Joint Consultative Forum
Education Sector

10th ANNIVERSARY
2004 - 2014

Emma, Age 18, Tor Bank School, Dundonald
This information can also be made available, on request, in alternative formats including large print, on computer disc, in Braille, on audio-cassette and in minority languages to meet the needs of those people who are not fluent in English.
Section 75 is underpinned by the building of relationships between those who make and deliver public policy and those affected by such policy. Consultation can help us to become aware of problems our policies may pose for individuals and groups, which we might not otherwise discover.

Over the past 10 years, the Joint Consultative Forum [the Forum] has become an important lynchpin in ensuring effective engagement with the community, voluntary and trade union sectors on Section 75 equality issues. Indeed, it’s our experience that, due to the diversity of its membership, it adds considerable value to engagements and consultations and thereby influences our policy making process. It has provided both consultees and public authorities with an opportunity to share experiences and highlight challenges they face and discuss how they are being addressed. It has also proven to be an effective mechanism to up-date and inform consultees on critical work areas, the overall financial/planning context within which the five Boards operate and it has become a platform for discussion on new initiatives across the education sector.

On this, the 10th Anniversary of the establishment of the Joint Consultative Forum, we wish to record our sincere thanks to the members of the Forum for their contribution to the policy-making process. There is no doubt that real change has come about in what we do and how we do it as a result of listening and learning from the experiences of those who use our services.
INTRODUCTION

In 2003 public authorities in the education sector and voluntary sector organisations combined their efforts under the leadership of NICEM to deliver an EU funded programme, aimed at the introduction of anti-discrimination training measures to help create organisational cultures which tackle discrimination and promote diversity. The Boards'/Staff Commission’s experience of managing and co-ordinating consultation events and the implementation of the Anti-Discrimination and Diversity in Action project, led to the proposal to establish a Joint Consultative Forum. Initial contacts within the community, voluntary and trade union sectors and the public authorities in the education sector, confirmed that there was widespread support for the establishment of such a Forum.

The initial meeting of the Forum, which was held on 1 April 2004, was used to gain a better understanding of our respective roles and an insight into some of the issues which consultees believed should form part of the mainstreaming agenda. It was also used to establish structures for the Forum and to identify agenda items for future meetings. The agenda included presentations from community and voluntary organisations and the education authorities. The Forum’s membership includes representatives from all of the Section 75 equality categories. The main issues to emerge from this initial meeting were:

- concerns regarding bullying of children/young people in an educational environment, in particular peer abuse;
- the need to ensure curriculum development around issues such as citizenship, equality, diversity, human rights and social justice; and
- engagement of children/young people in the policy-making and decision-making process.

Speaking at the inaugural meeting, Dame Joan Harbison, former Chief Commissioner with the Equality Commission, said, “I believe that constructive and sustainable partnerships such as this unique Forum are essential to the effective implementation of Section 75.”

This paper will provide you with an outline of what has changed over the past 10 years; it will also highlight programmes of work aimed at tackling educational under-achievement and engagement with children and young people. Further information on any of the policies referred to is available on request. Contact details for all of the Boards’/Staff Commission’s equality representatives are contained on page 20.
WHAT’S CHANGED?

SECTION 75 EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland ['the Commission'] undertook an effectiveness review of the legislation during the period 2006-2008. The Effectiveness Review’s recommendations were to influence the future direction of travel in relation to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

One of the most significant changes to emerge was the shift in focus from concentrating primarily on the process of implementing Section 75, to achieving outcomes within the Section 75 framework. In this context, each specified public authority was required to: submit a revised Equality Scheme; make improvements in its screening of policies; and conduct an audit of inequalities, which would set the context within which it could address inequalities relevant to its functions. The identified inequalities were to be addressed through the development of an equality action plan.

The Equality Commission, commenting on the Boards’/Staff Commission’s initial Audit of Inequalities, welcomed “… the comprehensive approach taken by the Staff Commission and the Education and Library Boards in relation to the development of their audit of inequalities and their proactive approach in engaging and consulting with Section 75 groups at this early stage.”

