving their full educational potential. Key aims of the Programme are to improve the health, ability to learn and social development of children in the Sure Start programme and this is achieved through the provision of support and guidance including parenting advice on play, learning, nutrition, breastfeeding and healthcare.

The Department of Education has provided funding for at least one Developmental Programme for 2-3 year olds in each of the 39 Sure Start projects in Northern Ireland. This Developmental programme provides support to those children in areas of

disadvantage that it would benefit most and aims to give children the basis to: develop improved language skills; improve physical development; improve social and emotional skills; foster greater independence; increase levels of attention and concentration; and enable each child to settle in quickly to their pre-school setting.

### **Pathway Fund**

In February 2016, the Education Minister launched the new Pathway Fund which replaces the Early Years Fund from 1 April 2016. The Early Years Fund supported around 150 early years' settings since 2004, providing early years care and education to children in areas of low provision. The new Pathway fund will be open to all providers of registered early years education, focused on children aged 0-4 years, including the 150 settings that had benefitted from the Early Years Fund. It prioritises support in areas of disadvantage, where there is little or no provision and where services will enhance integration from an early age. The fund also promotes services that are delivered on a community-based social economy basis and will focus on the delivery of quality early years services and the sustainability of the early years sector. The fund will be administered by Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children – on the Department's behalf.

### **Early Intervention Transformation Programme**

The Early Intervention Transformation Programme, a Delivering Social Change Signature Programme co-funded with Atlantic Philanthropies, aims to transform mainstream services by enabling a shift to early intervention and prevention through a greater use of evidence and focus on outcomes. Workstream One of EITP seeks to equip, support and empower parents to provide their children with the best start in life. It is a partnership approach with Health and Education working across universal services, midwifery, health visiting and early years. Workstream 1 is focused on universal services, particularly from the ante-natal to pre-

school stages and focused on 3 inter-related parenting stages through the: Getting Ready for Baby, Getting Ready for Toddler and Getting Ready to Learn projects. The Getting Ready for Baby and Getting Ready for Toddler projects include strands on transforming ante-natal care and education provided by midwives and a strand on child development review for 3-4 year olds in pre-school setting. The Getting Ready to Learn project seeks to transform pre-school practice by using the skills of early years teachers and practitioners to support all parents to develop the confidence and skills they need to ensure that their children grow up happy, healthy and achieve their full potential.

Getting Ready to Learn is a universal programme which will be available in pre-school education settings over three years. It is focused on improving outcomes for children in pre-school by engaging and empowering parents to help them create and sustain positive home learning environments. The programme launched in March 2016, initiating the application process with funding available for the 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 academic years.

## *Childcare*

### **The Women's Centres Childcare Fund**

The Women's Centres Childcare Fund provides around 88,000 free childcare hours for economically and socially disadvantaged women to enable them to undertake training and other development opportunities and take up employment. The programme funds 14 centres across Northern Ireland. An evaluation of the Fund was commissioned which concluded that the programme provided a wide range of positive impacts in relation to the development and well-being of children and in supporting parents to access services and opportunities.

### **Bright Start School Age Childcare Grant Scheme**

The Executive's Childcare Strategy is being delivered on a phased basis. The first phase was launched in September 2013 and included 15 Key First Actions intended to address the priority childcare needs identified through research and during an initial round of consultation. The most ambitious of the 15 Key First Actions address an identified need for affordable school age childcare services—breakfast clubs, after school clubs and summer schemes. The Bright Start School Age Childcare Grant Scheme was launched in March 2014 to give effect to these Key First Actions. Meeting the childcare needs of disadvantaged families is one of the Grant Scheme's targets. Childcare settings based in the ten per cent most disadvantaged areas (defined as those areas with the highest proportions of children in low income families) and/or serving disadvantaged communities are eligible for higher levels of grant support. In addition, and in keeping with the Scheme's emphasis on promoting affordable childcare, only childcare settings that operate on a social economy model are eligible for assistance. A social economy setting is one in which any surplus of income over expenditure is reinvested solely for the purpose of school age childcare activities.

To ensure sensitivity to local childcare needs, the Grant Scheme is being delivered by the five Childcare Partnerships, which operate at local health and social care trust area level. As of March 2016, there have been three calls for applications. These are expected to support around 3,000 low cost childcare places. Disadvantaged communities have been a notable beneficiary of the scheme.

## **Childcare for Children with Disabilities**

Key First Action 6 of the first phase of the Childcare Strategy aims to address the childcare needs of children with a disability. Work here has included funding awareness raising training, grant-aid to enable the purchase of specialist equipment or to adapt premises, an initiative to develop peripatetic childcare and an annual holiday grant scheme, which provides childcare for children with a disability during the school summer holiday.

Through the Holiday Grant Scheme, a total of £54,234.95 was provided and allocated to support additional childcare sessions for children with a disability during school holiday periods in 2015-16.

## *Health and Social Care*

### **The Active School Travel Programme**

The Active School Travel Programme supports and encourages children and their families living in poverty and experiencing some of the worst health inequalities to become more physically active, thereby improving their health and social well-being. Because rates of physical inactivity are higher in socially disadvantaged areas, the programme included schools located in

areas of highest social deprivation where health inequality is greatest and where the programme will increase the numbers of participants engaging in physical activity.

### **Infant Mental Health Training Programmes**

A number of new Infant Mental Health Training Programmes were commissioned to enhance the capacity of Early Years and Health and Social Care progressions in contact with vulnerable families and babies – 337 workers received training over the period of the Delivering Social Change Signature Programme.

Over 300 health professionals developed their skills for delivering parenting programmes (improving infant health and reducing childhood behavioural problems).

### **Suicide Prevention Programmes**

Over £7m was invested in suicide prevention to deliver a range of regional programmes including: Lifeline; Card Before You Leave; training and awareness raising programmes; public information campaigns; bereavement support and self-harm counselling and support. A number of actions within the Protect Life suicide prevention strategy are targeted at children and young people. These include: suicide prevention training for teachers, youth workers, and sport coaches; prevention training delivered directly to young people; the 'iMatter' programme for building school pupils' emotional resilience; current development of new Protecting Life in Schools document; the schools' counselling service; and the Arts Council 'Young People & Wellbeing Programme'.

### **Obesity Prevention Programmes**

£2.8m was invested in programmes to tackle obesity. The Public Health Agency has continued to roll out an expansion programme of effective models of intervention to support people living in poverty. These include initiatives such as the Cookit!

Programme. In addition, the Public Health Agency has helped in the development of the Food Poverty Network for Northern Ireland.

### **The Family Nurses Partnership Programme**

The Family Nurse Partnership programme is operating in the 5 Health and Social Care Trusts. The Family Nurses Partnership provides a voluntary preventative programme for teenage mothers, offering intensive and structured home visiting, delivered by specially trained 'family nurses' from early pregnancy until the child is two. The aim of the programme is to improve the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged families and children and to prevent social exclusion. At end March 2016, there were approximately 310 mothers on the programme. A further 173 mothers have graduated from the programme since 2010. The early indications from the programme data in NI indicate that the following outcomes are improving: improved breastfeeding rates, reduction in maternal smoking, low levels of children attending A&E and improved child development including language development. Parents on the programme are encouraged to go back to school or employment to improve their economic self sufficiency. Budgeting and life course development are built into the programme curriculum. Positive change in child development improves the readiness of the child for school.

### **Sports programmes**

The following three sports programmes have progressed as part of [Together: Building a United Community](#) (T:BUC):

- As of February, in 2015/16, approximately 70 children and young people from the Lower Falls and Greater Village (top 2% according to NI Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM)), have been engaged in a range of sports and creative activities through the revised TBUC sports programme, which has been developed in partnership with the Falls and Village communities;

- Following consultation with community representatives and local young people, the roll-out of a sports project commenced in Lisnaskea. In the first phase, approximately 25 young people will receive tailored training and mentoring. It is estimated that the entire project will benefit approximately 100 children and young people. (Lisnaskea is in the top 40 per cent most deprived wards according to the NIMDM.)
- Consultation has commenced in Colin and Eastside urban village areas, which have been selected as the location for a third sports project. (The majority of Colin is in the top 6 per cent most deprived wards. Eastside is analogous to the Ballymacarrett ward, which is in the top 3 per cent most deprived wards.)

As well as being able to take part in activities they might not otherwise experience due to socio-economic barriers, it is anticipated that participants on the programme will feel more confident; feel better able to effect change in their lives and/or communities; and have more positive attitudes to people from different cultural and community backgrounds.

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure also provided over £100,000 funding for activities benefiting looked-after children and, in partnership with Sport NI, distributed 158 free sports kit bags and good relations training to sports and community groups in the top 25 per cent most deprived wards.

