

REVIEW OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION HIGH LEVEL POLICY PAPERS

ANALYSIS REPORT

**SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS ON THE
HIGH LEVEL POLICY PAPERS DECEMBER 2006 – JANUARY 2007**

May 2007

SUMMARY

1. A number of high level policy papers relating to the Review of Public Administration (RPA) were shared with education stakeholders between December 2006 and January 2007 in order to enable their comments and views to be incorporated into the policy decisions, and therefore, to influence the drafting of a proposed draft Order for the RPA.
2. This exercise was part of ongoing stakeholder engagement, carried out throughout the RPA programme. The policy papers issued were drafted in light of comments received as part of the public consultation on the RPA held during 2005, the subsequent bilateral meetings held between stakeholders and the Department of Education (DE) and the on-going meetings of the RPA stakeholders group.
3. Consultation and engagement will continue throughout the remainder of the RPA programme. Meetings of the RPA Stakeholders group will continue, and the Minister for Education intends to continue to engage in bilateral meetings with stakeholders as required.
4. This report analyses the 44 responses received. For ease of reference, we have arranged the responses into broad groupings, such as schools, Sectoral Interests and Children and Young People's bodies. Annex A summarises the main issues raised by each grouping.

INTRODUCTION

5. The Review of Public Administration (RPA) was set up by the Northern Ireland Executive in 2002. Since the suspension of devolution in the autumn of the same year, it has been progressed by direct rule Ministers, but with ongoing dialogue with the main political parties here, until the return of devolution in May 2007
6. Two full public consultations have been held on the entire Review of Public Administration, and the three main areas of reform (Health, Local Government and Education) have each sought to engage with stakeholders throughout the Review.
7. As part of the RPA implementation process, the Department established an Education Stakeholders group. This group met for the first time in May 2006 and meets periodically to discuss issues emerging from the implementation of the Review. The views of this group were also reflected in these papers, as well as the views expressed by members of the various RPA Project Boards
8. The high level policy papers were issued directly to 52 organisations (listed in Annex B) for their comments and wider circulation. They were also made available to read or download from the Department of Education website.
9. We accepted responses by post, fax or email.
10. All responses were acknowledged following the conclusion of the consultation period. We did not respond to individuals or organisations about the points made in their submissions.
11. This report is an analysis of the 44 responses received as a result of the circulation of the high-level policy papers.
12. We will publish this report, along with a list of respondents, on the Department Of Education website and will let respondents know how to access the document.
13. Requests to view the content of responses can be made through the Department of Education at:

RPA Policy and Legislation Team
G3 Annex
Department of Education
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
Bangor
BT19 7PR

GENERAL COMMENTS

14. Some general comments were made:

Consultation

15. Many respondents felt that the period allowed for submission of comments was too short and/or the publicity surrounding the issue of the papers for comment was insufficient. Some also felt that further consultation and engagement would be needed.
16. The Department acknowledges that the period for comments was relatively short, although this was necessary in order to enable us to feed the comments received into the draft RPA legislation. All comments received have been very useful to us, and this exercise was just one part of the ongoing stakeholder engagement on the RPA, and is in no way intended to replace public engagement and consultation, which has been, and will continue to be, held throughout the Review at appropriate points.

Engaging Children and Young People

17. A number of responses stressed the need for the Department and the formal and non-formal education system, early years, schools and youth service to improve the ways in which it enables children, young people and their families to be consulted about, and involved with, the policy work of the Department and front line service delivery.
18. The Department agrees that, as the main beneficiaries of its work, children and young people and their families have a vital role to play in both education policy and service delivery decisions. We also recognise that there is much more we as a Department can do to develop creative and effective means of fully engaging these groups in the decision-making process. This is a key priority for the Department, and while we embrace the opportunities and challenge it presents we do not underestimate the work needed to make real progress in this area.
19. The Department intends to engage with other government bodies, voluntary organisations, children, young people and their families in order to identify creative and effective ways in which these groups can be fully and meaningfully engaged. This challenge is one which faces the government as a whole, and reaches beyond the RPA. While the establishment of Pupil Councils in many schools is providing an ideal opportunity for pupils to play a greater role in developing policy within their school and across the system at large and the role of the Director of Children's Services, the establishment of a NI Network for Youth and the Education Advisory Forum will seek to help address this matter, the Department recognises that more work will be required in this area.