In November 2013, the Equality Commission published a good practice guide ‘Making Equality Work’. It used case studies to communicate the clear message that ‘good practice adds value to a business’. A section of the publication ‘Education For All - The Passport to the Future’ was dedicated to the work of the Boards/Staff Commission on the completion of the Audit of Inequalities which informed their Equality Action Plan. Deirdre Vaugh explained that “critical to the success of the audit was combining quantitative and qualitative data from the Department and the Boards with the observations and insights of Section 75 consultees and relevant research from the community and voluntary sectors”.

REVIEW OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

On 22 November 2005, following the Review of Public Administration, government announced details for the future management of the education sector. Central to this was to be the establishment of an Education and Skills Authority by April 2008 with its primary function being to support the operational delivery of education across Northern Ireland and a new Northern Ireland Library Authority.

The new library authority, known as ‘Libraries NI’ was established on 1 April 2009. The establishment of the Education and Skills Authority [ESA] was not achieved.

This year, the Minister for Education announced that agreement had been reached at the Executive to establish a single body to replace the five Education and Library Boards and their Staff Commission. A new Bill has been drafted and presented to the Northern Ireland Assembly to give effect to this decision.
WHAT’S NEW?

With the exception of the establishment of Libraries NI the structure of educational administration remains largely unchanged. Over the 10 year period, there have been some very positive developments.

REGIONAL STRUCTURES

A number of inter-Board Units have been established. Examples include:

Regional Equality Unit

The Boards/Staff Commission developed a collaborative approach to the implementation of the Section 75 Equality Duties under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Disability Duties under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The outworking of the Equality Commission’s Effectiveness Review prompted the Boards, in June 2012, to create a dedicated Unit within the Boards’ Central Management Support Unit, to coordinate the implementation of the statutory equality, disability equality and good relations duties.

Regional Vision Resource Base

In recent years this Unit has produced adapted textbooks and customised resources to schools across the Board areas. These resources have included individualised customised textbooks, enlarged print, Braille and pdfs. In conjunction with the RNIB, it has established a loan library of specialist equipment which can be borrowed for pupils to try out before purchasing individual equipment.

www.education-support.org.uk/parents/special-education/rvrb
Established during April 2013, and following the launch of the DE Traveller Framework in November 2013, a five Board Delivery Plan was disseminated to all schools with Traveller pupils. The implementation of the Plan has ensured that: all schools with 5 or more Traveller pupils have support; all such schools have completed a Needs Assessment Audit to baseline current issues; additional support is provided to schools with higher than average suspensions; one-to-one or family support is available, as appropriate; and ‘cluster’ arrangements are in place to facilitate the sharing of good practice across schools.

Jim Maye from the inter-Board Traveller Education Service, Valerie Maxwell from Southern Health Trust, Conor McArdle and Deirdre Brady from Craigavon Traveller Support Committee and Traveller parents and children at the commencement of site works for the halting site for Travellers at Brownlow, Craigavon, July 2007.

Established in 2008, the IDS has facilitated the development and application of best practice and strengthened the range of assistance available to newcomer pupils. It is responsible for a variety of work areas from providing school-based support for initial parent/teacher meetings, to follow-up advice on pastoral needs, basic language needs and curriculum support. In addition to this, it provides regional support for new teachers and is raising inter-cultural awareness.

The Common European Framework of Reference is a set of global benchmarks for language proficiency which is being used by IDS to inform planning and track pupil progress.

www.selb.org/tess  
www.neelb.org.uk/teachers/ids
WHAT’S NEW?

REGIONAL POLICIES

The development and implementation of regional policies has also contributed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. Examples include:

The School Catering service across the Boards’ serves an average of 171,000 meals to pupils in nursery, primary, special and post-primary schools each day. 82,000 pupils are entitled to Free School Meals [25.5% of the school population]. There is a 81% uptake of Free School Meals. The benefits of this service include a social opportunity to eat with others, and a freshly prepared hot nutritious meal, which caters for special diets. It is the long-term aim of the Service to develop a “Whole School Approach” to healthy eating.

