

Advice to the Department of Education on the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) in Education Addendum

11th February 2016

Summary of Recommendations

NICCY firmly recommends the reinstatement of a dedicated budget for CRED and the retention and ringfencing of CRED work by the Department when the functions of the YCNI transfer to the Education Authority (EA).

NICCY recommends that the UNCRC is used as the framework for the implementation of the CRED policy, the inclusion of Article 4 of the Convention as a relevant article and that SMART targets which deliver on the Department's obligations under the UNCRC are set and monitored to ensure that the UNCRC meaningfully underpins the policy.

NICCY recommends that guidance for practitioners and information on training and other actions which are being and will be taken to ensure that delivery organizations take account of the particular needs of different groups of children is made available. CRED practitioners should be identified and information provided on the current level of CRED work ongoing.

NICCY recommends that discrete CRED programmes are built in as an integral element to, and funded through, the Department's Shared Education policy. Such programmes should go some way to addressing concerns expressed by pupils about sharing their education with pupils from particular schools and positively contribute to the success of shared education and the educational experience of children engaging in shared education. With regard to schools not currently involved in shared education, youth work and early years settings, NICCY wishes to see capacity being built and funding being secured for the delivery of CRED programmes.

NICCY recommends that information is provided on professional development, workforce capacity building and the level and type of support which will be given to voluntary and youth organizations to expand and embed CRED through dissemination of good practice, training and mentor support. Information should also be provided on what exactly will be required by the EA, YCNI and other arms length bodies in enabling greater consistency in the access to and impact of targeted CRED support as well as clarity provided regarding the future of the YCNI with regard to CRED.

NICCY recommends that information is provided on how the Department will foster more effective links with other departments and agencies, how this will ensure better support for education settings in the delivery of CRED and how educational settings will be encouraged to engage with parents, local communities and draw on local expertise with a timeframe for this work.

NICCY recommends that information is provided on future accreditation of CRED and progression routes, a definition of 'CRED related learning' is given and information on how schools will carry out self-evaluation without any additional resource is provided.

NICCY recommends that the Department increases the level of training and education on the UNCRC to comply with its obligations under the Convention. This is an important aspect of the CRED policy and should be addressed in the CRED Addendum.

Introduction

The Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) was created in accordance with 'The Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order' (2003) to safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people in Northern Ireland. Under Articles 7(2) and (3) of this legislation, NICCY has a mandate to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law, practice and services relating to the rights and best interests of children and young people by relevant authorities. Under Article 7(4), NICCY has a statutory duty to advise any relevant authority on matters concerning the rights or best interests of children and young persons. The Commissioner's remit includes children and young people from birth up to 18 years, or 21 years, if the young person is disabled or in the care of social services. In carrying out her functions, the Commissioner's paramount consideration is the rights of the child or young person, having particular regard to their wishes and feelings. In exercising her functions, the Commissioner has regard to all relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

International Children's Rights Standards

The UNCRC is a set of legally binding minimum standards and obligations in respect of all aspects of children's lives which the Government has ratified and must comply with in the discharge of its functions. The Northern Ireland Government Departments, including the Department of Education (DE), is obliged to comply with the obligations under the UNCRC by virtue of being a devolved administration of the UK Government, the signatory to the UNCRC. There are a number of UNCRC articles, Committee recommendations and Committee General Comments which are relevant to the CRED Addendum. With regard to awareness raising and dissemination of information about the Convention, Article 42 of the UNCRC requires states to make the provisions of the Convention known to adults and children alike. Article 29(1)(b) requires that education be directed towards, "*the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations*". This is endorsed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which has stated that, "*states should develop a comprehensive strategy for disseminating knowledge of the Convention throughout society*"¹ and place special emphasis on children acquiring knowledge of their rights through, "*incorporating*

¹ *General Comment No.5: General Measures of Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Para. 66), UN Doc CRC/GC/2003/5, Para 67.

learning about the Convention and human rights in general into the school curriculum at all stages”.² In particular the Committee has stipulated that human rights education should provide information on the content of human rights treaties and children should learn about human rights by seeing human rights standards implemented in practice, whether at home, in school, or within the community.³

With regard to the provision of a budget for CRED, Article 4 of the UNCRC states that,

“States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.”

