

**Priorities for Youth  
Improving Young People's Lives through Youth Work**

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## Ministerial Foreword

I am pleased to be publishing the Priorities for Youth for public consultation. It is my aim that the key actions contained within this document will help to improve young people's lives through youth work.

Everyone wants the best for children and young people. The Executive is committed to helping children thrive, achieve and develop the confidence to meet the transitions into adulthood. Youth work has a good track record in engaging young people in positive activities that empower, encourage and support them to work through these transitions and help them develop the necessary personal and social skills to face the challenges they may face along the way.

The needs of young people must be at the heart of all education policy. Youth work has an important contribution to make to the development of young people within the context of the education service, funded from the education budget. It is an increasingly relevant aspect of non formal education. I am committed to ensuring that it continues to contribute to achieving the vision of all children and young people reaching their potential.

I want to provide a clear policy remit for youth work within education and to enable a clearer focus for youth workers and managers, a refreshed approach to planning, delivery and evaluation and, crucially, a high quality service for young people which can effectively demonstrate its contribution to improved outcomes.

For too many of our young people the formal education system is still not meeting their needs. I am determined that future investment in youth work will ensure that practice takes these challenges into account and meets them in partnership with young people.

Results from inspection are mostly good with some practice outstanding; however a range of issues have been identified which need to be addressed. The major and recurrent issue for my Department is that youth work can no longer be allowed to remain

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a separate policy detached from the overall education priorities. It is and should be recognised as a major contributor to improving educational and life long learning outcomes. I want to ensure that by providing a clear policy remit, planning and performance will improve and provide increased evidence of the value of youth work and a stronger case for continued and potentially wider investment.

While there is much to be proud of in our overall education system, there is also much more to be done. I have made it a priority to tackle underachievement and promote equality and the raising of standards across education. I therefore want to ensure that the non-formal side of education plans and delivers high quality youth work services in line with the broad education priorities. It is crucial that youth workers and volunteers are supported in these efforts, and understand the distinctive contribution they can make to improved educational outcomes for young people.

I am also seeking to place a greater emphasis on the needs of disadvantaged young people and those for which youth work can provide a valuable link with future education and training.

Taking part in youth work is not compulsory but it is an important part of the education continuum. Over the years, youth workers have provided access to safe and supported environments that foster the active involvement of young people. Youth workers have a key role in ensuring that young people continue to make the most of the positive, fun and enjoyable opportunities youth work offers to experience new and different educational activities and develop as active members of their communities. The personal commitment of youth workers in both the statutory and voluntary youth sector will have impacted on the lives of many thousands of young people over the years. I would acknowledge that contribution and continue to recognise youth work for the important contribution it can make to a range of outcomes by enhancing personal and social skills, as well as keeping young people actively engaged in a learning process.

Engagement will be key in implementing the new policy. Boards and the Youth Council will come together to develop 3 year plans which set out how services will be provided to meet the Priorities for Youth outcomes and which take account of local need. I hope

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that these plans will provide a mechanism for effective engagement with other agencies operating with young people.

The most challenging education budget settlement in modern history, together with the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA), provide the mandate for a converged statutory youth service which will work collaboratively with key sectoral partners in the voluntary sector to ensure young people's needs are met through a range of high quality, cost effective provision.

The development of these priorities has been influenced by extensive pre consultation and ongoing engagement with key stakeholders. I am confident that this new policy framework will provide the impetus for continued improvement across the youth sector which has delivered excellent services over the years.

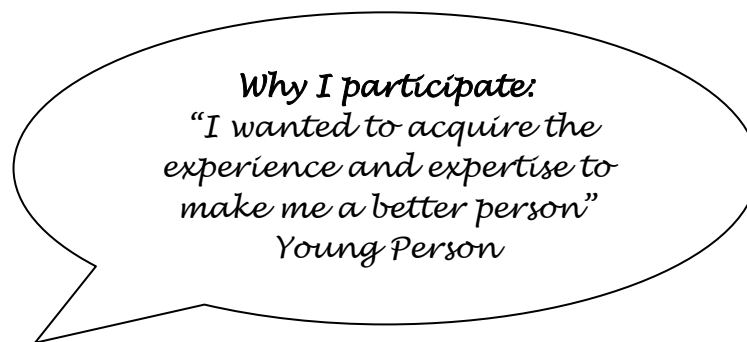
This consultation document provides an important opportunity for you to consider whether the Priorities for Youth and the proposed actions will help to improve young people's lives by enhancing the planning, delivery and performance of youth work in the best interests of young people.

**John O'Dowd**  
**Minister for Education**

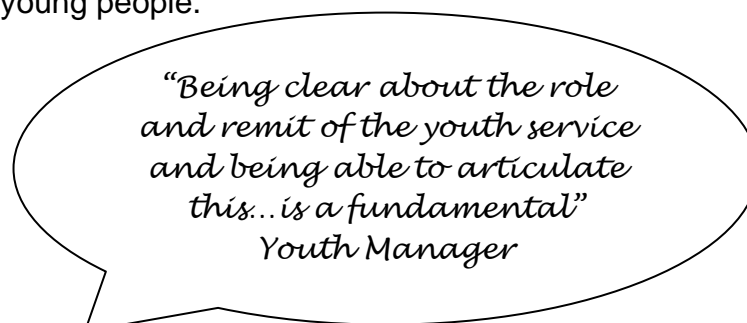
## Section 1 – Introduction

*Every young person achieving to his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development*  
(DE Vision Statement)

1.1 The Department of Education (DE) invests in youth work to support and encourage children and young people to mature and reach their potential as valued individuals and responsible citizens. Effective youth work helps young people to identify their personal and social development needs and involves them in shaping the services designed to meet those needs. Unlike school, participation is voluntary.



1.2 The uniqueness of youth work is that young people, of all abilities and of often diverse interests, choose to participate regularly in a part of the education system that is less formal than school but no less important in terms of learning and development. This dynamic and changing service should complement the formal education service; it is, and must remain, distinctive from formal education; yet, at the same time, it must connect with broad education priorities to ensure maximum benefit for young people.



