



age
equality

SUMMARY

Age Equality

Policy Priorities and Recommendations

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Executive Summary

To advance age equality, we recommend that government, officials and key stakeholders act to address the following policy priorities, including via the Programme for Government and Budget: the Active Ageing Strategy; the Children and Young People's Strategy; and the wider policies and programmes of government.

- **LAW REFORM:** Protect people of all ages from unjustified age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services.
- **HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELL-BEING:** Meet the specific needs of older and younger people across a range of equality groups.
- **EMPLOYMENT:** Reduce the proportion of young people who are NEET; reduce long-term unemployment amongst older people.
- **EDUCATION:** Improve the participation of older people; young carers; looked after children; and those within the juvenile justice centre.
- **HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION:** Across all tenures, ensure accessible accommodation, energy efficiency, and access to a comprehensive fuel-brokering scheme.
- **PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE:** Ensure the active participation of younger and older people; address over-arching barriers.
- **PREJUDICE AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES:** Challenge age-based negative and prejudicial attitudes, addressing their impact on individuals.
- **WELFARE AND SOCIAL PROTECTION:** Further mitigate equality impacts of Welfare Reform; address the number of looked after children within the criminal justice system.

LAW REFORM: Protect people of all ages from unjustified age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services.

Comprehensive legislation should be introduced to give protection to people of all ages, including children and young people, against unjustifiable direct and indirect discrimination, as well as harassment and victimisation. The legislation should permit lawful positive action; should include exceptions which are narrowly construed and objectively justified; and should grant the Commission a range of general duties and powers, including enforcement powers. We also reiterate our call for reform of the Commission's powers in relation to the age employment legislation.

1. Reforming, strengthening and updating Northern Ireland equality law will help tackle inequalities, simplify and harmonise the equality legislation, and address the significant gaps in protection between equality law in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
2. We also continue to recommend the inclusion of a commitment in the PfG to extend age discrimination legislation to the provision of goods, facilities and services.

HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELL-BEING: Meet the specific needs of younger and older people across a range of equality groups.

Action for younger people should include the provision of adequate age appropriate mental health support services; transition services from child to adult services; and support for young trans people. For older people, action should include the provision of effective care in the community; raising awareness and uptake of the use of assistive technologies; and meeting the specific needs of older LGB and trans people in domiciliary, residential and nursing care.

The Department of Health (DoH) should ensure that provisions for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are adequate to meet the mental health needs of all children and young people.

3. Children and young people in Northern Ireland face particular barriers in relation to access to mental health treatment. Specific issues relate to the provision of funding to ensure services are age appropriate and provide adequate services to support children and young people with mental health needs.

4. While progress has been made on the reduction of the number of treatments on adult wards in Northern Ireland since the Bamford Review, the availability of inpatient CAMHS treatment for young people in Northern Ireland remains limited¹. This results in young people aged under 18 with mental health difficulties being treated in an age inappropriate manner due to being on adult psychiatric wards².

The Department of Health (DoH) should ensure the early availability of services and hormone suppressants to meet the needs of young trans people.

5. We recommend that consideration is given to further developing the service provision for young trans people, including taking account of any learning from the delivery of the 'Knowing our Identity' (KoI) service³ locally, and the 'Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS)⁴ in Great Britain.
6. Further, given the exacerbating impact of puberty on gender dysphoria⁵, we also recommend that consideration is given to lowering the age at which hormone suppressants are available in Northern Ireland. While hormone suppressants are currently available to those aged 15 to 18⁶, they are available in Great Britain from 12 years old.

Effective processes should be put in place to ensure the successful transition from youth to adult health services.

7. During the transition from child to adult care, adolescents can be left with no service until eligibility for adult healthcare services and associated delivery responsibilities are established⁷. This can result in a child having services withdrawn before commensurate adult provision is made available. In addition, young people with specific care needs can experience a lack of support when making the transition from one service to another.
8. It is vital that individuals are not left without support, simply due to a change in their age. Overarching policy processes are needed to provide early planning and preparation for adolescents during their transition to adult health, social care and well-being services.

