



Report to the CYPSP BME Sub Group

**Initial meeting
Regional BME Parents Reference Group**

**Consultation:
Outcomes for Children**

Saturday 6th October 2012
(insert added 240713)

Introduction

For the first time in Northern Ireland, all of the main agencies for children and families, have agreed to work together on a plan to improve the lives of all children who live here. This multi-agency group is known as the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP).

The CYPSP structure incorporates a number of sub-groups, one of which is the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Sub Group. The term BME is described as "settled BME communities, Travellers, Roma, refugees, asylum seekers, migrant worker communities (including undocumented people), unaccompanied children and children of mixed parentage" (www.cypsp.org).

The BME Sub Group consists of a range of representatives from community, voluntary and statutory agencies. The aim of this group is to improve the lives of BME children and young people. In order to achieve this aim, the BME Sub Group has agreed to:

- "plan what needs to change to address the rights and needs of BME children and young people and improve their outcomes, focussing on those issues that must be addressed at a Northern Ireland level.
- produce an action plan that will set out what it will do to ensure that the outcomes for BME children and young people are improved.
- decide on a set of indicators which will be used to measure how well BME children and young people are doing in Northern Ireland over time. This will help the Sub Group know if its joint work is changing the lives of BME children and young people for the better.
- work closely with the Outcomes Groups to ensure that outcomes for BME children and young people are addressed at local level as well as at Northern Ireland level" (www.cypsp.org/bme).

The CYPSP identified that the new plan for improving children's lives through better outcomes for children should incorporate meaningful engagement and participation by children, young people, their families and other stakeholders involved in the lives of the children and young people in Northern Ireland.

"children, young people, families and communities will be enabled to participate in the planning process. Listening to [them] is key to understanding what works well".

The Parenting Forum, a project within Parenting NI, was asked to develop a model that would facilitate and support parents from across Northern Ireland to become involved in the planning process. As a partnership organisation, the Parenting Forum has over 1,500 individual parents and family support organisations on its membership list.

The Parenting Forum also has considerable experience in carrying out numerous consultations throughout Northern Ireland and is well placed to carry out real and meaningful consultations with parents within an agreed frame-work. As the groups of parents come from a range of diverse backgrounds and include parents of children with special needs, Parenting NI is also in a position to offer additional support structures to assist parents to be actively involved in the participation process.

The Consultation Process

As agreed with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, Parenting Forum would recruit a group of parents from across Northern Ireland to sit on the Regional BME Parents Reference Group. This group would act in a consultative role in responding to any documentation, plans or initiatives as directed by the BME Sub Group. Parenting Forum would design and facilitate 3 sessions per year using information as directed. This will be part of a rolling process of communication between the BME Sub Group and the Regional BME Parents Reference Group.

The Parenting Forum used two of their own internal facilitators for this initial meeting and consultation with parents. Consultation with parents requires highly skilled and experienced facilitators who are capable of working sensitively with diverse groups and facilitators were chosen accordingly. Parents clearly valued the opportunity to be consulted on the outcomes for children and readily contributed their views and their experiences.

Consultation Methodology

A consultation pack was designed to ensure a uniform approach across all work with the Parents Reference Group. The pack incorporated a brief induction to provide parents with an insight into the rationale behind the CYPSP and the planning framework. User friendly materials were designed in order to engage parents in discussion [see Appendix 1- Facilitators' Pack].

A focus group approach was used as the data gathering method because it brought parents together in a way which enabled them to share their experiences and their opinions. Parents worked together using guided handouts to identify how the lives of BME children and young people living in Northern Ireland could be improved.

Interpreters were available at the meeting to provide translation and pre-prepared handouts were available in a variety of languages which enabled all parent to fully participate in the consultation.

Data collected during the focus group session was translated where required and collated using a qualitative content analysis approach.

