Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Education

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education — Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy: Department of Education, Education and Training Inspectorate

29 April 2015

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:
Miss Michelle McIlveen (Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Lunn
Mr Nelson McCausland
Ms Maeve McLaughlin
Mrs Sandra Overend
Mr Seán Rogers
Mr Pat Sheehan

Witnesses:

Mr Andrew Bell	Department of Education
Mrs Faustina Graham	Department of Education
Mr Paul McAlister	Education and Training Inspectorate

The Chairperson (Miss M McIlveen): I welcome the following officials: Faustina Graham, who is the director of collaborative education and practice at the Department of Education (DE); Paul McAlister, who is the assistant chief inspector in the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI); and Andrew Bell, who is the head of the shared education and community relations team at DE. Good morning.

Mrs Faustina Graham (Department of Education): Good morning.

The Chairperson (Miss M McIlveen): Can I ask you to make an opening statement? Members will follow with questions.

Mrs Graham: Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Committee on the review of the community relations, equality and diversity in education policy (CRED), the Minister's decision to end the CRED earmarked funding and the way forward.

It may be helpful to begin by reminding members of the aim of the CRED policy, which is to contribute to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others. Importantly, the policy was designed to underpin and support existing curricular requirements. In particular, those are personal development and mutual understanding at primary level and learning for life and work at post-primary level, as well as the general curricular aims of developing young people as individuals and as contributors to society.

Earmarked funding of almost £5 million has been provided over the four years since the policy was introduced in 2011. That funding was largely allocated to capacity building of the education workforce and also to the development and dissemination of resources for CRED and good practice in CRED-related work.

As part of the normal policymaking cycle, a review of the policy commenced in September 2014. The review confirmed that significant progress has been made. Over 2,000 school leaders, governors, Youth Service managers, teachers and youth workers attended awareness-raising sessions over that period. In excess of 4,000 teachers and youth workers have been trained to improve their knowledge and skills related to CRED issues. A quarter of all principals have engaged in training on dealing with controversial issues in the classroom. Over the last two years, almost 800 schools and youth organisations received advice and support in implementing their CRED policies. During the same period, 810 programmes were delivered, involving approximately 25,000 young people. Guidance has been developed that is supported by a dedicated website that provides a one-stop shop for practitioners, including case studies, resources and support materials. A review of those CRED resources identified a significant range of good resources that cover all the section 75 groups, including teaching plans and materials that teachers and youth workers can access and use.

Monitoring of the effectiveness of the policy included a series of focus groups with teachers, youth workers and young people, together with the commissioning of a module in the young life and times survey. The evidence indicates that the majority of young people experienced CRED activities and that good provision is effective in changing attitudes. Last year, as part of the review process, the Department commissioned the Education and Training Inspectorate to undertake a formal review of the CRED policy. Work was undertaken over the autumn term, and the report was published on 25 February 2015. That evaluation was positive and demonstrated that implementation of the policy has been largely effective. Practice in most of the schools and youth organisations that were visited was effective. Indeed, the majority of the taught sessions that were observed were evaluated as being "very good" or "better".

The report has also made a number of recommendations for further embedding CRED in the curriculum. Those include ensuring that the rights of the child underpin practice; CRED is embedded in a strategic overview of all policies and developed further through Priorities for Youth; and the development of shared education is referenced in light of emerging research and practice. The report additionally recommended that the Department continue to support the personal and professional development of staff and governors in schools and youth organisations to promote and embed CRED and also for the Department to foster more effective links with other Departments and agencies to support schools further and youth organisations in working in their local communities.

The Committee will be aware that, as part of the action to address pressures on the extremely challenging 2015-16 education budget, the Minister has now ended earmarked CRED funding. Prior to making his decision, a full equality impact assessment (EQIA) was carried out, which was the subject of a public consultation that closed on 6 March. In publishing its equality impact assessment, the Department identified the potential impact of ending earmarked CRED funding on certain section 75 groups, specifically persons of different religious belief, racial groups, sexual orientation and persons with a disability and persons without. However, a number of mitigating factors were identified to address potential adverse effects on those groups.