Sport NI has worked with a range of key partners to deliver several interventions to increase levels of participation in sport and physical activity by people in areas of greatest social need. Sport NI anticipates that, at end March 2016, it is well on course to meet its target of 35,550 participants from areas of greatest social need. These participants include young people under 16.

## **Social Investment Fund**

### Invest in Play



This £3.5 million capital investment in children's play areas for residents of Foyle and part of East Londonderry Constituencies will focus on providing accessible, high quality play provision (Fixed Play Areas and Multi-Use Games Areas) strategically located within those communities, most in need. The four play areas planned are in Ballymagroarty, Kilfennan Valley Park, Ballyarnett Country Park and the Brandywell.

### **Curriculum Sports Programme**

The Curriculum Sports Programme in schools aims to develop the physical literacy of the youngest pupils (years 1-4) and instil in them a love of physical activity and sport. In 2015/16, the GAA delivered 840 coaching sessions per week in 295 Primary Schools to 18,772 pupils. In the same year, the IFA delivered 877 sessions per week in 191 Primary Schools to 18,554 pupils. An evaluation of the Programme in May 2015 demonstrated that it is very popular with schools, with participating pupils showing evidence of improved physical literacy. There is also anecdotal evidence that the Programme has wider benefits in terms of participants' self-esteem. Efforts have been made to link programme activities to other parts of the curriculum and the Programme does appear to be distributed fairly evenly across schools with high levels of children from deprived households.

### *Family Support*

#### **Family Support Hubs**

At end March 2016, there are 29 Family Support Hubs providing

Over 5,300 families have been accepted by the Family Support Hubs and signposted to support services.

total geographic coverage across Northern Ireland. Family Support Hubs are a collaborative network of statutory, voluntary and community organisations signposting families to the specific services that they need. Delivering Social Change funding has delivered vital investment in early intervention family support services. Between April 2015 and December 2015, 3,204 families were referred to Hubs, far exceeding the total referred in 2014/15. Over 5,300 families have now been accepted and signposted. Intervening as early as possible helps to tackle problems emerging for children, young people and their families.

### **Families Inside Out**

Families Inside Out is a programme that targets young people aged 18-24 who are in Hydebank Wood College and Prison. The programme aims to help young parents strengthen family relationships and find suitable employment upon release from Hydebank. The programme is predicated on the idea that children will do better once they have a better quality of attachment with one (or both) parent(s), where the parents can meet the needs of their child(ren) and where the child(ren) live in a safe and secure environment. Between November 2014 and November 2015, 25 participants took part in the pre-release programme; 6 of these participants had partners and between all participants, there are 32 children. Pre-release participants have taken part in a range of activities, parenting sessions being the most prevalent activity.

## **Delivering Social Change Positive Parenting Signature Programmes**

Additional high quality support to new and existing parents with emerging vulnerability has been provided through the expansion of evidence-based parenting programmes, including Strengthening Families and Parenting Ur Teen/Odyssey Programme. Strengthening Families Programme is designed to reduce risk factors for children in families with a history of parental drug and alcohol abuse and/or families experiencing difficulties. The core aim is to improve the family environment by helping parents to develop discipline techniques and to understand the importance of rewards and positive attitudes in their children. Parenting UR Teen is an eight week programme developed by Parenting NI and has the key purpose of improving the parent/adolescent relationship and is based on an authoritative parenting style. A two year Incredible Years Co-Ordination Programme has supported 54 delivery organisations to improve standards and quality of implementation.



Over 700 families have been helped and supported through Parenting Support Programmes

## **Community Family Support Programme**

The Community Family Support Signature Programme is an intervention to support young people and their families. It is a support programme designed to help prevent younger family members from falling into the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) category, while helping other young people in the family who already find themselves in this situation to re-engage with education or training to find employment. It is delivered by family support organisations in the heart of the community. The support provided on the programme is directly matched to individual needs and may include help with: accessing suitable education, employment and training opportunities; developing skills to find work, creating CVs, job-searching

and preparation for job interviews; self confidence, motivation and social skills; parenting skills; encouraging better relationships within families; improving your health; and money management and benefit advice.

720 families have participated in the Community Family Support Programme, which has an overall budget of £4 million.

## *Housing*

### **Social Housing**

In 2015-16, there were a total of 1568 Social Housing Development Programme new social housing dwelling starts and 1,209 Social Housing Development Programme new social housing dwelling completions.

### **Regional Rate Freeze**

The Executive delivered on its Programme for Government 2011-15 commitment to hold the regional rate increases to the rate of inflation.

## *Neighbourhoods*

### **Urban Villages**

The Urban Village initiative is a response by the Northern Ireland Executive to a body of evidence which shows that division, dereliction and inequality continue to limit potential. It is an approach designed to improve good relations outcomes and develop thriving places where there has been a history of deprivation and community tension. The Urban Villages programme is designed to help deliver Priority 2 of the T:BUC strategy – “Our Shared Community” by creating a community where division does not restrict the life opportunities of individuals and where all areas are open and accessible to everyone. As of March 2016, five projects have been announced, four within the new Belfast City Council area and one within the new Derry and Strabane Council area. The Urban Villages initiative has three inter-connected aims: to foster positive Community Identities; to build Community Capacity; and to improve the Physical Environment. During 2015-16, the Urban Village Team concentrated on scoping and early engagement work in each Urban Village location. Activities include capacity building, working with children and young people and a series of creative and educational projects being taken forward by organisations such as National Museums, Libraries NI, Northern Ireland Screen and the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium. The outcome of this engagement will be the creation of Integrated Development Frameworks for each Urban Village which will detail the capital and revenue projects identified from the extensive stakeholder engagement.

### **Policing and Community Safety Partnerships**

PCSPs (Policing and Community Safety Partnerships) are local bodies made up of Councillors and independent people from each council area who work to make communities safer. They do this by focusing on the policing and community safety issues

that matter most in each area. Acknowledging the relationship between levels of deprivation and crime and the perceptions of crime, the Department of Justice has ensured that deprivation measures are a key factor in its allocation of funding to PCSPs. In 2015-16, each PCSP has undertaken a Strategic Assessment of specific local policing and community safety issues, identified priority issues to be addressed in 2015-16 and developed action plans in response to evidenced need. PCSP priority youth interventions specifically target the engagement and participation of disaffected young people who are vulnerable and at risk of involvement in interface violence and criminal activity. Many such projects involve children from areas that rank high in terms of multiple deprivation, for example:

- West Belfast Transient Youth Project being delivered in the Collin, Upper Falls, Suffolk and Lenadoon areas;
- "Fighting Chance" sport and education programme delivered by the Ballykeel-based Braid Amateur Boxing Club; and
- Carrickfergus Twilight Football Programme, which actively targets the surrounding wards of Northland and Sunnylands.

### **Social Investment Fund - Belfast West Early Intervention project**

The Belfast West Early Intervention project, worth £0.92million, launched in November 2015. This project recognised the need for positive local interventions to divert local young people away from anti-social behaviour and low level petty crime and is being delivered with the support of local community and voluntary groups in the West Belfast. It is hoped that the project can help inspire and promote citizenship, leadership, educational attainment and enhance the future prospects of the nearly 900 young people involved.

### **Intensive Support and Supervision Programme**

The Youth Justice Agency delivers a specific, high intensity programme of work with our most prolific young people. Our Intensive Support and Supervision Programme (ISSP) identifies said young people (101 as at February 2015) by way of

intensive assessment(s). Following identification and assessment(s) these young people are offered at least 15 hours per week contact. This contact involves challenging offending behaviour as well as offering high levels of support in accessing education/training, accommodation and combating addictions (where appropriate). The majority of these young people are supervised in conjunction with our Reducing Offending in Partnership colleagues, lending a dual layer of service delivery, information sharing, support and supervision.

### **Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme**

The Programme for Government (PfG) 2011-15 included a commitment to bring forward a £13 million package to tackle rural poverty and social and economic isolation. The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme had a £16m budget as well as the associated £13m PfG target. Both of these targets were met. As of March 2016, a further £4m was on course to be achieved in 2015/16 and the proposed budget for activities in 2016/17 is £4m.

The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation programme has had a positive impact on the lives of rural dwellers across a range of areas including: access to transport and broadband services; the promotion of good health and positive mental health; fuel poverty and youth employment; and supporting community development in rural areas. The TRPSI programme provided for the development and implementation of a range of measures designed to target access poverty, financial poverty and social isolation among vulnerable groups in rural areas. In total, seventeen individual measures have been delivered under the current Framework and one of its great strengths has been its flexibility, enabling it to bring together a broad range of organisations to work in partnership to address a wide range of rural issues. A range of initiatives are supported under the TRPSI programme including, for example:

- the Rural Micro Capital Grant Programme, for which Letters of Offer were issued to 370 rural community groups to support the purchase of small scale capital investment (less than £1500) to help support the work of the community groups to address poverty and isolation issues at a local level; and
- 1,355 unemployed rural young people supported by the BOOST Youth Employability Programme (DARD and DEL collaboration).