Parent Profile

The Parenting Forum was aware of the need to ensure good representation from all BME communities living across Northern Ireland. The group contains a wide range of nationalities including Chinese, Cuban, Ethiopian, Ghanaian, Indian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Pakistani, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Sudanese, Vietnamese as well as parents from the Travelling Community and a number of parents who were Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

The group represents a wide spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds, including unemployed. There was representation from parents whose children

have additional needs. The group is mixed gender within a wide age range. Parent representatives had children varying in age from babies to over 18s as outlined in the table below:

Total Number of Parents : 56

Gender:	Male	Female		
	3	53		
Ages of Children:	0 - 5 years	6 - 10 years	11 - 17 years	18+
Number of Children	36	44	20	5

The Report

This consultation was carried out on behalf of the BME Sub Group who sought feedback from parents in relation to the six Outcomes and associated strap-lines for improving lives of BME children in Northern Ireland. The following information is based on the responses gathered from the BME Parents Reference Group about what is good, what is not so good and what could be improved in relation to the six Outcomes and the lives of BME children living in Northern Ireland.

A note about the findings (inserted 240713)

Parental opinions, experiences and suggestions provide a rich source of data. Qualitative information obtained from parents can enhance the statistical service level data and evidence based research available for planning purposes. This triangulated approach helps to ensure that outcomes based planning is based on robust and comprehensive information.

Comments made by parents (both positive and negative), have been incorporated into this report and submitted to the BME Sub-Group as part of the CYPSP planning process. The role of the Parenting NI Facilitator is to report issues raised by parents, not to resolve specific problems identified. However, if appropriate, parents may be signposted to a suitable source of support. Parenting NI Facilitators will not share contact details relating to individual examples given by parents, except in relation to child protection concerns.

Anonymised, experiential accounts, shared in good faith by parents, may provide opportunities to understand where systems can be improved at policy, strategic or practice level, to ensure better outcomes for all children.

Query from Parents

An issue that was raised spontaneously by a number of parents at the meeting was about the terminology 'Black and Minority Ethnic'. A number of parents were not happy with this description. Parents from the Travelling Community felt excluded by this term. Other parents remarked on the focus of 'Black' to the apparent exclusion of other 'colours'. The term 'minority' was also queried as a potentially inappropriate term. While parents accepted that this was the official term, they felt that it did not adequately or fairly describe the broad and growing range of diverse communities that live in Northern Ireland.

1. Healthy



We want the same positive emotional and physical health and wellbeing for all BME children and young people, as the best of their peers.



Good

Many positive comments were made about the NHS particularly in relation to free access to medical services and dentists for children. Specific aspects of the service including appointments system for clinics, drop in clinics, hearing and sight tests were all commended. Appreciation for maternity and health visiting services including the home visits and vaccination service. Good sexual health service for teenagers in some areas. Some areas had good access to interpreter services – free interpreter/see GP within 24 hours. Parents commented on friendly helpful staff in general.

The role of schools in promoting healthy eating was appreciated by parents, as was the role of the health visitor in giving advice about healthy eating for children.



Not so good

Some families did not have such a positive experience of health services.

Parents would like more contact and advice from the health visiting service. Need for more appreciation by Health Visitors of cultural differences which for example may impact on English language development.

Delays experienced by many – in accessing GP appointments, delays in interpreter services (up to 3 weeks), long waiting lists for specialist/consultant appointments, waiting times at outpatient clinics and long waiting time for results.

Dentistry services – very expensive for adults. Also long waiting lists – parents have waited 1 to 2 years for a dentist appointment

Lack of respect and lack of cultural awareness by some medical staff.

No interpreter service available in A and E






Some school uniforms unsuitable during winter



Suggestions

- More cultural awareness training for medical staff
- More access to interpreter services in clinics. A and E should have interpreter service – even if this is a telephone based service
- Better medical treatment required – more in-depth examination and testing rather than superficial prescriptions.
- More involvement by Health Visitors especially for 0-2 year olds
- More help for special needs children including planning for their care in the future.
- More understanding on depression and mental illness.
- Dentists – more should offer services to NHS patients and reduce waiting times for appointments.
- Some schools need to review uniform policy – children need warmer clothes/shoes in the winter.

