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There is nothing quite as powerful as the spoken word, the raw emotion, and the real lived experience. But our voices lie dormant without an audience. NYCI has published this document so that the voices contained within can be heard more widely. Its publication responds to the consistent call that has been made by youth workers for more opportunities to learn from others about their experiences of working in cross cultural settings. They want to know what others have done and how exactly they have done it. This document goes some way toward meeting that request.

These voices have of course been heard and listened to already. During the first phase of this project the people who contributed to this consultation gathered together to share their experiences with research consultant Siobhan Lynam and NYCI Intercultural Officer, Lisa Mauro-Bracken. The participant’s contributions were then compiled, analysed, and subsequently represented in what has become the Report and Recommendations for an Intercultural Strategy for Youth Work.

Interculturalism presents new challenges for youth workers and they often feel ill equipped for the task. They wonder what their role is with regard to interculturalism. In practice interculturalism in youth work is about inclusion – which means making services available and accessible to all ethnic and cultural groups and ensuring that within those services supports are provided to promote and establish equality of outcome for all. Mainstreaming interculturalism requires the adoption of an intercultural and anti-racist mindset in the way all business is conducted in everyday life. It means building an intercultural approach into all policy, planning and service provision. The commitment to interculturalism and anti-racism would then become evidenced and reflected in practice and would guide the design, development and evaluation of all youth work policy, programmes, and service delivery. It involves a whole organisation approach whereby everyone in the organisation does what they can to adopt an intercultural attitude.

Mainstreaming interculturalism can be described as looking at the world through an intercultural lens in exactly the same way as we have sought to develop gender lenses and disability lenses in our work. Interculturalism is, like disability and gender, an equality issue, largely focused on anti-discrimination but it is also about embracing diversity and benefiting as a society from the diversity within it. It is about building a new society together. Ultimately it is about sharing, collaboration, cooperation and ironing out our differences and difficulties together through respectful dialogue. This document goes some small way toward that dialogue. It presents the issues from each actor’s point of view. It is a rare opportunity to hear so many diverse voices air their concerns, their experiences and their hopes for intercultural youth work.

NYCI would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the people who contributed to this report, far too many to name individually, and to the various youth groups who have forged new paths toward intercultural youth work and whose experience make this consultation report so rich and varied in content.

Anne Walsh
Intercultural Project Officer
NYCI
The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) with the support of the Department of Education and Science (DES) and the National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR)\(^1\), produced a Report and Recommendations for an Intercultural Strategy for Youth Work. As part of this process, NYCI completed a consultation process to establish views on improving access to youth work opportunities for young people from Traveller and minority ethnic communities.

Youth work has particular characteristics, which make it suitable for working with young people from Minority Ethnic (ME) groups. These include diverse, learner-centred programmes, its focus on voluntary participation and flexible, adaptable methodologies. There is evidence of a commitment to, and interest in, intercultural youth work among both youth workers and young people in the ongoing activities of many youth organisations. However, there remains a need for greater strategic direction, support and coordination in this area to ensure that a commitment to inclusive, intercultural practice becomes a sustainable feature of youth work in Ireland.

This report summarises information gathered as part of the focus group consultations held with young people, their parents, youth workers and representatives of minority ethnic communities including youth workers from minority ethnic backgrounds. It highlights the range and depth of comments made during the consultation phase of the development of an Intercultural Strategy for Youth Work.

\(^{1}\) NPAR has since reached the end of its projected project timeline and has been discontinued.

AN INTERCULTURAL STRATEGY
FOR YOUTH WORK

In response to recommendations in The National Action Plan against Racism, 2005 - 2008 (NPAR) and the National Youth Work Development Plan, NYCI and DES undertook to develop an intercultural strategy for the youth sector. This report and recommendations responds to the need to promote interculturalism and combat racism in the youth work sector. It aims to ensure that development opportunities in the youth sector promote equality and are accessible, culturally sensitive and appropriate in meeting the needs of young people from diverse and different cultures. This Report and Recommendations will take on board the 'whole system' approach advocated in the NPAR including mainstreaming, targeted strategies accommodation of cultural diversity.

An Intercultural Strategy will enable the youth work sector to work more effectively to:

- Ensure that young people, volunteers and youth workers from minority ethnic communities and diverse cultures can be assured of opportunities to engage in youth work and have equality outcomes from youth work and youth service provision.
- Be fully inclusive of and responsive to the rich cultural diversity that exists amongst young people in Ireland today and to ensure that such diversity is valued, celebrated and positively reinforced for the benefit of all young people and for society as a whole.
- Contribute to the development of a shared ability and a sense of responsibility to protect all young people and to ensure, for each other, the right to be different and to live free from racism and unfair discrimination.
- Share existing national and international good practice, for example in relation to youth work with young Travellers, refugees etc.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

Between April and June 2007 a wide-ranging consultation process was completed to support the development of an Intercultural Strategy. A steering group with representation from the youth work sector, government and non-government organisations advised on key aspects of the consultative process to ensure a strategy and implementation plan were completed.

The consultation process included:

- A public call for submissions
- A series of discussions and workshops with stakeholders from statutory bodies and agencies
- An invitation to NYCI member organisations as well as other relevant groups to make submissions and contribute to the development of the strategy
- Focus group consultations to ensure young people and youth workers informed the development of the strategy

As mentioned above, this report highlights the comments made during the focus group consultations. The aim of the consultations was to determine how access to youth work by members of new and established minority ethnic communities could be improved.

A total of 95 participants attended the focus group events. The aim of the focus group sessions were to:

- Provide an opportunity to engage in intercultural dialogue, exchange ideas and raise awareness.
- Allow participants to share experiences of needs, barriers to participation, and suggest adaptations necessary to fully accommodate young people from diverse cultures and minority ethnic backgrounds in youth work.
- Contribute to the intercultural practice and social inclusion work being undertaken in the various locations.

The groups were organised in the following locations:

- Blanchardstown, Dublin 15
- Dundalk, Co. Louth
- Tralee, Co. Kerry
- Canal Communities Area, Dublin 8

3 www.diversityireland.ie
4 www.youth.ie
FOCUS GROUPS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

A total of 29 young people attended these sessions. The sessions were targeted at those engaged in youth activities who were interested in more inclusive youth development opportunities. In addition, young people from diverse and/or minority ethnic backgrounds were invited to attend. They may or may not have been engaged in youth activity but they wanted to discuss their experiences of inclusion and exclusion and their desire to be involved. This included young people living in direct provision accommodation.

FOCUS GROUPS WITH PARENTS FROM MINORITY ETHNIC AND IRISH COMMUNITIES

Fifteen parents attended sessions which were targeted at those who wish to promote a greater inclusion of young people from diverse cultures in development opportunities. Many of the parents met for the first time to discuss issues around inclusion/intercultural youth work and the opportunities for young people to participate in general.

YOUTH WORKERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF ORGANISATIONS OF MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS

A total of 51 people contributed to these sessions. The sessions provided opportunities for sharing experiences and insights which contributed to the development of an Intercultural Strategy. These sessions also provided an opportunity to consider how youth service and minority led organisations could work collectively to develop a more inclusive youth work practice locally.
The focus group consultations were informative and a good opportunity for people to meet and discuss issues around intercultural youth work. These sessions created links between youth organisations and community development agencies that often do not work together on youth issues. In addition, the sessions provided an opportunity for participants to learn about available services as well as cultural learning.

A number of recurring themes occurred throughout the discussions held with young people, parents and youth workers. The general findings demonstrated that the equality focus at the local level is not significant, with limited inclusion programmes and activities being implemented.

Activities which are inclusive of minority ethnic communities are developed because an individual youth service or worker/leader has recognised the need. Participants were not aware of any national guidelines or research on the needs of young people from minority ethnic groups. Youth workers felt there is limited leadership in relation to intercultural youth practice and they do not have a sense of being responsible for inclusion. Many youth workers stated they are not confident about their skills to manage racist incidences and have limited ability to facilitate effective interculturalism/anti-racism practice with their groups.

