

Meeting 1 of the Steering Committee to review the Action Plan on Bullying 2013 Minutes

Wednesday 16th February 2022, Time 12.00 pm

Clock Tower, Department of Education, Marlborough Street

Attendees:

Minister Norma Foley T.D. Minister for Education
Minister Josepha Madigan T.D. Minister of State at the Department of Education
Aileen Hickie, CEO, Parentline
Áine Lynch, CEO, National Parents Council Primary.
Deirdre Shanley, Assistant Secretary, Schools Division, Department of Education.
Emer Neville, President, Irish Second-Level Students' Union
Prof. James O'Higgins Norman, Director, UNESCO Chair on Tackling Bullying and Cyberbullying
Director, DCU Anti-Bullying Centre.
Jane McGarrigle, Project Officer, Webwise.
Mai Fanning, President, National Parents Council Post-Primary.
Majella O'Dea, Teacher Education Section, Department of Education.
Maria Joyce, Coordinator, National Traveller Women's Forum.
Moninne Griffith, CEO, Belong To.
Niamh Molloy, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education.
Dr Noel Purdy, Director Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU) Stranmillis
University College, Chair of Committee.
Orla Cantwell, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education.
Pat Fitzgibbon, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education.
Ronan Kielt, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit, Department of Education
Sarah Benson, CEO, Women's Aid.
Seònaid Ó'Murchadha, Board member, Independent Living Movement Ireland
Sharon Eustace, Regional Director, National Educational Psychological Service NEPS, Department of
Education.
Susan Mulhall, Digital, Teacher Supply, Teaching Council Unit, Department of Education.
Martina Morey, Representative from Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and
Youth.
Yvonne Keating, Deputy Chief Inspector, Inspectorate, Department of Education.
Zak Moradi, Anti-racism Activist.

Apologies:

Judith Lyons, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education.
Rebecca Galligan, Inspectorate, Department of Education.

Purpose of the Meeting:

An introductory meeting of the Steering Committee to review the Action Plan on Bullying 2013

1. Welcome from Minister Norma Foley/Minister of State Josepha Madigan

Minister Norma Foley T.D. welcomed the members of the Steering Committee and highlighted the importance of the work on preventing and tackling bullying to the school system. Minister Foley highlighted the government's commitment to addressing the issue of bullying in schools, outlining some current provisions in the Department including the Wellbeing Policy Statement & Framework for Practice and work of the Inspectorate. Minister Foley emphasised the need to take a whole of education approach and the importance of the student voice in considering the issue.

2. Welcome from the chair Dr. Noel Purdy

Dr Noel Purdy, Chair of the Steering Committee echoed the welcome to the group and provided a background in relation to his research and involvement in various reviews and legislative developments. He outlined the Terms of Reference for the work of the Steering Committee to the committee and expressed the hope that the new Action Plan will reflect and consider developments in society and research over the past decade.

3. Overview of the Whole Education Approach to Anti-bullying, Prof. James O'Higgins Norman, Anti-bullying Centre

Prof James O'Higgins Norman provided a presentation on the Whole of Education Approach to anti-bullying outlining the key components of the approach and included information on the statistics relating to the incidence of bullying in schools in Ireland.

4. Overview of Wellbeing Policy, Sharon Eustace, NEPS

Sharon Eustace presented the Department of Education's Wellbeing Policy Statement & Framework for Practice which included a focus on the four key areas of wellbeing promotion under the framework and informed the group of the location of resources to support schools as they engage in a wellbeing promoting process.

5. Overview of 2013 Action Plan on Bullying, Deirdre Shanley, Parents and Learners Unit

Deirdre Shanley presented the 12 Key Actions in the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying and highlighted the work of the Inspectorate in relation to anti-bullying from 2013 to date.

Dr Noel Purdy advised of the need to focus on evidence and research, highlighting the importance of authentic respectful partnerships in school communities.

Steering Committee members then provided a brief introduction of their background and the role of the organisation/area that they represent.

6. Questions and Answer Session

Sarah Benson CEO Women's Aid highlighted her concern in relation to gender equality in society and that actions in relation to Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence were not included in the 2013 Action plan, drawing attention to a lack of data on issues of harassment and sexualised bullying, also highlighting the role of prevention education to tackle this.

Dr Noel Purdy and Deirdre Shanley advised that issues around sexual/gender based violence and sexualised bullying would certainly be key areas of focus for the review of the Action Plan.

Moninne Griffith, CEO BelongTo queried the position of teacher representation on the Steering Committee.

Deirdre Shanley informed the SC that there will be engagement with a wide range of stakeholders throughout the process of the review and that the unions and management bodies will be heavily involved in the working group to review the anti-bullying procedures.

Aileen Hickie CEO, Parentline asked is there research or data relating to the link between school refusal and bullying.

Prof James O'Higgins Norman referenced the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre's website as a source of research and information relating to the area of bullying.

Maria Joyce Coordinator, National Traveller Women's Forum, asked how the action plan would be implemented and highlighted the experiences of Traveller and Roma children in relation to bullying.

Deirdre Shanley advised that once the new action has been finalised that a group will be established to monitor implementation of the actions.

Sarah Benson, CEO Women's Aid queried how many meetings would be taking place during the course of the review.

Deirdre Shanley confirmed that Parents and Learners Unit would revert to the Steering Committee with a schedule of dates.

Dr Noel Purdy thanked everyone for attending the meeting and brought the meeting to a close.

End of meeting.