

# COMMUNITY RELATIONS, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION



Department of  
**Education**

[www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)

AN ROINN  
**Oideachais**

MÁNNYSTRIE O  
**Lear**

March 2011



## **MINISTERIAL FOREWORD**

As our society emerges from the period of conflict into a new and hopeful phase, and we become more diverse in our communities, I want to ensure our children and young people have the skills and attitudes to ensure a society where equality and diversity are valued and relations within and between communities are strong.

My vision for the future is one where schools are vibrant, self-improving communities of good practice that meet the needs and aspirations of individual pupils and prepare them to take their place in building the type of society to which we all aspire for the next generation.

Re-building a strong and vibrant society is a role for the whole of Government but I recognise and value the contribution that education can play – one which is challenging, but one that we must achieve if the next generation is to avoid the mistakes of the past.

There has been a long history of community relations work in schools and youth organizations throughout the period of conflict. The first formal public statement of commitment to this work by my Department was in the early 1980s, and since that time work to educate children and young people has been part of the remit of both formal and informal education.

However, much has changed over the years and our young people have to face communities which are much more diverse than in previous generations. To ensure education prepares our young people for today's society, I commissioned a review of my Department's policy for community relations.

Based on extensive pre-consultation and research, this new policy has been developed to ensure education for community relations remains relevant – a policy in which equality and inclusion are one of the cornerstones of an education system which enables every learner to fulfill his or her potential and which removes the barriers which prejudice such as sectarianism, racism and homophobia can create.

This policy will complement the curriculum by providing teachers and youth workers with the capacity to address what are often difficult and sensitive issues; by ensuring good practice is disseminated and relevant materials are available; by equipping children and young people with the skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to recognize, understand and respect difference in all its forms; and by providing opportunities for children and young people to put these skills into practice.

The policy will broaden this work to cover all section 75 groups, so that our children and young people can learn to handle diversity in all its various forms. It is my desire that this work becomes fully embedded into educational settings to ensure that we prepare our children and young people to take their place in society.

I firmly believe this policy will contribute to the overall aims of the Programme for Government in promoting respect for diversity, equality and inclusion, and will complement the work of other Executive colleagues.

---

Caitríona Ruane MLA

---

## **COMMUNITY RELATIONS, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION**

### **1 THE NEED FOR REVIEW**

- 1.1 In June 2008, the Education Minister, Caitriona Ruane initiated a review of the Department of Education's (DE) Community Relations policy.
- 1.2 The purpose of the review was to examine the current DE Community Relations policy, with a view to making recommendations to develop a new policy which will take account of the ongoing divisions, promote equality and work to eliminate discrimination between the two main communities. The review was also to focus on the wider concepts of diversity as well as the issues affecting the two main traditions. The review would take account of the revised curriculum, including Personal Development and Mutual Understanding and Citizenship, an increasingly diverse society here, the key drivers affecting the education system in relation to enhanced collaboration via the curriculum, the outworkings of Bain, the impact of Review of Public Administration and the funding of this policy area. In addition, the need for a strategic approach, clear accountability, value for money and the opportunity to embed community relations to ensure sustainable long term impact would be key drivers.
- 1.3 Community relations within education should help young people to gain an appreciation and understanding of their own tradition, a respect for others, and an appreciation of the importance of equality by enabling learners to look for and celebrate their similarities as well as understanding and respecting difference. It should help young people to be at ease with difference in all its forms. Equality and diversity enhances and enriches communities but it also challenges them. Our society is still polarised in many areas and sectarianism is still regrettably a widely experienced feature of life here.
- 1.4 The Review recognises that we are a society in transition, moving gradually from suspicion and fear towards increased co-operation and security, from division to sharing. We are also a society that is much more diverse than 20 years ago when the original Community Relations policy was developed.
- 1.5 There is, for example, a greater representation of children and young people from different ethnic groups in classrooms or youth settings; increasingly there are children for whom English may not be their first language and who come from a different culture. For example, in the early 1990s, there

were 655 newcomer pupils where English was an additional language, but in 2009/10 this has risen to 7,532 pupils – an increase in excess of 1000%, while in the same period, the number of non white pupils has risen from just over 2,500 to nearly 7,500 – an increase of almost 200%.

- 1.6 It is estimated that 6-10% of the school population identify as non heterosexual, and that 60% of students who report anti-gay harassment felt nothing is done about it.<sup>1a</sup> A study by the Rainbow Project indicates that almost 20% of young same-sex attracted men believe they achieved lower results due to difficulties in school relating to their sexual orientation.<sup>1b</sup>
- 1.7 Over the period September 2009 to June 2010, a total of 286 young women were supported through the School Age Mother Programme which facilitates young women of compulsory school age who are pregnant or parenting to continue in education. Of these 286 young women 191 were new referrals, 33.9% had been receiving support from the programme for two or more years and 48% of the total cohort is in sixth form education.
- 1.8 In the 2007/08 Annual Schools Census post primary schools were asked to record pupils who had been assessed as having a disability. The 2010/11 Annual Schools Census indicates that 2.5 % of post primary children registered across the 5 stages of the current Code of Practice were recorded as having been assessed by a medical professional as having a disability; around 9.3 % of post primary children with a statement were recorded as having a disability; and 0.04% of post primary children without SEN were recorded as having been assessed as having a disability.
- 1.9 Our children and young people are therefore learning about, experiencing and accepting, diversity in the education setting or within their communities that previous generations here have not had to face. This means that their parents, and others within their community, have not had the experience of living with and socialising with people from other faiths and cultures to the extent that children and young people now have. As a result, there can be mixed messages about the emergence of these cultures within our society and, regrettably, racist attacks are not uncommon here.

