Children & Young People’s Strategy Team

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7th March 2017

**RE: Consultation on Children & Young People’s Strategy 2017- 2020**

The Community Relations Council (CRC) is an arms-length body of the government of Northern Ireland and a catalyst for good inter-community and inter-cultural community relations work in the region. In making its response, CRC is mindful of its particular existing responsibilities ‘to identify and develop effective approaches to peace-building and reconciliation in partnership with local people and organisations, and with central and local government’.

CRC promotes the benefits of good relations policies and practice at regional, local, community and institutional levels; advocating for acknowledgment of our interdependence; challenging sectarianism, racism and all forms of violence motivated by hate. The delivery of a peaceful, reconciled and interdependent society will be based on social partnership, the broader engagement of civil society and positive political leadership underpinned by priorities including fairness, equity, openness and diversity, and we continue to believe that it will take a concerted, integrated and collaborative effort to build a just, equal, fair, peaceful and reconciled society.

The CRC welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Executive’s draft Children and Young People’s Strategy 2017-2020. CRC has a critical interest in how society and its structures support and prepare children and young people to develop strong meaningful relationships in a culturally diverse society. The development and sustainability of these relationships must be considered in the context of a society which is emerging from conflict, but a conflict (past and present) which continues to impact on the lives of many children and young people.

It is within this context that the CRC offers the following comments.

**Policy Context**

The development of this draft strategy takes place within the context of a number of important policies and interventions – current and future. Firstly, the Executive recently consulted on a new Programme for Government 2016-2021(PfG) and its proposed outcomes and indicators relating to respect, reconciliation and shared space. CRC welcomed the inclusion of these themes and looks forward to seeing the final PfG as well as receiving an update on the related data development. CRC will assist The Executive Office (TEO) in the development of indices for respect and reconciliation.

The Together Building a United Community strategy (T:BUC) is the current intervention directed by the Executive which sets out to improve and develop good relations within and across our society. It has four priority areas, one of which is ‘Our Children and Young People’. The headline actions under this theme include targeted programmes such as United Youth, Summer Camps, Cross Community Sports Programme, as well as Shared Education.

The Fresh Start Agreement (FSA) also recognised the role of children and young people in peacebuilding and supported their involvement in the conflict transformation process by committing financial support for greater contact within education. Both shared and integrated education were to be the beneficiaries but recently some of these educational specific financial resources have been returned to the treasury. CRC was disappointed by this development. Another outworking of the FSA included the report and recommendations from the Panel on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups which included recommendations for children and young people.

Peace IV continues to support peace and reconciliation and identifies children and young people as a group that deserves special attention. The programmes of activities are yet to be executed.

Other policy areas that impact on the opportunities for building good relations include Priorities for Youth; Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy (CRED Enhancement Scheme has been removed) and the Shared Education Policy. The recently published Review of Integrated Education Report (2nd March 2017) will also sit with this family of policies aiming to make a contribution to peacebuilding and reconciliation.

The Executive’s policy backdrop to the new and emerging Children and Young People’s Strategy is wide-ranging, and it is important to consider what is currently delivering well for children and young people. This also requires looking further afield to local government policies and interventions, namely community planning and good relation strategies. They should be taken into consideration, especially within the context of co-design and delivery partnerships.

Importantly, it is critical that the knowledge, expertise and good practice from within the community and voluntary sector is harnessed in the development and delivery of interventions, and the views of those working with children and young people in formal and informal settings sought in terms of best practice and future planning. The voluntary/community sector has vast experience of working directly with children and young people across all walks of life. Practitioners are aware of the issues on the ground pertaining to the lives of young people, and the opportunities for engaging and building upon their contribution in the development of a multicultural, shared and reconciled society. It is imperative their views are sought on an on-going basis to help deliver a strategy that brings positive change for our children and young people.

To assist the development of CRC’s response to the draft strategy, we sought the views of a number of CRC core funded groups who engage with and undertake programmes of activity with children and young people. In order to support the department during this consultation period and to ensure a wide range of voices were heard CRC facilitated a discussion between departmental officials and these core funded groups. A note of this meeting can be found at Annex 1.

