

17 November 2025

Mike Nesbitt MLA
Minister of Health
Castle Buildings,
Stormont,
Belfast, BT4 3SQ

Issued by email to: neighbourhoodprogramme@health-ni.gov.uk

Re: Call for Evidence - Development of a Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Model of Care

Dear Minister Nesbitt,

On behalf of Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI), I am pleased to submit this letter in response to the Department's *Call for Evidence* on the development of a Neighbourhood Model of Care. CiNI welcomes this important initiative and strongly supports the ambition to deliver more integrated, preventative, and community-based health and social care across Northern Ireland.

CiNI plays a unique and strategic role in enabling this vision. As the umbrella body for over 130 member organisations, we provide the infrastructure, coordination, and training that connect statutory services with the community and voluntary sector. Many of our members are place-based organisations delivering frontline support to children, young people, and families – from family support hubs and youth services to community health and wellbeing projects.

Through our work on behalf of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), CiNI facilitates Locality Planning Groups across the Southern Health and Social Care Trust area. These multi-agency partnerships provide a proven framework for local coordination, early intervention, and prevention, ensuring families receive the right help, at the right time, within their own communities.

In addition, CiNI's *Gets Active Project (Holiday Food and Activities Programme)* demonstrates how neighbourhood-level partnerships can effectively address food insecurity, isolation, and health inequalities. Delivered with youth and family centres in areas of high deprivation, the initiative combines healthy meals, physical activity, and youth leadership – empowering communities to support children's wellbeing while reducing pressure on statutory services.



CiNI also contributes to workforce development and system readiness for neighbourhood-based care. Our Children's Services Training Programme, delivered on behalf of the Department of Health, builds the skills and confidence of professionals working in the community and voluntary sector to support integrated, cross-sectoral practice in areas such as child protection, safeguarding, and early intervention. Through learning and reflective practice, participants develop the capacity to work collaboratively across organisational boundaries, strengthening relationships between statutory, voluntary, and community partners. In 2024/25, CiNI trained 1,953 practitioners working directly with children and families – enhancing consistency, communication, and shared understanding in the protection and promotion of children's wellbeing across Northern Ireland.

Together, these strands – Locality Planning, community delivery, workforce training, and strategic sector support – position CiNI as a key partner in realising the Department's ambition for a Neighbourhood Model of Care that is sustainable, preventative, and rooted in local partnership.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our evidence and experience further and to work with the Department in shaping the next phase of this important area of reform.

Yours sincerely,



Chief Executive

Children in Northern Ireland

Our vision is to make
Northern Ireland a society
where all **children** are
valued, are treated **fairly**
and are able to **flourish** .

