This response has been prepared by Children in Scotland and Enquire. Children in Scotland is the national agency for voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals working with children and their families in Scotland. Enquire is the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning. Children in Scotland manages Enquire which is funded by the Scottish Government.

**Please refer to Question 7 for our comments.**

## CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. The strategy outlines a care pathway (page 10).

(a) If you are a service user and/or carer, please tell us what difference you believe the implementation of the pathway will make to the services you experience.

(b) How can we best ensure that services and support meet your needs?

(c) If you are a care provider, what changes will you need to make to implement the pathway?

(d) How will you make these changes?

2. The strategy identifies key factors that need to be in place to ensure the pathway is successful (Page 11 para 6.7).

(a) Which of the key factors are most important for a successful pathway?

(b) Which are the most challenging to put in place?

(c) Do you think that any key factors have been missed?

3. The strategy identifies areas for action that should be addressed going forward (Page 13-16)

(a) Which of the areas for action will be the most challenging to implement?

(b) Which of the areas for action will make the biggest difference and why?

(c) Are there any other areas for action that you would like to see included within the strategy?

4. Please comment on the current provision of sensory impairment services as either a service provider or service user. If you have any experience of sensory impairment services, please let us know what you think of them: this should include any experience of one-stop shops.

5. What difference will the implementation of the strategy make to your life?

6. Does this strategy properly reflect the current climate and developments in policy and practice for children and young people particularly in relation to the Getting it Right for Every Child approach and the Doran Review?

7. Do you have anything you wish to add to the Sensory Impairment Strategy or any other general comments that have not been covered by the questions?

We welcome the recognition that “Children who are born with, or who acquire hearing or sight loss in early childhood, have very different developmental needs to those of adults who lose their hearing and/or sight later in life, and require very specialist input from a variety of agencies.” Given the disparate nature of the group and emphasis on the needs of older people with sensory loss, the inclusion of children and young people within the scope of this framework will require further discussion and clarification. The development of a strategic approach that supports a ‘smooth transition to adult life’ is particularly welcome. The framework should provide an opportunity to achieve consistency across Scotland by identifying tools such as that recently developed by NDCS, SDS, Donaldson’s School ‘A template for success – positive transitions into further education, training and work for deaf young people in Scotland’.

A list of references to existing relevant reports and recommendations would help to site the framework within the continuum of development that has taken place over the years in this field. For example, Principles of Inclusive Communication - An information and self-assessment tool for public authorities, Scottish Government 2011. This would presumably be one useful starting point in considering compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

Similarly it would be helpful and reassuring to know that the proposed framework takes into account existing research and evidence on screening, identification, treatment and education of children and young people with visual, hearing and dual sensory impairments, by making reference to these.

The framework and questions refer to ‘care pathways’ which reflect a medical model of support and provision. Without an explanation of the principles underpinning this approach it is difficult to comment on where a care pathway might interface with GIRFEC, with the requirement by children and their families for specialist input from

a variety of agencies, with the requirements of school leavers for positive destinations and the requirements of people seeking to enter or remain in work. It should be explicit that there is one plan using GIRFEC methodology – guidance to accompany the Scottish Government's forthcoming Children and Young People Bill should clarify how this will fit with specialist input required.

As work proceeds on the Doran recommendations areas of overlap will presumably become clearer. It is difficult to comment at this point but important to reference.

The Framework provides a welcome opportunity to address a disparity in provision for under threes with a sensory impairment as the ASL Act is not specific in relation to provision that this group and their families can expect in order to ensure optimum development. Impairment from birth or very early childhood to one or both principal learning senses presents obvious challenges to development and access to specialist intervention, support and information from the point of diagnosis is crucial.

The Framework provides an opportunity to agree a strategic approach to delivering rehabilitation training for visually impaired pupils, a requirement that was highlighted at a recent RNIB conference and where there appears to disparity across Scotland. The Doran review notes that significant numbers of teachers with qualifications in sensory impairments are due to retire soon and Recommendations 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 highlight specific strategic action which this framework should influence and link to. The recommendations also note action needed in relation to qualifications and provision of staff working with children who have complex additional support needs, again Enquire would welcome the Framework contributing to support the delivery of these recommendations.

Parents and carers contacting the Enquire helpline and who have responded to a recent survey by For Scotland's Disabled Children value the information and support that is provided by a variety of third sector agencies. A more strategic approach to the provision of such services and information may be helpful in ensuring greater parity of access.

Parents have noted the negative impact on their vulnerable children when providers of services such as school transport and respite care change as a result of tendering and commissioning processes and their perception that financial criteria appear to carry most weight. In considering options for realignment of spend on specialist provision it must be clear that decisions will be transparent and meaningfully informed by the views of the service users. We would welcome a collaborative approach that positions the agreed outcomes for the service users as a priority, recognising that defining these outcomes requires input and agreement from a range of levels; regional, service provider, parent and child.