**General Comments**

CRC’s core business deals with and supports approaches and interventions aimed at building strong, cohesive and reconciled communities. CRC therefore, welcomes the development of specific outcomes which intersect with community relations issues which, if achieved, will make a positive contribution to peace-building and reconciliation.

The identification of post-conflict matters such as shared, inclusive and safe communities and, the continuing impact of paramilitaries, including intimidation and threats of violence, respect for difference, tolerance and understanding and racism is a strong indication that these areas of work need to be addressed and will receive the necessary support over the next 10 years by the Executive and its partners. CRC welcomes the acknowledgement and inclusion of these issues and is pleased they form the foundation of the associated outcomes.

However, CRC is slightly concerned that whilst sectarianism continues to have a negative impact on our society, it is not explicitly mentioned in the draft strategy. Given the history of our society and our ongoing conflict transformation process it is important to make a specific reference to sectarianism, especially in the context of the above portfolio of policies, as well as the work supported by CRC to help eradicate this problem. It is a regional issue affecting groups and individuals within our community and it should therefore be named within the draft strategy as a problem to be dealt with – it is not exclusive to the adult population. The impact of sectarianism on young people should not be overlooked nor viewed simply in terms of anti-social behaviour. It is a very complex issue which requires a multi-agency approach working with young people of all ages, their families and people with responsibility for them and the wider community.

There is a continuum of language used within the draft strategy. On the one hand young people are presented as potential leaders with the ability to promote positive attitudes and behaviours to their peer groups, families and communities. This would largely reflect some of the feedback from young people who attended the TBUC Engagement Forum and it is positive to see this recognition given to them as leaders and champions.

In contrast to this positivity, the draft strategy goes on to make reference to children and young people living in interface areas/communities with more entrenched attitudes as needing ‘greater support to realise the outcome of improved attitudes’. The labelling of communities and people living in those communities is unhelpful. Whilst some communities have experienced the conflict more than other others, and may live in areas that are geographies of violence, it is wrong to assume they have more ‘entrenched’ views. They may live at sites of tension but they are not the cause and this is an important distinction to make in terms of prejudice. However, geographies such as these do require targeted support to help create the conditions for greater participation in the peace process and to develop opportunities to live in open vibrant communities free from fear, threat or any obstacle to interaction across the region.

The draft strategy uses language such as promoting and closing the gap. CRC would like to see this language developed further in its final iteration so that it reflects a stronger aspiration to achieve much more. Community relations practitioners constantly raise the issue of hope and aspiration and want to see this vision articulated in government policy. The term ‘moving from conflict management to conflict transformation’ is also helpful in terms of describing the second phase of the peace process.

Finally, the draft strategy has paid particular attention to the process of developing the strategy and has provided a lot of detail regarding background, engagement and related structures. This type of detail appears to dominate and a final strategy should perhaps provide this information as appendices in order to prioritise the themes and more importantly the proposed action plan.

**Outcomes**

CRC will now offer specific comments on the various proposed outcomes from a community relations perspective.

* + *Children & Young people are physically and mentally healthy*

This outcome correctly identifies issues such as bullying, physical & mental health, and the impact of poverty and deprivation on children and young people.

The legacy of violence in the past is not confined to the generation which lived through the worst years, and it has had a profound impact on community health. CRC asks that the draft strategy gives recognition to the impact of the conflict within the physical and mental health outcome.

