



National Children's Policy 2016

*"Children are the world's most valuable resource and
its best hope for the future" (John F. Kennedy)*



MINISTRY FOR THE FAMILY
AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

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“Children are the world’s most valuable resource and its best
hope for the future” (John F. Kennedy)

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Terminology

For the purpose of this policy, the following terms will be used in reference to:

Child: Defined as per Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which considers "*...every human being below the age of eighteen years.*"

Young Person: The definition of a young person overlaps and extends to that of a child. A young person is defined in line with the 'National Youth Policy Towards 2020' (2015) which considers children "*...in the 13 to 30 age group.*"

Family: A family is defined as a person, or collection of persons, who are linked to the child either by blood, kinship, common ancestry and/or responsibility of care and upbringing.

Primary Caregiver/s: The primary caregiver/s refers to the person/s or entity which is/are recognised by the State as being responsible for the care and upbringing of the child.





Foreword

Dr Michael Farrugia | Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity

Our Vision:

“Children should be respected, protected and have their rights fulfilled. Our vision is for children’s voices to be heard, their opinions and ideas considered and supported so that they may grow to realise their full potential.”

The National Children’s Policy is a major step taken by the Government in order to ensure that our younger generations not only have a lively, active and happy childhood, but also have all the necessary building blocks in order to have a prosperous future. As explained in this policy’s vision, every child should be respected, have their rights safeguarded and be protected. By doing so, it will be ensured that each and every child will be given the necessary tools and support so as to have the same potential as any other child to have a bright childhood and future.

It is not enough to only set policies, but it is more crucial to see these policy actions set into motion. Hence, it is not enough to enact legislations, but to also, through solidarity and implementation of such legislations, ensure that our children are protected at all times. In fact, restructuring of the current children services within the National Social Welfare Services is planned in order to provide better support and prioritise children’s needs in case of abuse or risk of harm.

Issues of accountability, governance and upgrading in children’s institutions are also at the focus of our work towards children at large. As part of the restructuring, a new agency specialising on fostering and adoption services will be set up so as to be able to provide the best possible services and support to the children, their families and their carers. An

additional issue that is to be addressed in parallel to that of fostering and adoption is that of unaccompanied minors. It is necessary to ensure that children in such a situation are given the opportunity to grow in a safe and stable family.

Another sector in which children need to be put at the centre of any changes is that of the justice system. Children can have various roles when entering the justice system, be it as victims, witnesses or as offenders. The below policy actions take into consideration and give great importance to the roles, conditions and treatment of children finding themselves in this system. This follows in line with the recommendations issued by the Council of Europe in relation to their strategy regarding *Rights of the Child*, hence being always at the forefront of adopting time-effective and efficient measures.

To conclude, it is also essential to protect and educate children so as to learn to safeguard themselves from any abuse, especially the new emerging trend of online abuse. It is only through educational development, health services and social inclusion, that our children can enjoy their childhood and have a bright future ahead of them.