The findings below outline the key messages emerging from the focus group consultations and include the following:

- Experiences of youth work
- Experiences of racism
- Participants' perceptions of the majority community
- Barriers to participation for minority ethnic/Traveller young people
- Challenges to developing inclusive programmes
- Support for youth organisations and youth workers
- Support for minority ethnic organisations
- Examples of good practice
- Suggested actions
A majority of the focus group respondents from ME backgrounds involved in youth work opportunities stated their experiences have been positive. Several young people from ME backgrounds stated they are unaware of opportunities through the youth service in their community. Their involvement in youth related activities occurs through after school programmes, church groups and sports clubs. However, their experiences are similar to those young people involved in the non-formal youth sector. The participants mentioned the following points:

- Interaction and friendship
- Creativity and reduced boredom
- Inclusion and integration
- Positive involvement in the community
- Leadership activities and engagement for older youth
- Support and assistance with formal education through peer mentoring programmes and homework clubs
- Support and welcome for parents
- Reduced negative attitudes towards Travellers and a sense that discrimination and racism is decreasing
- Need for more relevant activities
- Employment options for disadvantaged communities

“Invited new people into youth club; Music is a good way to bring people together; swapping music; drama, hip hop; dancing and music.” _ME Young Person

“New friends were made; we were all kind of friends, the whole group; it brought us together…We were working together for a performance; felt good; working together and completing something; having to perform; not messing up” _ME Young Person

“For them, at moment there’s not any differences, whether Catholic or Muslim, all treated as one; not putting children into religious situations; make friends with who you want just be as one; don’t worry about if from Iraq or Ireland” _ME Parent

“It’s important because we stay in same place; would feel separate if don’t go; keep busy; go nuts if just stay at home; no external activities/entertainment; otherwise only TV” _ME Parent

“If you’re new it’s important for someone to make you feel welcome” _ME Young Person

“Support from Ms R. (a teacher) for the dance club; she gave us resources, radio/player, room to practice, anything we needed. She is the best; brought everyone together, brings black and white together; we have fun; I have so many Irish friends she is so good she doesn’t discriminate” _ME Young Person

“I worked with principal to develop a strategy to get all children involved, they do the work; encouraged positive multicultural activities in school; we learn about each other; level of tolerance high, includes Travellers, Africans; example of a school as a multicultural youth centre; we celebrate diversity. Need to have an active anti-bullying/racism policy; needs to be visible not just poster gathering dust” _ME Parent

“…In my country for young people turning 18, receive community education, involved with education into life, not only relying on school” _ME Community Representative
“Leadership activities, we made a committee, so young people come in and will plan what they want to do for next week and this week say if want to go to cinema; one would be president; next one would have to see how much it would cost especially for trips.” _Youth Worker

“Sometimes things organised but not what interested in; sometimes, as well, gone through programme already or have been on exchanges so coming to basketball wouldn’t be as exciting; boring” _Traveller Young Person

“After age 18, kids, they enter different area, real challenge comes. At this age, looking at different pleasures of life. So how to promote something more for them? How to express yourself; how to develop yourself; what is out there for you? Give chance to everyone to do things to contribute self to community and as a whole, to society; want to work with other youth organisations to keep them in this balanced state; extremes in both ways. This comes to light in all societies/communities, so how do we keep to the middle way. That’s our challenge.” _ME Youth Worker

“Traveller kids mixed in with settled; no fighting, no racism no name calling; kids get on well. (Local youth) Centre broke boundaries; settled come up to site and Travellers can go to their houses; call on each other to play. Different nationalities mixing too; youth workers must have knowledge of cultures; youth leader treats everyone the same but doesn’t come naturally; (The youth centre) is great for young people, it keeps them occupied and we know where they are.” _Traveller Parent

“Don’t know what to do; would like to have opportunities; my status is a problem; I can’t continue my study, can’t work, and can’t do anything.” _ME Young Person

“Many Travellers work alongside trained people a long time; work but not qualified. Travellers have the experience; need recognition of experience so people can provide youth work as employees not volunteers.” _Traveller Parent

Overall participants stated their experiences of youth work/activities were positive and provided opportunities for interaction, integration and friendships. These interactions reduce boredom and help to support young people and their parents in becoming a part of the community. Participants mentioned that positive experiences occurred because of the support provided by a teacher or other adult in creating an environment that is respectful and open to diversity.

The positive environment was also fostered by schools and youth clubs having a policy on equality, bullying, and/or anti-racism in place ensuring that issues of race and culture are discussed openly. Although many young people and parents stated their youth work experiences have been positive, several participants stated that youth work activities are boring and need to be more relevant to their needs. They stated the current projects and activities do not offer opportunities to minority ethnic/Travellers beyond volunteering. There is a sense of frustration and disgruntlement towards the service with a desire for more activities which promote employment opportunities for Traveller youth.
EXPERIENCE OF RACISM

Several young people and parents from minority ethnic and Traveller communities stated they had experienced racism with the following points raised:

- Verbal attacks are often made by children. There is a perception that the children have no understanding of what they are saying.
- Believe racist behaviour/comments are learned and that dealing with a situation requires working with children at school but also with parents and the wider community.
- Response by parents is to limit activities outside the home. Young people also limit their own activities to places where they feel safe and do not travel alone or after dark.
- Very few incidences are reported as there is a fear of repercussion. Reporting to those in authority does not resolve the problem as participants perceive they are the ones with negative attitudes.
- Lack of information on the part of all participants about the role of the National Consultative Committee on Racism in Interculturalism (NCCRI).
- Many stated there are mechanisms and policies in place to deal with such situations. Such approaches have assisted in reducing racism/discrimination in some areas.
- In other cases, if an incident is reported, families, schools and youth organisations will respond, however participants stated they felt the response is not always appropriate.

“This is around racism; racism is a lot around skin/colour but people say need to be mindful of imported racism.” _ME Youth Worker

“Football is a mixed team but sometimes call names, skin colour etc, insulting; at my school won’t call it to my face; know it happens but pretend it doesn’t” _ME Young Person

“Irish in class tell me to f*** off, shut up, etc. Teacher told about these things, but does nothing. Nothing will change; crazy; Teacher tells me to be quiet, shut up; makes me sad.” _ME Young Person

“They get it from their parents, young people don’t understand and don’t know what they are saying; I don’t think they believe what they are saying; it is easier to start with young people, but there’s a lot of work needs to be done with adults; I’d say 60% or more needs to be done with adults.” _Youth Worker

“It comes from parents, just today, someone was saying in the crèche if someone brown comes here I’m not allowed to come in anymore; parents in Ireland haven’t grown up in the Ireland their children are growing up in, their attitude is learned. The attitudes and opinions of parents are based on own experience and kids believe their parents when they say something. It has a negative effect.” _ME Youth Worker

“People are afraid to report racism to the Gardaí because Gardaí are racist. Everyday, people are afraid because nothing happening; Ethnic Liaison Officer, he needs to have training in interculturalism; Gardaí employed in these posts need to liaise with groups; never see the face of them; need to know what their job description, role, training brief is and who they accountable to; what follow up will occur if report something.” _Traveller Community Worker

“Told Ms. R. (teacher) about it, she wanted to tell the police but I didn’t want to because didn’t think it would help, could make it worse because parents of the kid don’t care about how they act; dangerous but didn’t want to report; thought would get bullied more.” _ME Young Person
“Not easily reported. Accept it. I am used to it, incidents happening. When I report, and call Gardaí, no response. They say, that offenders are underage, nothing they can do; they advised me to move out. There is nothing I can do; so why should I report it; eventually I left.” _ME Parent

“I had an experience to report an assault, a racist incident; the Gardaí asked any bruises? There weren’t, so he said can’t do anything for you. Victim becomes the suspect, there is no protection, don’t feel safe; keep curtains closed, don’t want people to know you live there.” _ME Parent

“...If someone calls you a monkey, just walk away, you are not a monkey so why does it bother you. I am teaching her to ignore racist statements otherwise will escalate and then it’s a burden to make family safe. It’s up to parents to teach child, tell them not to speak certain ways.” _ME Parent

“When I first came a kid said n*****; I reported it to a teacher but he did nothing about it. All he did was ignore it. He should have gone to head teacher. If he did this the person might have got in trouble, but all he did was say don’t say that again; (I was) told to ignore it; but when he left, the kid did it again. Why would I ignore it?” _ME Young Person