I will turn to the public consultation, to which 23 responses were received. Respondents identified impacts on similar groups to those that I outlined. A number of respondents were not content with the mitigations outlined by the Department. In particular, respondents expressed concern that disability, sexual orientation and race would not be the primary foci in the shared education signature project. Some responses highlighted concerns on the potential negative impact on the youth sector and, in particular, the skills capacity in the voluntary youth sector.

Following consideration of the outcomes of the public consultation, the Minister decided that, on balance, there were sufficient mitigating actions to justify his proposal to end earmarked CRED funding as part of the challenging 2015-16 budget. Those mitigating factors include the focus on protecting front-line services as far as possible; the fact that earmarked funding for CRED was intended to support the initial implementation of the CRED policy; and the fact that the curriculum requires schools and youth groups to address community relations, equality, diversity and inclusion.

The decision to end earmarked funding does not mean the withdrawal of the policy, which will remain in place. The advancement of shared education, including the provision of funding, will allow educational settings to continue to provide opportunities for meaningful interaction between young

people from different community backgrounds. School and youth organisations continue to be required to adhere to the policy aims and objectives, utilising their mainstream funding to deliver curricular requirements. The Department expects the Education Authority and the Youth Council to continue to support the implementation of the CRED policy and to minimise any potential negative impact on the particular needs of those of differing sexual orientation, racial group and disability.

I will now turn to the way forward. Officials are working to revise the CRED policy to take particular account of the findings of the ETI evaluation and the ending of earmarked funding. It is envisaged that the core of the policy will remain unchanged but that the associated actions will be updated to reflect the mainstreaming of that work. In revising the policy, we will explore the synergies with shared education to ensure that the good work observed by inspectors is built on and continues to make a significant difference. Naturally, we will offer to brief the Committee on the revised policy once that work has progressed.

I trust that that has provided the Committee with the CRED review findings, the rationale for the Minister's decision to mainstream CRED work and our plans to update the current policy to build on the successes that have already been achieved.

We welcome the opportunity to answer any questions that members might have.

The Chairperson (Miss M McIlveen): Thank you for the briefing. Essentially, you are saying that the reason that it is being withdrawn is purely as a result of funding.

Mrs Graham: Yes, it is the challenging budget. To protect front-line services, difficult decisions had to be made, and this is one of them.

The Chairperson (Miss M McIlveen): It is recognised that the policy was working and benefiting a substantial number of young people in our society.

Mrs Graham: There is no intention on the part of the Department that that should change. The point of the policy and the additional money that was allocated to it — the earmarked funding — was to ensure that schools and youth settings had the opportunity to look carefully at CRED requirements. It is an integral part of the curriculum, so there has been that requirement since the introduction of the curriculum in 2007. It was to enhance that at the beginning of the process, and now that it is to be embedded in the curriculum, it will continue, irrespective of funding.

The Chairperson (Miss M McIlveen): The funding gave structure to the programme, which will now be lost, so how will you ensure that there is a structure that can be measured?

Mrs Graham: As I said, we are in the process of looking at the way forward. It is important for us to take a considered view of that. It was timely that the policy was due for review in 2014, which meant that we looked actively at the outworkings of the policy and what was successful at that point. The most important part of the review was the Education and Training Inspectorate's evaluation, because, with the ETI recommendations — I touched on some of them, but, as I am sure that you are aware, there is a great deal more detail in the report — that allows us to do exactly what you are saying: to shape how it will move forward for schools and youth organisations while making it clear to the Education Authority and the Youth Council that the expectation is there and that the fact that money was earmarked in that way does not mean that those structures should disappear or that a change or modification of those structures cannot take place, depending on what resources allow.

