



SOUTH BELFAST PARTNERSHIP BOARD

DHSSPS Autism Strategy Core Team,
Room D1,
Castle Buildings,
Stormont Estate,
Belfast,
BT4 3SQ

Friday 15th March 2013

Dear DHSSPS Autism Strategy Core Team,

The South Belfast Partnership Board is a Board which brings together all sectors – community, statutory, political and private – to strengthen and better target the efforts being made by the community, the private sector and the Government to tackle in partnership the economic, social and environmental problems which affect people in the most disadvantaged areas of South Belfast.

The South Belfast Partnership Board is supportive of the *Autism Strategy and Action Plan 2013-2015* response made on behalf of Sólás. Sólás is one of our partner organisations who we work with and support throughout their activities in south Belfast.

We strongly agree that there is a great need for equality of opportunity along with the support from statutory agencies for effective and appropriate support services, the need to focus on children and young people with autism and their families – the whole family approach, the fact that priority should be placed on providing access to appropriate transition planning across the lifespan for children, inclusive of school life, an increase of awareness of Autism in the wider community, the collation of Autism prevalence data to illustrate actual need as currently this data is limited and finally the need for a more interagency linked-up approach.

Currently the South Belfast Partnership Board is leading/facilitating the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership process of establishing Locality Planning Groups and Family Support Hubs across south Belfast. Sólás are involved in this partnership to ensure the specific services and issues concerning Autism are understood and highlighted. We strongly recognise the linkages between the *Autism Strategy and Action Plan 2013-2015* discussion document and the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership, as the Disabilities subgroup has created a leaflet to provide parents/carers with information about the new regional 'Six Steps of

South Belfast Partnership

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Autism Care' Pathway for children and young people in Northern Ireland.

I trust that you find our support for the response made by Sólás and our additional comments useful, and we look forward to seeing how they help shape the final document in due course.

The South Belfast Partnership Board would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of the matters raised within this response with the DHSSPS Autism Strategy Core Team. We would also be pleased to act as a conduit for any discussions at a local level. Should you require further information or clarity to any of our comments please don't hesitate to contact my colleague Una Lappin on 02890 244 070 or unalappin@southbelfast.org

Yours sincerely



Briege Arthurs
Chief Executive
South Belfast Partnership Board