1.3 Non-formal education in the form of youth work encourages children and young people to develop their personal and social skills and stay engaged in learning. The Youth Service developed a non statutory curriculum endorsed by DE “Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice” (1997) which provides a flexible framework for the delivery of good youth work practice.

Effective youth work can help overcome barriers to learning by providing further opportunities to gain qualifications, to volunteer as junior leaders and to develop a range of skills and attributes that can help young people improve their life outcomes as individuals and contributors to their community and the economy. It provides opportunities to build self-esteem, to work as part of a team, make friends, socialise and take part in enjoyable and structured activities in a safe environment. It also has the potential to develop mutual understanding and a respect for others, and to promote recognition of, and respect for, cultural diversity.

1.4 Youth workers can help young people to develop holistically, by enhancing their readiness to learn, building positive relationships and acting as role models. Without effective intervention, the outcomes for some young people are poor compared to their peers. Although relevant for all young people, youth work can be particularly relevant to those at risk of disengaging from society, those who become disaffected at school, those at risk of committing an offence, those who could become non-stakeholders in their own community, and those adversely affected by the legacy of the conflict.

1.5 This consultation document outlines a set of priorities within a policy framework for youth work within Education, strategically aligned to the overall DE policy and vision for young people. Establishing Priorities for Youth will provide a clear focus for ESA, where the investment in youth work is directly linked to supporting good quality services that deliver better outcomes for young people. The principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) have been taken into consideration when developing these Priorities. This framework should promote children's rights and reflects the main guiding principles of the UNCRC.

### **Current legislation and funding for DE supported Youth Work**

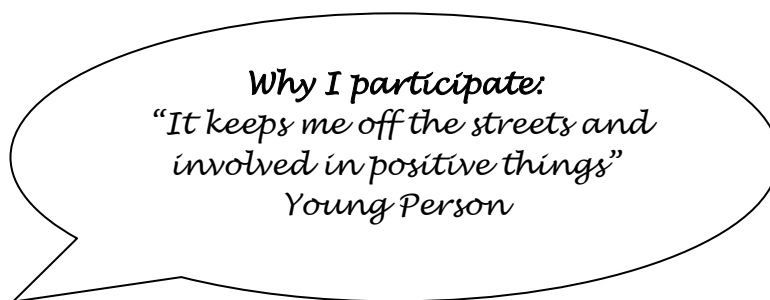
1.6 The statutory provision for the Youth Service is contained in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986<sup>1</sup>, which sets out the requirements in regard to providing youth services, and the Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1989<sup>2</sup> which established the Youth Council.

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<sup>1</sup> 1986 No. 594 (N.I. 3).

<sup>2</sup> 1989 No. 2413 (N.I. 22).

1.7 The Department invests approximately £29million resource and £5million capital (approx 1.5% of the overall DE budget) into youth services annually, which is distributed via six different funding schemes, one in each Education and Library Board (ELB) and one in the Youth Council, which operate independently of one another. Each of the five ELBs and the Youth Council receive revenue budgets of approximately £4m to £5m each. Funding is currently allocated to the ELBs to support local delivery, maintain statutory units or programmes and to provide funding to local voluntary youth units who satisfy registration criteria and are eligible for funding. Most organisations funded by the Youth Council use the grant to support the day-to-day running of their regional office, salaries, and/or the delivery of regional programmes.

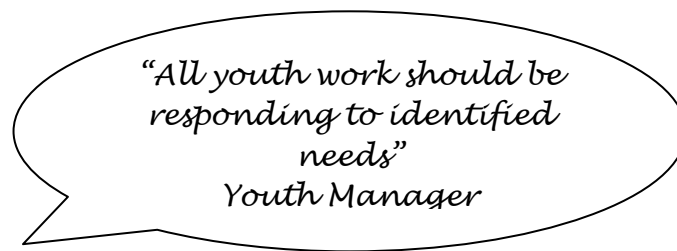


### **Current Delivery Structure**

1.8 It is estimated that 157,000 young people access youth services annually (over 30% of population aged 4-25). There are 126 statutory youth clubs/units or projects, and 11 Outdoor Education Centres controlled and managed by ELBs, with over 1,900 voluntary groups supported either by the ELBs or the Youth Council (uniformed/non-uniformed units; church related and secular units; headquarter and umbrella bodies; residential centres). Over 20,000 volunteers help deliver the service.

1.9 The voluntary sector plays a vital role in the delivery of youth work funded by DE. The Department fully supports the shared values and principles in the 1998 Compact, and which were restated in the 2011 Concordat, and is committed to working with Partners towards implementation of the agreed commitments contained in the Concordat.

1.10 The context for the delivery of youth work and the range of people who can refer to themselves as youth workers is very broad. References to youth work or youth services throughout this document relate to youth work which is delivered by the ELBs and the Youth Council, or delivered by the voluntary sector supported by the ELBs and Youth Council and which is subject to inspection by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). ESA will subsume the ELB Youth Service and Youth Council.



*“All youth work should be responding to identified needs”*  
*Youth Manager*



## Section 2 – Current Policy Context

### Introduction

2.1 The most recent youth work policy document is ‘The Youth Work Strategy 2005 – 2008’ which achieved a number of key objectives identified as relevant at the time. The current context for the delivery of, and support for, youth work needs to take full account of the issues facing some young people today, a range of public service reforms, including the establishment of ESA, changing educational priorities, inspection findings, results of the pre consultation and increasing pressure on the education budget.

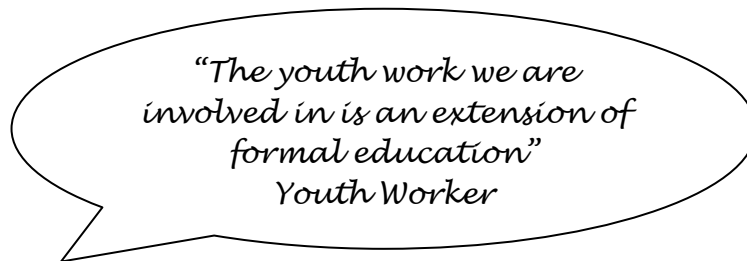
2.2 The increased focus on achieving public value with public investment, combined with a renewed emphasis on demonstrating improved outcomes for young people, creates an ideal opportunity to review both the value and contribution of youth work in contributing to the DE vision of every young person fulfilling his or her potential at each stage of his or her development.