Mr Andrew Bell (Department of Education): The funding was there for a very specific purpose, and it followed on from the previous review of the community relations schemes, from where the CRED policy evolved, following an ETI evaluation. That funding was specifically for capacity building and the dissemination of good practice. The previous review identified that teachers were telling us that, although they recognised that it was in the curriculum, they did not have the capacity or skills to deliver it, which is why we put in funding for capacity building. Over the period, the focus of the funding was on that. Faustina outlined the figures. Significant numbers of educators — teachers, principals and youth workers — have been trained and given those skills so that they can address those issues. The funding was for very specific purposes. The Minister is now mainstreaming that, in light of budget reductions. The capacity that has been built in the system, in schools and in youth organisations will mainstream that work through their existing funding.

The Chairperson (Miss M McIlveen): I can see that it might be easier to mainstream in a school setting, but it might be more challenging in a youth organisation, particularly those in the uniform sector, which rely very much on volunteers. Over time, there is a large turnover of volunteers, who will also require capacity building. How will you ensure that that is not lost in that sector?

Mr A Bell: We have asked the Youth Council in particular, through its existing funding, to make sure that it addresses that issue. It is also a key element of Priorities for Youth. It mentions that CRED is a specific issue addressed in Priorities for Youth. As regional plans are taken forward, the Department will expect associated work to be delivered.

The youth sector view CRED as being integral to its work. It is delivered through the joined in equity, diversity and interdependence (JEDI) work, which very much drives how youth work is taken forward. The issue of volunteers has always been difficult to address, and, even during the period of this policy when we were funding, it was difficult to address the training needs of youth volunteers because of the way in which they operate and the fact that you are asking people to give up more time from their volunteer work to be trained. The Youth Council is looking at that, and we will continue to work with the youth sector and, indeed, the statutory youth organisations covered by the Education Authority to try to ensure that those issues are addressed.

Mr Rogers: You are very welcome. I will go back to what you said, Faustina, about CRED largely being effective? We talk about budget implications and so on. Were there any concerns about the quality of delivery, the quality of projects, the range of provision and the level of rigorous assessment in schools and youth clubs?

Mrs Graham: Sorry, in what way?

Mr Rogers: In stopping the funding of the project.

Mrs Graham: As you know, with any work in schools, there will always be variation. The evaluation was very much about looking at what was best practice and also accepting that we have not completed the journey of a uniform approach across the education system to the implementation of the CRED working. There will always be that requirement to upskill people. As schools progress in this work, once the training has been delivered, we can see increasing sophistication in the rigorous evaluation of what schools can do. However, people are at different starting points, and it often depends on the whole-school approach to evaluation generally. All those things come into play in the evaluation.

Mr Rogers: Surely it is hard to separate the protection of front-line services from that. You said:

"good provision is effective in changing attitudes".

Surely meaningful interaction between our young people from different backgrounds is essential if those attitudes are to be changed. Is that not one of the front-line aims of education in Northern Ireland?

Mrs Graham: Absolutely. As Andrew said, a difficult decision had to be made in very challenging circumstances. That is the decision that has been made. I was trying to say earlier that ETI's work indicates that the Department has a good basis of recommendations on which to revise the policy and point a way towards embedding it in the curriculum in a sustained way. That is important. As you know, whether it is £1·1 million, as it is in this instance, or £10 million, the money does not always make the difference. Money is very welcome, but what makes the difference are the people working and contributing who see the response and reaction of the young people whom they are working with. That will ultimately make the difference. It is incumbent on us to do the best job that we can in light of the fact that the decision has been made to end the funding. Good information is coming back from the evaluation and review, which will allow us to begin to do that. As I said, we will very happily come back to brief you on what we can do in response, but we are not at that point yet.

Mr Rogers: One of the shames is that some great practice will possibly not now be disseminated. Is it really down to financial reasons that the Department is not able to put in place a more structured and funded support for the programme?

Mrs Graham: As we discussed, up to now, there was quite a structured support for the programme. The money not being there does not mean that those things will all be lost. That would create a dependency culture as opposed to empowering our schools, the Education Authority and the Youth Council to do the work. We are looking generally, and certainly in teacher professional development, at empowering people to create a self-sustaining system. We cannot have a system that is entirely dependent on money — welcome as it is. I would never not want money to come into the education system, but, when people have engaged — I listed the statistics for the people who have been trained — there is a cascading effect across a school. When those leaders have been trained, and teachers and youth workers have taken forward work in their school, it allows that to grow exponentially. That was the intention of the original funding.

