

Summary of Anti-Poverty Strategy Feedback forms

Women's Support Network, Save the Children NI, NI Anti-Poverty Network and Dr. Ciara Fitzpatrick, Ulster University used the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy consultation period to engage with people with lived experience of poverty. Below is a summary of the 145 responses to their feedback on the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy and what they believe should be included within it.

1. Do you think that what is in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy will make a difference to the financial hardship/poverty that you or the people and families you work with experience?

- **78% felt that the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy would make no difference** to the financial hardship and poverty that people experience.
- A further 15% reported they were unsure if the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy would make a difference.
- Only 7% felt that it would make a difference.

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This is not giving us any way out at all - it's just regurgitating the same things - we're going to keep this, we're going to review this, we're going to research that, we're going to continue to provide.....and what they're already providing is not enough because the Cost of Living has gone up really high and this is not addressing any of these things.

PARTICIPANT AT FOCUS GROUP ON THE
DRAFT ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

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It all makes me very sad, I don't see any change for me in my situation and I know a lot of people in my situation. And I just don't see any change for me out of this Strategy.

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2. How do you rate the draft Strategy overall?

- **82% rated the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy as 'Poor'.**
- A further 15% rated the draft as 'Average'.
- Only 3% rated it as 'Good'.

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I think they need to give help with electricity, gas, food, it's all gone up so much and we can't afford it. You're actually living on beans on toast - people are having to go without.

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They need to get rid of the two-child limit instead of waiting to hear what the research is going to say. I don't think we need to research this we need to act on it.

PARTICIPANT AT FOCUS GROUP ON THE
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3. Can you list some things that you think would make a difference to the financial hardship/poverty that you, your family and community experience that you think should be included in the Strategy?

In summary the main suggestions focused on the following areas:

- Free school meals for all pupils
- Bringing back the Holiday Hunger Scheme
- Introducing a price cap on school uniform costs
- Increasing the school uniform grant
- Increasing the threshold for help with school uniform grants and free school meals
- Increasing the value of social security benefits to meet the cost of living including Universal Credit, Child Benefit, Carer's Allowance and Healthy Start
- Support for essentials including food, energy and childcare
- More help with childcare costs
- Scrapping the two-child limit
- Ending the five-week wait in Universal Credit
- Introducing a Child Payment in Northern Ireland
- Listening to those living in poverty
- Capping private rents and providing more affordable housing
- Support needed for the working poor

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The School Uniform Grant needs to be increased because they're so expensive. And they should include nursery school age in the grant too.

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Even something as simple as giving every child free school meals.

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A number of issues came up repeatedly at focus group sessions with women in relation to the help that was needed to address poverty and these included:

- **Food price inflation** – many of the women were struggling with the increased cost of food and they wanted to see actions included in the draft Strategy to address the financial hardship being caused by the increasing cost of food.
- **The costs of the school day** – there were many issues raised with school costs including the costs of school uniforms, food for school including breaks and lunches, the costs of breakfast clubs and after school activities and additional school costs including for stationery and school equipment. Women stressed over and over again the need for help with school costs which had significant impacts on their family budgets.
- **Childcare costs** – the issue of expensive and inaccessible childcare was frequently raised by women which kept many of them out of work or spending much of their income on childcare resulting in financial difficulties. Many wanted to see action on childcare costs to allow them to access education, training and work and also the need for help with childcare for those on lower incomes.
- **The costs of energy and transport** – many of the women reported struggling with the costs of their energy bills and meeting transport costs either through public transport or for fuel. They wanted to see actions included in the draft Strategy to help address these costs to allow them to heat their homes and access the transportation they need to work and access services.

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Each of the other countries are doing things that we could just pick that would help to make a difference, that would make things better.

Why can't we?

PARTICIPANT AT FOCUS GROUP ON THE
DRAFT ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

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The price of food at the moment is ridiculous. We really need help with that.

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DRAFT ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

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Some kind of help to access childcare would help me. It would cost me £1,800 to put my two children into childcare, I just can't afford that.

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Do away with the five-week Universal Credit wait because it pushes people into debt. I found it really hard, I had to use a social supermarket to eat and ran out of money regularly.

PARTICIPANT AT FOCUS GROUP ON THE
DRAFT ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

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They need to make school uniforms affordable. They need to put caps in place, a cap on school uniforms.

PARTICIPANT AT FOCUS GROUP ON THE
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They should introduce a Child Payment like in Scotland, free school meal payments over the holidays to stop holiday hunger, put a price cap on school uniforms, increase the School Uniform Grant and include costs for shoes

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