

Department for Social Development  
Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
McKelvey House  
25 Wellington Place  
Belfast  
BT1 6GD

13<sup>th</sup> February 2007

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Belfast City Centre North West Quarter Part Two  
GVA Grimley Baseline Regeneration Issues Report to the Department  
for Social Development**

Although the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) was not specifically consulted in relation to the above consultation document, it has recently come to our attention and we would like to offer the following comments.

The Office of the Commissioner was established under legislation<sup>1</sup> and is principally tasked with promoting and safeguarding the rights and best interests of children and young people. NICCY has a specific duty under Article 7 of the Order to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law, practice and services relating to the rights and welfare of children and young persons. Key issues for our Office include poverty, inequality and social exclusion, therefore urban regeneration and the possible impact on children and young people clearly falls within our remit.

NICCY is both disappointed and surprised at the omission of any reference to addressing social need and the need to promote equality, particularly considering that the three areas covered by the plan have high levels of deprivation. We also note with some concern the absence of plans to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment or a Children's Rights Impact Assessment and we strongly recommend this process is followed in order to assess the impacts of these proposals, especially on children and young people.

patricia lewsley  
commissioner

barney mcneaney  
chief executive

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<sup>1</sup> The Commissioner for Children and Young People (NI) Order 2003



In addition, in line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (right to an opinion) and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998), it is our view that DSD should actively engage in a creative and meaningful process of consultation with children and young people who are likely to be affected by the proposed regeneration. NICCY has regularly expressed through a broad range of policy and consultation work our concern that Section 75 is not being adequately enforced in respect of the age criterion and that public authorities are consistently failing in their duty to meaningfully consult with children and young people on issues that have direct relevance to their lives. It is not clear how this process was inclusive of views and issues expressed by children and young people and it is vital that their voices are heard, particularly those most vulnerable and marginalised, and that they are given opportunity to contribute their views on what is a significant and wide-ranging policy area. We therefore require clarification to what extent the views of children and young people were sought prior to development and publication of the current consultation document and how their opinions will be sought in response.

I look forward to hearing from you in relation to the issues raised above.

Yours sincerely



Patricia Lewsley  
Commissioner