1 The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (Feb 2011) [RQIA Independent Review of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services \(CAMHS\) in Northern Ireland](#)

2 The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (Feb 2011) [RQIA Independent Review of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services \(CAMHS\) in Northern Ireland](#)

3 Belfast HSCT 'Knowing Our Identity: Gender Development service for Northern Ireland' Leaflet

4 NHS England introduced a service framework for the 'Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) for Children and Adolescents' for the period 2016 to 2020.

5 "Gender Dysphoria (GD) describes the distress that is caused by a discrepancy between a person's gender identity and that person's sex classified at birth (and the associated gender role and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics) (Fisk, 1974; Knudson, De Cuypere, & Bockting, 2010b)" quoted from [NHS England E13/S\(HSS\)/e 1](#)

6 In some instances young trans people in NI can be referred to the services available in GB

7 Care Quality Commission (Jun 2014) [From the pond to the sea: Children's transition to adult health services](#)

Ensure effective care in the community, addressing any issues with direct payments; homecare visits; and transport to community care services.

9. Government must ensure that care in the community arrangements guarantee a sufficient quality of care to support individuals to live at home, where it is their wish and it is appropriate for them to do so.
10. While the move under ‘Transforming Your Care’⁸ to a person centred approach to social care is welcomed, it is important that direct payment rates from Health and Social Care Trusts are sufficient to deliver effective care. Visit times must also be sufficient to ensure quality of care. Further, the availability of affordable transport is key, particularly in rural areas, to accessing community care services, especially for older people without access to a car.

Raise awareness and uptake amongst older people of assistive technologies to access health, social care and well-being services.

11. The development of the Health and Social Care Board’s eHealth and Care Strategy for Northern Ireland’s^{9 10} framework sets out a range of measures to increase the use of innovative technologies in the delivery of health and social care over a five year period from 2016 to 2020.
12. Any radical shift in the provision of health, social care and well-being will require support to develop understanding of the new technologies. When introducing systems that make use of IT and/or the internet it will be important to take into account lower rates of IT awareness and/or internet usage by older people¹¹ or people with sensory disabilities compared to that of the general population. Safeguards should also be put in place to ensure that the use of these technologies does not lead to social isolation. This could include through regular face to face meetings to review health needs.

Ensure that older people of differing sexual orientations and transgender people have their domiciliary, residential or nursing care needs fully met.

13. Older lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) and trans people can have different family support networks to the wider population and thus potentially differing needs for domiciliary, residential or nursing care support when compared to heterosexuals. In addition, older LGB and trans people’s experience of growing up in Northern Ireland may make them more reluctant¹² than others to disclose their sexual orientation, sex, gender or medical history.

8 Health and Social Care Board (Oct 2012): [“Transforming Your Care” Draft Strategic Implementation Plan, Executive Summary](#).

9 Health and Social Care Board (Mar 2016) [eHealth and Care Strategy for Northern Ireland](#)

10 Role of lead department moved from the Health and Social Care Board to Department of Health in May 2016

11 Age UK, [Introducing another World: older people and digital inclusion](#).

12 For example - only 14% of older people had been open to healthcare providers about their sexuality. Heaphy et al (2003), referred to in Equality and Human Rights Commission (2010) [Don't look back? Improving health and social care service delivery for older LGB users](#)

14. To better meet these needs, health care workers providing care in residential or nursing care support, should receive specific training in the provision of intimate care for these groups, and in the needs and sensitivities of LGB and trans people. Further, any decisions on care plans and in the sharing of information between medical facilities and/or care providers should include the care recipient.

EMPLOYMENT: Reduce the proportion of young people who are NEET; reduce long-term unemployment amongst older people.

Targeted action is required, particularly for those who may face additional barriers due to Section 75 identities. Mentoring, targeted careers advice and wider support for those at, or approaching, school leaving age could help match career aspirations and skills to job prospects. Co-ordinated action is needed to tackle perceived and actual barriers facing older people in returning to, and remaining in, work – including with regards to stereotypes; life-long learning and education; training and development opportunities; and pathways to work.

