

Comments on Way Ahead/Working Together

Comments by organisations, groups and individuals listed alphabetically under each of the headings identified as the main issues raised in the responses to the consultation.

Ad-hoc Women's Policy Group - We recommend that a ministerial-led interdepartmental group is established to monitor the implementation of the strategy, with representatives of the women's sector included within the groups. There should be a dissemination strategy applicable to all departments so that they can report on progress achieved.

The Belfast Butterfly Club - ...transgendered people should be included in the implementation of the action plans and their views sought on any future amendmentsconsultation should be ongoing but should include transgendered people.

Belfast City Council - It is important to continue to work closely with the voluntary and community sector. The Council would like to be involved in this process and welcomes inclusion in all associated consultation processes.

Belfast Jewish Community Centre - I would like to suggest that other minority ethnic groups be added ... to include representatives of minority groups with specific distinct needs that are not addressed by any other organisation or group.

British Psychological Society - Flexibility should be the watchword, embracing groups and individuals as appropriate.

Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) - fear that with responsibility spread between a number of ministers there may be no clear, central ownership or commitment to the strategy. ... responsibility may be better located with one minister... .. note the central role of OFMDFM's Gender Equality Unit in working with departments to take forward the implementation of the strategy and its action plan. We believe that this role must explicitly include a commitment to comprehensive training for all departmental and agency staff on gender equality and the mainstreaming process. ... partnership working must be inclusive and representative of all key stakeholders to the strategy, including girls and boys. ... advocate that these partners must also have a clearly defined role in the monitoring and review of the strategy

Disability Action - Chapter 9 should also include information on responsibility for the strategy on return to devolution.

Down Lisburn Trust - The Trust acknowledges that a number of governmental organisations and bodies are involved in the gender equality issue, but would advocate a more co-ordinated approach. The creation of one single body which would be cross-departmental to oversee the equality agenda, which would obviously include gender equality, would be beneficial and promote mainstreaming.

EHSSB - - The consultation document would need to be made more accessible for people with learning disability. Face-to-face dialogue may be most effective. Similarly wider engagement of the Council for the Homeless and other Minority Ethnic groups may be necessary. Political opinion, given the need for the political will to make progress, additional consultations may be required with politicians within the consultative process. Human Rights: Some additional thought should be given to the proposed Bill of Rights. The various consultation processes undertaken by the Human Rights Commission should further inform the debate on gender rights, socio-economic rights etc.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland - Referring to the Public Procurement Policy's objectives to integrate social policies with procurement] ... subject to a positive evaluation of the pilot scheme, similar proposals to integrate the objectives of the gender strategy within public procurement should be brought forward. The Commission would appreciate further clarification on how the necessary policy development will be taken forwards.

The Men's Project - During the next stage of development it may be useful to form an Advisory Group comprising staff from the OFMDFM Equality Unit and a few representatives of men's and women's work. (In this regard, TMP suggested "the fledgling 'Two of a Kind' group".

NIC ICTU - [Referring to a partnership approach] We would recommend that this partnership includes working with the trade union movement to advance gender equality. Congress recommends the approach to best practice consultation as set out in the Equality Commission's Revised Statutory Duty Guidelines (2004). We recommend that the views of individual trade union organisations are sought given the particular role that the trade union movement plays in the promotion of gender equality within the workplace. We also note that certain trade unions have a large representation of women members and we recommend that the views of these unions in particular are sought in order to inform this Strategy. ... but [Congress] would recommend that a full equality impact assessment should accompany this Strategy. We would welcome clarification as to how training will be delivered on the gender aspects of this strategy as it affects all s. 75 groups.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive - The Wider Equality Action Plan group could be the focus of a high level consultative forum/council with sub groups looking at specific cohesion issues including Gender, Race, Children, Older People, Disability, Poverty, Rura Issues and Sexual Orientation. [On other organisations to be included in the process] Equal Parenting Council, Families Need Fathers, Fathers 4 Justice. Recommend wider consultation with affected groups.

NICVA - urge the need to adopt a pre-emptive approach to prevent the emergence of new inequalities. NICVA would therefore recommend that the gender equality unit withdraws this flawed document and focuses on an action plan that implements the government's commitments under CEDAW and the Beijing Platform of Action with an additional focus on the inequalities suffered by the most marginalized women and the need to work for more equality of life chances. It is not sufficient to claim that other strategies will cover these areas of multiple discrimination..[In terms of the way ahead, Qs 18 to 21]: The proposals' refusal to deal with the multiple identities of women is not only unrealistic but also short-sighted

Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP) - (On omissions from the Strategy) -an issue relating to the inter-departmental nature of the document which raises a question about who will lead it. One solution may be to establish an Interdepartmental Working Group on Gender . There should be a dissemination strategy for all departments.

Presbyterian Church in Ireland - (What is a group of representative men, women, boys and girls?) Acknowledging a vested interest it would be important to have active church members involved who were able to represent broad church opinion. It would be appropriate to include the major churches which are absent from the list in Annex. 9.

QUB - OFMDFM should continue to develop formal links with interested groups, address their preferred means of communication and refer back to the consultees as time passes. It is important that consultees are heard and their views taken on board.

South and East Belfast Trust - The best means of maintaining ongoing consultation and working together is by consulting in a way that is appropriate for individuals/groups. This might be by e-mail, visiting their premises or telephone interviews. Ask individuals what would be best for them, ensure that questions etc are relevant and of interest to those you consult and ensure they are given feedback. Working with the voluntary and community sector should continue but might be expanded to include schools and colleges - this might take the form of a school project.