In this context, it is involved in a number of initiatives which include: breakfast clubs; healthy breaks; and compliance with nutritional standards for school lunches. The food in schools magazine ‘Bite’ is produced by the Boards in collaboration with the Public Health Agency and DE.

An Equality Impact Assessment [EQIA] was conducted, preceded and informed by consultation with Section 75 groups and schools, the results of the EQIA were published in 2011.

Over the next two years, the Boards will facilitate the delivery of a new Leadership and Management Capacity Building Programme for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators or Learning and Support Co-ordinators in all schools.

The five Boards undertook a review of the criteria being utilised for initiating statutory assessment of a child’s special educational needs with the aim of establishing consistency of practice across all five Boards. The ‘Provisional Criteria for Initiating Statutory Assessments of Special Educational Needs and for Making Statements of Special Educational Needs’ was published in September 2009.

SCHOOL CATERING SERVICE

The School Catering service across the Boards’ serves an average of 171,000 meals to pupils in nursery, primary, special and post-primary schools each day. 82,000 pupils are entitled to Free School Meals [25.5% of the school population]. There is a 81% uptake of Free School Meals. The benefits of this service include a social opportunity to eat with others, and a freshly prepared hot nutritious meal, which caters for special diets. It is the long-term aim of the Service to develop a “Whole School Approach” to healthy eating.

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Through the Northern Ireland Anti-bullying Forum [NIABF] [funded by the Department of Education of which the Boards are an integral part], a resource for schools has been produced entitled ‘Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour’. The resource takes a stepped approach to dealing with all forms of bullying.

The NIABF in conjunction with the Boards developed a Regional Capacity Development Pack for training of school staff in the implementation of this resource. Out-centre and school-based training is currently being delivered and Every School a Good School TV has worked with Board officers and schools to produce visual supports to exemplify some of the recommended strategies.

A ‘Bullying Concern Assessment Form’ has been compiled which records the type of incident and type of bullying e.g. physical, verbal and its nature e.g. disability, racist, cyber, sectarian. It records an assessment of the incident, details the intervention strategy implemented and any on-going support and intervention.

Bullying was one of the three main issues to emerge at the initial meeting of the Forum in April 2004; ‘concerns regarding bullying of children/young people in an educational environment, in particular peer abuse’.

Priorities for Youth “Improving Young People’s Lives through Youth Work”, published in 2013, is the overarching policy framework for the future delivery of the youth service.

The Policy recognises that youth work is an important area of education policy and must directly contribute to DE’s overarching vision and priorities for education. The policy also recognises that there is a need to address and minimise the root causes of educational disadvantage and barriers to learning that young people face. Youth work in statutory and voluntary youth settings, schools and through detached and outreach work, provides additional opportunities to support young people’s learning and development and improve employability by re-engaging them with education.

A Regional Advisory Group comprised of representatives from the voluntary and statutory sectors has been established to provide advice to inform the development of a framework which will outline a strategic overview of DE funded youth services assessed as needed to support Priorities for Youth.
WHAT’S NEW?

PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

A range of partnership projects, together with the implementation of the inter-Board Community Relations, Equality and Diversity [CRED] Action Plan, have contributed to both the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. Examples include:

**PARTNERSHIP; INCLUSION; RECONCILIATION; CITIZENSHIP; HISTORY [PIRCH] PROJECT**

Funded by the International Fund for Ireland [IFI], it has brought together young people for reconciliation projects based on specific curriculum areas, namely History and Citizenship. The concept is for schools to work on a partnership basis, sharing and collaborating in many aspects of school life, in what can broadly be described as a ‘shared education’.

Groups of students from Parkhall High and St. Benedict’s College both prepare for climbing wall.

**PRIMARY INTEGRATING AND ENRICHING EDUCATION PROJECT [PIEE]**

This project has been developed through funding secured from the IFI in partnership with Atlantic Philanthropies. The project’s aim was to support primary schools, which are in close geographical proximity but from different sectors, to collaborate.