According to the UNCRC Committee’s General Comment on Article 29 of the Convention – a statement of its meaning and objectives - education must be child-centred, child-friendly and empowering.⁴ The goal is to strengthen the child’s capacity to enjoy the full range of human rights, to promote a culture which is infused by appropriate human rights values and to empower the child through developing his or her skills, learning and other capacities, human dignity, self-esteem and self-confidence. In this context, ‘education’ goes far beyond formal schooling to embrace the broad range of life experiences and learning processes which enable children, whether individually or collectively, to develop their personalities, talents and abilities and to live a full and satisfying life within society. Educational programmes should be conducted in ways that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and that help to prevent violence and conflict.

General Comment No. 1 on the aims of education is clear that a school environment must reflect tolerance, equality and promote peace and understanding. The General Comment is clear that there is an obligation on Government to ensure that schools which allow bullying, intolerance and inequality to thrive is in breach of Article 29(1) of the UNCRC. It states that,

² *Ibid*, Para 68.

³ *General Comment No. 1: Aims of Education*, UN Doc CRC/GC/2001, Para 15.

⁴ *Ibid*.

“...the school environment itself must thus reflect the freedom and the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin called for in article 29 (1) (b) and (d). A school which allows bullying or other violent and exclusionary practices to occur is not one which meets the requirements of article 29 (1).”⁵

The Committee’s General Comment No 5. on General measures of implementation of the UNCRC,⁶ is clear that children should be visible in budgets and that analysis of resources for children should take place to ensure that States are fulfilling their obligation to allocate resources to the maximum extent in order to ensure the realization of children’s rights. In addition, it outlines the obligation on States to ensure that budget decisions which will impact on children are made with the best interests of the child as a primary consideration. It states that,

“The Committee needs to know what steps are taken at all levels of Government to ensure that economic and social planning and decision-making and budgetary decisions are made with the best interests of children as a primary consideration and that children, including in particular marginalized and disadvantaged groups of children, are protected from the adverse effects of economic policies or financial downturns.”⁷

General Comment No. 5 also emphasises the importance of States ensuring that the Convention is reflected in professional training curricula, codes of conduct and educational curricula at all levels. Understanding and knowledge of human rights must be promoted among children themselves, through the school curriculum and in other ways.⁸ Children need to acquire knowledge of their rights and the Committee places special emphasis on incorporating learning about the Convention and human rights in general into the school curriculum at all stages.⁹

The UNCRC Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern in its recommendations in 2008 with regard to training, knowledge and understanding of the

⁵ *Ibid*, Para 19.

⁶ *General Comment No.5: General Measures of Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, UN Doc CRC/GC/2003/5.

⁷ *Ibid*, Para 51.

⁸ *Ibid*, Para 53.

⁹ *Ibid*, Para 68.

Convention. The Committee expressed its concern that the Convention is not part of the curriculum in schools¹⁰ and recommended that the UK Government,

“...further strengthen its efforts, to ensure that all of the provisions of the Convention are widely known and understood by adults and children alike, inter alia by including the Convention in the statutory national curriculum, and that it ensure that its principles and values are integrated into the structures and practice of all schools.”¹¹

The UN Committee also recommended that,

“...the State party, in accordance with article 4 of the Convention, allocate the maximum extent of available resources for the implementation of children’s rights...”¹²

It highlighted the need to invest in children by Governments, stating that investment in children is a,

“...widely accepted best guarantee for achieving equitable and sustainable human development and a fundamental requirement for social and economic priorities of any government”¹³

The Committee went onto recommend that the Government,

“a) make children a priority in the budgetary allocations as a means to ensure the highest return of the limited available resources; and make investment in children visible in the State budget through detailed compilation of the resources allocated to them;

b) consider using rights-based budget monitoring and analysis, as well as child impact assessments on how investments in any sector may serve “the best interests of the child”¹⁴

¹⁰ Para 20, CRC/C/GBR/CO/4, 3rd October 2008

¹¹ *Ibid*, Para 21.

¹² *Ibid*, Para 19.