## *Financial Support*

### **Lowest Household Charges**

The Executive delivered on its 2011-15 Programme for Government commitment to ensure no additional water charges for households, ensuring that household charges here are lowest in the United Kingdom.

### **Free School Meals and School Uniform Grants**

Parents do not have to pay for school lunches if they receive any of the following:

- Income Support;
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- support under the Immigration and Asylum Act;
- Child Tax Credit, or Working Tax Credit and have an annual income of less than £16,190;



- Working Tax Credit “run-on” – the payment someone may receive for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit;
- the Guarantee element of State Pension Credit; or if
- their child has a statement of special educational needs and is designated to require a special diet, or he, or she, is a boarder at a special school.

Children who receive Income Support, income-based Job Seeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance in their own right qualify as well.

The extension of the eligibility criteria has resulted in an additional 16,000 post-primary pupils entitled to free school meals and school uniform grants. Overall, more than 100,000 (30%) children in schools are entitled to free school meals.

Free school meals and uniform grants provide important support for low income households to overcome some of the financial barriers they may face in seeking to ensure their children have access to and can benefit from education. This contributes to the Department of Education corporate objectives and Programme for Government 2011-15 commitments to target social need/tackle disadvantage by supporting children and young people from low income families to access and participate fully in education.

## **Maximising Incomes and Outcomes – A 3 Year Plan for Improving the Uptake of Benefits**

In the first 2 years of the Benefit Uptake Programme (Maximising Incomes and Outcomes- a 3 Year Plan for Improving the Uptake of Benefits), the Improving Benefit Uptake team secured £30.1m in additional annual benefits for 8,968 people. In the 3rd year of the 3 Year Plan, the Improving Benefit Uptake team, from November 2015, targeted a further 25,000 people to provide them with a free and confidential Benefit Entitlement Check to ensure they are getting their full benefit entitlement. In addition, the Improving Benefit Uptake team has delivered a comprehensive advertising campaign, finishing in February 2016, encouraging people to contact the "Make the Call" help line (0800 232 1271) for a full Benefit Entitlement Check.

The Improving Benefit Uptake team has also been working with Maximising Access to services, grants and benefits in Rural Areas (MARA and MARA extended project) since 2012, providing benefit support services to customers referred by the project and generating almost £1m for over 300 people in additional annual benefits in that time.

The Improving Benefit Uptake team has 19 Community Outreach Officers who cover the NI geographical area and work in partnership with many rural community groups to support customers living in rural or isolated areas, and those who are vulnerable. These partnerships include working with South West Ageing Partnership (SWAP), Fermanagh and Armagh Connected Together (FACT) and the Mid Ulster Seniors Network. There are many individual community local community groups associated with each of the above organisations and the Improving Benefit Uptake team has provided advice, support and other services including benefit clinics for carers and people with disabilities and their families.

In addition, officials work with Rural Community Development Support Service (RCDSS), participating in many events organised by their local groups including Dennett Interchange (Londonderry and Strabane) and the Armagh Down and Antrim Rural Support Network (TADA). All of this work is aimed at tackling poverty and providing support and advice to residents of rural

communities to ensure that they get all of the benefit entitlements that they are properly entitled to and that they are signposted appropriately to other Government supports and services.

## **Peace IV**

The EU PEACE IV Programme was adopted by the European Commission on 30 November 2015. The programme is administered by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) which made the first call for funding on 3 March 2016. As with Peace III, the eligible area consists of Northern Ireland and the six border counties of Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo and Donegal.

PEACE IV has been allocated €229m from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with a further €40m in match funding being provided by the two member states. TEO is the accountable department for parts of three of the four thematic objectives of the PEACE IV Programme, including the Local Authority Action Plans. A portion of the allocation to Councils is earmarked for the provision of activity for Children and Young People, with this element of the Peace IV programme totalling €17.1m.

The application and assessment process for the Local Action Plans is ongoing.

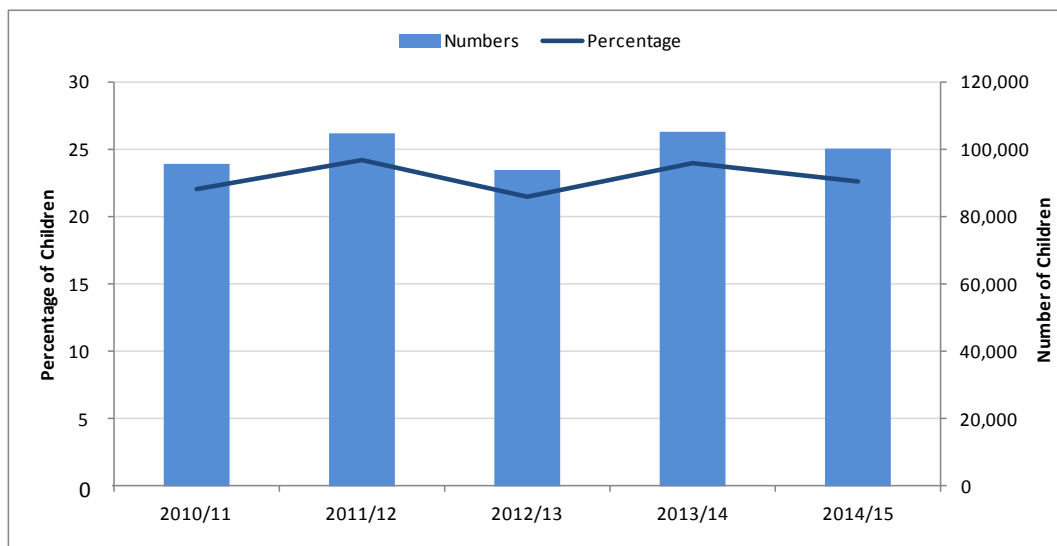
### 3. CHILD POVERTY IN NI

The latest official child poverty figures published relate to the year 2014-15. These data are taken from the [Northern Ireland Poverty Bulletin 2014/15](#).<sup>1</sup> These are the latest official child poverty figures available.

**Absolute Poverty - Before Housing Costs (BHC)** - *Children living in households with income less than 60% of the UK median for 2010-11 (adjusted year on year for inflation)*

In 2014-15, there were approximately 100,100 children in absolute poverty BHC, which represents 23% of children in Northern Ireland. As shown in Figure 1, this rate has decreased by three percentage points from 2013-14.

Figure 1: Percentage and number of children in absolute poverty (BHC), 2010-11 to 2014-15



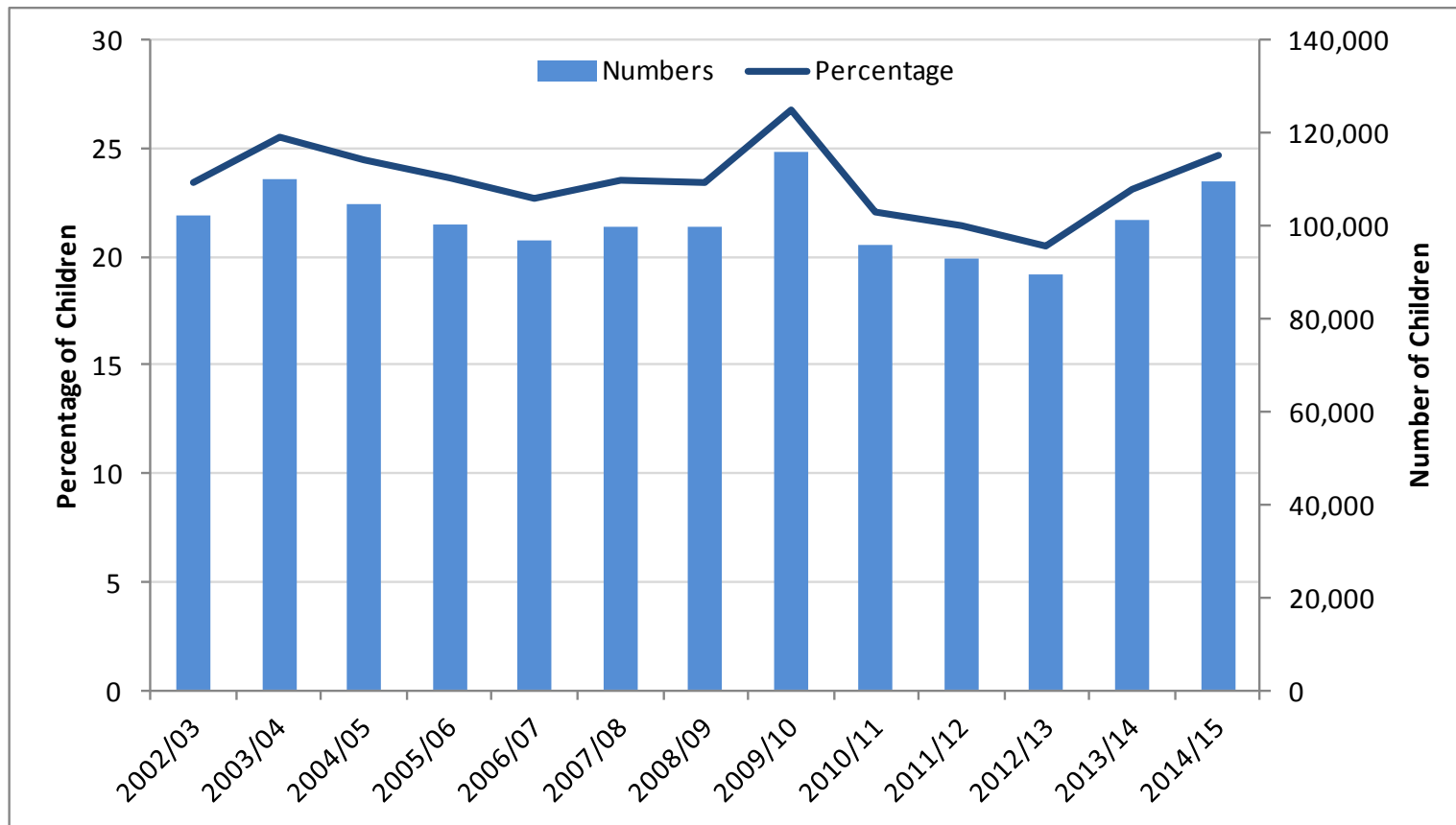
<sup>1</sup> The Northern Ireland Poverty Bulletin was published by the Department for Communities on 28 June 2016.

