



Pilot Network for Youth

EA Summary Review
&
Recommendations

July 2017

Introduction & Background

“Consultation on proposals for a Network for Youth was completed in 2008 and a ‘Network of Networks’ option agreed.” At that time it was also agreed *“to use existing resources to build on and strengthen the networks and systems that are already in place for young people”* (Priorities for Youth 2013, 4.19). This provided the context and starting point for a set of actions in the policy document relating to participation (4.20.1 to 4.20.5).

In relation to a Network for Youth (action 4.20.3), the then Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI) were tasked, in collaboration with key sectoral partners and young people, to develop options for a flexible contemporary model for strengthening participation in the youth service at a local, sub-regional and regional level. In summer 2015 a Regional Youth Development Plan (RYDP) Action Group, inclusive of young people, was established to take forward and scope out a pilot model for the Network for Youth, taking into account existing and emerging participative structures and forums.

The Action Group reported in spring 2016 which provided the basis for the Education Authority to draw up a specification and application form, which was publicly advertised in September 2016, inviting applications from voluntary organisations or consortia to pilot the agreed Network of Networks options for the Network for Youth between November 2016 and March 2017.

Appointment

A nine person, cross-sectoral Assessment Panel, inclusive of young people, met on Wednesday 26th October 2016. From that meeting the Northern Ireland Youth Forum (NIYF), in partnership with the organisations below, was selected to deliver the pilot, with funding awarded up to a maximum of £59,833:

- Fóram na nÓg, Include Youth, YouthAction NI, Young Farmers’ Clubs of Ulster

Monitoring & Evaluation

A monitoring & evaluation framework was devised for the pilot, which included regular programme and financial monitoring reports, the production of a baseline audit of youth participation structures and a summative evaluation report.

EA Review & Assessment of Agreed Areas for Action

The Pilot had five key Areas for Action to deliver on and the following assessment is based on information provided by NIYF in 3 monitoring reports, an evaluation report and audit of participation structures. It is also drawn from the EA Youth Officer's attendance at, and participation in, 3 monitoring update meetings; 3 steering group / partnership meetings; 1 sub-regional event; and the regional Youth Fest event (all of which took place between 7 December 2017 and 29 March 2017).

Agreed Area for Action	EA Assessment & Summary of achievements
<p>1) Bring together a Reference Group of young people to input to, and provide feedback on, the effectiveness of the Network for Youth.</p>	<p>Achieved 12 young people were recruited to act as 'Youth Participation Champions' (YPCs). - 1 non-binary, 2 males, 9 females</p> <p>The young people were primarily recruited from the 5 NfY partner organisations but a number were also participants in EA local youth council structures.</p> <p>Training was provided to the group in understanding participation and facilitation skills. The YPCs designed evaluation forms for the 5 sub-regional events held facilitated discussion groups. The YPCs were significantly involved in the planning, organisation and delivery of the NfY Youth Fest event (see Area for Action 5).</p>
<p>2) Establish a baseline of youth participation structures within the DE/EA funded youth work sector above the unit level; and categorised, e.g. as local, sub-regional, community of interest or regional.</p>	<p>Achieved A Baseline Audit of Youth Participation Structures was undertaken and a final report produced April 2017.</p> <p>The Audit focussed on DE/EA funded youth work sector above unit level. 80 organisations responded to the online survey with 58 being deemed as Youth Participation Structures - 23 out of these are run by EA with 35 run by voluntary sector organisations.</p>
<p>3) Develop and maintain a communication strategy including a bespoke online mechanism to enable effective communication between local, sub-regional, community of interest and regional participation structures.</p>	<p>Achieved Web & social media presence established and promoted. An online Participation Hub was live and there have been 11 contributions to it. http://www.niyf.org/showcase/ http://www.niyf.org/network-organisations/ http://www.niyf.org/blog-2/ http://www.niyf.org/participation-hub/</p> <p>Participation Resources have been shared online with 9 resources now available.</p> <p>6 newspapers published the stories based on a press release and 2 YPCs were interviewed on 'U105'.</p>

Agreed Area for Action	EA Assessment & Summary of achievements
<p>4) Create a flexible 'membership' criteria, invite application to and generate a record of local (i.e. above unit level), sub-regional, community of interest and regional participation structures, from across the DE/EA funded youth work sector, that sign up to and engage in the Network.</p>	<p>Partly Achieved Young people supported by the NfY Participation Worker have developed a draft NfY membership criteria. This Area for Action is only Partly Achieved as the definition of participation structure membership and the NfY membership criteria requires further discussion with EA.</p> <p>A database, based on the 80 respondents to the Audit questionnaire, has been initiated.</p> <p>There was ongoing promotion and dissemination of the concept of the NfY via social media and presentations by NIYF and its partner organisations at the various meetings and events they attend (e.g. presentation to YCNI 27/04/17).</p>
<p>5) Facilitate networking opportunities to develop positive relationships with others, increase participation and share examples of good participatory practice at all levels, within and between those that sign up to the Network from across the DE/EA funded youth work sector.</p>	<p>Achieved As agreed in the project work-plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Sub-regional networking events & 3 Community of Interest workshops took place engaging 203 young people • 1 Regional networking event took place on March 25th 2017 • 6 Practitioner workshops were delivered involving 33 workers <p>Additionally, 3 Preparation for Participation workshops were undertaken with groups with no significant or previous experience of external networking</p>

Summary of EA recommendations for the further roll-out of the Network for Youth

The establishment of the Network for Youth is a key output in the Regional Youth Development Plan (2017-2020).

DE Priority: Improving the Learning Environment				
Area for Action	Outputs	Outcomes	Measurement/Target	PfY
Participation – Voice of young people in decision-making	Network for Youth established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people able to influence others, advocate on behalf of others or take on representative roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot Network for Youth reviewed April 2017 Revised Terms of Reference for Network for Youth in place by April 2018 Annual Monitoring of Network for Youth in December 2018 & 2019 	4.20.3

Based on the learning from the Pilot the recommendations are as follows:

1. Within the boundaries of the RYDP planning and budgeting periods, EA will agree a resource allocation for the Network for Youth (Network of Networks option), modelled on the pilot funding allocation.
2. EA will draft a revised specification and invite submission from suitably experienced organisations to establish the Network for Youth (Network of Networks option). The specification will, among other things, include:
 - i. A Youth Steering Panel inclusive, as far as practicably possible, of young people from around Northern Ireland, of mixed community background and reflective of the wider youth population, and who are currently engaged in a controlled or EA registered/recognised youth participation structure;
 - ii. A strategic partnership with place(s) allocated to an EA representative(s) specialising in and/or with knowledge of participation across the region;
 - iii. A strategic planning 'Away Day' to facilitate the cross-sectoral sharing of information and capacity building at the strategic level;
 - iv. Maintenance of a database of controlled and EA registered/recognised youth participation structures;
 - v. The delivery of at least 5 sub-regional (geographic events), 3 community of interest events, 1 inclusive regional event and the further development of work initiated in the Pilot on '*Preparation for Participation*' workshops in geographic or thematic areas with low capacity or no functioning youth participation structures.
3. For the purposes of the Network for Youth (Network of Networks option), agree a definition of a participation structure.
4. Agree membership criteria for the Network for Youth (Network of Networks option).