“People don’t know that (they can report to NCCRI). Need to advertise this or make it publicly known; has to be independent of government and Gardaí. Is it kept confidential?; maybe (advertise) in Citizen Information Centres or advertise service in community groups” _ME Parent

“School yards, lot of bullying/racism in the past; kids wouldn’t go if racism; but now, schools do something; something being done; kids can come back tell parents and then tell teacher; people can stand up now. Racism gone away. Mixing in now.” _ME Young Person

“Racism is dealt with quickly; and sometimes (schools) over respond; can’t say black; can’t accuse minority ethnic of doing something; fight between communities and an Irish young person will get expelled; Often appear obsessed with issues but not talking about it; Schools are terrified problem will arise and will get accused of not handling it; DES has to look at it and provide support to schools; Board of Management of a school needs to have policies in place and create/approve language that won’t be considered offensive; but need to be allowed to express self without causing problems.” _ME Parent

Participants stated that they had experienced racism and dealing with it required work with children at school and with parents in the community. A whole community approach was necessary to reduce the occurrence of racist incidences. Several Traveller parents, young people and youth workers also stated they repeatedly experience institutional as well as direct discrimination. Most participants stated they did not report racist incidences as there is fear of repercussion and that there is little interest or willingness to assist. Often there is the sense of being treated as the one in the wrong. There is a lack of information on the part of all participants about the role of the NCCRI as an organisation that records incidents of racism and compiles three monthly reports and also offers advice on reporting incidents of racism to the Gardaí. This suggests the need for community groups to work closer together in understanding how to combat racism. More information and skills are required on handling racial incidences within the youth sector, schools and in the community. A concerted effort to combat racism is required to ensure young people feel safe and can participate actively in youth work.
PARTICIPANTS’ PERCEPTIONS
OF THE IRISH COMMUNITY

Some of the participants gave their own views on the Irish. Many of these views are based on their negative interactions with other young people during their time in Ireland. The following statements were made:

"Don’t meet Irish or play with them or get together with them; I have Czech and Polish friends; don’t want to make friends with Irish; some are not good, crazy, not nice, wild.”

_ME Young Person

“Irish don’t understand; but also not interested in Africa, Poland etc. If you don’t have accent okay, but once have accents even if white, people start to say oh he’s from there; she’s not our friend because she’s got this accent.”

_ME Young Person

“Irish not social; they don’t speak to each other. Three foreigners on team, but the Irish don’t speak to us; training but no interaction with me other than kicking ball, etc. Acceptance difficult, but important; coach has tried but not work. In my class 50:50 Irish to foreigner, but segregate each other, don’t have full acceptance.”

_ME Young Person

“Settled people assumed I knew people because I was a Traveller and it’s same with coloured people, settled people think all know each other.”

_Traveller Youth Worker

“Irish kids don’t identify self by creed/religion. Muslim kids identify themselves by creed. Irish kids tend to focus more on attitude, class.”

_ME Youth Worker

“I don’t think they know what people go through to get here; it’s not like we came here and it was all peaches and cream. We had a hard time getting here. Now I want to go home because you get bullied just for your race; I hated it so much when first got here. People look at me and they say what is she, not black not white, I am something funny; If explain what people go through to get here they understand better, might make a difference; might make it easier to come together.”

_ME Young Person

Negative interactions with the majority Irish community have created a perception of the Irish as not social, not interested in minority ethnic communities and being racist. Many of these perceptions have grown out of the frustration and isolation young people feel when they are not included in activities. Several of the young people would like majority Irish youth to learn more about them in order to gain acceptance.
There are many barriers to accessing youth work opportunities for young people and adults from a minority ethnic and Traveller background. Participants stated that youth organisations need to actively promote their services and provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for true participation by young people from diverse backgrounds to occur. The following barriers were mentioned throughout the discussions:

- Lack of information about youth work opportunities and youth organisations
- Lack of targeted outreach and accessible programmes provided
- Language and miscommunication
- Limited awareness about cultural and religious beliefs and practices
- Lack of youth workers from the minority ethnic and Traveller Communities
- Parents’ fear and safety concerns for their children
- Perception of parents about Irish culture, their own culture, youth work and young people
- Gender issues
- Financial constraints
- Garda vetting process

“I don’t know where to get information; supposed to have community projects but where to go don’t know where to start.” _ME Parent

“I don’t know about stuff outside of school; wouldn’t know about other clubs, not invited to go.” _ME Young Person

“Lack of knowledge about service; need to do outreach; if it’s about building relationships, need to inform.” _ME Community Worker

“Up to agencies to promote services that they have to offer …And up to parents and young people to find out.” _Community Worker

“Parents should be involved; very protective about my child; when no information mentioned this is one of the problems. Want it (information) written out, not have children telling us.” _ME Parent

“If want to set up club that focuses on cultural information, on African culture, happy to have Irish join, but most likely they won’t be interested; things we want our children to learn; have to accept that we want different things.” _ME Parent

“People lack information; might be on radio but not many understand it; helps if come and speak or provide information in person’s language.” _ME Community Representative

“Literacy may be an issue; there is an assumption that people have the confidence to make a call (to get information), presumed people will call numbers.” _ME Community Representative

“Accents can cause barrier because can’t understand each other; but need to keep mixing and keep trying; say it once, don’t understand, try again.” _ME Young Person

“English language greatest barrier for social communication; don’t know what to talk about or what to do; we can talk and have group discussion about medical things, school work, but if want to talk further, don’t know what to say; don’t know what their social life is.” _ME Young Person

“African culture…for example, why do children avoid eye contact when speaking with an adult…. also way we address people is different; my children call other elders Aunty, not by first name; show respect; I can’t refer to my older sisters by first name; taboo. This can cause significant problems; it causes confusion between the two cultures.” _ME Community Representative
“Understanding their culture, it’s a big problem; Travellers, they have their own culture; it’s from the parent’s perspective what their children are allowed to do while trying to keep the culture.” _ME Community Worker

“I have my Arabic background, I am British, I am Irish. Whole concept of ‘integration’ is undefined; what do we mean by integration. I have Irish friends, study here, work here, pay taxes, go out; okay, don’t drink, not into clubbing scene that’s my preference rather than cultural thing. So when someone says integration, I feel more integrated as have similar problems as others…Celtic Tiger, Ireland changed, been here through that change; Irish have lost identity, fewer Irish going to church. Culture constantly changing so to promote Irish culture then is a good thing for us.” _ME Youth Worker

“The religious aspects is what brings us together; cultural aspects brings or creates a difference within groups; last Friday had around 15 cultures in one group; for us, the unifying thing is the creed and don’t differentiate based on culture. Next step is to invite other creeds because religious barriers they do exist because parents have fears; real barriers that need to be crossed. To preserve religious identity, this is greater challenge to us than the cultural challenge.” _ME Youth Worker

“If don’t know each other, how can we know values. The idea of Irish culture or Irishness overrides religious barriers; promoting the idea of a common thread is a good way forward.” _ME Youth Worker

“Issue around food; if food not halal, this is a barrier; if invited to events, it is difficult to attend, need to have halal food; often this is overlooked and if I don’t tell them about food need, I won’t come to event.” _ME Young Person

“Parents come with fears of exclusion; often trying to build trust but still Travellers won’t let children out on trips.” _Traveller Development Worker

“Mum not allow me, won’t let me walk around at night. If parents know where I am and know it’s safe, it’s okay. If don’t know what’s happening, not happy. If they have a consent sheet and letter, it’s fine, it’s okay.” _ME Young Person

“Safety for kids, afraid for them to just go to things; need to know who is organising.” _ME Parent

“Not a fear born out of ignorance; have to understand their context, different backgrounds, different experiences; it’s not as if don’t have youth work/groups at home but in a different country. Families trying to find own area, they’re looking from different perspective.” _ME Community Representative

“In Blanchardstown, some parts are disadvantaged; many people living modestly. Some children involved in bad activities, so parents don’t want children mixing with Irish children and Irish children may also not be willing to mix up with new communities. There is a fear of ghetto/not mixing between two communities; very disadvantaged because not in powerful situation.” _ME Community Representative

“In school, kids making friends with other kids; kids interact quickly, but parents holding them back; hard to get parents involved; try different things. Lucky with Foróige youth club, but parent involvement a challenge. Activities at youth club would mean two free hours for them (don’t get this often) so see it as something to look after kids not to get involved with themselves.” _Traveller Development Worker

“Parents are often reluctant to integrate and won’t let young people do this; because when don’t feel welcome, they live in and stay in own community; don’t let children out; strategy is to work with parents; hard to get them to trust and be happy to see children involved.” _ME Parent

“Adults are the ones with problems and prejudices (teach to children). An accepting school environment creates accepting children; learn from children; need to foster this acceptance so society will be better.” _ME Parent
“Difficult to engage parents; many came with business ideas and busy with own things and survival, no clue about the society around them; don’t understand Irish society, culture. Parents unaware of social make up of Ireland and new needs of kids; think of it as when at home; need to be aware of new country that they live in and being aware; See education side of things, getting decent grades, but difficult to educate them about the other things; Parents don’t see it as important; haven’t understood need for children to engage.”