## Relative Poverty - Before Housing Costs (BHC)

*Children living in households with income less than 60% of the median UK income in that year*

In 2014-15, relative child poverty was 25% (approximately 109,500 children) BHC, an increase of two percentage points from the previous year.

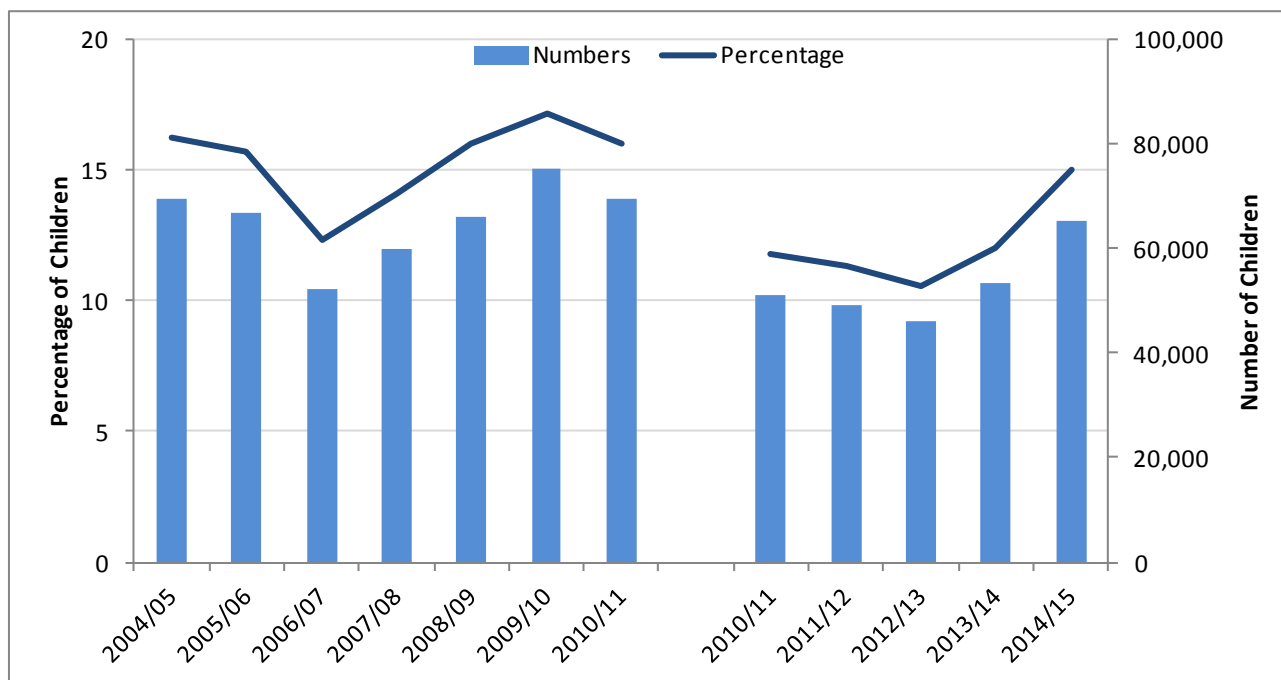
Figure 2: Percentage and number of children in relative poverty (BHC), 2002-03 to 2014-15



### Combined Low Income and Material Deprivation

In 2014-15, 15% of children in Northern Ireland were in combined low income and material deprivation, which equates to 65,300 children. This represents an increase of 3 percentage points from the previous year; however, readers should note that at a Northern Ireland level the sample size for the proportion of children affected by combined low income and material deprivation is relatively small. This measurement is used to combine the measurement of low income along with material deprivation in families. It measures income poverty and also asks if a range of indicators apply. For example, some of the indicators under this measure include the ability of a family to replace broken electrical goods if something breaks down unexpectedly, or the ability to make choices such as going on holiday away from home one week a year (not at a relative's home). If a family has a household income below 70% of the median income and a certain number of these indicators are met, then that family is considered in combined low income and material deprivation.

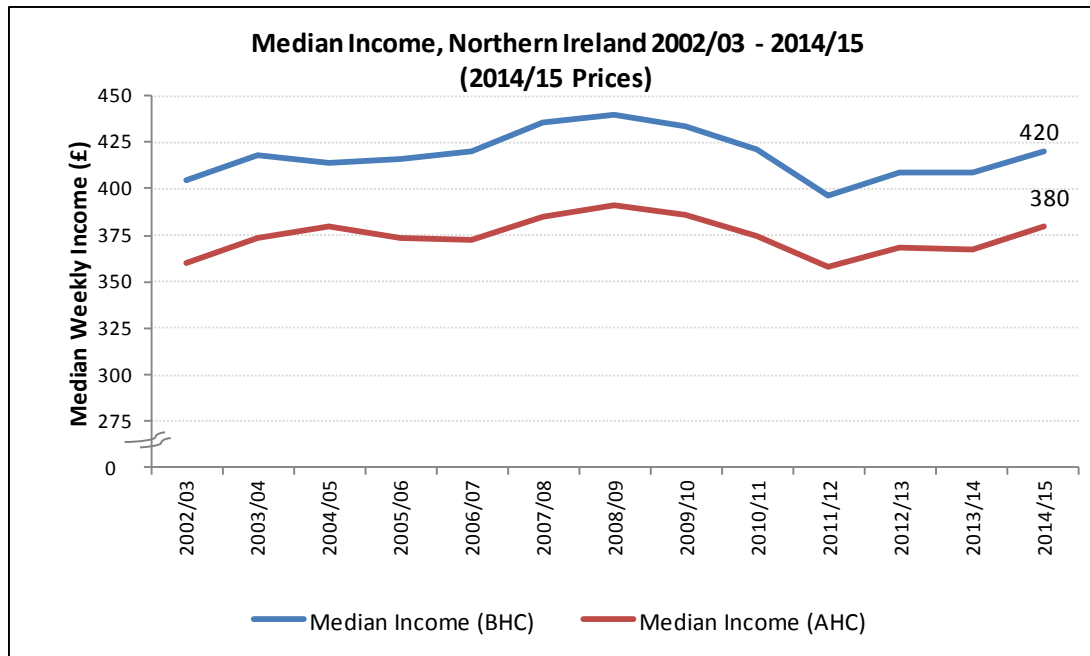
Figure 3: Percentage and number of children falling below thresholds of low income and material deprivation, 2004-05 to 2014-15



## INCOME AND EARNINGS

Northern Ireland median household income in 2014-15 was £420 per week before housing costs or £21,900 per year, representing a three percent increase from the previous year. This represents a £12 (3%) increase from the previous year, in real terms. However, over the time series median income in 2014/15 remains below the peak of £439 in 2008/09. In 2014/15, the average (median) income in the UK was £473 before housing costs and £404 after housing costs. Therefore in 2014/15, the relative poverty threshold, 60% of the UK median, was £284 per week before housing costs and £243 after housing costs. The absolute poverty threshold in 2014/15 was £277 before housing costs and £237 after housing costs, based on the 2010/11 inflation adjusted UK median.