Mr McCausland: Your submission references one of the ETI recommendations:

> *"the rights of the child as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ... should be more central to the outworking of CRED in policy and practice."*

When I checked through the document on the Internet, there were no references to rights other than that recommendation. It would be helpful if you could explain to me how rights have not been more central in the past and how you envisage that they would be more central in future.

Mr Paul McAlister (Education and Training Inspectorate): The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child gives a common platform for that work right across Northern Ireland. It is important for teachers who are just starting out with that work to see it in a broader context. Some articles automatically link with article 2 on non-discrimination: article 12 relates to respect for the views of a child; article 23 relates to children with disabilities; article 28 relates to a child's right to education and what that should mean; article 29 relates to the goals of education provided for the child; and article 31 relates to leisure, play and culture. Those articles provide a very good backdrop that can be taken in common by schools in all sorts of situations across Northern Ireland that serve children from all sorts of backgrounds. It means that there is a clear understanding on the part of the teachers and management, including governors, of what CRED means for the children in their school. It also means that the parents can have confidence in what the school is providing against that backdrop.

Mr McCausland: Thank you for that. The Department is absolutely clear, then, that, because the United Kingdom has signed up to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Education Department should follow through on that.

Mr A Bell: The CRED policy actually references the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Mr McCausland: I appreciate that, but I am just asking whether, generally, it is the Department's position that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child should be followed through on.

Mr A Bell: We have referenced it in the policy. Therefore, by default, we are acknowledging the fact —

Mr McCausland: Thank you. I appreciate that very much.

Secondly, you mentioned awareness-raising training for governors that has been held in the past. Do you envisage similar awareness-raising sessions for governors in future? I understand that there is a cost to such projects but an awareness-raising session for governors is not really expensive in comparative terms. Do you envisage awareness-raising for governors and others on the general area of CRED, which would include the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?

Mr A Bell: The governor training was in response to identified needs. At that stage, we worked with the boards to identify all training needs. Governor training needs came up, and quite a number of governors received training. The way in which we envisage it going forward is that, if there are other identified needs, we will look to the Education Authority to work with governors on how those needs should be addressed. However, CRED is already specifically referenced in the governors' handbook. If there are continued needs, we will need to look to see how those should be addressed.

Mr McCausland: Is there much in the governors' handbook about it?

Mr A Bell: There is a section on CRED in the governors' handbook.

Mr McCausland: Is it six lines or six pages?

Mr A Bell: It has been a while since I looked at it, so I cannot tell you off the top of my head.

Mr McCausland: I am sure that we can get a copy.

Mr A Bell: It is definitely referenced; we were quite keen on that. One of the commitments made in the policy was to look at other areas that would support it. The governors' handbook was one of the areas that we looked at.

Mr McCausland: Finally, how do you view the issue of race? When the UK Government are responding to international conventions on racial issues, they interpret that legally as relating to an ethnic group. Therefore, it does not necessarily mean colour or nationality; it could be an ethnic group within the United Kingdom. There is there a legal basis for the definition that they use. Do you have a particular definition of race that you use?

Mr P McAlister: As a teacher many years ago, I attended a course in Corrymeela called Meeting the Other Side as a Partner in Education. One phrase that has stuck with me since then is "free to be". A key concept conveyed at that course was that, when you come through the door of a school, it does not matter who you are. If you are a girl who wants to play football, you are free to be. If you have ginger hair or no hair, you are free to be. That was continually reinforced throughout the course. In relation to race, if a person sees themselves as from Slovakia, Afghanistan, or whatever country, and sees that as their identity, that should be respected. They should be encouraged to have self-respect for that identity, how they see themselves, and other people should respect them for that.

Mr McCausland: I appreciate that entirely. I am dealing more with the fact that different ethnicities within the United Kingdom, whether it is Welsh, Scottish, Irish, Ulster or whatever, are seen as race under the legal basis that is used. Is that how it is understood here as well?

