

Equality and Social Need Steering Group Meeting

Wednesday 27 September 2006

2pm, Room E4.02, Castle Buildings

Minutes

Present:

Gerry Mulligan	Equality and Social Need (Chair)
Carol McCabe	Equality and Rights
Bernie Duffy	Equality and Rights
Stephen Donnelly	OFMDFM Research Branch
Linsey Farrell	Central Anti-Poverty Unit (Secretary)
Liz McMeekin	Central Anti-Poverty Unit
Seamus Camplisson	DHSSPS
Victor Douglas	DCAL
Sharon Fitchie	DARD
Margaret Langhammer	DRD
Rosemary Crawford	DETI
John McGuinness	DEL
Alex Boyle	DOE
David Malcolm	DSD
Colette Leeson	RPA
Grainia Long	ECNI

Apologies:

Gerry Cosgrave	DFP
Carolyn Barr	DFP
Susan Nicholson	NIO
Elaine McFeeters	DE

1. Apologies & Introductions

Apologies were received from the following members:

Gerry Cosgrave	DFP
Carolyn Barr	DFP
Susan Nicholson	NIO
Elaine McFeeters	DE

2. Minutes of 21 March 2006 & Matters Arising

- (i) Members agreed the minutes of the meeting on 15 June that had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Matters Arising

- (ii) Gerry advised members that the IT system for recording information on the anti poverty strategy action plans was still being fine tuned.
- (iii) ECNI had advised that they were working on the screening template and would forward this for circulation to departments as soon as possible.
- (iv) Whilst e-government was not being taken forward as a PSI initiative, there were still plans to bring along a representative from the unit once the anti poverty strategy had been finalised to advise

the group on the relevance of e-government initiatives to promoting social inclusion.

- (v) In relation to the European Year of Equality of Opportunity for All, it was suggested that potentially the best approach would be to decide on a way forward within Northern Ireland, in consultation with all departments and the Equality Commission. There was the possibility of holding a key event during the course of the year, maybe jointly with by ECNI.

3. Review of Public Administration Update

- (i) Colette Leeson from RPA explained that the RPA steering group was being led by Nigel Hamilton. . In consideration of the cross-cutting theme of equality, Mary Bunting was chairing a cross-departmental equality forum, which reported back to the main steering group and included ECNI, NIHRC, NICCY, CRC and NIC ICTU. . The Equality Directorate was represented on the Human Rights and Location work streams.
- (ii) Colette informed the group of several staff changes within the RPA team. Debbie Donnelly had now moved on and would be replaced by Maurice Dowling from DSD. Damian Prince from DCAL would also be joining the team. Colette advised the group that she was due to join DFP's Shared Service Centre on Monday 2 October.
- (iii) Gerry thanked Colette for all her support and wished her well in her new post. He raised the issue of a paper prepared by the Location group and asked if this had yet been cleared. Colette offered to check the status but Carol McCabe advised that it was one of the papers to be circulated at next week's Equality Forum meeting.

- (iv) Colette informed the group that the RPA website had an equality section and would be very useful for circulating and sharing information.

4. Presentation on Review of Effectiveness – Grainia Long, ECNI

- (i) Grainia Long from ECNI joined the group and gave a presentation on the review of the effectiveness of section 75. A Section 75 working group had been set up to discuss effectiveness and how to measure it. Grainia explained that the objectives of the review were:
 - a. Objective 1 – measuring the impacts and outcomes.
Grainia informed the group that Reeves Associates had successfully tendered for the two research projects involved i.e. an assessment of the extent of impacts and outcomes and an assessment of the impact of the model of mainstreaming.
 - b. Objective 2 – an audit of compliance.
This deals with how implementation is taking place on a practical level. This again would be carried out by Reeves Associates.
 - c. Objective 3 – the Commission's Role.
This review would be carried out by Brice Dickson and Colin Harvey and would assess how the Commission had carried out their functions; a first draft had already been completed.
 - d. Objective 4 – the role of OFMDFM & NIO.
This project would look at how the departments are promoting and securing the implementation of Section 75; this project was currently out for tender and would hopefully commence around late October/early November.
 - e. Objective 5 – the role of the voluntary & community sector.
This project would consider the contribution of the sector in

representing the views of those most likely to be affected. This project was also out for tender and would hopefully commence around late October/early November.

f. Communicating the Review

Grainia then explained the various methods that would be used to inform the outcome of the reviews.