_ME Youth Worker

“I am a Muslim father, (it’s a) matter of fact that boys and girls don’t mix; even in prayers, separate in mosque; can’t be where a woman is, because it would get me out of my prayers.”

_ME Parent

“…When you’re a girl you stay right until married; parents have to know everything.”

_Traveller Parent

“Perception nothing to do with a religious thing but more to do with cultural thing from home; that women are not involved outside of the home.”

_ME Youth Worker

“Girls not let off as much as boys; not as much freedom. This could be challenged but traditions are up to parents. Mothers and fathers always strict with girls; usually seen not heard. Once a girl is 12/13, must stay home; young girls are engaged at 16/17; engaged so girl won’t get bad name; if out (socially), get bad name and then hard to get her married.”

_Traveller Youth Worker

“Girls engage easily and well and very willing. Men reluctant won’t necessarily join. See a lot of sexism in school. Need for equality, respect; family values issue and beliefs so don’t see that certain actions not acceptable.”

_Community Worker

“Perception nothing to do with a religious thing but more to do with cultural thing from home; that women are not involved outside of the home.”

_ME Youth Worker

“(In our countries) unusual to spend money on football, or activities but here income is limited and many activities have to be paid for; and parents don’t have money to pay. Their perception is that here many activities are seen as costing or requiring pay; and in reality many activities do not cost; parents need information about this.”

_Community Representative

“Barrier; but there’s a reason for people not getting clearance (Garda vetting), very essential…(need a) level playing field; same clearance as any one else…have one law for youth organisation and one for others. Other organisations looking at it but up to them; doesn’t make sense.”

_Community Worker

“For example if she wants to apply she should know how to get it; Need to know more about the procedure; how long; explanation about how it works; how apply for it; there should be someone there to help.”

_ME Parent

“No problem or issue getting Garda clearance for volunteers, but there was a real standoffishness when produced form; understand that they have to fill in lots of forms so they were taken aback and suspicious by this but explained it’s to protect young people and self, and explained the form so found it okay; Garda clearance has to be done by each organisation so every time they volunteer for different group they need new clearance.”

_Community Worker

Many of the barriers mentioned throughout the consultation process require youth organisations and workers to rethink how they promote their services and create a more welcoming, inclusive service. Language, cultural and religious diversity within the minority ethnic communities further limits the ability of some groups to learn about youth services through the normal recruitment processes being used. The perception of parents about Irish culture, their own culture and how young people are expected to behave creates barriers to active participation due to fear and concern for the safety of their children as well as the desire to maintain their cultural/religious identities. Additional information about the youth service and the benefits to young people must be provided to parents along with the creation of a trusting relationship before real participation can occur.
CHALLENGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMES

Youth worker participants stated they found it difficult to get young people from a minority ethnic background, especially asylum seekers and separated children, to access and participate in youth work. For those experiencing difficulties first hand, they recognised it is necessary to encourage young people directly and have a flexible, open attitude in order to respond effectively to the needs of this group. They recognised the need to create an environment within the club that values and respects diverse cultural backgrounds. The following challenges were mentioned throughout the focus group discussions:

- Youth workers’ perceptions and attitudinal barriers
- Need for enhanced skills for youth workers and Irish youth around intercultural issues and anti-racism
- Funding and resource constraints
- Programme and structural inflexibility
- Lack of interagency communication

"People’s prejudices there; fear of change, fear of difference.”

_Community Worker

"A lot of youth groups live in own bubble and need to burst bubble. No awareness about the issues, many don’t want to change. A lot more work has to happen and see what other youth groups are doing.”

>Youth Worker

"Outreach work to target minority ethnic groups has to do with leadership.”

>Youth Worker

"Society gives silent messages to people: an all Irish group sends a silent message to minority groups; when writing up constitution, should ask, are we being inclusive; are we wheelchair friendly, are we LGBT inclusive; are we open to minority ethnic groups; are we making efforts to include minority ethnic young people or are we forgetting subconsciously?”

_Community Worker

“Need to break down perceptions; need to break down locally; start small and move up; break formation of ghettos and seclusion. Want everyone to have free way of expression. Perceptions grow there (in ghettos) and extreme views, bad things can happen; so need to focus on how to break perceptions of young people, it’s how to break the ghetto.”

_ME Youth Worker

“Youth Workers need to be trained to deal with issues; understanding the need and having skills to take responsibilities for comments/actions being made at youth clubs. Xenophobia versus racism needs to be addressed; imported xenophobia/anti-Semitism with migrants; No intercultural stuff being implemented.”

_Community Worker

“Dealing with anti-racism work: members at Y hadn’t engaged before. Anti-racism work with Irish, there was a wariness because never mixed with foreigners before. Also, at the hostels, different groups live together and have many significant differences. They don’t necessarily get on; doesn’t mean have to get on. Only thing they have in common is that they are foreign nationals (and they are asylum seekers.) They are from different countries; could have Nigerian, Moroccan all together; problem with that, but people see them all as nonnationals.”

>Youth Worker

“Often activities enforced through funding; Youth leaders not connected to this because so engaged and absorbed with kids so don’t have time to make connections.”

>Youth Leader

“Asylum seekers and refugees, minority ethnic youth are not mentioned or named in DES funding as a target group like the Travellers and disadvantaged youth are. Disadvantaged young people, what does it really mean? Open to interpretation; not specified so interpret it way we need to; but should specifically name asylum seekers as a target group as they are living off €19.10 a week. We should receive proper funding not €2,500 to sustain projects for a year... We have two groups, legally resident migrants and asylum seekers group, integrated groups together; decided to target asylum seekers before got funding; ran project on a shoestring to offer...
something; anything we can offer for anything we did it; offered arts, crafts, computers.” _Youth Worker

“A awful lot of people coming in are living in rented accommodation; very expensive, living on very small budgets and are disadvantaged but my area wouldn’t cover them so they aren’t coming into my youth group; Disadvantaged by cost of living; my remit not able to target minority ethnic groups even though would like to do this.” _Youth Worker

“Access to spaces; waiting lists to youth projects; a lot of projects would be geographical, based on catchment area and that funding excludes; that is a barrier.” _ME Community Representative

“Really difficult to hear about people from another country. People huddle together in groups; need something to get them going, break boundaries.”  _ME Youth Worker

“Global village is held over lunch with sizeable number of foreign nationals and some Irish; 1st to 5th year (12-16 yrs old) seem to love it; keep coming back; asked them once if they would attend NYP (regular youth club based outside of school) but this was outside their comfort zone so didn’t show up; left the activities in school; very successful, they attend doing great work.” _Youth Worker

“Racism difficult to listen to… Don’t know how to react, challenge misinformation… Youth workers not trained.” _Youth Worker

life and for their parents sanity, give them a break knowing that children are going to something.” _ME Community Representative

“Transport a problem and time because can’t allow them out too late. In Tyrellstown, kids everywhere but no place to bring them locally; have to pick them up personally; needs exploring, something needs to be done. Driving like mad to ferry all over the place to get children to places because they wanted to do things.” _Youth Worker