Whilst the project has ended it has left an important legacy in a number of different areas. An evaluation of it, found that interdependency provided an essential platform for enhanced education practice. Partnerships developed have become embedded within school practice and have continued at the end of the project. The model developed provides for meaningful and sustained contact between young people and adults working within a school setting.

**WELCOMING SCHOOLS PROJECT**

The aim of this initiative funded by the IFI is to ‘develop within schools a welcoming ethos and atmosphere, build on the principles of inclusivity, respect for others and an embracing of diversity within their own school culture’. It provides a unique opportunity for staff of the participating schools to learn, share and work together. It is designed to culminate in an award for any school that achieves Welcoming Schools Status. Of the 18 participating schools, 17 achieved the Award and due to extenuating circumstances, one school did not achieve the award.
**LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER PROGRAMME**

This programme brought together young people aged 11 to 16 from both sides of the community with the aim of encouraging contact, dialogue, promoting reconciliation and community relations.

It was funded by IFI. Under this project, Youth Workers applied their skills of informal social education within school settings to help realise and build the vision of a shared future.

This helped to promote understanding between pupils and staff in paired post-primary schools from the divided and diverse communities of Northern Ireland. It also helped to facilitate integration between the participating schools and the communities within which they were located.

The project also established strong strategic alliances between formal and informal education and delivery was enhanced through the sharing of skills and expertise between youth workers and teachers.

An ETI report on the programme reported that pupils were able to improve their knowledge and understanding of the challenges of learning and living together.

**PROMOTING RECONCILIATION THROUGH A SHARED CURRICULUM EXPERIENCE**

This Project was designed to explore and evaluate the impact of cross-community contact on those areas of the statutory curriculum in primary and post-primary schools which address directly areas of good relations and reconciliation. In primary schools, this is delivered through the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding [PDMU], and in post-primary schools the Local and Global Citizenship, which is part of the Learning for Life and Work strand of the curriculum, is used.

It was designed with a strong evaluation strand to enable the project to establish the extent to which a cross-community contact experience contributes to reconciliation.

A specific curriculum programme has been developed. All schools in the project follow this curriculum, either on a cross-community or individual school basis.

This work is directly related to another of the three main issues to emerge at the initial meeting of the Forum in April 2004, “the need to ensure curriculum development around issues such as citizenship, equality, diversity, human rights and social justice”.

All of the above projects have been evaluated. There is clear evidence that they have encouraged the prioritisation of this work in school development planning, developed pupils’ understanding of, and appreciation for diversity through the embedding of this work at cross curricular level. [The ETI ‘First interim evaluation on the International Fund for Ireland’s Sharing in Education Programme’, June 2012, covers 19 specific projects.]

Furthermore, the evidence demonstrates that high-quality shared education contributes to better learning for young people.
TACKLING EDUCATIONAL UNDER-ACHIEVEMENT

The tackling of educational under-achievement and the promotion of equality of opportunity are inextricably linked. Whilst the main thrust of the Boards activities are directly related to improving educational standards, there are a number of noteworthy projects which contribute both to raising achievement and educational aspiration and which will provide the basis for established best practice across the education sector. Examples include:

**Achieving Belfast and Achieving Derry - Bright Futures**

This programme was constructed and developed to target those schools that were in the most challenging circumstances and with the potential to under-achieve.

The participating schools are being provided with intensive support for literacy and numeracy and through a multi-agency approach, are receiving wrap-around support to take account of socio-economic issues. Project Action Plans are in place. To date all proposed targets have been achieved.

There is evidence in participating schools of improvements in examination results and a decrease in the number of pupils leaving school without any qualifications.

**Delivering Social Change Programme**

The OFMDFMs’ Delivering Social Change framework seeks to co-ordinate key actions across Government Departments to take forward work on priority social policy areas.

In October 2012, OFMDFM announced a ‘Delivering Social Change Programme: Undertaking additional literacy and numeracy measures’.