Michael Farrugia
Minister for the Family
and Social Solidarity

Policy's Aims and Background

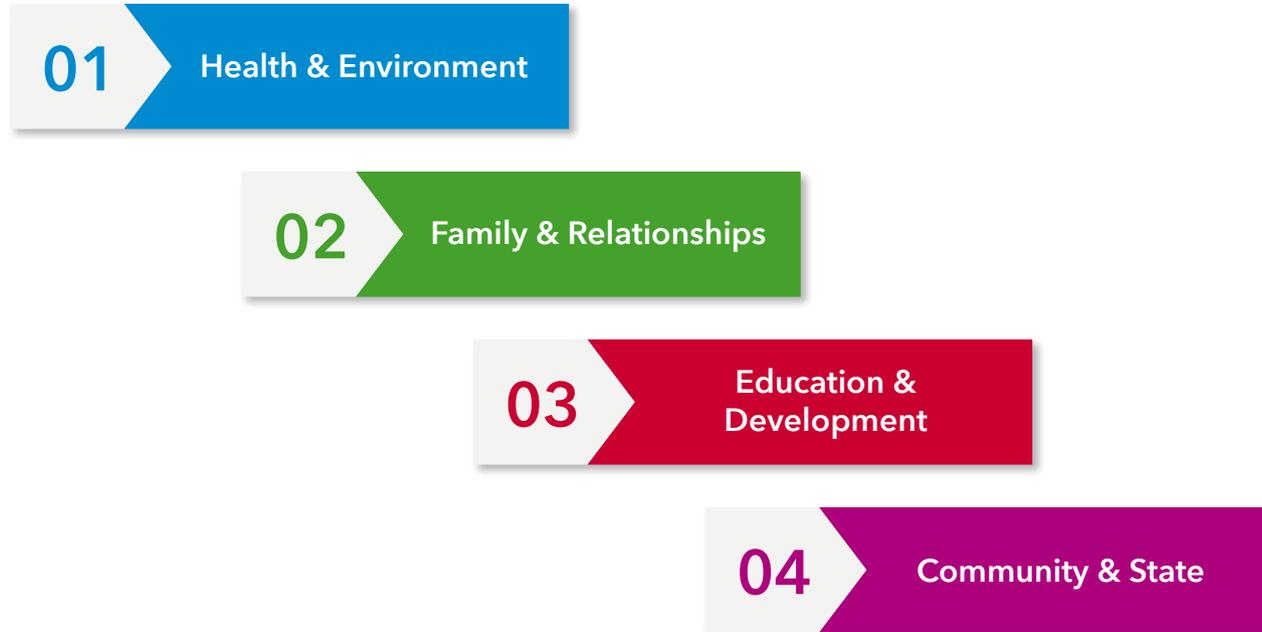
The structure of the National Children's Policy aims to achieve four set of goals and outcomes such that the current younger generation will have a suitable lifestyle as well as a better and sustainable future. Furthermore, the focus of a child in regards to this policy evolves from the personal development of the child and expands to incorporate sequentially the family structure, the involvement within the community and State participation.

It is the vision of this policy that children are respected and protected, while being aware of their rights. This policy aims to highlight actions upon which the children's opinions and voice will not only be heard, but also encouraged and supported. Only through such involvement can they fulfil their potential in the here and now and to grow into responsible and proactive adult citizens.

In order to achieve such a vision, four set of long-term goals and corresponding short-term outcomes were developed.

Long-Term Goals	Short-Term Outcomes
Have active and healthy generations	Children living an active and healthy lifestyle
Protect children and ensure an adequate living environment	Children are living in a safe and economically stable family environment
Grow-up to be independent and responsible adults	Children achieving their maximum potential in education and later in future employment
Become active participants within their community and State	Children are respected and enabled to be active participants in their social surroundings

The supporting structure for achieving such outcomes and goals is based on four separate but interdependent areas of a child's life. The underpinning pillars refer to the individual's health, familial and relationship interactions, educational development and social involvement within the respective community.



The first pillar relates to the provision of health services and healthy lifestyle of the child, as well as the importance of the surrounding environment due to its high correlation to health and psycho-physical wellbeing. Policy actions proposed under this pillar focus on the goal for children to live a healthy childhood and grow as a healthy and physically active generation.

The second pillar treats the family structure and the ever evolving relationships a child encounters whilst growing up. Only through having stable, healthy and safe relationships will the child have a positive childhood and grow to attain his/her full potential later on in life.

The third pillar highlights the necessary measures through which children can maximise their educational experience such that it will be both educational and enjoyable for them. By making learning a pleasurable and interesting experience, only then will the child be fully participative and hence, the teaching effective.

The fourth and final pillar incorporates policy actions with respect to active participation within both the community and the State at large. Encouraging children to become active within their community and the democratic system of the Country, will eventually lead to more actively participating and involved generations.

Reality of the Lives of Children in Malta

Children today are growing up in a rapidly changing society where new and modern concepts of family structures, lifestyle variations, technological advances and other changes in the broader social structure are putting pressure on societies and communities to adapt to changing times. Such transitions present a number of challenges for all, especially for children, across their course of life.

