

**Submission to The Education Committee in relation to Shared/Integrated Education on behalf of the Ballymoney Community Resource Centre, Community Education Steering Group.**

Ballymoney Community Resource Centre Community Education Steering Group met on 02.10.14 to discuss and contribute towards the inquiry response into Integrated/Shared Education. The BCRC Community Education Steering Group was initially formed to Those groups represented included Causeway Older People's Strategy Team (COAST) which was represented by Mary McCusker, Integrated Education Fund (IEF) was represented by Eleanor Kyle, Coleraine Education Community Project (CECP was represented by Paul McLernon), Focus on Family was represented by Brendan Patterson, Millburn Community Association was represented by Billy Eilis and Ballymoney Community Resource Centre was represented by Angela Mulholland.

The guidelines for the Inquiry are The Education Committee will:

- Review the nature and definition of Shared Education and Integrated Education as it applies across all educational phases – including consideration for the need for a formal statutory definition and obligation in statute to facilitate and encourage Shared Education.
- Identify the key barriers and enablers for Shared Education and Integrated Education.
- Identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of policy interventions and programmes.
- Consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve sharing and integration – including the effectiveness of the relevant parts of the CRED policy; the need to engage more effectively with parents/carers; and the role of Special Schools.
- Report to the Assembly on its findings and recommendation by Spring 2015.

The Committee agreed to set the deadline for submissions to the Inquiry as **24 October 2014**

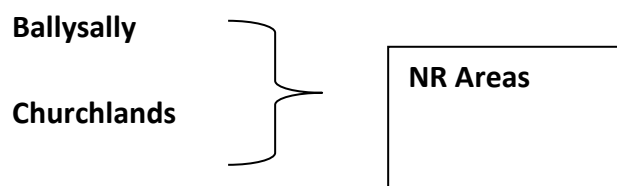
Here is the following contribution and record of discussion from the scheduled meeting.

Two local Grammar Schools within the town of Coleraine were discussed (The Coleraine High School and The Coleraine Institute and it was stated that where a student attending these schools comes from can and does have a detrimental effect on their overall life experience within the education system. It was felt that the role of Community Education has to deal with the effect of this behaviour and that sometimes this form of education is the only route out of deprivation and low self esteem for not only the young people concerned but also for parents and adults alike.

It was recognised that there is a lot more support for students within the Primary School model and the Ballysally Nurturing Programme was held up as a model of best practice as most of the support is facilitated on a one to one basis, however once students reach secondary school level this support is seen to be delivered more on a speed dating level. Participants agreed that collaboration is important and vital to ensuring sustainability for programmes and projects alike. A current example of best practice in collaboration is the current programme Coleraine Education Community Project (CECP) which was set up in April 2010 in collaboration with ten of the schools and nurseries in the Coleraine N. R. Areas. Although this funding is only up to March 2015, it was agreed that programmes like CECP and it's Vision to build bridges between Coleraine schools and the communities they serve, to help families access opportunities, to realise their potential, and develop stronger, independent and confident communities are vital to sustaining the concept of both Integrated and Shared Education.

It was recognised that there are at present 62 grant-aided integrated schools in Northern Ireland (with a total enrolment of 21,500 pupils, or 7 percent of total pupils in 2012/13), made up of 38 grant-maintained integrated schools and 24 controlled integrated schools. This result is still relatively low and needs to be addressed. However it was agreed very strongly that this issue has to be addressed however not at the expense of the standard of education for any student.

In relation to formal education it was stated that mature students were not made to feel particularly welcome whereas within the Community Education platform, everyone was made to feel welcome. This then led to a discussion on why kids are leaving both Primary School and indeed Secondary School levels with little or no qualifications. It was recognised that the concept of Integrated/Shared Education needs to get into the heart of the programme in the home. The home environment has to change and be part of Integrated Education and the concept of Working Class Kids getting Working Class Jobs has to be challenged. Just because there is no history of someone in the family not having achieved or having gone to University, should not be the same aspiration of the young people growing up within those areas. It was noted that particularly within the Millburn Estate 30% of the kids attending the school are from the estate, therefore this creates in itself an opportunity for integration amongst young people from different areas in Coleraine and wider afield. This also creates an opportunity for schools within the Neighbourhood Renewal to interact and take part in programmes designed to promote integration and shared learning.



Community Education can provide a platform within Neighbourhood Renewal areas for both Integrated Education and Shared Education. The role of the Community Networks/Community Groups and Associations is to co-ordinate and deliver what is needed on the ground. The role of Community Education should not be about any personal agenda but should be about the participants and those availing of the courses and objectives. The concept of a natural/shared space is at the core of Community Education. People need to feel safe, free from barriers and any special needs also need to be addressed. The discussion returned to the question of why is the current education system not working? Why are young people leaving without qualifications? The concept of working for yourself/learning apprenticeship skills and opportunities to start social enterprises that address real social issues can all be achieved through the medium of

community education with a strong focus on integration and shared learning. It was also recognised that within different communities, engaging with parents is vital to continuing the concept of integrated and shared education.

Models of Good Practice were then discussed, The Aspire Programme in particular.

Aspire is a collaboration of local grass-roots community groups operating in the Coleraine area. Currently there are five core Aspire members with a much wider support from other local partners. Part of Aspire's remit is to deliver relevant community-based training (accredited and non-accredited) for the benefit of local communities. What has tended individual groups within areas will have Training/Programme Workers as paid employees whose main role is to generate programmes and participants to attend that individual group. Where Aspire aims to be different is by providing a genuine beneficiary-led approach to programme delivery - this means identification of local need and then provision of programmes to meet that need. As all the groups under Aspire are working towards the same goal, it means that where the programmes are delivered and by whom is largely irrelevant so long as the beneficiaries are getting what they need and the programmes are of the required quality to meet those needs.

This approach to integrated education puts the learner at the centre of the process as opposed to the more traditional approach of specific centres trying to attract people and courses solely within the confines of their own work. The expected result of this work will be that as well as the individual beneficiary gaining the skills, qualifications and learning that they desire, furthermore local organisations will develop genuine partnership working in terms of future delivery of programmes and services. The long-term aim of Aspire is to have a Programme Officer, working centrally and not aligned to any particular group. This role would involve identifying educational and training needs within local and wider communities and then engaging participants in programmes that are already running in the local area, or where there are gaps in programme delivery provision, setting up these programmes in partnership with the most relevant local delivery partner in the area. It is anticipated that this approach will provide a far more enhanced service for local beneficiaries than the current competitive arena that aims to secure participants for isolated courses.

Another approach that Aspire is taking is to ensure that access to relevant programmes and courses is accessible for all so there is a major emphasis on roles that encourage participation through person-centred, relationship-developing, pre-programme support. Given the barriers to education, whether through prior negative experiences from formal education processes or through the wide variety of other causes (family commitments, social isolation, lack of confidence, fear, lack of transport and other resources, etc), the aim of Aspire is to work alongside people to gently remove these barriers, resulting in the right stage and time where the individual feels comfortable and motivated to commit to a programme of learning, either formal or informal.

We all have a responsibility to our young people? There is a real challenge out there to keep skills within our own area, to ensure a vibrant and sustainable community for the future. Community Education helps to break the class issue down within the education system. It was generally agreed that the cost of uniforms were too dear, particularly when you have four or five children to send out at the start of each term. The concept of discrimination was also discussed and on how we measure success? It was generally agreed that valuing apprenticeships and focusing on opportunities to develop social enterprises was the way forward.

Submissions should be made by email to [committee.education@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:committee.education@niassembly.gov.uk)