

**MINUTES OF THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM FOR THE EDUCATION SECTOR HELD IN THE COUNCIL FOR CURRICULUM, EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT ON THURSDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2004**

**Present:**

Mr Alf Armstrong	Equality and Human Rights Officer, N E E L B
Ms Brenda Banks	Citizenship Co-ordinator, N E E L B
Mrs A Bennett	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
Ms Sharada Bhat	Indian Community Centre
Mrs Patricia Bray	Disability Action
Mr Jeff Brown	Department of Education
Ms Claire Campbell	Youthnet
Mr John Curran	Inter-Board Central Management Support Unit
Mr Mark Donnelly	Best Value Officer, S E E L B
Ms Elsie Gillanders	Assistant Advisory Officer – S E L B
Mr Mike Graves	Ulster Teachers' Union
Mr David Guilfoyle	Director, Youth Council for Northern Ireland
Dame Joan Harbison	Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Mrs Donna Heaney	Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Ms Tansy Hutchinson	NICEM
Mr David Jess	Belfast Education & Library Board
Ms Lisa Johnson	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
Ms Evelyn Kerr	Family Planning Association
Mrs Lily Kerr	UNISON
Mr James Knox	Rainbow Project
Mrs Sharon Lawlor	Department of Education
Ms Helen Leith	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
Ms Nicola Lynagh	N I Council for Integrated Education
Dr David McConnell	Age Concern
Ms Philomena McDermott	Cross Phase Adviser, W E L B
Mr Gerry McGuinness	Belfast Education & Library Board
Dr Duncan Morrow	Community Relations Council
Mr Michael Mulholland	GMB
Mr Andrew Murdock	Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
Mrs Maura Murphy	Equalities Manager, S E L B
Dr Katy Radford	Save the Children
Mr Arthur Rainey	Chief Administrative Officer, W E L B
Ms Carline Stewart	Education and Library Boards' Solicitors
Rev Stanley Stewart	Presbyterian Church
Ms Deirdre Vaughn	Senior Principal Officer - Equality, Staff Commission
Mrs Patricia Weir	Chief Executive, Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards
Mr Tommy Wright	N I Public Service Alliance

**Apologies:**

Ms Sonia Anderson	East Belfast Community Development Agency
Mr Frank Bunting	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Mr William Cameron	DCAL
Mr Tim Cunningham	Committee on Administration of Justice
Ms Teresa Devlin	Office of the N I Commissioner for Children & Young People
Rev Ian Ellis	Church of Ireland

Ms Anne Hope	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Mr Danny Lambe	Equality Commission
Dr Paschal McKeown	MENCAP
Ms Fiona McMahon	Disability Action
Ms Sue Macleod	PAPA NI Autism Charity
Mr Greg Martin	Newtownabbey Senior Citizens Forum
Mr Peter O'Neill	NUS-USI
Ms Kathryn Stevenson	Children's Law Centre
Ms Paula Tabakin	Belfast Jewish Community
Ms Edel Teague	NI Human Rights Commission
Mr Martin Walls	Royal National Institute for the Blind

## **1. Welcome and Introduction**

Arthur Rainey (acting Joint Chair – Public Authorities) welcomed everyone to the inaugural meeting of the Joint Consultation Forum (the Forum). He reported that Felice Kiel, the acting Joint Chair for the community and voluntary sector) and a key player in the establishment of the Forum had left NICEM and was now living in London. He said that he wanted to take this opportunity to record the Forum's thanks for her work on the E U funded project 'Anti-Discrimination and Diversity in Action' and in helping to establish this forum. He then introduced Tansy Hutchinson (NICEM) as acting Joint Chair.

Tansy Hutchinson explained that the idea for the Forum had arisen out of the E U funded project 'Anti-Discrimination and Diversity in Action'. She said that this Forum was unique in that the community and voluntary sector were working with the public authorities as partners and not consultees and she thanked the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) for agreeing to host the inaugural meeting.

Lisa Johnston, Equality Officer, welcomed everyone to the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). She said that CCEA's Chief Executive and Senior Management Team were disappointed that they were unable to attend the Joint Consultative Forum meeting but unfortunately the date for the meeting had clashed with a CCEA Management Conference. She said that the Chief Executive had expressed support for the Forum and said that CCEA would welcome an opportunity to address a future meeting on issues associated with the Review of the NI Curriculum.

Lisa also explained administrative arrangements for the meeting.

