

**To live in a place of hope, equality and opportunity where young people and their family’s dreams are realised**

**YPAR International Working Group Zoom Meeting minutes**

**15th February 2022**

**Present:** Evelyn Regan (SWAN), Aine Kavanagh (ELI), Katia Hancke (Foundations), Deirdre Keane (OCS Guidance Counsellor), Tom Farrelly (HSCL OCS), Pat Gates (YPAR), Mary Meehan (YPAR).

**Apologies:** Martin Byrne (BYS), Johanna Visser (Stoney Batter YS),

**Energy Levels high – Holidays in Ireland**

**Minutes from 11th January 2022 –** Taken as Read and Noted

**Matters arising –** covered on agenda

**NEIC Initiative – Social & Economical Inclusion and Anti Racism 2022 – 2024**

* NEIC PIB looking for key proposals on the social inclusion of minority ethnic communities
* Need to overcome institutional blockages
* EAL (English as an Additional Language) is a major part of social inclusion in school for young people with no English or as a second language.
* There is a particularly acute problem among the Roma families living in the NEIC
* I-YPAR sub-group met and discussed proposal to the NEIC and we had previous developed a proposal which we have reviewed and updated for a new submission.
* Pat has spoken with Joy Eniola and Jessica Farnan who are also looking at the issue of EAL and we agreed on the need to collaborate and ensure we have a collective and agreed proposal
* Pat shared proposal on screen and participants read through this. It was stressed that this was only a draft and there was a lot more work to be done to before we could consider it an effective proposal.

**Responses to the initiate proposal**

* Young people not getting the support they need in the schools
* A lot of young people missing out
* The lack of English language supports is having a very negative impact on teachers and on other pupils in class.
* CDETB offer English classes and their remit is 1st year students to 24 year olds – Unfortunately there is huge waiting list – the Roma Community have particular complex needs but learning English is essential for their social inclusion.
* The trauma, separation anxiety, mental health and welfare issues are just some of the deeper issues presenting with minority ethnic and Roma children.
* Need to add in theory of how long it takes to have competency in the English language to be able to sit exams
* There are long term developmental and educational implications for the young people
* There is a need to collate what is already happening in the area and add to proposal. We need to to give evidence of what is being done and what is needed.
* We need to capture the full picture and evidence of need. A needs assessments is required to do this and understand the complexity of the needs of minority ethnic and Roma families with respect to English language and other needs.
* Literacy is a huge issue among this cohort.
* There is also a great difficulty in assessing EAL students if there is a suspected learning difficulty / SEN as there is a language barrier and lack of professionals who are equipped to assess students whose native language is not English - also lack of actual assessments for non-native English speakers. NEPS reluctant or unwilling to prioritise EAL students
* This issue clearly falls within the remit of the Department of Education who are not giving it the attention or the resources needed to adequately address the issue.
* We have 13 and 14 years olds in 6th classes in primary schools how is this right?
* Bottom line we cannot do nothing unless we get ‘the powers that be’ to take the issue seriously. We need to meet with the policy makers, funders, and the politicians.
* Junior Cert Teachers do not have the capacity to teach EAL and their curriculum is not relevant to the needs of most of the students. Young people being made to sit through classes they have no understanding about.
* Often many minority ethnic parents are not aware of the Irish Ed System and they haven't made an informed decision to try to tackle Leaving Cert with little or no English. Awareness of options for parents / families is vital in support their children.
* There is a need to lobby the Dept of Education to provide EAL teacher allocations to schools who have a large number of EAL students.
* An EAL task force needs to be established in DEIS school areas where there are high percentage of EAL students across a number of schools. It cannot be dependent on grants or funds from other services who cannot sustain it long term.
* The culture of the EAL students is a factor - some children/parents/families value education more than others.
* There is a need for immediate intervention. It is complex but one way is to pick a certain age group, for example sixth classes and target intensive English classes for 3 weeks in June when the term is coming to an end and we can start to prepare students for transition to secondary school. Interventions need to take place during school time.

**Actions**

* Pat to incorporate the need for a comprehensive English Language Needs Assessment for minority ethnic school children into the existing NEIC proposal
* Need to advocate for a separate EAL department in DEIS School areas with high percentage of students with EAL needs.
* Convene a meeting with Minister of Education and local politicians on this issue.
* Need to put pressure on the Department of Education to make this issue a priority in the NEIC
* Need to engage some of the other local stakeholders DCETB, NEIC Inter Cultural Working Group.
* Needs to be a priority issue for the NEIC task force
* Need to endeavour to capture the current number/stats re current EAL needs. Tom will send list of questions to Pat to send on to other schools to complete and return
* Tom to send statistics to Pat for O’Connell’s School.
* Aine to forward information to Pat – re the durations of reaching English language competencies for sitting exams.

**Next Meeting – Tuesday 12th April 2022 @ 10am**