¹³ CRC (2007) Day of General Discussion “Resources for the rights of the child – Responsibility of States”, Para 27.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, Para 30.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has recognised the importance of holding States to account with regard to their obligations to invest in children to deliver their rights under the Convention. The Committee is currently working on expanding on what is meant by the General Measures of Implementation of the Convention and is taking forward work with a view to drafting a new General Comment on public expenditure or public investment in infancy and childhood to implement the rights of the Convention. It is proposed that this General Comment will include indicators to measure the extent to which States are meeting their obligations. In addition, the Human Rights Council has recognised the importance of investing in children and has adopted a resolution, *“Investment in the rights of the child”*¹⁵ which affirms the high economic and social returns of investment in children and stresses the importance of resource allocation and spending for the promotion and protection of children’s rights.

Discussions with Departmental Officials

In providing advice to the DE on the CRED Addendum it was very helpful for NICCY staff to meet with DE staff on 22nd January 2016 to discuss some of the current issues relating to the CRED policy. NICCY understands that the purpose of the CRED Addendum is to ensure that the good work already achieved through the operation of CRED over the last four years continues and that expertise not lost due to the withdrawal of earmarked funding for CRED. NICCY is extremely supportive of this intention and wishes to see the continuation of work undertaken through the CRED policy, including the provision of discrete CRED programmes to children and young people in all education and youth settings across Northern Ireland.

The decision taken in March 2015 to withdraw all earmarked funding for the implementation of the CRED policy is extremely disappointing. While we understand from discussions with the Department and the CRED Addendum that it is intended to deliver on the CRED policy commitments through mainstream funding, we also understand that without a specific budget for this work since March 2015, delivery of the policy has been difficult and CRED work is not happening to the same level as it was due to a lack of resources. From discussions with DE, the current informal consultation on the CRED Addendum aims to seek views on how CRED work can be continued without a dedicated budget. It would therefore appear that despite the Department’s intention that CRED work will continue to be funded through mainstream budgets that this is not happening to the

¹⁵ 27th March 2015

same degree that it was. In addition, if sufficient resources were being adequately allocated to CRED through mainstream budgets it would not be necessary to seek views on possible delivery mechanisms for CRED following the withdrawal of its dedicated budget. We must therefore conclude that the withdrawal of earmarked funding for CRED is having a significant detrimental impact on the delivery of the policy. We also understand that a substantial expertise base has been developed under the leadership of the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI) which convenes the CRED Reference Group. While some CRED work is ongoing through this mechanism it is NICCY's understanding that funding for this is running out and there is a serious risk that this rich expertise will be lost. While we are aware that Departmental officials are pursuing new delivery avenues in terms of resourcing for CRED through the Shared Education signature programme and funding available for shared education through Peace IV, co-ordination, retention, consolidation and maintenance of ongoing expertise and structures are vital. **NICCY firmly recommends the reinstatement of a dedicated budget for CRED and the retention and ringfencing of CRED work by the Department when the functions of the YCNI transfer to the Education Authority (EA).**

CRED Addendum

The CRED Addendum states that the CRED policy was subject to a formal review in late 2014 which indicated the continued need for the policy to fully embed community relations, equality and diversity work. During the course of the review, the Education Minister confirmed plans to end CRED earmarked funding. The review confirmed that the policy is fit for purpose and is achieving its objectives and a number of actions were identified to build on work to date and further embed the policy against the background of a more challenging financial landscape. The core policy remains unchanged and the Addendum supplements the policy with an updated set of action commitments.

The updated actions commitments are all extremely vague, no timeline has been provided for their delivery and there is no information indicating how these commitments will be resourced. As stated above, we are aware that CRED work is not currently being carried out to the same level as it was due to a lack of resources. We therefore assume that the reason for the lack of detail in the updated action commitments is also due to a lack of resources and uncertainty around future resourcing of CRED. The Addendum states that there is an expectation that implementation of the CRED policy will continue through mainstream budgets which, given that additional sources of funding for CRED are being

sought, this is obviously not sufficient. The expectation that implementation of the CRED policy will continue through mainstream budgets is also concerning given the operational independence of schools regarding their budgets and limited resources available to schools, as well as a range of current and future competing priorities for funding in schools, not least under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill which is currently awaiting Royal Assent. In addition, it states that The Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order 2007 requires all schools to address community relations through Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, Local and Global Citizenship and Developing Young People as Contributors to Society. The Curriculum Framework for Youth Work and the Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education contain similar requirements. This is concerning in that the introduction of the CRED Policy in 2011 was a recognition that current obligations and policies were not enough to address the issues of community relations, equality and diversity in education and that additional targeted action was necessary. It has not been asserted at any stage that the CRED policy has achieved its aims and that there is no longer a need for such targeted action.