Mr A Bell: Do not forget that the CRED policy and, indeed, the curriculum aim to address issues that are faced by communities. We know from the PSNI hate crime statistics, for example, that it is very often the newcomer communities here who are affected by that. What schools are encouraged to do under this policy is to look at the issues that are facing the young people who they are dealing with in their communities, and address those issues. Given that the indications are that most of the issues that we face in this society are around newcomer groups, that is what schools have been addressing through us.

Mr McCausland: I will not pursue the matter; I will just make the observation that, if we look at section 75, we see that the definition of race at a UK-wide level has a legal basis set down in the courts. It is important that that is kept in mind when looking at racial issues here, because indigenous ethnicities are also covered by it.

Mr P McAlister: The real thrust of this is about mutual understanding. In the Key Stage 1, 2, and 3 curricula, which are available from the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), mutual understanding is pointed out as a key element. Personal understanding is also part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. It is really important that children coming into our schools from whatever countries, home or abroad, feel free to be, as they consider themselves, in terms of race or ethnicity and it should be no barrier to their education.

The Chairperson (Miss M McIlveen): Mr McCausland has talked about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF has a Rights Respecting Schools programme, which a number of our schools are involved in. Can I ask for your comments on that? Are you supportive of that programme and look to help fund schools to be part of it?

Mr A Bell: The schools that have chosen to do that have, as far as I am aware, funded it largely from their own resources. The Department is certainly content with Rights Respecting Schools. A number of schools have gone down that route, but there is not currently a specific funding stream to fund it. Schools have funded it largely through the mainstream budgets.

The Chairperson (Miss M McIlveen): How effective has that programme been? Have you given any consideration to that?

Mr A Bell: I have not looked at that programme in enormous detail, but the feedback that we have had from working with officers from the boards who were working with schools is that it is a very effective programme in relation to CRED issues.

Mrs Graham: The feedback that I have heard is only anecdotal in the sense of what we have picked up on in inspection; we have never done a formal evaluation of it. However, the requirement on all schools is around accessing the pupil voice. That is probably at the more sophisticated end of helping young people to look at their rights. Going back to what Mr McCausland said, the debates that our older pupils can have around definitions and what is legal is the type of thing that can happen in that situation. The direction of travel of Rights Respecting Schools is certainly something that we see positively, but there has not been any formal evaluation of that work.

Mr P McAlister: The inspectorate does not promote one particular way of working, but we have had examples. Although, as Faustina says, we have not done a formal evaluation of it, inspectors have cited it in various situations and said that it has worked particularly effectively for the children. However, as I said, we have not taken a complete overview of it.

The Chairperson (Miss M McIlveen): Thank you. I remind members and those in the Public Gallery to ensure that your mobile phone is switched off. There seems to be some interference with the recording.

Mr Lunn: Thank you for your presentation. It seems that it is purely a funding decision to terminate the programme. I appreciate the Department's difficulties at the moment; times are tight. However, a pattern seems to be developing of good programmes being terminated, and you wonder about the cost in human terms. If somebody had come along two years ago and given the opinion that the CRED programme was not working very well and that there was no need for it, the Department would have defended it as an excellent programme and so would the ETI, I think, on the basis of what I read here. Now there is no money, and it has to go. You change tack and say, "Well, there are other ways to deliver this, and all the good practice hasn't been lost; it will all cascade down through the system. In particular, we're going to involve the Youth Council", which appears to be facing the chop, frankly.

I wonder where all this will end. I have seen it recently with language tuition in primary schools, if I can make that comparison. That is an excellent scheme, which is highly valued and recommended. Any authority you might speak to across Europe and beyond thinks that it is a terrific thing to encourage young children when they are capable of picking up a language easily to learn a second language, but we are not going to fund it any more. The Minister says that is OK because schools can use their surplus budgets. That is what he came out with in the House recently. I think that he was able to point to two schools that might be in a position to do that. Going back to your comment about the Youth Council, is it not a fact that it is also under threat, so it may not be valid to say that you will be able to utilise its expertise in this area?