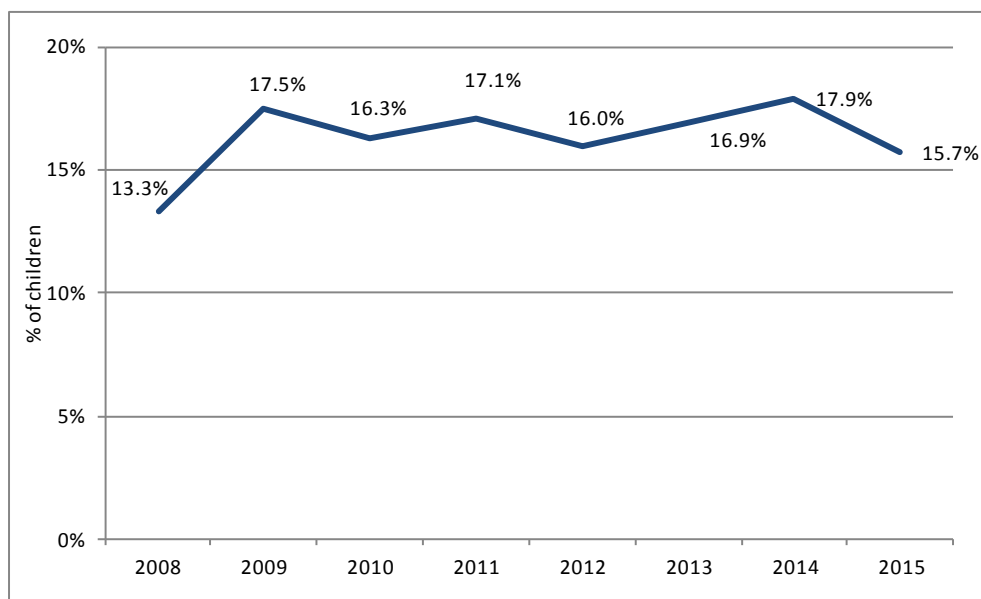
Figure 4: Median Income, Northern Ireland 2002/03-2014/15 (2014/15 Prices)



## OTHER INDICATORS OF CHILD POVERTY

### Worklessness

Figure 5: Indicator: Proportion of Children Living in Workless Households



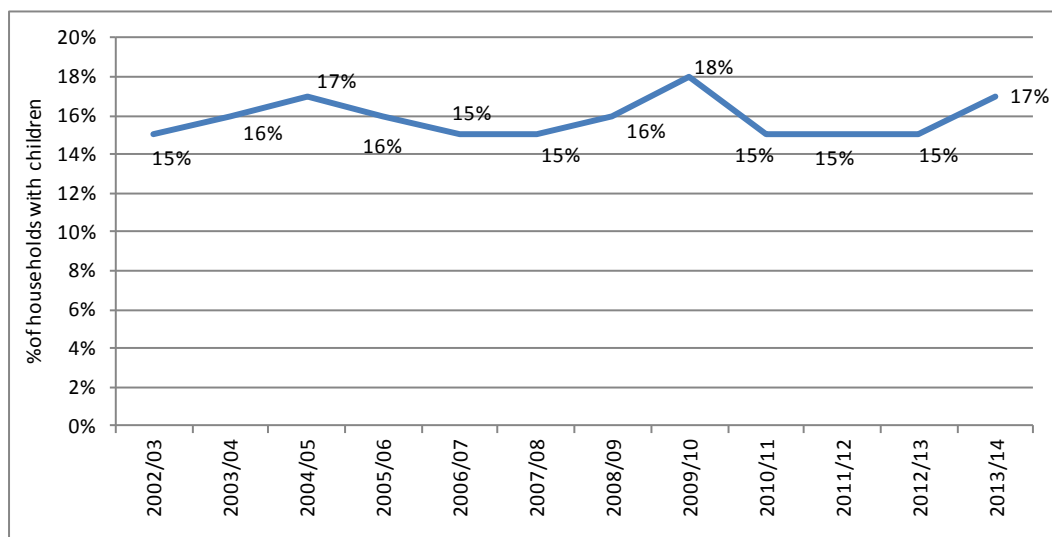
Source: DFP, NISRA, Economic and Labour Market Statistics, Labour Force Survey (Quarter 2 data used)

The proportion of children in workless households has fluctuated in recent years. In 2015, 15.7% of children in Northern Ireland lived in workless households, a decrease from 17.9% in 2014.



## In Work Poverty

Figure 6: Indicator: Percentage of all households with children where at least one adult is in work and the household is in poverty ('in poverty' means that income is less than 60% of UK median income before housing costs)

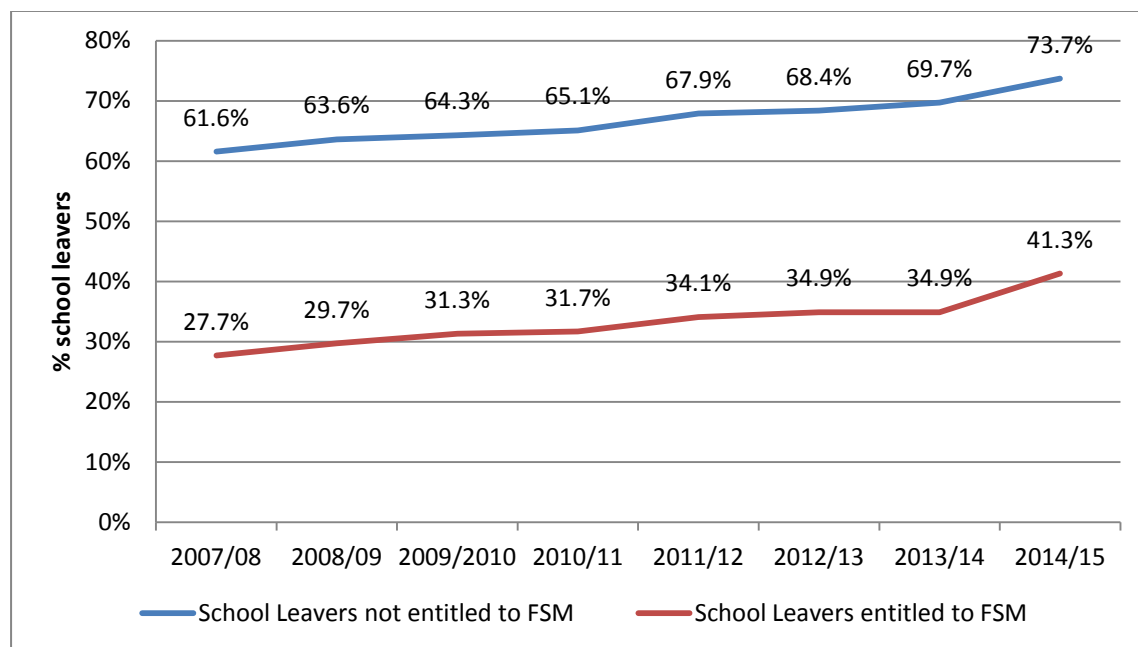


Source: DSD Family Resources Survey / HBAI report

The percentage of all households with children where at least one adult is in work and the household is in poverty has fluctuated between 15% and 18% over the time series presented in Figure 6; in 2013-14 the figure was 17%, an increase from 15% in 2012-13.