20. The Department accepts the viewpoint that if the post-RPA arrangements are to be truly child-centred we must address the issue of how to make our services and the decision-making process behind them accessible to children and young people, and we must strive to achieve real engagement with those who use and benefit from the services we provide.
21. As part of the formal consultation process on the new School Improvement policy, the Department will ask post-primary schools specifically to obtain their views on the policy. As part of the process to formulate and shape the new policy, senior officials from the Department have taken the views of a sample of post-primary pupils through a number of meetings.

Equality and other Impacts

22. A lot of respondents felt that the policy papers raised a number of Equality, Human Rights and other issues, and many called for Equality Impact Screening to be carried out.
23. Preliminary Equality and other screening has been carried out on all the policy papers, and, although some policy areas were considered to have a low Equality impact, the Department is giving consideration to the best way to ensure that all potential impacts are fully explored, and that stakeholders and the public have the opportunity to let us know about the potential impacts they anticipate from the policy proposals.

Timescale for implementation

24. Some respondees felt that the aim to implement the changes from the RPA by April 2008 was too optimistic, and that more time is needed to carry out this work.
25. The Minister for Education, Caitríona Ruane, announced a new timescale for the implementation of the Review on 19th July 2007, stating that the establishment of the ESA will happen by April 2009 at the latest. This will allow more time for the detailed preparation of the ESA prior to its establishment.

Consistency across policy papers

26. Some respondees felt that the policy papers were not always consistent and coherent. In particular, some felt that the vision expressed in Paper 1 was not adequately reflected in the other policy papers.
27. It is intended that, in due course, a consolidated policy paper will be produced by the Department to bring together, in a user-friendly format, all the policy areas discussed in the high level policy papers.

Terminology/format of the papers

28. Many responses included comments about how the format and content of the policy papers could be improved. These comments included requests to make greater reference to specific sectoral interests, to improve the focus on the child within the papers and presentational issues, to improve the accessibility of the papers.
29. It is acknowledged that the papers were not as accessible as they perhaps could have been. This is mainly because the policy papers were written as internal policy documents, and not designed as public consultation papers. The distribution of these papers was not intended to be a public consultation, but rather an opportunity for stakeholders to see policy papers at an early stage thus enabling them to influence the policy development process. It is not usual for the Department to share such documents with external audiences, but we feel that it is important that stakeholders are given as much access and input to this Review as possible.
30. As stated above, we intend to produce a consolidated policy document and in doing so will take into account the comments received as part of this exercise, in particular those comments relating to terminology and accessibility.

Funding

31. A recurring theme throughout the comments on the policy papers was the need for adequate funding to implement the RPA proposals.
32. The Department recognises this need. As with any major change in administration, there will be associated costs in implementation. However, we are confident that these will be outweighed by both the long-term financial savings achieved through greater efficiency in the system, and the improved delivery of front-line services, which will benefit from those savings.

Ethos

33. A lot of respondees felt that the definition of ethos in these papers did not adequately reflect their view of ethos, and did not recognise the concept of sectoral or collective ethos.
34. The Department's approach to ethos fully recognises both its individual and sectoral dimensions. The consolidated policy document will make it clear that the definition of ethos is a matter for schools and sectors themselves. The Department recognises that there are elements of ethos that are unique to particular schools and sectors, as well as other elements that appear to be common to all good schools.

COMMENTS BY PAPER

This overview does not represent all the comments made, but gives a summary of the main issues raised in the responses received to each of the high level policy papers.

Paper 1 – The RPA in Education – An Overview

The Vision paper sets out the key strategic vision for the Department of Education (DE). It supports the strategic educational outcomes in DE's Strategic Plan and explains how the RPA will help support and deliver DE's strategic objectives.

35. There was strong support for this paper and many responses welcomed the emphasis on the principles of 'A Shared Future'.
36. Some comments reflected a feeling that the papers would benefit from greater coherence and clarity as to how each policy area will feed into the overall vision for education.
37. Various areas, such as sectoral interests, were raised by respondents as warranting greater emphasis in the policy papers.

OUTCOME

38. The consolidated policy paper, which will be distributed to stakeholders and will be made available on the Departmental website, will be written in light of the comments made on this paper.

Paper 2 – The Relationship between the Education and Skills Authority and Schools

This paper sets out the relationship between the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) and schools, and explains that it is one primarily of support and to hold to account within a framework of maximised autonomy for schools.

39. While the responses showed a high degree of support for the concept of maximised supported autonomy (MSA) for schools, a similar proportion raised concerns as to the potential impact of the policy. Many of these comments appeared to be based on fears and speculation about potential impacts due to the lack of detail in the paper about how the system might work in practice
40. The main issues raised were regarding the increased workload and responsibility for school governors. The need for increased training and capacity building for governors was highlighted, but respondees also

expressed concerns that the increased scope of the role may dissuade people from volunteering for the role in future.