2.3 DE policies and associated funding enable the delivery of services almost exclusively to children and young people, and therefore has more capacity to enhance overall outcomes if used as collectively and effectively as possible. Despite universal access to education, outcomes are not universally the same. Whilst many young people achieve and succeed, other young people are at risk of not fulfilling their potential either because of their social context, additional need or their experience of and attitude towards education.

2.4 Not all young people struggle with the context in which they find themselves and, even when they do, some will thrive despite the issues they face; others will not. Before deciding on priorities for youth work, it is important to understand what some young people achieve in terms of educational, social and employment outcomes and the barriers they may face to achieving their potential. Appendix 1 provides further information on the outcomes for young people and the issues they are dealing with as they make the difficult transition to adulthood.

## Wider Education Policy

2.5 There is a substantial suite of policies that youth work contributes to, or which can impact on the planning and delivering of youth work, particularly the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education (CRED) policy. The revised curriculum is now in place across all schools. At the heart of the revised curriculum is an emphasis on developing children and young people's personal, interpersonal and learning skills and their ability to think both creatively and critically. This is also the case with the non formal curriculum for youth work, although the youth work curriculum is a much more flexible format which provides additional opportunities for young people to develop these skills. The two are not mutually exclusive. Appendix 2 provides further information on the key education policies and priorities.



2.6 Education is going through a major period of change in the north of Ireland. The change from the present structures to ESA will present significant opportunities. In 2005 the then Education Minister confirmed that youth services would remain the responsibility of DE and would be included in the remit of ESA. The Youth Service RPA Policy Paper 9 (DE, 2006) signalled the intention for youth services managed by ESA 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'*.

## Inspection

2.7 ETI emphasises continually the importance for providers and policy-makers from the different areas of education to make connections in the interests of the same young people with whom they work. Such connections recognise the important and complementary contribution which teachers and youth workers make towards preparing young people for employment and life. Young people should be able to identify and articulate their common learning outcomes across each sector. Strategic planning for youth services should therefore be informed by an analysis of the educational needs of young people as articulated by them.

2.8 ETI reports that, in policy terms, youth work is strategically and operationally too discrete. It sits separately from related policies such as Extended Schools, Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) and the development of area learning communities at a departmental level. Too often there are not strong enough links made between the skills and attributes attained through non-formal learning in the Youth Service and those being developed through the work of the formal curriculum. Few opportunities exist for the dissemination of good practice.

2.9 ETI reports that there continues to be a need to monitor and evaluate more specifically the coherence, progression and outcomes in young people's learning. ETI has developed quality indicators for the youth sector around the core themes of: the quality of achievement and outcomes; the quality of provision; and the quality of leadership and management. See Appendix 3 for further information on evidence and key findings from ETI inspections.



## Wider Government Policy

2.10 The education service also needs to take account of a range of wider Executive policies and youth work can assist in the delivery of key strategic outcomes such as the Programme for Government 2011- 2015, Children and Young People's 10 Year Plan, Play and Leisure Policy,

Child Poverty policy and the Cohesion Sharing and Integration policy. By helping to deliver on all the policies aimed at improving the life chances for young people, the Youth Service can demonstrate its relevance to a wider audience. See Appendix 4 for further information.

## **European and Regional Strategic Context**

2.11 Education is a devolved matter and non formal education policy is therefore a matter for the Minister of Education. However, it is useful to consider the thrust of youth policies elsewhere. It is clear that across regions, countries and at European level, youth work is recognised as an important aspect of learning, on the continuum of educational provision and, although it has distinctive characteristics which set it apart from formal education, it seeks the same long term outcomes for young people. See Appendix 5 for further information on youth policies within other regions and at European level.

## **External Factors**

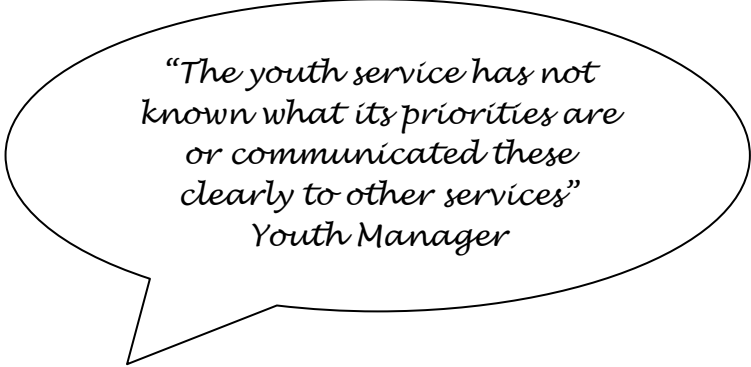
2.12 In common with other developed societies, the north of Ireland has been experiencing a period of social, political, technological, cultural and demographic change. In setting out the context for youth work today, consideration should be given to external factors which are beyond the control or influence of DE, but which are important to future planning. The PESTLE (Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental) analysis at Appendix 6 provides a framework within which to consider external factors and presents an analysis of the external environment that could impact on youth work within education in terms of future planning and delivery.

## **Pre Consultation Engagement**

2.13 In developing the Priorities for Youth, the Department undertook comprehensive pre-consultation to establish the views from within the youth sector and wider educational service. Views were gathered through questionnaires, focus groups, street-based consultations, seminars and workshops.