Under this programme almost 300 recently graduated teachers who were not currently in work, have been employed to deliver one-to-one tuition, where appropriate, for children in primary and post-primary schools who are currently struggling to achieve even basic educational standards.

The project will operate for a 2 year period. Individual pupils have been identified for support using performance data. Baseline information has been recorded against individual pupils with targets and success criteria identified together with the specific planned intervention. All participating schools are being monitored and each school has an end of year evaluation report to complete.
The Boards are represented on the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership. It has developed a three year action plan which has a focus on early intervention and family support and planning for specific groups of children and young people in specific localities, through Regional Sub Groups.

These Groups bring together expertise from the community, voluntary and statutory sector organisations which share concerns regarding the particular disadvantaged group of children and young people. The sub groups established to date are:

- Young carers [Young carers are children and young people aged up to age 18 who have a substantive caring role for a family member that significantly impacts on their health or development].

- Children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties [EBD] [This group focuses on children or young people suffering emotional or behavioural difficulties which impede or distort personal development and affect relationships, causing distress to the child or young person, their family or community].

- Children and Young People with Disabilities [The focus of this group is children and young people who have a physical, sensory or learning disability or prolonged illness or condition which, in interaction with various barriers, and without the provision of adequate support services, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others and hinder their optimal potential for personal development and social inclusion].

- Transitions [This group will plan what needs to be changed to address the rights and needs of young people with disabilities at transition to adulthood].

- Children, Young People and Offending [The group of young people concerned are defined as children and young people at risk of offending; children and young people in the justice system; and children and young people for whom offending and its consequences present a significant risk].

- Black and Minority Ethnic [BME] Children and Young People [This group is concerned with the specific needs of BME children and young people. BME refers to settled BME communities, Travellers, Asylum Seekers, migrant communities and children of mixed parentage].

- Children and Young People affected by Domestic Violence [This group links on-going work in relation to children affected by domestic violence in NI into the CYPSP].

- Looked after Children and Vulnerable 16+ Young People [The group will link work for this population of children and young people and will ensure that there is no duplication of work with any new process].

Supported by the Participation Network, these plans are being developed in consultation with the disadvantaged group using child friendly materials.
TACKLING EDUCATIONAL UNDER-ACHIEVEMENT

**PATHWAYS PROJECT**
The Pathways Project is an alternative education project (AEP) which aims to work with those young people who have been excluded or have disengaged from mainstream education. They are a very vulnerable group in relation to mental health issues, substance misuse, criminality, paramilitary influences and suicidal ideation.

Engagement with the group, through youth services, was difficult at times and apathy was clearly an issue for many of the participants. However, discussion work around sensitive issues e.g. flags and emblems was particularly beneficial, with many young people expressing a diverse set of attitudes and opinions and working together in group work to explore these differences with respect and compromise.

**The Pathways Project, Belfast**

www.pathwaysproject.aepf.org

**BELONG PROJECT**
The Belong Project has been funded by Atlantic Philanthropies as an inter-agency family support programme for 7-12 year olds and is dedicated to promoting a sense of Belonging amongst BME children [including Travellers] within the wider community.

The strategy is to realise this overarching outcome through achieving the following set of more specific outcomes: increasing cultural confidence and competence; increasing participation in clubs and schools; increasing educational achievement of Traveller children; reducing bullying and racial harassment; and increasing resilience. The Project brings together staff from the inter-Board Inclusion and Diversity Service and the Traveller Education Support Services to improve children’s sense of belonging and their educational attainment.

Activities include mentoring support, out of school hours learning, school staff development, parental learning, and networking between clusters of schools.

www.belongni.org
**EXTENDED SCHOOLS ACTIVITIES**

The Boards have worked together to collate a range of case studies which highlight best practice in the Extended Schools’ programme across Northern Ireland. These case studies can be viewed on the inter-Board website [www.niesis.org](http://www.niesis.org). They have been categorised to reflect the aims of the children and young peoples’ package. The categories are:

- reducing underachievement;
- fostering health, well-being and social inclusion;
- improving life chances; and
- integrating the delivery and support services for children and young people.

