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Summary Report of Responses to the Consultation on Priorities for Youth

Improving Young People's Lives through Youth Work

OCTOBER 2013









Summary Report of Responses to the Consultation on Priorities for Youth

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Summary Report of Responses to the Consultation on Priorities for Youth

Section 1

Introduction – the Consultation Process

1.1 Public consultation of the draft Priorities for Youth (PFY) policy ran from 17 September 2012 until 10 December 2012. It generated a total of 518 responses, many of which represented the views of groups of stakeholders or organisations.

1.2 Prior to development of the draft policy, the Department had carried out an extensive pre-consultation exercise and also worked with key stakeholders to develop and refine the proposals.

1.3 As part of the consultation process, there was further widespread engagement across the youth sector. The Youth Council, Education and Library Boards (ELBs), Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations (RVYOs) and other stakeholders hosted events to encourage interested parties, including children and young people to give their views on the draft policy framework. The NI Assembly Education Committee also hosted an event on 28 November 2012, which provided a further opportunity for a range of stakeholders to discuss the document and share their thoughts. Officials from the Department attended many of the consultation events and heard views from participants at first hand.

1.4 The Assembly Education Committee was briefed by Departmental officials about PfY on 19 September 2012 and 5 June 2013 and, along with all consultation responses, the views expressed by the Committee were taken into consideration in finalising the policy framework.

1.5 This document summarises the content of the responses received during the consultation process and the Department's consideration of them. Every effort has been made to ensure that the views of respondents have been accurately reflected throughout this document.

1.6 The Department would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who input to the public consultation, either by providing a written or oral response, or by attending one of the consultation events. In particular, the Department is grateful to all those who were involved in arranging consultation events and to the large number of children and young people who took the time to provide responses to the consultation.

Section 2

Responses Received

2.1 Responses to the public consultation exercise were submitted in a variety of ways, including completed questionnaires, e-mails and letters. A total of 518 written responses were submitted for consideration during the consultation and were categorised into the following groupings:

- completed consultation pro-forma questionnaires (N = 430); and
- other correspondence which did not conform to the pro-forma questionnaire, but which identified specific factors or general observations (N = 88).

2.2 Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the respondent profile. It should be noted that many single responses represented the views of groups of individuals, organisations or, in some cases, groups of organisations.

Table 1: Respondent profile

Respondent Type	Number	Percentage
Young People (As a group or individual)	118	*22.8*
Local youth providers, their staff and volunteers	64	*12.4*
Regional youth providers, their staff and volunteers	58	*11.2*
Other organisations (eg schools and churches)	53	*10.2*
Others (including anonymous)	225	*43.4*
Total	**518**	*100*

Section 3

Summary of Consultation Responses

3.1 This report not only sets out a statistical analysis of written responses to the questionnaires but also reflects, where appropriate, the range of comments, including those presented in other formats that the Department received during the consultation exercise.

3.2 There were 11 questions posed in the consultation booklet. Of those, 10 invited a 'tick box' response on a 5 point Likert scale (see Section 4), as well as asking respondents to provide additional comments to explain their response or to respond to the issue in further detail. There was a further open question inviting respondents to make any additional comments on the PfY policy framework.

3.3 Where respondents provided a narrative comment in response to the consultation, those comments were individually analysed. A variety of comments were provided on each proposed Priority. Whilst the majority (86%) of respondents were in support of the overall aims of PfY, many provided detailed responses that went beyond simply signalling agreement; some asked for more information on how actions would be taken forward, others raised issues specific to a particular part of the sector such as Irish-medium youth provision, and others asked questions about how a particular action would impact on certain aspects of youth provision.

3.4 The tables included in this document summarise the quantitative and qualitative responses to the consultation and are based on the main themes that emerged from the large variety of responses received. This document is intended to be a summary of the responses so does not cover in detail the full range of feedback. **Please note that not every comment is included.**

Section 4

Quantitative Analysis of Consultation Responses

4.1 430 responses were submitted to the Department using the pro-forma questionnaires. The findings from these responses were used to provide a quantitative analysis as shown in Tables 2 and 3 below.

