



**Consultation Feedback Report 1 of 3:
Views of the Regional BME Parents Reference Group
on the
BME Children and Young People Draft Action Plan**

**Parenting Forum
23 February 2013
(Clarifications made 170613)**

Introduction

For the first time in Northern Ireland, all of the main agencies for children and families, have agreed to work together on a plan to improve the lives of all children who live here. This multi-agency group is known as the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP). The CYPSP structure incorporates a number of sub-groups, one of which is the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Sub Group. The term BME is described as "settled BME communities, Travellers, Roma, refugees, asylum seekers, migrant worker communities (including undocumented people), unaccompanied children and children of mixed parentage" (www.cypsp.org).

The BME Sub Group consists of a range of representatives from community, voluntary and statutory agencies. The aim of this group is to improve the lives of BME children and young people.

In order to achieve this aim, the BME Sub Group has agreed to:

- "plan what needs to change to address the rights and needs of BME children and young people and improve their outcomes, focussing on those issues that must be addressed at a Northern Ireland level.
- produce an action plan that will set out what it will do to ensure that the outcomes for BME children and young people are improved.
- decide on a set of indicators which will be used to measure how well BME children and young people are doing in Northern Ireland over time. This will help the Sub Group know if its joint work is changing the lives of BME children and young people for the better.
- work closely with the Outcomes Groups to ensure that outcomes for BME children and young people are addressed at local level as well as at Northern Ireland level" (www.cypsp.org/bme).

The CYPSP identified that the new plan for improving children's lives through better outcomes for children should incorporate meaningful engagement and participation by children, young people, their families and other stakeholders involved in the lives of the children and young people in Northern Ireland:

"children, young people, families and communities will be enabled to participate in the planning process. Listening to [them] is key to understanding what works well".

The Parenting Forum

The Parenting Forum, a project within Parenting NI, was asked to develop a model that would facilitate and support parents from across Northern Ireland to become involved in the planning process. As a partnership organisation, the Parenting Forum has over 1,500 individual parents and family support organisations on its membership list.

The Parenting Forum also has considerable experience in carrying out numerous consultations throughout Northern Ireland and is well placed to carry out real and meaningful consultations with parents within an agreed frame-work. As the groups of parents come from a range of diverse backgrounds and include parents of children with special needs, Parenting NI is also in a position to offer additional support structures to assist parents to be actively involved in the participation process.

The Participation Process

As agreed with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, the Parenting Forum has recruited a group of parents from across Northern Ireland to participate in the Regional BME Parents Reference Group. The aim of the Parents Reference Group is to act in a consultative role in responding to any documentation, plans or initiatives as directed by the BME Sub Group. The Parenting Forum has agreed to design and facilitate 3 sessions per year using information as directed. This will be part of a rolling process of communication between the BME Sub Group and the Regional BME Parents Reference Group.

Consultation with parents requires highly skilled and experienced facilitators who are capable of working sensitively with diverse groups and facilitators were chosen accordingly. Parents had previously participated in an induction workshop which explained the CYPSP process and sought parental views on better outcomes. Parents clearly valued this further opportunity to be consulted on the draft Action Plan and readily contributed their views and their experiences.

Consultation Methodology

A facilitation pack was designed to guide this consultation with the Parents Reference Group. The pack incorporated a brief overview to remind parents about the context and rationale behind the CYPSP and the planning framework. This overview was available in a range of languages. A user friendly version of the Actions and Milestones prepared by the Participation Network was incorporated into this consultation.

A focus group approach was used as the data gathering method because it brought parents together in a way which enabled them to share their experiences and their opinions. Parents worked together on each of the six outcomes using guided handouts (A) to examine the proposed Actions and Implementation Milestones, (B) to compare this with issues that parents had already raised at their first meeting (061012), and (C) to answer three specific questions related to each outcome which had been agreed with the Regional BME Sub Group:

- Do you agree or disagree that the proposed actions and milestones will ensure BME children and young people will be [insert outcome]? Can you explain your reasons?
- From what you've heard, will these actions and milestones be enough to ensure BME children and young people will be [insert outcome]?
- Do you have other ideas or suggestions that would help to ensure that BME children and young people will be [insert outcome]?

Interpreters were available at the meeting to help ensure that all parents were able to fully participate in the consultation.

