

ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY GROUP



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WHO ARE WE?

The development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland, based on objective need, is a longstanding commitment. Section 28E of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides that the NI Executive, *“shall adopt a strategy setting out how it proposes to tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation based on objective need.”* As part of the 2020 New Decade, New Approach agreement, it was stated that a restored Executive would *“develop and implement”* an Anti-Poverty Strategy.

The Anti-Poverty Strategy Group is made up of former members of the Anti-Poverty Co-Design Group which was convened by the Minister for

Communities in January 2021 to work alongside the Department of Communities to co-design an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland.

The Co-Design Group built upon the work of the Expert Advisory Panel and their report, published in March 2021. The Co-Design Group met with DfC officials throughout 2021, and in 2022 it was agreed that the Co-Design Group would develop its own paper of recommendations, which would be presented to the Minister for Communities, and the Ministerial Steering Group which had formed to engage with the social inclusion strategies.

The group published its recommendations paper in September 2022. This was a comprehensive,

evidence-based, suite of recommendations on how an Anti-Poverty Strategy could meaningfully address poverty in Northern Ireland.

WHY HAVE WE FORMED?

In 2024, the Minister for Communities communicated to the Co-Design Group that process with the Department for Communities had come to an end, and there would be no further meetings of the Co-Design Group. The Minister stated that work on developing the strategy would be taken forward by officials within the Department for Communities, who would gain input from officials in the other government departments.

Members of the Co-Design Group were disappointed that engagement with civil society organisations had come to an end, and despite a number of requests to meet with the Minister and/or his officials, the offers were not accepted. Many members of the Co-Design Group were concerned about the lack of progress on the strategy and were further concerned that if a strategy did materialise, it would not be meaningful or impactful in addressing poverty.

The group wanted to continue working together to influence the development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy and continue to press for publication of the draft strategy.



WHAT ARE OUR OBJECTIVES?

Influence the development of an overarching, comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy based on objective need which is evidence based, will work towards the eradication of poverty in Northern Ireland, and takes a rights based approach. The strategy should have clear, timebound targets and build upon the detailed work that has been carried out to date in order to ensure expedient delivery and implementation of actions.

Press for consultation with civil society organisations, and people and communities with lived experience, in the development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Press for the publication of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland, and an inclusive, accessible and meaningful consultation process.

CORE PRINCIPLES FOR AN ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

- An **overarching, comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy** based on **objective need** which is **evidence based** and takes a **rights based approach**.
- The strategy should have **clear, timebound targets** and **build upon the detailed work that has been carried out to date** in order to ensure expedient delivery and implementation of actions.
- The vision for an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland should be the **eradication of poverty**. It is unacceptable that one person lives in poverty, or that one child grows up in poverty, so anything less than the goal of eradication will be unacceptable.
- A **lifecycle approach**, with additional themes of **place-based interventions**, and address cross-cutting issues, such as **housing, employment inclusion and access to services**.
- The Strategy should be **fully resourced**.
- **Cross-departmental responsibility, delivery and accountability** should be a key feature of the strategy. The Strategy should include and interconnect NI Executive policies on addressing poverty.
- **Cross-sectoral** development and implementation.
- Incorporate the experience and expertise of **people with lived experience**.

Key areas for an Anti-Poverty Strategy

Some of the key areas identified by the Anti-Poverty Strategy Group include:

- Creating an Anti-Poverty Act and Anti-Poverty Commission;
- Implementing a new child payment, delivering a childcare strategy, making participation in school cost-free, and restoring the value of social security benefits for children;
- Dealing with low pay and precarious work, through measures like a 'real Living Wage', collective bargaining, and prohibiting the use of 'zero-hour' contracts;
- Strengthening the benefits and social security system to protect against poverty, including via reforming supports for persons with disabilities, review of supports under Universal Credit for those who are self-employed, as well as removing the bedroom tax, benefit cap, two-child limit, and five-week wait for Universal Credit;
- Tackling poverty amongst pensioners and older people;
- Addressing cross-cutting issues impacting on poverty, such as housing, employment inclusion, and access to services.

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