Target actions, advice and support to reduce the proportion of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

15. Effective targeted action is required, particularly for those who may face additional barriers to training and the labour market due to Section 75 identities. For example, lone parents who are predominately women¹³, may require assistance with childcare, while disabled people may require support in relation to transport, additional costs and/or securing reasonable adjustments. Government should use regular monitoring and disaggregated reporting to ensure maximum uptake of opportunities and subsequent progression into employment.
16. Mentoring, targeted careers advice and wider support for those at, or approaching, school leaving age could help match aspirations to job prospects; encouraging actions to gain required skills and/or deal with any wider issues. A close match between the available training courses and labour market opportunities may also support more direct access to employment.

¹³ Dr Russell, R. (Jun 2014) [Census 2011: Key Statistics at Northern Ireland and LGD level](#)

The Departments for the Economy and Education should work in partnership to deliver coordinated actions to reduce long-term unemployment amongst older people.

17. The share of people in Northern Ireland classed as long-term unemployed is higher for the over 50s age group.¹⁴ Despite the fall in unemployment figures, the percentage of people aged 50 years and over claiming long-term unemployment benefits has increased by 2 percentage points over a three year period¹⁵.
18. Targeted action is needed to tackle perceived and actual barriers facing older people in returning to, and remaining in, work – including with regards to stereotypes; life-long learning and education; training and development opportunities; and pathways to work.

EDUCATION: Improve the participation of older people; young carers; looked after children; and those within the juvenile justice centre.

Actions should tackle barriers to older people participating in life-long and further education; ensure collaboration between Departments to identify young carers and provide services to both support them and improve their educational outcomes; provide tailored support to ensure the effective participation in education of every looked after child; and ensure that children and young people in the juvenile justice centre have access to an appropriate education curriculum.

The Department for the Economy should tackle barriers to older people participating in life-long and further education.

19. The Commission welcomes that the Northern Ireland Strategy for Further Education¹⁶ provides a context to tackle the barriers perceived and/or faced by older people and looks forward to its review to ‘develop policy proposals on the most appropriate roles’ and ‘to identify the main barriers which inhibit different groups of learners (for example by age and level of learning) from participating in provision’¹⁷.
20. Northern Ireland has the highest proportion of adults in the United Kingdom with no educational qualifications¹⁸. We therefore call for the development of policy proposals which will remove the barriers to education perceived and/or experienced by older people.

¹⁴ Long-term unemployed is a percentage of unemployed who have been unemployed for 12 months or more – sourced from the Labour Force Survey

¹⁵ NISRA long-term claimants over 50 (January 2014 to March 2017) – [comparison of figures between March 2014 to March 2017]

¹⁶ DEL (2016) [Skills to succeed Further Education Means Success](#)

¹⁷ Department for the Economy (2016) [Programme for Implementation](#) (Pg 30)

¹⁸ Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister [Active Ageing Strategy 2014 -2020 consultation](#).

The Departments of Health and Education should work in collaboration to identify young carers and provide services to both support them and improve their educational outcomes.

21. By working in collaboration, the Education and Health Departments could better identify carers; raise awareness among young carers of supports potentially available; provide signposting to relevant DE and DoH services; and improve monitoring and data collection.
22. We welcome the '*Supporting Young Carers in School: An Introduction for Primary and Secondary School Staff*'¹⁹ guidance produced²⁰ by the Education Authority and the Health and Social Care Board. The guidance seeks to make young carers more visible to teachers and to assist teachers in supporting their needs. We recommend that the mainstreaming of the guidance within schools is monitored and reviewed.

The Departments of Education and Health should provide tailored support to ensure the effective participation in education of every looked after child.

23. Evidence shows that looked after children have poorer educational achievements when compared to their peers. The Department of Education and the Department of Health should work together to provide a co-ordinated and consistent approach, including via their duty within the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015²¹, to ensure the effective participation in education of every looked after child.
24. Further, consistency is also needed across Trusts to address the geographical variations that currently exist²² in allocating and implementing Personal Education Plans for children in care.