Malta, as across the European Union (EU), is characterised by a number of emerging demographic trends, amongst which include; an increase in life expectancy, a considerably low fertility rate, more diverse family formations, postponement of child-bearing and migration flows. Indeed, the total fertility rate in Malta has experienced a decline in the past decades, from 3.6 in 1960, down to 1.4 in 2012. This has resulted in a drastic decline in which the child population fell by nearly 10,000 between 2006 (85,080 children) and 2013 (75,659 children)¹.

The traditional welfare state which was once structured on the typical nuclear family, with the male as the breadwinner and the woman as the carer, is now no longer the norm. Children are growing up in more diverse and pluralistic families, including lone parent households and reconstituted families. These different family forms, characterised by more symmetrical roles, are changing the social definition and composition of households. An overview of all households with children demonstrates that in 2013, 81.0% of children lived with both parents, 18.2% lived with a single parent, whereas 0.8% did not live

¹ Data source: National Statistics Office (NSO).

with neither of their parents. Lone parent and reconstituted families have exhibited an increase in the last number of years. Another emergent reality constitutes of inter-cultural marriages and same-sex unions².

Factors such as the increase of female participation in the labour market and the furthering of education are key elements to the postponement of child bearing. Additionally, since grandparents are increasingly opting to continue being active in the labour market, they can no longer provide informal childcare for their grandchildren as was the norm in the past decades. Hence, active ageing and changing family formations are bringing forth a societal need to invest further, both in the private and public sectors, in more effective family-friendly and gender-equal measures, as well in community based child-care services. At the same time, it is essential to consolidate all possible resources in order to rapidly address and cater for emerging new challenges and new necessities. It is only through such investment that one ensures an adequate lifestyle and sustainable growth in our country for both present and future generations.

International and European Frameworks

During the last decades, Malta has witnessed an increased interest in the promotion of children's rights, which has been reflected through the codification of various international instruments.

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child, signed and ratified by numerous Member States (MS), including Malta, which came into force in September 1990 constitutes the most prominent international legal instrument for safeguarding children's rights and wellbeing. This Convention provides a holistic and comprehensive framework to guide MS in the development and evaluation of their children's policy agendas. Fundamentally, such a Convention promotes children's rights to be happy, to grow up into mature adults, to be protected from anything that may cause them harm and to be able to express themselves, without harming themselves and others.

Through its Charter of Fundamental Rights, the EU has also contributed towards the development of a legal basis which safeguards children's rights and wellbeing. The

²Data source: NSO.

Charter includes a general article on children's rights (Article 24) and a specific article on child labour (Article 32). It also ensures that the child's education conforms with the family's "*religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions*" (Article 14) and provides for the right to paid maternity and parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child (Article 33). Furthermore, the Council of Europe (CoE) Warsaw Declaration of 2005 provides an explicit legal mandate to take action in the field of children's rights, including actions to address social, legal, health and educational aspects arising from the various forms of violence against children. Another central European framework concerns the European Commission (EC) Communication 'An EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child' (2011) which aims to make the rights of the child an integral part of each MS's fundamental rights policy.

Apart from highlighting the need for child protection, adequate child services and child participation, the UN, the CoE and the EU all stress the need to strengthen inter-organisational cooperation and to enhance collaboration across different policy areas related to child wellbeing. Through their policy and legislative frameworks, these international organisations indeed provide a holistic and concrete framework which all MS can adhere to so as to ensure that the rights and wellbeing of children are effectively safeguarded.

National Frameworks Catering for Children and Young People

In Malta, children have been a national priority for several decades, as reflected through the enactment of several relevant legislative Acts. Amongst many, the most renowned of these are the: Education Act (Chapter 327); Social Security Act (Chapter 318) – Children's Allowance (Article 76); Children and Young Persons (Care Orders) Act (Chapter 285); Adoption Administration Act (Chapter 495) and Foster Care Act (Chapter 491). In addition to this, further amendments are planned in the foreseeable future, whereby the Foster Care Act will become more child-focused and child-friendly. In all the related and referenced Acts, as well as in a number of other adopted national policies and strategies, the wellbeing of children features as an important objective.