Mr A Bell: The Youth Council is still in existence and, under this year's funding, we have indicated that we expect it, certainly as long as it remains — it is not our side that is dealing with that — to deliver against the CRED policy. If a decision is taken at some stage that it is not to remain, we will continue to work with whoever deals with organisations in the voluntary youth sector to ensure that the policy is addressed. The Minister's position on funding is that he has taken every action to protect front-line services. He has stated that it is simply not possible to protect everything and that, when we are faced with a £97·6 million funding gap, it is inevitable that some issues will have to be addressed in a different way, which is what we are aiming to do through the CRED policy. The CRED policy will remain in place; the challenge for us is to find ways to ensure that the good work is not lost.

Mr Lunn: That is fair enough but, looking at it in the round, it seems that some programmes are being sacrificed that are not, in the overall scheme of things, particularly expensive and that have received very good reports over the years. They are not being reduced; they are being cut out. Suddenly, from being a terrific programme that is well worth spending £1·2 million a year on, it is not needed any more. The language programme, at £600,000 — not even upwards of £1 million — is doing so much good for young children in the opinion of most of us, but it is not going to be cut to £400,000; it is going to be cut out. As usual, I do not have a particular question for you.

Mr A Bell: The Minister's view on that is that he believes that there are sufficient mitigating actions to avoid losing all the good work that has taken place and that, when we are looking at reviewing and revising the policy, we will try to bring those issues to the fore through the policy. We want to build on the good experience. I know that somebody else mentioned that maybe we would lose that

experience. We have tried to capture that as much as possible through the website and the case study materials. There has been really good practice and, in some cases, that good practice does not cost an awful lot; people's attitudes are the main issue. One of the schools that responded to the consultation flagged up the fact that, while the money was welcomed, it was not the driving force for doing that work. In that response, they stated that, irrespective of whether funding was provided, they would continue to deliver this. Those attitudes really make a difference.

I was involved in the consultation when we were introducing the CRED policy, and some of the respondents told us at that stage that the budget was reduced and there was a lot of concern about how much they could deliver. However, some respondents said that money was not the answer to everything and that it was about attitudes. That is what we have sought to do with the earmarked funding, which was there with a view, in the longer term, to try to mainstream this work within schools, and that is what the focus has been. Even going forward, the policy was due for review. I have been working towards this review over the last year before all the issues became clear around the current budgets, and the view was that the funding would be used in a different way moving forward, because we felt that we had addressed the capacity building and we had addressed dissemination. That was the information that was coming back through surveys.

Mr Lunn: Their anticipation was that there would still be funding there, although you might use it in a different way.

Mr A Bell: If funding is there, we would —

Mr Lunn: But there is no funding.

Mr A Bell: If funding is there, we would find a way to use it so that it would be good value for money and would drive forward the issues. The fact is that, because of the budget situation and the Minister deciding that there are sufficient mitigating factors, we do not want to lose that work. That is the key message: we do not want to lose this work, and we want to drive it forward. We have to find other ways to do that within existing funding.

Mr Lunn: When was the review to be completed?

Mr A Bell: We commissioned the inspectorate, and its review was to finish around Christmas, with the report coming out in January, which is what happened. We then looked to update the policy but, in light of the budget decisions, we deferred that until we worked through those. Obviously, until the full public consultation was undertaken on the equality impact assessment, we could not make final decisions. Now that that has worked through, we are starting to look at revising the policy. As we have seen, the core of the policy does not change. The policy was a core policy, plus a number of actions. The actions that were associated with the policy at that stage took account of the fact that funding was available. We will be looking at those actions and seeing what alternative actions we can put in place to access, as far as possible, mainstream funding to make sure that we do not lose the aims of the policy. The Department has also committed to continue to monitor the work going forward, so we will continue to see whether there are factors that have not been identified either by us or through the public consultation.

Mr Lunn: You are going to continue, without funding, work that required funding until now.

