Strategy for the Delivery of Youth Work in Northern Ireland 2005-2008

Department of Education

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to have this opportunity to pay public tribute to the commitment given by so many individuals and organisations in turning a request from the Department of Education to the Youth Service Liaison Forum into reality. The Department values the contribution made by youth work and its role in the non-formal education of young people, with its particular emphasis on participation and empowerment of young people

In commissioning this work the Department had recognised that it was imperative to create a clear and coordinated strategy for youth work in Northern Ireland. There was also a strong consensus across the sector that this initiative was essential in order to further increase the effectiveness of youth service delivery here. The contributions made by young people, individuals engaged in a variety of roles within the sector, and agencies, both voluntary and statutory, have made this a very robust and comprehensive strategy. It is also unique in that it is the first Northern Ireland wide youth work strategy.

It is proposed that the Strategy will be implemented through a series of Operational Plans setting out the work envisaged for each of the years covered by the Strategy.   These Plans would clearly identify the objectives and targets, and also those agencies who would take a lead in the range of working groups established to support the implementation of the Strategy.

It is recognised that the Strategy will be taken forward within a climate of finite resources. This will necessitate the prioritisation and alignment of objectives against available resources.

The Department will itself have a number of roles, including that of lead agency in some working groups. However, the most important role for the Department will be that of "champion" for the vision and mission set out in the Strategy. The Department will also consider appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating progress so that the positive impact of this Strategy on the lives of young people over the next three years can be gauged.

Dr. Eddie Rooney
Deputy Secretary, Department of Education

2. VISION, MISSION & VALUES OF YOUTH WORK

VISION

The youth service's vision of the future is one where all young people in Northern Ireland

- are able to enjoy themselves, realise their potential and participate as active citizens in a secure and peaceful society;

- know their rights and responsibilities and have these rights protected and promoted;

- are valued, understood and involved and feel safe and supported.

MISSION

The Mission of the youth service, to be achieved through this Strategy, is to promote the development, well-being, rights, and participation of young people (aged 4-25) by ensuring that:

- high quality youth work is inclusively and effectively delivered to facilitate the personal and social development of young people within a supportive public policy framework. Youth work may engage in all aspects of a young person's development – personal, social, educational, political, cultural, spiritual, physical, and vocational;

- young people have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to make informed choices about their lives, are at the heart of designing, managing and evaluating youth work policy and practice and can make a meaningful contribution within public and political decision-making processes;

- there are adequate resources and funding to effectively deliver the Strategy; and

- there are clear roles and responsibilities for the delivery of the Strategy and the organisations involved are held accountable for the delivery of the Strategy and collaborate effectively.

VALUES

The following values will underpin all aspects of the Strategy and will shape the future delivery of youth services to young people

Personal & Social Development
- Youth work is a vital non-formal educational process of personal and social development, through which young people can develop their knowledge, understanding, attitudes, confidence and personal and inter-personal skills. Young people have the right to expect that it will be accessible, affordable, high quality and flexible to meet changing needs and a changing environment.

Promoting Rights
- The rights of young people are paramount and should be actively promoted and protected. Each young person is a unique individual who has an equal right to make informed choices, to be valued, accepted and treated with dignity and respect.

Protection
- Young people have the right to enjoy their lives, in a safe environment where they are protected, supported and feel they belong, free from violence or abuse. It is recognised that youth work involves an element of risk and challenge, appropriate to the age and development of young people.

Participation
- Young people have the right to participate actively in decisions that may affect their lives.

Peace-Building
- Youth work should actively promote a peaceful and inclusive society based on equity, diversity and interdependence.

People
- The skills, knowledge and attitudes of those involved in work with young people, paid or voluntary, are critical to their development. All those involved in work with young people should have the appropriate skills and knowledge and, as role models, work with integrity and openness.

Partnership
- Youth service organisations should collaborate effectively together and recognise their accountability to each other, young people, and those who resource and work within the youth service. Partnerships with organisations external to the youth service should adhere to the values outlined in this Strategy.

3. PRIORITIES FOR THE PERIOD 2005 -2008

The following aims and priorities have been drawn up to guide the development of the youth service from 2005 to 2008, under four key themes:

- Effective inclusive youth work
- Participation
- Resources and funding
- Implementation

It is noted that 2008 is not envisaged as an 'end date' for many of these priorities, but that work will be carried forward into the next strategic period.

Theme 1: DELIVERING EFFECTIVE INCLUSIVE YOUTH WORK

The youth service has an impressive history of providing a wide range of stimulating personal and social development programmes for young people in Northern Ireland which complement the work of the formal education sector and help to achieve a range of public policy objectives across Government.

The development of "A Model for Effective Youth Work Practice" has been an important step forward in helping to define what this practice should look like.

The Youth Service Liaison Forum is keen to build on this success by further expanding provision to meet clearly identified need, continuing to improve the quality of provision, increasing the involvement of marginalised groups in the youth service, improving the public policy framework as it affects young people and promoting the benefits of the youth service.

Aim 1
Ensure that high quality youth work is inclusively and effectively delivered to facilitate the personal and social development of young people within a supportive public policy framework.

Priorities
Priorities for delivering effective inclusive youth work for the three years from 2005 to 2008 are as follows:

Research the Needs, Views and Aspirations of Young People
1.1   Develop, implement and review a young-person centred research strategy which will inform the development of evidence-based youth work.

Sustain and Expand Provision to Meet Identified Needs
1.2   Map and review the delivery of youth work to ensure it is appropriate to the differing needs, interests and aspirations of young people

Collaborative Working
1.3   Develop and implement a strategy for the development of youth work practice:
- within the formal education sector
- within geographic communities
- within communities of interest
- across other Government Departments

Sustain and Develop the Quality of Youth Work

1.4   Develop and support appropriate curricula for youth work that reflect the values, aims and priorities of the Youth Work Strategy and the needs of relevant age groups.