2. Enjoying, Learning and Achieving

  <p><i>All BME children and young people are welcomed and supported to learn and achieve in a context that reflects and respects their cultural identity.</i></p>	 <h3>Good</h3> <p>Free education “Our children have learnt to speak English – we are learning from them” Good relationships between parents and schools, commitment by teachers Good information and meetings for parents by schools Good standard of education in Northern Ireland Good school environment, children feel safe, good discipline in school Opportunities for learning through play Access to after school activities including language clubs Free transport, books and stationary School trips</p>
 <h3>Not so good</h3> <p>Some examples of poor communication between schools and parents Some schools not aware that parents cannot read or write – cannot help children with their homework. Not enough after school activities or places especially for younger children and teenagers Competitiveness not encouraged Children not allowed to speak own language in class Cultural difference not always acknowledged or reflected in the work that children do Not enough indoor / outdoor facilities for children and young people Concerned about children having to do PE outdoors in bad weather.</p>	 <h3>Suggestions</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More cultural awareness and respect in schools • Extra support for parents with reading and writing so that they can help children with homework • Classes for parents to learn English – some parents with home responsibilities have very little opportunities for formal learning • More after schools activities for homework, sports and play • More community group activities for children – games, trips etc • Children should be encouraged to speak own language in school • More free activities for families • Breakfast clubs in more schools • More indoor/outdoor facilities for families in the community • More celebration of cultural events that are celebrated in own country [of origin]

3. Experiencing economic and environmental wellbeing

<div data-bbox="190 279 533 571" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="607 376 987 603" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="73 667 1111 794"><i>All BME children and young people enjoy a safe, healthy, and inclusive environment free from poverty regardless of parental legal status of ethnic identity.</i></p>	<div data-bbox="1144 236 1261 352" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="1144 357 1249 395">Good</p> <p data-bbox="1144 443 2029 778"> Access to educational and social programmes in some communities Career development opportunities and advice offered in schools Child benefit Good housing for some families Library services with free internet access Access to parks, leisure facilities and youth clubs Clean air Access to green spaces Accessible transport in some areas Some parents living close to amenities </p>
<div data-bbox="73 855 181 962" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="190 922 416 962">Not so good</p> <p data-bbox="73 1010 1111 1142"> Cost of living high – cost of heating, transport and food in particular High private rent if not living in Housing Executive house Some families experiencing cramped housing conditions – causing “child stress, parent stress, no room to play, eat, relax, storage” </p> <p data-bbox="73 1182 1077 1281"> Some Housing Executive houses still have single glazing Some families living in estates where environment is not safe – experience of racism, windows knocked in etc </p> <p data-bbox="73 1321 501 1417"> Not enough jobs Language barrier to getting a job Poverty – impact on children </p> <p data-bbox="73 1457 674 1487"> Not enough childcare and childcare expensive </p>	<div data-bbox="1144 855 1290 1002" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="1290 970 1525 1010">Suggestions</p> <ul data-bbox="1193 1023 2051 1487" style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to affordable childcare in general would make it easier to avail of training, work opportunities “parents ... are willing to be involved - just need more childcare support”. More free places in play-schools, nursery schools and longer hours of service. • More vocational training • Places like doctors, employers, training centres etc should be more child friendly • Cheaper public transport. • No fees for leisure facilities. • Some areas need improvement to environment – parks etc • Improvements to Housing Executive accommodation • Make environment safer for parents as well as children

4. Contributing positively to community and society



All BME children and young people are seen and heard in all decision making and other societal roles without being stereotyped.



Good

Most people in Northern Ireland very polite, honest and friendly.
 Opportunities for doing courses, programmes
 Information available in community centres
 Opportunities for volunteering and community work – good experience for children and young people
 Charity groups
 Meetings in schools about how to get involved in community
 Meetings about BME
 Children's forums
 Opportunities like today when parents can have their say - it is good for the parents and for children to see their parents volunteering



Not so good

Very little information about volunteering

Need more help with childminding [in order to attend courses and training]

Migrant people still not active enough, very difficult for them to be involved in community life

Not enough opportunities to express opinions and views especially for the members of BME community (people of all age groups)

Not as many opportunities for children to volunteer.



