

Youth Council for Northern Ireland



**Core/Infrastructure/Programme Funding
Schemes for Regional Voluntary Youth
Organisations (RVYOS)**

**Results of the
Equality Impact Assessment**

August 2008

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report presents the results of an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the Core/Infrastructure/Programme Funding Schemes for Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations (RVYOs). This report is further to the Draft Policy that was presented in October 2007 and to the draft EQIA Report which was presented for public consultation between December 2007 and February 2008. The full draft EQIA Report is available from YCNI's website (www.ycni.org/EQIA/eqia.html).

1.2 The New Funding Policy for Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations (RVYOs) is now available for download on the Youth Council website at www.ycni.org/funding/funding.html.

1.3 This report details information gathered as part of the EQIA public consultation stage, the identification of potential adverse impacts and recommendations as to how the policy was modified to mitigate adverse impacts.

1.4 A number of written responses to the EQIA consultation were received from organisations in the voluntary and community sector and the issues raised therein, and elsewhere during the consultation period were considered alongside existing data. This material will be considered as YCNI prepares to finalise its new policy on Core/Infrastructure/Programme Funding Schemes for Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations (RVYOs).

1.5 YCNI consider that any emerging actions will have a positive effect in terms of the promotion of equality of opportunity between all Section 75 dimensions, and we would like to thank all those who contributed to the EQIA.

1.6 Further copies of this report are available on YCNI's website - www.ycni.org/EQIA/eqia.html.

1.7 If you have any queries about this document and or its availability in alternative formats (including **large print**, Braille, disk and audio cassette, and by e-mail and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English) then please contact:

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2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Section 75 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires that Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI) shall, “in carrying out its function relating to Northern Ireland, have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity” between the following nine Section 75 categories:

- Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- Men and women generally;
- Persons with a disability and persons without; and
- Persons with dependents and persons without.

2.2 In addition, and without prejudice to these obligations, YCNI is also committed to having due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. The organisation is committed to looking beyond the consultation process to embed good relations into its practice.

2.3 YCNI produced its Equality Scheme in 2001 which was approved by the Equality Commission. The Scheme sets out arrangements as to how YCNI will fulfill its statutory duties under Section 75. The Equality Scheme acknowledges YCNI’s commitment to carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) and policy reviews on existing policies and to develop new policies as required.

2.4 The purpose of this EQIA is to ensure that the funding policy proposed by YCNI will provide improved access to YCNI funding by Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations working with Section 75 categories of young people.

2.5 The time at which the EQIA is being conducted is one of a rapidly changing policy and legislative context. Consequently YCNI has taken the onus in drawing the attention of participants in the public consultation to a number of key drivers for change that will impact on Youth Service Provision and delivery including the Review of Public Administration and the formation of the Education and Skills Authority.

3. BACKGROUND AND POLICY AIM

3.1 Core Aim 6 of YCNI's Strategic Plan 2004 is: *To ensure regional voluntary youth organisations receive appropriate support in the delivery of efficient and effective youth work, through the provision of information, advice, training, and financial and other resources.* The Council recognises the importance and value of the role played by regional voluntary youth organisations (RVYOs), either in supporting the delivery of services to children and young people through local youth groups, or through the direct provision of key services to children and young people.

3.2 In line with this aim, annually the Council assigns between £1.5m and £2m to support groups and activities that operate in accordance with its Strategic Plan. The allocation of these funds is determined by available resources and the Council's priorities but generally falls within one of two categories – core funding and programme funding – where the former supports the needs of the RVYO and its constituent members, while the latter is designated for time-bound projects that may be organised by any bona fide group.

3.3 In relation to core funding, at the present time 29 RVYOs attract infrastructure or core funding. Their affiliated groups provide for approximately 180,000 young people and utilise 1,513 part-time workers and 17,000 volunteers. Funding packages run from approximately £2,000 to £240,000, with an average of £45,000.

3.4 In 2006 the Youth Council decided to carry out a fundamental review of its current funding policy for a number of reasons, including its concern that the list of RVYOs receiving core funding had stagnated, and there was also a need to develop a funding policy that better reflected the principles of equality, transparency, fairness, value for money and which met the needs of the sector more effectively.

3.5 In order to ensure that the new policy would be genuinely a fresh approach, and that those currently funded and those not in receipt of such funding could both shape the policy from the outset with their contributions unhindered by the direct presence of YCNI staff, the Council appointed an independent firm of consultants, with relevant experience, to conduct the initial stages of the process.