The Addendum states that in taking CRED work forward, the ETI recommends that the rights of the child underpins practice. It refers to the UNCRC and contains a list of UNCRC articles that bear a relation to the CRED policy at Annex 2. Article 4 of the UNCRC, which relates to implementation of the Convention rights to the maximum extent of available resources, is one of the obligations on the Department through ratification of the Convention yet it is not listed as a relevant article. It states that the Department will encourage the ETI as part of its inspection activities to report on how adequately the UNCRC articles are being addressed. No information is provided on how this will be carried out or what this will mean for the inspection process in future. While this intention is welcome, it is concerning that no targets have been set with regard to the UNCRC, which should be the case if the UNCRC is genuinely intended to underpin the policy. This would provide a clear framework for the ETI to measure against delivery and also provide clarity for schools in ensuring that the UNCRC is meaningfully and consistently underpinning the policy. **NICCY recommends that the UNCRC is used as the framework for the implementation of the CRED policy, the inclusion of Article 4 of the Convention as a relevant article and that SMART targets which deliver on the Department's obligations under the UNCRC are set and monitored to ensure that the UNCRC meaningfully underpins the policy.**

It is very unclear from the CRED Addendum whether there is currently any work ongoing in relation to CRED and no information is provided which states how CRED will be delivered going forward in the absence of available funding for the delivery of discrete CRED programmes. There is no advice to schools in the Addendum with regard to current CRED delivery and while there are a range of roles identified in the Addendum for schools, the Department, the EA, the YCNI, the ETI and CCEA, nowhere does it state who will actually be delivering future CRED programmes. Reference is made to ‘practitioners’ but these have not been identified in the document. It states that delivery organizations need to take account of the particular needs of those of differing sexual orientation, racial group, disability, LGBT young people and those identifying as belonging to one of the two largest religious groups in Northern Ireland. It does not state how this should be done. **NICCY recommends that guidance for practitioners and information on training and other actions which are being and will be taken to ensure that delivery organizations take account of the particular needs of different groups of children is made available. CRED practitioners should be identified and information provided on the current level of CRED work ongoing.**

The need to take account of the particular needs of those of differing sexual orientation is particularly important given that the Young Life and Times Survey 2012 found low levels of schools and youth work settings addressing sexual orientation and identified this as an area for an increased number of programmes. Also, DE’s Consultation on its EQIA Proposal to End the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) Earmarked Funding states that,

“Preliminary work for advancing CRED has identified sexual orientation as a priority both in delivery and capacity building of teachers and youth workers”¹⁶

In the EQIA, in the section on sexual orientation, the Department stated that schools have to put in place a policy on Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE) and that the CCEA is taking forward work to review current RSE guidance for schools and intends to issue new guidance before the end of the 2014/15 academic year. Given that the Department has identified the value of CRED in the promotion of positive attitudes toward members of the section 75 categories and has specifically identified additional work as necessary with regard to sexual orientation, this ‘mitigating measure’ falls far short of what is required

¹⁶ Page 11, Department of Education, Consultation EQIA Proposal to End the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) Earmarked Funding, February 2015.

under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 as it will neither mitigate the adverse impact or promote equality of opportunity as is required when an area where the promotion of equality of opportunity is identified.

