



SOUTH BELFAST PARTNERSHIP BOARD

The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister,
GD36 Stormont Castle,
Stormont Estate,
Belfast,
BT4 3TT

Monday 4th March 2013

Dear OFMDFM Childcare Strategy 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 *‘Towards a Childcare Strategy’* response made on behalf of Women’s Support Network and Windsor Women’s Centre. We have worked collaboratively with these organisations in drawing up their response.

In addition to this response we would like to add the following points: -

- South Belfast Partnership is mindful that the Department of Education is currently developing advice and guidance on the community use of the school site in relation to its ‘Every School, A Good School’ policy. Wrap around care and after schools programmes are often interpreted within this sphere. The current situation has a potentially pejorative outcome in that it may encourage schools to compete with the community, voluntary and women’s sector who have traditionally delivered this service to the most vulnerable and needy groups;
- South Belfast Partnership would also welcome the extension of the SureStart 2 year old programme and ring fenced budget by the DE in recognition of the vital contributions early year’s intervention makes to the child’s development and childcare;
- South Belfast Partnership Board also feels that in general there is a shortage of registered Childcare provision (even with the extension of SureStart) and is mindful that this can act as a major barrier to employment or training opportunities,

South Belfast Partnership

23 University Street, Belfast BT7 1FY. Tel: 028 90244070; Fax: 028 90245565; 028 90241760

email: enquiries@southbelfast.org; <http://www.southbelfast.org>

Company Limited by Guarantee Registration No NI36168 Charity Registration No XR30331

particularly for those living in some of the more deprived areas.

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. We strongly recognise the linkages between the '*Towards a Childcare Strategy*' discussion document and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

I trust that you find our support for the response made on behalf of Women's Support Network and Windsor Women's Centre useful and our additional comments, 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 OFMDFM Childcare Strategy 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