3.6 This initiative commenced with an open meeting for all RVYOs, held in VSB offices in Belfast on 5 July 2006. The purpose of the meeting was to raise awareness of the initiative and provide direct access to the consultants, who offered one-to-one meetings with all RVYOs. The consultants emphasised that they would accept responses at any time during the initial consultation period which ended on 12 October 2006.

3.7 Out of a total of 79 RVYOs contacted, 47 groups responded, including the following:

- Chinese Welfare Association
- Mencap
- Multicultural Resource Centre
- NI Council for Ethnic Minorities
- NI Deaf Youth Association
- PHAB NI Inclusion Matters
- PlayBoard
- The Rainbow Project
- Voice of Young People in Care

3.8 The Council considered fully the outcome of this initial stage of the process in early 2007. In March 2007 a new consultant was engaged specifically to give support in terms of Section 75. At this point YCNI screened its existing policy. This process indicated that the existing policy was unlikely to promote equality of opportunity and good relations, nor to meet the Council's core aims as set out in the Strategic Plan 2004-07. The outcome of the screening exercise was consulted upon between 30 March and 25 May 2007. Two hundred and twenty six (226) organisations were consulted; three responses were received, all were positive.

3.9 The Council circulated a first draft of a new funding policy to the same set of stakeholders in May 2007. This second stage of the consultation was again led by the consultants, during the period June to August 2007. A summary of the responses was circulated to all attendees at consultation events and also placed on the YCNI website, in order that its content could be amended, if required, by those consulted.

3.10 In November 2007 YCNI screened its new policy. This process indicated that, given the importance of funding for voluntary Youth Organisations, a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) should be conducted.

3.11 The Council considered the feedback and then amended the draft funding policy prior to a third stage of general public consultation which ran from November 2007 – 8 January 2008, and included three consultation events.

3.12 Following on from this public consultation a draft EQIA was available for consultation. This process is outlined in more detail in the following section.

3.13 The Council's intention from the outset has been to redesign its funding policy in order to encourage applications from groups which provide services to under-represented categories of young people. The Council believes this intention is clearly evident in the steps outlined within the above section.

4. FORMAL CONSULTATION

4.1 The draft EQIA Report was made available to the public on 10 December 2007, making clear that YCNI was keen to consult as widely as possible on the findings of the EQIA and including preliminary recommendations as to how to mitigate adverse impact.

4.2 The following actions were taken:

- The report was issued to all funded groups, to Section 75 category groups and other relevant bodies both within and without the youth sector and to any members of the public on request.
- A prominent advertisement was placed in the *Belfast Telegraph* newspaper, inviting the public to comment on this matter in accordance with good practice.
- A copy was posted on YCNI's web internet site.
- Individual consultation meetings were made available on request and with representatives of particular interest groups if required.
- A series of public consultations were organised in premises in Belfast, Craigavon and Antrim. These included a generic consultation, a Section 75-specific consultation and a young person specific event scheduled during out of school hours.

4.3 YCNI put in place systems to ensure that materials were available in accessible formats and in a timely fashion and worked closely with qualified internal and external youth workers and young people to devise appropriate methods of consultation.

4.4 The consultation period ran until 15 February 2008.

5. DATA COLLECTION AND CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE RESEARCH

5.1 A pre-consultation review of funding for RVYO's was carried out with core- and non-core funded group in 2006 by Williamson Consulting. This outlined issues of common concern within the sector in relation to YCNI's existing funding policy. Further information on the outcomes of this phase is available on the YCNI website at www.ycni.org/funding/funding_policy.html in the Funding Section.

5.2 In carrying out the EQIA, YCNI took into account both this material and a wide range of data and research relating both to youth service policy, to funding and to the operational principles and activities of both the regional voluntary organisations it currently funds and those who might be eligible to apply. These can be referenced in full in the draft Equality Impact Assessment Report, December 2007, available on the YCNI website at www.ycni.org/EQIA/eqia.html

5.3 The Council acknowledges the advice given in the Equality Commission's *Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities* on data collection on sexual orientation. However, no equivalent guidance is available for agencies collecting data from young people under the age of 18. Within this context YCNI has taken the position that it is not appropriate to collect information on sexual orientation from young people. Current service-wide agreed systems for collecting data also do not include questions on young carers.