## **2. Minutes of the Preliminary Meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum held on 1 April 2004**

On a proposal from Katy Radford and seconded by James Knox the minutes of the preliminary meeting of the Forum held on 1 April 2004 were agreed.

## **3. Confirmation of Terms of Reference**

Tansy drew members' attention to the Terms of Reference which had been amended in line with the suggestion at the preliminary meeting of the Forum to provide for two meetings per year.

Mike Graves (Ulster Teachers' Union) said that it was his understanding that the Forum would meet before the publication of the public authorities' Annual Reports to the Equality Commission in order that the community and voluntary sector could input to the reports.

Deirdre Vaugh said that the suggestion to have two meetings, one in May and one in September, was to enable consultees to be fully appraised of the public authorities' work during the year. At the May meeting public authorities would be in a position to give an outline of the work they would be reporting on and said that the community and voluntary sector would be given an opportunity at that stage to influence the reports going to the Equality Commission

On the proposal of Tommy Wright, seconded by Maura Murphy the Terms of Reference were adopted.

#### **4. Appointment of: Joint Chairs, Secretary and Steering Group**

Katy Radford, Save the Children, agreed to conduct this part of the proceedings.

On the proposal of David Guilfoyle, seconded by Arthur Rainey, John Curran was appointed the public authorities' Chair.

On the proposal of Patricia Bray, seconded by Claire Campbell, Tansy Hutchinson was appointed the community and voluntary sector Chair.

On the proposal of Tommy Wright, seconded by Caroline Stewart, Deirdre Vaugh was appointed Secretary.

#### **Steering Group**

Deirdre outlined the purpose of the Steering Group and said that it was intended that the Steering Group would meet quarterly and review progress on the implementation of the public authorities' Equality Schemes and associated programme of work and would be used as a mechanism whereby work could be progressed between Forum meetings. She explained that one of its first task was likely to be the preparation of a 'snapshot' of key activities being undertaken by public authorities to implement their Equality Schemes.

Deirdre suggested that the Steering Group, when established, should operate for a two year period after which a critical review would be conducted in order to assess its effectiveness. She pointed out that the Steering Group and the Forum did not replace the existing and ongoing consultation arrangements and was intended as 'added value' rather than a mechanism to centralise consultation. She said that the work of the Steering Group would be completely open and that there would be a mechanism for reporting back to the Forum.

Deirdre also suggested that, rather than seeking nominations to the Steering Group at today's meeting, the officers draw up a list of possible members, representative of all the Section 75 equality dimensions and ensure the inclusion of those with a legitimate interest in education. She outlined the following organisations who may wish to nominate a representative:-

**Public Authorities:-** Department of Education; five Education & Library Boards; CCMS; Staff Commission; Youth Council for N I and N I Council for Integrated Education

**Trade Unions:-** Teachers' Negotiating Council and Joint Negotiating Council

#### **Community and Voluntary Sector:-**

**(Age)** Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People; Save the Children; Children's Law Centre; Youthnet; and Age Related Reference Group

**(Disability)** Disability Action; MENCAP;

**(Race)** NICEM; Chinese Welfare Association

**(Sexual Orientation)** CoSO

**(Gender)** Women's Support Network

Duncan Morrow acknowledged Deirdre's wish to be inclusive with a broad spectrum of views represented on the Steering Group, however, he pointed out that there was a danger of the Steering Group being too large to function effectively and suggested that the group be streamlined with rotational membership and that an effective feedback mechanism to the Forum be established.

Following discussion it was agreed that the officers would contact the various equality groups with a view to establishing the Steering Group.

#### **5. Anti-Bullying Strategy – A Practical Experience – Mrs Philomena McDermott, Cross-Phase Adviser WELB**

Philomena explained that the Western Board had adopted a 3 year Anti-Bullying Strategy and was totally committed to supporting its schools, outcentres and youth centres in the promotion of anti-bullying strategies. She briefly outlined how and why the board had developed its strategy through:-

- Conducting a survey of services/staff
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities
- Legislation; and
- Consultation.

She explained that the anti-bullying strategy had two strands namely:-

- Prevention – Proactive strategies
- Intervention – Reactive strategies to support the child being bullied and support the child who was the bully.

On the prevention side she explained that the Board had heightened awareness of the whole of issue of bullying. Its anti-bullying poster campaign was launched by the Children's Commissioner, Nigel Williams in November 2003 with 164 schools buses displaying anti-bullying posters on racism, sectarianism, homophobia and disability. The Board had actively promoted an anti-bullying culture, its ongoing school based work focused on 'whole' school development and it ensured pupil involvement by promoting the 'listening' school.

