

13 Dec 01
(10)

Memorandum

FROM: MARTIN McGUINNESS

TO: EXECUTIVE

DATE: December 2001

EDUCATION PACKAGE FOR NORTH BELFAST

Issue: Proposals for an Education package as part of the Executive Initiative on North Belfast.

Timing: Immediate.

Recommendation: To agree the attached education package and make an announcement before schools break for Christmas.

Discussion

1. As part of the Executive's initiative to tackle the current difficulties in North Belfast, the Department of Education was asked to propose a package of education measures to ensure that the Executive response was seen to address the needs of those who had suffered most from the unrest - namely pupils, teachers and schools - and to contribute towards a long term resolution.

2. The attached education package, which I outlined at the last Executive meeting on the 26th November, sets out proposals for immediate support to schools and for enhanced youth provision to contribute towards the rebuilding of community relationships. The total cost of the package is £1.5m spread over 4 financial years, with the bulk of expenditure falling in 2002/03 financial year. This represents a measured and balanced response to the needs of the education community in North Belfast and constitutes an important contribution towards a long-term solution for the area.

Recommendation

3. Colleagues are invited to agree the package of education measures contained in the attached paper and to an announcement as early as possible, and preferably before schools break for Christmas, to maintain the cohesiveness of the Executive Initiative.

MARTIN McGUINNESS
Minister for Education

NORTH BELFAST INITIATIVE: EDUCATION PACKAGE

1. As part of the Executive's initiative to tackle the current difficulties in North Belfast, the Department of Education was asked to propose a package of education measures to ensure that the Executive response was seen to address the needs of those who had suffered most from the unrest - namely pupils, teachers and schools - and to contribute towards a long term resolution.
2. DE has already implemented a support package for Holy Cross and Wheatfield (£154,000), funded youth activities (£25,000) in the area and supported exceptional closures over Halloween, agreed to construct a turning circle in Holy Cross school (£25,000) and to fund bus transport and, through the Board, funded extensive physical security measures and improvements to the accommodation in the 2 schools. The Belfast Board has also incurred substantial additional costs on educational psychology services, curriculum support, vandalism etc and has submitted a bid for £265,000 to the Department to cover these.
3. DE's view is that, given its substantial expenditure commitment to schools in North Belfast to date, any additional educational measures should be funded in full by the Executive. This is also regarded as important to avoid complaints that the rest of the education system has lost out as a consequence, which would detract from the positive presentation of the package (questions along these lines are already being asked about the funding for Holy Cross and Wheatfield.)
4. DE has identified a package of education proposals (attached) which are designed to address the immediate needs of schools in North Belfast and rebuild community relationships in the area. The Minister outlined these measures to colleagues during discussion on North Belfast at the Executive on Monday 26th November. The proposals in the following paragraphs reflect views from the BELB and CCMS, advice from the Education and Training Inspectorate, and requests for assistance from schools in North Belfast in correspondence with the Department.

Immediate Support

5. Support along similar lines (but at lower levels) to Holy Cross and Wheatfield, for other schools in the area which have been affected by the backwash from the Holy Cross dispute and the general ongoing inter-community strife in the area. Advice from the Education and Training Inspectorate, BELB and CCMS and contacts with the schools show that children are displaying disturbed emotional behaviour, fatigue, listlessness and inability to concentrate. Teachers are under extreme stress from the continuous tension and sense of uncertainty in the area, the increased attention required by pupils and the pressures of dealing with anxious parents. The support element of the package will provide assistance to the following primary schools which have been most affected:

Currie PS
Ballygolan PS
Ballysillan PS
Edenbrooke PS
Mercy PS
Holy Cross Boys PS
St Mary's, Star of the Sea PS
Cliftonville PS
Malvern PS
Grove PS
Lowood PS
Sacred Heart PS
St Patrick's' PS (North Queen Street)

Rebuilding Community Relationships

6. Support for schools and youth clubs to resume and develop cross community contact and dialogue as soon as they feel able. If relationships are to be rebuilt - or established - in an effective manner the initiative needs to extend beyond schools into the local communities. The role of youth tutors - who teach part of

the week in schools and work in youth clubs in the evening - would be critical in making this link, supported by detached youth workers working on the streets or wherever young people not in clubs are to be found.

7. It is proposed that five additional youth tutors should be employed to provide a youth tutor for each secondary school in the area (one already has a youth tutor). These schools are:

St Gabriel's
Castle High
Boys' Model
Girls' Model
Mount Gilbert (existing youth tutor)
St Gemma's

It is also proposed to secure a further three detached youth workers, to be added to the three funded recently under Executive Programme Funds, who would be deployed in both communities in North Belfast in equal numbers. These workers are critical in reaching young people who do not join youth clubs and are extremely difficult to engage. The aim behind this two-pronged approach is to build a bridge between the schools and the communities in North Belfast and the Belfast Board will play a key role in coordinating and managing the work of the youth workers, in liaison with schools and youth clubs in the area, to try to achieve this.