## GCSE performance

Figure 7: Indicator: Proportion of school leavers entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and Maths (*Children entitled to Free School Meals are compared to children not entitled to Free School Meals*)

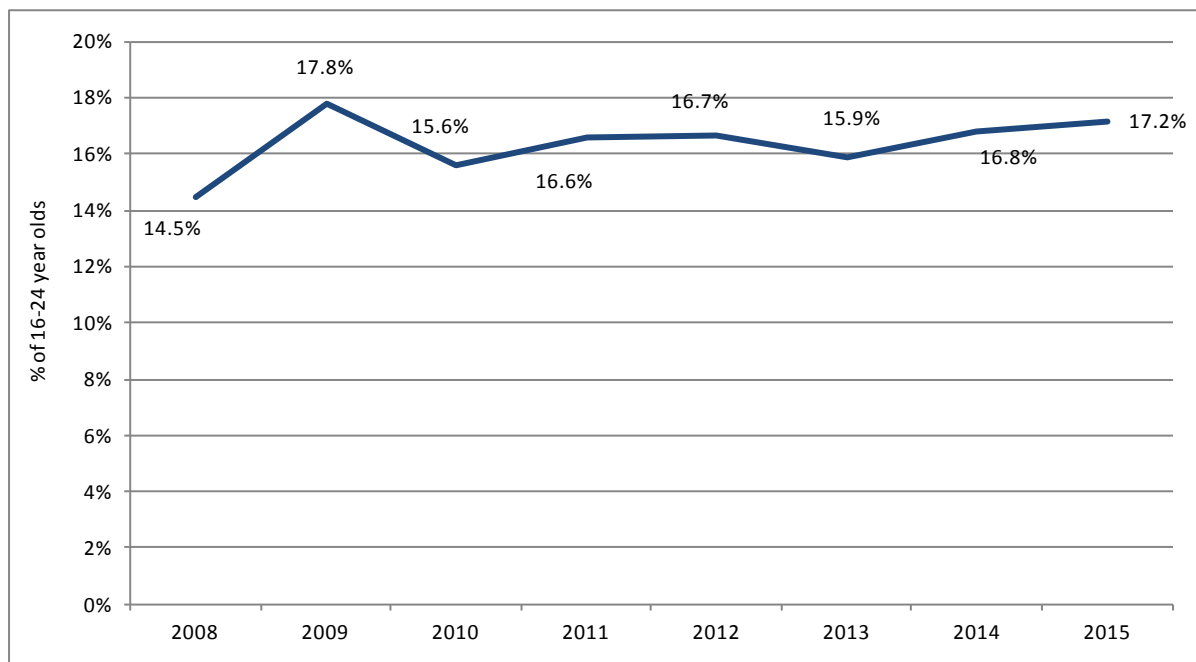


Source: DE, School Leavers Survey

The proportion of school leavers entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and Maths has increased from 27.7% in 2007-08 to 41.3% in 2014-15 and the proportion of school leavers not entitled to FSM was 73.7% in 2014-15.

## Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)

Figure 8: Indicator: Proportion of 16-24 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

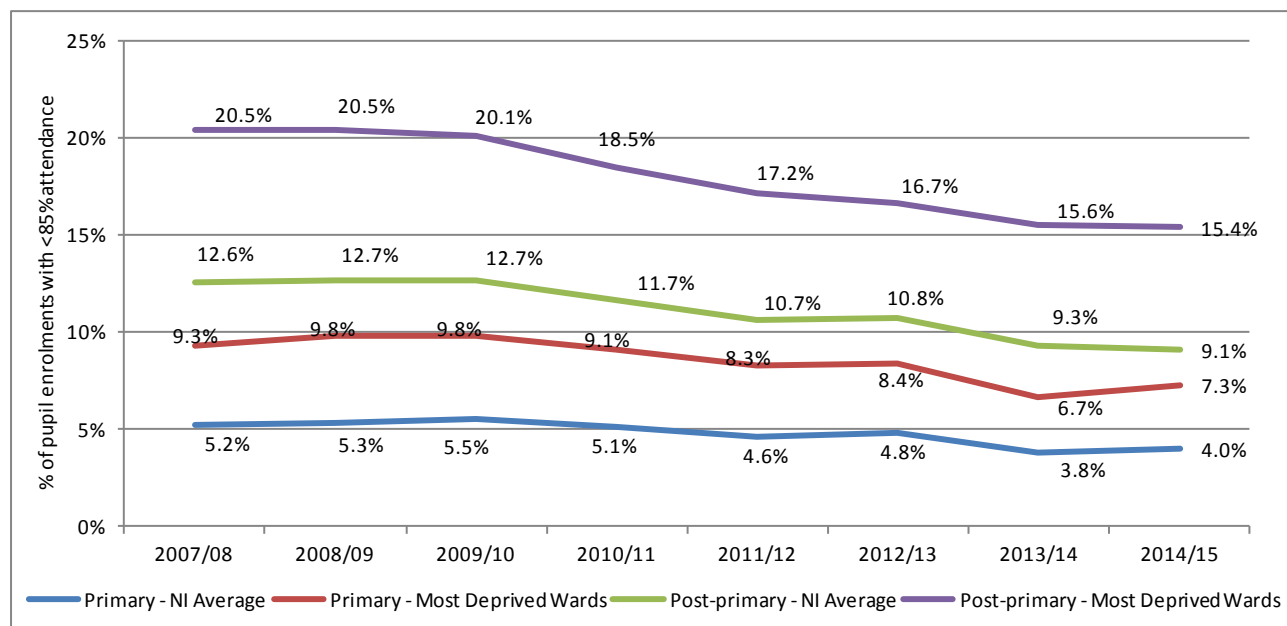


Source: DFP, NISRA, Economic and Labour Market Statistics, Labour Force Survey (Quarter 3 data used)

The proportion of 16-24 years olds not in education, employment or training has increased from 14.5% in 2008 to 17.2% in 2015, fluctuating in the intervening years.

## School Attendance

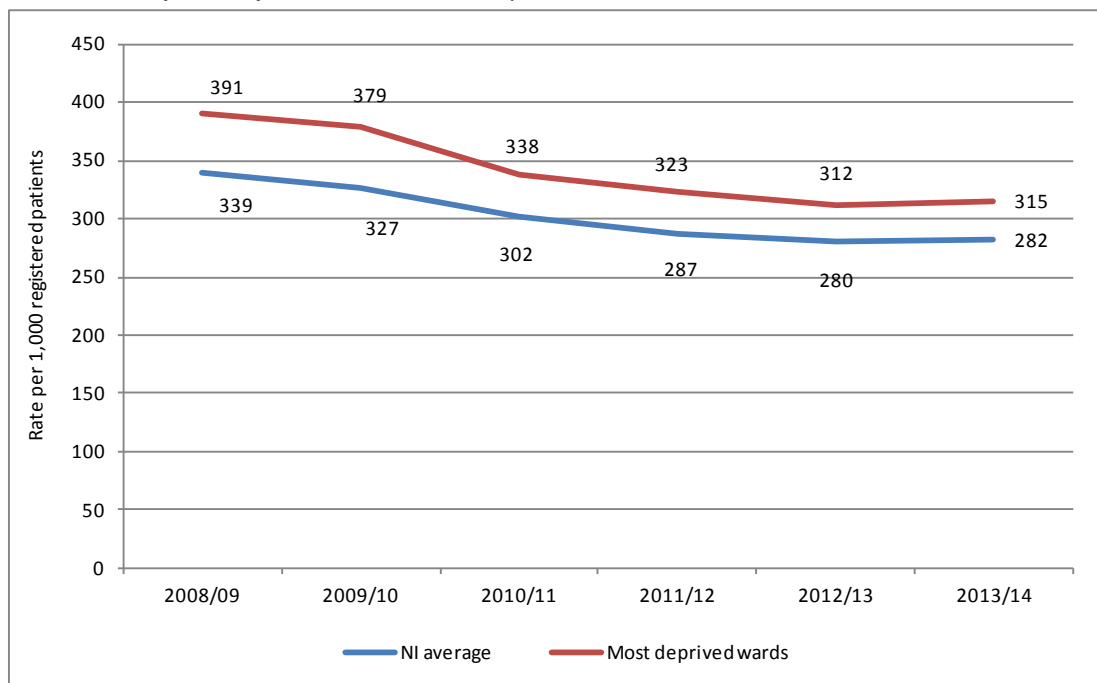
Figure 9: Indicator: Proportion of pupil enrolments in primary and post-primary schools with less than 85% attendance (*The NI average is compared to the 20% most deprived wards based on the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure*)



Source: DE School Census

## Dental Health

Figure 10: Indicator: Number of patients aged 0-17 (registered with a dentist and receiving dental treatment) who had at least one treatment for dental caries per 1,000 registered patients (*The NI average is compared to the 20% most deprived wards based on the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure*)



*Research suggests that dental decay is a good proxy for levels of nutrition. Young people suffering from tooth decay are more likely to have:*

- *higher levels of school absence.*
- *difficulty concentrating.*
- *other illnesses in the longer term, e.g. diabetes, heart disease, and low-birth weights.*