Also in its EQIA, DE relies on its Shared Education policy as a mitigating measure for the withdrawal of CRED funding in its EQIA. From examination of the Shared Education policy it is not proposed to include the programmes which had been funded under CRED. The aims of the Shared Education policy are to improve educational standards and reconciliation outcomes and upon examination of the Department's Shared Education policy Key Action 10 states that the ETI will undertake independent reviews of current practices in relation to the delivery of the CRED policy, including consideration of the opportunities that are provided for children and young people to discuss and explore issues associated with divisions, conflict and inequalities. This is the only explicit mention of the CRED policy in the Shared Education policy. There is no suggested obligation on schools through the Shared Education policy to address CRED issues or to mitigate against the impact of the withdrawal of earmarked funding for CRED. It may be the case that the Department intends to mitigate against the impact of the withdrawal of funding for CRED through the Shared Education policy, however the actions it intends to take should be explicitly referenced. NICCY agrees that there is an obvious relationship between CRED and Shared Education policies and that the potential exists to significantly strengthen the success of the Shared Education policy through the introduction of discrete CRED programmes.

NICCY provided assistance to the Minister for Education by consulting with almost 6,000 children and young people to explore their views and experiences of shared education,¹⁷ with the intention of ensuring that these views meaningfully informed the development of the policy and legislation relating to shared education. While many of the children and young people who took part in NICCY's consultation on shared education gave positive accounts of their participation in joint classes and activities. However, a significant minority described having more mixed experiences of shared education initiatives, where interaction with pupils from other schools had been negative or limited. Some of the issues raised include children feeling uncomfortable if they were in a minority or 'out of place' when attending classes in another school. Some described collaborative activities and joint classes as 'shared' but 'separate', because pupils remained within their own school or

¹⁷ Shared Education The Views of Children and Young People, Children and Young People's Report, NICCY, 2013.

friendship groups and interaction with pupils from other schools had been limited. Some pupils expressed concern about sharing their education with pupils from particular schools. Their concerns related to academic ability, cross-community issues, standards of behaviour and the increased potential for bullying.

It is NICCY's view that shared education must be viewed as part of a continuum of education models, the ultimate goal being a truly integrated system of education for all children in Northern Ireland, where children of all religions, races, genders, ability, sexual orientations and ages are educated together. This is supported by the DE's definition of shared education as contained in its policy document, *"Sharing Works; A Policy for Shared Education"*¹⁸, which is for,

"Vibrant, self-improving shared education partnerships delivering educational benefits to learners, encouraging the efficient and effective use of resources, promoting equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion".¹⁹

The Department goes on to provide a far-reaching vision and description of shared education which includes pupils of different ages, genders, races, sexual orientations and political opinions and children with a disability and those without and children with dependents and those without. It also refers to different school types, encompassing pupils attending all types of school in Northern Ireland. The Department confirms that its intention regarding shared education is broad enough to include children from a range of section 75 groups and states that,

*"It is expected that Shared Education will be organised and delivered in such a way that promotes equality of opportunity and social inclusion by providing opportunities for children from differing Section 75 groups (e.g. children from different religious backgrounds, children from different racial backgrounds, children with and without disabilities, children who are carers or school age mothers) and from differing socioeconomic backgrounds to learn together at school and in less formal education."*²⁰

¹⁸ *"Sharing Works; A Policy for Shared Education"*, Department of Education, September 2015.

¹⁹ Page 4, *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

NICCY very much welcomes the recognition contained above that children are not a homogeneous group, but rather have multiple identities which go much further than their religious identity alone. Bringing children together to be educated, under the auspices of shared education, will result in the coming together of children with a range of identities in terms of not only their religion but also their race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and home life circumstances, including children with caring responsibilities and children who are looked after by the state. There is therefore significant potential for issues to arise with regard to a lack of understanding of difference across a range of areas. It is our view that CRED has the potential to make an extremely positive contribution to the promotion of tolerance and respect which is so vital to ensuring the success of shared education in Northern Ireland. This is borne out by the findings of the 2012 Young Life and Times Survey which found that of those young people who had undertaken programmes on the specific areas over 80% reported more positive attitudes to people with disabilities, different religious beliefs, sexual orientations and ethnic group, over 75% reported more positive attitudes to people with different political opinions and over 70% reported more positive attitudes to people of different age, gender and on the issue of dependants as a result. In 2014, the same survey reported similarly high results in relation to young people's experience of CRED.²¹ Research clearly shows that different groups of children have very different educational experiences. Children from certain groups are much more likely to experience bullying in school and are also much less likely to enjoy equality of opportunity in accessing education, which suggests a clear causal link which must be addressed if all children are to fulfil their maximum potential in education. These include looked after children, Traveller, Roma and black and minority ethnic children, Newcomer children, socio-economically deprived children, children with additional needs including special educational needs and /or a disability, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people and young carers.

