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**Intercultural awareness**

In 2013, the Northern Ireland Executive published *Together: Building a United Community Strategy*[^1], which reflects its commitment to improving community relations and building a shared and united society. The first priority outlined in the strategy aims ‘to continue to improve attitudes amongst our young people and to build a community where they can play a full and active role in building good relations’. The strategy goes on to outline a number of intercultural awareness programmes, including the *United Youth Programme*[^2], which is designed to give young people aged 16-24 who are not in education, employment or training flexible, high quality, young-person-centred opportunities, such as work experience and volunteering and leisure opportunities, whilst focusing on good relations and building relationships between divided communities. At the end of April 2019, over 2,700 young people had participated on the programme.

The *Intercultural Education Service*[^3] is a new regional service formed in April 2017 as a result of merging together the former Inclusion & Diversity Service and the Traveller Education Support Service. It is part of the Children & Young People’s Services directorate and works closely with the Education Directorate, Health Services, Youth Services and District Councils. It provides advice, guidance and focused support to schools, families and other educational support services and helps schools to meet the additional educational needs of pupils from target communities (Traveller; Newcomer; Asylum-Seekers; Refugees and Roma).

As an intercultural support service there are several key objectives:

- To meet the learning needs of children and young people with additional needs
• To provide excellent educational support for schools and target communities

• To provide a consistent service to schools and families in need of support across Northern Ireland

• To facilitate equality of access and equality from pre-school to post-primary education

• To build the capacity of schools to meet the intercultural development needs of children and young people

• To promote whole school approaches to service development

• To promote full inclusion and integration across all areas of education and youth services

• To support and encourage family learning, out of school hours learning and life-long learning.

Initiatives and resources include:

• Help-desk during the weekday for immediate answers to questions

• Emergency support for schools who are working with Newcomer pupils for the first time or who require immediate support due to an urgent issue

• On-going school based support for schools wishing to access more in-depth support and training for staff on intercultural awareness, assessment and planning and curriculum access

• Interpreting service to help teachers communicate with Newcomer families. See the link below

• On-line courses for teachers developed by IES to support teachers and other staff in mainstream classrooms

• Translated documents and other resources for schools to support intercultural awareness, welcome and communication with home, assessment and planning and curriculum access.

**Shared education**

Shared Education means the organisation and delivery of education so that it:

• meets the needs of, and provides for the education together of learners from all Section 75 [4] categories and socio-economic status
• involves schools and other education providers of differing ownership, sectoral identity and ethos, management type or governance arrangements

• delivers educational benefits to learners, promotes the efficient and effective use of resources, and promotes equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion.

Further information is available from the Department of Education website.

In 2015, Sharing Works: a policy for shared education was published by the Department of Education. The strategy outlines the value of shared education and its core principles, as well as aims in four key areas related to shared education: facilitating it; funding it; putting structures in place to support it; and embedding it. Linked to this was the passing of the Shared Education (Northern Ireland) Act 2016, which placed a duty on the Department of Education and the Education Authority to encourage, promote and facilitate shared education.

Community relations, equality and diversity in education policy

The Community relations, equality and diversity (CRED) in education policy was launched in 2011 by the Department of Education. Through formal and non-formal education settings, CRED aims to ensure that children have an understanding and respect for the rights, diversity and equality of all without discrimination. It also aims to equip children and young people with the skills and behaviours necessary to develop mutual understanding of and respect for difference.

The Community Relations Council works to promote a fair and peaceful society based on mutual trust and reconciliation across all ages and communities. In addition to running projects of its own, such as the peer leadership programme which empowers young people to challenge sectarianism, the Council supports a number of different organisations working to promote community relations across all age groups in Northern Ireland through different grant schemes. It also organises the yearly Community Relations and Cultural Awareness Week, which promotes cultural diversity and increases understanding and engagement between and amongst all sections of the community. This is complemented by a yearly intercultural and anti-racism film festival, run by Culture Northern Ireland, which encourages young people and the wider community to embrace diversity and broaden their cultural awareness.

Young people's rights

Children's rights

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People's website provides information about the rights of young people and the history of children's rights in Northern Ireland. It also provides links to other organisations which promote children's rights, including charities.

Additionally, the Ombudsman for Children's Office is a human rights institution, and part of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. It’s responsibilities include protecting children’s and young people’s rights in Ireland; investigating complaints about any children services or organisations; and promoting the rights and welfare of children and young people. The Ombudsman’s role and responsibilities are set out in the Ombudsman for Children Act (2002).

Human rights
There a number of pieces of legislation setting out rights; covering both young people and adults:

The Human Rights Act 1998[14] gives citizens a clear legal statement of their basic rights and fundamental freedoms. All public bodies are bound by equality legislation which prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, disability; sex; gender reassignment; race; religious belief; political opinion; sexual orientation. Details of this legislation are available from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland website[15].

The Data Protection Act 2018[16] controls how an individual’s personal information is used by organisations, businesses or the government. It updates the UK’s previous data protection laws to be more appropriate for the UK’s digital economy and society, hence it repeals the Data Protection Act 1998[17]. It applies the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation[18] (GDPR) into UK legislation in preparation for when the UK leaves the European Union. The Act broadens the scope of individual’s data and information it protects to all general data, law enforcement data, and national security data, in order to protect the privacy and rights of individuals. Individuals are given more power and control of their data: to know what data is held about them, how it is being used, and when it should be deleted. The Act provides further protection to children’s data; the Information Commissioner’s Office[19] provides a summary[20]:

- to process children’s data online, children, aged 13 and over, can provide consent without parental consent (unless it is for a preventative or counselling service);

- when processing data of children under the age of 13, reasonable efforts must be made to verify the person providing parental consent holds parental responsibility for the child;

- privacy notices and processes must be designed to allow children to easily understand and access, to exercise their data protection rights, and erase their personal data;

- if the original processing was based on consent when the individual was a child, erasure of that data when requested must be complied; and

- children’s personal data for marketing purposes, user profiles or creating personality, have specific protection.


Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism

The principal terrorism-related threat in Northern Ireland is domestic terrorism. Responsibility for dealing with Northern Ireland Related Terrorism (NIRT) rests with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland[23]. Many of the policies and programmes for tackling terrorism in the long term are devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive.

Many of the initiatives mentioned under the subheading 'Intercultural Awareness'[24]' above are
relevant, since they are aimed at encouraging community cohesion and promoting a peaceful society.