5.4 The format of the draft EQIA Report was deliberately concise given the amount of data already in the public domain via the Education and Library Board (ELB) EQIA, which was itself based on data collated by YCNI.

5.5 The following organisations provided written submissions and comments to the draft EQIA Report within the specified consultation period:

- Newstart Education Centre
- The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- Playboard
- YouthAction
- Ocean Youth Trust Ireland
- The Boys' Brigade (2 responses)
- Mencap
- YouthNet

5.6 In addition one written response was received from the ECNI outside the consultation period. In the spirit of Section 75 this response has been considered herein.

5.7 Those respondents who completed the pro-forma welcomed receipt of the report.

5.8 Four responses indicated that the funding policy would have a positive impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity. One response did not know. One response did not comment. Four responses stated that policy would have a negative impact

5.9 YCNI has given all Issues raised by the responses detailed consideration.

5.10 Comments made in relation to the process and schedule of conducting the EQIA were welcomed and noted in relation to how YCNI will conduct future consultation processes.

5.11 Within the scope and remit of this EQIA, issues noted for response by YCNI have been compiled into Table One, page 9.

5.12 A number of additional comments made by the responses indicating that the funding policy would have a positive impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity were noted. These included the stated belief that *'by in large the intentions highlighted in the report will deliver benefit where it is deserved through 'actual' rather than 'perceived' work and interaction with young people'* and the reiteration of *'the importance of infrastructure funding to allow good and efficient organisation of our young people.'*

5.13 The following challenges presenting to groups and raised in the consultation process are noteworthy though not directly related to the EQIA:

- Increased funding required in relation to transport, childcare and opportunities to link to other organisations.
- Accountability of organisations claiming to provide inclusive services.
- Value for Money.
- Resourcing of appropriate training opportunities for volunteers.

Table One: Issues noted within written responses for response by YCNI

Written Response	Issue Noted	YCNI Response
ECNI	Measures which might mitigate adverse impact	<p>YCNI wish to highlight that the overarching aim of the new policy was to be more inclusive. The original screening of our grant aid policy dated 30 March 2007, and subsequent consultation by YCNI on this policy between 30 March and 25 May 2007, identified the need to abandon the existing policy on the grounds that it was unlikely to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. The breadth and depth of consultation surrounding implementation of this policy has specifically aimed to consider these measures holistically. An independent consultant was involved in the initial stage of the process and in the full knowledge that the final product would be screened under Section 75.</p>
YouthAction YouthNet ECNI Newstart Education Centre	<p>A number of youth groups affiliated to Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations (RVYOs) are not registered with Education and Library Boards (ELBs). The draft EQIA Report did not back up analysis of participation in RVYOs with statistics.</p>	<p>The Council has access to an extensive range of data on users of local youth provision across Northern Ireland. Some of this information was highlighted within the draft EQIA Report. However, the Council also analyses this data set in order to provide a profile of those young people attending youth groups which are affiliated to, or members of, regional voluntary youth organisations (RVYOs). While the great majority of youth group members are included within this exercise, it is recognised by the Council that information on some young people is not captured, either because their own local youth group is not currently registered with an Education and Library Board, or because their involvement is in a youth project directly managed by an RVYO. This is the reason that the Council has clearly stated its intent to improve data collection in order to ensure that it is more comprehensive and accurate.</p> <p>Given the number of RVYOs it would not be feasible to include information on each specific RVYO within the draft EQIA Report.</p> <p>It is not appropriate to collect some data from young people – sexual orientation, political opinion. Currently, information on marital status or dependents is not collected. Information on religion is collected. An overview was provided in the draft EQIA, Report but this issue has now been addressed in more detail (see 7.9 of this report for further details).</p>

