

## **Paper 9**

### **YOUTH WORK – REVIEW OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

#### **Youth Work in Context**

1. The role of Youth Work, in helping young people develop their social and personal skills, is relevant to all young people in Northern Ireland. It is an important form of non-formal education which makes a distinct and vital contribution to the development of young people in what is still a divided community at many different levels. It is particularly relevant to those at risk of disengaging from society; those who become disaffected at school, those at risk of offending, those who will end up as non-stakeholders in their own community. Without effective intervention, the outcomes for these young people are poor compared to their peers; however, youth workers engaging with some of the most troubled children, are helping them to achieve much better outcomes.
2. As well as providing important opportunities for young people from all backgrounds to participate in decision-making and positive action, and to understand and respect alternative views, youth work has a fundamental role in helping tackle the barriers to individual learning and achievement. It enhances the potential for the individual to contribute to their community as part of the contract of being a citizen in today's society. Citizenship is taught in schools, but citizenship is lived out in youth work through making participation a reality for young people, whether that's being part of designing the schedule of youth work activities for the local youth centre, volunteering in the local community or engaging in cross community programmes, all of which activities are available in most youth settings.

## **Current Delivery Mechanisms**

3. The Youth Service is composed of the Statutory and Voluntary Sector; the statutory sector is under the auspices of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs). The voluntary sector is made up of a great variety of organisations, with over 20,000 volunteers. Participation by young people is voluntary, and youth activities, which are firmly rooted in non-formal, social education, are generally out of school or work time. [See Tab A for details]

## **Good Practice**

4. There are many examples of good practice within the existing service. The contribution of the voluntary sector, engaging local communities in the delivery of youth work and supporting volunteers provides an important example. There are also examples of high quality service to young people being provided by the statutory youth sector. The youth service enjoys a long history of partnership working and through this approach has managed to be highly cost effective.
5. In particular, the existence of the Youth Service Liaison Forum (YSLF) assists the Department in planning and delivering strategy. The YSLF includes members from the Northern Ireland Youth Forum (representing young people) Youthnet (representing the voluntary sector), Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), the ELBs, Youth Council (YCNi) and the Department of Education (DE). It acts as a place for the testing of ideas, the provision of advice and the creation of joint working projects. Evidence of its work is the production of a joint three year strategy document 'Strategy for the Delivery of Youth Work in NI 2005-2008' which was developed through consensus and consultation.

## **RPA Policy Requirements**

6. The previous Education Minister's Statement of November 2005 confirmed youth services as a continuing responsibility of the Department of Education. It also confirmed the establishment of a single education authority to assume the functions of the Education and Library Boards and Youth Council NI. This is the basis on which policy requirements have been taken forward.

## **Views of Stakeholders: (DE Bilateral Meetings)**

7. During May and June 2006, the DE interviewed a wide range of stakeholders, including statutory and voluntary organisations, representatives of young people, and front line workers. The broad agreement reached as part of the stakeholder meetings has been reflected in the previous policy papers.

## **Issues for consideration in identifying what will change post RPA**

8. DE does not intend that RPA should see a revolution in youth policy on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. It is clear that there will be a need to put in place the legislative powers and duties that will facilitate the continued development of the youth service, as set out in the Youth Work Strategy, along with a clear focus on economy, effectiveness and efficiency. The themes of inclusion and participation are core to a successful modern youth service that meets the needs of young people in Northern Ireland today and into the future. In addition, the strong ethos of partnership working, particularly across the statutory and voluntary sectors, that has been developed through the YSLF, needs to be maintained. This partnership approach is central to ensuring that the Education and Skills Authority (ESA), which will be both a deliverer and commissioner of youth services, is a gateway to effective services and not a gatekeeper.

## Proposed Changes

9. The migration of the Northern Ireland Youth Council to sit alongside the 5 ELB Youth Services in ESA will provide a more joined up sector. It is essential that the statutory youth sector supports the delivery of services and development of capacity in those areas that need it most and where voluntary youth organisations may not be prevalent. However, the legislation needs to allow for the ESA to determine how best to commission youth services in the future, in whatever direction is deemed to be the most effective way of serving young people, whilst recognising and harnessing the contribution, expertise and significant value for money that those 20,000 volunteers represent.
  