---

<sup>1a</sup> The School Report (2006) - Stonewall

<sup>1b</sup> Out on Your Own (2006)

- 1.10 As well as the changes in our demography, children and young people cite bullying as one of the main issues worrying them in almost every survey carried out in recent years. This bullying is often associated with the victim being perceived as being different somehow to other children, but not necessarily of a different religion or race. It is therefore essential that education prepares learners to live in a society where they understand and appreciate basic human rights; education also needs to provide them with opportunities to develop the skills they may need to be resilient and resourceful when faced with challenges in their lives, including prejudice.
- 1.11 The review acknowledged the contribution of the voluntary and community sector with regard to its work on Community Relations, Equality and Diversity over the period of the troubles and beyond, and of the contribution of philanthropic and non government resources which have historically been made available. However, recognition was given to the fact that in order to ensure long term sustainability, the reliance on these sources should not be factored into the development of this policy approach. Equally, where the opportunity exists, the value of the expertise and good practice developed by the voluntary and community sector should be built upon.
- 1.12 Equality legislation underpins the duty of statutory authorities and employers to work towards the inclusion of the diverse range of people within our society and towards equality of access and provision. The commitments made to promoting reconciliation and mutual trust in The Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement, including Section 75 and Schedule 9 to the NI Act 1998, place a statutory obligation on public authorities in carrying out their various functions relating to the north of Ireland, 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.
- 1.13 In addition, without prejudice to this obligation, Public Authorities are also required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, and racial group.

- 1.14 The Good Friday Agreement included a commitment to recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the north of Ireland. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities also requires states to protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.
- 1.15 The St Andrews Agreement further committed to continue to actively promote the advancement of human rights, equality and mutual respect.
- 1.16 The Hillsborough Agreement also affirmed the shared belief in the importance of working together in a spirit of partnership to deliver success for the entire community and the importance of mutual respect, equality and greater inclusiveness. Recognition was also given of the work of existing departments which touches upon the proposed functions of the Department of Justice including aspects of community relations.
- 1.17 The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has regarded discrimination on religious grounds as racial discrimination when there is an overlap with another indicator of ethnicity. Other Human Rights instruments explicitly include religion among the determinants of forms of racism, including the definition recommended by the Council of Europe which states:
- "racism shall mean the belief that a ground such as a race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin justifies contempt for a person or a group of persons, or the notion of superiority of a person or a group of persons".
- While our society has entered a new and hopeful period in our history, the legacy of the conflict period and continuing sectarianism remains and still has an impact on the lives of children and young people.
- 1.18 Equality and inclusion are one of the cornerstones of an education system which enables every learner to fulfil his or her potential. However, it is still possible for many children to make the transition into adulthood without having any meaningful contact or interaction with people from another religion, nationality or race. The many manifestations of bigotry may have diversified, but they draw on generations of suspicion and rejection of the unfamiliar, of the unknown, of 'the other'.



- 1.19 To make a difference, therefore, a Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy in education must fit the current and future needs of children and young people and of the wider community and civil society. While sectarianism is still in evidence, there are also new challenges arising from our changing society if we are to achieve equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination in all its various forms. The policy, and its delivery, must recognise the influences, both positive and negative, that peers, parents, guardians and the media have on the views, perceptions and stereotypical images of young people. The views of children and young people need to inform the delivery of community relations, equality and diversity in education settings, both within and outside school. The changing nature of curriculum delivery in both formal and non-formal settings provides the dynamic backdrop and context for the policy review with the focus on the needs of the learner and on equipping children and young people with the key skills to be successful learners and participative citizens.
- 1.20 The review acknowledges the valuable work that has been carried out over the years to improve community relations and to promote equality of opportunity and seeks to build on this important foundation by addressing young people's needs today, and to develop a policy that will enable education settings<sup>2</sup> to meet those needs.

### **The Establishment of the Working Group**

- 1.21 A member of DE's senior management team established and chaired a Working Group (the group) at the Minister's request in June 2008. The membership covered a wide range of areas and perspectives together with knowledge and understanding of community relations, and other pertinent issues relating to equality, human rights and children's rights. The group was required to:
- Consider the current community relations schemes and ascertain demand for community relations in education;
  - Consult with voluntary organisations, Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and other relevant agencies;
  - Ascertain required outcomes of the new policy supported by clear, concise evidence;

---

<sup>2</sup> Education means primary, post-primary, youth and early years

- Prepare a needs analysis of the resources required to address a new policy; and
- Prepare and submit a draft policy to Senior Management in DE before presenting to the Minister.

1.22 The Working Group understood that any proposed policy changes would occur against a complex backdrop of significant change in education. In developing proposals, the review had to take into account:

- Personal Development and Mutual Understanding and Citizenship within the curriculum and its impact on equality and good relations;
- The enhanced sharing mechanism and initiatives of specialist and extended schools;
- Good relations practices in education in the formal and non formal sector;
- The infrastructural changes associated with Bain;
- The Entitlement Framework and the development of Learning Communities;
- Relevant theoretical and empirical data; and
- The development of the 'Priorities for Youth'.

