

include YOUTH

Response to Department of Justice Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector Funding Model

September 2016

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Include Youth

Include Youth is an independent non-governmental organisation that actively promotes the rights, best interests of and best practice with disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people.

The young people we work with and for include those from socially disadvantaged areas, those who have had poor educational experiences, those from a care background, young people who have committed or are at risk of committing crime, misusing drugs and/or alcohol, engaging in unsafe or harmful sexual behaviour, or at risk of being harmed themselves. We provide a range of tailored employability programmes for these young people, including programmes in partnership with community based organisations.

Our Give & Take Scheme adopts a youth work approach to improving the employability and increasing the self-esteem and confidence of young people aged 16 to 24 who are not yet ready to participate in mainstream training.

Many of these young people have experienced social exclusion, poverty or have other complex challenges in their lives and therefore need additional support to overcome these barriers and positively progress their education, training or employment needs. Seventy-five per cent of young people on the Scheme are care experienced, while over a third have a background in offending. We offer a range of tailored programmes including

- Core - for young people referred to us through the Health Trusts
- Start Programme – a collaborative partnership programme with community based organisations, targeted at young people in the North Down, Ards and Belfast areas
- Outreach - for groups or organisations throughout Northern Ireland
- One to One - for young people at risk of child sexual exploitation
- Transitional support - for those moving on from our Scheme and into mainstream education, training or employment

Our main offices are in Belfast, Armagh, Ballymena, Derry, Enniskillen, Newtownards and Omagh.

Include Youth also delivers an Employability Service on behalf of two of the five Health Trusts for young people aged 16 + who have had experience of the care system. This service is designed to offer tangible and concrete opportunities to assist young people leaving care to prepare for, and engage in work. We also deliver a joint employability mentoring project with Business in the Community.

Include Youth also engages in policy advocacy work in the areas of employability, youth justice and policing. This work is informed by relevant international human rights and children's rights standards, is evidence based, including that provided by young people and practitioners and is based on high quality, critical analysis.

Comments

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the VCSE Sector funding model consultation.

Include Youth has had a long standing relationship with DoJ and we have welcomed the partnership approach and willingness to collaborate with us on numerous issues. Over the years Include Youth has contributed to the work of the Department of Justice through our input at a policy level.

Voices of young people

We have shared the Department's priority that where possible the views of young people should feed into and inform developing policy and practice. Through our extensive programmes of practice with vulnerable children and young people we are able to access the views of a wide range of children and young people who come into contact with Include Youth. Many of these young people have had contact with the youth justice system.

One of Include Youth's key strategic goals is to influence decision makers and to shape policy in relation to youth justice and youth unemployment. All of our work both internally and externally is underpinned by the voices of young people.

We have seen the outworking of that commitment to access the views of young people through our involvement in a number of Departmental policies and initiatives. This has involved facilitating workshops with young people participating in Include Youth programmes as well as young people detained in Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre, to ascertain their views on DoJ policy developments, including:

- Youth Justice Review
- Reducing Offending Strategy
- Statutory Time Limits
- Custodial Arrangements for Children
- Bail
- Community Safety Strategy
- Criminal Justice Healthcare Strategy

When requested we have provided the Department with child friendly consultation documents to enhance the access of the consultation process to as wide an

audience as possible and to ensure harder to reach young people have an opportunity to feed their views in.

Partnership and Collaboration

We regard ourselves to have been a 'critical friend' to the Department and have always sought to work in a partnership way which may at times present challenges to the Department but we hope has also provided solutions and assistance. We have always been open to discussing our views and engaging in discussion and negotiation to reach common goals.

We welcome the acknowledgement that the VCSE sector has much to offer by working in partnership with the Department. With our grounding in practice and our knowledge of the policy context we believe we have much to offer in working collaboratively. We are supportive of a co-design approach and indeed have extensive experience of being involved in pre-consultation and early development stages of the Department's work.

Outcomes

We welcome the move to develop an outcome based approach which will effectively measure the impact our work has. We would also like to point out that policy outcomes can be difficult to measure as it is often a slow process to create policy change. While we can evaluate and monitor the opportunities that Include Youth can provide to ensure young people's voices are recorded and relayed to policy makers, it can prove difficult to assess to what extent those views have directly resulted in policy change. Policy change is often impacted on by so many external factors that identifying the particular levers of change can be problematic. (Paddy – do we want to mention evaluation of our policy work here and reference it?)

Competition

The move to a competitive marketplace may limit the extent to which co-design and collaboration can take place within the sector as organisations may increasingly see each other as competitors rather than collaborators.

Core Funding

(Paddy – what do we need to say on this??)

Best Value

We would welcome further clarification on how the Department will define 'best value'.

Private and Social Enterprise Sectors

We would seek clarification on the expected role of the Social Enterprise sector to the work of the Department and if the Department envisages a role for the private sector?

Department Priorities/ Programme for Government and Business Plan

We welcome the commitment to link Department priorities to the Programme for Government and look forward to seeing the outworking of this commitment in PfG action plans and DoJ Business Plan.