

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: Core/Infrastructure/Programme Funding Schemes for Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations (Amendment December 2008)

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 advise the Department of Education, Education and Library Boards and other bodies on the development of the youth service;
- to encourage cross-community activity by the youth service;
- to encourage the provision of facilities for the youth service and facilities which are especially beneficial to young persons;
- to encourage and assist the co-ordination and efficient use of the resources of the youth service;
- **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.**
- to advise on the training of part-time and full-time youth workers;
- to encourage the development of European/International opportunities for young people and those who work with them.

Successive Strategic Plans have reinforced these functions through our Mission, Vision and Values. In particular, under Core Aim 6 of the Strategic Plan 2008 – 2009 we outlined the manner in which Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations (RVYOs) were 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 has recognised 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. Recent lobbying in light of proposed cuts in the Youth Service/Community Relations budget as set out in the draft Programme for Government 2008 is further highlights this commitment.

In line with Core Aim 6, annually the Council has assigned 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.

Up to 2007 only 28 RVYOs attracted strategic or core funding; their affiliated groups providing for approximately 180,000 young people and utilizing 1,513 part-time workers and 17,000 volunteers. Funding packages ran from approx. £2,000 to £165,000 with an average of £45,000. From 2003 to 2007, the Council also granted almost £900,000 to 43 specific programmes offered by voluntary organisations.

In 2006 examination of available figures contributed to a growing awareness that the list of RVYOs receiving support through core funding had stagnated. This, in turn, caused concern on a number of fronts. First, that the existing policy may be encouraging dependency on Council support; support may not be guaranteed in the longer term. Second, that the existing policy may not encourage applications from new organisations, and (in particular) those that may be able to represent marginalised groups. In line with Core Aim 4 and our desire to promote diversity and inclusion this trend was disconcerting. Third, the Council may be failing to acknowledge changes in its external environment by maintaining traditional relationships at the expense of innovation.

With these concerns in mind, a fundamental review of funding was launched. In the interim period (2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09) two new short-term funding programmes have been implemented. Programme 1 was aligned 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 were available to cover the operational and running costs involved in delivering effective youth work.' Deliberately, this short term programme was not available for groups already in receipt of infrastructure funding; maximum funding was for £15,000. Programme 2 afforded 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 were prioritised:

- Children & young people living in rural areas
- Active citizenship
- Children & young people experiencing mental health challenges
- Youth volunteering

This short term project funding was restricted to grants of up to £10,000 per organisation. Closing dates for applications to both current programmes closed on June 16th 2006, with a tacit understanding that similar programmes may be established as a further interim measure during 2007 and prior to the full implementation of the new funding policy.

An open meeting for all RVYOs was held on 5 July 2006 and marked the beginning of the review process. 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. 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

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.

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.

In November 2007 YCNI screened its proposed new policy – entitled Young People Focused. This process indicated that, given the importance of funding for voluntary Youth Organisations, a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) should be conducted. 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. Following on from this public consultation a draft EQIA was available for consultation. This process was reported upon in August 2008. Outlined in full detail in the Report on the Results of the available from YCNI's website at (www.ycni.org/EQIA/eqia.html), it resulted in a number of significant to its new funding policy.

In particular, the Council recognised the difficulties faced by emerging 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.

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*].

Having amended the proposed policy in light of all feedback, Council approved the new funding policy and is currently working towards implementation with effect from 1st April 2009.

Policy Aim:

Operating in accord with existing statutes, the Council’s Strategic Plan and available resources, a new funding policy entitled **Young People Focused – Thematic Infrastructure/ Programme Funding** has been developed to provide appropriate funding for RVYOs and relevant projects that will deliver efficient and effective youth work.

Proposed Policy Amendment:

Amendment to percentage allocations of funding for the Thematic Infrastructure Support Funding and Programme Funding.

The published Funding Policy states that the percentage distribution of the Council’s total grant aid budget to RVYOs will be:

Infrastructure Support Funding	75%
Thematic Infrastructure Support Funding	12.5%
Programme Funding	12.5%

The proposed amendment to the percentage allocations for Thematic Infrastructure Support Funding and Support Funding is to replace the definite percentage allocation for each heading, with a ‘range’. Outlined below, this range will provide flexibility in responding to the level and quality of the Thematic Infrastructure Support applications.

Infrastructure Support Funding	75%
Thematic Infrastructure Support Funding	12.5% to 20%
Programme Funding	12.5% to 5%

Under the amended funding policy, £300,000 will be ultimately available for Thematic Infrastructure Support funding following the three year phasing -n period.

Reason for the Policy Amendment:

The Council consulted on this distribution and no amendments were received to the proposed allocations. However, as the Council had not previously sought new applications for any category of infrastructure funding, it was not possible to accurately predict the level of demand for such funding.

Analysis of current Expression of Interest Forms records around 25 applications under this category. Given the overwhelming demand for Thematic Infrastructure Support funding, it is proposed that some of the funding originally allocated under the current Programme Funding strand be vired to Thematic Infrastructure Support.

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 will 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 2008 – 2009, financial management policies, emerging arrangements for YCNI funding and management under the ongoing Review of Public Administration (RPA).

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

Annual reports

Draft EQIA on Proposed new Funding Policy (presented for public consultation between December 2007 and February 2008).

Report on the Results of the EQIA (August 2008)

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 as a result of this policy amendment?

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

Please comment:

A scan of the 29 RYVOs which have been 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 kind 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.

Insert details of the groups that potential will benefit from this amendment. Note likely to be missing and how Dev fund will aim to promote their participation.

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

	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. **In particular the Development Fund..... (also pos reference to weighting)**

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. Two significant reports by the Department of Education (SHOUT) and Save the Children (Count Me In) provide insight into the extent of marginalisation among young people who are gay/lesbian/bisexual or from ethnic minorities 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?

Yes No

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. 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 early 2008, the revised policy will be presented to the Department of Education for scrutiny and ratification and it is the Council’s intention that the new policy will be introduced, on a phased basis, in 2008/09.

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.

Through the screening of the original policy, the Council acknowledged that its existing policy did not meet its statutory obligations and so put in motion a process of change, in particular to widen its pool of applicants from eligible RVYOs. The new policy will 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 Council’s obligation to have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and 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 has been commissioned by the Council 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 has informed 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

Because the fundamental formula and principles of the funding policy remain the same and given that the amendment is restricted to modifying the proportion of funds to reflect and be proportionate with application received, the EQIA originally conducted remains current.