

# YCNI POLICY SCREENING FORM

## Background

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Youth Council for Northern Ireland ('the Council') is required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

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

Without prejudice to the obligations set out above, the Council is also required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

## Screening

The screening procedure should lead to one of two conclusions:

- The policy being screened does not have a significant impact on equality of opportunity and therefore does not require an EQIA
- The policy being screened has (or is likely to have) a significant impact on equality of opportunity and may require an EQIA.

## **Scoping the Policy**

### **Title of Policy: Funding Policy 1998 - 2006**

#### **Brief Description:**

Under the provisions contained in the Youth Service (NI) Order 1989, the Council is obliged to meet a number of statutory functions, including the need:

- **to assist the effective provision of administrative services (including training, equipment, and travel expenses) by voluntary headquarter organisations –**
  - **which provide facilities for the youth service; and**
  - **whose activities are exercisable or whose services are available throughout Northern Ireland and not only in some particular locality.**

Our Strategic Plan 2004 – 2007 reinforces these functions through our Mission, Vision and Values. In particular, under Core Aim 6 we outline the manner in which Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations (RVYOs) are to be supported (see below):

**Core Aim 6: 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 the 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. The case for enhanced funding for these bodies was highlighted in the Council's publication "Investing in Youth Services". Council remains committed to advancing this case.

In line with this aim, annually the Council assigns between £1.5m and £2m to support groups and activities that operate in accordance with our 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.

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

Since 2003, the Council has also granted almost £900,000 to 43 specific programmes offered by voluntary organisations.

Over recent years there has been a growing awareness that the list of RVYOs receiving support through core funding has stagnated and this presents a cause for concern on a number of fronts. First, this may encourage dependency on Council support and this support may not be guaranteed in the longer term. Second, this strategy of support may not encourage applications from new organisations that may be able to represent marginalised groups that have not attracted previous support. In line with Core Aim 4 and our desire to promote diversity and inclusion this trend is disconcerting. Third, the Council may be failing to acknowledge changes in its external environment by maintaining traditional relationships at the expense of innovation.

With all these concerns in mind, we have in place a review of funding that will be fully implemented by 2008/9. In the interim, two new short-term funding programmes have been introduced. These programmes mark the beginning of a staged process of change to be undertaken over the coming years.

Programme 1 aligns with our aim to 'ensure that there is adequate funding and resources to consolidate existing provision and effectively deliver the Youth Work Strategy', and to 'ensure that adequate resources are available to cover the operational and running costs involved in delivering effective youth work'. Deliberately, this short term programme is not available for groups already in receipt of infrastructure funding and is up to a maximum of £15,000.

Programme 2 affords priority to projects that align with the need to 'ensure that adequate resources are available to support the inclusion of marginalised and traditionally under-represented groups in the youth service.' The following themes in particular have been prioritised:

- children and young people living in rural areas
- children and young people experiencing mental health challenges
- active citizenship
- youth volunteering

This short term project funding is restricted to grants of up to £10,000 per organisation.

Closing dates for applications to both current programmes closed on June 16<sup>th</sup> 2006, although it may be that similar programmes may be established as a further interim measure during 2007 and prior to the full implementation of the new funding policy.

**Policy Aim:**

**Operating in accord with existing statutes, the Council's Strategic Plan and available resources, the policy aims to provide appropriate funding for RVYOs and relevant projects that will deliver efficient and effective youth work.**

**Who defines or defined the policy?**

The Youth Service (NI) Order 1989 describes the function of the Council to provide financial support for groups and projects, as earlier described. This policy has been endorsed by the Department of Education, most recently through the 2005 Youth Work Strategy that established priority areas for funding. Significant stakeholders were then consulted on these priorities and endorsed the policy before implementation.

**Who implements the policy?**

Council members ratify the policy which is then put into operation by staff who oversee the distribution of funds in accordance with the Council's financial management systems.

**Is the policy applied uniformly throughout the organisation? *If NO, what are the consequences***

YES

**Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the policy?**

The primary stakeholders are young people, through the work of funded RVYOs and projects. Potential stakeholders include those relevant groups and projects who have been either unsuccessful in their previous applications or who have never applied for funding.

**What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the aim or implementation of the policy?**

Available resources; availability of appropriate RVYOs; availability of alternative sources of funding.

**How do we interface with other bodies in relation to implementation of this policy?**

The majority of the groups and projects do not rely solely on Council funds but work under joint funding arrangements with a variety of partners. For example, Young Farmers groups are also supported by DARD.

**Which other policies are related to this policy?**

Our Strategic Plan 2004-7, and financial management policies.

**What data are currently available to facilitate the screening of this policy?**

Monitoring returns and final accounts from those groups and projects in receipt of Council funding.

2003 Review of YCNI Funding Policy.

Investing in Youth Services Report (P. Mattessich).

Annual reports.

**Screening the Policy**

**Answering the Four Screening Questions**

The four questions ask for evidence in relation to the Section 75 dimensions. You should not think of the “don’t know” column in the form as the easy option to respond to any of the questions. In cases where you don’t know and you don’t have data, you will need to make a judgement based on experience as to whether the policy you are screening may have an impact on any of the nine dimensions. If your judgement is that the policy may have a differential adverse impact in relation to any of the Section 75 dimensions (i.e. it affects some groups differently and less favourably than other groups), you should seek to obtain evidence. You should note that evidence can be qualitative – i.e. drawn from the experience of individuals from their perspective - as well as quantitative. Officers must give consideration to steps that they could reasonably be expected to take to obtain evidence and thereby inform their decision-making. Such steps could include meeting with a representative group or selective consultation.