1.5   Develop and effectively implement quality standards for youth work including minimum standards, good and best practice.

1.6   Ensure that there is a consistent, transparent and effective system for registering, monitoring and evaluating the provision of youth work.

1.7   Develop and measure performance/outcome indicators for youth work, which reflect the values, aims and priorities of the Youth Work Strategy.

1.8   Review the provision of residential centres and outdoor education and develop, implement and monitor an appropriate strategy.

Promote Inclusive Youth Work

Research, develop and implement specific youth work strategies to respond effectively to the needs and aspirations of excluded and traditionally under-represented groups.

1.10   Review and amend the Department Of Education Community Relations strategy for the youth service in light of developments in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence

1.11   Develop the role of youth work in promoting active citizenship

Promote outward-looking youth work

1.12   Promote outward looking youth work by developing North South, East West and international links, and by developing awareness of global citizenship

Promote a Supportive Public Policy Framework

1.13   Promote the rights, aspirations and well-being of young people in the development and implementation of public policy

Promote the Benefits of Youth Work

1.14   Commission and disseminate appropriate research to demonstrate the role of youth work in supporting a range of public policy objectives.

1.15   Promote, with key stakeholders, the role of youth work in contributing to a range of public policy objectives.

1.16   Promote the value of youth work to young people and the public.

Theme 2: PARTICIPATION

Central to the ethos of the youth service is encouraging and facilitating the participation of young people in a way that is appropriate for the relevant age group. Participation can take place on a number of dimensions, such as :
- The development of individual capabilities and confidence.
- Participation in local communities and communities of interest
- Participation in decision-making in the youth service.
- Participation in the development of public policy.

Aim 2
Ensure that young people have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to make informed choices about their lives, are at the heart of designing, managing and evaluating youth work policy and practice, have opportunities to address issues they are interested in, and can make a meaningful contribution within their communities and within public and political decision-making processes.

Priorities
Priorities for participation for the three years from 2005 to 2008 are as follows:

Build Young People's Skills and Confidence
2.1 Enhance young people's skills and knowledge so they become more confident in all aspects of their lives and make informed choices

2.2 Increase the awareness of young people that they have an important contribution to make in decisions that impact on their lives.

2.3 Support and assist young people to pursue their interests in a variety of contexts

2.4 Promote volunteering opportunities among young people

2.5 Develop, implement and review a youth information strategy which will enable young people to access the information they need to make informed choices and manage their lives

2.6 Research and promote the development and dissemination of models of best practice in enabling young people to make choices and control their own lives.

Participation within the Youth Service
2.7 Review existing participative structures within the youth service to ensure there is a coherent and inclusive organisation which will co-ordinate, promote and support the participation of young people in the youth service.

2.8 Develop appropriate and supported youth-led participative structures which enable young people to participate effectively in decision-making bodies at all levels in the youth service.

2.9 Develop appropriate strategies and structures for the participation of children aged 4-14

2.10 Ensure there is an appropriate forum of young people to oversee implementation of the strategy

2.11 Ensure that voluntary and statutory youth organisations have effective mechanisms for involving young people in their governance

2.12 Ensure youth representatives have the support and training they require to take their full place on committees and decision-making bodies.

2.13 Develop, implement and review particular strategies for encouraging participation by excluded and traditionally under-represented groups.

2.14 Promote, support and resource the development of peer-led and self-managed programmes which reflect the concerns and interests of young people

2.15 Research and promote the development and dissemination of models of best practice regarding the participation of young people in the youth service.

Influencing Public Policy

2.16 Play an active role in developing and supporting an inclusive Forum, comprising young people to advise the NIO, NI Executive and NI Assembly on policies and practice affecting young people in Northern Ireland.

2.17 Provide an interface for young people, including those from excluded and under-represented groups, with political representatives, political structures and public bodies.

2.18 Develop a youth-led policy unit to translate and communicate key policies to better facilitate consultation with young people.

2.19 Research the views of young people on key issues and policies affecting them, on a regular basis.

Theme 3: RESOURCES & FUNDING

The Youth Work Strategy, and youth work in general, will only be successful if there are adequate resources to achieve the agreed aims and priorities.

There are currently major difficulties in appointing suitably qualified youth workers, and recruiting and retaining volunteers which need to be resolved.

Issues concerning the management, training and development of those involved in youth work (paid and volunteers) as youth workers, managers, and policy-makers were addressed in detail in the Human Resources and Volunteering Working Groups of the Youth Service Policy Review. The Youth Service Liaison Forum is committed to ensuring that the recommendations of these groups are appropriately updated and effectively implemented. There is also commitment to ensuring that recommendations from the Under 10s Panel are effectively implemented.

Effective youth work also requires the provision and maintenance of appropriate premises, equipment and other physical resources, as well as resources to effectively develop and deliver the curriculum. The Youth Service Liaison Forum also recognises the potential value of IT within the youth service.

Underpinning all these resource issues is the availability of the necessary funding. The initial consultation on the development of a Youth Work Strategy highlighted the major concern, in both the public and voluntary sectors, about the low level and often short-term nature of the funding available for youth work. It is also recognised that the mechanisms through which this funding are delivered are also critically important in ensuring it is allocated fairly and used effectively.

Aim 3
Ensure that there is adequate funding and resources to consolidate existing provision and effectively deliver the Youth Work Strategy.

Priorities
Priorities for Resources and Funding for the three years from 2005 to 2008 are as follows:

Human Resources
3.1   Develop and implement a volunteer strategy to include recruitment, retention, recognition, training, support and development.

