

**Participation Working Group (NINFY)
Tuesday 19th February 2008 YCNI**

Present

David Guilfoyle Chair
Stuart Mullan
Gilbert Bell
Gerard Doran
Ann Godfrey
Vivian McConvey
Sheri Chamberlain
Chris Quinn
Joe Hawkins
Denis Palmer
Pauline Leeson
Jacqueline O'Loughlin

Apologies

Sara McCartan
Paula Keenan
Martin McMullan

Secretariat : Clare Harvey, Karen Witherspoon (Minutes)

1. Minutes of 19th November 2008 agreed

2. Update on Timescale

The Chair gave an update in relation to the timescale. Since the last meeting of 19th Nov 07, DE had instructed the Secretariat to reduce the timescale due to their need to have some reference to NINFY in draft legislation by February 08. The Chair noted it would not be feasible for the working group to have advice ready for DE by April, but that the outline options paper should be in place by then. He reported that the reduced timescale had impacted on the plans to engage with children and young people, and particularly on the plans to hold focus groups with target specific category groups during the design of the document (see below). The Chair thanked the sub- group for their work.

3. Consultation with young people's advisory panel

At the previous working group meeting there had been agreement to engage a consultant to engage with Section 75 groups and to develop a representative advisory panel. The nominated sub group met to move these plans forward on 29th November 07. Given the instruction from DE with regards to reducing the timescale, the sub-group had decided not to establish a 'new' advisory panel, but to access the existing Children and Young Peoples Forum, courtesy of the Big Deal.

The sub-group went through a tendering process and recruited Rodney Green Consultants to co-ordinate the consultation with the advisory panel. It was reported that Rodney had met with the group and had planned to meet with them again at a residential on 1 March. He had also made direct contact with other groups such as Sixth Sense. The Chair noted that the role of the advisory panel was primarily to advise on the language and format of the paper and of any support materials such as leaflets. Rodney

would take responsibility for ensuring the text was youth friendly, and also developing support materials which could be used to consult with younger children and those with learning disabilities.

Members asked if they could have sight of the groups which had been contacted and the main contact person. It was agreed that this information would be made available.

It was noted that the role of the advisory panel was limited to informing the language and format of the document, but that there would be fuller engagement with a wide range of children and young people once the consultation paper had been released. In particular, the Big Deal staff would play a key role in delivering targeted consultations, as agreed at the previous working group meeting.

4. Discussion on the draft report

Clare Harvey introduced the draft report. She noted a proposal by the sub-group to expand the provisional title to “Northern Ireland Network for Children and Young people”, to reflect the target age ranges – subject to approval by the working group and DE.

In presenting the draft consultation document, she noted that the decision to produce a youth-friendly version had limited the length and complexity of the paper. However technical documents could be posted on the website for those consultees seeking more detailed information. She noted that the three options proposed in the document, (ie a regional youth-led body, a youth assembly, and a network of networks), had all emanated from responses to the pre-consultation, as had the proposed Vision and Values. The only ‘original’ material in the draft was the tables of disadvantages and advantages of each model. It was agreed to retain these tables, and Gerard Doran proposed that a graphical representation of each model should be added for each of the three options.

In terms of the section on the regional system, it was acknowledged that the working group would have to revisit this area for greater consideration on how to join up the ‘system’ once the consultation phase was complete.

A number of textual amendments were made to the draft document. The amended version would be circulated to the young people’s advisory panel for their input, and the subsequent ‘youth-friendly’ version and summary leaflet would be re-circulated to the working group for final amendment and approval around Easter-time.

Other points of discussion included:

- There was a need for DE in particular, and other government departments to give feedback on their thoughts on the NINFY. The Chair noted he had met with the Commissioner for Children and

Young People and was also scheduled to meet Caroline Evans OFMDFM

- Resourcing from DE needed clarified
- Clarification was needed if DE were leading on behalf of all government departments since NINFY requires cross governmental support
- NINFY should be reflected in the next Action Plan of the Children and Young People's Strategy
- Ministerial Sub Committee should have a discussion on NINFY
- The group recommended that the consultation process should be deferred until assurances were given by DE that the options for consultation were viable, to avoid raising false expectations.

5. Preparation for the consultation

It was agreed that the next working group meeting should focus on the consultation and dissemination processes. In preparation for this, it would be useful if there were some desk- research on similar consultations, eg NICCY Shout consultation, CYPUC consultations, Funky Dragon, etc.

It was suggested that the young people's advisory panel should be asked for their preference on ways to be consulted, eg. whether they felt the summary leaflets or the full documents should be provided to young consultees.

In terms of dissemination, it was proposed that Parenting Forums and Sure-Start should be included on the circulation list, to enable parents to advocate for very young children. The Play Quest team would also have a key role in direct consultations with young children.

Gilbert Bell suggested that an insert could be included in the April mailing of the Curriculum Development News, which has a circulation of almost 3000.

6. Date of next meeting to be confirmed