1.23 The group met on nine occasions and considered a range of written and oral evidence throughout the period June 2008 –June 2009.

## **2 BACKGROUND TO COMMUNITY RELATIONS POLICY IN EDUCATION**

- 2.1 The first formal public statement by the Department of Education of commitment to the development of a Community Relations policy came in the DE Circular: 'The Improvement of Community Relations: The Contribution of Schools' in 1982. This stated that every teacher, every school manager, Board member and trustee, and every educational administrator within the system, has a responsibility to help children and young people to learn to understand and respect each other, and their differing customs and traditions, and to prepare them to live together in harmony in adult life.
- 2.2 Against a backdrop of many challenges in education, the current community relations policy evolved during a prolonged period of violence and civil unrest, and latterly, in the two periods of devolved government. As a result the policy was designed to encourage work on community relations and the promotion of equality where possible. It was optional for schools and youth settings if they wished to avail of the opportunities within the schemes developed, but the Department did not make community relations or cross-community contact compulsory. The eighties and early nineties were difficult times, and education had to remain a safe and stable environment for children where the focus was on educating young people in keeping with the curriculum at that time.
- 2.3. Community Relations was difficult and demanding work and those who led these programmes in those difficult times, both in formal and non-formal education, pushed boundaries and took risks that had a significant positive impact on the young people involved. For many young people the schools and youth community relations programmes represented their only opportunity for cross-community contact. The Department's community relations policy was managed by a small group of officials and eventually responsibility was devolved to the Education and Library Boards for the Schools Community Relations Scheme, and funding was provided to the Youth Council, Arts Council and voluntary/community groups to further develop this work with young people. The current policy therefore was developed and maintained within the parameters of what was possible at the time, bearing in mind the trust placed in schools and youth settings during the conflict, parental choice and what was safe for workers, children and young people.

## Current Funding Schemes

- 2.4 Up to 31 March 2010, the Department allocated (09/10 figures) approx £3.573m per annum for the promotion of equality and good community relations among children and young people in formal and non-formal education. The aim was to encourage greater cross-community contact and co-operation; to support and encourage mutual understanding and tolerance; to promote equality and work to eliminate discrimination; and to promote recognition of, and respect for, cultural diversity.
- 2.5 The Department provided opportunities for children and young people to meet and interact through the following programmes:
- The Schools Community Relations Programme;
  - Community Relations Core Funding Scheme;
  - Cultural Traditions Programme;
  - Youth Service Community Relations Support Scheme;
  - Community Relations Youth Service Support Scheme.
- 2.6 Each programme was designed to address the issue of improving the understanding and relationships between the two main traditions here without excluding any other tradition. Designed approximately 20 years ago, the main aim of the programmes was to promote contact, by bringing young people from each of the two main traditions together. Not all schools accessed the DE-funded programmes; many schools developed their own relationships with other schools from different backgrounds independently. In 2009/10 approximately 20% of schools accessed the programmes, and many schools and youth units made their own efforts to develop good community relations by promoting an inclusive ethos based on a defined value set or by coming together with other schools/youth units either specifically about diversity or to maximise resources and facilities. While such arrangements are welcome and important, and while numerous examples of best practice exist, it does mean that there is a lack of coherence in how educators are preparing learners for life and work in a diverse society. In addition, a number of reviews over the years have identified the continuing need for the promotion of equality of opportunity, the elimination of discrimination and encouraging better community relations, particularly between the two main traditions.

- 2.7 As part of the education budget for 2010/11, the Community Relations budget was set at £1.1m to provide assistance with the implementation of the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy. This was in recognition of the need for a wider policy approach and reflects wider investment through other policies which support community relations (para 3.11 refers).
- 2.8 To deliver Community Relations programmes, professionals and practitioners have worked in often challenging circumstances and, on occasion, at their own risk, in an attempt to effect attitudinal and behavioural change. The strong commitment to promoting equality and better relations has resulted in a wide range of projects and partnerships, touching the lives of many children and young people across the early years, schools and youth sectors. The success of these programmes has often depended on the enthusiasm and dedication of key individuals working with limited resources and support. The ETI report on community relations recognised the value of contact between young people of the two traditions whilst also recognising that more coherence between the programmes was desirable. The programmes provide valuable lessons on good practice and the learning from these will be incorporated into practice as this work moves forward.

### **3 COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN CONTEXT**

- 3.1 There is a concerted focus across government departments to improve the lives of our children and young people. This has been reflected in the establishment of the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People and reflected in the objectives of the governmental pledge to children and young people.<sup>3</sup>
- 3.2. In recent years political and societal developments have impacted on community relations at a strategic level outside of education: a range of equality and human rights legislation<sup>4</sup>, commitments in the Good Friday, St Andrews and Hillsborough Agreements, (paras 1.14 –1.16 refer), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)<sup>5</sup> and the current Programme for Government, the overarching aim of which is 'building a fair and prosperous society for all'. There has also been an increase in the number of people from other countries settling here resulting in a range of cultures which enhance and enrich our communities.

#### **Education**

- 3.3 The Education Reform Order 1989 places a statutory duty on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education, that is to say the education together at school of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils. In fulfilling its statutory responsibility the Department funds integrated schools that are robust, do not involve unreasonable public expenditure and meet the specified criteria.