“If you get clubs that invite people you will get people mixing in, get them together, but depends on the facilities and where it is located. Some people will drive kids to it; some only walk and if too far won’t go but if 5 minutes….. Safe enough for kids to go to centre; but if it were further away wouldn’t go to it. Facilities/Centre have to be where everyone goes.” _Traveller Parent

“Evenings 5:30 to 6:30pm okay but not sure as I don’t want to walk about at night; area really rough.” _ME Young Person

“Won’t set up groups unless have three volunteers; all have to go through induction training and Garda clearance is required.” _Youth Worker

“Worry about being on own so if it’s to happen, information must be provided about youth club in school, can talk with friends about going to club. Separate, isolation will lead to people not joining; only go to places with friends, peers, community; can’t under-estimate fears.” _Youth Worker

“Difficult for newcomers, people don’t join in because they don’t want to be the first one. People huddle together in groups; need something to get them going, break boundaries.” _ME Youth Worker

“Go to places where relatives go so easy to make friends and mingle.” _ME Young Person

“People looking for place but only place (in Tyrellstown) is the school and it is willing but small, only 6 classrooms; built these places but no place to gather. May live in an advantaged area but no facility available.” _Community Worker

“No regular meetings; did some training with (other organisations) and from that said needed network days to support using the new skills but not really happening in terms of networking. It’s obvious it’s needed; (Interculturalism) big thing for all but so used to what doing and tend to catch up at trainings; nothing however done that is saying let’s get together.” _Youth Worker

“People looking for place but only place (in Tyrellstown) is the school and it is willing but small, only 6 classrooms; built these places but no place to gather. May live in an advantaged area but no facility available.” _Community Worker
Attitudes of youth workers at the individual and organisational level can result in exclusion and discrimination. Language and images used at youth centres can also create an exclusive environment limiting participation of minority ethnic and Traveller youth. The lack of facilities, location of some centres in rough areas and geographical boundaries have also limited the participation of young people as many participants stated there are safety concerns about allowing children to attend activities after dark.

Furthermore, a lack of cross sector work between youth services, schools, community development projects and minority ethnic led organisations limits channels for disseminating information, developing projects that involve a family focus and providing services that reflect the needs of the community. These challenges affect the ability of youth organisations and workers to develop inclusive programmes and will need to be overcome to ensure increased participation.
Youth workers and representatives of the ME ethnic communities felt there was a need for support and resources to ensure their services are in line with intercultural practice. Many of the participants stated they would be interested in working with diverse groups but that they lack the awareness of, or skills in, intercultural issues and practice.

The following supports were mentioned as being essential to reducing miscommunication and conflict and ensuring the implementation of intercultural youth work practice:

- Ongoing and relevant intercultural awareness and capacity building (support and training)
- Intercultural communication skills and support in using skills gained
- National guidelines and policies to instruct and guide youth organisations in implementing intercultural practices
- Support in the development of inclusive programmes
- Skills on implementing needs assessment
- Documentation and sharing of good practice approaches which can be used by youth workers as models
- Support in understanding the Youth Work Act (2001) and the role of VEC Youth Officers
- Adequate resources, both human and financial

"I used Theatre of the oppressed: very simple game; one person nominated as devil; game called 'Devil's Advocate' and did with mixed group; some young children from minority ethnic participants frozen in fear; quizzed them on why? (To them) devil is powerful; culturally found this disempowered me as I didn't expect the reaction; found I wasn't culturally aware. I learned, but need more information about cultural issues/beliefs and parameters can work with. Feel youth workers need to be more aware; made me stop and think. Never thought for a second that a word would frighten them."

_Youth Worker

"Need to understand culture, can't use hearsay or media; need support around the idea of family in own and other cultures; all responsible for what is important and need to find out; really need to re-educate selves around values and beliefs."

_Youth Worker

"We would work on integration, but there is fear we won't be able to communicate (with youth and parents)"

_Youth Worker

"If can't communicate here, how can we communicate about other areas; to avoid this sense of alienation need to promote intercultural activities together."

_ME Youth Worker

"Language, many parents have little or no English; how am I going to communicate with them; can use children but… Explain to young people and then expect them to tell parents, this might not work."

_Youth Worker

"Youth services should take the lead on this and embed it (intercultural youth work) into organisation; always deal with it and ensure people aware of policy."

_Community Worker

"I think it should be in the Constitution to have to start somewhere with integration. School and youth clubs that is where bulk of work is, this is where first contact comes. School is a miniature version of life; what you instil in school years and if putting in wrong ingredients into child… (Need to) have it (equality/inclusion) in constitution but could raise hostility."

_Community Worker

"We have no guidelines, no direction; nothing that states include everybody or that have to be proactive and provide service. Have to do this work."

_Youth Worker

"Comes from youth clubs and youth work, understanding of why doing it (equality) young people and youth workers have to be part of the
process; important process; design the policy themselves.”  
_Youth Worker_  

“Lot of work needs to be done, still nothing, no specific project or programme in place. Many voluntary groups don’t have equality policy; there is a stage before that, understanding why need it; need to do education about why do we need equality and then develop policy from there.”  
_Youth Worker_  

“I think locally it would be useful to develop similar intercultural strategy with VEC via Community Development Board (CDB); if CDB under NPAR, takes the initiative to develop anti-racism and equality plans, there needs to be a focus on youth inside this. It would bring all agencies together; Galway did this and very strong youth focus. Could happen in other places, but depends on the CDB; where is commitment of board on this.”  
_Community Development Worker_  

“A lot of the projects have expressed an interest in intercultural work but don’t know where to begin; and a lot of times, because the projects are so established themselves, it’s something completely new that has to be taken on and the leaders would need training; different piece of work; the interest is there; it’s just where to begin.”  
_Youth Worker_  

“Assessment as well, youth should be asked felt needs and express what want to do; and getting other groups to respond to the assessment. If young people not included, they will get in to trouble. Get them together to ask them what like to do; how to get these done; find out what they need.”  
_Youth Worker_  

“Need to find out what young people want; mom and dad give certain education and experiences but need other information; take responsibility and experience for life.”  
_ME Community Representative_  

“There are Muslims in many areas and would have different communities. We know have to go to community and provide services, but need easy access. A small survey to outline where they are and what background they are; if know persons are there and what ethnic background is there, makes it easier; but haven’t really looked into a survey and not done a survey because costly and timely so don’t know differences.”  
_ME Youth Workers_  

“Is there learning from UK and EU; they have already come up with stuff; gone through this process already; is there something else we could be learning.”  
_Youth Worker_  

“VEC under the Youth Work Act, taking on Youth Officers; their job is to develop comprehensive youth work plan with policies; intercultural work needs to be integrated into plans. Youth officers being trained but not sure if getting diversity or intercultural training; need to push it nationally or at least locally.”  
_Community Worker_  

“There’s a lot of scepticism around VEC taking on youth work; and what that is going to dictate to the workers and the young people and putting a curriculum to youth work; fear that they will be taking on large youth projects and programmes and squeezing out the smaller ones; huge scepticism.”  
_Youth Worker_  

“I left Kildare at a time when people starting to talk about it; maybe it’s about going under formal education area, when youth work is about informal education; VEC would be more formal education and that will dictate how it is reported, this changes how we manage as well as accountability. People are afraid it’s becoming very numbers focused, how many kids, how many projects did you run, what activities, etc., not about development; changes the focus to outcome based; taking away from real focus, of reaching out to needs; youth work however focuses on reaching out to disadvantaged, empowering; but becoming more like private business.”  
_Youth Worker_  

“It’s important they (minority ethnic led community groups) all hear about VEC registration and that VEC includes their work in the mapping exercise.”  
_Community Development Worker_  

“Need for infrastructure, facilities and venues for activities. Saying that though, need to be careful where youth club is set up; certain areas, like living in hell; youth club in one area would not be good.”  
_Traveller and ME Parents_  

“Comes down to having resources; limited resources, can’t promise something can’t deliver.”  
_Youth Worker_
“Limited funds but implementing as much as we can, as see there is a great need to include these groups so kids have a chance to be kids.” — Youth Worker and Leader

Ongoing, continuous support and adequate training is required for youth workers to gain the confidence to use the information and skills obtained as well as to build their capacity to work within a diverse and inclusive environment. Several youth workers felt national guidance regarding intercultural issues is necessary along with policies to target new communities. Guidelines on how to develop inclusive programmes as well as information on best practice approaches which can be used as models would be useful.