Children are indeed one of the main target populations addressed by Malta's National Reform Programme (NRP) under the Europe 2020 Strategy, the National Report on

Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010 and the National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024. Other related policies which promote the rights and wellbeing of children include the draft 'National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting 2016-2024', 'The Voice of the Child in Care' (April 2014), 'Environmental Health Inequalities in Malta Assessment Report' (2013), and a number of policy documents in the area of education, such as 'Addressing Attendance in Schools Policy' (2014), 'Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools Policy' (2014), 'An Early School Leaving Strategy for Malta' (2012), 'A Whole School Approach to a Healthy Lifestyle: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Policy' (2015) and 'A National Literacy Strategy for all in Malta and Gozo 2014-2019' (2014).

In line with the objectives established in such referred policy documents, throughout the years, Malta has set up various structures, schemes and initiatives to secure the rights and wellbeing of children and ensure the highest level of provision of care. Children are also assisted indirectly through schemes and benefits (both monetary and in-kind) aimed to improve the prospects of families. Some examples of this are the provision of free health services (including primary, secondary and tertiary health care) as well as certain scheduled medication which is provided entirely free of charge to all those who are eligible. A number of measures are in place to promote home-ownership, particularly for first-time buyers and families with children, have also been launched in the past years. Moreover, assistance for low income families is also given through a number of specific monetary benefits, such as the provision of energy subsidies to help families with the cost of housing utilities and work-related benefits (such as In-Work Benefit).

Despite the substantial developments made throughout these last years that directly and indirectly benefit children, as evident from the extensive provision of universal and targeted services which act on a preventive and interventionist level, child wellbeing remains one of the key national priorities. This policy is committed to solicit further progress in this area by strengthening efforts towards empowering children and ensuring that they have access to the highest level of services and opportunities so as to enable them to fulfil their utmost potential. This policy document also promotes the mainstreaming of children's issues across different policy areas and should thus serve to guide present structures and services towards securing more effectively the rights and wellbeing of all children.

01

Health and Environment

Long-term Goal

Have active and healthy generations.

Short-term Outcome

Children living an active and healthy lifestyle.



Policy Actions

1. To establish community-based units or information centres offering pre-natal, ante-natal and maternal support.
2. Strengthen awareness and promotion of benefits of breastfeeding and provide greater support to mothers to facilitate breastfeeding and/or provide other effective alternatives when necessary.
3. Generate healthy lifestyle patterns among children, primary caregiver/s and, more importantly, expectant mothers.
4. Uphold the right to high quality treatment of health care.
5. Enhance curative and screening services at every stage of health care to children with regards to rare medical conditions.
6. Tackle the issue of childhood obesity through an optimal mix of legislative, policy and public awareness activities and introduce fiscal measures to support the adoption of healthy lifestyles for the entire family.
7. Promote healthy eating habits and regular exercise in synergy with 'A Healthy Weight for Life: A National Strategy for Malta 2012-2020' (2012) and the 'Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plan for Malta 2015-2020' (2015).
8. Provide children and their families with informative and supporting sessions addressing healthy lifestyle choices, food budgeting and nutritional standards.
9. Strengthen the importance of promotion of children's healthy lifestyles among primary caregivers and educators.
10. Strengthen support to children going through the transition between child, adolescence and adult phases, especially in the areas of physical, sexual and mental health.
11. Strengthen and update age appropriate sexual health education as part of a wide policy for relationships and sexual identity education in line with the: 'Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy' (2015).