4.2 The quantitative analysis shows that over 86% of respondents agreed or mostly agreed with the overall aims, vision, issues and actions contained within PfY. This agreement rating was also reflected in many of the additional comments made during the consultation exercise. The Department views the responses as an endorsement of the proposed actions outlined in the draft policy.

Table 2: Responses to all quantitative questions – Bar Chart

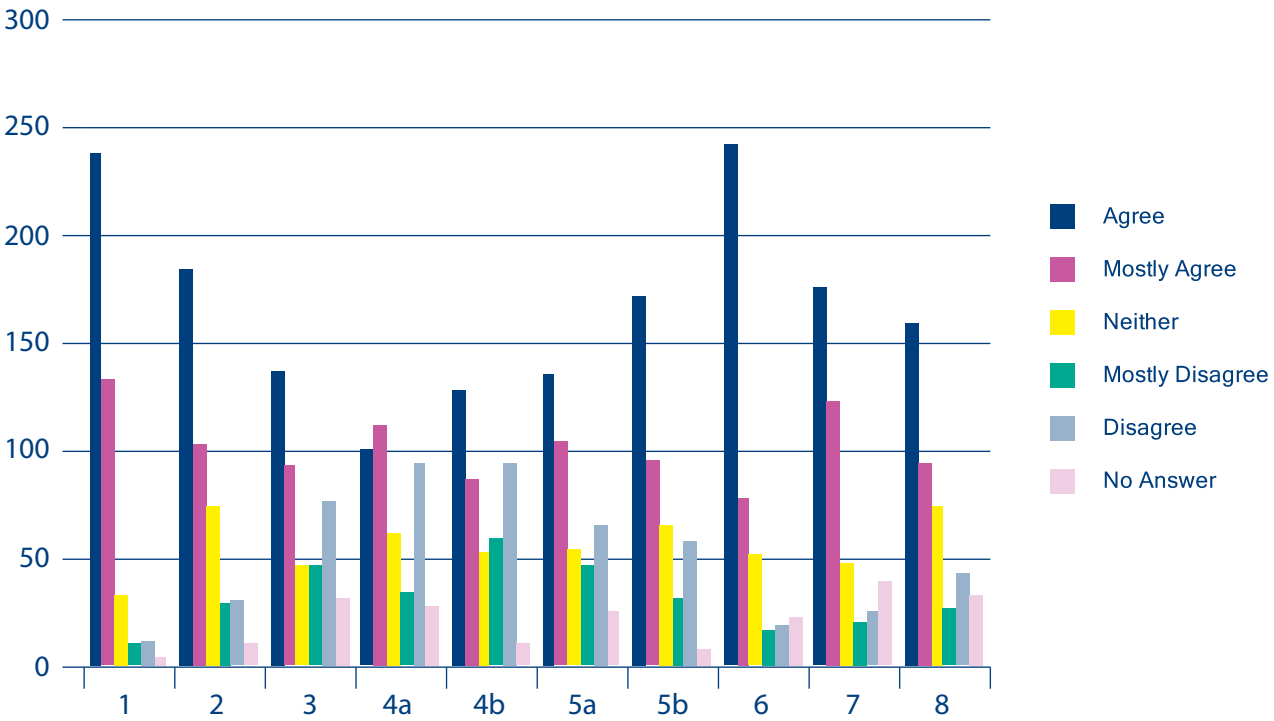

Table 3: Responses to all quantitative questions – Numerical Chart

Question	Agree	Mostly Agree	Neither	Mostly Disagree	Disagree	No Answer	Total
1. Do you agree with the vision, aims and principles of youth work supported by the Department of Education as proposed (see Section 3 of the consultation document)?	238 *55.3%*	133 *31%*	33 *7.7%*	10 *2.3%*	12 *2.8%*	4 *0.9%*	430
2. Do you agree that youth work supported by the Department of Education should be strategically aligned with the education priorities (see paragraph 2.17 of the consultation document)?	184 *42.8%*	103 *24%*	74 *17.2%*	29 *6.7%*	30 *7%*	10 *2.3%*	430
3. Do you consider that there is sufficient emphasis in the consultation document on enhancing participation for young people in the youth service?	137 *31.9%*	93 *21.6%*	46 *10.7%*	46 *10.7%*	77 *17.9%*	31 *7.2%*	430
4a. Do you agree with the proposed actions in Priority 1 (see paragraph 4.5 of the consultation document)? (See Question 4(b) which seeks comments specifically on proposed age bands)	100 *23.3%*	112 *26%*	62 *14.4%*	34 *7.9%*	94 *21.9%*	28 *6.5%*	430
4b. Do you agree with the proposed age bands for youth provision, as set out in action 7, paragraph 4.5 of the consultation document?	128 *29.8%*	86 *20%*	53 *12.3%*	59 *13.7%*	94 *21.9%*	10 *2.3%*	430
5a. Do you agree with the proposed actions in Priority 2 (see paragraph 4.7 of the consultation document)? (See Question 5(b) which seeks comments specifically on the action on additional targeted provision).	135 *31.4%*	104 *24.2%*	54 *12.6%*	47 *10.9%*	65 *15.1%*	25 *5.8%*	430
5b. Do you agree that additional targeted provision should be supported to help meet the needs of specific groups of young people assessed as facing barriers to learning, as proposed in action 3, paragraph 4.7 of the consultation document?	172 *40%*	95 *22.1%*	65 *15.1%*	32 *7.4%*	58 *13.5%*	8 *1.9%*	430
6. Do you agree with the proposed actions in Priority 3 (see paragraph 4.11 of the consultation document)?	241 *56%*	78 *18.1%*	52 *12.1%*	17 *4.1%*	19 *4.4%*	23 *5.3%*	430
