

Submission to the Department of Education
for consideration of the
Youth Service Policy Review

22 December 1998

Introduction

NICEM is a voluntary sector, membership-based umbrella organisation representative of minority ethnic groups and their support organisations in Northern Ireland. The Council is committed to collective action informed by people's experience and analysis of their circumstances. In pursuit of equality of opportunity and equity of treatment, NICEM works for social change in relation to racism and in particular to the elimination of racial discrimination.

NICEM with its member organisations and other NGOs produced three volumes of work : "Speaking Out Conference Report : the Health and Social Needs of Ethnic Minorities in Northern Ireland in May 1997, the Action Research Report "Out of the Shadow - Families, Racism and Exclusion in Northern Ireland" in December 1997 and "Youth Against Prejudice" Conference and Evaluation Report in March 1998 which highlight the issues facing by the minority ethnic children and young people. It also provides a guidance of action for the statutory and voluntary sector in response to the needs of minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland.

Deep-rooted historical youth service was about social control of the young generations, it is the time to treat children and young people equally and acknowledge their rights. NICEM welcome the Youth Service Policy Review as this is a significant consultation report since the publication of the blue book, Policy for the Youth Services in Northern Ireland, in 1987.

Young people in Northern Ireland are subject to prejudicial and discriminatory treatment, the current needs and key issues for young people especially from minority ethnic communities are not identified. It is essential to recognise that, "racism, sexism and paternalism all stem from the predisposition to devalue the other person. The youth service has to find ways of demonstrating its opposition to these ills in the way it organises and manages its work, as well as in its programmes....." (Managing youth services, Cattermole, et. Al, 1987, p.127)

Views from NICEM

Considering that young people from minority ethnic communities should obtain an equal start, NICEM has the following comments and recommendations :

- 1. "Many of today's young people...face poverty, unemployment, boredom and sectarian violence." (p.10) "The typical situation of many young people reflects problems that are deep seated and structural, for example, sectarianism, unemployment and poverty." (P.14)**

It is not disputable that the impact of sectarianism as well as racism affected young people from minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland, however their experience of racial prejudice and discrimination is still not recognised by the government. It is not a policy gap to fill in but the essence of mainstreaming minority ethnic issues.

- 2. According to the report, "assessment of the implications of legislation such as the Children Order and UN Convention, etc..."(p.11)**

Our first doubt is about what exists now, i.e. the inventory of youth service provisions for children and young people from minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland ? If the youth service provisions in Northern Ireland, especially the statutory sector, has little arrangements such as purpose, direction, resources and policy for the care of children and young people from minority ethnic communities then what is the next step to meet the needs of them ?

3. “Community development is about involving developing the skills, knowledge and experiences of people in taking initiatives to respond to social, economic and political problems and participate fully in the democratic process. Community development must take a lead in confronting the attitudes of individuals, and the practices of institutions which discriminate against ethnic minorities, women, disabled, religious, elderly, sexually oriented and other disadvantaged groups.....”(Standing Conference for Community Development, 1989) **“Use citizens jury model to involve young people in the evaluation of general youth service policy.” (P.22)** But how to involve young people from minority ethnic communities to engage within this democratic process and exercise their power of rights as citizens ?

4. About “the implication on the Children (NI) Order and the UN Convention” (p.19)

Should Race Relations (NI) Order, new PAFT (Equality Scheme under Northern Ireland Act 1998) and new TSN include in it and take into account ? Should all details of the above legislation and Convention documents as appendix in this consultation report, in particular the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child treats “children as active subjects of care and acknowledge s in international law children’s rights to provision, protection and, for the first time, participation” (Towards a City Health Plan - people’s views, Belfast Healthy City, 1998) ?

5. As “Education Minister George Mudie has indicated that the forthcoming consultation paper on the youth service could herald a major expansion and reform.” (Young People Now, issue 116, Dec., 1998) What is the co-ordination of good youth service, policy and practice regarding to the Republic of Ireland and in the Great Britain ?

6. All training for the youth sector should include anti-racist training and anti-discriminatory practice.

7. About identifies good practice model, as there is no mention of existing support agencies - voluntary sector, community sector, ethnic minority communities and their support organisations which provide significant support and services for ethnic minorities children and their families in Northern Ireland, their invaluable contributions should acknowledges as a vital resource and assets of Northern Ireland.

8. As Northern Ireland is a multi-cultural and multi-racial society, needs analysis (p.13) should be genuine inclusiveness which is more responsive to the needs of children and young people from minority ethnic communities. Since curriculum which is the centre of value-based, it should be more inclusive, culturally sensitive and can promote a positive attitude towards young people from different cultures and traditions. So where are children and young people from minority ethnic communities

? How many young people are there ? How to identify ethnic minorities children and young people's needs, then establishing priorities, develop programmes and describe what and how does the statutory sector intend to do (action agenda) to meet those needs ?

9. Specific data or statistics, research of the working group on ethnic minority children and young people in Northern Ireland are invisible in the consultation report ? (p.13, 29, 38) it is unworkable to search for details as there is no references or bibliography in this report.

10. There is no overarching policy which is an enabling statement, with focussed aims and objectives such as work with young people from minority ethnic communities or anti-racist work. NICEM believe in explicit commitments to developing pro-active practice, include appropriate methods for achieving all the objectives, then follow by a process of ethnic monitoring and evaluation (about documentation p.113).

11. Staffing or volunteering, there is exigency to implement equality proofing strategy in recruitment, training (such as anti-racist work, develop anti-racist programmes) and support for ethnic minority community development in terms of recognition and funding.

12. Genuine empowerment and participation is to consult, liaise and involve young people from minority ethnic communities in the beginning of all process before any decision making or service delivery.

13. About make expenses available (p.44, 47), is there any resources and funding to make it work ?

Recommendation

1. **Mainstreaming ethnic minorities in the Youth Policy, Services and Practice, in particular the needs to train black youth and community workers, funding for black organisations to develop long term youth work strategy.**
2. **There is a standard for racial equality in services working with young people in Great Britain ("Young and Equal, Commission for Racial Equality, 1995). The Department of Education should bring these good practice to Northern Ireland.**
3. **Department of Education should include the Statement of Purpose for Youth Work (National Youth Agency, 1992) into the Northern Ireland policy on youth work.**

For further information about this submission, please contact :

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22 December 1998

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Dear Sir

Re : Youth Service Policy Review

I enclose our submission on the above subject matter. Should you have any question about our submission, please do not hesitate to contact me for details.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Yu
Executive Director