Written Response	Issue Noted	YCNI Response
<p>Mencap YouthNet</p>	<p>EQIA to consider the findings of additional research into the participation of children and young people with disabilities in youth services.</p>	<p>The YCNI has examined the findings and recommendations of the Bamford Review and The Importance of Being Inclusive research conducted by the Policy Implementation Panel on Young People with Disabilities.</p> <p>The YCNI notes the importance of this research to the delivery of youth services at local level and the importance of harnessing additional youth service resources to implement such recommendations.</p> <p>The focus of this EQIA is on core, infrastructure and programme funding schemes for RVYOs. However, the RVYOs will have flexibility to earmark YCNI funding for a wide range of purposes, including training.</p>
<p>Playboard</p>	<p>Use of NI Census statistics.</p>	<p>The EQIA drew on available research, including the NI Census, to analyse the participation of some groups of young people in youth service by the % of the overall NI youth population they make up.</p> <p>YCNI believe it elected to examine relevant and robust research and, where appropriate, YCNI acknowledged the rapidly changing context in which this research is being conducted.</p> <p>In addition, it is expected that the Council's intention to improve data collection as part of the new funding policy will ensure that more comprehensive and accurate information is available.</p>
<p>Youth Net Playboard ECNI</p>	<p>Effect funding may have on smaller youth organisations</p>	<p>YCNI has agreed to review the funding policy in order to ensure that it does not have an adverse impact on Section 75 categories. YCNI is committed to ensuring the funding policy reflects equality, transparency, fairness, and value for money and meets the needs of the sector more effectively.</p>
<p>Mencap ECNI</p>	<p>Summary of the key points raised in initial consultation on the draft policy should be made available</p>	<p>These have previously been widely circulated to all consultees and placed on the YCNI website. However, they will be referenced more clearly within this report and again made available on the YCNI website and/or by request from YCNI in written format (see 5.1 of this report for further details).</p>

Written Response	Issue Noted	YCNI Response
ECNI Newstart Education Centre	Consultation with groups representing people with disabilities and people from different sexual orientations	YCNI circulated its draft EQIA Report widely, including a full copy to a very wide range of specific Section 75 groups working with both these categories. Representatives from such groups had also attended previous sessions during the initial development phase of the new funding policy.
ECNI	Consultation with those with learning difficulties	Regarding the reference to learning disabilities, it is relevant to highlight the subject matter of this EQIA – funding for RVYOs. It is highly unlikely that those with a learning disability would be applying for such funding.
Youth Net Playboard ECNI	EQIA should be carried out as an integral part of the policy development process	YCNI commenced its funding review process in June 2006. After an initial consultation phase, YCNI carried out a screening exercise on its current policy; this was consulted upon between March and May 2007. This process concluded that a new funding policy was needed. YCNI circulated an initial version of a new policy for consultation between May and July 2007, culminating in a revised policy being circulated for a further consultation ending in early January 2008. In November 2007 YCNI carried out a screening exercise on its new policy and concluded that an EQIA should be conducted. The consultation process on this ran from 10 December 2007 to February 2008. YCNI considered both the feedback from the funding policy consultation and the EQIA consultation in determining its next steps.
ECNI Youth Net	More detail requested from the report produced by Williamson Consulting	The most recent and relevant report from Williamson Consulting was provided as an appendix to the draft EQIA Report.

6 PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

6.1 A series of public consultations were organised in premises in Belfast, Craigavon and Antrim: including a generic consultation, a Section 75-specific consultation and a young person specific event scheduled during out of school hours.

6.2 The following organisations identified themselves as being present:

- Girls' Brigade
- Boys' Brigade
- Guide Association for Northern Ireland
- Voluntary Service Bureau
- Youth Forum
- Youth Link

6.3 Youth Council worked extensively with VSB and a team of qualified youth workers to prepare materials and exercises for the young-person specific event. The evaluation comments from this session indicate both the interest and usefulness of the event.

6.4 Four key areas in the EQIA process were presented for comment from participants at public consultations in relation to the Section 75 categories:

- Views on proposed measures to mitigate adverse impact.
- Feedback on any unidentified needs and issues for equality groups and suggestions as to how these may be met.
- Positive actions to be taken to encourage application from those currently under represented.
- Views on the positive or negative impact of revised funding policy.

6.5 Matters of concern highlighted, but which did not indicate any negative or adverse impact explicitly to Section 75 categories include:

1. Reduced funding and its implications for existing and future work within specific organisations.
2. Core costs not covered in project funding and thus reductions here could be detrimental to equality work.
3. The application process should be timed to facilitate strategic and operational planning within affected RVYOs, particularly where changes relate to core posts.
4. Questions as to how youth work is evaluated and existing quality indicators.