3.2   Promote volunteering opportunities among young people

3.3   Enhance the status and promote the development of the youth work profession

3.4   Improve the recruitment of youth workers through the development of appropriate pathways to initial qualification

3.5   Improve the continuous professional development of youth workers

3.6   Improve the capabilities of youth work organisations in relation to Human Resource Management and development

3.7   Improve employment practices and the Terms and Conditions of youth workers

Delivery of Effective Youth Work

3.8 Develop, implement and review a strategy for ensuring there are appropriate facilities to meet the needs of young people and sufficient resources for maintaining facilities to an agreed standard.

3.9 Ensure that adequate resources are available to support the development and delivery of appropriate curricula for each age group.

3.10 Ensure that adequate resources are available to cover the operational and running costs involved in delivering effective youth work.

Inclusion of Marginalized Groups

3.11 Ensure that adequate resources are available to support the inclusion of marginalized and traditionally under-represented groups in the youth service.

3.12 Increase the accessibility of youth work facilities for disabled young people in relation to their physical and sensory needs.

Information, Research and Policy Development

3.13 Ensure adequate resources are available to support research, policy development and dissemination of information in line with the Strategy.

3.14 Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement an Information and Communications Technology strategy for the youth service.

Participation

3.15 Ensure that adequate resources are available to develop and support participative structures as outlined in the Strategy

Innovation & Development

3.16 Ensure that adequate resources are available to develop new initiatives in line with the Strategy through the establishment and implementation of a suitably resourced Development Fund to support innovation within the youth service.

Collaboration

3.17 Ensure that adequate resources are available to promote and support effective collaboration between youth work bodies, including the servicing of the Youth Service Liaison Forum and relevant working groups.

Maximising Funding

3.18 Review the funding of youth work and ensure there is sufficient funding from Government to achieve the priorities in the Strategy.

3.19 Maximise the funding provided by Departments and other public bodies, in addition to that provided by the Department of Education, Education and Library Boards and Youth Council for Northern Ireland for youth work that contributes to other public policy objectives including the Programme for Government and Departmental objectives.

3.20 Maximise funding for youth work from charitable and private sources.

Funding Mechanisms

3.21 Review the mechanisms for the funding of voluntary organisations involved in youth work, at headquarters and unit level, to ensure that they are coherent, sustainable, support the principles of the Compact, New TSN, Section 75, Taskforce on Resourcing the Voluntary and Community Sectors, and good funding practice as well as the achievement of the aims of the Strategy.

3.21 Promote the development, implementation and review of a strategy for the planning and evaluation of short-term funding of youth work initiatives and pilots to ensure coherence and sustainability.

Theme 4: IMPLEMENTATION

The Youth Service Liaison Forum recognises that the Youth Work Strategy must be implemented effectively, with clear agreed responsibilities for taking forward each of the priorities and strong commitment by, and collaboration between, the organisations involved in youth work in both the voluntary and statutory sectors.

Aim 4

Ensure that there are clear roles and responsibilities for the Delivery of Youth Work Strategy and that the organisations involved are held accountable for that delivery and collaborate effectively.

Priorities

Priorities for the Implementation of the Strategy over the three years from 2005 to 2008 are as follows:

4.1 The Department of Education takes an energetic lead in driving the implementation of the Strategy and it is integrated into the Department's Business Plan.

4.2 Agree clear roles, responsibilities and commitments for those bodies delivering relevant aspects of the Strategy.

4.3 Develop and implement a planning process which will enable Youth Service Liaison Forum members to inform the development of action plans. Delivery agencies are accountable, within established mechanisms, for the achievement of agreed objectives

4.4 Ensure there is an appropriate forum of young people to oversee implementation of the Strategy

4.5 Agree and implement an effective overall framework for objectively evaluating progress in achieving the Strategy and developing a new strategy for implementation from 2008.

4. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Youth Work is distinctly educational and involves constructive interventions with young people in non-formal settings. Youth work is primarily concerned with personal and social education, and is characterised by the voluntary engagement of young people. As an educational activity it is most effective when it is planned and delivered with clear objectives and informed through continuous monitoring, evaluation and critical reflection on the processes and practices employed.

Non-formal education refers to learning and development that takes place outside of the formal educational field, but which is structured and based on learning objectives. This is differentiated from *informal learning*, which is not structured, and takes place in daily life activities within peer/family groups etc. Youth work interventions typically result in both non formal and informal learning.

Youth worker The role of the youth worker is to create relationships of trust and respect with young people and work with them in ways that combine enjoyment, challenge and learning. The success of youth work will be largely dependent on the relationship between the youth worker and young people.

Inclusive youth work means youth work that is designed to encourage the participation and involvement of young people, particularly those who have traditionally been under-represented and may have felt excluded.

Accessible refers to both geographical accessibility (ie young people being able to get to and from youth work provision) and accessibility in the sense that those with a range of disabilities and other barriers (eg language, cultural) can make full use of youth work premises.

Citizenship encompasses social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. Whilst encouraging respect for the law, justice and democracy, *citizenship education* also seeks to develop independence of thought, reflective thinking and debate. *Active citizenship* refers to the practical application of such skills into positive involvement within community or public life.

Participation is a key element of the youth work process. It is a way of thinking and working which facilitates individual and collective decision-making by young people, and promotes personal and social development. It can take place in a number of dimensions, such as involvement in community life, decision making in the youth service, contributing to the development of public policy etc.

Equity Diversity and Interdependence (EDI) *Equity* refers to a commitment to fairness. This may include examination of such things as allocation of resources, involvement in structures of power and so on. *Diversity* encourages respect for and expression of the range of identities represented by the youth of Northern Ireland, and those who work with them in the youth sector. *Interdependence* recognises and explores the ways in which our individual paths are intertwined. It is about building relationship between the various people and groups who make up the population of these islands.

