

Joint Consultative Forum

Equality and Diversity Unit

1 April 2021: Zoom

	Attending	Place of work	Contact
1.	Matthew McDermott	Head of Equality and Diversity (EA)	Matthew.mcdermott@eani.org.uk
2.	Geraldine McMahon		Geraldine.McMahon@eani.org.uk
3.	Leigh Noble	MENCAP	leigh.noble@mencap.org.uk
4.	Aisling Twomey	Rainbow Project	aisling@rainbow-project.org
5.	Helen Ferguson	The National Deaf Children's Society	helen.ferguson@ndcs.org.uk
6.	Jacqueline McKinstry	Head of Human Resources Libraries NI	Jacqueline.McKinstry@librariesni.org.uk
7.	Lesley Kerr	Policy Officer, MEA	lesley.kerr@midandeantrim.gov.uk
8.	Breidge McPherson	Women's Centre Derry, Children's Advocate	breidgemcpherson@womenscentre.co.uk
9.	Lee Cullen	Cara Friend	Head of Youth Services
10.	Kathleen Toner	NI Fostering	kathleen.toner@fostering.net
11.	Sandra E. Douglas	Retired teacher, TUS	sed48@hotmail.com
12.	Emalyn Turkington	Training & Education Manager, Nexus	emalyn.turkington@nexusni.org
13.	Heather McKinstry	TUS officer	heather.mckinstry@eani.org.uk
14.	Catherine Ward	SEND Implementation Team	Catherine.Ward@eani.org.uk
15.	Gemma Attwood	Community Relations Council	gattwood@nicrc.org.uk
16.	Clodagh Hanna	St Mary's University College	c.hanna@stmarys-belfast.ac.uk
17.	Alastair Donaghy	NEU Northern Ireland	alastair.donaghy@neu.org.uk
18.	Natalie Swanson	Comms/ send sdp	Natalie.Swanson@eani.org.uk
19.	Kieran Shields	Head of IES	Kieran.Shields@eani.org.uk
20.	Rachel Hogan	Children's Law Centre	rachel@childrenslawcentre.org

	Attending	Place of work	Contact
21.	Alex McFarland	Senior child psychologist, CYPS	Alex.Mcfarland@eani.org.uk
22.	Richard Magowan	Department of Education	Richard.Magowan@education-ni.gov.uk
23.	Ange Wallace		ange.wallace60@gmail.com
24.	Peter Hamil		edunorth@ireland.anglican.org
25.	Donna Wiggett	AEP (region 8 rep)	donna.wiggett@aep.org.uk
26.	Bronagh Wright	NEU NI President 20/21	bronagh.wright@neu.org.uk
27.	Eliza Browning	Committee on the Administration of Justice	eliza@caj.org.uk
28.	Kelly Maxwell	Autism NI Director, Family Support	kelly.maxwell@autismni.org
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33.	Equal Ops team	EA	Paul.mcnamee@eani.org.uk Marjory.cooke@eani.org.uk Bert.traynor@eani.org.uk
35.	Equality Managers	EA	Adele.davidson@eani.org.uk Emma.patterson@eani.org.uk

	Apologies	
1	Rhyannon Blythe	Director, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
2	Donal Collin	ECNI
3	Niamh Devlin	NICCY
4	Robyn Scott	Equality Coalition
5	Clare Duffield	HR & LS, Director, EA

* Please note this is a list of those who requested a link to the meeting, not all attended or attended the full session.

Joint Consultative Forum – Meeting Note

Equality and Diversity Unit

1 April 2021: Zoom

Welcome and Overview

Matthew McDermott welcomed members to the meeting and outlined the intentions of this forum; an opportunity to engage with our colleagues, stakeholders and wider community to review our current screening practices and obtain feedback for past and future Action Plans, devised by the Equality and Diversity Unit of EA.

Review of EA Equality Scheme

Matthew McDermott split the cohort into 3 break out rooms, the following points were raised in relation to EA's screening process:

Positive feedback:

- Screening panels have been robust in their challenge (internal stakeholder)
- Collaborative approach with ED Team significant in demystifying the process (internal stakeholder)
- Noted that, generally, screenings by EA are of a higher quality than some other Authorities (external stakeholder)
- Accessible on website and laid out clearly
- Engagement with regards to areas such as transgender were well run and engaged with CVS
- Attendees preferred emails sent out about screenings rather than checking websites for them

Feedback for improvement:

- Often screening can feel retrospective for them and an advance warning of some of the upcoming work would be helpful
- Concerns around disaggregated data, quantitative information stated not giving true picture (external stakeholder)
- Confusion in CVS about who owns what education related policy, DE/ CCEA/ EA etc and therefore who is responsible for screening
- Voices of CYP needed to be paramount to the consultation process
- Often issues being screened is a 'done deal' or direction of travel is already set (external stakeholder)
- Show how feedback is being used effectively, not aware of how the screening affected the policy in the bigger picture
- Recommendation to include socio-economic impact question in screening, along lines of *"Is it likely that those on lower incomes will be disproportionately impacted and is there evidence of geographical variance"*
- During the process, assess **who** is responding and **how** they are responding.

EA Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan, Planning for 2022 – 2027

Matthew McDermott split the forum into 3 rooms again, this time to discuss what members want EA to focus on in the new Equality scheme and new Equality and Disability Action Plans, the feedback has been split into the below themes:

Disability:

- Disability is central to the work and should remain so
- Reasonable adjustments remain key for staff

Gender:

- Be specific on gender disadvantage
- Covid impacts – recognition in future plans of the significant impact of Covid on women, carers, families
- BOG need more training on areas such as transgender and peer support

Race:

- EA should do more anti-racism work in schools and with workforce
- Ensure that Newcomer experience and anticipated needs are given proper focus
- More anti-racism work needed in schools and a push to get schools to record racist or homophobic bullying

Engagement:

- Engagement and improving engagement are central
- Place greater focus on pre-engagement work prior to policy setting and formalise this
- Need to be better at engaging with multiple identities of people
- Plans should include scope and actions for interagency collaborative working

Data:

- Data is central
- Measure who is in and is not in school (which groups)
- Measure outcomes of young people, map the journey and demonstrate impact

Other:

- Be mindful of counter disadvantage
- Do not deviate from model Equality Scheme content – policy definition excellent – but include the additional considerations re socio and rural
- Sectarianism and Good Relations to not become side-lined
- Recognition in Plans regarding mental health climate in NI and impact of Covid on adult and child mental wellbeing. Equality Plans to tie in with/support other EA strategic plans in this area
- Need for e learning platform for schools on Equality and Diversity
- Socio economic is going to be a big issue post covid
- Sexual assault an issue in schools, need to share info with schools on how to tackle this behaviour and report on anonymised data

- Access to education' should be changed to 'equality of opportunity' as this is broader and more inclusive
- Social inclusion should be central to the plans
- EA improvement projects should be embedded into the plans
- Statutory co-operation is key and should be mapped out and committed to

Closing remarks

Matthew McDermott thanked members for such a constructive session and reminded members that this is just the beginning of consultation and engagement, which will be required to draft our new scheme and plans. Matthew McDermott also revealed plans to set up a Youth Panel that will engage directly with young people to get their views going forward.

Session Closed.