6.6 Within the scope and remit of this EQIA, the following issues were noted for further consideration by YCNI:

- Identification of training needs to support equality training for staff and volunteers.
- The criteria used to determine RVYOs may unfairly mitigate against those organisations which provide religious teaching and structured youth work. This might require consideration of programme content, mission statement and the need for ring-fenced funding that was not connected to Lottery funds.
- Scheduling and timetabling of activities and events can impact on organisation's abilities to cater for those from minority ethnic communities.
- Information dissemination about access to tailored and general youth service provision is of particular importance to those from minority communities of interest including those living with disabilities, young carers and from minority ethnic communities.
- Language issues, translation, interpretation and signing are issues to be given consideration in youth service planning, delivery and uptake.
- The proposed Regionality Test may unfairly mitigate against youth organisations working with under-represented categories of young people.

6.7 Consultees were invited to offer any further comments they might have in relation to the revised funding policy.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 The Youth Council has made a number of significant changes to its new funding policy in light of the responses received from the EQIA consultation.

7.2 The Council has recognised the difficulties faced by emerging regional voluntary youth organisations (RVYOs) in developing a province-wide service. It is further recognised that RVYOs working with young people from Section 75 categories may find this a particular challenge.

7.3 In response, the Council has decided to establish a **Development Fund** under its current Programme Funding strand. This will be designed to assist “emerging” RVYOs which can demonstrate the “intent” and “capability” of developing a province-wide service, the two key conditions which must be met before the Council can provide any funding. Such RVYOs may be supported financially through a planned and phased process of extending their services to a point where they can fully comply with the practical regionality test set out in the Council new funding policy [see *Appendix*].

This Development Fund will be advertised during the autumn and initial grants will be allocated during 2008/09, with follow-up grants in following years, subject to satisfactory progress.

7.4 Regional Criteria

The Council has amended its regional criteria by setting a more achievable threshold. The Regionality test, details of which are provided within the Appendix, has a component to acknowledge a level of regional coverage which requires services to be provided to young people from at least 70% of District Council areas. Under one funding strand, there is a further component which reflects the necessity for some young people to travel significant distances to access appropriate youth service provision by recognising a ten mile radius circle around local youth provision as its catchment area.

7.5 Weighting Factor

It is recognised that work with disabled young people and those from other Section 75 categories is more resource intensive. Therefore, the Council will apply an appropriate weighting to reflect this. This weighting would have an impact on several aspects of the assessment process, including a weighting factor when considering the numbers involved in activities offered by such RVYOs.

7.6 Priorities to be used as a focus for funding under the Thematic Infrastructure strand will be based initially on those set out in the Northern Ireland Executive 10-Year Strategy for Children and Young People.

Priorities will also be influenced, in due course, by the outcome of the current Department of Education consultation on “Priorities for Youth”. A strong element of this process has been planned interactions with young people, including those from Section 75 categories, so that they might help shape the identified priorities.

7.7 The Council will be advertising its new funding policy widely, including by public advert. Youth organisations currently in receipt of funding will directly receive information, as will recent unsuccessful applicants for funding.

An open briefing seminar on the new funding policy will be advertised in advance, together with notices to the stakeholders described above. Youth organisations will also be offered the opportunity for individual meetings with Council staff in order to provide them with a focused briefing on the new policy.

As has been the case to date, feedback will be available to RVYOs whose applications have been unsuccessful.

7.8 The Council has committed itself to an interim low level review of the policy towards the end of 2010/2011. This will provide an opportunity to review the equality impact of the new policy, and to make minor modifications.

A major review is scheduled before the fourth anniversary of the policy. This will provide the opportunity for a more fundamental review of the policy and its implementation.

7.9 Monitoring and Geographic Information System (GIS)

This system is currently being reviewed by a working group representing both the statutory and voluntary youth service sectors. The intention is to develop a more appropriate management information system for the youth service, of which statistical data will be a part and including data relevant to Section 75 grounds.

The collection of qualitative data and data relating to youth work outcomes is also being addressed.

This proposed revised system will assist with improved monitoring of the impact of public sector funding to voluntary youth organisations.

YCNI will establish a system to monitor the impact of the policy on relevant groups by the Section 75 dimensions. This information will be reviewed throughout the lifetime of their grant and within a reasonable period after the grant ends. The results of the monitoring will be widely and openly published. If this monitoring shows that the revised policy has resulted in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, YCNI will ensure the policy is revised accordingly.

Further copies of this report are available on YCNI's website:

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