

## **COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY ON PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN SCHOOLS (NOV 2001) (Revised April 2002)**

### **Introduction**

1. The Department of Education (referred to as the "Department" throughout this document) recognises the need for consultation and the sharing of information to be an ongoing and a continuous process throughout Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects. It also attaches importance to developing this and entering into a real partnership with those involved.
2. The Department has an important role to play in communication and with this in mind the PPP Unit has produced this " Public Private Partnership Communication Strategy" document. The purpose of the document is to provide School Authorities with a clear overview of the Department's role in communication in relation to PPP projects; what it is seeking to achieve and how it intends to meet its objectives.
3. Equally, Education Authorities also have an important and major role in communication and in order to help clarify this the PPP Unit have produced draft "Guidance For School Authorities On Handling Communication for PPP projects". This guidance, along with the strategy, is intended to assist Education Authorities in developing their own communication plans, which will assist them in better managing the PPP process.

### **Objectives**

4. It is important that the communication activities of both the Department and the Education Authorities are co-ordinated as necessary. The communication objectives of the Department in relation to PPP in schools are as follows: -
  - To ensure that the expectations of Education Authorities and the public are properly managed;
  - To be open and transparent;
  - To ensure that consultation is undertaken as and when appropriate and information is available as far as possible;
  - To produce and up-date guidance as and when necessary;
  - To ensure that information on PPP on the Department's website is up to-date and easily accessible;
  - To liaise with the Department's Press Office to raise the profile of PPP, and keep the public informed of developments and ensure fair and accurate coverage of the projects;

- To contribute to a better understanding of the PPP process;
- To establish a useful network of PPP contacts in the public and private sectors;
- Expand PPP knowledge and skills and facilitate the transfer of these to Education Authorities where appropriate;
- To produce useful and informative publications on PPP projects in schools; and
- To handle information requested by the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Assembly Education Committee.

*The communication objectives of PPP projects are likely to include:*

- To ensure that the needs of users and other relevant stakeholders are understood;
- To ensure that expectations of users and other stakeholders are managed;
- To ensure that consultation is undertaken as and when appropriate and information is as up to date as possible;
- To keep staff in the School, local interests etc informed of developments on the project;
- To keep the Department informed of developments on the project and to ensure departmental developments are communicated to the project; and

To ensure that the private sector is made aware of the educational needs in a project.

### **Communication strategy**

5. The Department will require each Education Authority with PPP projects to nominate a Project Team member to act as Communications Officer to prepare and action a Communication Plan for their projects. The PPP Unit will nominate a member of staff to co-ordinate these plans and set up meetings with nominated communications officers on a yearly basis. The purpose of these meetings would be to create a forum to:

- Co-ordinate plans where necessary;
- Share information and knowledge as appropriate; and
- Share lessons learned.

6. Projects should prepare their communication strategies by identifying the communication approach (see Appendix 1 for an

example) and a high level plan for the project (see Appendix A of the Guidance for a pro-forma). The latter should be formally reviewed by the Education Authority at the end of each stage.

7. The yearly meetings of communication officers will consider the more detailed yearly communication plans (see Appendix B of the Guidance for a pro-forma). This strategy aims to provide as much flexibility in communications as possible, relying on the yearly meeting of communication officers (and their relationship generally) to co-ordinate effective communications. In general terms, however, the Education Authority is in the lead in relation to communication about project specific areas (notably Trade Unions contact) and the Department is in the lead in relation to the PPP programme. Where major statements to the press or political bodies are being made about projects, both the Education Authority and the Department, should be kept informed.

### **Roles:**

*8. The main communications roles are as follows: -*

#### **Project Board**

All members of the Project Board will be expected to represent the views of their organisations and take an active interest in ensuring that their organisation is properly informed in relation to the project.

#### **Project Manager**

Will act as the point of contact for the Project Team with the Project Board.

Reporting to the Project Board, has planning and delivery oversight of the communication strategy and plan.

#### **User Assurance Group**

The Chairperson of this group will act as the communication point for this group and report back to the Project Manager and Project Board.

#### **Communication Officer (as Project Team Member)**

Communication Officer to produce and action a Communication Plan for PPP projects and attend yearly meetings with other project communication officers and the Department's Communication Officer.

Communication Officer (a member of the Department's PPP Unit) will set up yearly meetings with nominated communication officers to co-ordinate plans and share information/lessons learned.

### **Additional Support**

The Departments' Economic Advisory Unit (EAU) and Building Advisory Branch (BAB) will liaise and communicate with the departmental representative on the Project Board and Team. The PPP Support Unit will communicate directly with the Project Board, Project Team and the Department.

The Departmental Press Office will consult the PPP Unit before communicating or responding to events, which relate to PPP in schools.

Assembly questions, ministerial and official cases will be referred to the PPP Unit in the first instance and Education Authorities consulted for inputs as necessary.

The PPP Unit will be responsible for ensuring that the PPP programme is communicated effectively.

### **Controls**

9. This is the first attempt by the PPP Unit to produce a Communication Strategy and Approach for PPP projects and it is therefore the Unit's intention to review these as projects progress. Account will be taken of any feedback provided and, following on from this, amendments and up-dates will be made as necessary.

**Appendix 1**  
**PPP UNIT Communication approach**

<b>Target groups</b>	<b>Consultation Information</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Review</b>
<b>Education &amp; Library Boards, CCMS and Trustees</b>	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Written</li> <li>• Visual-video</li> <li>• Information Technology - internet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through discussions at Project Board and Project Team meetings.</li> <li>• Minutes of Project Board and Project team.</li> </ul>	Quarterly
<b>Board of Governors</b>	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Written</li> <li>• Visual-video</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through Quality Assurance Group via the Project Manager</li> </ul>	As and when the meetings occur
<b>Principals &amp; Senior Staff in Schools</b>	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Written</li> <li>• Visual-video</li> <li>• Information Technology-internet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through project Board and Project Team.</li> <li>• Through Quality Assurance Group via the Project Manager.</li> </ul>	
<b>Trade Unions and Teacher Unions</b>	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written</li> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Information Technology - Internet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DFP PPP Forum.</li> <li>• Trade Union Side.</li> <li>• News reports.</li> <li>• Through Project Board</li> </ul>	Quarterly

<b>The Private Sector</b>	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written</li> <li>• Information Technology - Internet</li> <li>• PPP Expo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of requests received by the PPP Unit for further information.</li> <li>• Interest at PPP Expo stand.</li> <li>• Interest at OJEC</li> </ul>	Annually
<b>The Private Sector</b>	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written</li> <li>• Information Technology - Internet</li> <li>• PPP Expo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of requests received by the PPP Unit for further information.</li> <li>• Interest at PPP Expo stand.</li> <li>• Interest at OJEC.</li> </ul>	Annually
<b>Assembly Education Committee</b>	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written</li> <li>• Meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	
<b>DE Press Office</b>	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Press cuttings</li> </ul>	Weekly
<b>DE Staff</b>	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information Technology Intranet</li> </ul>		