The ‘invisibility’ of the ME community in some areas suggested youth workers and organisations required assistance on implementing needs analysis and gathering baseline data about the local population. There is a need for a better understanding of the Youth Work Act and the role of the VEC Youth Officers in terms of its impact on funding and resourcing existing youth organisations as well as youth work implemented by community-led groups. Adequate resources are necessary to ensure youth organisations have the capacity to target young people, volunteers and workers from ME backgrounds.
SUPPORTS THAT CAN BE GIVEN TO MINORITY GROUPS

In order to support minority ethnic groups and enhance participation of young people from these communities, youth organisations must actively engage local groups to explore areas of overlap and identify opportunities to plan and work together.

Participants stated the following supports would assist minority groups in becoming more involved in youth work:

- Information and greater awareness about the youth service, becoming affiliated to a youth organisation and accessing supports available from the service
- Establish partnerships and networking opportunities to learn and share skills, knowledge and expertise
- Provision of certified courses to minority ethnic organisations to enhance the capacity of their members
- Resources such as access to facilities, funding opportunities, identifying materials/training and managing logistical barriers such as transport and child care

“Have no knowledge about how youth services work or the funding.”
  _ME Community Representative

“Didn’t know until recently that we could become affiliated with KDYS; doing own thing; talked to staff here trying to get membership; got information about service but don’t know what help is available, what we can do etc.”
  _ME Community Representative

“Biggest challenge we all face was to set up youth organisation; that was our challenge. If build up networks; try to meet once a month and discuss what doing; once a month for an hour, as it’s silly to operate separately.”
  _ME Youth Worker

“Issue of capacity building, most of us our qualifications are not recognised, building capacity so possible to get employed afterwards.”
  _ME Community Representative

“Some groups need to have their capacity built like we said earlier because they have been oppressed all their life. Targeting people, but then giving with one hand and taking with the other; there’s a fine line there; a group may need all help they can be given in their category group but then are we reinforcing the stereotypes vs. making it more inclusion vs. fluffing over the issues.”
  _Traveller Community Worker

“Should always follow up to try not to have training just for training sake; (review) training; and push agencies so that it’s proper and accredited training leading to skills and employment; aiming to build people’s capacity; people need jobs.”
  _Traveller Youth Worker

“Come to KDYS to do junior cycle and senior cycle; when first started off I came here as participant; in all these years don’t understand (why) only one Traveller employed here. Strategy is to include Travellers, supporting them to finish school and get trained, get qualifications, but also need to support them getting employed…

If don’t have them employed there is a barrier to using service; don’t penalise those for not finishing school; find other ways to get them involved.”
  _Traveller Community Worker/Parent

“Support would be to include open door, funding, information, equality policy.”
  _ME Community Representative

“Need some sort of financial help; security, a place to meet, maybe a sports hall; different clubs have access to halls so play/bring teams together in different places”
  _Youth Worker

“Funding and resources an issue; put own money into setting up youth organisation, all of us are professionals; so that’s how we raised money at beginning. Now looking for funding; should be able to get a little support from other organisations but mainly on us.”
  _ME Youth Workers
“Youth organisation supported us for two years running; asked to be affiliated but have to pay to be affiliated; not resourced; can’t afford this, can’t afford to pay.”

_ME Community Representative

Participants stated very little direct contact had been made between youth services and minority ethnic-led groups. Information on what supports are available from the youth service, such as funding opportunities, mechanisms for becoming affiliated with a youth organisation, access to facilities, or how to go about finding such resources, would assist minority ethnic-led groups.

Traveller and ME participants stated that employment of youth workers from minority ethnic communities could encourage people from diverse backgrounds to become involved in a youth organisation. Several participants stated there is a need for experience to be recognised as many Travellers do not have and may not be able to obtain the formal qualifications required to be a youth worker. Improved networking opportunities with these groups and organisations would help them to become aware of the different youth organisations and opportunities to work together. This would also create opportunities for youth organisations to recruit new members, leaders and staff as well as gain a better understanding of the needs of these communities.
EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Much of the good practice occurring at the focus group sites is occurring in an ad hoc fashion and is not fully documented.

Documentation of such activities could be shared with other agencies. An activity which focuses on identifying and collating best practice materials and disseminating it to youth organisations would be useful. Examples of good practice were identified in the following areas:

- Welcoming environment: ethos of equality
- Targeted outreach/information provision
- Interagency partnerships
- Employment of minority ethnic youth worker
- Peer mentor programmes

WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT, ETHOS OF EQUALITY: KERRY DIOCESAN YOUTH SERVICE

“To be really honest ever since I came to Tralee been seeing leaflets about KDYS; KDYS statement of welcome, anti-racism, equality, all on leaflets; different people on posters, familiar faces. In KDYS, there was a leaflet; there was a decision made that said we will be clear, honest, open.’ _ME Parent

“Have long relationship with some parents; have strong relationship with a good few parents; some minority ethnic parents volunteering, they get training.” _Youth Worker

“KDYS has an ethos of equality; always had practice of inclusiveness, equality; saw a massive need for young people in town from asylum seeker and new communities background; knew they needed to be accommodated, needed to respond; volunteers came along at right time; fantastic all came and said wanted to be volunteers; offered training, got financial support; everything happened at the right time.” _Youth Worker

“As KDYS workers and leaders, we will sit with them (parents) and say what procedures there are and tell them who we are, give application form, insurance and explain have emergency number; meet with parents from accommodation centre to talk about this. Next month, for example, all parents with children, we will have meeting and coffee; tell them who we are tell about equality; we will say who is responsible for them, build trust, explain service. Even me, before I knew KDYS, I wouldn’t let my daughter come, not until I am sure, now know them. So get them in, build trust, is important.” _ME Youth Worker

“Parents need to know about youth services. We have a meeting for parents to come to; a letter can work too, but a visit may be necessary. Tell them where you are, invite parents to come to meet youth workers; when tell them about programme they trust you. For example, some members last week went to Dublin; we had sent a letter home explaining the programme and invited parents to drop in or call; explained everything will be fine; there were no problems, but just wanted to be sure.” _Youth Worker

“Also organise programmes in school, ‘Let’s be friends’ and ‘Okay, Let’s Go’ (transition programme). Workers go out to primary school, 6th class, and go through timetable, school tour, language information for parents. The KDYS member of staff that runs the programmes facilitates students to make transition from primary to secondary school; will provide information for parents in several languages explaining that child needs to be registered in secondary school.” _Youth Worker
TARGETED OUTREACH COMBINED WITH INTERAGENCY PARTNERSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT OF MINORITY ETHNIC YOUTH WORKER:

BLANCHARDSTOWN YOUTH SERVICE (BYS)

An example of good practice included a targeted outreach programme for a summer camp. The youth outreach worker met parents, often going door to door, and presented information at a local church about the youth service, proposed activities and answered parents’ questions.

This assisted in building a trusting relationship with the family and helped to spread the word about the summer camp. The programme was funded by the Blanchardstown Area Partnership (BAP) and linked with local schools and churches which also offered venues for promoting youth work. It allowed the youth service to utilise the cultural resources in the community and provided useful insight to cultural differences.

