

**RPA Communication Steering Group
1st Meeting
10.00am, Seagoe Hotel, Portadown
9th May 2006**

Attendees:

Chris Stewart	(DE)
Liam Barr	(DE)
Paul O'Connor	(CCMS)
Nicky McBride	(SEELB)
Brendan O'Hara	(SELB)
Richard Bullock	(SELB)
Oliver Kelly	(WELB)
John Martin	(BELB)
Daryll Kenny	(NEELB)
Deborah Girvan	(NICIE)
Karen Gribbon	(CCEA)
Revd Ian Ellis	(TRC)
John Darcy	(ANIC)
David Guilfoyle	(YCNI)
Mark Langhammer	(NITC)
Pol Ó Mórdha	(CnaG)
Revd Timothy Bartlett	(Catholic Trustees)
John Miskelly	(GBA)
Chris Dardis	(RTU)
Mary Field	(Youth Net)

No.	Description	Action
1.	Welcome and Introductions	
a.	C. Stewart opened the meeting at 10.05 and welcomed members to the meeting. He gave a background to the purpose of the group, and stressed the importance of the work the group will do.	
b.	J. Miskelly asked about his request to the Department for information on appointments to the Bain review. It was explained that this information is not yet available, but will be shared with the group as soon as it is.	
2.	Terms of Reference	
a.	The Terms of Reference for the Group were discussed. M. Langhammer proposed adoption of the Terms of reference as presented, J. Darcy seconded. The Group as adopted terms of Reference for the Group as presented.	PMO
3.	Objectives	
a.	It was discussed that although the objectives of the Group include "Highlighting the benefits of the changes", the	

	group will also need to bear in mind the ‘threats’ of RPA to stakeholders in communications.	
b.	It was agreed that as the Communication Strategy is developed, an evaluation element should be built in.	PMO
c.	It was unanimously agreed that education staff would be briefed first on any decisions related to their employment. Ideally, this would be done in person, by line management. It was agreed that each organisation must take responsibility for briefing their own staff on such matters.	Member bodies
4.	Communication Strategy	
a.	It was agreed that Youth organisations and Youth workers should be added to the priority groups listed at point 3.	PMO
b.	It was debated whether political groups should be added to the list at point 3. It was decided that this was not necessary, as they are included in the stakeholders communication plan.	
c.	Communication with Youth Groups – It was discussed that email is usually preferable to hard copy for this sector. Youth Net have links with a number of groups and can filter information out to them.	
d.	The role of group members in delivery of the Communications Strategy was discussed. It was agreed that where possible, members would become actively involved in the delivery of the Strategy.	
e.	The group praised the approach that is now being taken to Communication for the DE RPA programme and suggested it should be used as a model for other projects within DE and other Departments. However, it was recognised that this Communication Steering Group would only be able to address the communications issues in relation to the RPA Implementation programme.	
5.	Community Planning	
a.	The links between the DE RPA team and the DOE Community Planning team were discussed. Joan Cassels is the DE representative on the Community Planning Group.	
b.	It was agreed that if the group felt it useful, the PMO would arrange for a representative from the Community Planning group to make a presentation to them at a later meeting.	
6.	Stakeholders Communication Plan	
a.	The Chairman sought comments from all those present on the draft Communication Plan. Most were in agreement with the general direction of the plan. However, a number of amendments were suggested. Organisations to be added are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Catholic Trustees - Employer Organisations - Library Staff - Youth Net 	PMO

b.	It was agreed that generic key messages, as well as sector/organisation-specific messages should be developed and included in the Communication Strategy.	PMO
c.	Even where a decision has not yet been made, it was agreed that it is beneficial to inform stakeholders when this is likely to happen, to maintain stakeholder confidence.	
d.	It was confirmed that the Communication Strategy would include an evaluation element. It was agreed that individual Steering Group members would be best placed to evaluate the effectiveness of the communication channels within their own organisations and in turn, provide feedback to the Steering Group. The secretariat will develop proposals for the overall evaluation of the effectiveness of the communications.	
e.	C. Stewart asked members to carry out a stock take of their existing communications channels and report back to the Group.	All members
f.	The idea of bringing press editors together for a presentation on RPA and the possibility of having regular press briefings was discussed. This was considered a good way to develop and maintain good media relations, although it was recognised that such a technique would be most effective when there were major announcements to be made.	
g.	It was agreed that it would be beneficial for DE staff to visit organisations to brief and inform staff as much as possible throughout the programme.	
h.	Communication with teachers was discussed. From experience, most group members felt that hard copy, rather than email suits this group best. However, it was acknowledged that cost would be a factor in the methods used to disseminate information. A number of methods may have to be used simultaneously in order to achieve the most efficient and effective dissemination of information.	
i.	It was agreed that information on the Advisory Forum should be communicated as a priority area, as well as information on the ESA.	
j.	It was agreed that there was a need for consistency throughout the Communication Strategy as to how each organisation is represented and dealt with.	
7.	Road show	
a.	It was agreed that an RPA road show would be beneficial, but that this should not happen until more decisions are made.	
8.	Frequency and location of meetings	
a.	It was agreed that the group should meet on a monthly basis. This may be revised as necessary throughout the RPA programme.	
b.	The group did not have a preference for the venue of	

	meetings. The secretariat will identify a suitable venue for the next meeting.	
c.	It was agreed that a list of member's email addresses would be put together and circulated to all members.	PMO
d.	The matter was raised as to whether RPA Programme Management Board (PMB) minutes would be made available to the group. The Chairman agreed to raise the issue with the PMB. He believed that the Board would have no objection to this but he asked the group to treat information relating to developing policies as confidential until decisions are made.	
9.	Newsletter	
a.	The group welcomed the RPA newsletter.	
b.	It was agreed that the newsletter should be circulated as widely as possible. Members were asked to help with this.	All members
c.	The FAQ section of the newsletter was discussed. This will also be added to the DE website. It was agreed that organisations should be able to submit questions to DE that they would like to be answered in this section. It was confirmed that provision had been made for this – contact details are included on the newsletter.	
d.	Members will be used as the primary contact for their organisation. Some members indicated that they would also collate queries etc from their organisation and feed them back to the group – others were content that individuals could do this themselves, through the RPA email address.	All members
e.	It was proposed that an online suggestion/question posting facility should be added to the DE website.	PMO
10.	AOB	
a.	The question was raised as to when a shadow ESA may be established. C. Stewart advised that the department has taken legal advice on this, and this is unlikely to happen more than a few months prior to the legislation being made. However, DE plans to appoint a Chief Executive designate before the end of this year.	
b.	Communication with Parents and young people was discussed. It was proposed that the interim Children's Commissioner should be invited to speak to the Group on this subject.	PMO
c.	OFMDFM have a forum that could help with communication with Parents and young people.	
11.	June Meeting	
a.	Members agreed to contact PMO with any questions their organisation would like to see answered in the next issue of the newsletter.	All members
b.	An updated Communication Plan and a draft Communication Strategy will be produced for discussion at the next meeting.	PMO

c.	Next meeting to take place 16 th June (am), venue to be confirmed. Members who cannot attend to inform PMO as soon as possible.	PMO All members
d.	Meeting concluded at 12.20.	

Christine J. Kidd