12. Ensure there is equity of access to mental health services for all children, in particular, adolescents.
13. Address the rate of premature and risky alcohol consumption, use of illicit drugs and smoking among children through legislative, regulatory and policy mechanisms.
14. Enhance early detection, support and care with regards to children that have addiction to smoking, alcohol, gambling and drug use.
15. Provide and strengthen rehabilitation services for children with addictive behaviours.
16. Tackle the issue of social media addiction amongst children through the teaching of proper and responsible use (including the relation to the children's health) with the cooperation of the primary caregiver/s who need to set an example.
17. Uphold standards that regulate the representation of children in the media and public activities.
18. Promote opportunities for children to participate more fully and actively in cultural activities.
19. Ensure that children have age-appropriate activities and spaces for leisure, whilst guaranteeing that quality standards, safety and regulatory issues are followed and enforced.
20. Encourage inclusive and equitable play opportunities for children.
21. Continue supporting accessible and affordable sport activities which encourages social interaction, personal and social development and healthy behaviours which in turn, decrease anti-social and criminal activity.
22. Strengthen the provision of good quality sporting facilities for all children whilst promoting participation by giving greater importance to physical education in schools.
23. Continue developing play and recreational spaces for children from playgrounds, youth cafes, sports centres and leisure centres which, where possible, are also weatherproofed and free of charge.

02

Family and Relationships

Long-term Goal

Protect children and ensure an adequate living environment.

Short-term Outcome

Children are living in a safe and economically stable family environment.



Policy Actions

1. Tackle the reintegration of homeless families and individuals, through various programmes which promote independent living and employment opportunities.
2. Promote the protection and welfare for all children, including those seeking asylum.
3. Further investment in residential homes that accommodate unaccompanied minor asylum seekers within the community.
4. Ensure adequate access by children to an imprisoned or hospitalised parent in a child-friendly setting.
5. Review and study the effects that Supervised Access Visits have on the children, and if necessary, to revise the system accordingly.
6. Review and upgrade Child Protection Services through the ongoing adaptation of policies, legislative and standards such that, the children become more actively involved in the judiciary decision making process.
7. Encourage training and strengthen enforcement mechanisms to promote and render child protection more effective and efficient in order to curb all forms of abuse.
8. Revise present legislation to act as a more effective deterrent in cases of child abuse.
9. Update, promote and implement out-of-home childcare standards, including the area of foster care.
10. Support the family and out-of-home care providers to offer an environment that enhances the full and harmonious development of the child.
11. Ensure that children and young people leaving institutionalised care, detention or residential disability settings are adequately prepared and supported in their transition to independent living through education, training and/or employment by the development of an after-care plan and basic follow-ups.
12. Establish and uphold a holistic policy with respect to parenting and family support services and guidance which addresses parenting and familial factors that effect the family's function.

13. Implement and coordinate family plans and support units within the community which offer support and also serve as a referral to more specialised services as needed.
14. To increase the provision of preventive and interventionist services, whilst at the same time not diminishing the importance of the remainder of services.
15. Encourage an integrated approach among all stakeholders which focuses on safeguarding the holistic development of the child by facilitating access to early and preventive support services.
16. Strengthen and increase the provision of support to families whose children require special attention due to certain conditions (e.g. mental health, addiction, disability, etc.) and/or situations (e.g. pregnancy, etc.).
17. Support primary caregiver/s and educators in their efforts to provide children with age-appropriate and safe places to live, learn, rest and play.
18. Provide best practices to children and parents by the social media providers with respect to privacy controls and reporting mechanisms for abuse/bullying so as to better protect the children online.
19. Provide and promote positive parenting courses to parents along with their children for all ages and family backgrounds.
20. Promote a child-friendly justice system and promote rehabilitative and restorative approaches to juvenile offenders.
21. Promote the value of respect, dignity and equal treatment of every child, both by the primary caregiver/s as well as among the children themselves.
22. Promote the value of quality family time and meaningful interactions between children and their carers.
23. Increase and enhance the provision of comprehensive information and educational services to prospective parent/s, so as to promote a holistic well-being to the new-born child.

03

Education and Development

Long-term Goal

Grow up to be independent and responsible adults.

Short-term Outcome

Children achieving their maximum potential in education and later in future employment.