Personal and social education is concerned with the young person gaining knowledge, understanding and awareness of him/herself as an individual and having an active role in relationships with others. It is an expansive term, and can relate to the intellectual, physical, moral, spiritual, cultural, vocational and social development of a young person

Interface means a geographical area which includes a boundary between two or more cultural, political or religious groups which may have been in conflict

Communities of interest are groups of people who may live in different geographical areas but share a common interest, such as a sport or hobby, or share an identity such as sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, disability etc.

APPENDIX 1: YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND
- an Overview of Rights and Needs.

1.1   The age structure of the Northern Ireland population is the youngest in the United Kingdom, with young people under 25 representing 36% of the population here (as compared to 31% in the UK). Demographically, almost 1 in 5 (17%) of the youth population in Northern Ireland is located in the Belfast Council area, followed by 7% in Derry, and 6% in Lisburn. Despite a contracting agricultural economy, just under half of all young people (47%) under the age of 25 live in rural areas.

1.2   Within Northern Ireland there are just over 517,000 aged 4 to 25. At any one time, over a third of these young people will be actively involved in some form of youth service provision, although this means that the majority are not regularly involved. However, by the age of 25, it has been found that over three quarters of young adults will have come into contact with the youth service at some stage.

Developmental Needs of All Young People

1.3   Whilst the diversity of young peoples' individual and social contexts give rise to a wide spectrum of youth work approaches, there are nonetheless some fundamental and universal needs which relate to the personal and social development of all young people.

1.4   The Youth Service Policy Review formulated an outline of key developmental needs, indicating how these relate to youth work during the journey from childhood, through adolescence, and into young adulthood. It is noted that, whilst this outline attributes specific needs to defined age bands, in reality life transitions vary according to each individual. Hence the age-banding within this outline should not be seen as prescriptive.

1.5   **Children**: key developmental needs in the 4-10 year age band:
   •   Physical development: the opportunity to initiate safe and creative play activities that enrich a child's physical abilities promoting good health, skill development, and serving as a pre-requisite for later physical confidence;
   •   Social development: experiences to enable children to develop personal relationships through informal activities, providing a forum for the expression and testing of communication and social skills leading to self-confidence, value learning and co-operative interactions and;
   •   Creative stimulation: non-formal activities providing an experience of how things work and contributing to projects which enable an understanding of their environment, relationships, their strengths and limitations.

1.6   **Young People**: key developmental needs in the 10-16 year age band:
   •   Participation: opportunities for engagement in activities and groupings that allow a personal sense of contribution and community ensuring the development of accountability, personal esteem and membership of society;
   •   Acceptance by, and of, others: the provision of programmes that encourage healthy relationships, reducing potential prejudice towards others and allowing feedback of acceptance and respect;
   •   Development and challenge to values and beliefs with other young people, building a foundation for good health, spiritual development and creative contribution to society;
   •   Engagement with the wider community: opportunities for involvement in community decision making, developing skills and knowledge appropriate to 'active citizenship'.

1.7 **Young Adult**: needs specific to the individual young adult in the 16-25 age band
- Information : young people face crucial choices between the ages of 16 and 25 years. Accurate information accessible through a variety of mediums is required to enable young people to make informed decisions which support their development. There is inequality in young people's access to information sources and advice.
- Specialist support: many young people will face crises during this period in their lives. Individual support for young people around areas such as health, including sexual and mental health, employment, offending behaviour and accommodation is a requirement;
- Citizenship: support for young adults in the transition to full active participation in community life is particularly relevant in Northern Ireland given the long absence of local democracy and the prevailing sectarianism.

1.8 However, to frame young people's lives and youth work in an exclusively needs-based perspective runs the risk of objectifying young people and of treating them as passive subjects. This may result in a tendency for young people to identify themselves as powerless within many spheres of their lives.

1.9 This context is rapidly changing within Northern Ireland, with a growing application of a rights-based framework in policymaking and professional practices. For young people, such a re-focusing of policy formulation has been translated into a raft of initiatives based on promoting and enforcing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The experiences of other countries, which are more advanced in terms of a rights agenda, indicate that this approach can change both how young people are viewed, and how they view themselves, in terms of the power relations within society. It is noted that, whilst the rights-based agenda provides young people with universal entitlements, these are juxtaposed with an acceptance of responsibilities, both on the part of young people and on service providers.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

1.10 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child contains 54 Articles, which balance the welfare of the child, as incorporated in rights to protection and service provision, with the rights of children and young people to participate and be involved in decisions which affect them, in accordance with their maturity and experience. These rights include the following:

- **Rights to Participation**
  These establish the principle that young people are entitled to active involvement in decisions which personally impact on them. Within Northern Ireland, such rights are reinforced within other legislation, such as the Children (NI) Order 1995 and Section 75 of the NI Act (1998). A number of measures have emerged within Northern Ireland which seek to translate these principles into practice for young people. Surveys of young people have found an overwhelming desire for inclusion within decision-making, although this is tinged with scepticism as to the extent to which their views will be genuinely considered.

- **Rights to Protection**
  A number of Articles within the Convention seek to protect all children from forms of maltreatment, abuse, exploitation and invasion of privacy, with additional Articles which provide safeguards for vulnerable groups such as refugee children, those with a disability, those in care or those involved within the criminal justice system.

- **Rights to Provision**
  These Articles stipulate a range of entitlements which relate to standard of living, including rights relating to health, education, environment, play, leisure and cultural activities.

1.11 Whilst the UN Convention has universal application, with additional safeguards for some vulnerable groups, the degree to which young people currently enjoy such rights within Northern Ireland varies starkly. Personal circumstances, combined with a wide range of socio-economic factors, serve to ensure that for considerable numbers of individuals, the reality of being young in Northern Ireland falls short of many entitlements laid down in the Convention.