7. Do you agree with the proposed actions in Priority 4 (see paragraph 4.17 of the consultation document)?	175 *40.6%*	123 *28.6%*	48 *11.2%*	20 *4.7%*	25 *5.8%*	39 *9.1%*	430
8. Do you agree with the proposed actions in Priority 5 (see paragraph 4.21 of the consultation document)?	159 *37%*	94 *21.8%*	74 *17.2%*	27 *6.3%*	43 *10%*	33 *7.7%*	430

Section 5

Qualitative Analysis of Consultation Responses

5.1 All comments received during the public consultation, be they comments made on the pro-forma questionnaires, written responses made in other formats, or points raised with Departmental officials at consultation events, have been considered.

5.2 Overall, respondents were generally very supportive of the draft priorities and associated actions, with particular support for the following aspects:

- Recognition of the educational benefits of youth work;
- Enhancing participation of young people in flexible ways;
- Increased links between formal education and youth work;
- Targeting underachievement and disadvantage, while maintaining access to universal provision;
- Funding services based on an assessment of need;
- Improved planning processes, including 3 year Regional Youth Development Plans (RYDPs);
- Increased provision/ longer opening hours where there is a need and demand for it;
- Improved recognition and support for youth work volunteers and staff;
- Training and support to be provided by the Practice Development Unit (PDU);
- Supported opportunities for organisations and RVYOs to collaborate and share resources; and
- Development of a young people's small grants programme.

5.3 The main areas where respondents sought further detail or clarification included:

- Provision of a definition of 'youth work';
- The role of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) and how implementation of PfY would progress prior to its establishment;
- Recognition of the role and value of volunteers;
- The relevance of personal and social development objectives;
- How needs assessment will work and the role stakeholders will have in informing the process;
- How assessment of need will affect individual programmes, units or areas;
- The practical support that will be provided for youth workers and volunteers, for example, in attending training or in areas where longer opening hours are to be implemented;
- Whether the PDU would draw upon existing good practice and materials, eg the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU); and
- The support that will be provided to young people to enable them to participate in decision making.