Policy Actions

1. Strengthen efforts to reduce school absenteeism in synergy with the 'Attendance in Schools Policy' (2014).
2. Promote vocational education and training, encouraging development of entrepreneurship skills among children and develop internship programmes so as to strengthen links between local businesses, schools and youth organisations.
3. Increase opportunities in form of job-placements, work experience and internships for children so as to facilitate the future transition into employment.
4. Support children showing interest to engage in businesses and livelihoods in the rural economy such as; farming, fishing food and hospitality.
5. Increase awareness on safety and accident and injury prevention, including road and water safety.
6. Ensure that quality education and additional educational support structures are available to all children residing in institutional settings such as; detention centres, hospitals and respite settings, to help them overcome gaps in their schooling.
7. Implement strategies to improve school engagement and reduce incidences of suspension, expulsion, grade retention and early school-leaving through engaging parents in schooling.
8. Promote different pedagogical styles of learning and foster an inclusive school environment where all pupils, irrespective of their social and ethnic background, are able to flourish.
9. Sustain the commitment to effectively engage children (especially those of adolescent age) who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).
10. Reinforce efforts into reducing early school leavers (ESL) in synergy with 'A Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving in Malta' (2014).
11. Combat gender stereotyping in subject choices and promote the increased uptake of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) by young girls, both in school and later in higher education.

12. Continue to provide timely access to educational and therapeutic support for children who are identified as requiring additional or special attention/services.
13. Strengthen social inclusion measures and re-invigorate efforts to improve educational outcomes for children coming from; migrant families, special needs (including gifted) children and enhance the role of early years' education for such groups.
14. Increase and update the provision of subjects relating to home economics, household budgeting, life skills and relationship education in both primary and secondary level schools.
15. Support the production of age-appropriate quality children's programmes that primarily address the entertainment, educational and informative needs of children.
16. Support cultural organisations and educational settings to invest more in children's creative and cultural appreciation and involvement.
17. Provide induction courses for children coming from non-national families such that they acquire basic skills in order to help them integrate easily when entering the educational system.
18. Strengthen the commitment against bullying in schools in synergy with 'Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools Policy' (2014).
19. Nurture critical and creative thinking and development across all levels of education.
20. Design childcare facilities and schools in such a way that meets the educational, social, emotional and physical needs of children.
21. Provide all children with a stronger voice in educational matters which affects them both directly and indirectly.
22. Promote further an education system which is not primarily based on standardised and test-based approaches, but also take into consideration continuous assessment, participation and creativity.
23. Enhance early intervention in schools through professionally trained support staff that extends beyond academic learning.

24. Strengthen coordination and interaction between educators and primary caregivers.
25. Children need to be made aware and educated on the pros and cons of social media, more specifically, the perils of bullying, blackmail, grooming, abuse, privacy, etc.
26. Train educators in both secondary and primary schools on emotional and mental health education and empower them to provide basic support/therapy to students in need.
27. Attribute greater importance to children's personal and social development within schools.
28. Promote attendance of children in pre-school and kindergarten centres.
29. Strengthen the provision of pre- and after-school programmes to ensure that the child's needs are well catered for in the absence of their primary care giver.



04

Community and State

Long-term Goal

Become active participants within their community and State.

Short-term Outcome

Children are respected and enabled to be active participants in their social surroundings.



Policy Actions

1. Promote and recognise children as active citizens and engage them in democratic process, social participation, environmental activism and innovation, volunteering and social entrepreneurship.
2. Ensure that the views presented by children by participation in forums and consultations are taken into account by the formal political process and policy-makers, and that feedback is provided in return.
3. Ensure that views presented by children are taken into account through democratic participation by extending permanently full voting rights to young people aged 16 and over for all State, Local and European elections and referendums.
4. Promote empowerment, inclusion and activism of children in all aspects and levels of society.
5. Combat all forms of discrimination and intolerance experienced by marginalised groups (e.g. children from migrant families, unaccompanied minors, children seeking asylum, children with disabilities, children in care and/or detention, LGBTIQ+ children and children from ethnic and religious minorities).
6. Provide children with access to remedy if there has been a breach of their rights as provided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and promote awareness of the services provided by the Office of the Commissioner for Children.
7. Adopt a multidimensional approach to tackling child poverty, building on the 'National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2014-2024' (2014) and the 'Social Investment Package' in order to break the intergenerational poverty cycle.
8. Explore policy models and programmes, such as area-based programmes focusing on disadvantaged areas, so as to address the impact of child poverty.
9. Strengthen outreach and community based initiatives to provide greater mentor-style support to vulnerable families with children.

