

Joint Consultative Forum

Equality and Diversity Unit – Attendance list

27 November 2020: Zoom

	Attending	Place of work	Contact
1	Kathryn Stevenson	Head of Legal Services	kathrynstevenson@childrenslawcentre.org
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8	Kathleen Toner	Director	Kathleen.toner@fostering.net
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10	Rachel Hogan	Children's Law Centre	rachelhogan@childrenslawcentre.org
11	Brenda Callaghan	Human Resource Adviser. CCMS	brenda.callaghan@ccmsschools.com
12	Lydia Lynas	Head of Inclusion & Progression	lydia.lynas@orchardville.com
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	Apologies		
	Una Turbitt	A.D Education, EA	
	Richard Magowan	DE Equality Unit	

* Please note this is a list of those who requested a link to the meeting, not all attended or attended the full session.

Joint Consultative Forum
Equality and Diversity Unit – Meeting note

27 November 2020: Zoom

Welcome and Overview

Matthew welcomed attendees to the meeting and gave a brief overview of the agenda an overview of the purpose of Joint Consultative Forum. He introduced the speakers for each session.

New SEN Framework - SEN Regulations and Code of Practice

Sharon Lawlor and Chris Hutchinson delivered a presentation which outlined the changes which are being made to the SEND Act which include:

- New duties in relation to the Education Authority and the Health and Social Care Trusts, this includes a much larger emphasis on the child's view and changes to the annual review process.
- New Board of Governor duties, including the Learning Support Coordinator (LSO) replacing the formally known SENco and a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) to replace the current IEP.
- New efforts to mediate disputes will be used through a third-party contract.
- New SEND rights regarding the appeals process for parents.

Sharon also outlined some details regarding the financial support for these changes; £7.5 million for the first 3 months, and a bid for £30 million which is ongoing. The business case is with the Department of Finance and the Minister.

Responses to topics raised during the presentation:

1. LSC (formally SENco) workload/ratio per pupil

Sharon stated that there is a formula which will determine the funding each school will get so this ultimately dictates the ratios of LSC to pupils. There is a letter to EA being finalised at present which will give more information. There will be a minimum and maximum amount assigned to schools.

2. Annual review

Sharon spoke of the need for confidence to be restored with parents when it comes to the annual review. The 'bigger' meeting which normally happens at every key stage or transition to a new school (at age 14) will now be able to be requested by the parent, 16+ year old child, the principal, or the EA if any of the parties feel it is imperative.

3. PLP: Any information on how this will look and not be a box ticking exercise?

Templates have been designed with SENco staff for statutory nurseries, primary, post primary, and special education, they are part of the code consultation. The templates are online along with examples of how to use them. There will also be a place to document the parent and the child's views. At present there is 2 review points mapped in for a year but this could be changed if the child is not making progress. The idea is that this document will be a living one which can be updated on whether the provision and services are working for the child or not. Historically the criticism is often

that EA take too long or that the schools have the wrong information recorded which causes the delays. This form will ideally stop this delay. It is anticipated that training on the software will roll out in January.

4. Impact on workload, teachers being required to contribute to PLP and what measures will be in place to make sure it is worked out effectively.

Sharon outlined that it was up to school to determine who will be entering PLP data. The training will be for the LSC and one other, they will then cascade that information down through the school. Teachers will have to contribute, and the schools will be responsible for ensuring the LSC has the appropriate schedule to carry out their job.

5. Voice of young people.

Sharon emphasised the importance of capturing the views of the child. Efforts need to be made for those children who cannot express themselves or are nonverbal. It is very important and will be a statutory duty to record their opinions.

Sharon closed her session by thanking all those present for their feedback and input and stressing that it would be most useful and beneficial to comment on any further concerns or to reiterate issues raised today on the consultation directly which will be formally noted. The DE consultation is available [here](#).

Consultation on Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools and Consultation on Area Planning Framework for Special Schools

Michael McConkey began by speaking of EA's proposal for the future educational provision for children with special educational needs within special schools and within specialist provision in mainstream schools across Northern Ireland. Michael mentioned the commitment to engaging and consulting with the community, as well as with principals, to shape a collective agreement.

Lyn McQuigan delivered a presentation on the changes EA are piloting parallel to consultations (which have been extended) to respond to the increasing pressure on special schools. This includes:

- A changing and more complex profile of SEN
- An inequality and inconsistency across the region
- A need to ensure the effective and efficient use of resources

Discussion ensued around changes to class size. Lyn outlined there would be 12 pupils in primary, 14 post primary and 8 in autism classes. There may be a need to have smaller numbers in these classes in response to the pupil's challenges during that particular year. Classes grouped together through key stages as opposed to year group which will mean there will be a mix of ages.

In terms of funding Lyn reminded the JCF that the Department of Education hold this funding, can only go ahead when the framework is ready and agreed upon. DE have requested the framework and are aware there is a need for funding to make it happen.

Concluding Remarks and Close

Kathryn Stevenson closed the session reminding the group to make their opinions known formally via the online consultations.

Kathryn enquired about the screenings required for the changes for the Planning Framework, these screenings are available on EA's website.

Kathryn concluded that during these times, when so many vulnerable children were out of school (requiring additional resources), Health, Education and the Department need to work together to provide service as well as possible. She thanked everyone for attending and contributing.

The meeting ended.