“For young people to integrate properly need to speak the language; inability to speak English language was a barrier; other issues too; language was one way to get them involved. Families had issues around culture in Ireland; if young people left on own would be easily accepted, but when mix up with Irish people couple of issues had to be looked at. Having the language was helpful; it enabled and empowered them to communicate and informed them; gradually able to include youth in activities at community centre and youth clubs in the area. Initiative in BYS, funded by BAP, found partnership between these two organisations (BYS and BAP) worked very well.” _Community Worker

“I think we did sow a seed which I believe can be tapped into; the layout is there and very successful, there’s no doubt about that; we ended up involving a great number of these young people in activities in the summer. Whole idea is to get them to take part in area club and group activities in the area and achieve integration as a result of that. I think it was successful, however we need to build on that.” _ME Youth Worker

“The work, done in the summer, is important; vast majority of activities were free; getting information out was necessary, but we had to change (in order) to reach the community; the youth worker he went door to door; met parents and talked about the programme; issue is getting information out, had to change to get into the communities; youth worker explained things, answered questions. Outreach, knocking on doors; challenging fear; think of worst case situation so gave them the positive; acknowledge what is going on.” _Youth Worker

“Had a few issues, like the culture thing; young people decide not want to do this; some of them didn’t want to; so we wondered why; when asked, we realised it wasn’t a question of the young people not wanting to do it; a lot of issues around fear, and around mum and dad and asking if could go out; parents opinions, not fitting in; so devised couple of strategies. Have to bring the whole family along; went and spoke with parents, carried them along and explained what was available; positive aspects of youth work; educate parents means it is easier to get children to come; sit in living room; they invite you to dinner or cup tea; tell them what’s available; time done educating parents much easier to get young people to take part; I believe strategy that can’t go wrong.” _ME Youth Worker

“Every community can’t have full time worker; impossible to have full time worker in each place; will always be restriction but important to acknowledge all the work that is being done; do a lot of work to plan activities and to inform people about them but information still not out there.” _Youth Worker
TARGETED OUTREACH: YMCA, DUBLIN

Youth worker participants providing services for young asylum seekers, including separated children, have found it difficult to get young people to access and participate in youth work because of the lack of trust, fear due to previous experiences/trauma, and reluctance to leave their accommodation centre. The youth workers stated it is necessary to encourage young people directly and to provide flexible, one to one support. Youth workers stated the identification and implementation of different approaches to initially engage young people from ME backgrounds would be essential.

“Starting in September, we set up a system where one youth worker would take responsibility for linking up two hostels; there would be a crossover between youth rather than the case workers sending them to us; more connected, with us going to them; I will go over and will be the key person who goes to centre and informs youth of activities to get them to join. I act as a go between; I know it sounds small but (not being physically present) is a barrier; so I will attend every photography course; we need to think about things a bit more; make sure our work is connected. In terms of the young people mixing we had a lot of success; it’s just getting them on a continuous basis and making the unaccompanied minors from the hostels feel part of the project.”

>Youth Worker

PEER MENTORING ACTIVITIES

Peer mentoring programmes geared towards ensuring a positive transition from primary to post primary school have been a successful mechanism for involving minority ethnic youth in youth work activities. It is felt that once they are involved in school activities it becomes easier to involve them in after school youth work activities. It also ensures young people talk about youth work and promote increased participation within their own social group. Involvement in youth work activities from a young age is believed to be the most effective way to increase participation.

Peer mentoring programmes are a positive approach for promoting and advocating young people’s interests to a larger group of people and they improve representation of minority ethnic groups within a service. It has given youth workers the opportunity to consult with young people about their interests as well as identify how to improve access to the youth service. Projects can then be developed in response to such consultation.

“The mentor group, 5th year, look after 1st years; always look to promote 5th year foreign nationals to be positive role models for a 1st year foreign national; see it as very well balanced and mixed. Comfortable there; made an exhibition, created using stories, masks, different dances, the project based on themes looking at commonalities.”

>ME Young Person

“The mentoring model tries to give them a positive focus; many are disadvantaged because of their status in Ireland; Motivate and remind them there is a future; use sports, art, academics, science. Very little positive promotion of African culture; no role models; don’t hear about them, so need to promote the positive role models more; don’t hear about them or things accomplished; Need to identify successful people; (instead of) emphasis always on the negative.”

>ME Community Worker

"The mentoring model tries to give them a positive focus; many are disadvantaged because of their status in Ireland; Motivate and remind them there is a future; use sports, art, academics, science. Very little positive promotion of African culture; no role models; don’t hear about them, so need to promote the positive role models more; don’t hear about them or things accomplished; Need to identify successful people; (instead of) emphasis always on the negative.”

>ME Community Worker
“In that school they have a peer mentoring programme; trained to mentor isolated youth; trained 12 mentors; roll out in September; People at risk will now work with other students; School approached KDYS to run the training.

Young people at risk of leaving school themselves trained as mentors; helps in school, provides a contact, someone can go and talk to when have a problem; they listen but not counsellors; so if you are afraid to go to a teacher about being bullied, you have a mentor so go to mentor and they have the courage to go to the teacher. Support you to do this and to get help.” _Youth Worker

Several examples of good practice were highlighted during the consultation process. This information provided ideas for other youth organisations and workers on different approaches that could be used to increase participation of young people from minority ethnic and Traveller communities. However, there are many more examples of good practice occurring which are undocumented and therefore, unavailable as learning models. Documentation of good practice will need to occur so that youth organisations and workers can share ideas and support each other in developing more inclusive practices.
SUGGESTED ACTIONS

Throughout the consultation process several suggestions on how to ensure participation and develop intercultural youth work practice were made.

- Research into practices and needs
- Policies to support intercultural practice
- Funding and resources
- Interagency partnerships
- Training and support
- Recruitment of outreach and youth workers from ME background
- Targeted outreach and information
- Pilot projects and initiatives
- Monitoring and evaluation

RESEARCH INTO PRACTICES AND NEEDS

There is a lack of relevant data about ME young people, their needs, the barriers to their participation in youth work and what interests they have. Also there is a lack of knowledge about activities and programmes occurring in the youth services that have had success in increasing participation of minority ethnic youth and adults. In order to ensure programmes and activities are relevant to the needs of young people, research is required. The research should provide youth organisations with a base from which to plan and develop positive, inclusive programmes.

Research into best practices should also occur with the aim of producing resources and guidelines for the development and implementation of inclusive programmes. The research should include a component on organisational reflection to ensure an equality agenda which respects diversity and promotes anti-racism is embedded in all programmes, policies and procedures.

POLICIES TO SUPPORT INTERCULTURAL PRACTICE

Several participants stated there was a need to develop equality and intercultural policies within their organisations. As part of this process all staff, volunteers and young people involved in the organisation should determine what interculturalism means and what an intercultural approach would entail.

Support should be provided to youth organisations in this process. It is also important to ensure the involvement of local minority led groups and young people. The policies should promote equality and inclusion in services. It may be necessary for an organisation to reflect on current policies and practices and identify good practices in the sector. Youth workers, volunteers and young people should be provided with training on the policies to ensure they understand and can implement their programmes in line with them.
“Use the human rights based approach. Members must enshrine equality into constitutions; anti-racism code of practice embedded in this, diversity plan; doing this with the sporting organisations getting them to look at equality clauses; codes; sports organisations told by ministers if they didn’t include child protection and equality they would lose funding so they incorporated these into constitutions; so something to consider.”

_Community Development Worker

FUNDING AND RESOURCES

Additional funding is required to enable intercultural youth work and integration initiatives are developed and implemented. This should be made available to all youth organisations to promote participation and inclusion in their work. Inclusive activities will require that youth workers, leaders and management provide adequate time and human resources to the planning and implementation process. This will have cost implications. Providing sustainable, long term funding sources will ensure all organisations can avail of training, education and the support needed to promote interculturalism within Ireland.

INTERAGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

Networking with other youth organisations needs to be prioritised. Participants involved in close working relationships with other agencies demonstrated this provides the necessary financial and resource supports to implement inclusive programmes.

Such partnerships must be built into programme planning and educational training as it will enable smaller organisations to provide more equal access to and a wider range of options for minority young people. Participants also stated the development of good relationships with existing minority ethnic groups will provide contacts and enable them to participate in the development of relevant policies and practices within youth organisations.

“Have to be proactive and promote working together.”

_Community Worker

“Would be useful if youth workers came together visit each other, mix; have an organised event.”

_Youth Worker

“A couple of Africans, other foreigners around table, get mixture of cultural views; in your culture you do this, in ours we do this so find balance so that child will not come home and talk back or say your culture is bad because it is a domineering culture; respects me”

_ME Parent

“Getting different groups to work together is the first step; even if it’s raising awareness about issues.”

_Youth Worker
TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR YOUTH WORKERS

Throughout the consultation, youth workers and volunteers stated that continuous training and intercultural awareness with young people, volunteers, staff and the community is necessary.

