

**RAG/LAG Stakeholder Engagement Event**

**Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon**

**Mid Ulster**

**Fermanagh & Omagh**

# **The Needs of Newcomer Children & Young People**

**24 February 2022**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines a participative process facilitated by the Education Authority (EA) Youth Service with key stakeholders, including young people on the needs of Newcomer Children and Young People.

These events were hosted across Mid-Ulster, Fermanagh & Omagh and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Area and engaged with a total of 682 participants.

Throughout these events stakeholders identified emerging issues and associated challenges for children and young people. Stakeholders also identified approaches that they believe should be considered by Youth Service to support Newcomer Children and Young People.

Young people who attended the event identified a number of key issues and challenges experienced by Newcomer Children and Young People including racism, fear of fitting in, being judged, isolation, loneliness and confusion.

Language barriers was also noted to be a concern as children and young people are often used as translators which further impacts on their emotional health and wellbeing and their ability to be young people.

The event highlighted the need for more educational awareness and training on the needs of Newcomer Children and Young People, a review of curriculum and programmes on offer to support young people's engagement, and accessibility to specialist support including translation services and ICT equipment to support with this.

## 1.1 The needs of Newcomer Children and Young People

- 1.1.1 Local Advisory Group (LAG) members, including young people have led, supported, and engaged with Youth Service stakeholders for this participation event.

## 1.2 Aims

- 1.2.1 To identify and inform the EA and the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) on the needs of Newcomer Children and Young People.
- 1.2.2 To support the development of key themes for the Regional Assessment of Need and the Regional Youth Development Plan 2020-2023.
- 1.2.1 To increase participation of young people and other key stakeholders at a local level to identify key themes and issues in relation to the needs of Newcomer Children and Young People.

## 1.3 Objectives

- 1.3.1 To host a local event to increase the participation of young people and key stakeholders.
- 1.3.2 To provide opportunities for RAG members, LAG members and key stakeholders to network and to discuss and explore the needs of Newcomer Children and Young People.
- 1.3.3 To develop recommendations on how Youth Services can best support Newcomer Children and Young People.

## 2.1 Methodology

- 2.1.1 LAG members, including young people, designed, supported, and engaged in the delivery of this regional event across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, Mid Ulster and Fermanagh & Omagh.
- 2.1.2 Across all events, a variety of methodologies were used to capture findings and evidence throughout the evening.
- 2.1.3 There was a PowerPoint input provided which also included video inputs from Local Advisory Members.
- 2.1.4 Mentimeter is a cloud-based tool that was used to encourage engagement and interaction with participants; questions were set, and participants gave their input using their mobile phone or through the supply of iPads provided.
- 2.1.5 Round table café culture discussion workshops were facilitated with participants to provide an interactive supportive format to enable young people and stakeholders to identify and discuss needs.
- 2.1.6 Guest speakers helped set the context. Inputs were provided by Patryk Rozynek from Oasis Empower Youth Forum Portadown and Mimi Gates and Aoife Longden from Aspire Leadership Project.

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## ATTENDANCE

### 3.1 Attendance

- 3.1.1 A total of 682 people attended events.
- 2.1.7 Participants in attendance included young people aged 11–25, Youth Workers from Local EA and Voluntary Youth Services across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, Mid Ulster and Fermanagh & Omagh Areas.
- 3.1.2 Other key stakeholders included representatives from local PSNI, EA Intercultural Education Service and Craigavon Intercultural Programme.
- 3.1.3 Representation from RAG included the Department of Education.

### 3.2 Attendance Figures

Attendance Group	Number
Young People	633
Local Advisory Members	17
Regional Advisory Members	2
Youth Work Staff	21
Other (Community and Voluntary Sector Representatives)	9

### 3.3 Satisfaction

- 3.3.1 96% of evaluations stated that the event was very satisfactory or satisfactory.

### 4.1 Key Findings

- 4.1.1 The engagement event aimed to capture information on the needs of Newcomer Children and Young People. A summary of those identified are outlined below:
- 4.1.2 Findings from the events show that young people are experiencing high levels of racism, harassment, discrimination, isolation and judgement based on their background and culture.
- 4.1.3 Lack of understanding and awareness of cultures was also key within the feedback across all events.
- 4.1.4 The events highlighted a need for more educational programmes and online presence to provide support, as well as stronger links with key partners, including parents and intercultural services, using a more proactive approach. There should also be stronger connectivity between voluntary sector and statutory authorities to support Newcomer young people.
- 4.1.5 Newcomer Children and Young people told us that they would like greater access to computers and other resources, to support with language translation.
- 4.1.6 An increase in after-school activities for Newcomer Children and Young People could provide support with homework and English language acquisition. Youth activities after school would also provide Newcomer Children and Young People with the opportunity to integrate with others and learn new skills.
- 4.1.7 It was highlighted that many parents want their children and young people to maintain as much of their cultural practices as possible. However, some young people outlined that this can be very challenging, as they feel pressured at school to fit into their new culture, and to do so quickly. These tensions can result in a young person having to struggle with a conflicted identity. Many of the children and young people stated they can be left confused and frustrated and, for some, this frustration may lead to poor performance at school. It may also lead to unacceptable social behaviour from the perspective of their parents or from the perspective of larger society.

