**CoSO General Meeting - 14th August 2000**MinutesIntroductionsRyan Nelson, Barbary Cook, Adrian McCracken (RP), Sam (QS), Doris (QS), John (QS), Mairead McCafferty (LL), Geraldine Telford (LL), Sharon (QS), Gareth Lee (QS), Barry Fitzpatrick (QS), PA Machlochlainn (NIGRA)ObservingAndrea (PFC)ApologiesAlex Berman, Geoff Dudgeon, Declan McSherryWe went through the post book to see which PAs have asked for face-to-face consultations.The OFMDFM has asked for a meeting ASAP re their Consultation Conference with Pas – either Wednesday 23/8 or Friday 25/8 were suggested as dates.Adrian said we need one person o field face-to-face consultation calls, log them and ensure that they get dealt with.Trans issue/representationBarry – there has been anxiety expressed by some individuals as to whether CoSO would represent trans people in their work on the Stat Duty. There had been a question of whether CoSO and Press for Change (PFC) should meet in order to resolve this question. In the end Andrea has come up with a positive proposal from PFC. The issues revolved around the desire (apparent) of most trans people in NI to have their needs/demands dealt with as a gender question. Originally CoSO had endeavoured to be as inclusive as possible. Tine McCombe had come along as a representative of trans people. There was also a recognition by CoSO that LBGT trans people must have a representative voice in the negotiation of equality schemes.Recently there have been requests from the Equality Commission to clarify whether or not trans questions should be treated as gender questions or sexual orientation questions. The tensions between PFC and CoSO reps have been unfortunate given hat CoSO was endeavouring to be inclusive.Andrea – PFC is proposing hat transgender issues would be dealt with by PFC, under the gender category, but that CoSO would continue to represent LBGT trans people under sexual orientation should issues arise under the stat duty for LBGT trans people.Barry noted that there is a concern that the Transgender Group is not an organisation, and that there may be feelings of personal animosity between some trans people in NI, however this meeting is not the appropriate forum for dealing with that issue.Andrea said that it’s true that PFC don’t represent all trans people. In a recent survey 60% of trans people felt that PFC doesn’t represent them, but 100% of trans people feel that Tina McCombe doesn’t represent them. She pointed out that it is also the case that transsexuals in NI are not terribly well organised. In the same survey 35/45% said they would class themselves as LBG, and she acknowledged that there is a crossover between the communities. Andrea said that she though that LBGT issues will arise for trans people. Andrea – PFC would like to have observer status in CoSO, to develop an ongoing referral service on issues arising, so that PFC and CoSO can move forward in a constructive way. However she reiterated that transgender is not a part of sexual orientation under present case law.Adrian felt that CoSO should write to PAs to make it clear that PFC will deal with trans issues. Barry pointed out that any letter would also have to say that CoSO would be dealing with LBG trans people and their needs. Andrea said it’s quite simple, SO questions get dealt with by CoSO and gender questions get dealt with by PFC.Barbary confirmed that the definition of SO under the equality schemes remains LBGT. Mairead pointed out that we had decided that the delineation ought to go in the final generic response. Adrian said he thought it would still be a good idea if the letter went out. Geraldine agreed with Mairead about the final response. Barry confirmed that he thought that it would be a good idea if a letter went out, saying that we have consulted with PFC.Barry said that he would draft a letter and circulate by e-mail and hard copy.Barry said that he also though it might be a good idea to have a formal meeting with PFC to talk about policy issues.VOTE - PFC was proposed as an observer by Barry and seconded by Adrian. No dissenting votes.Designing the System for collecting, collating and analysing the anecdotal evidenceBarbary thought that we need a team of people to do the above, in order to ensure that the anecdotal evidence is secure and used to its full potential. In this way the experiences of LBGT people will be reflected in CoSO policy decisions and lobbying.Andrea said it would be a good idea to build a relational database to store the data.Adrian wondered if this constituted a piece of research. Barbary thought not. There would need to be other pieces of research carried out on people’s experiences, but this had to do with what we were going to do with the stuff that people sent us.Adrian (later on), Gareth (not weekends), Ryan and Mairead said they would get together with Barbary before the next meeting to talk about this. Barbary would arrange a meeting time and be in touch with everyone.Meeting with the Equality Commission re monitoring (Tuesday, 6th August)Barry, Mairead, PA, Geraldine and Barbary had met for a pre-meeting at Barry’s house on the Sunday before. The meeting itself has been minuted by both Barry and Barbary (see notes sent out on e-mail list and available at meeting).Barry said that he thought that even though Joy Poots & Mary Bunting seem to have taken on our points it would be good to reiterate our concerns in a letter, especially the problems over there being no secondary channel on complaint after the telephone survey, for problems with a particular equality scheme, and our general problems with poor responses to consultation, and the need for anecdotal evidence to be developed as part of an ongoing dialogue.Adrian pointed out that we are going to have to go through all the schemes again. We have already received a telephone survey and Adrian thought we would receive 5 more by the end of the week.It was agreed that the letter be written by Barry.MonitoringSee minutes of meeting with Equality commission staff, Joy Poots and Mary Bunting.We all agreed that anecdotal evidence needs to be central to the monitoring process, and that there needs to be more research done on LBGT discrimination.Adrian asked whether or not the Equality Commission would be issuing guidelines on monitoring. Barry said yes they were, and they would say how important anecdotal evidence was.Barry pointed out that we needed to ensure that PAs have evidence before they start screening.Adrian said that given PAs’ employment monitoring would be confidential, can’t we encourage them to put an sexual orientation (SO) check box on the employment monitoring form? He pointed out that in England this was done about 8 years ago and there were no complaints from LBG people.Barry