Ensure children and young people in the juvenile justice centre have access to an appropriate education curriculum

25. Children and young people in the juvenile justice centre (JJC) in Northern Ireland have historically not had the same access to the full education curriculum as their peers.

19 Education Authority and Health and Social Care Board (2017) [Supporting Young Carers in School: An Introduction for Primary and Secondary School Staff](#)

20 The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Young Carers Group comprising the Health and Social Care Board produced the guidance in partnership with the Education Authority; Action for Children NI; Barnardo's NI; Gingerbread NI and Carers Trust NI.

21 [Children's Services Co-operation Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#)

22 For example only 80% of looked after children of school age had a PEP within the Northern Trust, compared to 92% within the Belfast Trust.

26. Since 2015, a review of the core curriculum against the requirements of Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) provision has been carried out²³. The Commission welcomes this step and calls for ongoing monitoring to ensure effective and comprehensive education provision, particularly in light of the negative issues associated with reductions in staffing levels, noted in the 2015 review by the Criminal Justice Inspection NI²⁴.

HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION: Across all tenures, ensure accessible accommodation, energy efficiency, and access to a comprehensive fuel-brokering scheme.

We recommend the application of the Lifetime Homes Standard and wheelchair housing design standard to all new builds across all tenures; provision of easy to access adaptation services; sufficient capacity to provide care and support for care home residents; and research to better understand the accommodation requirements of older people. Action is also required to further advance energy efficiency and to implement a fuel-brokering scheme to secure competitive rates across all tenures.

Accessible housing standards should be applied to all new builds, including, as a minimum, the extension of the Lifetime Homes Standard to new builds across all tenures.

27. More needs to be done to ensure that all new builds in private tenures comply with accessible standards, so as to better facilitate individuals to remain in their homes as they age or as their needs change. We note recognition within the draft Programme for Government delivery plans of the need to increase the provision of accessible homes²⁵.
28. While Part R of the Building Regulations - 'Access and Facilities for Disabled People'²⁶ has applied to all new private sector builds since 2001, providing basic access standards in dwellings, the Building Regulations do not include the Lifetime Homes Standard that were adopted for all social housing in 1998.

23 Youth Justice Agency (Jul 2016) [YJA Annual Report & Accounts 2015-16](#)

24 Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland; The Regulations and Quality Improvement Agency; The Education and Training Inspectorate (May 2015) [An announced inspection of Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre](#)

25 NI Executive (2017) [PfG Delivery Plan indicators 8 and 48](#)

26 [The Building Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2000, Part R](#)

Easy to access adaptation services should be implemented to ensure older people's independence in their own home.

29. Maintaining older residents in their own homes (as long as it is viable and they wish it) is a core element to securing and maintaining personal independence. To allow this housing adaptations may be required, driven by changing needs with age or following any discharge from hospital.
30. We recommend²⁷ that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) (or others as appropriate) ensure there are sufficiently resourced adaptation services across all tenures, setting out key targets and associated performance indicators via an outcome focused action plan.
31. Adaptations funding is currently only available to persons with a disability. We therefore also recommend that consideration is given to extending the Disabled Facilities Grant to older non-disabled people with health needs.

Trusts should ensure there is sufficient capacity to care for permanent care home residents (where they wish it), and that they provide for all older residents requiring care and support.

32. Should the Department of Health's²⁸ plans proceed to reduce residential accommodation for older people²⁹ it will be vital that older residents are assured that they will receive the same level of care and support in alternative accommodation.
33. Should the DoH plans proceed, we also recommend the mandatory inclusion of an assessment of the quality and services available in alternative care options. Compliance with the best practice guide '*The Reconfiguration of Statutory Residential Homes*³⁰ on the role of advocacy and the importance of infrastructure is recommended.

Undertake further research to understand the accommodation needs, preferences and expectations of older people.

34. The demographic trend of an ageing population is contributing to an increase in demand for support services and specialised housing in old age³¹. However it is also the case that sheltered housing has become less attractive to fit, active older people³².