5.4 A number of proposed actions appeared to have caused confusion or were misinterpreted, namely:

- Links to formal education – some respondents interpreted this as meaning that all youth work would take place in schools and/or that its outcomes would be measured against GCSE and A-level targets, rather than recognising, supporting and enhancing the complementarities between youth work and formal education;
- Three-year planning in RYDPs – some respondents raised concern about potential inflexibility and stressed the need for the RYDP to be able to respond to new and emerging needs;

- Age bands – some respondents interpreted these as rigid bands that would require individual youth programmes to cater for very wide age ranges (eg 9-13) and would split up friendship groups (eg 13 and 14 year old peers); rather than being guideline age bands for particular types of youth activity; and

- Universal provision – some respondents misinterpreted the statement that there will continue to be an element of non-targeted/generic youth provision, particularly for those in the 4–8 age group as meaning that this type of provision would only be available to that age group.

5.5 Two areas which generated a large number of concerns with the proposed actions were:

- Access to youth work for young people aged 22-25; and

- A cap on funding for RVYOs.

5.6 The main issues raised in the responses fall within four overarching areas as follows:

Overarching aims, ethos, vision and principles of youth work

- The emphasis on formal education in PfY;

- The recognition and value of volunteers;

- The desire for a definition of youth work;

- The desire to include reference to 'A Model for Effective Practice' and the 'Rainbow Model';

- An evidence base and links to other policies; and

- Youth service funding from within the Department's budget

Access to youth provision

- The effect of targeted youth service provision;

- The need for additional support/provision for a broader range of groups of young people than those listed in Priority 2; and

- The proposals in relation to the age range for youth provision.

Voluntary sector issues

- The role and recognition of the voluntary youth sector;
- The principle of primacy of the voluntary sector;
- The need for new RVYOs;
- A cap on funding for RVYOs; and
- The proposal to rationalise the number of RVYOs.

Practical/operational issues

- The need for proportionality in new systems and procedures;
- The proposed review of Outdoor Education Centres (OECs);
- Plans in regard to the youth sector's IT infrastructure;
- The role of ESA, once established;
- How 'assessment of need' will work;
- Enhancing the participation of young people;
- Equality, diversity and human rights issues; and
- Establishment of a PDU.

These issues are considered in more detail in the following table.

Common Themes	Issues	Department's Response
Overarching Aims, Ethos, Vision and Principles of Youth Work		
The overall aims, ethos, vision and principles of youth work	There was a wide range of views, which can be broadly summarised as follows: • the focus of youth work is non-formal education; • positive youth work outcomes are often achieved through personal and social development; • youth work should be recognised as educational; • participation is voluntary and as such must be attractive; • formal and accredited outcomes are valued by young people, but are usually not the primary reason they participate in youth work activities; and • youth work should not be a deficit model	These points align with the Department's policy intention and the wording in PfY has been strengthened to clarify the following: • that the Department views youth work as a form of non-formal or informal education; • that there is an educational value to personal and social development activities, particularly as a first step in re-engaging those who have disengaged, or who are at risk of disengaging from education; • that there is no expectation that all youth activity should lead to accredited outcomes but that all engagement will lead to planned and recorded outcomes; and • the use of more positive language, particularly in regard to young people, including strengthened references to the importance of youth work being engaging for young people and youth-centred.
Youth service funding within the Department of Education budget	Some respondents stated that they felt that the youth sector is under-resourced within the overall education budget. There was a strong appetite to be involved as much as possible in the development of new funding schemes for the youth sector. There was some unease that the ESA review of youth provision could potentially become a rationalisation process. There was a desire for ESA funding to be developmental, including provision for longer-term financial planning as well as short term (annual) funding allocations.	The Department intends to prioritise need within the available youth service budget; this is not intended to be a cost cutting exercise. The proposal to make longer-term allocations of funding available to youth organisations is an operational matter and is therefore not appropriate for inclusion. No changes made to PfY. These comments will be used to help inform future funding decisions made by both the Department and ESA.
The need for a definition of Youth Work	Some respondents recommended that the policy should more clearly define what is meant by "youth work". A number of suggestions as to possible definitions were made.	PfY does not seek to provide a new definition of "youth work". Such a move could be seen as restricting the potential scope for Departmental funding, or perhaps creating conflict within the sector regarding who is within and who is without the boundaries of a specific definition. PfY provides a sufficiently detailed description of how the Department supports youth work and the types of outcomes it expects young people to achieve. The final policy document does not therefore contain or refer to a specific definition of youth work.