Data collected during the focus group session was collated using a qualitative content analysis approach.

Parent Profile

The Parenting Forum was aware of the need to ensure good representation from all BME communities living across Northern Ireland. The Regional BME Parents Reference Group currently consists of 64 parents from BME Communities across Northern Ireland. This is the first time that such a group has been formed and includes Chinese, Ghanaian, Irish Travellers, Indian, Lithuanian, Pakistani, Polish, Portuguese, Quechuas, Sudanese, Russian and Vietnamese. This group of parents also includes a number of asylum seekers.

Parents were offered travel and child care expenses in order to help them attend this consultation meeting which was held in Belfast.

The group represents a wide spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds, including unemployed. There is representation from parents whose children have additional needs. The group mainly consists of women (n=61) and covers a wide age range. Parent representatives have children of varying ages from babies to over 18s as outlined in the table below:

Total Number of Parents: 64

Gender:	Male	3	Female	61
Ages of Children:	0 - 5 years	6 - 10 years	11 - 17 years	18+
Number of Children	36	44	20	5

The Report

This consultation was carried out on behalf of the BME Sub Group which sought feedback from parents in relation to the proposed BME Children and Young People Draft Action Plan. The following information is based on responses gathered from the BME Parents Reference Group following examination of the proposed actions and milestones and comparison with previous issues raised by parents.

A note about the findings

Parental opinions, experiences and suggestions provide a rich source of data. Qualitative information obtained from parents can enhance the statistical service level data and evidence based research available for planning purposes. This triangulated approach helps to ensure that outcomes based planning is based on robust and comprehensive information.

Comments made by parents (both positive and negative), have been incorporated into this report and submitted to the BME Sub-Group as part of the CYPSP planning process. The role of the Parenting NI Facilitator is to report issues raised by parents, not to resolve specific problems identified. However, if appropriate, parents may be signposted to a suitable source of support. Parenting NI Facilitators will not share contact details relating to individual examples given by parents, except in relation to child protection concerns.

Anonymised, experiential accounts, shared in good faith by parents, may provide opportunities to understand where systems can be improved at policy, strategic or practice level, to ensure better outcomes for all children.

Task 1 Part A

Name of Outcome: Healthy

Goal: We want the same positive emotional and physical health and wellbeing for all BME children and young people, as the best of their peers.

Proposed Action by BME Sub Group:

We will promote the mental health and well being of BME children and young people

We will ensure support for children, young people and families to access services that are culturally aware and appropriate



Milestones - Specific Tasks to achieve Actions Proposed by BME Sub Group:

- Look at programmes that work well in other places in helping children, young people and their families have good mental health and feel good about themselves.
- Test out local programmes that help children, young people and their families to feel proud of their culture and to get involved in activities.
- Make sure that children, young people and their families know they have a right to ask for an interpreter.
- Make sure that children, young people and their families know what services are on offer
- Make sure that people who offer services to children, young people and their families know about working with people from different cultures and maybe come from different cultures themselves.

Task 1 Part B

Name of Outcome: Healthy

Goal: We want the same positive emotional and physical health and wellbeing for all BME children and young people, as the best of their peers.

What parents have already told us about how to ensure better outcomes:

Improve access to health services for BME families

- make it easier for BME families to see their GP: difficulty at this initial point of access results in delays and/or unnecessary trips to A and E
- Interpreter services for health services could be more accessible to those families who require it
- improve waiting times for referrals to specialist services (including mental health services)
- address difficulty in accessing dental health services due to associated expenses
- health system could be more proactive towards BME families – for example, some but not all families received health visiting services which they found to be timely and invaluable
- Need for the health system to be more culturally aware and respectful



Reaction from parents to proposed Action Plan:

- Agreement and disagreement about the proposed Actions.
- Does not go far enough
- Other ideas or suggestions:

Mental health is important but is not the emphasis of parents concerns about children's health.

Need to do more to help parents to help ensure children are healthy

Need better access to basic health services. Problem areas – waiting times and access to interpreters

Interpreters need to be familiar with health issues, as well as being good interpreters, in order to convey correct information, especially in relation to serious illnesses/specialist services

Task 2 Part A

Name of Outcome: Enjoying, Learning and Achieving

Goal: All BME children and young people are welcomed and supported to [enjoy], learn and achieve in a context that reflects and respects their cultural identity.