10. Tackle juvenile crime and delinquency and divert children from such behaviour through engaging on a preventive level with children in the community.
11. Strengthen data capture to enhance knowledge and understanding of abuse and children's experience of the court system.
12. Reform the judicial system in order to make it more sensitive and child friendly such that, the judiciary can better reach its aim to obtain all information without impacting negatively the child's mental and emotional health (especially in cases when the child has already been "at risk" for a substantial amount of time).
13. Support efforts to limit exposure by children to age-inappropriate online material including material of sexual or violent nature, online gambling, etc.
14. Promote best practice among retailers, media and the entertainment industry with the aim to eliminate sexualisation and commercialisation of childhood.
15. Provide effective and timely protection and support services, including therapeutic services for victims of abuse and crime.
16. Ensure perpetrators, including those under the age of 18, receive effective therapeutic support with the aim of reducing recidivism.
17. Implement and sustain a multi-disciplinary front-line team working directly within the community and offering direct service and support to children in need.
18. Support and increase quality youth work, especially in places of recreation and play, so as to serve as reference to children for their overall development.
19. Enhance collaboration and networking between all sectors through the integration of data systems concerning children so as to be able to develop better tailor-made service provision.
20. Revise and update the system by which a child is deemed "at risk" such that it is more evidence based and is also linked directly to their primary care-givers for constant updates and possible prevention and/or early interventions.

21. Address the issue of the ever increasing situation of informal adoption so that the children's safety is ensured at all times and in all possible instances.
22. Deliver better and more cost-effective public services through greater use of alternative or innovative service delivery models.
23. Strengthen the network between government, local governments and NGOs to provide and make maximum use of leisure, sporting and culture resources within communities.
24. Promote access to all services and programmes for children with disability in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
25. Promote the values of respect and personal expression of one's sexuality and freedom from exploitation and abuse, through age appropriate methods and services in synergy with the 'National Sexual Health Policy' (2010) and the 'Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy' (2015).
26. Ensure that legislation, policies and services that affect children are systematically reviewed.
27. Through research, the State must develop better 'child development and living conditions' indicators for the purpose of monitoring, comparison and better policy development.
28. Address and update the concept of family definition to incorporate all existing and emerging family structures, such that these are catered for, both by the school environment and the community.



Implementation and Review

The 2016 National Children's Policy is aimed to extend until the year 2024. Implementation of such a policy will fall directly under the responsibility of the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, who will be working along with respective Ministries, Agencies and Entities to enact the policy actions listed in this document. Furthermore, annual monitoring of the progress of such policy actions will fall within the remit of the Office of the Commissioner for Children.

At the end of the period, in the year 2024, an independent overall evaluation will be conducted on the overall impact of the implemented policy actions. A review of the National Children's Policy will then be made, based upon the resulting report, where a new National Policy will be drafted with the necessary changes, additions and updates.



Concluding Remarks

By focusing the attention upon the physical, psychological, and socio-economic aspects in the life of the child, this policy presents a number of actions under four key areas: health and environment, family and relationships, education and development and community and State. The ultimate aim of such a policy is to work towards the realisation of the full potential and wellbeing of all children, while encouraging society to foster respect and value for every child, regardless of his/her different characteristics, abilities and socio-economical background.

While the National Children's Policy emphasises the importance of safeguarding children's rights, it is crucial that children are also aware of their responsibilities with respect to their parents/guardians, those responsible for their care (such as educators), peers and also the State at large. It is imperative that in order for children to grow up and become active and responsible citizens, they need to be respectful of their primary caregiver/s, their community and of each other. Only through reaching a synergy between children's rights and children's responsibilities can social cohesion and social well-being be ensured.