1.12 Exclusion from full enjoyment of rights has been linked to several fundamental features of Northern Ireland -most notably to poverty and political conflict – as well as to young people's demographic backgrounds and particular situations.

Poverty

1.13 The Children and Young People's Strategy for Northern Ireland identifies poverty as a significant root cause of social exclusion. 38% of young people in Northern Ireland live in relative poverty. Moreover, poverty tends to be cyclical in that young people born into households of relative poverty are more likely to be socially disadvantaged as adults. There is a large body of evidence which illustrates the correlation between poverty and a wide range of barriers to full development, for example, educational underachievement, poor health, risk behaviours, reduced employability.

A Divided Society

1.14 Another fundamental cross-cutting issue which has been highlighted within the Children and Young People's Strategy for Northern Ireland is the impact of political conflict and inter-community divisions. Smyth's review of research data relating to young people, including studies of mental health, physical injury, crime, resilience, family functioning and attitudinal surveys, illustrates the wide ranging impact which conflict and sectarianism has had on the social development and rights of young people. Whilst Smyth's study indicated that young males from disadvantaged areas are at greatest risk of becoming either victims or perpetrators of violence, the data reveals that all young people have been socialised within an abnormal and polarised society, facing a complex range of detrimental consequences.

Social Exclusion

1.15 Whilst the impact of political conflict on young people merits significant attention, the focus on this issue has tended to mask other issues of equity and diversity affecting many young people here. An emerging body of evidence reveals that many young people face multiple forms of discrimination in forms other than sectarianism.

1.16 Studies involving young people from minority ethnic backgrounds have found numerous examples of both institutional and individual racism against young people, alongside a sharp increase in reports of racially motivated attacks in Northern Ireland over the past decade. Surveys of social attitudes in Northern Ireland reveal that latent racism, particularly against the Traveller community, is more prevalent than sectarian attitudes.

1.17 In a similar vein, there is mounting evidence that disabled young people (estimated in the Labour Force Survey to constitute around 6% of the youth population) as well as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender young people, young people living in rural areas and those with caring responsibilities, frequently suffer discrimination, social and recreational isolation and in some cases exclusion from basic human rights.

1.18 Gender remains a key determinant in shaping young people's experiences and in reinforcing socio-economic inequalities and uneven power relations within Northern Ireland. Studies of young people have identified distinctive issues and needs which relate to being either a young male or a young female in Northern Ireland, with the implications for youth work being that a gender-neutral approach is not always viable.

Vulnerable Young People

1.19 An increasing number of young people will, at some stage, face transient difficulties due to personal circumstance. Young people in or leaving care, young victims of crime, homophobia or bullying, children of prisoners, children from divorcing or separating families, young parents, young offenders, those unable to cope with academic, peer, or media pressure etc. all face barriers to reaching their full potential. Where there is inadequate protection or support provision, such young people are at risk of developing negative coping strategies, such as self-harm, attempted suicide or substance abuse, and/or suffering mental health problems.

Changing Lifestyles

1.20 In order to maximise the relevance and value of youth work to young people, it is also essential to identify and respond to the changing realities of young people's lives and lifestyles. For example, for younger children, the reduction in available play areas and mounting concerns about community safety have served to change traditional patterns of play. The reduced influence of the extended family has been linked to a reduction in traditional support networks, as has changed patterns of church attendance. Young people's access to information and methods of communication are also changing rapidly due to the growth of technologies, and young people are increasingly targeted as consumers within the global economy. However, opportunities to engage in risk-taking behaviours, such as drug and substance abuse, are also increasing. There is substantial evidence that young people are faced with a greater range of pressures, leading to a decline in psychological well-being for many. There are also indications that young people's routes to independence are changing, with transitions to economic and social independence being delayed or protracted for many young adults.

1.21 Such trends are manifested in changing patterns of young people's lifestyles, culture, use of recreational time, capacities and interests, and again highlight the imperative for youth work to start with, and respond to, the realities of individual young people.

Implications for Youth Work

1.22 Across Northern Ireland, youth work operates within a multitude of contexts. Given this diversity in 'starting points', it is essential that youth work is adaptable to specific and local circumstances as well as to the changing lifestyles of young people. This is reflected in the flexible youth work curriculum which comprises both generalist and specialist provision.

1.23 Whilst youth work cannot remove the root causes of social exclusion and conflict, it is evident that responsive and empowering youth work can and does make a significant contribution in wider efforts to ensure that young people enjoy their fundamental rights and are enabled to reach their full potential.

APPENDIX 2: THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH WORK POLICY

Policy Framework

2.1   The main statutory provisions for the youth service are the Youth Service (NI) Order 1989 and the Education & Libraries Order (NI) 1986. It is the statutory responsibility of the education and library boards 'to secure provision for the area of adequate facilities for recreational, social , physical, cultural and youth service activities'. The youth service includes youth work supported and delivered by the Education and Library Boards and by a wide range of voluntary and community organisations.

2.2   The main policy framework for the Youth Service in Northern Ireland dates from 1987. This defined the purpose of the Youth Service as "to support and encourage children and young people to mature and reach their potential as valued individuals and responsible citizens". It described the aims of the youth service as:

  •   to enable as many young people as possible, particularly those in social need, to benefit from youth services; and
  •   to meet the changing needs of young people through the provision of an appropriate range of services.

Youth Service Policy Review

2.3   From 1997 to 1999 there was a major review of youth service policy, with an extensive consultation process, including working groups on:

  •   volunteering and community involvement;
  •   facilities and support services;
  •   the active involvement of young people in shaping and managing youth services;
  •   human resources;
  •   monitoring and evaluation; and
  •   curriculum development.

2.4   The review produced a consultation report in September 1998 and, after further consultation, a final report in May 1999.

