



**Antrim Board Centre
17 Lough Road
Antrim
BT41 4DH**

**TEL: 02894482336
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18th January 2010

Dear Colleague

Re: A Shared Quality Assurance Framework for the Youth Sector in Northern Ireland

As a result of a series of discussions between the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) regarding quality assurance, an initial consultation on quality assurance in the youth sector in Northern Ireland took place between September and November 2009. As part of the consultation, interviews were carried out by an independent consultant, Tony Macaulay, with a sample of twenty-six key stakeholders including heads of service across the youth sector (statutory and voluntary) and representatives of the Youth Council, Curriculum Development Unit, University of Ulster, Department of Education and the Education & Training Inspectorate. The purpose of the interviews was to highlight current approaches and identify future needs and strategies in relation to quality assurance in the youth sector. An additional series of interviews was carried out with four key stakeholders in the Republic of Ireland to learn from their approach and experience on quality assurance frameworks.

The findings from the consultation were presented to a symposium on 6th November 2009. This **one day** event involved representatives from the statutory and voluntary sectors who, after discussing the findings of the consultation, agreed a strategy and approach for the future. These are included in the symposium report which is enclosed/available for download at www.youthworkni.org.uk

Among the next steps agreed by participants at the conclusion of the symposium was that a grouping should be established immediately to take forward the findings. As a result, a cross-sectoral Shared Quality Assurance Framework Group, chaired by Joe Hawkins (CDU Executive Committee) was convened. We have asked Tony Macaulay to continue to facilitate the process and at the first meeting the group agreed an initial development process. The purpose of the development process is to support the wider youth sector to begin to build a Shared Quality Assurance Framework. To achieve this we need your experience, views and ideas. We are therefore offering a series of opportunities for the sector to contribute to the building of a flexible and user-friendly framework that will support the continuous improvement of youth work in any setting.

The three main opportunities to participate in building the framework are as follows:

a) Call for Contributions

Please send us any suggestions, samples and proposals of good quality assurance models and tools from across the youth sector and/or further afield that you believe could be applied or adapted for use across the sector. We are particularly interested in simple and user friendly models that would reflect quality assurance systems presently in use and could be used in any setting such as a one night a week voluntary youth group. Please email any relevant web links or electronic copies to Noel.Gallagher@neelb.org.uk or Leighann.McConville@neelb.org.uk by Monday 8 February 2010.

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b) Feedback on Drafts of the Framework

Throughout the development process we want to provide opportunities for the sector to feedback on the various drafts of the framework as they are developed. You will be able to comment on the various drafts online at www.youthworkni.org.uk or call us on 02894482336.

At the first meeting of the Shared Quality Assurance Framework Group it was agreed to offer the following initial suggestion of key elements for your comments.

There are three main areas for continuous improvement:

- *Organisation*
- *People*
- *Youth Work Practice*

The key elements in each of these areas are as follows:

Organisation

- *Governance*
- *Policy*
- *Assessment of Need*
- *Prioritisation*
- *Planning*
- *Measuring organisational progress*

People

- *Volunteer and Paid Staff Recruitment*
- *Volunteer and Paid Staff Development*

Youth Work Practice

- *Youth Work Delivery (including relationship and outcomes)*
- *Inclusion*
- *Reflection on Practice*
- *Measuring Personal Development*
- *Participation*

c) Framework Building Workshop: Saturday 27th February 2010

A Framework Building Workshop will take place on Saturday 27th February from 11.00am-2.30pm. Venue to be confirmed. Representatives from the following key groupings from both the voluntary and statutory sectors will be invited to work on building the framework:

- Full Time Youth Work Practitioners
- Part Time Youth Work Practitioners
- Youth Work Managers
- Young People

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The outcome of the whole process will be a Shared Quality Assurance Framework that will then be piloted and subsequently implemented across the sector.

We look forward to working with you in building this important framework.

Please do not hesitate to contact CDU staff if you have any queries or require further information.

Yours sincerely

Gilbert Bell

Chairman
Curriculum Development Unit Management Committee

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