

*Children First*  
*The Northern Ireland Childcare Strategy*

A Policy Statement

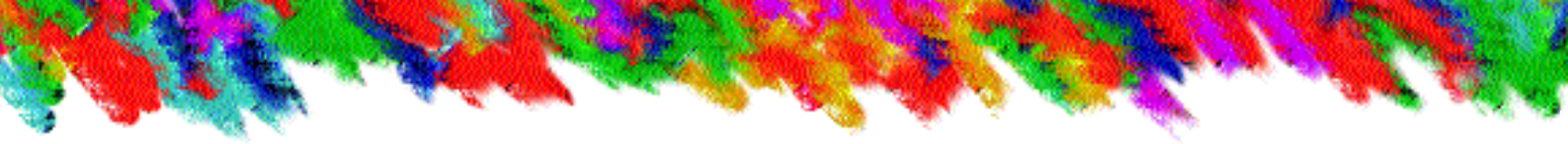




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September 1999





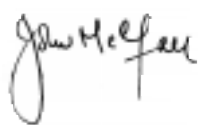


# FOREWORD

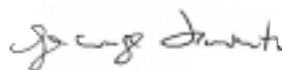
Family life is the foundation of our society, and support for families is a cornerstone of Government policy in health and social services, education and training. While parents will always have the primary responsibility for the care and well-being of their children, *Children First* outlines the measures the Government is taking to help and support them.

The Government's aim is to ensure high quality, affordable childcare for children aged up to 14 in every local community in Northern Ireland. This policy statement takes account of a range of comments in response to the earlier consultative document and we are grateful to all those who responded.

Measures are being taken to improve quality, increase access, provide better information and make childcare more affordable. An additional £61 million will be made available over the next 3 years to implement this strategy, but successful implementation will depend on a range of professions, agencies and voluntary bodies working together. New structures will be put in place to facilitate this. This policy statement sets a vision for the future of our children and presents a challenge to all those with a part to play in achieving that aim.



**JOHN McFALL**  
Minister with responsibility for  
Education and Training



**GEORGE HOWARTH**  
Minister for Health and  
Social Services



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