41. Some also raised issues about the potential impact on school principals. They stated concerns that those principals who already need a high degree of external support would require even more under MSA arrangements, and that the additional responsibilities may distract principals from their teaching and leadership roles. Some felt that MSA could lead to closures, or 'survival of the fittest' for schools which cannot achieve high levels of autonomy.
42. A lot of responses asked for more information about how MSA will work in practice, in particular, whether there will be a continuum or levels of autonomy.
43. While some responses indicated strong support for the availability of choice for schools to obtain support services from alternative providers to the ESA, many were concerned that this may lead to inconsistency in quality of services, and inefficiencies.
44. A lot of respondees felt that the definition of ethos in this paper did not adequately reflect their view of ethos, and did not recognise the concept of sectoral or collective ethos.

OUTCOME

45. The Department recognises that many of the concerns raised in relation to this paper stemmed from the lack of detail available to respondees in the paper as to the out workings of the policy proposals, and from the resultant speculation. We accept this is inevitable when a high level policy paper such as this is released for comment before full information on the out workings is available. However, the comments are valuable in helping officials consider the potential impact of different options for implementing this policy. The Department will seek to address the concerns and fears raised in the consolidated policy paper and through ongoing stakeholder engagement.
46. The consolidated policy paper will seek to give further information as to the potential out workings of MSA for individual schools. The Department and the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) is giving consideration as to the best way to prepare and equip school governors and principals in preparation for MSA and to support them following its implementation.
47. MSA arrangements are not part of a 'survival of the fittest' school closure plan. The aim is to have schools at their correct point on the continuum of autonomy, having the right balance of operational flexibility and support to its capacity and needs. It is also noted that changes will need to be carefully managed, over an appropriate period.

48. The Department is giving consideration as to how schools can be given appropriate choices in the provision of professional and administrative support services. Measures will be incorporated into any arrangements made to ensure the quality and cost effectiveness of alternative provision.
49. The Department's approach to ethos fully recognises both its individual and sectoral dimensions. The consolidated policy document will make it clear that the definition of ethos is a matter for schools and sectors themselves. The Department recognises that there are elements of ethos that are unique to particular schools and sectors, as well as other elements that appear to be common to all good schools.

Paper 3 – The Relationship between the Department of Education and the Education and Skills Authority

This paper sets out the relationship between the Department of Education and the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) and explains that it is one primarily to 'empower and to hold to account'. The Department will focus on policy development, while the ESA will be responsible for service delivery.

50. Many responses highlighted a fear that the Department may operate a 'command and control' relationship with the ESA and micro-manage the organisation.
51. A few responses were concerned at the statement in the paper that the Department would develop policy and "decide if and when the ESA (or others) should be involved or engaged". These responses felt that this statement was contrary to the duty on DE to consult.
52. The question was raised as to how the voices of parents, children and young people would be represented. It was also queried as to whether the DE would accept advice from organisations other than the ESA.

OUTCOME

53. The consolidated policy paper will seek to address the concerns regarding the potential for a 'command and control' relationship between the DE and the ESA. The Department does not intend to operate such a relationship with the ESA, and the policy and legislation implementing the RPA will reflect this.
54. The consolidated policy paper will clarify the statement included in Policy Paper 3 that Department would develop policy and "decide if and when the ESA (or others) should be involved or engaged". This statement was intended to refer to engagement prior to or in addition to formal or statutory consultation. The Department values the experience and knowledge of stakeholder organisations and intends to continue to

engage the ESA and stakeholders prior to the consultation stage of policy development where this is appropriate and feasible.

55. The Department is continuing to explore the best ways in which the voices of parents, children and young people could be represented in future as part of the Review of Advice project.

Paper 4 – The Relationship between the Department of Education and Stakeholders and implications for the planned Review of Advice

This paper sets out the relationship between the Department of Education and stakeholders, focussing on the role, remit and structure of the Education Advisory Forum (EAF) and ensuring access to policy and professional support for the various education sectors.

56. Many responses to this paper welcomed the EAF, although most also asked for further information about the role and composition of the body.
57. Many responses stressed the need for sectoral and trade union representation on the EAF and the need for children and young people's views to be heard.
58. A number of comments were made regarding the desire to see greater social partnership arrangements in place..
59. Some responses included references to the need for the continuation of government funding for sectoral support bodies, and welcomed the recognition of this in the paper. There was also recognition that any bodies providing sectoral support should not be funded to duplicate functions of the ESA.