2.5   The review report defined the youth service as including "all those organisations and projects whose primary purpose is the personal and social development of children, young people and young adults." and recommended that the age range for the service should be defined as 4-25 years, in three categories of under 10s, 10-16 year olds and young adults (16-25).

2.6   The review report proposed a mission statement for the youth service as:
      "To ensure opportunities for children, young people, and young adults to gain for themselves knowledge, skills and experience to reach their full potential as valued individuals."

Objectives of Youth Work

2.7   It also defined the objectives of youth work as
  •   To encourage personal development and social education, shaped in part by young people, based on learning from experiences in safe and enjoyable environments.
  •   To promote health and well-being at all stages of development.
  •   To build positive self-esteem, self-awareness and self-acceptance as a support to young people in making informed life decisions.
  •   To promote respect for individual differences and an acceptance of the individual's right to personal choice.
  •   To encourage and give opportunities for involvement in initiating, planning, management and evaluation of youth work, at all levels and in all areas.
  •   To encourage understanding of diverse groups in society and the involvement of young people in peace building and conflict transformation.
  •   To challenge young people to develop their role as active citizens and to identify issues at personal, local and global levels and create strategies for action.

2.8   The review made specific recommendations for taking forward work with young adults; work with under-10s; and the role of youth work in community relations.

2.9   The review also recommended the implementation of a new structure for the youth service, with a Youth Service Agency, Youth Service Standing Committee, local youth work fora and the existing regional voluntary organisations. However, the Department of Education did not accept the recommendation.

2.10   The Curriculum Development Working Group met in advance of the other working groups and produced a key curriculum framework model, "A Model for Effective Practice".   This was adapted, published and launched by the Department of Education in October 1997 and was revised and re-launched in January 2003. A Curriculum Development Unit was also established, as a resource for all full time, part time and voluntary youth workers within the voluntary and statutory youth services.

Policy Review Implementation

2.11   A Policy Implementation body was established to progress the recommendations of the review and important progress has been made in some areas.
   •   The Youth Work Training board has taken forward some of the recommendations of the Working Group on Human Resources, especially in relation to training and registration of youth workers.
   •   A Young Adult Policy Implementation Panel has produced a report and action plan.
   •   A Youth Affairs Panel has produced a report with associated recommendations.
   •   A Policy Implementation Panel on young people with disabilities has produced a report with recommendations.
   •   The JEDI initiative has progressed the promotion of community relations and diversity within the youth service.

2.12   The recommendations of these panels need to be incorporated into the Youth WorkStrategy. The work on under-10s has also commenced, but has not yet reported to YSLF.

Strategic Framework for the Education Sector

2.13   The Department of Education, which is responsible for the youth service in Northern Ireland, is in the process of developing a strategic framework on which its future business planning will be based. The draft mission statement states that

"We will work together as partners in education and youth services to ensure a high standard of education for all children and young people, which will put them at the centre of education, motivate them, build their confidence and enrich their lives and provide the foundation for a strong and vibrant economy".

2.14   Although potentially all the aims reflect the work of the youth service as well as formal education, the draft plan refers specifically to the youth service in the following aims and priorities:

Aim 2.1: To provide flexible learning opportunities that meet the varying needs and abilities of all young people.
Priority 1: To provide a broad, balanced and flexible school and youth service curriculum appropriate to the needs of young people, society and the economy.
Aim 3.1: To ensure equality of access to educational and youth service provision and to facilitate parental choice as far as possible.
Priority 5: To promote open and equal access to youth service activities for all young people.
Aim 3.2: To promote among all those in the education and youth service respect for, and accommodation of, diversity, equality and human rights.
Priority 2: To ensure young people are educated in a supportive and caring environment and are protected in schools and youth settings.
Priority 3: To ensure all people who work for, or interact with, the education and youth service are treated with respect and have their rights protected.

Priority 4: To take into account the needs of all Section 75 groups in delivering education and youth services.
Aim 4.1: To secure necessary funding to deliver a high quality education and youth service.
Aim 4.2: To use resources efficiently, effectively and equitably to support and improve learning.
Priority 1: To provide a safe and secure physical environment in schools and youth settings that meets the changing requirements of learning and teaching.
Aim 4.3: To have highly skilled and motivated teachers, youth workers and support staff Priority 1: To secure, in a cost-effective manner, an appropriate number of teachers, youth workers and support staff with the necessary skills and qualities to meet the changing learning needs of young people.
Priority 2: To promote effective collaborative working amongst teachers, youth workers and support staff.
Aim 4.4: To have high quality leadership and governance across education and youth service
Priority 1: To enhance leadership skills among senior management in our partner bodies, schools and youth settings.

2.15 The Department of Education will be incorporating the priorities of the Youth Work Strategy into its own corporate and business planning and monitoring.

Future Strategy

2.16 Overall, it was not entirely clear how the implementation of the recommendations of the Youth Service Policy Review would be driven and progress monitored. There are, therefore, various areas where there has been inadequate progress, which now need to be addressed in a co-ordinated and planned way, building on the valuable work that has been carried out to date.

Image of Youth Work

2.17 The Youth Work Strategy will need to address the lack of understanding amongst decision-makers and the public about what precisely youth work is, the benefits it has for young people and society and its contribution to the achievement of a wide range of public policy objectives.

Staffing

2.18 There is evidence that some employers are experiencing significant difficulties in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified staff, despite increases in the number of youth workers being trained. The youth work strategy will need to ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified youth workers to deliver the programme. There is also increasing concern about the difficulty in attracting and retaining suitable volunteers, which also needs to be addressed. With North/South Professional Endorsement and the establishment of a joint Education and Training Standards Committee imminent, the coherent mapping of opportunities for youth work training in Northern Ireland will ultimately result in the identification of alternative pathways to professional qualification.