(ii) Gerry thanked Grainia for her presentation.

a. Seamus Camplisson commented that the impacts and outcomes of the review would be “unknowable” as people were now more aware and alert and therefore it would be difficult to measure.

Grainia said that the methodology would take these factors into account.

b. Sharon Fitchie asked if Section 75 had changed behaviour and attitudes and Victor Douglas asked what effectiveness looks like. Grainia acknowledged that they would need to have a sense of what “success” looks like by the end of the review and that the commissioners would need time to consider it.

c. Bernie Duffy asked if there would be any changes to the nine section 75 categories. Grainia informed her that the subject had already come up within QUB research in the areas of social class and the urban/rural split but this would be for the Commissioners to decide in early 2007.

5. Presentation on Family Resources Survey – Chris Morris, DSD

(i) Chris had provided handouts of his presentation before the meeting and he referred members to this information on giving a brief overview of the findings of the survey.

- (ii) David Malcolm asked if there was anything that could be done to increase the race sample. Chris acknowledged that problems had arisen in compiling a sample in relation to minority ethnic groups, so changes may need to be made to the classification system to incorporate Portuguese and Eastern Europeans, who are currently classed as white.
- (iii) Stephen Donnelly informed the group that NISRA had produced a publication that stated that Northern Ireland had the highest inward migration – 7000 - over one year. He added that it was feasible to develop a freestanding Family Resources Survey to be applied in certain areas but resourcing this would be a big issue.

6. Joint Forum Recommendations on PSI

- (i) Gerry informed the group of the outcome of a recent meeting with the Joint Forum, which consisted of representatives from DSD and the voluntary & community sector. The group had made a number of recommendations in relation to future PSI work. In particular, they highlighted four areas of concern;
 - a. PSI Working Groups tended to be chaired by a senior government official, thus restricting ownership on the part of the voluntary & community sector. For this reason, it was recommended that meetings should be jointly chaired;
 - b. In terms of building partnerships, it was felt that government had not meaningfully engaged with the sector, thus creating the perception that representatives from the sector were there as a token presence;
 - c. There was concern over the lack of consistency on how groups planned and delivered work and it was felt that there were no structures in place in some cases; and
 - d. There was also concern over a perceived lack of communication. It was felt that because of the gaps between

meetings, the sector didn't always know what was going on.

- (ii) Gerry asked the group for their comments on the concerns raised.
 - a. On the issue of joint chairing, Gerry informed the group that this was not provided for in the Terms of Reference for the original PSI model, as the idea was for departments to work together, drawing on external expertise, and would therefore have to go to Ministers for approval. It was generally the view of the group that the chair should remain as a senior civil servant who would be accountable to Ministers. It was cited that other groups, like the Race Forum, did not want to be jointly chaired. ESNSG's preference therefore, was for a senior official, to show government ownership.
 - b. It was agreed that it was for the chair of any group to look at the best way of building partnerships and to decide how to make that group more effective.
 - c. The group agreed that in taking forward PSI, the project planning process would give participants a sense of timescales and responsibilities.
 - d. On the subject of communication, it was again agreed that it was for individual chairs to decide how they communicated information around their various members. Gerry suggested, resources permitting, bringing together a summary of all the PSI strands outlining the progress to date of each..

ACTION: OFMDFM

7. Update – Lifetime Opportunities

- (i) Gerry informed members that the Central Anti-Poverty Unit had addressed comments made at a recent Critical Friends Group meeting, especially around the targets.

- (ii) David Hanson had chaired a meeting with departmental representatives where he highlighted what he wanted from the strategy and staff within the Central Anti-Poverty Unit were now working with departments to develop a stronger document. Discussions with departments should finish by 28th September 2006.
- (iii) It was proposed to take the redrafted document back to the Critical Friends Group, made up of representatives from the voluntary & community sector, the Scottish Executive, the Welsh Executive and DWP. The planned publication date at this time was 30th October and the Secretary of State would launch the document.
- (iv) There was concern raised over the clearance of inputs by Ministers partly due to their attendance at Party Conference. OFMDFM advised that they would be submitting to the SOS through Ministers.
- (v) DETI input was currently awaiting clearance from the Minister but there was also some information they could not provide; baseline data was not available but Pauline Millar had already been made aware of this.
- (vi) DEL input would be with Pauline by Friday but would not be cleared by the Minister.
- (vii) Seamus commented that the perception from the structure was that departments continued to work in silos. He suggested that it might be useful to emphasise cross-departmental work within the text of the document.
- (viii) Gerry advised members that the next steps in the process would be to:
 - redraft strategy
 - speak to Critical Friends

- clear final draft of document around departments.