2.14 Overall, the responses of managers and youth workers emphasised concerns about:

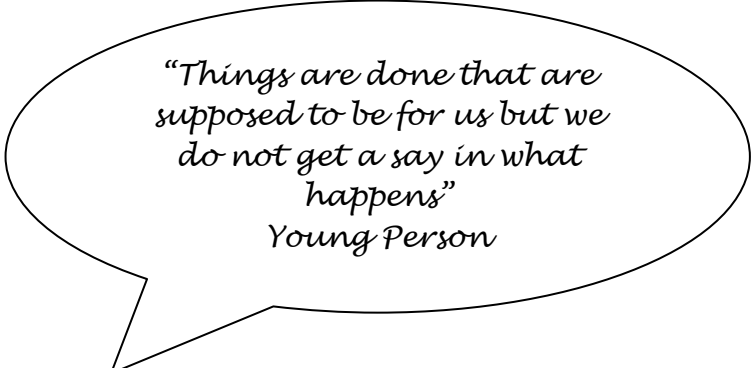
- the lack of policy direction,
- the lack of recognition of the value of youth work,
- the perception that it is considered to be of lesser significance within educational provision,
- how the diversity of youth provision makes it difficult to define the 'youth service',
- the capacity of the sector to deal with such a wide age range given the budget constraints.



*"The youth service has not known what its priorities are or communicated these clearly to other services"*  
Youth Manager

The main issues which young people identified were around:

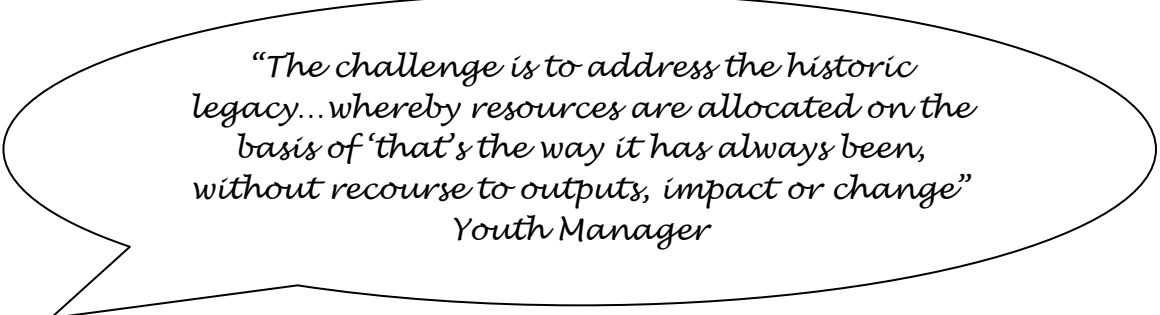
- negative perceptions of young people,
- the adult led and driven programmes on offer, and the lack of real or meaningful opportunities to participate in planning and delivery,
- lack of appropriate local provision and transport difficulties,
- lack of accessible information about available provision,
- the particular needs of marginalised or disadvantaged young people.



*"Things are done that are supposed to be for us but we do not get a say in what happens"*  
Young Person

The quotes printed throughout this document have been taken from pre-consultation responses. Further details of the pre-consultation process and findings are included in Appendices 7 and 8 and on the DE website.

2.15 The Department also established the Priorities for Youth Stakeholder Group, a cross-representational group based on recommendations from the Youth Service Liaison Forum, to enable DE to draw on the experience and involvement of the statutory and voluntary youth sector. The terms of reference and membership of this Group can be found in Appendix 9.



*“The challenge is to address the historic legacy...whereby resources are allocated on the basis of ‘that’s the way it has always been, without recourse to outputs, impact or change”*  
Youth Manager

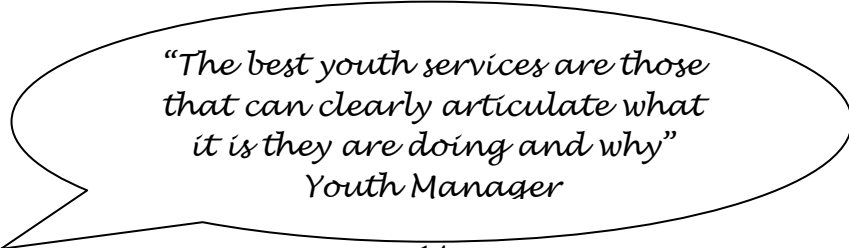
## **Review**

2.16 Youth work can and should be directly contributing to the DE vision for education. The meaning of youth work in education has been diluted over the years, and the important contribution good quality youth work makes to achieving a range of education and wider social aims has not been sufficiently recognised outside the youth sector. Taking into account all of the evidence, the following issues have been identified as requiring review and direction.

## Policy

2.17 Youth work policy should be set in the context of the DE strategic priorities which reflect the importance of:

- Raising Standards For All;
- Closing the Performance Gap, Increasing Access and Equity;
- Developing The Education Workforce;
- Improving The Learning Environment; and
- Transforming Education Management.



*“The best youth services are those that can clearly articulate what it is they are doing and why”*  
Youth Manager

## Planning

2.18 Strategic planning of youth services should reflect wider DE policy and should be in response to the assessed need for a youth work intervention, prioritised age ranges and priority groups. In planning for youth provision, managers should take account of a range of high level education policies and services, such as extended schools, full service schools, EOTAS, CRED, Irish Medium education, special education, area learning communities and the entitlement framework. Funding for youth provision should be consistent, transparent, and allocated proportionate to the level of disadvantage experienced by young people.

## Provision

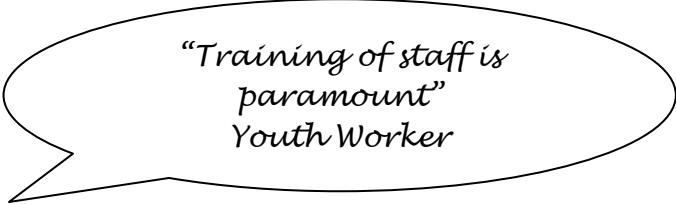
2.19 Where possible, and with proportionate funding, the youth service should provide learning opportunities and experiences that are relevant and interesting for all young people, but provide a more targeted service for those most in need. ESA should reshape delivery with a focus on value for money, where regional priorities are planned to complement and support local and more tailored provision, and implementing the relevant recommendations of the Irish Medium Review.



