1 The Context

1.1 The Effects of Deprivation

Over the past 10 years, Northern Ireland as a whole has become more peaceful and prosperous. Not everyone, however, has benefited from peace and economic progress. There remain many places that suffer from very high levels of poverty and disadvantage.
The symptoms of deprivation are easy to identify and understand. People who live in deprived areas are much more likely to be out of work or, when they do have jobs, to be poorly paid. The economic stresses of unemployment and low incomes are closely linked to social problems such as poor health, low levels of educational achievement and high levels of crime. Economic deprivation also leads to environmental problems, characterised by derelict buildings, undeveloped sites and poor services.

**What your life may be like if you live in a deprived neighbourhood**

**As a child, you will be more likely to:**
- have an unhealthy diet;
- have tooth decay;
- die prematurely;
- start to fall behind educationally at the age of 2;
- leave school without any qualifications.

**As an adult, you will be more likely to:**
- be unemployed or work in a poorly paid job;
- be dependent on benefits;
- have been traumatised or bereaved by the Troubles;
- suffer mental strain and addiction to prescription drugs or alcohol;
- go without food in order to provide enough for your children.

**As an older person, you will be more likely to:**
- rely on benefits for most, if not all, of your income;
- live in a house that has no central heating;
- suffer ill-health due to fuel poverty.
The stress of living in these conditions is often manifested in high levels of drug and alcohol abuse, anti-social behaviour and a breakdown in community values and structures. In some places, community division has made things worse creating enclaves and interfaces where the quality of life is affected by fear, where residents often cannot use the services that are closest to them and businesses are reluctant to invest.

Not only is it possible to identify the individual aspects of deprivation, we can also see that there is a compound effect, where one form of deprivation or disadvantage will cause another or make it worse. Failure to obtain the necessary training or qualifications will make it much more difficult to get a job and earn a decent income. This, in turn, will mean relying almost exclusively on the State for a whole range of services and benefits.

People living in the most deprived neighbourhoods are more likely to depend on public services than the rest of society. Those who are unemployed or who are on low incomes depend on the benefit system; those with poor health are more likely to need the help of the Health and Personal Social Services. It is also the case that those suffering from anti-social behaviour are more likely to need the assistance of the police. Because these neighbourhoods depend more on public services than the rest of society, they will be disproportionately affected by any weaknesses or under performance in those services. Consequently, they may derive greater benefit from incremental improvements in public services.

Deprived neighbourhoods stay poor because deprivation has become inter-generational; the children of deprived people end up being deprived in the same ways as their parents. If parents are poor or have poor health, it is likely that their children will also be poor and have poor health. A neighbourhood will spiral into decline as the deprivation worsens and successive generations become disadvantaged by where they live. To break the cycle of deprivation we must attack it in the places where most people suffer from it.
The Reality of Deprivation

- Life expectancy in the most deprived wards is less than the Northern Ireland average by 3.1 years for men and 3.5 years for women. (NI average 74.5 yr for men, 79.6 yr for women, most deprived wards 71.4 yr for men and 77.1 yr for women). (1)

- Levels of educational attainment are lower in most deprived areas. In the 10% most deprived wards, around one third of school leavers achieved 5+ GCSE grades A*-C compared with more than half of school leavers as a whole. (1)

- Levels of recorded crime are more than double (135 per 1,000 population) that of the Northern Ireland average (63 per 1,000 population) in some of the most deprived areas. (2)

- Within the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland up to 92% of children live in households dependent on means tested benefits, compared to as little as 4% in the least deprived wards. (3)

- Within the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland up to 69% of people are in low income household, compared to as little as 3% in the least deprived wards. (3)

- Within the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland up to 30% of people are excluded from work through unemployment, sickness or disability, compared to as little as 3% in the least deprived wards. (3)

- Within the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland up to 75% of persons aged 16-74 have no qualifications, compared to as few as 8% in the least deprived wards. (4)

Sources

1. Investing for Health, March 2002
2. BRO Draft Strategy (PSNI Data)
1.2 The Government’s Commitment to Tackling Deprivation

In Northern Ireland, the Government is committed to tackling deprivation. Each year, it publishes its plans and priorities and, in recent years, these have given considerable attention to the problem of persistent deprivation in our society. Commitments have been made to "tackle social need or social exclusion" because "poverty has for too long blighted the lives of individuals and whole communities". Because this issue is so important, it has been encapsulated in a cross-cutting policy known as new Targeting Social Need (new TSN) that now applies to all aspects of Government activity. It requires all Government Departments to use their resources to benefit the most disadvantaged people, groups and areas and to change the way things are done so that programmes and services are organised and delivered in ways that are more helpful to disadvantaged people. The range of current Government strategies and policies reflective of new TSN are particularly important to any attempt to tackle deprivation.