NICCY is concerned that just as the CRED policy has contributed to young people displaying greater tolerance and understanding to certain groups of young people through participating in programmes which dealt with issues relating to their lives, the impact of the withdrawal of all earmarked funding for CRED is likely to result in an increase in intolerance and negative attitudes towards the same groups of young people. As stated above, we are aware that CRED work is not being undertaken to the same degree as previously and we are concerned that the withdrawal of earmarked funding for the operation of discrete programmes under CRED could have an extremely detrimental

²¹ 'Young Life and Times Survey 2014' ARK.

impact on tolerance and understanding in schools and could also lead to an increase in bullying. This is in direct conflict with the intention of the Department's Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill. NICCY believes that there is a pressing need for young people to be educated about difference, tolerance, self-respect and respect for others in school. Such education should be part of a whole school approach to addressing the issue of bullying, ensure the success of shared education and that children are facilitated to fully participate and fulfil their potential in education. This is central to compliance with the Department's obligations to protect and realise the right of all children to an effective education under the UNCRC. We believe that there is a fundamentally important role for CRED in the furtherance of this aim. **NICCY recommends that discrete CRED programmes are built in as an integral element to, and funded through, the Department's Shared Education policy. Such programmes should go some way to addressing concerns expressed by pupils about sharing their education with pupils from particular schools and positively contribute to the success of shared education and the educational experience of children engaging in shared education. With regard to schools not currently involved in shared education, youth work and early years settings, NICCY wishes to see capacity being built and funding being secured for the delivery of CRED programmes.**

With regard to Professional Workforce Development, the review of CRED found that there remains a need for professional development and cascading knowledge and skills across the workforce. The Addendum states that voluntary and youth organizations continue to need support to expand and embed CRED through dissemination of good practice, training and mentor support to ensure increased access for young people. While this is welcome, no information has been provided on how it is intended that this will be achieved. In addition, it is unclear whether this has been communicated to voluntary and youth organizations, as this is a DE policy and is ultimately the responsibility of the Department. It states that the ETI identified the need for further support for practitioners to embed CRED, including through effective governance and community connections within and beyond the classroom. The Addendum states that the Department expects its arms length bodies to reflect the identified need in planning how support will be provided. The Department will require the EA, YCNI and other arms length bodies to enable greater consistency in the access to and impact of targeted CRED support which they provide. Again, no information on how this will be ensured has been provided, including how this will be resourced. The YCNI is referenced in a number of areas in the Addendum despite the Minister's announcement of the outcome of the consultation on the future of the Youth

Council on the 15th December 2015 that all future youth services will be delivered through the EA.²² **NICCY recommends that information is provided on professional development, workforce capacity building and the level and type of support which will be given to voluntary and youth organizations to expand and embed CRED through dissemination of good practice, training and mentor support. Information should also be provided on what exactly will be required by the EA, YCNI and other arms length bodies in enabling greater consistency in the access to and impact of targeted CRED support as well as clarity provided regarding the future of the YCNI with regard to CRED.**

The Addendum states that the Department will seek to foster more effective links with other departments and agencies to better support education settings in delivering CRED in their local communities. It refers specifically to agencies working with OFMDFM on the delivery of TBUC. Educational settings should also seek to avail of opportunities to engage parents and local communities in their work and to draw on local expertise as appropriate. Again, while this is welcome, no information on how this will be done or a timeframe for this has been provided. **NICCY recommends that information is provided on how the Department will foster more effective links with other departments and agencies, how this will ensure better support for education settings in the delivery of CRED and how educational settings will be encouraged to engage with parents, local communities and draw on local expertise with a timeframe for this work.**

In response to an ETI recommendation on the need for accreditation of learning through CRED the Addendum states that the Department will commission the CCEA to consider and report on how best accreditation and progression routes can be developed to ensure learning is age appropriate and advances knowledge and skills for children taking part in CRED activities. It remains unclear whether there will be discrete CRED programmes which will be delivered where learning can be accredited.