8. Other elements of the package include:
- enhancement of the Belfast Board Behavioural Support Unit to assist in the development of behaviour strategies in North Belfast schools;
 - Funding for art and music therapies, which have been found by schools to be very effective in helping children to express and deal with their emotions;

- Refurbishment of Wheatfield school;
 - Development of an astro-turf facility (on existing playing fields) in St Gabriel's school for use by both communities;
9. The attached Annexes set out the proposed package and associated costs in total and broken down by financial year. Some of the measures are short-term (eg support) while others need to be medium-term to have any effect and to take account of practicalities (eg youth workers, especially youth tutors, have to be trained and a reasonable length of contract is required to attract applicants).
 10. DE's view is that the package it is proposing represents a measured and balanced response by the Executive to the problems encountered by the education community in North Belfast, by providing immediate support to schools in need and putting in place measures which will contribute to the rebuilding of community relationships. It can be clearly justified, and confined to North Belfast, on the grounds of the special and exceptional circumstances which have persisted in the area and which provided the rationale for the wider Executive Initiative.
 11. While the package represents a reasonable start, it should be followed by a comprehensive and sustained initiative across Departments and statutory agencies. The Community Action Project provides a potential vehicle for such longer term intervention in which DE would expect education and youth measures to continue to play an important role.

Decision and Announcement

12. The education package was discussed by the Executive on 26th November and Mr Trimble referred to additional support for schools and youth in the area in his statement to the media announcing the resolution of the dispute. This has raised expectations among schools in the area (a number of whom have written requesting additional support) and CCMS and the BELB have sought details from DE. It is important that the Executive Initiative includes an education element and comes across as a cohesive, integrated package. The education announcement therefore needs to follow the earlier announcement of the

Community Action Project as soon as possible and, for maximum impact, before schools break up for Christmas.

13. DE has discussed the education package with DFP, which has given its support to the proposed measures. If the Executive agrees the DE proposals, DFP advises that the costs would need to be covered in the next Monitoring rounds. For 2001-02, this could be dealt with in the December Monitoring Round. For 2002-03, it will probably be necessary to take stock in February/March, after DETI has completed the promised review of its requirements, and that may provide an opportunity to resolve the point before the first normal Round in June. The funding after 2002-03 would be addressed in the Spending Review on the basis that it constituted an ongoing Ministerial commitment.
14. The Executive is asked to agree:
 - the education package proposals for North Belfast;
 - that the costs should be covered as need be at the next Monitoring and Budget rounds; and
 - that the initiative should be announced as soon as possible and preferably before Christmas.

Martin McGuinness

Annex 1

EDUCATION ELEMENT OF EXECUTIVE PACKAGE FOR NORTH BELFAST

Support for primary schools (For additional teachers, substitution, classroom assistants, etc. Schools decide on their own requirements and receive around £20k each this year and £10k next year.)	450k
Enhancement of BELB Behavioural Support Unit (Additional 3 teachers seconded to unit to assist development of behaviour strategies in schools - for rest of this year + 2 years.)	250k
Additional Youth Workers (Details to be determined in conjunction with Board and schools. Would buy 3 detached youth workers and 5 youth tutors - 1 for each secondary school in the area - for rest of this year + 2 years.)	500k
Additional after-school provision (1 year)	50k
Funding for art and music therapies (These have been found particularly effective in helping children to express and deal with their emotions - for 1 year)	30k
Refurbishment of Wheatfield (Estimate pending full assessment of need)	100k
Development of St Gabriel's playing field as an astro-turf facility for use by both communities. (The Principal, Jim Clark, suggested this. The current all weather pitch is used as a car park but if developed, would be made available after school hours for both communities. Glenbryn residents used to use the playing fields but the school has been locked up in the evenings for some time.)	120k
TOTAL	1,500k

Annex 2

**EDUCATION ELEMENT OF EXECUTIVE PACKAGE FOR NORTH
BELFAST**

(£'000s)

	2001/2 2004/05	2002/3	2003/4	
Support for primary schools	75	300	75	-
Enhancement of BELB Behavioural Support Unit	25	100	100	25
Additional Youth Workers	50	200	200	50
Additional after-school provision.	50			
Funding for art and music therapies	30			
Development of St Gabriel's playing field as astro-turf facility for use by both communities.	-	120	-	-
Refurbishment of Wheatfield	-	100	-	-
TOTAL	230	820	375	75