The Regional Development Strategy emphasises the importance of balancing the pattern of development in order to revitalise areas of slower growth and achieve social cohesion. It also highlights the vitally important role that urban regeneration plays in helping build more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable neighbourhoods.

The Department of the Environment is preparing a Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland. It will reflect the objectives and principles of "A Better Quality of Life", the UK Sustainable Development Strategy and also reflects one of the cross cutting themes in the Executive’s Programme for Government that everyone can share in high living standards and greater job opportunities. The Department for Enterprise Trade and Investment (DETI) aims to attract 75% of all first time inward projects to locate in new TSN areas on an annual basis. DETI is also working towards formulating a cross-departmental strategy for the development of the Social Economy in partnership with the Department for Social Development (DSD). This strategy will highlight the need to develop community businesses, training and enterprise schemes in areas of social need and the potential that the social economy has to open up new regeneration possibilities, recycle wealth locally and build the social capital upon which long-term community development can be based. Invest Northern Ireland has also developed an Accelerating Entrepreneurship Strategy that aims to promote entrepreneurship within disadvantaged areas.

The report of the Task Force on Employability and Long-Term Unemployment has identified employability and training as key issues in addressing deprivation. It recommended that the needs of deprived communities should be addressed in a comprehensive way with targeted initiatives that give special attention to areas that suffer both low employment and high deprivation.
The role that transport plays in helping deprived neighbourhoods to get access to jobs, services and facilities is recognised in the **Regional Transportation Strategy** for Northern Ireland.

The Department of Education recognises that "social need is closely correlated with educational under-achievement" and that education "has a crucial role to play in reducing social need". It has therefore implemented a number of initiatives specifically designed to address low achievement in schools, including the **School Improvement Programme** aimed at improving standards of literacy and numeracy.

The link between poor health and deprivation is well known. "**Investing For Health**" recognises this link and sets a framework within which all parts of the Government can play a part in overcoming the factors that cause poor health in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and population groups.

Crime, anti-social behaviour and vandalism are major issues in disadvantaged areas. The Northern Ireland Office is tackling these issues through the delivery of its **Community Safety Strategy** and the establishment of Community Safety Partnerships in each district council area. DSD is involved in community-based crime prevention and community safety projects, with the aim of complementing the Community Safety Strategy and other diversionary measures that can reduce anti-social behaviour and reduce the fear of crime.

A new community relations policy in Northern Ireland has been proposed in a consultation document, "**A Shared Future**", which recognises that community divisions and tensions can severely damage the quality of life in many deprived communities.

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure’s recent document, **Culture Can**, demonstrates how a flexible and innovative use of culture can be a very effective tool in tackling major social and economic issues.

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development’s **Rural Development Programme** directs substantial amounts of funding at disadvantaged rural areas in Northern Ireland. DSD works closely with DARD in order to ensure good co-ordination between the work of both Departments in tackling urban and rural deprivation.

The European Union makes a significant contribution to addressing deprivation through the Structural Funds, including Peace II. One of the three main themes of EU funding in Northern Ireland covers regeneration in disadvantaged areas, the need to develop the fabric of urban communities and the need to support bottom-up regeneration and development strategies for local areas.
1.3 The Role of the Department for Social Development
Under devolution DSD was given the critical lead role of addressing social need and social exclusion. DSD's main business areas - housing, social security, child support, urban regeneration and community development - aim to combat deprivation. It also leads, co-ordinates and drives forward work on addressing poverty, social exclusion, community development and urban regeneration for the Government as a whole. This is reflected in its mission statement "Together, tackling disadvantage, building communities" and the commitments DSD made within successive Programmes for Government under the 'Growing as a Community' priority.