27 ECNI (May 2013), [Response to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's consultation on the Inter-Departmental Review of Housing Adaptations Services](#)

28 Role of lead department moved from Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to Department of Health (DoH) in May 2016

29 DHSSPS [Transforming Your Care: A review of health and social care in Northern Ireland](#)

30 Health and Social Care Board (Nov 2013) [Making Choices: Meeting the current and future accommodation needs of older people – Good Practice Guide – Reconfiguration of Statutory Homes, November 2013](#)

31 Northern Ireland Housing Executive (Aug 2008) [Older People Housing Policy Review Action Plan 2008 – 2010](#)

32 Professor Paris, C, Emeritus Professor of Housing, Ulster University (Mar 2013) [Future need and demand for appropriate models of accommodation and associated services for older people](#)

35. Research into housing needs and preferences, and geographical patterns of need may assist the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; Housing Associations; and the nine councils in assessing the demand and supply needs for future social housing.

Given the impact of fuel poverty on older people, we recommend actions to further advance energy efficiency and to implement a fuel-brokering scheme across all tenures.

36. While progress has been made, including improvements in energy efficiency through the Affordable Warmth Scheme and the requirements of an Energy Performance Certificate³³, addressing fuel poverty should remain a priority for action, as highlighted in the Active Ageing Strategy 2016 – 2021.
37. In addition to further advancing energy efficiency, an energy brokerage scheme open to all tenures should be implemented to allow the group purchase of fuel at more competitive rates than is possible by individual households.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE: Ensure the active participation of younger and older people; address over-arching barriers.

Action is required to encourage younger people to apply for public appointments; and for public authorities to more effectively and meaningfully engage with and foster the active participation of people of all ages in public policy development and decision making, including to tackle over-arching structural and personal barriers to active participation.

Encourage younger people to apply for public appointments; address institutional barriers; and deliver capacity building.

38. Greater participation by younger people in public appointments would help to ensure a more informed policy decision making process. As part of a range of actions to encourage applications from younger people, new avenues of promotion could be explored and implemented to raise awareness of opportunities, and their relevance among younger age groups.

³³ From 2008 all properties, including new builds and properties for sale, are required to hold an Energy Performance Certificate. The EU Performance of Buildings Directive (Part F) has been introduced in stages into NI building requirements.

39. Consideration should be given to exploring and addressing any institutional barriers to appointment. Consideration could also be given to the production of more online guides and competency-based interviewing. We support initiatives which build capacity and gain apprentice style experience of board membership through training, experience and mentoring support.

Public authorities should take steps to more effectively foster the active participation of people of all ages in public policy development and decision making, including to tackle over-arching barriers.

40. To ensure the active participation of younger and older people, there is a need to tackle over-arching barriers to active participation including: structural barriers; physical and communication needs; personal capacity and confidence; and stereotypes and prejudice
41. Public authorities must ensure the active and meaningful participation of children and give due weight to their views in designing laws, policies, programmes. We recommend an evaluation of the effectiveness of the ‘Departmental Children’s Champions’ in *“ensur[ing] children’s and young people’s interests are fostered and their views sought on policy and strategy issues”*³⁴.
42. We recommend that Departments ensure the fulfilment of the aim of the 2016 Active Ageing Strategy³⁵ to ensure *“the active participation and citizenship of older people in decision-making on policies and in the provision of services”*³⁶, not only in the delivery of actions associated with the Strategy, but across the development, delivery and review of all Government policies and services more generally.

PREJUDICE AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES: Challenge age-based negative and prejudicial attitudes, addressing their impact on individuals.

We recommend further exploration of how prejudicial attitudes impact on older people’s health and lifestyle choices; training for police incorporating challenging negative and prejudicial attitudes towards children and young people; and balanced media reporting to ensure fair representation of young people. The fear of crime among older people should also be addressed.