10. The RPA will have a fundamental effect on the role of DE in youth work, with the introduction of the ESA. The roles of DE and ESA, post-RPA, might be summarised as follows:
  - DE will set the policy for the shape of the youth service. It will oversee the commissioning and development of programmes, determine the funding, set the standards and long term objectives, as well as setting down departmental priorities for youth. This will provide the high level framework for youth services against which DE will performance manage ESA.
  
  - ESA will establish, fund and maintain youth services according to the policies and strategic plans set by DE, and ensure that these meet the needs of children and young people in an age range(s) determined by DE. ESA will prepare and publish a plan for the provision of youth work services. ESA will work in partnership with appropriate voluntary organisations to identify and meet needs on an area basis. It will develop and maintain an effective register of all groups approved for the delivery of

youth work services. It will establish, support and monitor the Northern Ireland Network for Youth. It will, in short, deliver the vision for a participative and highly relevant service whose purpose is to provide young people with positive experiences of citizenship and transition to adulthood in a difficult social context.

### **Better Outcomes for Young People**

11. DE will hold ESA accountable for the effective planning and operation of youth services and will monitor delivery closely to ensure that the needs of young people are given a central focus. DE will ensure that outcomes are linked to the outcomes of the OFM DFM 10 year Strategy for Children and Young People. ESA will support the successful development of the Northern Ireland Network for Youth, which will ensure that the voice of young people reaches government, and also, critically, the youth service. DE will continue to chair the Youth Service Liaison Forum bringing together both the voluntary and statutory youth sectors and will ensure that the guiding values of inclusion and participation are adhered to.

### **Vision of Youth Services**

12. Youth Work in Northern Ireland is about helping young people to reach their full potential as citizens in a diverse and pluralist society. It is about working with them to identify and meet their personal and social development needs and involving them in shaping the services delivered to them. It is the vital route by which young people's voices can be heard across government on the issues that interest and affect them. It is a dynamic and changing service that needs to knit with the priorities of formal education to ensure maximum benefit for young people. It has to demonstrate its relevance to young people who enter into youth work voluntarily. Only in that way can it deliver effectively to and for young people and keep them interested. DE needs to ensure

that youth services remain relevant to young people and that they are of high quality.

### **Legislative Proposals**

13. The purpose of the proposed powers for youth services in the new/amended order will be to provide the legislative framework within which the proposed new structures can operate. It will seek to set out as transparently as possible, **the high level functions** of the various bodies. The proposed provisions for youth services will seek, either within the body of that Order or by securing sufficient powers to make subordinate legislation, to establish the parameters within which DE and ESA will be permitted to operate, and to establish the necessary governance and accountability arrangements which will support the effective delivery of youth services in Northern Ireland

### **Proposed Legislative Powers Required**

14. It is essential that the appropriate duties and powers are in legislation to enable ESA to secure the delivery of youth services; however, it is equally essential that these duties and powers do not restrict the flexibility required in the delivery of effective and responsive youth services. The following summarises the legislative powers required to ensure that youth services post 2008 deliver real benefits for young people.

### **General**

- Legislation should provide that there is a duty on ESA to deliver youth services in the same way as the duty that ESA will have to provide other formal and non-formal education services;
- Legislation should enable the migration of the Youth Council functions into the ESA, and repeal the powers that established the Youth Council

- Legislation should place a statutory duty on applicable bodies (i.e. the Department, Authority) to make arrangements for involving and consulting those individuals and communities who use or receive the youth services which the body is responsible for securing or providing. The persons, either directly or through representatives, should be consulted on:
  - the planning and commissioning of the services to be provided, including the assessment of need;
  - the development and consideration of proposals for changes in the way those services are provided, and
  - decisions to be made by that body affecting the operation of those services.

### **Role of the Department in Youth Services**

- Legislation should impose a duty upon the Department in respect of ensuring the provision of youth services. The new arrangements should provide that the Department ensures that provision is in place. The duty to ensure the provision of youth services should be expanded to include the following high-level functions:
  - To ensure the commissioning and development of programmes and initiatives, including working with other appropriate agencies to secure improvements in youth services.
  - Determining (and revising as necessary) funding for youth services, standards for youth services and the strategic long-term objectives for the provision of youth services in Northern

Ireland, and also shorter-term Ministerial/Departmental priorities.

- To ensure as far as is reasonable that the commissioning and delivery of youth services is planned and carried out to meet Ministerial/Departmental objectives, to standards set by the Department, having regard to a combination of effectiveness, economy and efficiency (this would include being satisfied as to the maintenance of effective governance arrangements and a sound system of internal control).
  