OUTCOME

60. In addition to the written responses to the consultation the Department have engaged the Department of Finance and Personnel's Delivery & Innovation Division's Business Consultancy to further discuss requirements for the Forum with the DE Stakeholder Group. These discussions, while not yet complete, have provided greater clarity on the role, principles, terms of reference, size and potential composition of the EAF. The Department needs a Forum, whose membership includes a wider range of interests and views than at present, who will provide pre-consultation advice on possible future education policy. On the question of composition, the Department's aim is to ensure that there is a balance between the providers and consumers of education on the Forum and membership should therefore include 'voices' not currently heard including for example some sectoral bodies and those of parents, young people, voluntary and community organisations.

61. The Department advocates the social partnership ethos and has sought to, and intends to continue to follow this ethos throughout the Review. We continue to seek the advice and experience of our social partners in this matter.
62. The Department is giving detailed consideration to the agreed need for sectoral support following the implementation for the RPA, and the best ways in which this can be provided. This will be done in consultation with education partners in all of the sectors.

Paper 5 – Governance and Accountability

This paper sets out the proposed role, remit and constitution of the ESA Board, and the Accountability, planning and control arrangements for the ESA. It allows for limited powers of intervention for DE, but sets this in a context where accountability rests in the first instance with the Board of the ESA.

63. While there was broad support for the proposed role and size of the board, several responses indicated that a board of 8 – 12 members would not be sufficient. Many respondees asserted the view that the board membership should reflect sectoral interests/ the diversity of society here.
64. As with other papers, some concern was raised as to potential micro management by the Department.
65. Many responses expressed opposition to any removal or reduction of nomination rights of the Transferor Churches to school Boards of Governors. Some of these responses felt that this could have equality implications on grounds of religion.
66. The issue of school and sectoral ethos was raised by several responses. It was considered by some that foundation governors should have a power to challenge or veto the appointment of any governor felt to conflict with the ethos of the school.
67. The proposal to produce a Code of Practice for governor appointments received broad support, and several suggestions for the Code were made, including:
- a. Coverage of all s. 75 groups in appointment guidelines;
 - b. Guidelines that governors should be appointed on merit, not according to community background; and
 - c. Arrangements for representation for children and young people
68. As with other papers, many responses to this paper mentioned the need for training programmes for Boards of Governors.

OUTCOME

69. The ESA board membership will not be selected on grounds of sectoral interest, but on skills and experience. It is the Department's position that a small highly skilled Board is essential to the effective management of the ESA. The board will, however, take advice from within the ESA, from other organisations on a range of issues, including sector -specific issues, and the EAF's views will also be of relevance.
70. The Transferor Churches currently have a right to nominate representatives to the Boards of Governors of controlled schools. This right came into existence when the Protestant churches transferred a number of schools under their ownership into state control a number of years ago.
71. The Transferor Churches will maintain a right to nominate representatives to the Boards of those schools which they originally owned and transferred to state control. The issue in question is whether the Transferor Churches have a continuing right to nominate representatives to controlled primary and secondary schools which they did not previously own or transfer. This is because the law now prohibits an Act of the Assembly from including any provision which discriminates against a class of persons on the grounds of religious belief or political opinion.
72. It may be that a continuation of the current rights for the Transferor Churches to nominate representatives to schools which they did not previously own or transfer could be considered discriminatory under this law, and therefore would be prohibited. This matter is still under consideration and the Transferor Churches will continue to be fully engaged throughout this process.
73. With regard to the proposed introduction of a power to enable foundation governors to challenge or veto governor appointments, the Department has no evidence to support the need for such a provision and considers that it would not be appropriate to give one group of governors power or control over others.
74. A working group, led by the Department will give consideration as to the best way to prepare and equip school governors and principals in preparation for MSA and to support them following its implementation.
75. The other comments relating to school governor appointments will be addressed within the Codes of Practice.

This paper deals with the ownership of the schools' estate, strategic planning, procurement and delivery.

76. The proposals in this paper, and area planning in particular, received broad support from respondees although several responses asked for additional information and engagement, particularly in light of the Bain Review.
77. A high degree of concern was evident regarding the potential out workings of area planning. As with previous papers, most of these comments appear to be based on fears and speculation resulting from a lack of information, rather than specific points of detail raised in the policy paper itself.
78. Many responses asked for reassurance that area planning will take community and sectoral interests into account. A few also raised concerns about the potential impact on rural provision and on parental choice in relation to provision of particular types of school, such as Irish-medium or integrated schools. Others felt that community planning would not be suitable for those schools wishing to remain free from church and political influences.
79. A few responses raised the issue of a potential conflict of interests, if the ESA owned some schools, and also carried out area planning for all schools.
80. A few responses opposed the centralisation of building maintenance and procurement or any introduction of PPP/PFI arrangements.
81. As with some other papers, some concern was expressed that the Department would continue to have an operational role in this area, contrary to the stated objectives of the RPA.
82. A few responses to this and other papers asked the Department and the ESA to consider opening schools during evenings and weekends as community resources.

