

Terms of Reference for Youth Service Regional Advisory Group

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this document is to provide a revised Terms of Reference (TOR) for collaborative stakeholder engagement in the development of the Regional Youth Development Plan (RYDP) which addresses DE priorities in the context of Priorities for Youth: Priority 1, Action point 2). The Regional Advisory Group (RAG) is intended to operate on the basis of information sharing, collaboration and partnership.

2. Background and Strategic Context

- 2.1 The RAG was established in 2014 by the Department of Education (DE), in line with the recommendation contained in Priorities for Youth (PfY) (October 2013), and is made up of stakeholders including those with expertise and interest in youth service policy, practice and delivery.
- 2.2 The Services provided through the delivery and implementation of PfY involves both universal and targeted youth provision delivered in partnership with Regional Voluntary, Local and Statutory youth organisations.

3. Purpose of the Regional Advisory Group

“The Regional Youth Development Plan (RYDP) will address the DE priorities in the regional or local context and will be informed through stakeholder engagement in the form of Advisory Groups.”

Priorities for Youth - Priority 1(2)

- 3.1 The purpose of the RAG is to provide strategic advice to the EA to inform its development of a rolling 3 year Regional Youth Development Plan which will outline a strategic overview of the DE-funded regional and local youth service provision. The aim is to provide full and meaningful engagement across the sector in the context of the RYDP.
- 3.2 To achieve its purpose, the main objectives of the RAG are:
 - a) To provide advice to the Education Authority (EA) to inform the development of rolling 3 year RYDP to address DE priorities in the regional context;
 - b) To consider and provide advice to the EA on the delivery of youth services reflecting regional needs and priorities for both universal (raising standards for all) and targeted (closing the performance gap) provision to meet the needs of specific groups of young people (as set out in PfY 4.8.4)

Where a specific issue needs to be considered, appropriate representation should be arranged.

- c) To provide advice to the EA on progress on the outcomes of key targets and overall direction of the implementation of PfY;
- d) To provide input into the annual RAG/LAG Conference;
- e) To ensure that Children and Young People have the space to express their views and have their views taken into account on key issues important to them (Article 12 of the UNCRC);
- f) To provide advice to the EA on any other youth service areas as required on which the EA may decide to seek advice.

3.3 Specific priorities will be implemented via annual Youth Development Plans across all levels. Section 8 deals with sub-regional Local Advisory Groups.

3.4 DE expects the EA to seek advice from the RAG and to consider this advice when developing its strategic RYDP. Early engagement of the RAG at all stages of the development of the RYDP by the EA is required.

3.5 Final decisions in relation to the RYDP, and any other area for which the RAG provides input to will be taken by the EA as the accountable body in line with the overall framework, priorities and budget established by DE. All education policy remains the responsibility of the Minister for Education.

4. Role of the Members

4.1 The role of members is:

- a) To engage with both their own sector organisation and Children and Young People to consider and provide meaningful feedback to the RAG on agenda items or key issues important to them;
- b) To provide comments/additional agenda items as appropriate in advance of RAG meetings;
- c) To provide feedback to and from the youth organisations/groups which they represent.

5. Membership

5.1 Membership is intended to reflect the broad and varied EA funded youth sector groups, DE and other relevant Government Departments, EA, and YCNI the aim is to ensure that RAG represents a proportionate, balanced and representative grouping which reflects the key interests of youth work stakeholders, with

members contributing on the basis of their experience, knowledge and skills. Members may represent more than one group/sector.

- 5.2 The RAG should have a minimum of 20 members.
- 5.3 Voluntary sector representatives will be nominated through one or more representative organisations, which will ensure that nominations represent the breadth of interests across the voluntary youth sector (including urban/rural interests). The representative organisation(s) identified will be asked to put in place a mechanism to facilitate a two-way flow of communication between members/organisations appointed to the RAG through its processes and the wider voluntary youth sector. This will ensure that members have the capacity to represent and advocate on behalf of the wider voluntary youth network and not just their own individual organisations.
- 5.4 Members are invited to seek views from, and to report back to their organisations on the business conducted at RAG meetings.
- 5.5 Members are invited to participate in accordance with the shared values and principles of the Concordat between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the NI Government.
- 5.6 Any member unable to attend will be entitled to send a deputy, with prior agreement from the Chairperson. See paragraph [12] regarding termination.
- 5.7 An organisation may nominate new members from within their organisation at any time with the prior agreement from the Chairperson.
- 5.8 Members will consider and review membership of the RAG as required. Membership of the RAG will be formally reviewed on a three yearly basis to ensure that the group continues to be relevant and fit for the purpose intended
- 5.9 The EA will organise an induction session for new members in relation to the operation of the RAG

6. Chairperson

- 6.1 The RAG will be chaired by a senior official of the EA. The Chairperson will be responsible for co-ordinating agenda items, managing the agenda and leading discussions at the meetings. Where written advice is to be provided to the EA, the group will decide which member(s) will take the lead on behalf of the group.

7. Secretariat

- 7.1 The secretariat for the RAG will be provided by the EA.
- 7.2 The secretariat is responsible for issuing a schedule of meetings, arranging meetings, preparing the agenda with input invited from members, ensuring that

papers are circulated to the group at least seven days in advance of a meeting, where possible, and taking and circulating a record of meetings.

- 7.3 The timing/location of the meetings can be rotated by request from members and will be agreed by members in advance of each meeting to accommodate the maximum attendance of Children and Young People and members outside of Belfast.

8. Involvement of Children and Young People

- 8.1 Network for Youth representatives are invited to attend the RAG to represent the key views/issues expressed by children and young people.
- 8.2 Representation from the Network for Youth may be rotated based on the agenda items and the availability of members to attend with prior agreement from the Chairperson.
- 8.3 A staff member from the Network for Youth consortium will be invited to attend the meeting to accompany and provide support to representatives from the Network for Youth. In the event that young people cannot attend RAG, the NfY staff member can present agreed feedback on their behalf.
- 8.4 An update from children and young people will be included as appropriate on the RAG Agenda items.

9. Meeting Format and Arrangements

- 9.1 The meeting format will be agreed by the EA. The RAG will meet as often as is required. Meetings will be planned as far in advance as possible to facilitate maximum attendance.
- 9.2 A record of each meeting will be circulated in draft and agreed at the next meeting.

10. Review

- 10.1 The work of the RAG will be subject to annual review by the Chairperson, taking into account RAG members views and feedback. Regular in-year reviews will be undertaken as required drawing on member's feedback provided via an online survey/questionnaire following each meeting.
- 10.2 DE will consider the detail of the review conducted by the EA and may revise the Terms of Reference and/or membership, as required, this will ensure that the group continues to be relevant and fit for the purpose intended.
- 10.3 The Terms of Reference of the RAG may be amended/supplemented from time to time by the issue of new or additional guidance by DE.

Termination of Membership

- 10.4 Any organisation which is absent from meetings for a period of six consecutive months, or three consecutive meetings, whichever is the lesser period, will be considered as having withdrawn from RAG membership and will be notified accordingly by EA.
- 10.5 In the event a member leaves their representative organisation during the term of the group, a suitable replacement will be sought to ensure broad representation is maintained across the sector.
- 10.6 RAG members will be updated (as required) and can be found on the EA Website: <https://www.eani.org.uk/services/youth-service/governance-and-leadership/regional-advisory-group>

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