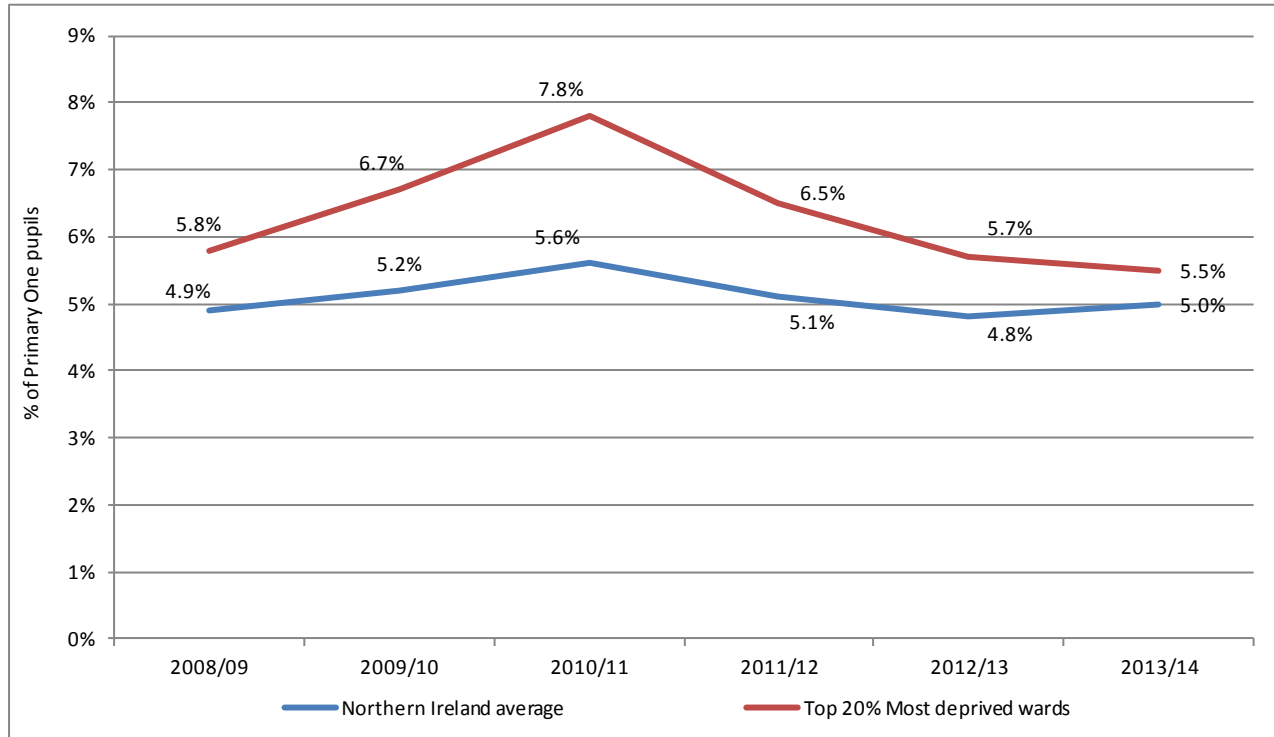
(Source: Centre for Disease Control)

Source: HSC Business Services Organisation, Dental Statistics Dataset

Overall in NI, rates for treatment of dental caries among those aged 0 to 17 have decreased between 2008-09 and 2013-14. However, there still remains a gap between the level of treatments in deprived areas and the NI average. This gap has, overtime, reduced but requires further closing.

## Obesity

Figure 11: Indicator: Proportion of year one pupils who are obese (*The NI average is compared to the primary one population in the 20% most deprived wards based on the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure*)

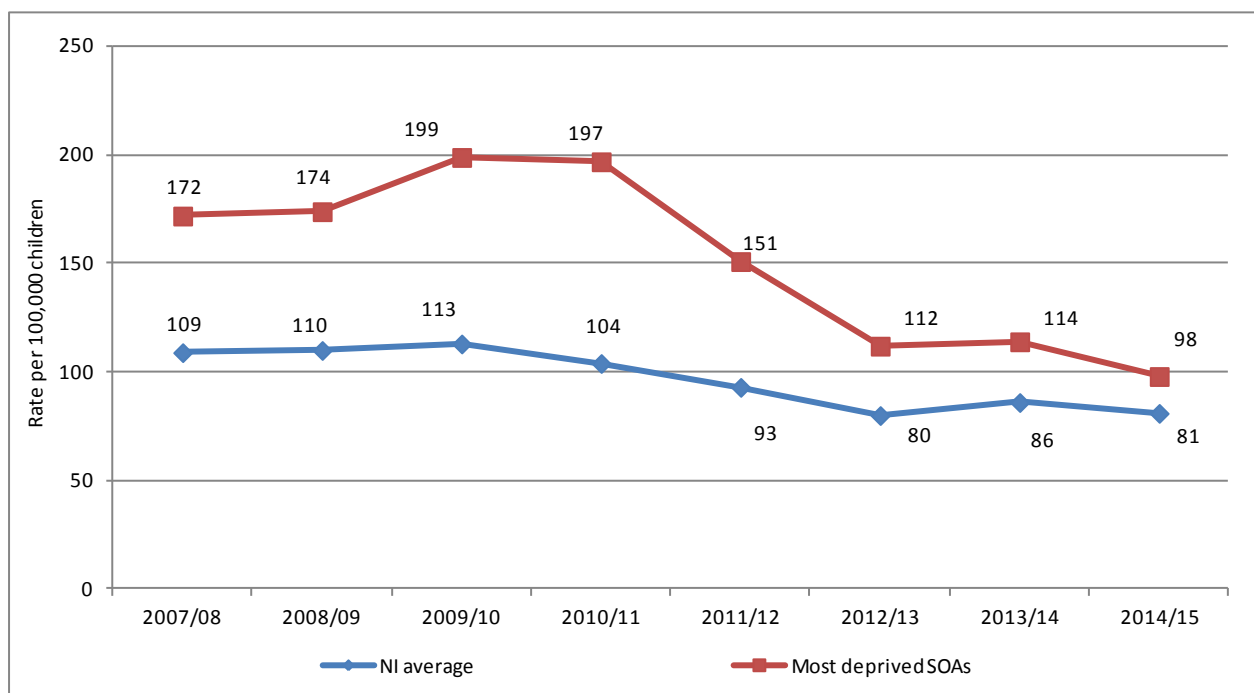


Source: DHSSPS, Child Health System

Over the period 2008-09 to 2013-14, there has been higher levels of obesity among year one pupils from deprived areas compared to Northern Ireland as a whole. Since 2010-11, however, rates have decreased in deprived areas, reducing the gap to the Northern Ireland average.

## Self-Harm

Figure 12: Indicator: Number of hospital admissions of those aged 0-17 with self-harm diagnoses (rate per 100,000) (*The NI average is compared to the 20% most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs)<sup>2</sup> based on the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure*)



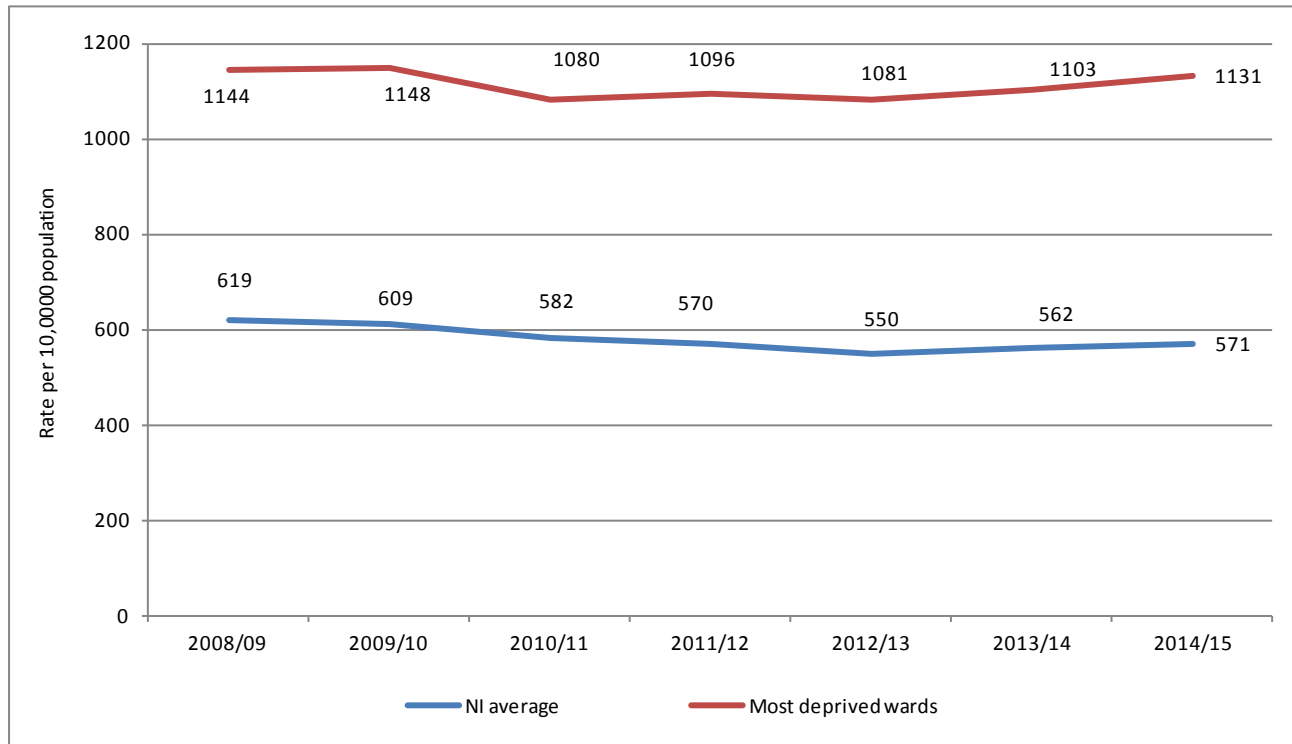
Source: DHSSPS, Hospital Inpatient System

Over the period 2007-08 to 2014-15, the self harm admissions rates among 0 to 17 year olds from deprived areas have been consistently higher than the Northern Ireland average for this age group. These rates have declined since 2009-10, with the rate among those from deprived areas declining faster, thus reducing the gap between the most deprived areas and NI as a whole.