The transgenerational impact of the conflict is well documented across a number of research studies e.g. a 2007 report by Save the Children stated that ‘all the most disadvantaged urban schools were situated in areas that have very high levels of child poverty and score high on most deprivations indicators. They were also in areas that had suffered most in the course of the conflict’. Two schools still had visible bullet holes in their walls. Head teachers and special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) reported that many children came from families who had suffered loss and trauma in the conflict and there is growing evidence that mental distress is growing as Northern Ireland moves towards a post-conflict situation (Cairns *et al*., 2005). Many of these families are still dealing with physical, but particularly mental, ill health as a result. Furthermore, in schools where children had to pass through the ‘other side’s’ area on the way to and from school, the fear of an sectarian assault was greater than those children who didn’t go to school in conflict-affected areas. [[1]](#footnote-1)

Research undertaken on behalf of the Commission for Victims and Survivors also concluded that ‘the effects of violence, traumatic experiences and social segregation impact upon parenting practices which affect early attachment and the capacity of the child to self-regulate. Self-regulation difficulties increase the person’s risk of mental disorders, behavioural problems and suicide’[[2]](#footnote-2) and ‘there was some evidence that the experience of the transmission of trauma may have contributed to anxiety, hyper vigilance and even depression in the children of survivors’[[3]](#footnote-3). An acknowledgement of the transgenerational impact of the conflict, as well as assurances for action would strengthen this section.

Furthermore, issues regarding identity are connected to types of bullying e.g. faith, community background and race. It is important these categories are not lost under the general heading of bullying.

The September 2015 the T:BUC Engagement Forum made the following suggestions in relation to culture and identity:

1. Move from isolated, short-term and small scale interventions engaging with the symptoms of division such as flags and emblems. Engage in depth with the problem of segregation and the wider context of social deprivation and disempowerment that fuels tensions within and between communities.
2. Use a holistic approach to address legacy and cultural identity issues, and incorporate wider issues e.g. education and employment opportunities.
3. Young newcomers to NI often face additional barriers such as language and the lack of support to access education, employment and training opportunities. Need for a focused piece of research to explore the issues and needs of ethnic minority young people, identify examples of good practice and apply these where relevant. Disseminate widely to practitioners and policy makers.
	* *Children & Young people enjoy play & leisure*

This outcome looks at matters concerning the need for safe, accessible and inclusive spaces for play and the contribution play and leisure makes towards wider community cohesion. It highlights societal barriers such as traffic and parental fears.

It does not however, examine this outcome through a community relations lens. It fails to acknowledge how the segregated nature of our society and the existence of contested spaces and physical barriers can impact negatively on opportunities for play and leisure. This outcome should consider play and leisure opportunities available to children within different geographic areas, on an urban and rural basis, and ensure future opportunities are devised through a collaborative and partnership approach to maximize sharing in terms of cross community, cross cultural and cross sector (e.g. schools and youth organisations collectively developing play projects that promote diversity that complement each other’s work). This joined up approach between existing or new facilities/providers must be a core element of the forthcoming action plan. Reviewing this outcome to include this analysis would be a positive development.

* + *Children & Young people learn & achieve*

This outcome pays attention to issues such as teaching respect; addressing bullying and violence in schools; encouraging children to be inclusive and respectful to others; educational attainment; free school meals; changing demographics and additional language needs.

The aim of the curriculum is ‘*to empower young people to achieve their potential and make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives.* [[4]](#footnote-4) CRC believes that collaborative working can support the aims of the curriculum and advance educational achievement. It is therefore disappointing that this outcome does not mention either integrated education or shared education. This is especially disappointing given the policy commitments and financial support in other Executive interventions, as well as research that reports how educating children together can support ‘bridging’ and help make a positive contribution towards reducing negative attitudes.

The ‘issues’ and ‘why it matters’ section of this outcome should be reviewed to include how integrated and shared education can support both educational outcomes and societal outcomes (in terms of cohesion). It is important to showcase all beneficial outcomes.

The youth sector and its expertise should be included within this outcome. Not all young people will engage with formal educational structures and it is important to acknowledge the role and expertise within the youth sector – both statutory and voluntary.

Furthermore, given that children and young people engaged in community relations programmes often have to return to divided communities, many of which remain segregated due to the legacy of the conflict. It is important to examine how schools and youth services can work together, as well as with local government to develop whole community approaches. This collective approach should be examined alongside the final PfG.

