

Participation Working Group

October 10th 2007, Ramada hotel

Present : Gilbert Bell, Ann Godfrey, David Guilfoyle (Chair), Clare Harvey (Secretariat), Joe Hawkins, Paula Keenan, Pauline Leeson, Vivian McConvey, Martin Mc Mullan, Stuart Mullan, Jacqueline O'Loughlin, Denis Palmer, Chris Quinn, Karen Witherspoon (Secretariat)

Apologies : Sheri Chamberlain, Gerard Doran, Sara McCartan

1. Minutes of the meeting of July 2007 were approved

2. **Terms of Reference :** The Chair reported that he had notified DE about the concerns expressed by the group and by some respondents to the pre-consultation in terms of perceived gaps in the Terms of Reference. DE had agreed to revise the Terms of Reference accordingly. Therefore NINFY will be accessible to '*all children and young people up to the age of 25*' rather than '4-25', and the functions will extend to local government, East/West and North/South contexts.

3. **Pre-consultation :** The Secretariat provided a brief outline of the pre-consultation responses. In total 12 responses had been received, which had been analysed alongside the report of a consultation conference held with young people in 2006. Overall the responses were largely consistent in terms of the proposed vision and values for NINFY, and there was also a high degree of consensus about the anticipated barriers. There was greater divergence in terms of the proposed functions and format of NINFY. Responses from young people largely focused on NINFY as a structure or organisation, with ideas ranging from a shadow youth assembly, a regional body with local branches, and a co-ordinating 'network of networks'. Responses from NGOs, NICCY and local government tended to give greater focus to the need for a coherent and multi-layered 'system' which would operate to support participation at all levels.

Following discussion on the pre-consultation submissions, it was agreed that the Secretariat would prepare a brief summary paper to provide an overview of the responses. This would be made available on the YCNI website.

4. **Involvement of children and young people.** Whilst the pre-consultation document had been circulated widely and had generated some very valuable responses, concern was expressed that the voices of some communities and groups of children and young people had not been heard to date. The Secretariat also reported that queries had been received regarding the representation of young people on the working group itself.

The composition of the working group was discussed at length, as was the engagement of children and young people in this process to date. As a result, the group proposed to defer production of the full consultation document until further engagement has taken place with a wider diversity of children and young people. Furthermore, the group recommended that each step of NINFY development must be guided by ongoing dialogue with children and young

people. This process should extend to children of younger age groups, as well as young people with a wide range of circumstances and life experiences.

Rather than repeating the pre-consultation exercise, it was agreed that this next phase of consultation should seek responses to the ideas which had emerged to date. It was proposed that a new flyer could be developed to provide an update of the situation. Existing mechanisms to support the extended involvement of children and young people within NINFY design could include the Big Deal Participation and PlayRanger staff, Children's Services Planning, Participation Network, and Belfast City Council Youth Forum. A sub-group were nominated to progress these plans (C Harvey, P Keenan, S Mullan, M Mc Mullan).

The Secretariat noted that this extended phase would require approval from DE, given the impact on the timetable. It was noted that there were also resource implications eg. costs of printing flyers, staff time etc. However the group reiterated their commitment to ensuring that children and young people should have a major role in the design of NINFY options.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING : Monday 19 November 10.00 am at YCNI