The need to include 'A Model for Effective Practice' and the 'Rainbow Model'	Several respondents representing headquarter organisations considered that the principles and approach of 'a Model for Effective Practice' and the Youth Service Sectoral Partners Group's Policy and Practice Framework (2009), commonly known as the 'Rainbow Model' should be referenced in the policy.	PfY includes references to 'a Model for Effective Practice'. The Rainbow Model has not been included in the final document. It is considered that such inclusion is not required as it does not add any further clarity.
The emphasis on formal education in PfY	Most respondents generally welcomed the acknowledgement of youth work as an educational activity. The majority supported having increased linkages made between youth work and the Department's wider educational vision and with formal education. However, many also expressed concern that there was too much emphasis placed on accredited courses and qualifications, which risked losing a little of what makes youth work unique, in terms of setting it apart from formal, school-based education. Some respondents felt that 'soft' personal and social development activities may not be easy to measure and record on an Outcomes Framework.	The intention in PfY is to strategically align youth work to the Department's overall education priorities, including raising standards and reducing the performance gap, therefore providing a clear policy remit for youth work within education. PfY aims to assist youth workers to plan and record a variety of youth work educational outcomes effectively and proportionately, including personal and social development outcomes that may support young people in education, employment or training in the future. The document has been amended to make this clear and clarify that all outcomes can be taken into account in an Outcomes Framework. The Outcomes Framework included as an Annex to PfY is illustrative and can be modified as required to meet the needs of each particular youth work setting. PfY makes it clear that personal and social development learning outcomes remain within the remit of youth provision funded by the Department.
The recognition and value of volunteers	Many respondents commented that PfY did not adequately reflect the value of the role that volunteers, who make up the vast majority of the youth sector workforce, play within the sector.	The Department has amended the wording of the document to better reflect the significant and essential contribution that it recognises volunteers make to the delivery of youth services.
Evidence base and links to other policies	Many responses commented on the need for the policy to have a strong evidence base and/or links with other policies and strategies both within education and across wider government. Some respondents also sought evidence of how PfY complies with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).	The Department considers that PfY has a strong evidence base (see appendices to the consultation document). References to links to other policies and the UNCRC have been strengthened in the final policy. PfY highlights how it will provide a point of reference across government and that its outworkings will provide clarity in relation to the non-formal educational provision which the Department is supporting and upon which the services required by, or offered by, other Departments can be built.

Access to Youth Provision		
The effect of targeted youth service provision	Most respondents welcomed the intention to prioritise provision for young people who are disadvantaged or who experience a combination of barriers to learning. Some respondents cautioned against the possibility of over-emphasising this, leading to the possible creation of a deficit model for youth provision, while others articulated fears that young people who are not considered to fall within the 'disadvantaged' categorisation would no longer be able to access funded youth provision.	The document has been amended to clarify that the Department's intention is not to introduce a deficit model for youth service provision and that there will continue to be an element of non-targeted/generic youth provision across all the age ranges. There is, however, an opportunity to target those most at risk by developing early and effective youth interventions.
Additional support and provision for specific groups of young people who may be at greater risk of social exclusion, marginalisation or isolation because they experience a combination of barriers to learning.	Several respondents suggested additional groups that could be added to this list.	No change made to PfY. The Department has concluded that the list is not intended to be exhaustive and this is reflected in the document. The policy intention is that youth work interventions will be planned based on an assessment of need at local, sub-regional and regional levels, but also, as is currently the case, at individual level in terms of the interaction between the youth worker and young person.
The proposals in relation to the age range for youth provision	Many respondents either supported or had no strong views on the age range and age bands for youth provision, providing that the age bands were not applied rigidly in practice.	The age bands and associated youth work activities are intended only as a guide. It is for individual youth work providers to determine the appropriate age bands for individual youth work activity groups, based on an assessment of the individuals involved.
The proposal to only consider services for young adults in the age range 22-25 where there is a compelling and evidenced need.	A large number of respondents, particularly those from RVYOs, expressed disagreement about the proposal in regard to access to youth provision for those in the 22-25 age group and expressed a desire to retain access on the same basis as other age groups.	PfY has been amended to reflect that the focus for the age range 19-25 will be on issue-based programmes or volunteering and leadership responsibilities. However, for the age range 22-25, the focus will be on those who are either in, or at risk of being in, the group of young people not in education, employment or training or those who have not yet accessed developmental or other educational opportunities and are unlikely to do so.