OUTCOME

83. As with previous papers, the consolidated policy paper and on-going stakeholder engagement will seek to provide additional information on the potential out-workings of the policy, which was not included in the high level policy paper. Hopefully this will help allay some of the concerns expressed.
84. This policy area will be updated in light of the Bain Report.
85. The ESA will consult with sectors in determining the provision needed in each area and will take account of the anticipated needs of all

sectors. The parameters within which strategic planning will take place will be set in consultation with key stakeholders, including sectoral representatives. The policy will treat everyone on an equal basis and will be applied to all sectors in the same way. The ESA will be the body responsible for area planning and does not have any church or political influences and therefore this should not be an issue for those schools who wish to remain free from such influences.

86. The Department is currently working on proposals to deal with any (real or perceived) potential conflict of interest resulting from the ownership of controlled schools.
87. PPP/PFI arrangements will still be an option for procurement following the implementation of the Review, but there is also the option of using the frameworks.
88. The comments regarding opening schools as community resources during evenings and weekends have been passed to the appropriate personnel within the Department for consideration. However, this is an issue that might be most effectively addressed at a local level and could be given consideration through the Community Planning processes in specific areas.

Paper 7 – Employing Authority and Employer roles under post RPA arrangements

This paper details how the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA) will be the single employing authority for all teaching and non-teaching staff in all schools. The role and functions of employer will rest with Boards of Governors. This is intended to achieve the benefit of more coherent workforce planning throughout education, with greater consistency of terms and conditions for all staff.

89. The majority of responses to this paper were in agreement that the employing authority function should go to the ESA and employer functions should be carried out by school Boards of Governors. However, some contrary views that the ESA should not have this role and that Governors should carry out all employer duties were also expressed.
90. Some felt that Boards of Governors may require training in order to take on this responsibility.
91. The potential for increased mobility and redeployment was welcomed.
92. A small minority opposed the proposals, stating that governors should carry out all employer functions and that centralisation would be detrimental to ethos, and also lead to inefficiency.

93. Several responses indicated confusion regarding the difference between the two roles, and asked for greater clarity and perhaps different terminology to be used.

94. It was also suggested that the ESA should have mechanisms in place to quality assure the appointments processes within schools.

OUTCOME

95. The consolidated policy paper will seek to give greater clarity on the employing authority function and the employer functions. Consideration will also be given as to whether different terminology could be used to describe these roles.

96. As indicated previously, the Department is considering the best ways in which to prepare and equip school governors for these changes and to support them following their implementation.

Paper 8 - Future of the School Library Service (SLS)

This paper proposes that the SLS moves to the ESA but retains links to the public library service.

97. Most responses to this paper welcomed the proposals and the recognition in the paper of the important role of the SLS.

98. Many responses stated a preference that the SLS should remain a statutory service and that it should be centrally funded or that funding should be ring-fenced.

99. Several responses felt that the remit of the SLS as set out in the policy paper did not reflect its full role, but acknowledged that further work was being taken forward within DE and the outcome was awaited. Many felt that the title 'Education Library Service' would better reflect the organisation and its role.

100. Several responses indicated a desire to see SLS representation on the EAF.

101. Several queries were also raised regarding the potential impacts on SLS staff, including the effect on career progression prospects and integration into the ESA.

OUTCOME

102. Guidance will be issued outlining the functions, duties and provision of a library service to schools. It is the intention that this will

remain a statutory service delivered by the ESA in compliance with any policy guidance issued by the Department. As a statutory service we would envisage a central funding provision to the ESA to administer delivery. The evaluation of support for learners will be covered by inspection.

103. Consideration will be given by the ESA to the appropriate name for this service following implementation of the RPA.
104. The comments regarding the desire to have SLS representation on the EAF have been passed to the Review of Advice team to inform their work on the composition of the EAF.
105. The staffing issues relating to this area are covered by the guiding principles developed by the Public Service Commission. The issue of the transfer of staff falls to both DE and DCAL and we are in negotiations about how best to approach this.