Proposed Action by BME Sub Group:

We will promote whole school inter- cultural awareness and competence

We will promote greater parental engagement with education to enable parents to support the education of their children

We will ensure that BME children and young people have the same access as their peers to activities based in schools, out of schools and in the community



Milestones - Specific Tasks to achieve Actions Proposed by BME Sub Group:

- Make sure that people who are training to be teachers learn about working with children and young people from different cultures and about the rights of BME children and young people.
- Find ways to involve BME parents in learning about how schools work.
- Find ways to make sure that BME children and young people are able to join in out-of-school activities – like sports clubs, youth clubs and fun ways of learning.

Task 2 Part B

Name of Outcome: Enjoying, Learning and Achieving

Goal: All BME children and young people are welcomed and supported to [enjoy], learn and achieve in a context that reflects and respects their cultural identity.

What parents have already told us about how to ensure better outcomes:

Need for more recognition, respect and celebration of cultural diversity in schools

Need more help for children with their school work

Not enough indoor/outdoor facilities for children and young people and their families



Reaction from parents to proposed Action Plan:

- Agree with all 3 Actions.
- However this does not go far enough
- Other ideas or suggestions:

Promote value as well as learning of BME cultures through schools and encourage children to speak their own language as well as learning English

Please consider childcare for parents to help them attend meetings, classes etc

More support for parents who do not understand English – through classes including homework classes for children and their parents

More information on what is happening, especially free or low cost activities, so that parents are aware of all opportunities for children

We need more diverse representation from BME communities in childcare, playgroups, school boards and teachers etc.,

Use of schools as a community resource in summer time

Task 3 Part A

Name of Outcome: Living in safety and feel they belong here

Goal: All BME children and young people experience safety, a sense of belonging and a life free from racial harassment.

Proposed Action by BME Sub Group:

The issue of bullying and harassment is widely recognised. We will ensure that the issue of racial bullying and harassment is recognised as equally important by linking with ongoing work addressing this issue. We will also ensure children and young people understand that this is not acceptable and know how to report issues.

We will promote the need for family support that emphasises the secure environment that children and young people have a right to. This covers the issue of LAC, domestic violence, positive parenting and hidden harm.



Milestones - Specific Tasks to achieve Actions Proposed by BME Sub Group:

- Work alongside the organisations that work to fight hate crime and bullying against BME children and young people in schools and in communities.
- Make sure we give special support to BME children and young people who might have to leave their families because there is violence in the home and work with families to make family life safe.

Task 3 Part B

Name of Outcome: Living in safety and feel they belong here

Goal: All BME children and young people experience safety, a sense of belonging and a life free from racial harassment.

What parents have already told us about how to ensure better outcomes:

Parents seriously concerned about levels of racism and bullying towards their children in the school environment.

Some families are living in fear of attacks on their homes and on themselves.

Families have experienced discrimination and racism from staff in some agencies as well as members of the public.

Some sources of authority appear to turn a blind eye to this abusive racist behaviour.

Children should be protected from all forms of abuse, including abuse in the home and online.



Reaction from parents to proposed Action Plan:

- Good to see emphasis on bullying /harassment in the Action Plan.
- Does not go far enough
- Other ideas or suggestions:

Practical Action needed on how to help families deal with racist attacks on family homes. Also need for specific support for neighbourhoods that need help to deal with this issue.

More mechanisms to know where and how to report all abuse including racial bullying and harassment, taking into account cultural differences where some families may not wish to complain. Families need to know that positive action will be taken when they report these issues, and that support will be offered.

More training for teachers and classroom assistants to increase cultural awareness and to report abuse and bullying that children may not report.

Task 4 Part A

Name of Outcome: Living in a good environment and have enough money to live on

Goal: All BME children and young people enjoy a safe, healthy, and inclusive environment free from poverty regardless of parental legal status of ethnic identity.

Proposed Action by BME Sub Group:

We will explore the issue of housing for BME families taking their needs into consideration

We will ensure advocacy and support for BME families which is important for all outcomes, but particularly to support families in accessing support, including childcare support and BME children and young people and families to access employment



Milestones - Specific Tasks to achieve Actions Proposed by BME Sub Group:

- Work with housing organisations to help BME families to get good places to live that are safe and have enough room.
- Make sure that BME families get the help they have a right to.
- We will work with other organisations that help BME parents to get jobs.