Funding

2.19 Throughout the youth service funding is a major issue, particularly the short-term nature of much of the current funding that is available, the potential ending of some important sources, such as the EU peace funding, and the general low level of the funding. There is widespread recognition that additional resources, effectively and efficiently used, will be vital in enabling the Youth Work Strategy to achieve its aims.

APPENDIX 3: EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

3.1   In addition to developments in relation to youth work policy, there have been a range of changes taking place in Northern Ireland affecting the lives of young people and the development of youth work that need to be reflected in the Youth Work Strategy. These are highlighted below.

Programme for Government

3.2   The Programme for Government represents an important framework within which the Youth Work strategy needs to be positioned, particularly in recognition of the contribution that youth work makes to the achievement of a range of government policy objectives.

The key objectives of each Department, as outlined in the Priorities and Budget 2005-8, are:

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)
- To promote sustainable development of the agri-food industry and the countryside and stimulate the economic and social revitalisation of disadvantaged rural areas: reduce the risk to life and property from flooding; promote sustainable development of the sea fishing industry; and maintain protect and expand forests in a sustainable way.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL)
- To protect, nurture and grow our cultural capital for today and tomorrow

Department of Education (DE)
- To ensure than all young people, through participation at school, reach the highest possible standards of educational achievement that will give them a secure foundation for lifelong learning and employment; and develop the values and attitudes appropriate to citizenship in an inclusive society; and
- To promote through the Youth Service, the personal and social development of children and young people and assist them to gain knowledge, skills and experience to reach their full potential as valued individuals; and through community relations measures for young people, to encourage the development of mutual understanding and promote recognition of, and respect for, cultural diversity.

Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)
- To promote economic, social and personal development through high quality learning, research and skills training; and to help people into employment and promote good working practices

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI)
- To encourage the development of a high value added, innovative, enterprising and competitive economy leading to greater wealth creation and job opportunities for all.

Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP)
- To prioritise the use and deployment of resources available to Northern Ireland and to secure the delivery of Public Services which meet the needs of citizens and offer value for money; and
- To meet the social and economic needs of the community in the Department's areas of executive responsibility

Department of the Environment (DOE)
- To protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment and built heritage and support the adoption of the principles of sustainable development; to plan and manage development in a sustainable way which will contribute to a better environment and which is modern and responsive to the community; to work with statutory and voluntary partners to reduce road deaths and serious injuries; and to support a system of effective local government which meets the needs of residents and taxpayers.

Department for Regional Development (DRD)
- Supporting the economy by maintaining and developing safe transportation networks, promoting airport and harbour services, shaping the long-term development of the region and providing other services to the public and other Departments; and
- Contributing to the health and well being of the community and the protection of the environment through the provision of modern, high quality water and sewerage services, at the lowest possible cost.

Department for Social Development (DSD)
- To provide a fair system of financial help to those in need and to ensure that parents who live apart maintain their children; encouraging personal responsibility and improving incentives to work and save; and
- To promote measurable improvements to housing in Northern Ireland; and
- To improve the physical, economic, community and social environment of neighbourhoods, towns and cities in Northern Ireland with a particular emphasis on tackling disadvantage

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)
- To improve health and well being outcomes through a reduction in preventable disease and ill-health by providing effective, high quality, equitable and efficient Health, Social and Public Safety Services to the people of Northern Ireland; and
- To create a safer environment for the community by providing an effective fire fighting, rescue and fire safety service.

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFDDFM)
- To assist government in making and implementing well-informed decisions and improving public services; and
- To promote equality of opportunity, human rights and improved community relations, tackle poverty and social disadvantage, and meet the needs of victims.

Youth work interventions can and do make a positive contribution to many of these Departmental objectives. Additionally, youth work has a valuable role to play in many departmental policies. Examples of these include:

Review of Rural Policy (DARD)
Investing for Health (DHSSPS)
Shaping our Future (DRD)
Unlocking Creativity (DCAL)
Strategy 2010 (DED)
Gender and Race Strategies (OFMDFM)
Taking our place in Europe (OFMDFM)

Political Environment
3.3   The governance of Northern Ireland continues to reflect uncertainty and division. There is a lack of clarity as to whether there will be agreement on the re-establishment of the Assembly and Executive and what shape it might take. This uncertainty has implications for the development of government policy and funding, as well as dangers for the political vacuum being filled by other forms of less democratic activity.

Review of Public Administration
3.4   The current Review of Public Administration presents both potential opportunities and uncertainties for public services as a whole, including the youth service. It is likely that, amongst other things, there will be changes to administrative structures, but, at this stage, it is not clear what these changes might be.

Children & Young People's Commissioner
3.5   The youth service has collectively welcomed the appointment of a Children & Young People's Commissioner to help promote and protect the rights of children and is keen to work closely with him in this task as well as promoting the role of youth service within it.

Children and Young People's Strategy
3.6   The agreement of Government to develop a comprehensive Children and Young Person's strategy, crossing the responsibilities of all departments, is also very much to be welcomed and presents an important opportunity for the youth service to demonstrate the crucial role it plays in the lives of children and young people, contributing to a wide range of government objectives. The Youth Work Strategy is being developed in parallel with the Children and Young Person's Strategy, and has been drawn up, taking into account the emerging vision and values of that Strategy, with the intention of impacting upon it.

Schools

3.7 There are important changes taking place within the formal education sector, both within the curriculum and in new and planned initiatives, such as:
- Citizenship
- Communities in Schools.
- EOTAS.
- Mentoring and Peer Education.
- Counselling in Schools.
- After-school clubs
- Educational Action Zones
- Extended Schools
- Young Apprenticeships
- Progress File Achievement Planner
- Employability initiative

These represent important developments in relation to the personal and social development of young people, which recognise the value of using a youth work methodology, and that need to be reflected in the Youth Work Strategy.