34 Dr Bryne, B and Prof Lundy, L Queen’s University of Belfast, Nov 2011, [Barriers to Effective Government Delivery for Children in Northern Ireland](#), published by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

35 OFMDFM (2016) [Active Ageing Strategy 2016-2021](#)

36 OFMDFM (2016) [Active Ageing Strategy 2016-2021 page 7](#)

Further explore how prejudicial attitudes impact on older people's health and lifestyle choices³⁷; and the key actions that will overcome any identified issues.

43. Studies and attitudinal surveys suggest that prejudicial attitudes may be an issue in the provision of health and social care generally for older people, but a more detailed exploration of the specific situation in Northern Ireland is currently lacking.
44. To identify specific priorities for action in Northern Ireland, we call for targeted research to examine any prejudicial attitudes in the delivery of health, social care and wellbeing services, and their impact on older people's health.

Training for police should incorporate challenging negative and prejudicial attitudes towards children and young people.

45. The review³⁸ of the youth justice system in 2011 highlighted a need to challenge, within the police service, negative and prejudicial attitudes towards children and young people.
46. We welcomed the Justice Minister's 2015 announcement³⁹ of a comprehensive scoping study into how children who may be impacted by the justice system are dealt with. We recommend that evidence is published to demonstrate improvements in outcomes and/or the priority actions that are required.

The Children and Young People's Strategy and action plans should include a focus on balanced media reporting measures.

47. Society's perception of children and young people is reinforced by negative media stories. However, actual police crime figures do not support this negative media image of children and young people, who are more likely to be victims of crime rather than perpetrators.
48. Action is required to ensure balanced reporting with media reporting also reasonably covering children and young people's achievements and their positive contributions to society.

³⁷ A focus on Lifestyle choices is about enabling older people to make independent choices about how they live, taking part in activities, interests and having their opinions valued

³⁸ Department of Justice (2011) [A review of the Youth Justice System in Northern Ireland](#)

³⁹ Justice Minister Ford announcement in May 2015 on [scoping study into how children who may be impacted by the justice system are dealt with](#)

Government should take action to address the fear of crime among older people.

49. Actions must not only focus on tackling crime but also the perception of the prevalence of crime against older people. While a number of strategies⁴⁰ exist to reinforce actual and perceived safety, evidence suggests that delivery is dependent on adequately resourced and targeted actions across Government policy. Delivery of commitments within action plans is therefore essential.
50. We have recommended that the Programme for Government⁴¹ includes a commitment to take actions to address the fear of crime amongst older people. We further recommend the adoption of specific outcomes and associated measures towards tackling the fear of crime amongst older people.

WELFARE AND SOCIAL PROTECTION: Further mitigate equality impacts of Welfare Reform; address the number of looked after children within the criminal justice system.

Action is needed to assess the impact of Universal Credit on low income mixed age couples; ensure that the withdrawal of housing benefit to unemployed 18-21 year olds does not result in a rise in youth homelessness; address the needs of single tenants aged 35 years and under when renting in the private rented sector. Action is also required to reduce the number of looked after children subject to Police and Criminal Evidence Order (PACE) detentions, and to address their overrepresentation within the criminal justice system.

Assess the impact of Universal Credit on low income mixed age couples.

51. The introduction of Universal Credit provisions relating to Pension Credit⁴² will have an adverse financial impact on low income couples where one partner is aged below the State Pension Age. Under the new provisions couples on low income will not be able to claim Pension Credit until both parties reach the State Pension Age.

40 Such as the Community Safety Strategy, 'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities 2012-2017 / Policing and Community Safety Partnerships / Active Ageing Strategy 2016-2021

41 ECNI (Jan 2017) response to draft Delivery Plan for Indicator 1: [Prevalence rate \(% of the population who were victims of any NI Crime Survey crime\) \(Para 1.14\)](#)

42 Pension Credit is income-related and provides a 'top-up' on weekly income if below the 'Guarantee Credit' income. At August 2017 – Pension credit tops up weekly income to: £159.35 if single and £243.25 if a couple.

52. Targeting of low income pensioners below the ‘Guarantee Credit’⁴³ income, should be a priority in the Department for Communities ‘Improving Benefit Uptake’⁴⁴ programme. For members of any specific equality groups who are receiving their full entitlement and yet remaining in poverty, action is required.