Voluntary Sector Issues		
The role and recognition of the voluntary youth sector within PfY	Many respondents expressed concern that the policy did not fully reflect the valuable contribution of the voluntary youth sector or the important role that it will play in advising ESA on implementation of youth service delivery, particularly in regard to membership of stakeholder Advisory Groups. Some respondents also commented that the Concordat between the Voluntary and Community Sector and Government should apply to ESA, when it is established.	The Department has strengthened references to better acknowledge the role of the voluntary sector. PfY states that the Department requires all its Arms Length Bodies and ESA, when established, to adhere to the values and principles of the Concordat when carrying out activities on its behalf.
The principle of primacy of the voluntary sector	Some respondents felt that the draft policy did not make it sufficiently clear that statutory youth provision should only be in place where there is no viable alternative within the voluntary sector and that 'primacy' of the voluntary sector needs to be restated.	No change to PfY. The Department considers that the primacy of voluntary provision is clearly reflected.
The proposed cap on funding for RVYOs	Few respondents specifically expressed support for this proposal. Almost all RVYO responses expressed disagreement or concerns regarding this proposal.	This does not represent a reduction in funding to RVYOs as this cap is broadly in line with the current level of funding. The 10% cap has therefore been retained.
The need to rationalise the number of RVYOs	Most responses by, or on behalf of, RVYOs disagreed with the proposal to rationalise the number of regional groups funded. This was felt to predetermine the ESA assessment of need and review of provision and some claimed that it demonstrated a lack of understanding of, and value placed on, the supportive role that RVYOs carry out for their members. However, some responses expressed support for the rationalisation of services and back office support in particular, welcoming this as an opportunity to direct more funding to front line delivery of services to young people.	The Department has decided to await the proposed ESA review of provision and assessment of need. The reference to rationalising the number of regional groups funded has therefore been removed.
The need for new RVYOs	Some respondents suggested that additional RVYOs were needed to support specific client groups.	The Department does not have responsibility for establishing RVYOs. It is for the voluntary sector to decide whether there is a need for a regional organisation to represent the interests of a particular grouping and, if so, to put in place arrangements to meet that need. Future funding of RVYOs by ESA will be based on services assessed as needed on a regional basis.