<sup>2</sup> For information on Super Output Areas, see: <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/geography/SOA.htm>

## Crime

Figure 13: Indicator: Recorded number of criminal offenses per 10,000 population (*The NI average is compared to the 20% most deprived wards based on the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure*)



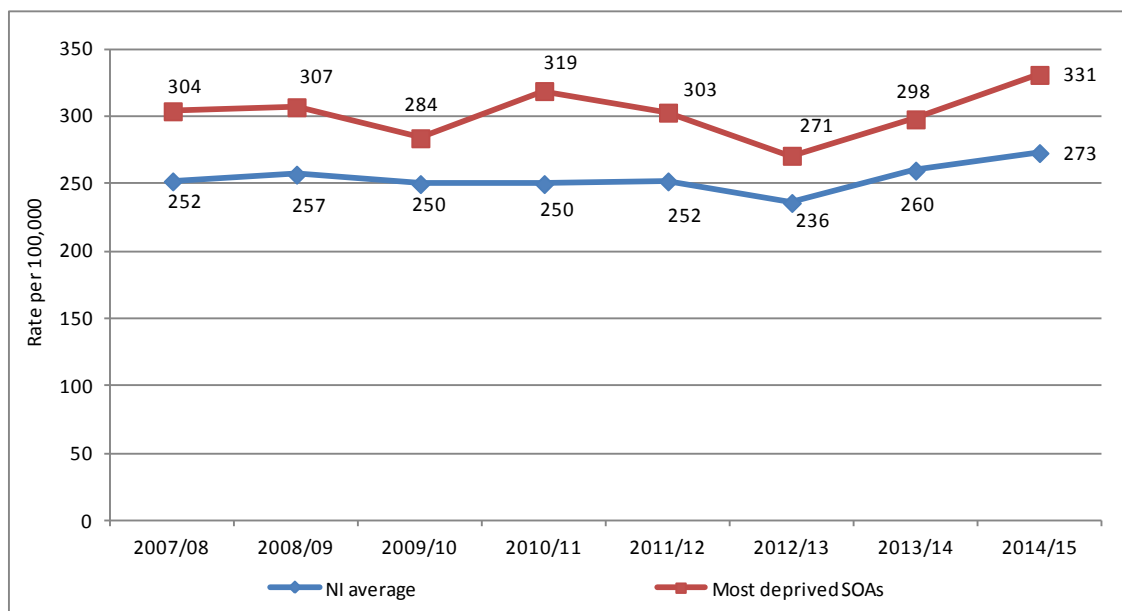
Source: PSNI, Crime Recording System

The number of recorded criminal offenses per 10,000 population dropped slightly between 2008-09 and 2014-15, although it has increased since 2013-14. The crime rate in the 20% most deprived wards has been consistently higher than the NI average over this period.



## Home and Road Accidents

Figure 14: Indicator: Number of child admissions to hospital due to an accident in the home or on the road (rate per 100,000) (*The NI average is compared to the 20% most deprived SOAs based on the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure*)

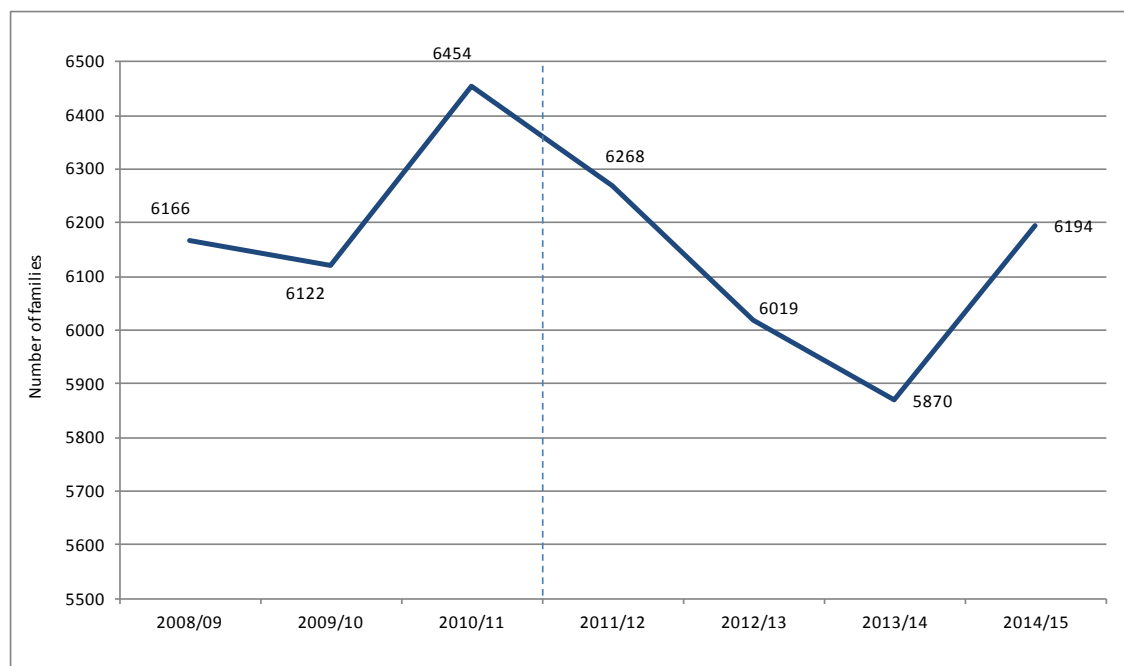


Source: DHSSPS, Hospital Inpatient System

Over the period 2007-08 to 2014-15, the number of child admissions to hospital due to an accident in the home or on the road per 100,000 population has been consistently higher in the most deprived areas compared to NI as a whole. Over this period, this rate has fluctuated, with the rate for 2014-15 being the highest over the time series for both the most deprived areas and NI as a whole.

## Homelessness

Figure 15: Indicator: Number of families presenting to the NI Housing Executive as homeless



Source: DSD, Northern Ireland Housing Statistics

Please note: The time series of data in the table from 2011-12 onwards are not fully comparable with other published figures. The Housing Management System (HMS) went live in July 2011, replacing the previous 'PRAWL' information management system. While the data captured through the HMS are essentially the same as those captured by the PRAWL system, data migration and coding variations in the period following the change of systems have had a small impact on the comparability of homelessness statistics. Hence figures from 2011-12 onwards are not directly comparable with those reported in previous years.

The number of families presenting as homeless decreased between 2011-12 and 2013-14 (from 6,268 to 5,870) before increasing to 6,194 in 2014-15.

## **4. NEXT STEPS**

In 2015-16, considerable work has taken place to develop a new approach to tackling child poverty in Northern Ireland. First and foremost, work has been undertaken to further develop a new Executive Child Poverty Strategy which was published on 25 March 2016. A decision has also been taken to develop a new Social Strategy for tackling poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation as part of the new Programme for Government.

### **Department for Communities**

This work is set within the context of the restructuring of government departments. In March 2015, it was announced that as part of the departmental restructuring process in Northern Ireland, policy for Poverty and Child Poverty would transfer to the new Department for Communities in May 2016. This will provide more complementary working in terms of meeting the needs of the most vulnerable by tackling poverty and disadvantage through the provision of focused support to the most disadvantaged areas and encouraging social responsibility and inclusion.

### **New Programme for Government**

The new Programme for Government Framework will provide the overarching strategic direction for the Executive's work over the next five years. The draft Programme for Government framework includes an outcome that: We give our children and young people the best start in life. The Executive plans to publish an agreed Programme for Government which will set out proposed actions to address the effects of socio-economic disadvantage and the basis on which it will measure progress towards achieving the best start in life.'

***It is expected that these changes in our approach to tackling poverty will result in a new and more effective approach for tackling child poverty, that can be captured in the 2016/17 Child Poverty Annual Report.***



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