Paper 9 – Youth Work

This paper proposes that the ESA will assume the functions of the five Education and Library Board Youth Services and the Youth Council NI to provide a more joined up sector. The ESA will establish a Northern Ireland Network for Youth and the Department will continue to chair the cross sectoral Youth Service Liaison Forum.

106. Most responses to this paper welcomed the proposals and the recognition given in the paper to the value and contribution of the youth sector. Several asserted the view that youth services will benefit from stronger links with 'traditional' education.
107. A number of responses stated the need for funding for this sector, and many of these expressed a desire for ring fenced funding. Several disagreed that the proposals could be considered 'cost neutral'.
108. A few responses asked for a formal or legislative definition of youth work.
109. Several responses petitioned the Department to ensure that children and young people are involved in the proposed changes, and emphasised the need for local area planning.
110. Some responses indicated a need for training and capacity building in the sector.
111. A few responses called for the Department to set an age range for youth service provision.

OUTCOME

112. The legislative changes will include a duty on the ESA to ensure the provision of youth services. Youth services will be part of the system of formal and non-formal education that the ESA will have a statutory duty to provide. The Department will determine and revise where necessary the funding for youth services.
113. The Department will set the policy for the shape of the youth service, and set the Departmental priorities for youth. This will provide a framework for youth services against which the ESA will be performance managed.
114. Officials have engaged with the youth sector and young people through the Northern Ireland Youth Forum throughout the development of these policy proposals, and will continue to do so throughout the development and implementation of the changes.
115. The ESA will be responsible for ensuring the quality of youth service provision, including the power to support, where necessary, groups to become registered.
116. The Department will determine the age range for the youth service in developing 'Priorities for Youth', which the the ESA will deliver on. The development of these priorities will include full consultation and engagement with stakeholders. These priorities will also seek to address the needs of disadvantaged young people as well as the delivery of universal youth services both regionally and according to local needs.

Paper 10 – Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)

This paper proposes to strengthen the legislation governing inspection and the Inspectorate.

117. Most responses to this paper welcomed the proposed changes, although some felt that additional information on the changes is required.
118. It was suggested that these changes should be extended to cover DEL and DCAL.
119. Some responses asked that the ETI be given a duty to take pupil's views into account in their reports.

OUTCOME

120. It is the intention that the consolidated paper will contain more detail regarding the proposed changes.
121. The powers afforded to the ETI by these changes will also cover some organisations and initiatives which fall within the responsibility of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL). The Department of Education will consult with these departments about this.
122. The Education and Training Inspectorate takes children's views into account as an important and integral part of its work on school inspections, and continues to work to improve the ways in which this is done.

Paper 11 – RPA Legislation – General Teaching Council Northern Ireland (GTCNI)

This paper does not set out a policy change, but instead provides information on the proposed clarification of existing legislative measures relating to the GTCNI.

123. All the responses which commented on this paper were in support of the proposed changes.

OUTCOME

124. This policy will remain largely unchanged.

Paper 12 – Education and Skills Authority: Director of Children's Services

This paper considers the proposed role of a Director of Children's Services within the ESA.

125. The majority of responses to this paper welcomed the proposals, and many saw this as an opportunity to join up services and procedures between the ESA and HSSA.
126. Some responses queried as to whether this role would lead to duplication with the work of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People and/or the Director of Children's Services in the HSSA. It was suggested that the DHSS role was unnecessary.
127. Several responses asked for further information on the proposed role and remit of the Director.

128. It was welcomed that the paper reflected a Northern Ireland-specific approach.
129. It was raised that funding would be required for this role, and that the approach of the Director would need to be flexible to deal with different sectoral groups, such as children educated in Irish-medium schools.
130. It was suggested that a regional Children and Young People's strategic partnership should be established.

OUTCOME

131. It is the intention that the Directors for the ESA and the HSSA will be required to work closely together to develop arrangements for the integration of services to children and work closely with other partners providing services to children. There will be no duplication of roles, as each will have a clearly defined and complementary remit.
132. The consolidated policy document will aim to provide greater clarity on the scope of the proposed role of the Director.
133. The Director will be required to operate with flexibility and sensitivity to individual and sectoral needs.
134. Funding for the role of the Director will be provided.
135. The Department welcomes the proposals put forward for a regional Children and Young People's strategic partnership and will consider how this might be implemented in conjunction with colleagues in other Departments.

Paper 13 – School Improvement

This paper aims to address weaknesses in the current legislative framework by clearly defining through the new RPA Education legislation, the responsibilities and accountabilities in the school improvement process.