Practical/Operational Issues		
The need for proportionality in new systems and procedures	Many respondents asked that any requirements in terms of outcomes measurement, monitoring and reporting should be proportionate to the level of funding received by youth providers.	PfY is about appropriate accountability, with an emphasis on proportionality and ensuring that programmes meet the needs of young people. The Department is committed to ensuring that any new systems and processes introduced are clear, fit for purpose, add value and are proportionate to the level of funding provided. The Department will keep this matter under review.
The proposed review of Outdoor Education centres (OECs)	Some respondents were concerned that the unique nature of OEC provision (at a regional level) is taken into consideration in the ESA assessment of provision and is considered alongside other centres within the direct control of ESA, such as CASS-funded centres, which sit outside of the youth service. These respondents stated that such a review should not only consider buildings and costs, but should also consider how OECs can assist the educational aims of the Department and, in a wider context, the aims of the Programme for Government. Several respondents queried whether the Department's youth budget should be used to resource ELB OECs, which they stated are used mainly by schools. Some respondents felt that too much of the youth budget is diverted to OECs, which local youth providers are then charged for using.	No changes to PfY. These comments will help inform the review of OECs in due course.
Plans in regard to the youth sector's IT infrastructure	Some respondents argued that an IT strategy should be developed for the youth service and resources should be made available for building an adequate IT infrastructure.	No change to PfY. The Department considers that decisions on an ICT Strategy should be made following ESA's consideration of the IT infrastructure requirements for funded provision.
The role of ESA	Some respondents were concerned that many of the actions are to be taken forward by ESA. They sought clarity on how the policy would be implemented prior to the establishment of ESA. Some also sought reassurance that ESA would engage with stakeholders when it was implementing the policy. Others sought further detail on the proposed structure of ESA, particularly in terms of where responsibility for youth services would be placed.	No change to PfY. The Department's intention is that ESA will be established in the near future and information about its structure will be circulated separately. Until ESA is established, implementation of PfY actions will be taken forward by the ELBs and the Youth Council, collaboratively as appropriate.

How 'assessment of need' will work	Many respondents generally welcomed the proposals to make decisions based on an assessment of need, although some queried how this would work in practice. Some asked about the role that the voluntary youth sector would play in assessing local needs and asked that any plans for youth provision retain an element of flexibility to allow youth workers to respond to local needs.	The Department considers that there is a need to deliver the Minister's priorities by assessing need from the bottom up and considering what provision is required locally rather than focusing on those structures and services already in place. Stakeholders will play a key role in helping to identify local need, as outlined in the policy. The document also acknowledges that the RYDP will require a degree of flexibility to deal with unforeseen circumstances and to adapt to meet changing needs.
Enhancing the participation of young people	Most respondents indicated strong support for enhancing young people's participation in the youth service, particularly in regard to the proposed young people's grants programme and how they could be supported in practice. A few respondents asked for additional information to be included in regard to the establishment of the Network for Youth.	No change to PfY. Comments will be taken into consideration by ESA when implementing the actions on young people's participation. The Network for Youth proposal will be progressed separately.
Equality, diversity and human rights issues	A few respondents raised general issues about equality, diversity and human rights. In the majority of cases, these were comments about how the policy would have a positive impact on provision and opportunities for certain groups of young people. Specific queries were raised as to whether the policy should set out differential policy approaches for groups such as young men and young women and also for black and ethnic minority groups.	No change to PfY. It is not possible to include all possible barriers to learning in the PfY document, nor would it be appropriate to include operational details of how individual needs might be met through youth work interventions.
Establishment of a Practice Development Unit	There was widespread support for the establishment of a PDU and for the range of functions the unit is intended to undertake. There were several suggestions as to how the functions of the PDU could be taken forward and, in some cases, modified in order to best support the entire youth sector. Most respondents agreed that the PDU should be established and managed by ESA, but have appropriate links to the voluntary youth sector to make use of training and best practice already available. Some respondents called for further consideration of who should oversee and manage the PDU, with a few suggesting the possibility that it should be established independently of ESA.	The Department considers that there was no persuasive argument given for locating the PDU outside the remit of ESA. However, the final policy has been amended to better reflect the relationships between organisations which will support the PDU through provision of training and support.

Section 6

Next Steps

6.1 The responses have been taken into account in preparing the final version of PfY and some aspects have been revised in light of the very helpful responses that the Department received,

6.2 PfY will be implemented through a phased approach, with full implementation planned by April 2016 at the latest. The Department will continue to work closely with key stakeholders during implementation and is pleased that, throughout the pre-consultation and consultation process, the Youth Sector has clearly demonstrated that it is keen to co-operate and collaborate to ensure the successful implementation of the policy framework.

Section 7

Further Information

7.1 Enquiries about this document should be directed to:

By post: Youth and Schools in the Community Team
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By email: ***Youth.Services@deni.gov.uk***

7.2 This report and Priorities for Youth are available on the Department's website at ***www.deni.gov.uk***. Other formats, including Braille and audio formats can be produced on request.

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