- While the above provisions will provide the high level framework, provisions will also be required to provide a power to the Department to regulate, order or direct the new Authority to carry out other such functions as may be specified in connection with the provision of youth services
  
- Legislation should enable the Department to direct the form and manner in which, and the time at which, the plan for youth services is to be published by the Authority. The Department should also be able to direct with who the Authority is to consult in drawing up the plan.
  
- Legislation should enable the Department to give a direction that the plan is included in a document specified in the direction, for example a more general plan for the provision of services relating to children within the relevant body. The intention is, as far as possible, to incorporate the plan for youth services within existing planning mechanisms for children's services, but the provisions should provide flexibility to allow for the preparation of separate plans should they be required.
  
- The primary legislation should make it clear that the Department determines policy on youth services and will performance manage the Authority in the delivery of the necessary services, but appropriate

voluntary organisations may be commissioned as the deliverers of such services.

### **Role of the Authority**

- Legislation should provide that the Authority has a duty to establish, fund and maintain youth services and provide or secure provision of requisite facilities to agreed standards. The services will be designed to meet the needs of children and young people in an age range to be determined by the Department of Education.
- Legislation should provide that the Authority must prepare and publish a plan for the provision of youth services. The plan should contain information of a description which may be prescribed in regulations
- Legislation should provide for the Authority to be able to meet the obligation to provide youth services by ensuring that they are provided by an appropriate voluntary organisation or such other persons as may be specified in regulations
- Legislation should place a duty on the Authority to publish information on its youth service and take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure that those who would benefit from the information do so.
- Legislation should place a duty on the Authority to review the services provided, to review the plan for youth services annually and publish modifications or a substitute plan.
- Legislation should provide that the Authority might develop and maintain a register of all groups approved for the delivery of youth services, and a power to support those organisations who cannot be registered to achieve required standards

- Legislation should provide that membership of the Board of the Authority includes at least one member with youth services background. There should also be a power to establish sub-committees of the Board [may be covered under standing orders of the Authority]
  - Legislation should place a statutory duty on the Authority to establish, monitor and support the Northern Ireland Network for Youth (NINfY) to carry out duties to be determined by the Department.

## **Budget**

15. It is anticipated that these proposals will be cost neutral.

## **Recommendation**

16. Officials have engaged with the youth sector and young people through the work of the Northern Ireland Youth Forum in the deliberations on NINfY, and addressed the issues raised in previous papers. Although more work is required on the future policy and departmental priorities for youth, I am content that these policy proposals are fit for purpose and therefore recommend that you agree that we present these to the stakeholders as the basis of legislative instructions.

Youth Services Division

## **The Statutory Sector**

The Education and Library Boards ensure the provision of youth services through direct delivery and through support to local voluntary groups. They provide part time training; local community relations support and coordinate local youth council work.

The Youth Council for Northern Ireland provides direct support to regional voluntary organisations, alongside support for community relations initiatives and advice on policy matters, including efficient use of resources, to the Department of Education.

## **Young People's Participation**

Since 1979 The Northern Ireland Youth Forum has acted as a voice for young people in the policy making and delivery of youth services. In addition it has acted as an advocate for young people on wider issues within government policy development.

The BiG DEAL is the name of the new £4million programme funded through the Big Lottery Fund. It is targeted at children and young people in Northern Ireland from 0-25 years old. The 'BiG Deal' is about helping children and young people create for themselves opportunities to design, take part and lead activities and projects which add to their own confidence, knowledge, attitudes skills and understanding, as well as those of others in the peer group, family, community, area or wider Northern Irish Society. It is also about encouraging their involvement in groups and organisations in ways that further support these changes and developments.

There are two distinct elements to the BiG DEAL Programme. Firstly it will create a Participation Hub to deliver a coherent approach to the participation of children and young people in Northern Ireland. The Hub will operate three

age specific strategies or sub-programmes targeting children and young people aged 0-10, 11-16, and 17 – 25. The BiG DEAL has been designed to complement the participation strategy of the Youth Strategy and the OFM/DFM Children and Young People Strategy. Its design has also taken cognizance of the RPA proposals and is clearly about preparing young people and the children and young peoples sector to engage fully with the emerging structures and the parallel community planning process.

### **The Voluntary Youth Sector**

The voluntary youth sector in Northern Ireland has a long history of providing local delivery of youth services, innovative approaches and supporting volunteer involvement. Youthnet, the umbrella organisation for voluntary youth organisations, plays a major role in policy development.