136. Most of the responses to this paper welcomed the proposed changes. However, many respondees felt that some of the language used in the paper (such as “complacency”) was unnecessarily negative and felt that it should be removed.
137. Many responses stated that ‘value added’ should be measured, as should efforts to close the gap between the best and lowest performing pupils.

138. Several responses asked that young people be involved in the policy development and implementation.

OUTCOME

139. The consolidated policy paper will seek to address the terminology issues raised by respondents.
140. The comments regarding potential methods of measuring school improvement will be fed into the work currently underway within the Department to determine the most effective measurements for this.
141. As part of the formal consultation process on this policy, the Department will ask post-primary schools specifically to obtain their views on the new school improvement policy. As part of the process to formulate and shape the new policy, senior officials from the Department have taken the views of a sample of post-primary pupils through a number of face-to-face meetings.

Paper 14 – Contingency Planning Post RPA

This paper explains how the local Civil Contingencies activities in NI will be strengthened in line with policy and practice elsewhere in the UK.

142. All the responses to this paper welcomed the proposed changes.
143. Some responses stressed the need for resources to implement the changes.

OUTCOME

144. This policy will remain largely unchanged.
145. The Department will put resources in place to support the implementation of the changes.

Paper 15 – Home to School Transport

This paper proposes a removal of the existing legislative provision for free school transport, in order to enable the Department to charge parents a fee for school transport should a decision be made to do so in the future.

146. Most of the responses to this policy paper were opposed to the removal of free school transport for those who qualify. Many cited potential equality and rural impacts, while others felt that this would be

counter-productive at a time when schools are amalgamating. Some respondents felt that the removal of free school transport may have an impact on access to education for children and young people.

147. Many responses stated a desire to see alternative measures (such as car pools) and recommendations explored, and for the Department to consult widely before removing the provision of free school transport.

OUTCOME

148. This policy has been removed from the RPA proposals.
149. The Department has decided not to carry out the enabling action detailed in this paper at this stage and will continue to explore alternative options to charging parents for school transport.

Paper 16 – Vending Machines and other foods in schools

This paper proposes to extend the current legislative provisions relating to foods in schools to cover vending machines supplied directly to schools via private contracts, in order to ensure that only healthy foods are provided in schools.

150. All the responses to this paper were in favour of the proposed changes.
151. It was raised that a clear definition of what ‘healthy foods’ are should be determined, and that children and young people should be engaged to determine the most popular healthy foods which could be provided in schools.
152. Some responses favoured the establishment of a single supplier for school foods.
153. It was also suggested that additional resources may be required to implement the policy proposals.

OUTCOME

154. The comments made will be fed into our work on implementing this policy.

Paper 17 – Age-appropriate provision for pre-school children

This paper takes forward two changes recommended in the outcomes from the Review of Pre-School Education in Northern Ireland launched by the Minister for Education on 25th April 2006. These changes are to raise the admissions age in statutory nursery (pre-school) provision to 3 years and 2 months; and to prevent primary schools admitting 4 year olds to reception classes/groups.

155. The majority of responses to this paper welcomed the proposed changes.
156. Some responses observed the potential for impact on service provision and some practical difficulties for parents. Several responses raised potential impacts on rural communities.
157. A few responses called for the introduction of a development programme for two-year-olds.

OUTCOME

158. The Department's priority remains to provide age-appropriate high quality provision for all children here. The Department has secured funding to ensure that every child whose parents wish it can obtain one year of funded pre-school education in the year before compulsory education. Additional funding secured by the Department from the Children and Young People Funding programme will be used to address need in both urban and rural areas.
159. Research has shown that children can benefit from pre school experience in an appropriate quality environment. The Department is developing a pilot programme for two year olds which will focus on constructive play in group settings to enhance the children's social development, build on their communication and language skills and encourage their imagination through play. This programme will initially be implemented through the Sure Start projects.

Paper 18 – Legislation relating to Data issues

This paper proposes legislative changes to enable the Department to collect detailed statistical and monitoring data from schools, alternative education providers, and youth organisations, as well as to ensure access to any such data held by the ESA.

160. The majority of the responses to this paper were in favour of the proposed changes.
161. Several suggestions were made regarding extending the proposals. These included enabling the Department to access relevant

data held by other organisations, such as the HSSA and to make the data also available to sectoral support bodies.

162. It was also noted that any data collection methods must be compatible with Irish language input.

OUTCOME

163. Consideration will be given to the potential for extending the proposals as suggested.

Consultation on the high level Review of Public Administration policy papers

Main comments by group

This Annex does not represent all the comments made, but gives an overview of the main issues raised by each of the broad groups who submitted responses to the high level policy papers.