Ensure that the withdrawal of housing benefit to unemployed 18-21 year olds does not result in a rise in youth homelessness.

53. The 2015 summer budget announced the removal of the housing benefit element of Universal Credit for out-of-work young people aged 18-21 from April 2017⁴⁵. Implementation in Northern Ireland commenced, on a rolling basis, from September 2017⁴⁶.
54. In June 2015, 3,800 claimants in Northern Ireland under the age of 22 claimed housing benefit, receiving an average of £54 per week⁴⁷. Of these claimants, it has been indicated that 800 would be directly affected by the removal of housing benefit by the introduction of Universal Credit⁴⁸. Action is required to assess the impact on individuals and avoid any rise in homelessness.

The Department for Communities should take targeted action to address the needs of single tenants aged 35 years and under when renting in the private rented sector.

55. Changes to Housing Benefit⁴⁹ have resulted in single people aged 35 years old and under being entitled only to a shared accommodation rate. This is lower than the full housing benefit rate. Young people aged under 35 have been negatively affected by Welfare Reform measures, as regards their ability to secure and sustain private rented sector accommodation, in the absence of available social housing.

43 This is a top up of weekly income if it is below a stipulated level, £159.35 for single people and £243.25 for couples

44 Department for Communities (Sept 2016) [Supporting People – Maximising Income through the Uptake of Benefits 01 April 2016 - 31 March 2019](#)

45 Parliament UK (Aug 2015) [Research Briefings: Housing Benefit: withdrawing entitlement from 18-21 year olds](#)

46 Department for Communities website 2017 - Universal Credit implementation timeline NI

47 Housing benefit is currently available to people if they pay rent, rates, have a low income, savings or if not in work.

48 Department for Social Development (Sept 2015) [The Impact of the Summer Budget 2015](#)

49 Northern Ireland Housing Executive’s website: [Benefits and Grants/Local Housing Allowance](#)

56. We welcome the commitment within the draft Programme for Government delivery plan⁵⁰ to develop affordable housing solutions to meet the needs of single people aged under 35 on benefits. We recommend that the Department for Communities, in its review of the role and regulation of the private rented sector, includes targeted action to address the needs of single tenants aged 35 years and under when renting in the private rented sector.

Reduce the number of looked after children subject to PACE detentions, and to address their overrepresentation within the criminal justice system.

57. The Children’s Law Centre and Include Youth have raised concerns⁵¹ that PACE⁵² powers “are not used as a measure of last resort, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, but instead have been employed in the absence of alternative accommodation, a concern also raised by the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland.”
58. The Review of the Youth Justice System in Northern Ireland⁵³ recommended development of an appropriate range of supported accommodation to reduce the use of the JJC as a place of safety under PACE⁵⁴. It recommended that looked after children should not be placed in custody where this would not have been an outcome for children in the general population⁵⁵. Despite this, in 2015/16 36% of all transactions⁵⁶ within the JJC were with looked after children, a similar rate to previous years⁵⁷.

50 NI Executive (2016) [Delivery plan: Number of households in housing stress](#)

51 Children’s Law Centre and Include Youth (2016) [Joint Briefing Paper for the Committee for Justice - Concerns around regression of implementation of the Hillsborough Agreement and the recommendations of the Youth Justice Review](#)

52 Police and Criminal Evidence Order 1989

53 Department of Justice (2011) [A review of the Youth Justice System in Northern Ireland](#)

54 Department of Justice (2011) [A review of the Youth Justice System in Northern Ireland recommendation 8](#)

55 Department of Justice (2011) [A review of the Youth Justice System in Northern Ireland recommendation 19](#)

56 Transactions are new admissions and internal changes of status from PACE to remand

57 Youth Justice Agency (2016) [Annual Workload Statistics 2015/16](#) reported: 2014/15 - 39%; 2013/14 - 42%; 2012/13 38%; 2011/12 - 32%



For further information visit:
www.equalityni.org/age