8. Review of ESNSG Budget

- (i) Stephen Donnelly advised that monies from the Young Persons Behaviour and Attitude Survey (YPBAS) had been freed up and departments had been asked to submit ideas on other areas where the monies could be used. A list of twelve projects had subsequently been drawn up. There were three areas in particular, which were considered to be of a specifically cross cutting nature:
 - NI Life & Times, Race & Good Relations
 - A survey of 3,500 Migrant Workers – DEL
 - Affordable Housing and the associated poverty and social exclusion implications.
- (ii) The work on these areas would proceed and a business case and rationale for the other nine areas identified would be worked on and brought back to the group in the New Year.
- (iii) Rosemary Crawford advised that DETI was very keen to progress the Labour Force Survey and asked for contributions from the group to help with this project.
- (iv) In relation to the review of the Equality & Social Need Research & Information (ESNRI) strategy, Stephen Donnelly advised the group that the findings had shown that it was working well in fulfilling its remit. The principles were seen to be relevant and comprehensive and any work commissioned conformed to the principles. There was clearly a need to market the relevance of work to departments and more thought should be given In relation to dissemination, perhaps a one day seminar from time to time.
- (v) Stephen agreed to review research/data priorities and put them to the group at the next meeting.

ACTION: Stephen Donnelly

- (vi) Stephen informed the group that DARD had withdrawn funding on the Food Survey which leaves a £60k shortfall.
- (vii) Stephen said that the group needed to keep in balance money spent on government surveys and research. With this in mind, Stephen asked the group to endorse a 50/50% split between NISRA surveys and specifically commissioned research projects. The group requested input from ESNRIG on this proposal as well as the options in respect of the current demands for funding the EFS and/or the LFS. Stephen agreed to take this forward in a short paper for the next meeting.
- (viii) David Malcolm asked for a review to be carried out on how surveys were carried out and suggested the possibility of mainstream funding.
- (ix) Gerry noted that survey funding was an issue for the NISRA Chief Executive and Central Survey unit. Gerry requested that the agenda for the next meeting should include considering research priorities and needs as well as the issue of ESNSG funding allocated to surveys being a maximum of 50% of the budget.

ACTION: Linsey Farrell

- (x) John McGuinness suggested that members speak to their respective research colleagues before the next meeting.

Linsey - Point xi is already covered at (v) above.

9. Policy & Legislation Updates including departmental developments

- (i) **OFMDFM**
Carol McCabe advised the group that the Age Discrimination legislation would come into force on 1st October 2006. Pensions

provisions would not come into effect yet. Members were advised that David Hanson had agreed to act as Older People's Champion and this would be announced shortly.

(ii) **DETI**

A press release was issued on 25th September launching the DETI disadvantaged areas maps. Members were advised that the special status category had been eliminated. Rosemary Crawford also advised that DETI had received a letter from CENI requesting sight of departmental inputs to the draft Children and Young People Action Plan.

(iii) **DHSSPS**

Seamus Camplisson advised that the Strategy and Action Plan on Human Rights would soon be launched for consultation. Gerry informed the group that 'Get in on the Act' guide to human rights would be issued to departmental equality contacts once cleared and that it was the duty of members to ensure that relevant colleagues within departments were made aware of this.

(iv) **CSR**

Carol McCabe advised that she had been approached by DFP in relation to the High Level Impact Assessment. She asked the group if they had been involved in these before. Rosemary Crawford said DETI had been involved in relation to efficiency reviews.

10. Any Other Business

(i) **RPA**

Communications strategy – sharing information internally. Gerry advised that he would ask representatives at the next meeting of the Equality subgroup to advise departmental equality representatives on RPA developments.

11. Date of Next Meeting

- (i) Next meeting had been arranged for Thursday 30 November 2006.
Linsey would contact members in advance with further details.

ACTION: Linsey Farrell