Education and Library Boards

- Comments stating the opinion that consultation or stakeholder engagement was insufficient or otherwise lacking;
- Comments regarding fears and speculation regarding the potential impact of Maximised Supported Autonomy (MSA);
- Comments asking that the role of the Transferor Representative's Council is not be diminished;
- Comments opposing any continuing operational role for the Department;
- Comments requesting that the School Library Service continue to be a statutory service, with central or ring-fenced funding;
- Comments stating that 'Education Library Service' would be a preferable name for the School Library Service;
- Comments stating that the youth sector requires additional or ring-fenced funding; and
- Comments detailing concerns regarding potential impacts and equality implications of the proposed Home to School transport changes.

Sectoral Interests

- Comments stating the opinion that the definition of ethos used in the papers was incorrect/insufficient and that sectoral or collective ethos was not recognised;
- Comments asking for full sectoral representation on the Education Advisory Forum;
- Comments stating that government funded sectoral support will be needed following the implementation of the RPA;
- Comments asking that the role of the Transferor Representative's Council should not be diminished;
- Comments asserting that schools should be enabled to 'protect' ethos, e.g. through foundation governors having a veto over the appointment of other governors;
- Comments that area planning should take sectoral and community interests into account; and

- Comments detailing concerns regarding potential impacts and equality implications of the proposed Home to School transport changes.

Schools

- Comments requesting that the spiritual dimension of education is reflected in the vision statement for education;
- Comments regarding fears and speculation regarding the potential impact of Maximised Supported Autonomy (MSA);
- Comments stating that governors and principals may need additional training to prepare and implement MSA;
- Comments that schools may need additional funding for MSA;
- General requests for additional information, particularly in relation to MSA and the EAF;
- Comments asking that the role of the Transferor Representative's Council is not be diminished;
- Comments raising concerns that a 8 – 12 member board for the ESA would not be large enough; and
- Comments conveying the opinion that school improvement should be measured by the 'value added'.

Children and Young People's Bodies

- Comments that although the recognition of youth work in the papers was welcomed, that it should be expressly mentioned more in the papers;
- Comments raising concerns that the statement regarding DE deciding if and when to involve others in policy development in Paper 3 may conflict with it's duty to consult;
- Comments calling for increased involvement and consultation with children and young people;
- Comments regarding the potential for a regional Children and Young People's strategic partnership; and
- Comments regarding the need for joining up of services between education and health in relation to the Director of Children's Services.

Other Statutory bodies

- Comments welcoming the emphasis on 'A Shared Future' and suggesting ways to promote the policy;
- Comments conveying the feeling that Boards of Governors should reflect society/ sectoral interests;
- Comments that governors may need additional training; and
- Comments calling for increased involvement and consultation with children and young people.

Others

- Comments giving mixed views on Maximised Supported Autonomy;
- Comments raising concerns about a potential 'command and control' relationship between the ESA and DE;
- Comments that a 8 – 12 member board for the ESA may not be large enough;
- Comments opposing any additional PPP/PFI schemes as a result of the policy proposals;
- Comments welcoming the increased mobility for school based staff under the employing authority proposals;
- Comments conveying the opinion that school improvement should be measured by 'value added'; and
- Comments detailing concerns regarding potential impacts and equality implications of the proposed Home to School transport changes.

Consultation on the high level Review of Public Administration policy papers

Circulation list for policy papers

This Annex does not represent all the organisations who received the RPA policy papers, but gives list of those to whom the papers were sent directly to, for comment and/or further circulation.

DUP
Alliance
SDLP
Sinn Fein
UUP
UKUP
PUP
Belfast Education and Library Boards
South Eastern Education and Library Board
Southern Education and Library Board
North Eastern Education and Library Board
Western Education and Library Board
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
Northern Catholic Bishops/Catholic Trustees
NI Council for Integrated Education
Transferors Representative Council
Governing Bodies Association
Integrated Education Fund
Youth Council
NI Youth Forum
Youth Net
Children in NI
Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
General Teaching Council
Association of Teachers and Lecturers
Irish National Teachers Organisation
Ulster Teachers Union
National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers
National Association of Head Teachers
Catholic Heads Association

Association of School and College Lecturers
Association of Head Teachers in Secondary Schools
NI Teachers Council
National Bursars Association
NI Committee/Irish Congress of Trade Unions
NI Public Service Alliance
UNISON
OFMDFM
DHSSPS
DEL
DCAL
DOE
NI Community Relations Council
NIHRC
Regional Training Unit
Staff Commission
Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment
C2K
NI Equality Commission
Aspect