

Our Pact Joint Statement

Children's Social Care Services Reform Programme Board Endorses Our Pact

The Children's Social Care Services Reform Programme was established in April 2023 to guide, steer and direct the programme of reform activities in advance of the publication of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care services. The Review emphasised the importance of consulting, engaging and involving children and families in decision-making. It also referred to 'doing with' and not 'doing to' and made a clear call for a shift in culture where children and parents are viewed as partners in the decision-making process rather than passive recipients of interventions. Prompted by the Review and through the Reform Programme, work was undertaken to produce a charter for children and families based on their expectations of how they would like services to be delivered and accessed. Children, young people, parents and carers were central to that work, which led to the production of a framework, which they have named ***Our Pact***.

Our Pact is an agreement that is intended to guide our interactions with children and parents when providing them with services and support. It is underpinned by the following principles:

- 1. Standards** - of respect, fairness and honesty in every interaction with children and parents.
- 2. Support** - helping families access the right help from the right people at the right time.
- 3. Share** - working together, sharing information and making decisions as a team.
- 4. Speak Up** - respecting rights and ensuring there is a fair way to raise concerns.

We – the member organisations who are represented on the Children's Social Care Services Reform Programme Board – fully endorse ***Our Pact***. This means we are

committed to the implementation of **Our Pact** in our respective organisations, structured around four key areas:

1. **Leadership:** Leaders demonstrating a visible commitment to **Our Pact** and working together to ensure its principles are embedded.
2. **Workforce:** Staff and volunteers understanding and applying the principles in their everyday work.
3. **Practice:** **Our Pact** being embedded in policies, practice guidance and systems so that participation of children and families is a consistent part of everyday service delivery.
4. **Participation:** Formal participation mechanisms and accessible feedback channels support meaningful engagement.

This endorsement is the first step in implementing the plan to imbed **Our Pact** across our organisations and the work that we do. In the coming months, the priority will be to ensure that all staff and volunteers who work with children, young people and families understand what **Our Pact** is and what it means for how they work. At the same time, children, young people and families need to know about **Our Pact**, and that they have accessible ways to give feedback and to see how their views influence services. This will build on much of the good practice that already takes place and will lay even stronger foundations to support a deeper culture change over time.

Signed

Peter Toogood

Chair, Children's Social Care Services Reform Programme Board

Members representing the following Agencies

Department of Health – Social Care Reform

Department of Health -Family and Children's Policy Directorate

Department of Health Strategic Performance and Planning Group (SPPG) Social Work, Mental health and Disability.

Department of Health – Office of Social Services (OSS)

Department of Health - Allied Health Professionals Office (AHPO)

Department of Health – Chief Midwifery Office

Children's Court Guardian Agency Northern Ireland (CCGANNI)

Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) Children's Services

Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) Children's Services

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) Children's Services

Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT) Children's Services

South-Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) Children's Services

Department of Education (DE)

Youth Justice Agency (YJA)

Department for Communities

Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)

Public Health Agency (PHA)

Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC)

Reimagine Children's Collective

Stephen Dallas (Chair of the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action and Chief Executive Officer for The Bytes Project) and Jenny Irvine (ARC Healthy Living Centre) on behalf of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector.