Building a Shared Future

3.8 The Youth Service Policy Review recognised the crucial role of the youth service in promoting peace-building and good community relations. The current government consultation "A Shared Future" provides an opportunity for the youth service to highlight, promote and develop this vital role.

New Targeting Social Need

3.9 The youth service recognises the important contribution of youth work with some of the most disadvantaged young people in Northern Ireland, many of whom have become, or may become, disaffected with formal education and authority in general. The youth service therefore recognises the importance of targeting resources to young people who have less access to resources and opportunities than other young people. The Delivery of Youth Work Strategy must also ensure compatibility with the strategic framework of the NI Anti-Poverty Strategy, ie. building capacity and opportunities for employment.

Equality

3.10 The Good Friday Agreement, through the Northern Ireland Act (1998), requires all public bodies to regularly review how they are promoting equality of opportunity in relation to nine key categories. This commitment is recognised as being central to the values of the youth service and needs to be reflected in the Youth Work Strategy. It is evident that the obligation placed upon all public bodies to consult with those potentially affected by policies – including young people – has resulted in greater demands upon youth service providers to facilitate the involvement of young people within public consultation processes.

Anti-Discrimination legislation

3.11 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 makes discrimination on the basis of disability unlawful, and requires employers to make 'reasonable adjustments' to facilitate disabled people. This legislation, which deals mainly with the provision of goods and services, employment, and property, has significant resource and training implications for the provision of youth services. Other relevant legislation which prohibits discrimination include the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997, the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998, the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976, along with various EU Directives. The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister has proposed the introduction of a Single Equality Bill, which would harmonise the provisions across all the grounds for which protection against discrimination is afforded and extend protection where appropriate. It is proposed that this Single Equality Bill will extend anti discrimination law into new categories including age and sexual orientation. Again, it is likely that the Bill will have various implications for the provision of youth services.

Bill of Rights

3.13 There is an awareness that work with young people needs to be based on a recognition of their rights, as reflected in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other EU and UK human rights law. The draft Youth Work Strategy reflects this commitment to the rights of young people.

Policy context within the Voluntary sector

3.14 The Treasury has increasingly recognised the need to ensure a robust independent voluntary sector as part of the means of delivering government priorities. The first step in this process was the creation of the 'Compact' (see below) setting out the framework for relationships between government and the voluntary and community sector. This work was further developed through the Treasury Cross Cutting Review (September 2002) which addressed issues of developing the capacity of the sector and recognising the need for a robust independent infrastructure.

Compact between the Government and the Voluntary Sector

3.15 There is recognition of the changing relationship between the statutory and voluntary sectors and the increased recognition of the value of the voluntary sector in delivering government objectives. The Youth Work Strategy needs to promote effective working between the voluntary and statutory sectors and reflect the principles of the Compact.

TaskForce on Resourcing the Voluntary and Community Sector

3.16 The government has established a Task Force on Resourcing the Voluntary and Community Sector which has produced an initial consultation document covering funding and other issues affecting the relationship between the voluntary and statutory sectors. The Youth Work strategy will need to address how to ensure that the resources to achieve the strategy are made available, are effectively used and are sustainable. It is also essential that the relationship between the voluntary sector and the statutory sector is based on agreed principles.

Playwork and Early Years Developments

3.17 Playwork includes the provision of informal play opportunities, and more formal playcare and after-school provision. Given the synergy between youth work and playwork, the youth strategy must take cognisance of the range of policy developments which impact upon the Play and Early Years sectors, including the Review of Children First, the Enriched Curriculum initiative being introduced in primary schools, and Children's Services Partnerships. One outworking from the Youth Service Policy Review has been the establishment of an Under 10s Panel, which is due to report to the Department of Education in 2005. Organisations responsible for taking forward the Delivery of Youth Work Strategy should be informed of the recommendations of this Panel as they emerge.

North/South, East/West, EU and international developments

3.18 Ratification of the Good Friday Agreement and further EU integration have, through the Causeway, Ncompass and EU Youth Programmes, opened up and enhanced co-operation and development within the non-formal education sector, on a N/S, E/W, EU and international basis. In keeping with DE's already mooted intention to develop an international education strategy, the youth service's vision of NI should be as a confident, prepared, culturally aware, outward and forward looking region, where young people and those working with them are ready and equipped to benefit from and participate fully within a local, regional, national and international context.

The ever-increasing significance and relevance of international youth work and policy, as the process of globalisation and international interdependence deepens, heightens the need to develop increased intercultural aptitudes among young people and youth workers, to tackle growing issues such as diversity, racism and xenophobia.

An adequate youth work response requires that all young people and youth workers are supported in developing the awareness and skills, through activities, training, professional development, maximising the sharing of good practice, and exchanges, in recognition of a more diverse cultural environment, as offered by the aforementioned programmes.

Appendix 4: Role and members of the Youth Service Liaison Forum

Established in 2003, the aim of the Youth Service Liaison Forum is:

"To assist the Department of Education in formulating and implementing youth service policy proposals and strengthen the effectiveness of the provision of services to young people through improved coherence between the major stakeholders."

The objectives of the Youth Service Liaison Forum are:

- To provide the forum for sharing views and improving co-ordination between the main youth service agencies on appropriate policy and executive issues as they relate to areas of common concern
- To assist in the formulation and development of youth service policy proposals
- To assist in the development of inter-agency, inter-sectoral and interdepartmental policies and strategies concerning young people.
- To support the securing of additional resources from DE and other sources
- To provide advice on the role of local area fora
- To draw up a plan of action which should synchronise with the strategic plans and annual business plans of all the partners

The members of the Youth Service Liaison Forum are:

Department of Education (DE)

Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)

Education and Library Boards (ELBs)

The Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI)

YouthNet

Northern Ireland Youth Forum (NIYF)

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