It also includes information on how individual school action plans and cluster action plans help each school deliver against their school development targets.

There is a new section detailing the background to the new DE ‘Community Education Initiative Programme’ which allocates new additional funding to the areas of highest deprivation across Northern Ireland.

**LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN [LAC]**

Whenever there are difficulties in caring for a child at home and it is not possible, or in the child’s welfare interest for them to remain at home, the decision can be made for a statutory agency to become legally involved to look after the child.

**THE ATTACHMENT PROJECT [TAP]**

A new project, the first of its kind in Northern Ireland, has been set up to provide support within the education system to Looked After Children [LAC]. It is now in its third year of implementation. TAP is a specialist intervention for children and young people with a traumatic background. The key to this approach is consistency, acceptance, the building of trusting relationships and the modelling of relationship reparation instead of rejection.

It is based on a collaborative inter-agency approach. The TAP team consists of a number of professionals [Head of Therapeutic Support Service, Education Project Worker - Belfast Trust and Trainee Educational Psychologists also including the Senior Education Welfare Officer [LAC in Education Support Service BELB/SEELB].

The TAP Team has provided support to all of the young people involved within the project through the provision of whole school awareness training; key adult training and consultations with key adults.
In 2007, new Disability Duties were introduced in GB. Most of the duties were already covered in Northern Ireland under Section 75, with two exceptions. These were the legal requirement to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and to increase their participation in public life. It was at an inter-Board/Staff Commission event, organised in partnership with Disability Action and MENCAP, that the idea of a disability survey originated. It was pointed out that, whilst we educate children with disabilities, do we ever ask them, “how is it for them?”

The Boards/Staff Commission and CCMS, having reflected on these views, agreed to co-operate in conducting a piece of research. It was recognised that very little information on the school-based experiences of this group of children and young people was available. A sample of approximately 1000 children, 221 primary and 42 post-primary schools were identified. 936 pupils from 145 primary and 36 post-primary schools completed the questionnaires, which is a very high response rate, given the pressures under which schools operate. The findings of the survey were published with copies available on request.

The survey was conducted against a backdrop of what was anticipated to be a period of unprecedented change in the education sector resulting from the implementation of the Review of Public Administration.

In addition to the actual findings of the survey, which were integrated into the Boards'/Staff Commission’s Equality Action Plan, it was noted that this model of engagement could be utilised on a much broader basis to obtain feedback from pupils in the education sector on their experiences of the school system.

It is envisaged that the model of educational administration which ultimately emerges will explore the extension of this research to children and young people across the Section 75 grounds, as appropriate.
The participation of children in school life should be promoted as part of the process of learning…” (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Council 2001).

Many schools already have in place forms of pupil participation. The DE Circular [Circular Number 2014/14] issued in June 2014, is designed to encourage and support those working in all grant-aided schools, to have effective forms of engagement to help children and young people to participate in making decisions that affect them. This circular provides information on the benefits of participation, explains what it is, how it works, how it can be evaluated, signposts good practice, and where support and help is available. Most importantly, the circular provides information on how it can be integrated into policy and practice within the school, for example, the extent to which pupils have been involved in the school development plan.

At Coleraine High School, the Council consists of a representative from each form class; appointed by School Council elections, responsible for the voicing of the opinions and concerns of their form class at School Council meetings.
ENGAGEMENT WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

YOUTH SERVICE AREA ACTION PLANS

The Boards’ Youth Services have a proven track record of engagement with children and young people in the policy-making and policy implementation processes.

Youth Service Area Action Plans are in operation across all Council areas of NI. In developing these Plans extensive needs, assessments were undertaken along with consultation with staff, young people and stakeholders.

These Plans demonstrate how the Youth Service, in particular, supports the “raising of standards” and “closing the gap”, through its work on many of the core issues facing young people by helping them to address their barriers to learning.