said that he thought they could put SO on the monitoring form but not be allowed to rely on it specifically. He thought that we needed a dialogue with them to ensure they don’t.Adrian said that he thought that we do want a culture where LBGT people feel comfortable ticking the boxes.Barbary said that she thought that CoSO ought to be supporting the concept of anecdotal evidence not solely because LBGT people might be afraid to tick boxes and come out, but also because it enriches the monitoring/research process, and makes it less easily definable by those carrying out the research.Impact Assessment (IA)Ryan said that there is currently confusion as to what the IA will actually involve. Barry said that the Equality Commission is going to sponsor a piece of research into what IA might look like. Ryan said that he has already looked into it in terms of gender, and most IAs seem to emphasise quantitative data. Ryan said he would prepare a description of things he has found out about.Adrian said that there are examples of IA around, the P&R money had IAs attached – NIVT’s was bad, BUPB’s was good – a lengthy process which pulled out qualitative evidence.Barbary said that she thought CoSO ought to prepare a briefing paper on this starting with our ideal types. Of IA.Adrian, Barry, Ryan and Geraldine said that they would go to the CAJ training on this in mid-Sept.TrainingAdrian said that he has talked to the EHSST and budgets have been set, so right now there is no money for external training. The budgets will be negotiated in January and so requests for training may come in around May. He also noted that he thought that people would be requesting training for free.Ryan said that PAs might get their Equality Office trained and then do the rest themselves. He suggested that CoSO might organise a conference on training.Adrian suggested unit-based training where PAs can pay for people to attend particular units. Adrian said that he thought we had to find out what they wanted and then build the training around that.Barry said that we needed to gather the training expertise that each member org of CoSO had, so that our new training would benefit from the pool of expertise. It was suggested that Alex and Sandra bring what they had found out to the next meeting. Adrian said he thought that PAs would want training around policy development. Barry said that he thought we needed an audit of the training that had been carried out in the past.It was suggested that PAs would want training around awareness raising and policy development.Barry said we ought to bring Alex’s last set of e-mails on training back to the meeting so we could refresh our memories, as some felt that it had not been made clear what was going on with the training sub-group. Barbary pointed out that Alex and Sandra had been gathering info on possible training formats and content from a range of sources inside the community both here, in England and the South, as they had been asked to do. It was agreed that this info could be added to full information from each CoSO member group on the training they presently provided, or had provided in the past. Barry suggested that of Alex and Sandra were willing to report back on findings this could be done at the next general meeting, or perhaps a separate training meeting.PA said that he thought it would be good idea to have extensive consultation on training with the PAs.Adrian said that he thought we could bring up the training issue in the face-to-face consultations.ConvenorBarry said that we needed to confirm the different roles in CoSO, for example having an Internal Convenor and an External Convenor. We need to decide exactly what each of those roles would entail.Adrian said that he thought that we needed to concentrate on the recruitment questions and leave this to the next meeting. When it was discussed he would like to see protocols developed as to the language a representative of CoSO should be using.Barbary pointed out that protocols on this had never been ratified and that individuals and indeed orgs are entitled to interpret CoSO’s goals and mission statement in particular ways.Adrian said that reps of CoSO must be as inclusive as possible and that the use of the word queer was not inclusive.Geraldine asked – what about Queer Space – does their language have a place inside CoSO?Barry said that we need to revisit the constitution – for example he has triggered the whole question about attendance at meetings.Recruitment/FundingBarry said that Paul Noonan was our advisory support officer at the Equality Commission. The Equality Commission had intimated that there might be more money.Adrian said that he would organise a meeting for the recruitment sub-group to meet before the next general meeting to thrash out all the issues and bring the job description to the next meeting. They would meet towards the end of August – on a Saturday.Civic ForumRyan – NICVA was nominees for the Civic Forum, especially from us. PA said that he has been under the impression that we had been excluded. Barry responded that we had been excluded from the OFMDFM’s report on the Civic Forum.Ryan said that nominations from groups seemed to hold particular weight. Barbary said that she thought the Civic Forum was a bad idea. It was nothing more than a super-quango, which would create a policy black hole into which issues would be lost, or chased around by a group of exclusive, conservative Assembly puppets. The Assembly and the Civic Forum would hide behind each other in the face of difficult policy choices and nothing would ever get done. In her opinion, which she recognised wasn’t a shared one, CoSO should have nothing to do with the Civic Forum.Adrian said that Duane Farrell was standing as an individual to represent gay men and youth.PostAdrian said he would take on responsibility for facilitating the face-to-face consultations. It was agreed that they should be set for 4.30pm onwards only, preferably on a Thursday and he said he would put PAs together 3 at a time.It was agreed that we needed to have a preparation meeting before these start. So the first one should be on Thursday, 7th Sept. We can meet on Thursday, 31st August at 4.30pm to prepare. Suggestions for the content of the meetings welcome.Barbary said that she would take on replying to the factual info requests that come through to CoSO.AOBBarry said that the Equality Coalition is meeting with the Equality Commission tomorrow at 2pm at NICEM and then at Andras House. No one could go.Barbary said that the next equality Coalition meeting was at 12-2pm in Grosvenor House on Thursday, 17th Aug and that she would be able to go.It was agreed that the next meeting would be on Monday, 11th Sept at 7.00pm in Foyle Friend.