Suggestions

- More publicity about volunteering opportunities for children, young people and parents.
- Would be very useful [to] organise voluntary work for children during summer/holiday time.
- More opportunities for BME communities to have their voices heard
- More understanding and acceptance from our majority to our different minorities especially Travellers who are from NI but treated different compared to their settled peers.
- People should be encouraged to work together for nice clean environments – clean up their own areas together.
- More gatherings for cultural purposes. Let local community see and understand our culture in order to get accepted.
- More opportunities especially for young children and older people to be a part of own community.

5. Living in safety and with stability



All BME children and young people experience safety, a sense of belonging and a life free from racial harassment.



Not so good

Racism and bullying is a big issue in many schools.
Schools not always supportive or active on this issue
Parents and children can be afraid to speak out, as child may be discriminated further – there has been some precedent for this as discussed by parents.
Concerns expressed about teachers behaving in a discriminatory way, including ignoring migrant children
Children feel there is no point in complaining as they will not be listened to

Many parents felt that children not safe outside home/school – risk of racism as well as danger from predatory adults. Concerns also expressed about children and exposure to harm through use of internet.

Parents referred to 'intimidation' such as racial discrimination, attacks on property including throwing stones at windows, banging on doors and cars getting burnt in some housing estates.

Experience of discrimination by members of public and by staff in some agencies.



Good

Some schools are doing a lot to ensure safety of children such as awareness raising on bullying and racism. Schools teaching children about their rights. Playground supervision is a very positive thing in schools to combat bullying. In cases of abuse most schools react and act immediately. Many schools have good security systems so that only parents can collect their children.
Schools that educate children how to protect themselves.
Children given ChildLine number.

In cases of violence against children or family members appropriate action was taken. Good and quick response from PSNI.
Neighbourhood watch areas are a positive thing.






Organisations are helping BME communities with this issue.



Suggestions

- Some schools and teachers need to improve their response to racism/bullying
- More education on diversity awareness of uniqueness, racism and equality in schools, out of school clubs, youth clubs etc for all children and staff
- Teach children to be more confident and comfortable regardless of race, gender or background.
- Need for opportunity for confidential meeting with school to discuss racism / bullying if this is a concern.
- More awareness about domestic violence and impact on children
- More police patrols in community areas
- Organise activities in the community to raise cultural awareness and tolerance
- Crucial to enable children to live free from racial harassment in order to prevent negative impact on self confidence

6. Living in a society which respects children's rights

  <p><i>All BME children and young people know and understand their rights and can reasonably expect that their rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.</i></p>	 <h3>Good</h3> <p>Schools were regarded as having a major role in successfully informing children about their rights. Children are taught to freely express their views. Children have right to take decisions themselves. Children are able to speak up and voice their opinions. Most children know the helpline phone number.</p> <p>There was general consensus that most people are aware of children's rights and that these are respected in most places in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Some parents were aware about consultation programmes for children like "Hear my Voice" where children give suggestions to policy makers.</p>
 <h3>Not so good</h3> <p>Children's rights are not always respected.</p> <p>Migrant children rights still not fully respected in some schools.</p> <p>Some parents discussed the concept of 'discipline' of children. There were wide ranging views about how this could be achieved effectively while respecting children's rights: "When they do something wrong, one cannot hit, cannot blame" "Children's rights are good but ... there needs to be a balance regarding parent's disciplining kids without fear of reprisal from the law".</p> <p>Some parents discussed children's rights in relation to responsibilities / accountability and some parents felt that both needed to be addressed.</p>	 <h3>Suggestions</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More education for children about their rights and how to protect themselves. • All schools should have counselling facilities. Children must feel safe to speak about their problems. Confidentiality is necessary in all cases. • More education for parents about children's rights • More help for parents about parenting and about positively handling children's behaviour