The Plans encapsulate generalist and targeted youth provision. Generalist youth provision ensures that supportive environments are made available to a significant proportion of young people, to help them to enhance their personal skills, levels of motivation and general resilience and to help them to develop their ability to interact with other young people and adults. Targeted provision seeks to address the direct impact of exclusion and marginalisation, addressing key themes of work, such as risk-taking health behaviour, sectarianism and racism, disaffection and low levels of attainment in school, while also focusing resources on specific groups of young people that are most marginalised.

A separate report has been compiled by the Youth Service Inclusion Unit in each Board. A sample of the projects being implemented is included below.

ROMA YOUNG MALES GROUP

The Board has developed initiatives that rely less on language and more on visual and physical activities as a means of continuing to engage with Roma young males, aged 12-16, in a meaningful and fun way.

Football/multi-sports continues to be popular in helping relationships to form between group members and facilitators. The young people have recently designed a badge to identify their personal Romanian origins on their sponsored football kits. The football enthusiasm of the group has been used to engage with football teams across the Board area to allow the young Roma group to mix with local young people and provide opportunities for local youths to gain an understanding of their Roma neighbours.
The Coleraine Peace Programme involved two groups of young people from the Coleraine area who have a history of involvement in community conflict at an interface area of the town. The Dublin Programme came about as a result of months of work with the two groups looking at Identify, Peace Building and Group Dynamics. This progressed to a process of mediation between the two groups and a series of joint planning meetings during May and June. Twenty-three young people took part in the programme which included cultural visits, discussion groups and social activities.

After a tense beginning the groups worked well together and honest and open dialogue was facilitated and good levels of social interaction were achieved. The growth for some young people was evident. They showed a willingness to engage with others and take risks to facilitate group development.

From the youth workers’ point of view it was felt that the objectives of ‘facilitating dialogue’, ‘broadening horizons’, ‘a challenging of stereotyping and urban myths’ and the opportunity to assess ‘movement and growth’ were met to a large degree and provided a solid foundation to deliver an extensive programme over the summer period.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board Lisburn BME project was established to specifically meet the needs of BME [Black & Minority Ethnic] young people, increase their participation in youth service, build cultural confidence and increase their knowledge and understanding of discrimination and diversity. The project has included over 100 young people aged 13-18 years old from more than twelve nations. The young people have shared experiences and worked together to tackle discrimination and promote diversity and good relations through, international youth exchange projects, environmental awareness initiatives, employability courses and leadership development. A number of the young people are also taking on volunteering and young leadership roles within their local community.

Young people from the Lisburn BME Project recently hosted an SEELB Inclusion conference exploring themes of discrimination, equality and diversity. The Lisburn B.M.E. Project continues to promote equality of opportunity and good relations and provides a stepping stone into youth service provision for newcomer B.M.E. families.
ENGAGEMENT WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**Inclusion Champions**

‘Inclusion Champions’ involves young people who are active participants in youth provision and who wish to promote and champion Inclusion in their youth groups, communities and schools. The programme aims to promote inclusion and improve young people’s lives through youth work and specifically focuses on equality legislation. Young people are provided with opportunities to explore and consider the implementation of Section 75 and the causes and impact of prejudice and discrimination on individuals and the community.

The programme is designed to equip participants with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to effectively champion Inclusive practice within their youth projects specifically, and within their peer groups. Following this programme groups develop an Inclusion Action Plan for their project which is implemented within their youth provision with the support of their leader in charge. The programme has recently been accredited at OCN Level 1 thus increasing the educational achievement of participants.

**Inclusion in the Outdoors 2014**

The programme aimed to introduce young people from Section 75 groupings and mainstream young people to a range of outdoor education activities and experiences. Eight young people with learning disabilities and four young carers were provided with the opportunity to gain the widely recognised accredited ‘John Muir Discovery Award’. To achieve this each young person had to complete four challenges; Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share. Participants were then required to provide evidence of completion of each challenge in their record books recording their experiences in words, pictures, poetry, sketches or songs. The use of DVDs and ICT was also encouraged as a useful tool in both promoting the achievements of the young person and the John Muir Trust. One of our parents at the information evening commented on this achievement, “The opportunity to try new things was tremendous and I liked the idea of my child gaining an accredited award that she could progress through”.