Practitioners engaged in September’s T:BUC Engagement Forum suggested the following points in relation to training and education:

1. Support for whole school approaches to peacebuilding that involves schools, parents, youth leaders and the local communities.
2. Essential to work with young people at an early age - pre-school, primary and secondary school and further education. It should also include youth work beyond the formal education system.
3. Use age appropriate approaches to address community relations and community cohesion issues.
4. Formal education and youth work must increase children and young people’s ability and understanding of their rights, and community relations, equality and diversity issues.
5. To assist understanding and acceptance of our diverse society, in-depth training in schools should take place to prepare teachers to work with and teach about people different faiths, different customs and different political beliefs is required.
6. Train all teachers, new and existing, in peacebuilding and reconciliation. This should be delivered in a sustained and joined up way across the education and youth sector.
7. DE’s Community Relations, Equality and Diversityin Schools (CRED) policy should be fully implemented and given the required financial resources and developmental support for delivery and OBA monitoring.
8. Utilise the good relations practice cultivated during the Summer Camps Programme within the school setting. This could include involving Summer Camp and youth worker practitioners within school settings to support and embed expertise.
9. Support for shared education should not undermine integrated education. T:BUC should include actions to promote integrated education.
10. Programmes to encourage settled young people to feel more favourable towards minority ethnic communities should be developed and delivered by both teachers and external organisations with expertise in this area of work.
	* *Children & Young people live in safety and stability*

CRC is pleased this outcome raises the important issue of paramilitary threats, intimidation and violence, and how this activity can result in homelessness and the displacement of families and individuals.

Research in 2009 (QUB) found that children and young people remained significantly affected by the conflict and that *“violence has remained a part of everyday life for children and young people living in communities defined by uncertainty, unease and the continued presence of paramilitaries and dissidents”*[[5]](#footnote-5)*.* It is therefore obvious that dealing with the past remains a huge problem for the youth of our society, and despite the experience of relative peace by many children and young people, the traditions of the past are continuing to impact on their lives.

The FSA also identified paramilitarism as an ongoing issue and the subsequent report from the Panel on the Disabandment of Paramilitary Groups in NI made a number of recommendations. Those specifically relating to children and young people recommended programmes working with vulnerable young people, addressing the issues that put young people at risk of becoming involved; improving the educational and employment opportunities of children and young people in deprived communities and building on the Executive’s good relations strategy T:BUC with a focus on reducing segregation in education and housing.

More recently the Ulster University prepared a report on ‘Political violence and young people: Exploring levels of risk, motivations and targeted preventative work’[[6]](#footnote-6) and it too made a number of recommendations. Therefore whilst it is important to continue to ‘understand this issue and how it could be addressed’, it is important that action is taken. This action should be carried out in cooperation with the Executive and linked to existing action plans and research.

CRC agrees with the sectors request to support training which develops resilience within young people in order to combat difficult issues and circumstances including external and internal influences such as the community, family, friends and paramilitary groups.

* + *Children & Young people experience economic and environmental well-being*

This outcome deals with issues such as poverty and degradation of the environment, but it does not consider how children and young people living in interface areas are impacted. Nor does it include any deliberations as to how children and young people are impacted by ‘contested spaces’. CRC has produced a number of publications relating to physical barriers and rural contested spaces and will share this information with departmental officials for consideration. Again, given that the removal of interface barriers by 2023 is a priority headline action within TBUC, it is disappointing it has not been included under this outcome.

Almost 190 practitioners, policy makers and service deliverers attended the September 2016 T:BUC Engagement Forum youth focused event. One of the key messages from the event was the call for support the development of a seamless system that offers assistance to the 24,000 NEET young people across Northern Ireland.

* *Children & Young people make a positive contribution to society*

This outcome covers issues such as participation e.g. school councils, community planning, decision making, youth work and ‘seldom heard voices’ of young people.

CRC welcomes this outcome and calls upon the Executive to ensure that children and young people are supported to become active participants in the peace process.

CRC encourages the use of lessons learned from previous and existing work to assist in the development of creative programmes to engage hard to reach young people. CRC also encourages the use formal and informal settings to engage in programmes around reconciliation and respect in relation to sectarianism and racism.