## Performance Management

2.20 Investment in youth work should contribute to achieving agreed, defined outcomes for young people in a cost-effective manner. Statutory and voluntary organisations should be expected to report against agreed, proportionate outcomes set out in approved plans. Numbers of young people who take part in youth activities should continue to be an important indicator of engagement, but not the sole basis of performance measurement. Youth work should demonstrate the difference between those outcomes achieved through planned programmes,

projects, accreditation and training, and those achieved through taking part, association and participation generally.




*“Training of staff is paramount”  
Youth Worker*

## People

2.21 The Department recognises the significant contribution of the entire workforce and the increasing demands placed on them, both in enhancing youth work practice and managing administration and governance. Structures should be put in place to ensure appropriate, timely and relevant support is available to enable continuous professional development across the workforce, paid and unpaid.

## Participation

2.22 There should be a renewed focus on active and evidenced participation of young people in youth work at local, sub regional and regional levels. Current and emerging participative structures and programmes should be assessed to determine the degree to which they support the development of a credible, democratic and accountable voice for both the empowered articulate and the less empowered less articulate young people before expanding the concept further.



*“Let young people get involved in planning and organising and let us have our place in the community”  
Young Person*



## Section 3 – Future Context

### **DE Vision Statement:**

*Every young person achieving to his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development*

### **Aims**

3.1 The strategic aims of Youth Work in support of the DE vision will be:

- To contribute to raising standards for all and closing the performance gap between the highest and lowest achieving young people by providing access to enjoyable, non-formal learning opportunities that help them to develop enhanced social and cognitive skills and overcome barriers to learning; and
- To continue to improve the non-formal learning environment by creating inclusive, participative settings in which the voice and influence of young people are championed, supported and evident in the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes.

3.2 To achieve the overall aims will require:

- A re-alignment of youth work policy with the strategic priorities for education which will help shape and modernise provision in order to produce more equitable outcomes for young people;
- The proportionate targeting of services based on need with a clear focus on those most in need of additional support to achieve their potential, embrace diversity, and overcome disaffection; and
- A clear focus on the provision of measurable, quality learning experiences for young people.

## Principles supporting Youth Work in Education

3.3 The following principles will underpin all aspects of Youth Work supported by DE:

- Participation in youth services is voluntary and should enable young people to develop the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to tackle the issues that are important to them;
- The active participation of young people should be fostered, supported and evident across all youth settings;
- Equality and inclusion should be fundamental to planning and implementation and the values of equity, diversity and interdependence should be at the heart of youth work;
- Young people, their families and the wider community should be involved in youth work in a meaningful way, with expectations managed within the resources available;
- Young people should expect high quality services, which follow best practice including the highest standards of child protection;
- Collaborative working between the statutory, voluntary, uniformed and faith-based sectors should play an important part in securing improved outcomes for young people and the continued commitment from the youth workforce, including volunteers;
- Resources should be used to achieve priority outcomes for young people in the most cost effective way, according to best practice principles (public value);
- The needs of the young person should be the key focus at each stage of development;
- Activities should be fun, enjoyable and planned to deliver improved outcomes.

## **The Contribution of Youth Work to the DE Priorities**

3.4 Equality, inclusion and rights are the cornerstones of an education system which enables every learner to fulfil their potential. Setting a clearer policy for youth work aligned to the DE priorities will provide a clear sense of purpose and focus on the added value youth work brings to the holistic education of young people. It should enable workers, volunteers and managers to connect not only 'what' they are contributing, but 'why' their programmes and activities are important, including:

- By helping young people to overcome barriers to learning and engagement;
- By providing personal and social development opportunities for all young people, but targeted for those who need it most;
- By helping young people to gain confidence, develop their self-esteem, have high expectations and aspirations for themselves;
- By helping young people develop an understanding of, and respect for, the rights, equality and diversity of all without discrimination;
- By providing opportunities for young people to gain additional skills, accreditation and training;
- By developing young leaders through supported volunteering in a leadership capacity;
- By helping young people to transition effectively into adulthood;
- By securing outcomes for young people that complement what they learn in school;
- By providing access to a different or a second opportunity to learn, re-engage, and improve life chances, using a youth work methodology;
- By supporting young people to participate positively and effectively in society.

## **Section 4 – Priorities for Youth**

4.1 The following priority areas detail the key actions required to effect change and prioritise the delivery of Youth Work in Education. Although numbered for ease of reference this does not reflect an ordering of priority. A summary of the proposed Actions is provided at Appendix 12.

### **Priority 1: Raising Standards for All**

4.2 Youth work has an important role to play in raising standards in education. To achieve this, youth work should be planned and delivered in response to the assessed need for a youth work intervention. There should be stronger strategic planning, supported by a composite assessment of need at local, sub regional and regional level. Planning should include an assessment of statutory and voluntary capital requirements. This will provide a clear framework for the delivery of youth services.

4.3 Robust qualitative and proportionate reporting systems, along with clear performance indicators and measurable evidence of progress and achievement of the young people, will demonstrate the contribution of youth work to improved educational outcomes for young people and, consequently, its public value.

4.4 The current age range for youth work goes nine years beyond the compulsory school age. Given the pressure on the education budget for the foreseeable future, the current age range is too broad to provide a consistent level of services for all those in the age range 4 – 25.

#### **4.5 Proposed actions to enhance the contribution of youth work to Raising Standards:**

- 1) Planning, funding and delivery of youth work will be based on the ESA composite (local and regional) assessment of need and will support requirements linked to the DE key priorities at local, sub-regional and regional level.
- 2) ESA will develop a strategic three year Regional Youth Development Plan (RYDP) for DE approval, which will be implemented via Annual Youth Development Plans across

all levels. This will address the DE priorities and will be informed through stakeholder engagement in the form of Advisory Groups, established in line with emerging RPA District Council structures. DE will determine the membership and function of these groups and will issue guidance, if necessary.