---

<sup>3</sup> Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People 2006–2016.

<sup>4</sup> Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 which requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and the Human Rights Act 1998 which gives further legal effect to the fundamental rights and freedoms contained in the European Convention on Human Rights.

<sup>5</sup> The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people (aged 17 and under) a comprehensive set of rights. It came into force in January 1992.

- 3.4 However, it is a fact that the vast majority of our children and young people are educated in settings that reflect one or other of the two main religious communities. Such a system takes account of, and respects, parental choice but does not commonly give young people day to day sustained access to shared learning experiences with those from a different background. Along with schools, early years and youth settings recognise that, given the nature of our education system, children and young people need opportunities to learn about themselves and their culture, and about others and the similarities and differences in their culture. They need to build positive relationships with young people from different backgrounds (across the range of section 75 groups) and to dispel negative perceptions and images about those who are different from them; the self-confidence to have pride in their own tradition; and the resilience to deal with intolerance or prejudice.
- 3.5 There have been extensive changes within education since the 1980s when the Department of Education first outlined its expectations in terms of schools having a responsibility to help children to learn how to understand and respect each other. There is now a greater focus on formal and non-formal education working with communities to educate and socially develop children and young people as active contributors to an improved society. Additionally, the revised curriculum, while having a central focus on developing knowledge and skills in literacy and numeracy, also aims to develop in young people knowledge and understanding of the challenges and opportunities they may encounter in an increasingly diverse contemporary society; and an understanding of their role in working for a more inclusive, just and democratic society where equality is fully accepted and discrimination actively discouraged.

### **School Curriculum**

- 3.6 There have been substantial changes to the curriculum in schools since the last community relations policy in education was developed. In the revised curriculum the central focus is on ensuring that young people develop their literacy and numeracy skills as well as knowledge and skills in other areas. There is also a recognition of the role that schools can and do play in encouraging learners to become personally, emotionally, socially and physically effective; to lead healthy, safe and fulfilled lives; and to become confident, independent and responsible citizens, making informed and responsible choices and decisions throughout their lives. The primary curriculum, therefore includes Personal Development and Mutual

Understanding (PDMU) as a separate Area of Learning, designed to provide the opportunity to develop specifically children's emotional development, health and safety; their relationships with others; and the development of moral thinking, values and action.

- 3.7 Through the curriculum, teachers are able to address issues of diversity with young people as an integral part of their wider programme of learning. As part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum, Local and Global Citizenship is a contributory element of the Learning for Life and Work area of learning that includes a specific focus on exploring the range and extent of diversity in both local and global societies. It includes the four strands of: diversity and inclusion; human rights and social responsibility; equality and social justice; and democracy and active participation.
- 3.8 Local and Global Citizenship provides young people with opportunities to investigate how identity, stereotyping, sectarianism and racism can contribute to conflict but also to enable young people to develop the skills necessary to manage and resolve conflict peacefully.
- 3.9 The revised curriculum is now in place in all year groups in all grant-aided schools. It is providing new opportunities for the promotion of equality and diversity, development of self-esteem and positive relationships with others in recognition of the importance of complementing and assisting the achievement of literacy and numeracy and the development of the whole child.

### Youth Service

- 3.10 Within the Youth Service, the Joined in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence (JEDI) Initiative has developed a range of training programmes, support resources and practice models aimed at promoting whole organisational approaches to increasing the ability and confidence of youth agencies and young people to be at ease with difference, acknowledge one and other as equals and promote improved relations between all. This work has been recognised as good practice and the on-going contribution of the Youth Service to this work has been reflected through various reports and in particular its ability to address the needs of those most marginalised young people through outreach and detached work.



### **Other Education Policies**

- 3.11 Reflecting the wider approach which the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy will address, a range of other DE policies (such as Every School a Good School, Supporting Newcomer Pupils, Travellers, policy proposals on the Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion) and the statutory obligation on DE to encourage and facilitate Integrated Education contribute to the broader approach which will underpin the aim of improving relations between communities and promote inclusion and a culture that welcomes diversity.

## 4 THEMES EMERGING FROM THE EVIDENCE

### Key Messages

4.1 During the course of the review considerable evidence was gathered to inform the development of this policy. The key messages are summarised as follows:

#### Renewed Emphasis

- As a society emerging from conflict, education must continue to promote and support the development of strong, healthy community relations among current and future generations;
- The emphasis of this policy must continue to be on addressing the preconceptions, distrust and divisions within our society, whilst broadening the scope of children and young people to understand and deal with difference in whatever form including – religious, gender, sexual orientation, disability or political affiliation. This policy must be premised on equality, human rights, the UNCRC, and reflect commitments made as part of the Good Friday and St Andrews Agreements (paragraphs 1.14 and 1.15 refer);
- This policy must embrace the complex, interrelated and significant backdrop of political, societal and educational change, many aspects of which will result in more effective joined-up working between government departments and communities, and between and across school sectors, early years providers and the youth service.