CRC is interested in what processes will be put in place to assist children and young people to participate more fully in public life and how progress will be monitored. Participation was discussed at the September 2016 T:BUC Engagement Forum and the following points were made:

1. Train peer educators and facilitators in peacebuilding work and resilience training with young people.
2. Continue to refine the co-design approach with an emphasis on partnership to ensure consultation has meaningful pathways and action.
3. Use T:BUC youth programmes to develop youth champions who can lead by example, profile the work and potentially use champions as youth consultants e.g. the NEET Youth Forum, PeacePlayers International and the River Crossing work etc.
4. Establish Department Champions for Change. They can be used to inspire young people to engage in policy and practice at local and governmental level. This should include the Children and Young Peoples Strategy.
	* *Children & Young People live in a society which respects their rights*

This outcome examines issues such as ensuring children and young people are aware of their rights; intolerance and negative attitudes towards them; striving for a society that embraces good relations and nurtures mutual respect and understanding; how educating children is key to building a mutually respectful society and the need to develop understanding and tolerance of diversity, sustain positive attitudes and embrace differences.

It also identifies groups who need targeted intervention i.e. those who experience racism, those who speak a different language and those with faith and with no faith.

CRC welcomes this outcome. It is important to employ a rights based framework as the basis for the strategy and its subsequent actions. Utilising the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as the foundation and backdrop to this strategy will ensure children and young people are supported to understand what rights they have, how rights protect them and how rights protect others. These discussions are important in the context of a society emerging from conflict as it encourages understanding, debate and respect.

* + *Children & Young People live in a society in which equality of opportunity & good relations are promoted*

This outcome encouragingly explores issues such as eradicating discrimination; developing understanding; living in peace; tolerance; developing positive attitudes and good relations with those from different backgrounds; racism; other hate crime categories; the T:BUC strategy; shared education; CRED policy and the need to close the equality gap.

Changing the existing patterns of social disadvantage is meaningless if we fail to acknowledge the impact of fear and distance, the fact that we live in divided society and that much mistrust remains within and across communities. This will continue to have an impact on where people choose to live; how, what and where our children are educated; how and where investment is attracted; where tourists visit and inclusive sustainable regeneration.

Tackling poverty in Northern Ireland is directly connected to creating a new culture of freedom from fear. Poverty is endemic at interfaces and CRC welcomes the focus on children and young people living in these communities. When examining inequalities it is important to analyse and report on the various Section 75 categories, but it is also important to put the inequality in the context of the geographical location. It must concentrate on dealing with the socio economic issues; the regeneration of these communities; the attracting of inward investment; improving educational outcomes and improving safety and creating the conditions for the barriers to be reduced and removed.

CRC has already raised concerns about labelling specific communities as areas where entrenched views are held. Cross community activity and programmes should be supported as well as interventions to tackle the inequalities experienced by these marginalised communities.

Issues of sectarianism and racism affect young people in a wide variety of ways. They are sometimes the perpetrators of incidents and sometimes the victims and most vulnerable. In its publication *Sharing over Separation,* CRC highlighted the issue of sectarianism in relation to young people - *“While the concept of what is “sectarian” can at times be subjective and hard to pin down, reliant on personal interpretations and “feelings” of stress and threat, the concept is something that permeates through all levels of society through sets of social relationships…. All factors should be considered when influencing policy-making regarding the control and prevention of youth violence across communities and at interface areas. Intercommunity youth violence should be perceived on* *two levels: (1) addressing the specific needs of “flashpoint” times in the calendar and in specific areas in relation to sectarian concerns; and (2) addressing holistically the ecological factors that augment this violence… Tying in with aspects of recreation and innovation, young people should be involved on every level with anti-sectarian campaigns, media or otherwise.”[[7]](#footnote-7)*

Youth work has an important and a specific role to play in peacebuilding and reconciliation. CRC has worked with a number of Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations (RVYO) such as Youthnet and Youth Action, highlighting the role of young people and their supporting structures in peacebuilding. Recent engagement facilitated by the T:BUC Engagement Forum enabled organisations to bring the voices of young people and their constituencies to the fore of policy discussions and debates regarding peacebuilding and reconciliation. The persistent message from this engagement was a repeat of previous calls for good quality and sustainable community relations interventions within and across a number of departmental and strategic interventions[[8]](#footnote-8).