- 3) ESA will support and encourage the development of robust quality assurance systems in all parts of the youth service.
- 4) ESA will design a framework of expected outcomes for all types of provision, proportionate to the support provided and in line with the RYDP. An example of an outcomes framework is provided in Appendix 10.
- 5) ESA will also design and implement an appropriate management information system (MIS) for all DE-supported youth work which will inform future planning and evaluation, and will consider the IT infrastructure requirements for funded provision.
- 6) ESA will develop an annual report for youth work to provide a high level summary of investment, activities, and outcomes achieved.
- 7) There will be four distinct age bands for ESA funded youth work, 4-8, 9-13, 14-18; 19-21. Services for young adults in the age range 22-25 will only be considered where there is a compelling and evidenced need for youth work interventions for this age range.
  - The focus for the younger age range of 4 to 8 will be through general youth work provision linked to the Youth Work Curriculum.
  - The priority age bands will be 9 to 13 and 14 to 18 for the provision of youth work activities, in line with the priority needs identified.
  - The focus for the older age range of 19 to 21 will be either issue based programmes or volunteering and leadership opportunities.
- 8) The RYDP should include actions designed to ensure greater progression for young people in the revised age ranges. For the 16+ age range, the focus should be on

programmes that provide access to leadership/training opportunities or apprenticeships. Young people should also have access to recognised and/or accredited programmes to volunteer either within units or in the wider community.

- 9) ESA will develop robust and proportionate quality assurance systems to monitor and evaluate youth service provision, taking into consideration ETI standards and inspection findings.

## **Priority 2: Closing the Performance Gap, Increasing Access and Equity**

4.6 There is a significant gap in achievement between the highest and lowest achieving young people, and those most and least disadvantaged. Specific groups of young people are more likely to experience barriers to learning, participation and progression and consequently be at risk of achieving poor educational outcomes. There is a need to address and minimise root causes of educational disadvantage and barriers to learning that young people face. Youth work, in statutory and voluntary youth settings, schools and through detached and outreach work, provides additional opportunities to support young people's learning and development and improve employability by re-engaging them with education. It can also equip children and young people with the skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to recognise, understand and respect difference; and provide opportunities for children and young people to put these skills into practice.

### **4.7 Proposed actions to enhance the contribution of youth work to Closing the Performance Gap, Increasing Access and Equity:**

- 1) DE will allocate the global youth work budget to ESA on the basis of a funding distribution mechanism, weighted according to disadvantage, which will determine a notional distribution amount for each District Council area. This funding mechanism will replace the existing population based Youth Assessment of Relative Need (ARNE) exercise used for the ELBs, and the non-ARNE ELB and YCNI allocations. It will be for ESA to determine actual allocations. Funding to support Regional Voluntary Youth

Organisations (RVYOs) will be capped at no more than 10% of the youth budget available to support local units, programmes and projects operating at a local level (excluding ESA admin which will also be kept to a minimum to ensure a focus on frontline delivery).

- 2) There will continue to be an element of non-targeted/generic youth provision, particularly for those in the 4 – 8 age group.
- 3) Targeted provision will be supported to help meet the needs of specific groups of young people, within the Section 75 grouping, or those who may be at greater risk of social exclusion, marginalisation or isolation because they experience a combination of barriers to learning, which may include:
  - Young people who are disadvantaged, vulnerable, or at greater risk of social exclusion;
  - Young people engaged in risk taking behaviour;
  - Young people who live in areas of deprivation or in interface areas;
  - Young people not in, or who are at risk of disengaging from, education, employment or training;
  - Young people with a SEN or with disabilities;
  - Young people who are newcomers or have English as an additional language;
  - Young people in care;
  - Young carers and young parents;
  - Young people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender;
  - Young people from the Traveller Community;
  - Young people living in rural isolation.
- 4) ESA will reflect, in the planning and delivery of youth services, key actions for youth as set out in other relevant DE policies, including the CRED policy and recommendation 18 of the Review of Irish Medium which states that '*The Department of Education should encourage and support informal opportunities for learning through the medium of Irish in the youth sector*'.

- 5) ESA will prioritise access to, and longer opening times for, centres or units operating within areas of disadvantage and on or near interface areas, including during periods when community tensions are heightened. ESA will review the current use of standardised contracts or agreements for schemes of assistance. The opening times and staffing levels should be determined on the basis of assessed need, taking account of the need for flexibility and contingency for unforeseen events.
- 6) ESA will ensure that outreach and detached youth workers are deployed in response to the need identified, rather than historic deployment patterns.

### **Priority 3: Developing the Non Formal Education Workforce**

4.8 Youth work supported by DE relies on a wide range of qualified and unqualified staff, including a significant bank of over 20,000 volunteers. It is made up of a range of statutory and voluntary provision, each with different employers, practices and ethos. Sustaining and supporting the levels of volunteers, strengthening governance and accountability arrangements and supporting improved practice will be key to delivering this priority.

4.9 Training and support for the youth workforce is fundamental to achieving and maintaining a consistently high quality of service to young people. In order to implement the Priorities for Youth, the workforce needs a range of support systems to enable sharing of practice, driving up quality standards, accessing enhanced support for specific issue based youth work and administration and governance.

4.10 Staff development and training should enable youth workers, volunteers and managers to: articulate the value of the service and celebrate its educational achievements; evaluate their work effectively through evidencing progression, measuring the learning outcomes for individuals and demonstrating the positive impact of youth services on communities; support the active and meaningful participation of young people in various youth work settings; and provide on-going and specialised training for specifically identified needs.