#### Role of Education

- Formal and non-formal education has a vital contribution to improving community relations but it alone cannot carry the burden of change;
- The Department of Education's work in relation to improving community relations contributes to the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Policy promulgated by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM);
- Changes in the curriculum provide increased opportunities for schools to help young people address their wider educational needs and for learners to develop the skills they need to build effective relationships and to promote equality. Embedding these changes will take time and

therefore direct work on community relations, equality and diversity is required but must be rooted in the revised curriculum;

- Notwithstanding the changes in the curriculum and the political progress to date, 96% of respondents to the pre-consultation questionnaires and those who presented to the working group and stakeholder groups agreed that there was still a need for additional, explicit work for education to deliver on community relations, equality and eliminating discrimination;
- Evaluation of impact is important, and should be sufficiently inclusive to reflect different starting points for different education settings.

### The Training of the Education Workforce

- Teachers, especially for the primary phase, are trained in settings that broadly reflect their religious background. Pre and post-qualification training modules for community relations or diversity may be optional for students;
- It is recognised that trainee teachers are taking up placements in education settings which do not reflect their religious background; such practice should be encouraged and supported;
- During their training and in continuing professional development, teachers should be supported to develop the confidence to support learners to deal with issues of equality, diversity, and discrimination and to work closely with colleagues with a pastoral care role to ensure that all the needs of learners are being identified and addressed ;
- In the youth sector, trainees and undergraduates are trained using a model, Joined in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence (JEDI), this is a model that could usefully be built upon across the sector;
- The potential for a more joined up and complementary approach between formal and informal education was also identified, including opportunity afforded through joint training initiatives.

### Active Engagement

- Children and young people can be influenced in a variety of ways at home and within their communities; they need to have the opportunity

to develop a practical understanding of cultural traditions, equality, diversity and social justice to overcome any prejudice which could act as a barrier to learning;

- It is not enough to teach or talk to children and young people about community relations. They need to develop the skills and the resilience to deal with prejudice such as sectarian attitudes and behaviours, homophobia, racism or negative attitudes to people with disabilities, whether they experience it directly or indirectly through the perceptions of others;
- Young people need education and age-specific support to help them recognise prejudice, to overcome it and to respond in a positive way to negative influences. Specifically, community relations education should equip them to be self-aware, to understand and know their own values and beliefs, to recognise the importance of equality and be able to understand why some people may have a perceived fear of others;
- Young people's practical understanding needs to be enhanced by experience including meaningful contact between young people from a diverse range of backgrounds including on a cross community basis.

#### Weaknesses in the Current Policy

- The review identified the need for more robust monitoring and evaluation of the quality of community relations provision, the restrictive nature of funding criteria (which had the effect of limiting current practice and did not encourage progression), the unnecessary complexity of five separate funding strands, insufficient in-service training for teachers, reliance on external organisations and the lack of connections between community relations work and other education policies. The combination of these factors has led to this work being seen as an add-on rather than integral to the curriculum.

## **5 THE WAY FORWARD**

- 5.1 The Programme for Government (2008-11) emphasised the importance of tackling the continued problems of sectarianism, racism, homophobia and intolerance in all its forms in our society. Education on its own cannot address the deep seated problems which have developed over decades, but has a crucial role to play in addressing these issues along with the wider community and civil society. The Department remains committed to tackling these issues through education.
- 5.2 The role of Community Relations in education is to help build a shared and safe society which challenges sectarianism and discrimination in all its forms and which supports children and young people to play their part in eliminating sectarianism and discrimination from within their communities.
- 5.3 It is important that the role of education in community relations, equality and diversity is relevant to children and young people today and, having considered the drivers for change and the strategic context for this work, the following summarises the main issues to be addressed in this policy.
- 5.4 The policy will seek to build upon and enhance previous programmes and draw on the experience and good practice of the Department, formal and non-formal education as well as drawing from the experience of organisations engaged in this work.
- 5.5 This policy will need to address the limited connections between the current CR policy and other education and government policies, which results in the perception of CR as an 'add on' to, rather than an integral part of, education. It will also need to broaden the scope of the work to include wider issues of diversity (including respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to all Section 75 groups and linguistic diversity) without losing the focus on the continuing need for specific work with children and young people to address equality, discrimination, sectarian attitudes and behaviour. This policy will take account of other existing and developing policies which contribute to the wider aspect of diversity (such as Every School as Good School; Supporting Newcomer Pupils, English as an Additional Language, Travellers, Way forward for Special Educational Needs, etc)
- 5.6 It will need to address the lack of strategic planning and connections for Community Relations and equality work across formal and non-formal education settings, and set out clearly the Department's expectations about

the quality expected of Community Relations and equality work, and how this will be monitored and evaluated. This policy should rationalise the funding schemes and set out clearly what support will be available to embed this work across education settings. It must also aim to co-ordinate funding across formal and informal education settings, and support the dissemination of best practice.

- 5.7 Given the relatively low uptake rates for the current schools community relations programme and the over-dependence on key members of staff who currently champion this work, to ensure access to Community Relations and equality work for children and young people, this policy will advocate and support the integration of this work into the education setting's planning and ethos so that all children benefit from this explicit work at some point in their education. To achieve this, there will be a need to move away from the dependency on external organisations in helping to deliver community relations, equality and diversity by seeking to embed this work firmly within educational settings by providing a strong skills base for educators and the required teaching resources. This does not detract from the significant contribution which external organisations have brought to this process over recent years, nor the significant level of shared education which has taken place. The Department will seek to consider how existing learning and models of good practice (including shared education initiatives) can support the process to embed skills within educational establishments during the early stages of the policy implementation.
- 5.8 The Department also recognises that a number of organisations, including local councils, voluntary and community organisations and philanthropic funders are engaged in this work. It is anticipated that their work will complement and in some cases support the policy objectives.
- 5.9 The policy will identify progression routes for those children and young people who take part in community relations activities to ensure learning is age appropriate and advances knowledge and skills and, where appropriate, support the involvement of parents and/or the community.
- 5.10 The policy will also aim to promote pre and post-qualification training on community relations, equality and diversity for teachers and youth workers (including training at management level to support the integration of this work within planning and ethos). The need for training for non-teaching staff will be considered within resource constraints.