## Challenges Related to Parents

- 4.1.8 In some instances, it was stated that the parents of Newcomer Children and Young People prefer to keep their children away from activities, including sports and other after-school activities that would enhance integration and enable them to socialise. This is due to fear and mistrust of influence by other cultures, which they may see as detrimental to the character of their children. Subsequently, it can be difficult to obtain parental consent for youth participation in activities. Newcomer Children and Young People have stated at times, their interests are contrary to those of their parents, such that a parent may refuse to give consent in some cases when the young person feels they need their support.
- 4.1.9 Parents are said to sometimes refuse consent when the events relate to the possibility of cultural adaptation, and when they perceive the event in question as distracting from the ability to succeed. For example, children and young people going to a recreation activity instead of studying. Parents may also refuse consent when the event or activity in question may be deemed by them to have an impact on the young person's religious beliefs and practice.

## Change in Family Dynamics due to Young People having to play several roles

- 4.1.10 Family dynamics have a major impact on Newcomer Children and Young People. Because of the poverty many of their parents experience upon arrival, young people often play several roles for which they were never prepared, and this impacts their settlement experience. Examples provided by young people included, parents having to work two or three jobs during after-school hours or during weekends and Newcomer Children and Young People having to provide support within the home, including cooking, carrying out chores, caring for sick siblings and generally looking after younger siblings while parents go to work. This results in many young people having to stay at home, reducing opportunities to socialise with their peers. Many also stated they are having to take on additional responsibilities at home, such as assisting to translate for their parents, helping write letters or complete official documents.



## 5.1 Recommendations

- 5.1.1 There is an important role for youth services in improving the quality of Newcomer Children and Young People's lives. There is a need to acknowledge the importance of this youth work and what it can achieve and therefore it should be resourced adequately.
- 5.1.2 Youth Services should provide positive, engaging activities and continue to create opportunities for exploring, addressing, and tackling issues which affect Newcomer Children and Young People, including creating safe spaces that young people want to go to.
- 5.1.3 Develop age appropriate youth work resources to support Newcomer Children and Young People.
- 5.1.4 Implement an effective communication strategy for young people, parents/guardians, and staff. This should aim to establish clear and effective terminology and access to relevant information to address cultural and linguistic barriers. This could include using translation services where necessary to ensure dissemination of key information, through EA centres and social media.
- 5.1.5 Potential use of EA school sites, in addition to EA youth centres, as a local hub for engagement with all young people, including Newcomer Children and Young People, for the purpose of providing a safe space, building relationships between children and young people and for the delivery of effective informal educational programmes.
- 5.1.6 There is a need to develop and enhance relationships with parents of Newcomer Children and Young People with a clear focus on providing information on Youth Services and the positive outcomes of participation. This will build trust, provide support, and ensure they are aware that the aim is to work together for the good of all children and young people and communities.
- 5.1.7 Youth Services should seek to engage bilingual volunteers and part time staff in Youth provision, recruited from linguistic communities and families to which Newcomer Children and Young People belong, thus building trust and reflecting diversity within the workforce.

- 5.1.8 Programmes should be educational and Newcomer Children and Young People must be involved in the planning and management of initiatives.
- 5.1.9 Educational programmes focusing on cultural awareness, and challenging racism should be integrated with work on anti-bullying and conflict resolution, as part of the Youth Service curriculum in all youth settings. These would act as important preventive measures.
- 5.1.10 Further research should be undertaken to explore how Youth Services can provide additional support to Newcomer Children and Young People.
- 5.1.11 Opportunities to share best practice across the statutory, voluntary and community sector would support the development of youth work responses.
- 5.1.12 Youth Services are in a key position to provide a safe, structured, learning environment. In particular Youth Service can:
- Provide emotional support – the child or young person may need referral to a more specialist service or additional support
  - Facilitate a peer support network – children and young people can become isolated but often welcome talking to friends about their concerns
  - Provide initiatives to build the self-esteem and confidence of Newcomer Children and Young people by offering opportunities to take on new roles and responsibilities; offer tasks which are achievable and give praise and encouragement; help them to feel a sense of belonging in Youth Service provision and involve them in decision making.

## 5.2 Future considerations

- 5.2.1 The key themes identified through this stakeholder event should be considered further by the EA Information and Planning team in preparation for the Regional Assessment of Need and will be shared with all local Senior Youth Officers for development of the upcoming Area Youth Development Plans.
- 5.2.2 The LAG should take account of the recommended youth service responses to identify issues for future area planning purposes and future service delivery across these areas and beyond.

List of evidence sources available on request:

1. Programme Invite
2. Agenda
3. Presentations
4. Menti Metre Notes
5. Attendance Record
6. Evaluation Feedback