#### **4.11 Proposed actions to enhance the Development of the Non-Formal Education Workforce:**

- 1) A Practice Development Unit (PDU) will be established and managed by ESA. It will identify, coordinate and secure the provision of a range of functions, such as relevant and proportionate training, continuous professional development opportunities, application of the non-formal curriculum and its links to the revised curriculum, advice on governance, legal and regulatory requirements, participation and development and support for self-evaluation. A separate unit for developing the curriculum will no longer be required.
- 2) Proportionate support may be made available where practice has been evaluated as needing development, or where inspection findings have evaluated the provision as inadequate or unsatisfactory. ESA will commission appropriate additional or specialist support where necessary.
- 3) The PDU will establish a forum for the sharing of information across all education sectors, including a range of relevant higher education providers, commission or develop support materials, and assess the need for senior managers, youth workers, volunteers and voluntary Management Committees to develop their capacity for good governance and continuous improvement through best practice.
- 4) ESA will support a continuous professional development programme to enhance the leadership and management competencies for youth work staff and provide opportunities for managers to keep pace with education policy overall.
- 5) ESA will explore the potential for youth workers to have access to elements of support services deemed necessary, which are currently available to schools for young people with additional needs.
- 6) ESA will agree a system with employers for linking the management and reporting arrangements for youth work staff to the achievement of agreed outcomes in the RYDP. The need to recruit, train and retain volunteers will be reflected in the duties of

the Management Committee/Leader in Charge, built into Service Level Agreements and contracts with units, projects and programmes they either deliver or support.

#### **Priority 4: Improving the Non-Formal Learning Environment**

4.12 Improving the non formal learning environment should not only include the physical environment, but also the practice in that environment. Area-based planning is about anticipating the future education needs of an area and planning to meet those needs within the confines of the projected budget. Under the current system, the ELB Youth Service currently manages and maintains the range of statutory outdoor education centres, as well as the statutory youth estate and the Department manages the capital requirements of the voluntary youth sector through a separate scheme. This creates a disparate system for assessing overall capital requirements.

4.13 Youth Development Plans will provide a means for assessing the statutory and voluntary capital requirements, in order to maximise the use of the education and wider community estate. Youth Development Plans will also consider IT requirements.

4.14 Participation is an integral part of youth work practice and must be embedded throughout its delivery. The opportunities for participation in the youth service have evolved significantly since the late 1970s when the Department issued specific guidance 'The Greater Involvement of Young People in the Youth Service'. The Model for Effective Practice has put the participation of young people at the centre of youth work and the extent and success of their participation is a major emphasis in any inspection activity.

4.15 Youth workers should have the flexibility to adopt the most suitable approach to enhancing participation within their setting, reflecting the needs of the young people at each age and stage of their development, and supporting young people to participate across a range of formal participative structures where they wish to. Every opportunity should be given to young people to participate in all aspects of the youth service, and in a range of different ways. The focus will be on creating opportunities for participation that meet the needs and aspirations of young people. Whilst formal participative structures may be a highly visible form of youth participation, there is a wide and diverse range of less formal, but no less important, forms of

participation which involve young people as recipients, volunteers, junior leaders, partners and evaluators.

4.16 Consultation on proposals for a Network for Youth was completed in 2008 and a 'Network of Networks' option agreed, to use existing resources to build on and strengthen the networks and systems that are already in place for young people. This provides the context and starting position for the following actions on participation. In developing new arrangements, consideration must be given to developing a credible and accountable voice for both the empowered articulate and less empowered less articulate young people, built on strong local foundations. Further information on participation is provided at Appendix 11.

**4.17 Proposed actions to enhance the contribution of youth work to Improving the Non-Formal Learning Environment:**

- 1) ESA will carry out a baseline audit of currently funded/supported provision to identify gaps and potential for over provision to inform the development of the needs assessment. This will include a review of the statutory youth estate and outdoor education centres.
- 2) ESA will administer both revenue and capital support for voluntary units/clubs who meet future funding criteria. This will be done through the Youth Development Plans. DE will no longer administer a separate Voluntary Youth Capital Scheme.
- 3) ESA, in collaboration with key sectoral partners, will develop options for a flexible contemporary model for strengthening participation in the youth service at a local, sub-regional and regional level. The pilot model, to be approved by DE, must take into account existing and emerging participative structures and forums, but must link effectively to the delivery of the RYDP. It will take into consideration the outworking of the Big Deal, including the need for participation workers at a sub regional level, the agreed 'Network of Networks' option for 'Network for Youth' and other good practice in relation to participation. Young people in youth-led or youth-governed participative forums or in generic youth settings should be enabled and supported to help further develop the proposals.

- 4) Practitioners within individual units, projects and programmes will be required to demonstrate and provide evidence of how they have supported an ethos and culture of active participation, and how the young people are involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes/projects, proportionate to the support provided. ETI will continue to evaluate the quality of participation, including the culture of participation, within units during inspection. Prescriptive guidance on participative structures is no longer required, and the remaining elements of the formal guidance issued by DE in 1979 will be withdrawn.
- 5) ESA will provide access to a regionally managed small grants programme, supported by one organisation or a range of organisations, which will allow for young people to administer grants to other young people. The programme will be aimed at strengthening the participation of young people as decision-makers.

## **Priority 5: Transforming Non Formal Education Management**

4.18 The existing administrative structures in the DE funded youth service can create inconsistency in practice and quality of provision. There are currently six different youth funding systems, with varying degrees of evaluation of the impact or public value achieved, and little or no coherence between what is being funded regionally and at a local level.

4.19 The Department intends to bring greater coherence to deploying youth work resources across the north through the introduction of ESA. All funding decisions, local and regional, will be based on the needs identified in the RYDP, which will provide greater consistency, coherence and cost-effectiveness in the interests of maintaining front line services for young people.

4.20 It will be important to set aside historic funding considerations to ensure that investment is directly relevant to the collective needs of young people, whilst at the same time addressing issues of probity, fairness and transparency.