The draft strategy indicates that efforts will be targeted at inequalities affecting children and young people, as well as children and young people living in interface areas. CRC would argue that all of the outcomes can be connected to those children and young people living in interface communities and it would be useful to locate these children across the spectrum of outcomes in order to present a holistic picture of the barriers and difficulties they face. This would then support co-operation from a number of agencies to address and tackle the problem collectively – the whole rationale for the Children’s Services Co-operation Act.

CRC’s commissioned research ‘[Young People and the Interfaces’](http://www.community-relations.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/CRC%20Interface%20Youth%20PRINT3%20Without%20marks.pdf) sought the views of young people living at interfaces as to the impact that living at an interface had on their daily lives, and how they would like to be included in dialogue around interface issues moving forwards. The research reported on issues such as security, community relations, perceptions of safe/unsafe space, interface violence and policing, and finally transforming the interface. The department should consider this research.

The draft strategy places an emphasis on empowering children and young people to be change makers and leaders and this is to be welcomed. It is absolutely true and necessary but in order to create ‘champions’ the strategy should detail how capacity building work is going to be supported and sustained. CRC believes that working with young people is extremely important and they have a role to play in building a lasting peace. Long-term investment is required to develop their position as future leaders in our society and instil in them the confidence necessary for these roles. CRC also advocates more emphasis on how to engage and include young people with a key focus on peacebuilding. It is important to consider the role young people could and should play in co-creating a new society. The ideas of young people should be a central theme and their involvement should be properly supported and resourced.

Investment is needed to produce leaders and to support them to develop resilience to deal with difficult issues. CRC supports a number of organisations who engage in this type of work e.g. Community Relations In Schools’ (CRIS) UNITY Project whereby they support young people to become ‘upstanding’ rather than bystanders to prejudice and negative behaviour. ForthSpring’s ‘Youth Matters’ Project also noted a reduction of interface violence in the area. Other groups are using arts based approaches e.g. Partisan Productions and Prime Cut and PeacePlayers International have utilised sport as a tool to build positive, strong and sustainable relationships between young people. There are many more examples and CRC is happy to provide more information upon request.

**Indicators**

The indicator proposed under the ‘*Children & Young People live in a society in which equality of opportunity & good relations are promoted’* and theOutcomeintends to measure attitudes towards others, engagement between young people of different community backgrounds and shared spaces.

In our response to the draft PfG, CRC commented that it is the quality of engagement within shared spaces that is critical, and an examination as to how this interaction has built relations and improved attitudes. Planned interaction, rather than chance encounters between young people, will be needed to ensure real progress.

CRC has a long history of working with community and interface workers and, again in our response to the draft PfG, we recommended that this work is acknowledged and included in the final PfG through the recording of measurements such as:

* % of Interface barriers removed;
* % of new/strengthening of interface walls/gates/security barriers;
* level of cross-community engagement in change process;
* % of people who feel positive and harmonious relationships exist between communities at interfaces/contested spaces.

The Executive and the Department of Education should consider the above points in respect of safety and accessibility for children and young people.

Other areas that DE should consider developing indicators for include:

* Resilience, ability, confidence, esteem;
* Confidence to engage with public agencies;
* Whole school approaches e.g. development work undertaken with teachers/Board of Governors and parents

**Next Steps**

Crucial to the success of this strategy will be the content of the action plan and the quality and intentions of the partnerships that take forward the actions. CRC looks forward to commenting on the action plan but stresses the need to build on the work that has already made a contribution. It is crucial that the learning from across the various sectors is harnessed and used as the architecture to continue the journey of peacebuilding and reconciliation.