Mr A Bell: As I said, the funding was specifically to address the capacity-building issues and the dissemination of good practice and materials, and that was largely addressed. That was the general conclusion, irrespective of the budget issues that then arose.

Mrs Overend: Continuing on that point, the Chair referred to the uniformed organisations and the turnover of volunteers. Obviously, the same goes for schools; there needs to be continual training for existing and new teachers. Have you had discussions with the teacher training colleges, for instance, about this?

Mr A Bell: We have worked with the teacher education institutions through some of the other programmes that we deliver, particularly the International Fund for Ireland sharing in education programmes. We worked on a couple of programmes with the teacher education institutions: one with the University of Ulster, and one through a combined project with Stranmillis and St Mary's. Those addressed issues around shared education, in particular. One of the aims of shared education is

reconciliation. In those programmes, we have encouraged them to look at how they train new teachers to ensure that that skill continues to be addressed at that level as new teachers come through.

Mrs Overend: OK. I want to go over what you said. You are looking at it, but it has not been implemented as yet. What stage are we at?

Mrs Graham: Paul showed you the curriculum overview. All the things that we are talking about in CRED are contained in the curriculum. There is a statutory requirement for schools to deliver that. We would like to get to a point at which a CRED policy is not required because it is so integral to the curriculum. The same applies to our teacher education colleges. They are preparing young people to come into the system to deliver their curriculum. Therefore, the expectation is there also. The luxury of additional funding is something that is always welcomed, but good practitioners — be they in teacher education or in schools or youth organisations — will not be stopped from delivering what they see as being required of them. It is great if a teacher has 20 or 25 pupils, as opposed to 30. Your job is then easier in a sense, but it will not change what you do. We have talked to teacher-training educators about the shared education agenda and the possibility of working collaboratively and designing programmes that would address the issue.

When I was working in the ETI and looking at the evaluation of the former programmes for best practice, we were seeing schools going way beyond the reconciliation issues, even in those programmes, and dealing with the broader section 75 issues. Therefore, we have developing good practice in our schools, our youth organisations and our teacher-training institutions. The difficult job that we face now is to find low-cost and no-cost ways — if that is what you want to call them — of supporting our schools and teacher trainers to continue to let that work grow. I am not underestimating the difficulty of that, but that is what we have to do. That is what we need to do, as everyone needs that support.

Mrs Overend: Andrew said that some of the respondents said that they wanted to do the work even if there was not funding, but we can depend on the goodwill of teachers for only so long before somebody breaks down at some stage. Your paper states that it is anticipated that Peace IV funding will be available for something like this. Can you tell me more about that and about the timing of it?

Mr A Bell: Peace IV is currently with the European Commission, so the Special EU Programmes Body is waiting for the European Commission to come back to it on that. The most recent indication that we had was that it is likely to be later in the year before it will get a response from the Commission. That was mentioned as one of the mitigating factors. Although the core funding was around capacity-building issues and the dissemination of good practice for CRED funding, we also encouraged the boards. They put in the CRED enhancement scheme, where schools could apply for funding. The policy encourages the thinking that the delivery of subjects such as learning for life and personal development and mutual understanding is not just about theory but about young people getting the opportunity to engage with other young people from different community backgrounds. I suppose that the key issue with the shared education funding, including the shared education funding to be available under the Peace thematic area, is that it will allow those types of opportunities to continue to happen. Schools will be able to bring together young people from different community backgrounds. That is the key. It is one of the mitigating factors but not the only one.

Mr P McAlister: May I come in on teacher education? We found CRED to be most effective where that good practice was being modelled by the professionals — either the youth leaders or the teachers — through the ethos of respect, and so on, and the degree to which they promoted sharing.

I welcome your raising teacher education. There is an opportunity for the various organisations that provide it to model that sharing for the whole education community and to increase the amount of interaction and experiential learning that student teachers have.

Mrs Overend: I am also thinking about monitoring the success of ongoing community relations in the schools, and so on, through CRED. If that moves into the curriculum, how will it be monitored? Will there be specific monitoring of how those relationships develop?