#### **4.21 Proposed actions to enhance the contribution of youth work to Transforming Non Formal Education Management:**

- 1) Historic funding arrangements for local and regional programmes and organisations will be phased out and replaced with a converged (local and regional) approach to securing services on the basis of identified need to meet DE objectives. The new funding scheme will be developed to support local and regional services assessed as needed in the RYDP, rather than services available, namely:
  - Project funding - used to finance a specific youth project or outcome;
  - Development funding - where youth organisations are effectively supported to provide additional or enhanced youth services;
  - Strategic funding - that is given to, often well established, youth organisations recognised to be of strategic importance and whose continued existence and activities are considered to be beneficial to delivering quality youth services; and
  - Regional funding to provide services to support effective youth work practice in satellite units or groups, training or, in exceptional cases, issue specific programmes assessed as needed on a regional basis.
- 2) ESA will only consider funding those organisations who can demonstrate clearly that their services are required in terms of the delivery of the RYDP.
- 3) While a range of regional groups may offer support services to individual youth units, there is a need to rationalise the number of regional groups funded. ESA will support innovative schemes to effect the rationalisation of regional support structures, such as sharing of back office functions, amalgamation or clustering arrangements.
- 4) ESA will publish the RYDP to demonstrate the levels of demand for youth work within the framework of DE priorities, and the ESA supported provision in areas. This should enable increased engagement with other departments, inform the work of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, and philanthropic and European funding streams and, where appropriate, facilitate merged or aligned investment in response to identified need which cannot be addressed by ESA.

## Section 5 – Next Steps

### Introduction

5.1 Delivering the actions should provide ESA, the workforce, sectoral partners, other departments, young people and the public with a clear and unambiguous framework for the future policy direction for youth work which is supported and delivered within a broad educational framework, and prioritised to maximise its contribution to overall education aims.

5.2 The support of key statutory and voluntary sectoral partners will be essential for the smooth transition to the new approach. Delivering on the actions will require the collective effort of a range of workers, managers and volunteers across a range of providers. Young people themselves also need to be fully involved in deciding how the proposals can be implemented.

5.3 The proposals in this document will be financed from within available resources during the 2013-2015 budget periods. Future resource requirements will be informed by the levels of needs identified in the RDYP, but will have to be managed within the agreed budgetary process.



### Timing and Transition

5.4 DE proposes a phased approach for these reforms, planned at local level, and working towards full implementation by April 2016. The new arrangements will be implemented by ESA within a transition period of a maximum of three years, commencing from April 2013. As the sector moves from the current delivery model and structures to the proposed arrangements it is important that the quality of services for young people is not adversely affected during the transitional period. The Department will develop enhanced cross sectoral arrangements, drawing

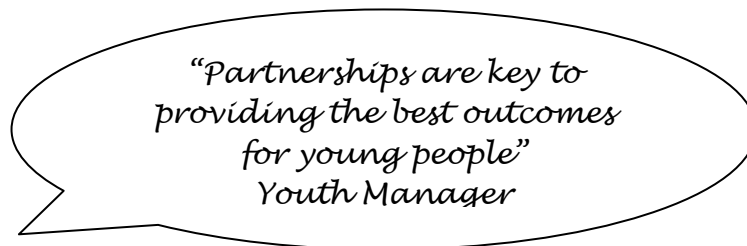
on the experience of the Youth Service Liaison Forum to ensure a strategic approach to transition and implementation.

5.5 At a sub regional level, Youth Service managers will liaise with Stakeholder Advisory Groups to provide clarity about the timing and direction of travel in their local area, communicate this effectively to local partners and manage the process.

5.6 The priorities and actions will be kept under review and updated as required.

### **Delivery Partners**

5.7 ESA will have a statutory duty to deliver and support youth work in line with Departmental priorities. The local voluntary sector will be encouraged and supported to provide youth services assessed as needed, and the statutory youth services will continue to deliver youth work where there is no viable alternative. DE recognises that transition to the new system may create uncertainty for groups currently in receipt of funding. ESA will work closely with voluntary sector partners to ensure that high quality services are maintained during the transitional period.



5.8 Having a single body responsible and accountable for youth work funded by DE will enable integrated planning and commissioning of the full range of youth work, both local and regional, from general participation and engagement through to more specialist and targeted support, structured around young people’s needs.

## Section 6 – Arrangements for Consultation

6.1 This consultation document provides an important opportunity for you to consider whether the Priorities for Youth and the proposed actions will improve the planning, delivery and performance of youth work in the best interests of young people.

6.2 The Department is keen to hear the views of statutory and voluntary youth sectors, schools, the wider community and particularly young people and parents.

### How to Respond

6.3 Consultation responses can be made online at [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk), by email to [Youth.Services@deni.gov.uk](mailto:Youth.Services@deni.gov.uk), or in writing, using the enclosed response form, to:

Priorities for Youth Consultation  
Youth and Schools in the Community Team  
Room 401  
Department of Education  
Rathgael House  
Balloo Road  
Rathgill  
BANGOR  
BT19 7PR

To enable responses to be analysed effectively, it would be helpful if respondents used the response form provided.

6.4 The consultation will close on 10 December 2012.

6.5 The Department would encourage organisations/groups which work with, or on behalf of, children and young people to seek the views of the children and young people they work with, as well as workers and volunteers. Where organisations do this, it would be helpful if they would



clearly distinguish whether the views represent the organisation, an individual or the young people.

## **Confidentiality and Freedom of Information**

6.6 The Department will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely the Department in this case. The right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential, any information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, the Department does have the responsibility to decide whether any information about your identity should be made public or treated as confidential.

## **Further Copies**

6.7 This document, appendices, young people's version and response booklet are available electronically at: [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk) or at the address above. Other formats of these publications, including Braille and Audio formats can be produced on request.

## Section 7 – List of Supporting Appendices

The supporting appendices listed below are published as a separate document. Copies are available at: [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk).

- Appendix 1 - Facts and Figures - Issues and Outcomes of Young People
- Appendix 2 - DE Policy Context
- Appendix 3 - Evidence from Education and Training Inspectorate
- Appendix 4 - Wider Government Policy Context
- Appendix 5 - European and Regional Strategic Context
- Appendix 6 - External Factors - PESTLE Analysis
- Appendix 7 - Pre consultation Findings
- Appendix 8 - Summary of Issues
- Appendix 9 - Terms of Reference and Membership of Priorities for Youth Work in Education Stakeholder Group
- Appendix 10 - Example of Outcomes Framework
- Appendix 11 - Participation of Young People
- Appendix 12 - Summary of Priority Areas and Proposed Actions