**Where there is little or no evidence, and common sense indicates that a differential impact may be expected, you should discuss this with the Equality Officer.**

**1. Is there any evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups?**

	Yes	No	Not known
Religious belief	✓		
Political opinion	✓		
Racial group	✓		
Age	✓		
Marital status	✓		
Sexual orientation	✓		
Gender	✓		
Disability	✓		
Dependency	✓		

**Please comment:**

A scan of the 25 RVYOs currently in receipt of infrastructure funding would suggest that many of the Section 75 categories may impact on participation rates among young people through these schemes. The Council is aware that this list has stagnated over time and the interim measures introduced during 2006 go some way towards widening the pool of potential applicants, with a particular focus on under-represented groups. Young people in rural areas and those with mental health challenges in particular have been prioritised. In the past, no groups working with young people and their sexual orientation have been funded. In 2006, a project of this nature has been funded. While statute dictates the age range that the Council can work with, previously there has been a tendency to focus attention on adolescents in particular. More recent funding profiles would suggest that a broader age spectrum is now being captured through the funding programmes.

**2. Do different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this policy issue?**

	Yes	No	Not known
Religious belief	✓		
Political opinion	✓		
Racial group	✓		
Age	✓		
Marital status	✓		
Sexual orientation	✓		
Gender	✓		
Disability	✓		
Dependency	✓		

**Please comment:**

See 1. above. The Council acknowledges and indeed celebrates the differences between each Section 75 category through our work. In the past the policy may not have been responsive to the needs of different groups of young people but it is envisaged that the revised funding policy will deliberately aim to promote diversity and inclusion through targeted investment.

**3. Have consultations with relevant groups, organisations or individuals indicated that policies of this type create problems that are specific to them?**

	Yes	No
Religious belief		✓
Political opinion		✓
Racial group	✓	
Age		✓
Marital status		✓
Sexual orientation	✓	
Gender		✓
Disability	✓	
Dependency		✓

**Please comment:**

During extensive consultation with key stakeholders no significant issues were raised, although this lack of response should not be taken as a positive sign but could merely reflect the extent of marginalization of these groups who failed to be captured by these exercises. Significant reports by YouthNet (SHOUT), Save the Children (Count Me In) and Disability Action & Disability Interagency Support Group (The Importance of Being Inclusive) provide insight into the extent of marginalisation among young people who are gay/lesbian/bisexual, from ethnic minorities or disabled respectively, and flag strategic concerns that a revised policy should hope to address.

**4. In relation to implementing this policy, is there an opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations by altering the policy or by working with others in Government or in the larger community?**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Please elaborate:**

The existing policy is unlikely to further the Core Aim (4) of the Council to 'promote and develop the contribution of youth work to active citizenship, peace-building, understanding of diversity and inclusion'. Mindful of these issues the Council has set in motion a significant review of the existing policy and is moving towards significant changes to its policy in light of this review. Research by the cost of the troubles study (COTTS, 1996) found that young people were disproportionately impacted by the troubles in NI. A recent CRC Report (Sharing Over Separation) highlights themes that a policy of this nature hope to address if it is to contribute to the A Shared Future policy and strategy.

At the same time, the dependence of many RVYOs on existing funding arrangements cannot be ignored and hence we have initiated a staged process of change over the next few years, as the basis of funding and the criteria used for assessing applications will change. Interim measures are diverting funds towards groups and projects that may not have attracted funding in the past, while at the same time continuing to support those RVYOs who have relied on Council support for several years. In 2007, the revised policy will be presented to the Department of Education for scrutiny and ratification and it is likely that the new policy will be wholly implemented by April 1<sup>st</sup> 2009.

**5a. With reference to Questions 1 to 4 please summarise how you believe the policy may impact on the organisation's obligation to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity.**

At the present time the Council is not wholly satisfied that its existing policy meets its obligations and so has put in motion a process of change, in particular to widen its pool of applicants from eligible RVYOs. The new policy cannot be introduced immediately but must be phased into operation over the next two years in order to protect the well-being of many bodies that have come to rely on this source of funding.

**5b. With reference to Questions 1 to 4 please summarise how you believe the policy may impact on the organisation's obligation to have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life.**

At the present time the Council is not wholly satisfied that its existing policy meets its obligations and so has put in motion a process of change, in particular to widen its pool of applicants from eligible RVYOs. The development of the new policy will consider if the policy discourages disabled people from participating in public life or fails to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and/or provides an opportunity to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people or encourage their participation in public life.

**6. What data do you believe will be required to ensure effective monitoring of the policy following implementation?**

A major piece of independent research is underway to consider the existing arrangements, and including consultations with those in receipt of funds as well as those who may be eligible to apply. This research will continue to inform the development of the new policy. Monitoring returns from RVYOs and projects.  
Financial returns from RVYOs and projects

**7. In the context of Question 3 are there any relevant groups which you believe should be consulted at this time? Please specify**

No.

**8. Any other comments on the policy and/or screening exercise?**

No.

**9. On the basis of answers to Questions 1 to 4 above (and in particular positive answers), do you recommend that the policy should be subjected to a full impact assessment?**

**Yes**

**No**

**Please elaborate**

Screening of this policy has indicated that the existing policy is unlikely to promote equality of opportunity and good relations, nor to meet our core aims as set out in the Strategic Plan 2004-7. Rather than commit to an EQIA it has been decided to **abandon the existing policy** and to introduce a new funding policy over the next two years. The new policy will be screened during its development to ensure that we continue to meet our obligations under relevant statutes and including Section 75. Interim arrangements will help move the Council towards a position where Section 75 obligations will be met fully.