For youth workers to work effectively with young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, they need greater cultural awareness, intercultural understanding and skills. Such activities would ensure recognition of intercultural difference and an understanding of traditions, social norms, values and beliefs. Participants felt that all youth workers within organisations should complete intercultural and anti-racism training so that they may develop their own understanding and insights into racism and discrimination.

The training should provide an opportunity for self reflection and develop practical skills that will enable them to respond effectively to racist incidents. Formal training should also be provided within youth and community course work on intercultural issues and provide youth workers with skills that will assist them in developing inclusion practices in their daily activities.

“Better training provided; better understanding of the people we are working with; practice of interculturalism need skills; great youth workers should mentor others; more volunteers from local communities.” _Youth Worker

“Bring children, youth workers and volunteers together and teach about African culture; important to share information between communities.” _ME Community Representative

“Our club has a few new members; couple of white faces; anti-racism was discussed last night; one kid stated maybe he feels left out because he’s Irish, but kid stated it’s great I love coming here. We all have preconceived ideas and a level of ignorance, lack of education around cultures. Need to educate these groups and merge them and need good facilitators to do the integration part. They are willing and want to get to know each other. Exciting to have people from other places; young people in Drogheda think it’s exotic; want to learn about them, culture, stories. In Drogheda young people are fascinated by cultures.” _Youth Worker

RECRUITMENT OF OUTREACH AND YOUTH WORKERS FROM MINORITY ETHNIC BACKGROUND:

A review of recruitment policy may be required to ensure minority ethnic groups and Travellers are represented on youth organisation’s staff.

Recruitment of outreach and youth workers along with volunteers from minority ethnic background was recommended throughout the consultation process. Several participants felt this would ensure better understanding of cultural differences and demonstrate a commitment to diversity by the youth organisation. It would also promote the services of the youth sector to the minority ethnic communities creating a stronger relationship between them.
“(Having youth worker from own culture) guarantees that there is balance, someone who will stick up for my interest; then I would be happy for child to go there.” _ME Parent

“Lose motivation if experience racism and bullying so back to issue of employing people from minority ethnic group. Having a person there to support them; important to have people from own community as role model, motivation; they are a resource. Youth can go to person and ask, feel comfortable going to them to learn about services, projects, can go to them for questions etc., and easier to go to someone they can identify with to say being bullied; otherwise might be afraid to go to adult.” _ME Parent

“Prefer if my child is somewhere and with someone that knows about my culture and supports, respects my way of life….Parents in Europe treat child as friend, in Africa child is child doesn’t have same experience; parents and adults must teach them this is the wrong way this is right way” _ME Community Representative

TARGETED OUTREACH AND INFORMATION PROGRAMMES

Examples mentioned during the consultations of intensive targeted outreach were shown to be successful in increasing participation of minority ethnic communities.

Activities that ensured effective information flow from schools or in the wider community and incorporated a whole family outreach approach to promoting the youth service encouraged active participation and built trust within the minority ethnic community. Outreach programmes that promote direct contact with parents and youth should be resourced. These programmes need to take into account language and cultural barriers as well as provide greater understanding about youth work opportunities as requested by participants. Ensuring outreach staff are from these communities will also create a bond with them.

“Need to look at moving away from traditional ways of getting information out.” _Youth Worker

“If one African comes in this year then will bring another five for future programmes; they tell friends. Leaflets handed out to stranger okay, but if one person in community using the service will bring in more, tell new people that this is a positive programme, will bring people in.” _ME Youth Worker

“To get to us better, come to church and provide information to congregation, congregation will get information out; go to the leader of the church; if (youth service) tells me someone coming to church, I will inform community, that not a religious function but an information session, provide music, food.” _ME Community Representative

“Have to target whole family not just the youth; parents have control, need to get them involved and take responsibility for their kids.” _ME Youth Worker
PILOT PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

Pilot projects and initiatives need to be implemented in order to develop and disseminate best practices in the area of intercultural youth work. Such projects should involve minority ethnic led groups and Traveller organisations with active participation of community members at all levels of development and implementation. They should demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion and provide opportunity for learning. Such learning should be used as a model and mainstreamed into other projects and activities. Some minority specific programmes may need to be developed for minority ethnic and Traveller youth, but such initiatives should be based on the needs of specific groups, when warranted and with the aim of creating opportunities for integration with mixed groups.

“Find a platform where different youth groups can come together like the environment; suggest, could get two or three youth groups to come together on theme based activities, not compete as such, contribute to some project; something dear to their hearts, shared by all; where we can get them interested, incentive to get them involved rather than addressing, focus on or deal directly with racism; has to happen; some key themes, for instance cars, environment, drugs, development education; look at their interaction (interculturally) and bring in issues through this; take people outside of comfort zone.”
_ME Youth Worker

“Need to bring them together (males and females) to focus on respect for women and each other; equality; bring people together; some people come from cultures where they have 3 or 4 wives; need to teach respect and equality as they may not have this in own culture.”
_ME Parent

“Between us, work on project highlighting our religions; you learn about Islam, send someone over; we could work together on that; lot of similarities but could talk about the differences; a project like that would bring us together; explain what we’re about.”
_ME Youth Worker

“When SARI held their world cup, good aspect was that it needed volunteers from all different agencies and minority ethnic communities; working towards a goal. We had different nationalities playing against each other. Benefit was people from all nationalities and cultures involved and that was coming together and sharing ideas; use project base to get different youth organisations to sit together and develop activities, come up with project; but have to sit down, talk and mix with ideas”
_Youth Worker

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

There is the need to establish performance-based indicators, which are tied into the organisation’s overall plans. The indicators will enable organisations to assess the commitment to an intercultural approach and to focus the efforts of staff on cross-cultural issues. Support for participation of minority ethnic and Traveller youth has to be promoted at every level of an organisation and organisations should, as part of regular evaluation of youth services, report on this. The monitoring process should ensure that baseline data is available and that review of effectiveness occurs regularly.
Promoting access to minority ethnic communities will require youth organisations to make contact and discuss youth work opportunities with minority ethnic groups directly.

Minority ethnic representatives and parents stated communication and consultation is important to them. In some situations, establishing separate groups may be required. Linking into these groups, however, will be necessary to ensure integration. Some parents felt it is important to have youth workers from minority ethnic backgrounds involved. There is a need to keep a connection to their own cultural identity; however, this does not preclude the involvement of Irish youth. There is the sense that this may be needed as an initial step to involvement. It would give young people the space to discuss issues and challenges they are facing in the wider community.

Development of pilot projects and activities which involve separate groups could occur with intercultural components designed to create opportunities for mixing with other youth groups. An example of this was seen from one of the sites working with asylum seekers. The group began as a separate group, but is very active in mixing with other youth services and has started to have Irish members join.

Skills, knowledge, and attitudes of staff also need to be developed. Providing ongoing intercultural and anti-racism training will ensure youth workers have the necessary awareness. Continuous support will give them the confidence to take the knowledge and skills gained and put them into practice. Targeted outreach and employment of minority ethnic youth workers/leaders will also ensure a more holistic, family approach to recruiting young people from minority ethnic communities occurs. More information and skills are required on handling racial incidences within the youth sector, schools, and in the community. A concerted effort to combat racism will ensure young people feel safe and can participate actively in youth work.

Although there are examples of good intercultural practice in the youth sector, there is a need to identify and develop best practice resources. Research into the barriers to participation in youth work by young people from minority ethnic communities is necessary to ensure youth work is relevant and based on their needs. Youth organisations need to actively promote their services among all communities in Ireland and to create an awareness of their work. Creating links and networking with minority ethnic-led groups and other agencies working with minority ethnic communities will assist this process. Partnerships should be used to form direct contacts with groups and work towards building trust as this will lead to positive interaction.

Overall, there is sense that national guidance, policies, and practical support is required to develop a youth service that provides intercultural, inclusive programmes. Without such guidance, youth workers will continue to find this aspect of their work challenging. Youth work provides an opportunity for young people to be involved in a culture of learning, innovation, and new practices. Ensuring youth workers have the capacity and support to implement intercultural youth work practices will ensure the promotion of inclusion and respect for diversity.