**Conclusion**

Professor John Paul Lederach[[9]](#footnote-9) said “it often takes as long to get out of a conflict, as it took to get to the point where the conflict stops”. Peacebuilding and community relations work with children and young people in Northern Ireland is a critical part of the peace process, and as society continues to transform it is important to continue to support practice and organisations that help deal with outstanding legacy issues.

Children and young people should be supported to live within a diverse society and learn to appreciate and understand other cultures and perspectives. Good relations must be a thread running throughout the whole strategy and good relations work should be streamed throughout all outcomes as it has the potential to impact on all aspects of a child’s life.

CRC hopes you find this submission helpful and looks forward to assisting you with its development and implementation when it is finalised.

For further information please contact Gemma Attwood, Policy Development Officer gattwood@nicrc.org.uk

Annex 1 – Minute of meeting held with Department Official

**General comments**

* Language/principles/objectives are important. A number of inconsistencies in use of language , paying particular attention to the section on equality of opportunity and good relations:
* The use of language was also raised e.g. ‘entrenched attitudes’, There is a danger that the draft strategy makes assumptions about certain communities and places pressures on these communities (wrongly);
* The inclusion of the wording ‘treated equally’ was discussed and it was felt that not everyone is equal and therefore any strategy needs to be able to meet the different needs of people, need to utilise an ‘equitable’ approach.
* Need clarification on what ‘promoted’ is. Want to aspire to more e.g. using the language ‘is pursued actively’ and where they are not ‘addressed’.
* Tackling discrimination will not necessarily mean we celebrate diversity – challenging isn’t enough.
* Can’t legislate for tolerance or celebration.
* Individuals are not responsible for being treated differently - it is others who treat people differently.
* When the document talks about ‘closing’ the gap, should it be aspiring to more e.g. ‘addressing’ the gaps i.e. the circumstances and crating the conditions for change.
* Emphasised the need to make sure the concepts and principles are grounded within and across the strategy, and that they are not open to interpretation.
* Is there scope to write in that departments *have* to work together?
* Need a political/government message that affirms the strategy will be delivered collectively.
* For some groups/individuals there is a sense that nothing is changing;
* Strategy should include case studies;
* Does it matter that PfG is not finalised?

**Children as Leaders**

* The documentation appears to have an emphasis on empowering children and young people and this is to be welcomed.
* C&YP lack confidence and motivation to engage with any structures.
* ‘Positive contribution’ is a positive outcome and should include an indicator that aims to increase capacity/ability to engage with public deliverable agencies’’.
* Children as change makers – children certainly have the potential to be change makers but need support to do this recognising that they still live in society emerging from the legacy of the conflict which is still segregated I many ways.
* Champions for Change. The outcome relating to this is ok, but the indicator is weak. This should be improved.
* The strategy should detail how capacity building work is going to be supported and sustained and any future pilots should emphasis this focus on capacity building.
* Need to talk about children and young people as positive forces and not as a problem to be solved.
* Rosenberg self-esteem scale – need to invest in C&YP to become leaders/develop ability to deal with difficult issues.
* Recommends the development of indicators that measure ability/confidence;
* In some rural communities there is a lack of community infrastructure thereby making it more difficult to engage with your community.
* Civic leadership is a big issue.
* We are in danger of creating ‘consumers’ (GoKarted up-to-here) whereas we need to concentrate on creating leaders and innovators – need to ensure that any future strategy supports C&YP to be opinion formers.
* Need to see and support C&YP to become role models.
* Social investment is needed - need a commitment that these types of programmes and interventions will get a higher level of investment;
* Develop an indicator around confidence to engage.
* Would be helpful to include softer outcomes which deal with ‘esteem’.