- 5.11 The policy will support a wider definition of what constitutes the promotion of better community relations, equality and diversity in partnership with parents, the wider community and civil society.
- 5.12 The revised curriculum provides more opportunities for children and young people to learn about difference and to develop the skills they need to respond positively to difference and diversity. Additionally, there is increased sharing and collaboration across education, while learning communities and a growth in integrated education provide opportunities for children and young people to come together. However, as well as being taught or facilitated to appreciate rights and equality, about developing self-awareness and testing their values and beliefs, children and young people should, as far as possible, be provided with planned opportunities for contact in both formal and non-formal settings to learn about one another's background and culture; to respect one another's beliefs; and to appreciate what they have in common with others in addition to differences in their culture, attitudes and behaviours. The importance of providing opportunities for meaningful contact with those perceived to be different is fully recognised by the Department and is strongly encouraged. However, the Department acknowledges that there are limitations in what can be realistically achieved, such as resources and timetabling, but all attempts, including innovative approaches, should be explored to facilitate children and young people in putting learning into practice.
- 5.13 The policy aligns with the Department's school improvement policy (Every School a Good School) in respect of the characteristic of a school being connected to its local community (one of four overarching objectives which characterise a good school).

## **6 THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS, EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION (CRED) POLICY**

6.1 In order to articulate more effectively the wider scope of the new policy, it will be renamed 'The Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education' (CRED) Policy, and will be premised on the interdependence between equality, good relations and human rights, including UNCRC and commitments in the Good Friday, St Andrews and Hillsborough Agreements. The policy reflects the changing educational needs of young people with regard to community relations, equality and the greater diversity of our community, and wider changes as we emerge from conflict and strive to live and work together in building a peaceful, just and prosperous society based on equality and good relations. The policy is set within the wider context of Programme for Government (2008-11) commitments and the Executive's overarching Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration.

6.2 The proposed aim of the policy is to:

- Contribute to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others, promote equality and work to eliminate discrimination, and by providing formal and non-formal education opportunities for them to build relationships with those of different backgrounds and traditions within the resources available.

6.3 The objectives of the policy will be to:

- Ensure that learners, at each stage of their development, have an understanding of and respect for the rights, equality and diversity of all without discrimination; and
- Educate children and young people to live and participate in a changing world, so that they value and respect difference and engage positively with it, taking account of the ongoing intercommunity divisions arising from conflict and increasing diversity within our society; and
- Equip children and young people with the skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to develop mutual understanding and recognition of, and respect for, difference.



- 6.4 The intended outcomes of the policy will be to develop learners who:
- Understand and respect the rights, equality and diversity (including linguistic diversity) of all section 75 groups;
  - Develop the skills, attitudes and behaviours that enable them to value and respect difference and engage positively with it.

### Core Principles

- 6.5 It is proposed that the following core principles underpin the policy:

### Pre-conditions

- As far as possible, provide opportunities for meaningful interaction between different groups with a view to impacting positively on relationships in the community;
- Complement what education settings are striving to achieve for young people: it should not be, or be perceived to be, burdensome or another initiative;
- Demonstrate its relevance and connectedness to improving outcomes for children and young people, and link to other education and wider Government policies, including its contribution to strengthening the economy by reducing the economic cost of sectarianism and civil unrest and through a more peaceful society, encouraging investment;
- Recognise the collaboration and partnership that already exists, including between schools, youth groups, colleges and training organisations, and build on this in a way that meets the needs of young people;
- Take account of the different starting positions for each individual and education setting and the communities around them.

### Values

- Adopt an approach in which the needs of all children and young people are paramount;
- Be responsive to the needs of children and young people and their communities and clearly set out the outcomes expected for young people;

- Support the development of children and young people's self-esteem and their knowledge of equality and diversity through the revised curriculum and the youth curriculum in a way that encourages progression;
- Involve children and young people in planning and evaluating the effectiveness of CRED programmes in a way which is representative of the school or youth group and of society in general;
- Encourage the concept of active learning which is underpinned by the formal and non-formal curricula;

### Outcomes

- Showcase best practice and support and encourage the sharing of skills across and between the formal and non-formal sectors;
- All processes should be open and transparent.

