

# Response from Regional Co-ordinator, UK Youth Parliament in NI

## Pre – Consultation Response NINFY

### **What is your vision of an ideal NINFY?**

A structure which works already existing local and national organisations and structures in NI rather than in competition with them.

### **What functions should NINFY cover?**

NINFY should take on a support and advisory role for organisations working in (Including but not limited to) the following fields:

Training and education for young people

Young People's Rights

Representation of Young People in Public, Political and Civic Life

### **How would NINFY link with existing participative structures for children and young people?**

In particular focussing on the participation of young people in decision making NINFY could provide supporting structures/facilities which all organisations working in this field could access, for example a framework for running elections for local and national bodies, panels for young people to participate in structures such as the District Policing Partnerships, Effective consultations for Government and facilitating connections between politicians/public figures and their young constituents.

### **Are there any existing models in the UK or internationally that would be relevant to this initiative?**

The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) as a youth participation organisation has an excellent model in England. UKYP is currently looking into how that structure can be replicated more effectively in NI. Scotland and Wales, following consultation with the young people involved in NI in particular.

There are of course flaws in this structure at a local level, as the election model is based on population and so Northern Ireland has a fairly small contingent, and unlike Scotland and Wales does not have it's own separate national youth assembly, however the young people and staff of UKYP are involved in a long term assessment of how to better structure the UKYP in NI:

#### **Particular issues that have arisen include:**

##### **Representation of those in rural areas –**

Rural areas have less local shadow youth councils/representative bodies from which young people can be appointed and nominated.

**Transport to and from meetings –** it is impractical and unfair for all meetings to be held in Belfast and so they are now held in different locations. The UKYP has also moved to a residential format, so for young people travelling long distances they are only expected to attend a quarterly residential making the travel time more worthwhile.

##### **The size/weight of the Northern Ireland voice in the UKYP:**

Again this can be attributed to the lack of support and funding given to set up/maintain local youth forums & shadow youth councils. If each young person felt they truly represented a local group and had been elected through a recognised process – a structure which NINFY could manage/oversee – then the young people would take themselves more seriously as a regional group. For young people participating in multi-national organisations (not just UKYP but also the European Youth Parliament for example) N.I will always find itself as a minority in any system esp. where that system of representation is based on population, it is important that the young people involved therefore feel fully justified in taking their place on that body.

### **What are the barriers that would stop NINFY being effective?**

Duplication of work with smaller local organisations.

Lack of inclusion of minority and vulnerable groups. – it is important that if NINFY does take on the form of say a National Youth Assembly that it attracts formerly disengaged young people, and not simply the same young people who are already engaged. A way of doing this would be to find an alternative model for nominations/elections to the schools model.