With regard to intervention Philomena explained that procedures had been put in place to help schools help and support the child being bullied and also the child who was the bully. She briefly outlined the ongoing staff development programme, the work being done in schools to promote pupil involvement and the pilot school council project being conducted in 14 schools ranging from nursery through to post primary.

Philomena explained that the strategy was being monitored and evaluated to establish whether it was making a difference. She reported that to date there had been an increase in the number of reported bullying incidents which was an indication that the strategy was indeed working and



Guidance and Resources for post-primary schools' prepared by Save the Children and said that this was an excellent model.

The following initiatives/strategies were also highlighted:-

- **The Western Board's 3 year Anti-Bullying Strategy** (*Philomena McDermott's presentation provided members with an insight into one Board's experience*).
- **Home to School Transport – North Eastern Education & Library Board** (*the North Eastern Board has taken a joint approach with Translink and the police aimed at promoting zero tolerance of unacceptable behaviour on home to school transport*).
- **Joined in Equity and Diversity and Inter-dependence (JEDI) (inter-agency – statutory and voluntary sectors)** (*10+ long term programmes with a number of pilot programmes are currently operating*).
- **Youthnet Research “Shout”** (*A number of youth posts have been funded by the Department of Education. A Department of Education/Youth Council Working Group is currently looking at the “Shout” research and the establishment of an inter-agency taskforce is being considered by the Department of Education*).
- **Review of the N I Curriculum** (*Arrangements can be made for a speaker from CCEA to give a presentation at a future J C F meeting on its proposal for the introduction of Citizenship Education as a statutory entitlement within the curriculum*).
- **Library Service – IT System ‘Bar’ i.e., People Cannot Access Sites about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) Issues on Library Computers**  
Deidre reported that Helen Osborne, who had been unable to attend the Forum meeting, had ensured that the bar on access to sites in relation to LGBT issues had been lifted and had indicated that she would meet with James Knox to discuss accessibility issues if he felt that this would be useful.

James confirmed that the Belfast Central Library allowed access to the CoSO site and he asked if accessibility could be checked to the Rainbow and Gay Times websites.

Deirdre undertook to have accessibility to these sites checked.

## **7. Closing Remarks – Dame Joan Harbison, Chief Commission, Equality Commission**

Dame Joan, speaking on behalf of the Equality Commission thanked the Forum for inviting her to speak at this important event which the Equality Commission was happy to endorse as a collaborative initiative which would help to progress Section 75 duties on promoting equality and good relations. She said that this initiative would build on the tradition of joint working on equality issues within the education sector. She said that the Equality Commission consistently advocated joined-up, collaborative approaches to working to deliver the statutory duties as a way of sharing experiences, problems and good practice. She emphasised how important it was to consult affected groups before policies were written and said that she was delighted to hear about pupil involvement which she felt was hugely important to start young people thinking about how they could influence things which affect them. She urged members to continue to support Section 75 and said that the Equality Commission's aim was that every school should be designated under Section 75.

She highlighted examples of good practice and positive outcomes emanating from EQIAs within the education sector and welcomed the mitigating steps that had been taken to more effectively mainstream equality considerations into future policy delivery.

She emphasised that the Equality Commission's reporting focus was now more on outcomes and examples of good practice and said that it was currently developing a database of good practice for its website which could be assessed by everyone. She informed members that the Equality Commission's Revised Section 75 Guide and Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessments had been approved by the Minister and would shortly be launched.

Dame Joan thanked members for developing the Joint Consultative Forum. She said that she believed constructive and sustainable partnerships such as this unique Forum were essential to the implementation of Section 75. She emphasised the importance of charting progress between meetings and she wished the Forum well in its ongoing work and looked forward to hearing of its future progress.

## **8. Date of Next Meeting**

Discussion took place on the venue and date for the next meeting and the following action was agreed:-

- Boards/Department of Education to host Forum meeting on a rotational basis (next meeting possibility to be held in the Southern Education and Library Board area)
- Arrangements to be made for speakers from the community, voluntary and public authorities to talk on issues which are of particular interest to the Forum.
- Members to email Deirdre at [deirdre.vaugh@scelb.org.uk](mailto:deirdre.vaugh@scelb.org.uk) with suggestions regarding research/projects being undertaken which they feel should be shared with the Forum.
- The officers of the Forum to arrange a date for the next meeting in May 2005.