Mr A Bell: In the response to public consultation on the EQIA, we indicated that the inspectors will look at CRED issues in schools, which they are doing at the moment. They will continue to do that. CRED is about attitudinal change, so one key factor that we used was the young life and times survey. We commission that every other year. The latest version is due to be published in May. It was done

in 2014, so we are due to repeat it in 2016. That will allow us to continue to monitor the impact of the CRED work that is happening in schools on the attitudes of young people. We will look very closely at the results, given the implications around the fact that we no longer have the earmarked funding available to make sure that schools are continuing to deliver CRED.

Mrs Graham: One other thing in the ETI report — I say this to spare Paul's blushes — is a recommendation that the ETI made for itself, which is to look at the whole concept of self-evaluation. That is one thing that I think that we will look at in the review of the policy. There are CRED indicators that can be used for the self-evaluative process, so the ETI has recommended that those be integrated into its Together Towards Improvement self-evaluation tool. That in itself allows schools to begin to see the integration of CRED. They have had the opportunity to look at it as a separate set of indicators, but this will allow them to see it as holistic to the self-evaluation process that they will undertake.

Furthermore, the ETI recommended that it become part and parcel of the inspection process, and that has already started to happen. At the minute, the ETI is looking at identifying good practice, and within shared education in particular. Rather than immediately looking at what is good and what is not so good, it is trying to cite where the practice is really good and can be built on, in order to encourage people while we are still on that developmental journey. That, again, was in the detail of that report, which I obviously would not have referred to in the briefing.

Mr P McAlister: I am grateful to you for raising that, Faustina. One thing that we are quite adamant about is that there should be no compromise on high-quality education when bringing people together. It has to be good education that children experience, as well as the sharing. As to the good educational outcomes, what we want for the children is really the test of what is provided. We see good educational outcomes as being one element of academic outcomes, through learning, as well as the reconciliation outcomes or the mutual understanding outcomes. However, they should come together in a really good experience for the learner.

The Chairperson (Miss M McIlveen): No one else has indicated to ask a question, so, to conclude, I want to ask what your timescale for updating the policy is.

Mrs Graham: We do not have a specific timescale as yet. We are turning our attention to that just now, so I would say probably before the end of the summer. Andrew?

Mr A Bell: We have already given some thought to it and have looked at the core of the policy, which we know is unlikely to change. We will then look at the actions. It is a matter of trying to balance things, because my team is also leading on all the shared education work in the legislation. Our aim is to move the policy forward as quickly as we can. The core of the policy does not change. As I said, change will be around the actions associated with it. The fact that the core of the policy is unlikely to change means that it should still apply to schools at present. As Faustina said, we do not, unfortunately, have a specific aim yet, but we will have one within the current year. I do not know whether it will be done by the end of the summer, but I do have somebody working on it at the moment.

The Chairperson (Miss M McIlveen): Will there be a further consultation?

Mrs Graham: On foot of the ETI report — this is why I am even saying about there not being a specific aim or deadline — we have to have face-to-face conversations with practitioners, the Education Authority and the Youth Council. It is not a case of us saying, "This is what you must do" in a prescriptive way; rather, it is about working collaboratively with all the education stakeholders, taking into account that we are where we are and that the money is not there. It is also not a case of us saying, "We're going to write all these wonderful things and require you to do them". It is really about working in practical terms. If we can do that and build consensus on how we support each other to deliver on the CRED policy, we will be in a better place. The first step for us, before we would even look at a wider consultation, is to have those frank face-to-face discussions to see what is possible and to inform our thinking. It should not be our thinking alone that determines what the end product of the policy will be.

The Chairperson (Miss M McIlveen): Obviously, the timescale is important, because the removal of the funding means that there is now a void.

Mrs Graham: Yes, I appreciate that.

The Chairperson (Miss M McIlveen): We look forward to hearing back from you on that.

Mrs Graham: Absolutely.

The Chairperson (Miss M McIlveen): Thank you very much.