A wide range of outdoor education activities were undertaken at Shannaghmore Outdoor Education Centre, Newcastle from 30th June - 4th July. This included canoeing, orienteering, bouldering, mountain biking, nightline and the low/ high ropes courses. Environmental activities included a litter pick along the Annalong coastal path, removal of invasive species from pathways and adjacent woodland in Silent Valley for the Mourne Heritage Trust and pond dipping / fossil collecting at Annalong Beach.
Prior to the arrival of the young people from the inclusion groupings the participants also received Disability Awareness Training which focused on Autism Awareness as the majority of the young people with disabilities were on this spectrum. Through the outdoor education activities opportunities were provided to develop new skills, build confidence and work together as a team irrespective of ability/disability. Problem solving through team challenges and participation in the range of environmental activities undertaken developed new skills, knowledge and experience in the outdoors.

**Buddies Programme**

Young people with autism can experience high levels of social exclusion, marginalisation and isolation due to the triad of impairments typical of the autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The Western Board’s Youth Service Inclusion Unit is delivering a programme that offers structure and time for young people with ASD to integrate and become familiar with mainstream youth provision with the support of informed and understanding peers.

The programme aims to provide a structured and well planned environment for young people with autism to encourage their participation in mainstream youth provision. An important element of the programme is that young people are being trained as ‘Buddies’. Buddies are peers who are provided with training to increase their understanding of ASD.

A participant of the programme, a young person with ASD explained, “I feel like I’m understood and not treated differently”. A parent of a young person with autism said, “The Buddies were fantastic - very well trained, understanding, caring, friendly and amazing. It’s apparent the Buddies are interested, committed and want to be here. My son has become more comfortable, aware, mature and outgoing”.

**LGBT Youth & Allies Group**

The Western Board has been working in partnership with local LGBT groups to establish an LGBT Youth & Allies group for young people aged 14-18 in the Omagh and Strabane area. The group planned and delivered LGB&T awareness raising training. Feedback from one of the workshops indicated that it was empowering for all the young people involved, as they came away with information on appropriate language and an increased understanding of the impact of homophobic and transphobic bullying.

In addition to training initiatives, support was provided to facilitate a consultation event on the OFMDFM Sexual Orientation Strategy for the LGBT Youth and Allies groups. One member stated, “It was great that someone took the time to help us provide feedback on a policy that is going to have such a huge impact for us. We probably wouldn’t have been able to give feedback without this help”.

Inclusion in the Outdoors 2014 continued

Prior to the arrival of the young people from the inclusion groupings the participants also received Disability Awareness Training which focused on Autism Awareness as the majority of the young people with disabilities were on this spectrum. Through the outdoor education activities opportunities were provided to develop new skills, build confidence and work together as a team irrespective of ability/disability. Problem solving through team challenges and participation in the range of environmental activities undertaken developed new skills, knowledge and experience in the outdoors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</table>

**CURRENT FIVE BOARD/ STAFF COMMISSION EQUALITY REPRESENTATIVES**
OFFICE BEARERS 2004 - 2014

Tansy Hutchinson, NICEM
  Joint Chair
  April 2004 - January 2007

Paschal McKeown, Mencap
  Joint Chair
  October 2007 - to date

John Curran, Inter-Board Central Management Support Unit
  Joint Chair
  April 2004 - to date

Nicky McBride, SEELB
  Acting Joint Chair
  February 2012 - June 2012

Deirdre Vaugh, Staff Commission
  Secretary
  April 2004 - June 2012

Cathy Lavery, Inter-Board Regional Equality Unit
  Secretary
  June 2012 - to date

Patricia Murray, Staff Commission
  Assistant Secretary
  April 2004 - to date