Task 4 Part B

Name of Outcome: Living in a good environment and have enough money to live on

Goal: All BME children and young people enjoy a safe, healthy, and inclusive environment free from poverty regardless of parental legal status of ethnic identity.

What parents have already told us about how to ensure better outcomes:

Some BME families are experiencing difficult housing conditions which can make family life stressful

Some BME families are experiencing poverty which is impacting on their children

Need for affordable child care support for parents who want to work outside the home



Reaction from parents to proposed Action Plan:

- Agreement with both actions
- Does not go far enough
- Other ideas or suggestions:

Agree that housing is a priority and request that surrounding environment also needs to be considered more such as play spaces, green spaces and where can children play during the winter.

Parents would like to see more part-time opportunities. Parents see main barriers as language and childcare.

Task 5 Part A

Name of Outcome: Contributing positively to community and society

Goal: All BME children and young people are seen and heard in all decision making and other societal roles without being stereotyped.

Proposed Action by BME Sub Group:

Support the participation and volunteering of children and young people

Work with regional and local media to portray positive messages and cultural awareness of BME children, young people and families



Milestones - Specific Tasks to achieve Actions Proposed by BME Sub Group:

- Find ways of helping children and young people to get involved in activities about their own culture.
- Provide leadership training for BME children and young people and their families.
- Find ways for BME children and young people and their families to have a say in decision making.
- Work with local newspapers, television and radio to encourage them to be positive about BME children and young people

Task 5 Part B

Name of Outcome: Contributing positively to community and society

Goal: All BME children and young people are seen and heard in all decision making and other societal roles without being stereotyped.

What parents have already told us about how to ensure better outcomes:

Need more opportunities for BME families to get involved in community life

Need more opportunities for BME families to express opinions and views

Need more information about volunteering opportunities for all ages

Need more gatherings for cultural purposes and to enable local community to see and understand our culture



Reaction from parents to proposed Action Plan:

- Agree with proposed actions.
- Does not go far enough
- Other ideas or suggestions:

Schools could do more to help BME children contribute positively by promoting and representing diversity of culture – not just at big cultural events but more in an everyday way by helping children value and understand their own culture.

School councils should be more representative of all communities who attend the school

Need for interpreters in range of areas (not just in health care environment) such as parent teacher meetings, dealings with police and courts etc in order to ensure clarity in two way communication in these situations

Task 6 Part A

Name of Outcome: Living in a society which respects their rights

Goal: All BME children and young people are welcomed and supported to [enjoy], learn and achieve in a context that reflects and respects their cultural identity.

Proposed Action by BME Sub Group:

We will promote the understanding of the rights of BME children and young people and the importance of a rights based approach among organisations, staff and BME children, young people and families

We will develop a robust integrated information system for BME children and young people in line with the UNCRC



Milestones - Specific Tasks to achieve Actions Proposed by BME Sub Group:

- Provide training on rights for staff who work with children and young people.
- Find out how good organisations are at working with people from different cultures.
- Make sure that everyone involved in planning services for children has training on rights, treating everyone fairly and different cultures.
- Make sure that all organisations have up to date information about the number of BME children and young people here and the numbers who are getting our help.

Task 6 Part B

Name of Outcome: Living in a society which respects their rights

Goal: All BME children and young people are welcomed and supported to [enjoy], learn and achieve in a context that reflects and respects their cultural identity.

What parents have already told us about how to ensure better outcomes:

More education for children and young people about their rights

All schools should have counselling facilities. Children must feel safe to talk about their problems.

Some parents unsure about balance between children's rights and traditional disciplining of children and identified:

- Need for more education for parents about children's rights
- More help for parents about parenting and about positively handling children's behaviour.



Reaction from parents to proposed Action Plan:

- Agree with proposed actions.
- Does not go far enough
- Other ideas or suggestions:

This is a hot potato!

Some parents feel that the children's rights agenda poses a challenge to some BME communities and how children are raised. Are Human Rights a Western view of Rights? Need for more opportunity to discuss rights based approach.

Agreement on need for training about children's rights for parents and children, taking into account concerns about children's rights, discipline and cultural norms.