**Formal Education**

* NI Anti-Bullying Forum can be consulted on issues related to bullying in schools.
* Outcomes are wide ranging and focus on formal education. Need to acknowledge that children and young people learn in different ways – not everyone takes the academic route.
* CRED and Enhancement Scheme – there is uncertainty about status of CRED policy and confusion over linkages to Shared Education.
* Programmes undertaken with children & young people and families are good for attitudinal change BUT to make structural change we need to undertake work with teachers, and this should be taken forward through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) route.
* There should be an indicator for work with teachers.
* Symbolically important to talk about the failure of the current school structure;
* Where do the signature projects go after 2019?
* Sections of the documents relate LGBT as homophobia – the strategy needs to see LGBT issues as ‘non-problem’, and target those who have discriminatory views/attitudes and not the person who is LGB&T.
* There is no mention of integrated education in the draft strategy – this should be included.

**Informal Education**

* There is an over emphasis on ‘formal’ education.
* The draft strategy has an absence of ‘youth work’ and ‘youth service’. It should be included across every area of the strategy.
* The documentation needs to more clearly outline the intention and principles to support youth work.
* Some children and young people want to access mental health service in their communities, not everyone wants to access these services through schools and formal education structures.
* Youth Service running pilot ‘Network for Youth.

**Sectarianism/Mental Health/Legacy**

* Experience with young people has shown that there are no sectarian issues when they are together but rather these issues flare up again when they go back into their own communities.
* Issues relating to physical and mental health, learning and achieving (transfer test and effect on mental health).
* The legacy of the conflict is a thread that runs across the issues raised in the draft strategy.

**Interfaces**

* The draft PfG was ‘interface’ light.
* Interface communities fit in with all the outcomes identified in the draft strategy;
* Would like to see a specific outcome on interfaces;
* There was a discussion about areas of multiple deprivation – they have been the same areas for the last 50 years. Needs and inequalities have to be addressed;
* Interface sites are the sites of violence, but they are not the cause;
* Interfaces are the physical environment for many children growing up;
* It is important to set the strategy against the UNCRC;
* TBUC has a target of 2023 for removing interfaces – this draft strategy needs to deal with what is going to happen in 2024;
* More data is available on the BIP website;
* The departments should be working together on these issues – this is not happening enough;
* Up to the present moment everything has been a sticking plaster – something different is needed;

**Paramilitary activity**

* Paramilitarism – need to develop an assessment around the monitoring of recruitment of C&YP into paramilitary structures;
* The ripple effect of the existence of the paramilitary groups and impact of their actions e.g. punishment beatings, on young people, family and communities living in fear;

**OTHER**

**Outcomes & indicators**

1. Outcomes are linked but are linked negatively i.e. if one collapses then they all collapse

**Information/data sources**

1. Arts council gather data/statistics on C&YP on issues such as community relations/personal development;
2. Cooperation Ireland Research on Young People and Paramilitary Recruitment;

**Next Steps**

1. Participants asked about the action plan;
2. What impact would Direct Rule have on the Strategy?
1. The impact of poverty on young children’s experience of school. Horgan, G. Save the Children. 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Towards A Better Future: The Trans-generational Impact of the Troubles on Mental Health](https://www.cvsni.org/media/1171/towards-a-better-future-march-2015.pdf); Ulster University. 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [Young People’s Transgenerational Issues in Northern Ireland](https://www.cvsni.org/media/1164/young-peoples-transgenerational-issues-in-ni-april-2012.pdf); QUB. 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/microsite/financial\_capability/key\_stage3/big\_picture/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Haydon, D., McAlister, S., Scraton, P. (2009) *Childhood in Transition* Experiencing Marginalisation and Conflict in Northern Ireland. QUB, Save the Children, The Prince’s Trust [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Political violence and young people: Exploring levels of risk, motivations and targeted preventative work. Report on Literature and Field Work; Morrow D, Byrne J, Dougherty B, Gallagher E, Hamber B; Ulster University. 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Sharing over Separation – Actions towards A Shared Future pg 34 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Youth Council submitted responses to OFMDFM’s consultation on Cohesion, Sharing & Integration; Community Relations, Equality and Diversity; and DE’s consultation on Shared Education Policy. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Professor John Paul Lederach; article by Paul Smyth, *From Subject to Citizen? The Role of Youth Work in the Building of Democracy in Northern Ireland* [↑](#footnote-ref-9)