

We would be very grateful if you could send something as below, to the email address shown as your response to the proposed cutbacks to the Youth Service and particularly the removal of the CRED budget to -'budgetconsultation@deni.gov.uk'

<insert date>

Dear Mr O Dowd,

Response to Department of Education Draft Budget 2015-16

As someone who has worked in the field of youth work and community relations for the last number of years I wish to put on record my concern at the Department of Education's **proposal to completely remove the CRED budget** which at £1.1 million is already completely inadequate for the services that need to be supported on the ground. I wish also to put my concern on record at the proposed £3M cut in support for the youth service, including the inequitable 20% cut to the Youth Council for Northern Ireland's (YCNI) budget allocation in 2015-16.

Given the responsibility for reconciliation work placed on you by the Good Friday Agreement, which has never been followed through, I feel that rather than remove this budget you should now honour your commitment to this work. To remind you the agreement stated;

*The participants recognise and value the work being done by many organisations to develop reconciliation and mutual understanding and respect between and within communities and traditions, in Northern Ireland and between North and South, and they see such work as having a vital role in consolidating peace and political agreement. Accordingly, they pledge their **continuing support to such organisations** and will positively examine the case **for enhanced financial assistance** for the work of reconciliation. An essential aspect of the reconciliation process is the promotion of a culture of tolerance at every level of society, including initiatives to facilitate and encourage integrated education and mixed housing'*

Youth work makes a significant contribution to the development of young people in the context of the education service, not least by keeping children and young people actively engaged in a learning process, reducing barriers to learning and improving educational and lifelong learning outcomes.

I recognise and understand the challenging economic environment within which the education budget is drafted. However, I believe that a continued, fair and equitable investment in the youth work sector represents excellent value for money. It is critical in helping to ensure that children and young people realise the Department's vision of achieving their full potential at each stage of their development.

I would urge the Minister to reconsider the proposed £3M cut in support for the youth work sector, including the draconian 20% cut to the YCNI budget allocation in 2015-16 and take a longer term investment approach to resourcing CRED work in particular

Yours Sincerely