### Intended Recipients

- 6.6 The policy will be focused on the needs of the learner, and will apply to children and young people in statutory early years, primary, post-primary, special schools and youth settings. While the requirement is to address all section 75 groups this should be implemented in a way which is age appropriate and flexible enough to focus on particular issues relevant to the needs of the learners and the communities within which the policy is delivered. In particular it is important that issues relevant to the recipients which are considered as difficult or controversial are given the due regard that they require. It will also seek to promote a whole school approach to engage staff, including ancillary staff, Managers, Boards of Governors, Voluntary Committees, parents and carers, and the surrounding communities in those settings.
- 6.7 The importance and benefit of early interventions in relation to Community Relations, Equality and Diversity is well documented and will be further reflected in the Department's Early Years Strategy. Early Years provision is by its nature non-sectoral. While the policy will apply to statutory early years settings, non-statutory early years settings are strongly encouraged to adopt the principles of the policy to support the implementation of the Curricular Guidance for Pre-school Education which already includes a requirement to develop respect for others and to appreciate the difference between people (in

particular Personal, Social and Emotional Development and The World Around Us) and which aligns with the aims of the policy. Non-statutory early years settings will be able to access guidance and other support materials to assist their delivery of the pre-school curriculum.

### **Delivery Mechanisms**

- 6.8 The current delivery mechanisms will be reviewed in terms of their ability to meet the policy aims and objectives and wider scope of policy.
- 6.9 The policy will move away from the dependency on external organisations in delivering community relations, equality and diversity by seeking to firmly embed this work within educational settings by providing a strong skills base for educators and teaching resources. A funding scheme will be developed to progress implementation taking into account the proposed key actions.
- 6.10 Implementation of the policy should be seen within the framework of existing, educational policies and practices that already seek to support the wider scope of the policy (para 3.11 refers).

## 7 DELIVERING COMMUNITY RELATIONS, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION (CRED)

7.1 The Department of Education is committed to securing better outcomes for learners and the new Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy will address the key issues raised during the review through the following actions:

**Issue 1: Integration and Cohesion.** The CRED policy should address the limited connections between the current CR policy and other education policies, which results in the perception of CR as an 'add on' rather than an integral part of education. A number of other education policies contribute to the wider scope of the CRED policy (para 3.10 refers).

### Key Action 1: CRED Integrated within Education

- Recognising that prejudice and fear are potential barriers to learning, and that the need for young people to overcome those prejudices is intrinsically linked to achieving the DE vision of 'every learner fulfilling his or her full potential', the CRED policy will address the needs of young people in terms of ensuring educational outcomes that complement the desired outcomes of other DE and wider government policies;
- The Curricular Guidance for Pre-school Education, the revised Curriculum and the Curriculum Framework for Youth Work all provide opportunities within formal and informal education to enable young people from all communities and backgrounds to better work together. Across all Key Stages there are opportunities for children and young people to develop the capacity and skills necessary for building better community relations and participating in democracy as equal citizens in a pluralistic society. The CRED policy will support the delivery of the curriculum by ensuring educators have the skills and experience to deliver curricular requirements, learn from good practice and provide opportunities for children and young people to put learning into practice;
- Community Relations, Equality and Diversity issues arise across the whole community and should not be regarded as an issue to be addressed in certain locations or communities. The Department will therefore expect all schools and youth organisations to address the full range of CRED issues through the relevant curricula;

- The Department will work with ETI colleagues to take stock of the policy implementation and involve ETI more closely in monitoring CRED;
- The Department will work with ESA to develop indicators for this work with the capability of being used for self evaluation; the need for both a local and regional approach will be considered;
- The Department will issue guidance to all education settings about the requirements of the CRED policy; this will enable settings to make the connections between the aims of the CRED policy and the formal and non-formal curricula, as each provides the vehicle for much of this work in education which is age appropriate. Linkages to other relevant education policies will also be identified within the guidance;
- The Department will promote the practice of Community Relations, Equality and Diversity and encourage greater sharing and collaboration across and between all educational settings on a cross community basis. As new education policies are developed and existing policies reviewed, the potential to impact positively in relation to CRED issues will be considered.

**Issue 2: Strategic planning and connections across formal and non-formal education settings.** The CRED policy should broaden the scope of community relations work without losing the focus on promoting equality and building relationships between the two main traditions. It will address the need for improved strategic planning and connections for CRED work across formal and non-formal education settings, and should set out clearly the Department's expectations about the quality expected of CR, equality and diversity work, including how this will be monitored and evaluated. Funding schemes should be focused on supporting formal and non-formal education settings to address the needs of the young people within communities.

#### **Key Action 2: Support for Effective CRED Planning in Education**

- The Department will work with the relevant educational bodies (e.g. Education and Library Boards, NI Youth Council, CCMS, NICIE, CNaG, CCEA and, when established, the new Education and Skills Authority) to develop effective plans for the delivery of the CRED policy at a regional and sub-regional level, including the structures required within ESA to assist and work with education settings to support them to integrate the policy in a way that is sensitive to their needs.

- Opportunity for a more joined up approach between formal and informal education will be explored, including joint training and delivery options.
- Guidance to educational settings, together with sharing of good practice, will provide practical input to the planning process for CRED work. This will be supported by a dedicated website which will provide a single source of information for educators, including exemplars of good practice and pointers to relevant resources.

**Issue 3: Access to work and programmes.** Given the relatively low uptake rates for the current schools community relations programme and the over-dependence on key members of staff to ensure access to CR work for children and young people, the CRED policy should support education settings to integrate this work into their ethos and planning. This will be achieved through capacity building of the education workforce, sharing and dissemination of good practice and targeted support for meaningful interaction between young people. Development of an indicator framework will assist with measuring the impact of this policy.