Urban regeneration is a complex policy area. There are many different initiatives and schemes and a large number of organisations involved at local neighbourhood, district council and regional level. In its work in the regeneration of our cities and towns, DSD uses a mix of public and private sector investment and contributions from the European Union's Structural Funds and the International Fund for Ireland. All of DSD's urban regeneration activity is directed at supporting both people and the places where they live, work and socialise and reflects, therefore, a wide range of physical, community, social and economic initiatives.

To date physical development schemes, particularly developments in town and city centres, have been one of the most important elements of urban regeneration policy. The most frequently used initiatives are:

- **Comprehensive Development Schemes**, which contribute to the regeneration of disadvantaged areas through development, or redevelopment, in areas of high deprivation, unlocking development opportunities by releasing underused or derelict land and buildings;
- **Environmental Improvement schemes**, which help to improve the appearance of the public spaces in town and city centres across Northern Ireland; and
- **Urban Development Grant (UDG)**, which aims to encourage economic and physical regeneration in targeted areas. It seeks to promote job creation, inward investment and environmental improvement by the development of vacant, derelict or underused land and buildings.

The Carrickfergus Maritime Area Regeneration Scheme is a comprehensive development scheme that has successfully regenerated the area between Carrickfergus town centre and the seafront. DSD invested £2 million in acquiring the land and preparing it for redevelopment. This investment has attracted £34 million worth of new private sector development into the area in the shape of 260 new houses and apartments, a supermarket, four pub/restaurants, a cinema and offices. The scheme has created over 300 jobs and transformed the appearance and facilities of this part of the town.
Laganside Corporation has been a model for brownfield regeneration in Belfast. It has tackled with considerable success problems of failure in land markets on derelict sites along Belfast's waterfront, where the high cost of removing dereliction, river pollution and contamination had for a long time discouraged landowners and developers.

Social, community and economic regeneration have been other major strands of regeneration policy since the late 1980s. **Making Belfast Work** and the **Londonderry Regeneration Initiative** were introduced around this time in an effort to direct more government funding into the most disadvantaged parts of these two cities. Outside these cities, the **Community Regeneration and Improvement Special Programme (CRISP)** regenerated run-down town and village centres with a package of developments in each town or village that included a core economic project developed by a local community group. The Urban Development Programme was made available to owners of run-down or derelict commercial property to help private sector investment in areas of clear market failure.

The **Castlewellan CRISP** scheme has transformed the main street of the town. Aside from Hillyard House, the core economic project, and the environmental improvements that were directly funded by the scheme, it has encouraged the private sector to refurbish almost every building in the town centre.

Hillyard House created new tourist accommodation in the town centre close to the entrance of Castlewellan Forest Park. At its height, it was catering for around 3,000 visitors each year and it employed 11 people. It was also used for local community events. The building has now been sold to the private sector and the local community group will use the money raised to undertake another economic development project in the town.
Many of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland are areas largely made up of social housing. DSD can, therefore, make a substantial difference to many neighbourhoods through the work of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the housing association movement.

The ongoing drive to improve housing conditions has been a cornerstone of area renewal throughout Northern Ireland. Housing activity has in many instances been the key to unlocking wider physical and social regeneration by providing a focus for related matters such as environmental improvements, health and welfare, community development and community safety. An example of this is the Creating Common Ground Consortium, a partnership of statutory and voluntary bodies in which the Housing Executive plays a leading role. This consortium is using funding from the New Opportunities Fund to regenerate 40 of the most disadvantaged housing estates in Northern Ireland.

The Social Security Agency (SSA) provides financial support in the most deprived neighbourhoods in the form of benefits to a range of customers, including people of working age, disabled people, their carers and pensioners. Along with the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), the SSA has a vision to "deliver high quality, customer-focused employment and welfare services in Northern Ireland". The SSA is delivering this vision through a major programme of Welfare Reform and Modernisation based around the principle of "work for those who can and support for those who cannot".

DSD leads "Partners for Change": Government’s Strategy for Support of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland. The strategy focuses on developing relationships between Government Departments and the voluntary and community sector through working together, capacity building and resourcing the sector. It also emphasises the importance of both active citizenship and the improvement of relations within and between communities in tackling social disadvantage. Furthermore, it sets out how Government Departments will work individually and collectively to support the voluntary and community sector in the delivery of services and regeneration. DSD is also responsible for supporting community infrastructure development through the Community Support Programme administered by district councils. More recently, it has also become heavily involved in supporting basic community infrastructure development through initiatives promoted by the Community Action Group, including the new Local Community Fund.