With regard to monitoring and evaluation, the Addendum states that the Department, with the EA, CCEA and YCNI, will monitor the impact of CRED through tracking the acquisition and development of children and young people's knowledge, skills and attitudes of CRED. DE will also continue to commission a CRED module as part of the Young Life and Times survey on a biennial basis. ETI will also be encouraged to ensure that inspection activities

²² <https://www.deni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/final-statement-to-the-Assembly-future-of-the-youth-council.pdf>

evaluate more fully the holistic education of children and young people and the added value for them of their CRED related learning. No definition has been provided of what constitutes 'CRED related learning' and it is unclear how children and young people will learn about CRED e.g. through discrete programmes or as part of other subjects. It also states that the ETI will continue to identify and report on examples of effective and innovative practice in CRED and to further embed the CRED quality indicators within "Together Towards Improvement" (TTI). NICCY is aware that TTI is a resource to support schools in the process of self-evaluation. It is concerning that this is yet another obligation on individual schools with regard to the monitoring of CRED, as well as delivery of CRED without any additional resource. **NICCY recommends that information is provided on future accreditation of CRED and progression routes, a definition of 'CRED related learning' is given and information on how schools will carry out self-evaluation without any additional resource is provided.**

The issue of the role of CRED in awareness raising and dissemination of knowledge of the UNCRC has not been addressed in the CRED Addendum. Article 42 of the UNCRC places clear obligations on the Department with regard to training, knowledge and understanding of the Convention. Knowledge of the UNCRC and rights among both children and young people and adults in Northern Ireland is low.²³²⁴ The UNCRC and children's rights are not a compulsory part of the Northern Ireland curriculum at any of the key stages of education. Training on the UNCRC and human rights in schools is extremely limited. There is no comprehensive strategy in relation to teacher education for human rights education.²⁵ Research carried out for the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission noted at Key Stage 4, the statutory curriculum for Local and Global Citizenship (LGC) makes no specific reference to *human* rights – referring to 'exercising rights and social responsibilities' instead.²⁶ However, the non-statutory guidelines urge schools to interpret this to mean 'human rights' and to developing curricula around international and regional human rights instruments. Support for human rights education was evident in the DE's CRED policy,

²³ For full module related to the rights of the child, see Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2002, available at: http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/2002/Rights_of_the_Child/index.html.

²⁴ NISRA (2013) The Young Persons Behaviour and Attitudes Survey. The Young Persons Behaviour and Attitudes Survey (YPBAS) is a school-based survey conducted among 11-16 year-olds. The survey covers a range of topics relevant to the lives of young people.

²⁵ Reference is made to pupil voice but this is not connected to children's participation rights. The CRED (non-statutory) guidelines include an amended form of relevant competences which include reference to an understanding of contemporary debates in relation to human rights from ITE through to CPD (Page 46).

²⁶ Education Reform in Northern Ireland A Human Rights Review, Laura Lundy et al. Centre for Children's Rights, Queens University Belfast, April 2013.

which states that it is, “...premiered on the interdependence between equality, good relations and human rights, including UNCRC”²⁷ and identifies ‘respect for rights’ as both an objective and outcome of the policy.²⁸ Given that there is a current deficit with regard to training and education on the Convention in education, NICCY has serious concerns about the lack of a budget for CRED and the resultant reduction in CRED work ongoing which will further reduce the education received by children on the UNCRC and on their rights. It is well acknowledged that children must be aware of their right in order to exercise and realize them. **NICCY recommends that the Department increases the level of training and education on the UNCRC to comply with its obligations under the Convention. This is an important aspect of the CRED policy and should be addressed in the CRED Addendum.**

Conclusion

NICCY welcomes the opportunity to provide advice to the Department on the CRED Addendum and also to meet with Departmental officials to discuss issues of concern relating to the continued operation of the CRED policy. We recommend that Department takes into account the recommendations made in this submission, which we provide in our statutory advice capacity under Article 7(4) of ‘The Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order’ (2003). We would be happy to discuss anything in this submission or provide clarification or further information if required.

²⁷ Department of Education (2011) *Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education*. Bangor: HMSO, Para 6.1.

²⁸ *Ibid*, Paras 6.3 and 6.4.