### **Key Action 3: Enhancing Links to the Curriculum in Formal and Non-formal Settings**

- The Department will issue guidance to each funded education setting, which will detail the outcomes required for young people in terms of helping them to understand and respect the rights, equality and diversity of all; and develop the skills, attitudes and behaviours that enable them to value and respect difference and engage positively with it. This guidance will enable education settings to deliver on CRED outcomes by rooting the work within the formal and non-formal curriculum.

The guidance will detail the actions/plans/activity the Department would expect to see in each setting, such as:

- those with responsibility for CRED in an education setting are identified, appropriately trained and supported to implement the policy;
- the children and young people within the setting are active participants in the planning for and integration of CRED policy;
- there is an agreed approach to measuring the impact of the CRED work, and there is evidence that this is implemented to measure progression;

- over time, consideration will be given to the appropriateness and affordability of appropriate CRED training for non-teaching/support staff to support a whole-setting approach;
- the need to consider mechanisms for engaging those marginalised young people who are not in formal or informal education through outreach and detached work; and
- the CRED development planning and self-evaluation processes are directly linked to the needs of the setting and wider society.

**Issue 4: Training for the Education Workforce.** The CRED policy should seek to strengthen pre and post-qualification training on community relations, equality and diversity for the education workforce. In addressing training for the education workforce, account will be taken of existing materials and other resources which are available (for example, NICIE's "Promoting an Anti Bias approach to Education", the Irish National Teachers' Organisation Race Relations Guide; Ulster Teachers Union policies such as gender balance and cultural diversity; and Amnesty International's support for teachers on Human Rights). In developing training, the need to include self-awareness to prevent the potential for any unconscious bias should be considered, together with the opportunity for delivery on both a cross community and formal/informal basis. The need for, and nature of supporting structures within the ELBs and the Youth Council will also be examined.

**Key Action 4: Training for Education Workforce on Community Relations, Equality and Diversity**

- The contribution of formal and non-formal CRED training to developing the workforce must be recognised for its potential contribution to teaching elements of the revised curriculum and delivery of the Youth Service curriculum. The Department will work with higher and further education training providers to strengthen community relations, equality and diversity modules so that the qualified education workforce is supported to improve the outcomes for children and young people dealing with issues of equality and diversity;
- The Department will, over time and subject to resource constraints, work with the relevant education bodies to promote and encourage appropriate training of all those who work in an education setting (paid and unpaid), including managers, Management committees, ancillary staff, and volunteers including Boards of Governors;

- The Department will work with the relevant education bodies to develop a programme of continuing professional development (including provision for theory-based, experiential and reflective learning) by using the existing consolidated expertise of CR staff from the five Education and Library Boards and Youth Council, (due to be subsumed within ESA);
- The Department will work with the relevant education bodies to consider how to achieve greater coherence in the educational experience for the learner in terms of CRED, including the co-ordination of planning and provision between those officers who provide support for schools and youth CRED work and between CRED officers and those working within other sections linked to the needs within the community;
- Consideration should also be given to how best the existing expertise, established good practice and materials can be built upon in a way which embeds these skills within the education sector;
- The Department will strongly encourage the relevant education bodies to seek opportunities for joint training between teachers from the different sectors and alongside youth workers so that learning can be shared;
- The Department will work with the relevant education bodies to consider if a regional group is required to oversee the roll-out and implementation of CRED across the formal and non-formal education sectors, and identify the range of actions and resources required to respond to the needs of those who work with children and young people.

**Issue 5: Accreditation and Progression.** The policy should explore the potential for progression routes to ensure learning is age appropriate and advances knowledge and skills for those children and young people who take part in community relations activities and where appropriate encourage involvement of parents and/or the community.



### **Key Action 5: Enhancing Opportunities for Young People – Learning into Practice**

- In order to help young people gain the skills and confidence to build relationships with others from different backgrounds, beliefs and abilities, the Department will work with CRED officers in the relevant education bodies to facilitate, as far as possible within available resources, opportunities for young people within each Key Stage to put their learning into practice by engaging in meaningful interaction with other young people from different social, cultural or religious backgrounds. The same principles will apply to youth work settings;
- Sharing and collaboration aimed at enhancing the delivery of the formal curriculum is a platform for bringing young people together, and settings will be supported and encouraged to consider how this platform can be used to support meaningful engagement;
- The Department, through ESA, will encourage opportunities for young people to come together in a meaningful way based on the needs of the young people within that community and will aim to make the best use of existing resources, and to disseminate and share best practice.

### **Resources**

7.2 The full cost implications of policy proposals and policy implementation will be developed on the basis of value for money. The budget will be used to cover two main areas of implementation:

- Training and capacity building of education workforce;
- Dissemination of good practice and relevant CRED materials.

In addition, and as resources permit, targeted support for meaningful interaction between young people will also be considered, with a priority for areas that continue to experience conflict, segregation and disadvantage. The importance of this should not be under-estimated and opportunities for meaningful engagement are strongly encouraged.

## Next Steps

- 7.3 In order to ensure that children and young people continue to benefit from the current community relations schemes, the Department phased out existing CR schemes at the end of May 2010, in preparation for a new funding scheme to support the main areas of the CRED policy implementation as outlined above, which will be managed by through Education and Library Boards and the NI Youth Council pending the establishment of ESA.



COMMUNITY RELATIONS,  
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION