

Network UPDATE



FOR THE COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN THE NORTH-WEST

"Promoting equal citizenship, justice and equality of opportunity"

April
2008

Health & Social Care Reform - done deal or opportunity for change?

Minister for Health & Social Care, Michael McGimpsey, continues to seek responses on his proposals for change to the structures that will govern, commission and implement services as part of the ongoing RPA reform agenda. The Minister stated: **"These reforms are important because they will bring about real improvements in health for everyone living here and also make it easier for you to do your work. I want to create a modern, responsive and forward looking health service which is efficient, tackles health inequalities and puts patients at the heart of its thinking"**.

There are several key issues to contemplate within the proposals and at several different levels:

- The relationship between the new structures and the Community & Voluntary sector
- The lines of responsibility, and therefore accountability and transparency, between the elements that are being proposed
- The primacy of commissioning and in particular the dynamic between local and regional decision-making
- The location of responsibility for the community development approach, and existing strategies/agencies (such as HAZ and IFH) – currently likely to sit within RPHA.
- The contribution to be made by communities to the style and substance of commissioning decisions.

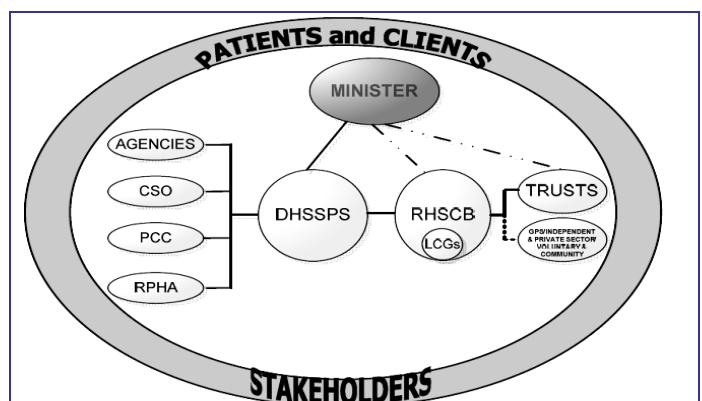
The diagram to the right gives an overview of what is proposed but it certainly seems that, thus far, it has raised as many questions as it has provided answers, mostly around the points raised above. In essence the question is whether the new structures will effect any movement towards a more social model of health, one which prioritises early intervention, health promotion and a strong role for communities as an equal partner in the devising and commissioning of services.

One perspective on how this might be realised relates to the devolution of commissioning budgets to LCGs in the first instance so that local needs can be properly assessed alongside regional objectives. Should such a bottom-up/top-down marriage be arranged, it places significantly more importance on the role to be played by lay and elected representation on the five sub-regional Local Commissioning Groups. The inclusion of local councillors

on the LCGs is new within these proposals and communities must ready themselves to support these individuals in maximising the influence of the community voice.

There are key logistical implications here also in terms of the resourcing and location of various bodies, and offices thereof. From a Western perspective, it would be imperative to see an equitable geographic distribution of agencies and therefore personnel to allow for the development of crucial new working relationships at all levels.

All those with an interest in helping deliver a health service which is person-centred as opposed to organisationally-structured should make their voice heard. The full proposals remain available at: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/consultations/current_consultations.htm - consultation ends 12th May 08.



Key:

- DHSSPS – "The Department"
- RHSCB – Regional Health & Social Care Board
- LCGs – Local Commissioning Groups
- CSO – Common Services Organisation
- PCC - Patient Client Council
- RPHA – Regional Public Health Authority

Following a recent North-West consultation on the proposals, the Network is organising a further small group discussion to inform its final comments.

This will take place at the Network offices – 2pm, Wednesday 7th May 08. Please indicate your attendance in advance – places limited.

Now You Mention It...

Ilex – The Con-joiner of Strategies...?

Ilex, the Urban Regeneration Company for the Derry City Council area, has certainly seen its relatively new Chairperson, Roy McNulty, occupying the pages and airwaves in recent weeks.

Mr McNulty, a native of Raphoe with an impressive raft of experience behind him, has been very forthright on two issues in particular:

The size of the regeneration task facing Derry~Londonderry, apparently much larger and wider than he had first envisaged.

The existence of so many strategies and action plans for the city and region but seemingly little to bind them all together, little or no synergy between them. Many of us have partaken in the drafting of these documents and have seen some progress made – a bit here and a bit there but how much further forward are we?

If Roy McNulty, through Ilex and the collaborative working it engenders, can stand and deliver on a joined up Team Derry or Team North-West that delivers true socio-economic regeneration, are we not all up for that?

Public Sector Jobs: “Can I Have Some More...?”

Professor George Bain, former QUB Vice-Chancellor, is leading a Review team that is consulting widely across Northern Ireland on the possible relocation of jobs within the public sector. Twelve meetings have been organised and the first has already taken place in Derry's Verbal Arts Centre – of course it ran over time...

The Terms of Reference for the Review refer, inter alia, to the need for an affirmative dispersal policy, tackling economic disparities and the Regional Development Strategy. This in mind, with the Maiden

City Flyer transferring hundreds of North-Westerners to work in Belfast every day, it was somewhat surprising to hear Professor Bain claim that, if all these commuters were enabled to work closer to home, the economic benefits would not be significant - “maybe a few extra coffee and sandwich bars” to quote the man himself. Quite how this very early pronouncement marries with the overall aim of the Review (*to recommend the distribution of public sector jobs that best enhances the sustainable economic and social development of Northern Ireland*) is difficult to discern.

This is a matter that all of us should take an interest in, from an equality as well as socioeconomic perspective. With a report due back to the Executive by the summer, please do not hesitate to forward your comments by 23 May 2008 to:

location.review@dfpni.gov.uk.

Invest NI Conference – the American Tsunami?

It looks as if Northern Ireland will have upwards of fifty senior US industry decision-makers in its midst come the 7th of May. All to be wined, dined and schmoozed everywhere from Belfast Castle to Stormont to Hillsborough Castle – that must be the fastest repartitioning any of us has ever seen! Even Glengormley must feel a bit peripheral on this itinerary.

Important and welcome as inward investment is in terms of “growing the economy” it is still apparent that the eastern corridor is effectively priority number one. If the economy is to be the “tide that lifts all boats” we must all be watchful for that wave that is going to crash over Glenshane...anytime in the next century, according to local analysts.

Fuel Poverty – Is it being left to Global Warming to sort out?

It may seem that the days are getting longer and, occasionally, the days warmer but it remains the case that thousands of homes in Northern Ireland face real difficulties in maintaining basic levels of heating comfort, a situation which is likely to deteriorate with continuing enormous price hikes for all forms of fuel.

Northern Ireland has the highest rate of fuel poverty in the United Kingdom. The most up to date figures show that 24 per cent of the population of Northern Ireland is living in fuel poverty. Fuel poverty means not being able to keep your home adequately warm at a reasonable cost.

Fuel poverty, often linked to having to spend more than 10% of your household income on fuel, is caused by a combination of three factors:

- Poor household energy efficiency;
- Low income;
- Expensive fuel or heating system.

Fuel poverty can have serious implications for the health and well being of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children and people living with disabilities or chronic illness.

Dealing with fuel poverty has been identified as an important issue by Government in tackling disadvantage in communities. The strategy document ‘Ending Fuel Poverty – A Strategy for Northern Ireland’ states the Government’s intent to eradicate fuel poverty in vulnerable households by 2010, and in all households by 2016. Although the Assembly has been restored since the publication of this strategy, there was little within the Programme for Government to suggest either the recognition of the extent of this issue or the likely achievement of the original targets.

Useful Links:

Ending Fuel Poverty - A Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2004

Tackling Fuel Poverty: A Partnership Approach, The Northern Ireland Fuel Poverty Advisory Group’s 2007 Annual Report

Tackling Fuel Poverty, The Inter-Departmental Group Report 2006

Peace III – 1.2: Strand 3 - Securing The Future – Call for Applications

The Special EU Programmes Body appointed a consortium of two organisations – the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and Border Action to deliver Priority 1 Theme 2 of PEACE III – Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past, of the Peace III Programme.

This Priority will be implemented through the following 3 strands:

Strand 1: Addressing the Past in Public Memory

Strand 2: Promoting Participation

Strand 3: Securing the Future

A first call for applications is now being made under Theme 1.2, Strand 3: Securing the Future.

AIM:

Innovative actions that will help prevent an outbreak of violence into the future, by taking action to repair relationships and by engaging the wider community in peace-building and reconciliation work.

Supporting schemes for future generations which seek to address and prevent the outbreak of violence along the lines of inherited and emerging divisions in society.

Indicative Actions:

- Projects that increase the participation of marginalised and minority groups in society and promote active citizenship.
- Innovative initiatives that will prevent the outbreak of violence in the future and that will seek to build and repair relationships and engage the wider

community in peace-building and reconciliation activities.

- Actions that will build the capacity of individuals to deal with the transition to peace and reconciliation and ensure that victims and survivors of the conflict are able to deal with the past.
- Innovative initiatives which seek to build positive sustainable relationships between and within the specific target groups of the Peace III Programme.
- Strategic initiatives to promote the inclusion and integration of victims and survivors into wider society.
- Actions that address the psychological effects on communities that have been affected by the conflict and experience particular problems of segregation, marginalisation and isolation.
- Innovative actions that focus on conflict resolution, mediation and other peace building activities.
- Activities that seek to acknowledge and deal with the hurt, losses and suffering caused by the conflict.

The Application Form and Guidance Note are available online at:

<http://www.nicrc.org.uk>

<http://www.borderaction.ie>

The indicative budget for this strand is €15-20m – closing date for applications is Friday 13th June 2008.

The Wheel - New Futures - Mapping The Road Ahead Annual Conference and AGM

9.00am-4.00pm, Thursday, 1st May - Croke Park Conference Centre, Dublin

Don't miss out on the most thought-provoking event in the calendar of the Community & Voluntary Sector!

Conference Themes:

Brand new research shows how the organisations in our sector get their supports and information and so the starting point from which we can build an 'infrastructure of support' for our sector is now clear. The Wheel has structured its 2008 conference to address these big-ticket items by:

- provoking discussion on the sector's role in the new era of regulation and on preparing our organisations for the change.
- stimulating thinking on addressing the skills-gaps and meeting the support needs of our sector.
- showcasing key developments that will help people who manage community / voluntary / charitable organisations to achieve their missions
- hosting discussion on preparing for all these changes.

Who should attend?

The Wheel's conference is open to anyone volunteering or working in or associated with the community and voluntary sector who has an interest in the 'big picture' and in the wider issues facing the sector. The conference will provide learning opportunities for anyone interested in learning more about:

- the developmental needs of the community and voluntary sector
- the introduction of charity regulation and the regulation of fundraising
- policies for developing skills in - and providing supports for - the sector.

Further information such as the Conference Agenda, Speakers and Registration details are available at:

www.wheel.ie/user/content/view/full/4116

(For Wheel members, attendance cost is €90 and for non-members €50)

Trauma, Health and Conflict in Northern Ireland

This seminar on the experience and public health impact of conflict related trauma in Northern Ireland takes place on 30 May 2008 at 10.00am in the University of Ulster, Magee.

The seminar will present:

- Findings from the Northern Ireland Study of Health and Stress on the prevalence of traumatic experiences and trauma related disorders, risk and protective factors and service use.
- Conclusions about the psychological and physiological impact of Troubles related trauma.
- The views of individuals that have experienced a traumatic event, how they coped, support and use of services relating to trauma.
- The importance and implications of this unprecedented evidence for future service provision in relation to trauma and trauma related illness.

To find out more or book a place, please email: info@nictt.org.

Postwatch urges users to have say on Post Office closures

Proposed changes to the delivery of post office services are now out for consultation. These have been drafted because of falling customer numbers, changing customer habits and the fact that many traditional Post Office services are now available elsewhere – the need to modernise is the premise for the proposed changes.

Postwatch is urging customers to engage in the proposed closure and replacement service consultation. Post Office Limited is holding a six-week consultation on the proposed closure of 42 post office branches and a change of service ('outreach') to 54 branches, throughout Northern Ireland. The deadline for responses is **12 May 2008**.

How do customers know if their post office is closing?

Find out more about the proposals at www.postoffice.co.uk/networkchange or call 0845 722 3344. Additionally, in those branches proposed for closure, posters will be displayed, and leaflets and letters will be available which explain to customers the rationale for change, how they can have their say, and where the local alternative services are.

Feedback on the consultation can be sent by post to FREEPOST Consultation Team (no stamp required) or emailed to consultation@postoffice.co.uk.

Money management training for youth workers

Sponsored by the FSA and delivered in Northern Ireland by Citizens Advice, Young People and Money is a one day training course that delivers financial capability information to those working with young people. The course is designed to improve their confidence by equipping them to better support their young people in becoming financially capable. There is no charge.

Upcoming dates:

8 May - Belfast & 13 May – Derry

Visit www.youngpeopleandmoney.co.uk or contact the Young People and Money team at Citizens Advice on 028 9023 1120 or email ypam@citizensadvice.co.uk to find out more or register.

If you have a group of 10 or more people Citizens Advice can deliver an individual training day for your organisation.

Cross-border co-operation as part of the northern Irish peace process

This conference will invite participants (50% from Ireland and 50% from continental Europe) to discuss cross-border co-operation under a number of thematic headings. The overall aim of the conference will be to disseminate some of the good learning from North-South cooperation in Ireland – notably EU Peace and INTERREG-funded cross-border projects – to a wider European audience, and to discuss its significance.

The event takes place on 12 and 13 June 2008 in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Dundalk.

The conference has been organised by the Centre for Cross Border Studies, with financial support from the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation managed by the Cross-Border Consortium (Co-operation Ireland, Border Action and the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland).

Please contact Patricia McAllister at the Centre for Cross Border Studies to register or find out more on 028 3751 1550 or email: p.mcallister@qub.ac.uk.

Easilearn.org

easilearn.org is a fresh new concept in fun, relaxed leisure learning from the WEA, offering courses for people who want to access courses just for the love of learning.

Would you like to learn about eBay, digital photography or how to trace your family roots? How about new ways to de-stress? Or maybe you'd like to learn a new craft? All these options and many more lie within this site.

This website allows you to find the course of your choice and register quickly and easily. The range of courses on offer and the spread of venues will continue to increase over the coming months and we want to put you very much in the driving seat for this growth.

You can shape the future of leisure learning in this region by helping us build easilearn.org into your favourite way to learn.

All of the courses on offer are fun and informal and any 'profits' made by easilearn.org will help subsidise the WEA's work in disadvantaged areas across Northern Ireland and the border counties.

Community Directory

The last few copies of the Community Directory for the Derry City Council area are still available for collection at the Network Offices.

Participative Democracy – Don't worry it doesn't hurt

At time of writing, Northern Ireland will have experienced approximately eleven months of devolved administration. Of course it is to be welcomed that we have come this far and that our children and young people are growing up in a society that is progressively and outwardly less violent even if, in the opinion of many, no less divided than ever.

Many saw the restoration of the institutions, advisedly or otherwise, as a step towards issue-led as opposed to manifesto politics. Is that not what we might have hoped for under creeping normalisation? If our ongoing core issues revolve around deprivation, inequalities and social exclusion, what value is there in continuing to nail colours to the constitutional mast?

It may not be fashionable to say it too loudly but it is clearly visible from the decisions, attitudes and priorities coming from Stormont that the pragmatism of adopting more of an all-island perspective is gradually being taken on board. This is not a political statement, simply cognisance of the strategic approaches that are being taken at the most senior levels in important arenas such as the economy, infrastructure and tourism.

Such longer-term perspectives do not develop in a vacuum or for their own sakes. They are adopted against a social and economic backdrop which, in the case of Northern Ireland, relates to a situation generally bleak for well over a generation. If a final analysis is ever forthcoming, it will surely place question marks beside the opportunities missed at various points by the political establishment. Equally it will reflect the truth that civic society, the mood on the ground, was as much an impetus for change as anything, that awareness of this hunger provided some kind of spur for the frequently brave interventions of leadership shown by our political personages over time.

This helps clarify what is, despite ongoing political

functioning, a significant gap in NI society – the capturing of the civic voice, the engagement at all levels with the real experts – the man, woman and child in the street. Quite often it is community & voluntary groups that are best placed to provide this platform for communication which can then inform articulation at different levels of influence. This is obviously not the dictionary definition but it certainly does give some idea of what we mean by **participative democracy**. Did anyone mention Civic Forum there?

To this day, participative democracy is a term that can elicit a range of reactions from many elected representatives, anything from skin-crawling to shouts of “blasphemer!” As with many fear-based reactions, this is often based on ignorance, a lack of understanding that participative democracy is intended to sit *alongside*, as an enhancer to traditional representative democracy. It provides for electees, individually and collectively, to work through different models and methods to better understand the needs of their constituents, to gauge their views on matters of shared concern and to respond accordingly so that public policy is better targeted, and therefore more efficient. The role of elected representatives is after all that of serving the communities so it surely makes sense to use all available resources towards genuine and meaningful engagement.

In a democratising society, the important role of the community & voluntary sector in advocating for social change and the removal of inequalities is one that must be strongly protected and developed. The Republic of Ireland has made gains both economically and socially through embracing the principles and practice of Social Partnership. It is time for the NI administration, a year after restoration and ten years after the Good Friday Agreement, to gear up for genuine civil influence, towards “A Shared Future” rather than “Look Back in Anger.”

The People's Millions 2008

The Big Lottery Fund is joining forces with UTV to encourage local organisations to enter the People's Millions contest before the noon deadline of **15 May 2008**. The contest gives local groups the chance to appear on TV and to win a grant of up to £50,000 to improve and enrich their local community.

Since the launch of People's Millions in 2005, a total of £750,000 has been awarded to 12 projects in Northern Ireland. Previous winners have been using their awards to make their local communities a better place to live by cleaning up riverways, building play parks and creating community gardens.

Breidge Gadd, Big Lottery Fund NI Chair said: “With only a month to go now is the time for groups to apply to the People's Millions. This is the fourth year we have teamed up with UTV to run this contest and we are really keen to hear from groups across Northern Ireland who have a wonderful idea for funding. So if you're involved with a project that really helps local people, contact us now and get your completed application in to us by May 15th.”

The Big Lottery Fund has five awards of up to £50,000 up for grabs across Northern Ireland. Projects will go head to head on TV to win the public's support and share in up to £250,000 of Lottery good cause money.

Organisations have until 15 May 2008 to enter the contest. The finalists will be screened on UTV Life evening news programme later in the year when viewers will be able to cast their vote for the projects they want to win the Lottery good cause cash.

Application packs for People's Millions are available by calling the hotline: 08450 101112 or by visiting www.peoplesmillions.org.uk

For further information call Andrew Kennedy, Big Lottery Fund Press Office on 028 9055 1426 or, out of hours, 07788 640 791

Full details of Big Lottery Fund programmes and grant awards are available at www.biglotteryfund.org.uk



Report submitted - then the arguments!

As per its brief, the Bill of Rights Forum, met the (extended) deadline of 31st March 2008 and submitted its report to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC).

The Bill of Rights Forum was set up, as per the Good Friday Agreement, to bring political parties and civic society together to discuss recommendations on what supplementary rights should be included in a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland (in addition to the European Convention on Human Rights) due to the "particular circumstances of Northern Ireland" – a term which was to become the focal point of much debate over the span of the Forum's work, and now beyond.

The full report (billofrightsforum.org/borf_final_report.pdf) is to be used to inform the eventual NIHRC advice to the Secretary of State in December 2008. In handing over the report, Chair of the Bill of Rights Forum, Chris Sidoti, outlined: *"Experience around the world has shown that Bills of Rights can be vital tools to help societies make the transition from conflict to real peace. The wide range of issues covered in this report have exactly that aim in mind, as they seek to entrench the values that will underpin Northern Ireland society in the years to come."*

The establishment of the Bill of Rights Forum, to include not just political representation but also that of various sections of civil society, was exactly for that reason – that political agreement was unlikely to be reached if left to political parties alone. It has been recognised that the

work of the Forum over the last sixteen months was indeed broad-ranging, informative and challenging but the word "maximalist" is now being used to describe the scope of this work as too broad, too far-reaching and as the main reason why the report and its recommendations do not enjoy cross-community political support nor endorsement by the NI Assembly.

Far from achieving its goal of promoting and then achieving consensus, it is clear that the widely-lauded work of the Bill of Rights Forum has not substantially shifted the position of political representatives who question the need for a Bill of Rights unique to Northern Ireland.

From a civic society position, it has also been disquieting to hear of questions being posed on the inclusion of certain civil sectors on the Forum and beyond this, the assertion by some MLAs that their voting patterns favoured one political persuasion over another.

The work of the Forum and the Assembly debate now catalogued, where does that leave us? Has Northern Ireland lived over thirty years of "particular circumstances" or has it not? Are inequalities in terms of lifetime opportunities, in both of the main traditions, continuing as a result of this or are they not?

The Human Rights Commission now faces an unenviable task on what it takes forward to the Secretary of State. It is legislatively unworkable for the Bill of Rights Forum's work to be carried forward without the required cross-community political support but does this tell us that:

- a) some kind of addendum is applied to the work of the Forum? OR
- b) a key piece of work, involving a social partnership approach, is dismissed and the status quo of social and economic inequalities remains unaddressed?

Hmmmmmm.....



A Practical Workshop on Making Record Checks for Paid & Unpaid Staff

AccessNI, the government's new service for carrying out background checks for recruitment purposes went live on April 1st 2008.

For community & voluntary sector groups, the key area of interest is not only on how to satisfy legal requirements in relation to salaried posts but also in relation to volunteers, so important to the core work of many organisations. This is especially important if your organisation delivers services to groups such as children/young people or vulnerable adults.

The new procedures replace the previous POCVA system and all future checks must be made according to the new regulations.

AccessNI's website provides a range of essential information for groups of all sizes who may require to conduct checks for staff/volunteers.

A very useful resource is included online at: www.accessni.gov.uk/ecrit-guidance-document.pdf

This document describes the various levels of disclosure now possible, the relevant terminology and the timelines that all groups need to build in to their recruitment processes if a background check is likely to be required.

As useful as the website is, any new system usually becomes most familiar through experience. For this reason, the Network and the North-West Volunteer Centre have come together to organise a practical workshop to deal with the operational issues that most groups will face in these early stages of the new system.

This workshop will take place in:

The Junction, Bishop Street, Derry-Londonderry
10 – 12noon, Wednesday 28th May 08

Interest is expected to be high and with places limited, you are advised to register your interest early. Contact the Network on 71 279090 or email info@nwc.org.

The Talk on the Hill

Skills Development Crucial Says Empey

Minister for Employment and Learning, Sir Reg Empey, has called on trade unions to help encourage Northern Ireland's workforce to develop world class skills. Speaking at the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NICICTU) Biennial Delegate Conference in Portrush, Sir Reg said: "The development and enhancement of skills is fundamental to the future economic well being of our country and therefore the future of our children and our grandchildren.

"Our productivity, currently only 91.5% of the UK average, needs to be improved. We need to do this through the development and enhancement of skills and I call on employers, trade unions and other stakeholders to help make this a reality."

Sir Reg went on to emphasise that much remains to create the dynamic and innovative economy that Northern Ireland needs.

Gildernew Widens Access To RDP Funding

Michelle Gildernew MP MLA, has increased the number of areas eligible to apply for funding under the new Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013.

Originally the Rural Development Programme defined some areas in the Derry Urban Area and the Belfast Metropolitan Area as urban because they fell within urban boundaries, however they were considered by their communities to be rural. Outlining her decision the Agriculture and Rural Development Minister said: "My officials have been working with Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency (NISRA) to review the definition of some areas in the Derry Urban Area and the Belfast Metropolitan Area. This was in response to concerns as to whether rural areas that are on the periphery of urban areas would be eligible for funding from the new Rural Development Programme.

"I can confirm that Strathfoyle, Newbuildings and Culmore in Derry have now been included as eligible areas for the RDP This decision will allow a number of farmers, rural dwellers, rural businesses and community groups who were previously excluded from the Rural Development Programme to now apply."

Investment To Tackle Social Disadvantage - McGuinness

Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness told local trade unionists that the massive investment planned here over the next decade will be used to create the opportunity to tackle economic and social disadvantage. He told delegates at the Irish Congress of Trade Unions - Northern Ireland Committee's Biennial Delegate Conference: "Growing the economy is our top priority. This is vital so as to provide the wealth and resources we need to build the peaceful, prosperous, fair and healthy society we all want, supported by high quality public services and infrastructure.

"We plan to invest approaching £20billion in our

infrastructure over the next ten years, with around £6billion in the next three years. This money will be used to build and renew the roads and transport links, the schools, the colleges, the hospitals and health care facilities, the water and sewage facilities, the social housing and the other investment we need to grow the economy and provide modern high quality services.

"We are very conscious of the great concern to ensure that this huge capital investment is used in a way to maximise the social and employment opportunities for all our people, addressing existing patterns of socio-economic disadvantage. I am pleased to say that the Executive has agreed guidance on this covering all public bodies for which we are responsible. I believe that this has the potential make a real difference for many.

"Including practical social objectives to ensure the promotion of fairness and transparency into contracts and tenders is an important way of making sure the Executive's policies are turned into positive outcomes."

Programme Shapes Up For US-NI Investment Conference

Programme details for the US-NI Investment Conference have been revealed by the Economy Minister, Nigel Dodds. The conference will run from 7-9 May, commencing with a Welcome Reception on Wednesday evening at the Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra. Thursday 8th May takes the US delegates from Blackstaff Studios in Belfast to Parliament Buildings, at Stormont and in the evening to Hillsborough Castle. The formal proceedings conclude on Friday morning at the Culloden Hotel.

Minister Dodds said: "...70 companies have said that it is their intention to visit Northern Ireland in May for the conference. Of these, over 40 will be visiting Northern Ireland for the first time and the rest will be representatives of existing investors. In total, we hope to welcome ninety senior executives to Northern Ireland to be part of this event."

Confirmed speakers who will tell their success stories of investing and working in Northern Ireland include Mike Zafirovski, CEO of Nortel, Jim Foster, CAO (EMEA) of Citi, John Spangler, Managing Director of Seagate, and Stuart McGuigan, CTO of Liberty Mutual.

Delegates will also hear from Minister Empey on Department for Employment and Learning's commitment to providing quality training tailored to employers' needs.

Minister Dodds believes this conference provides a one-time opportunity to showcase the new Northern Ireland, which is open for business. "This US-NI Investment Conference represents the largest number of highest quality senior business people to visit Northern Ireland at any one time. It provides a unique opportunity to capitalise on the potential of our political stability and excellent investment proposition. The Conference enjoys the full support of the Northern Ireland Executive and the US Administration. Both the British Prime Minister and the Taoiseach will be participating."

Get up close and personal with DSD Committee

The committee of MLAs responsible for scrutinising the work of the Department for Social Development is to hold one of its meetings at 10.30am in NICVA on 19 June 2008.

All of the meetings of the committee are open to the public but hosting a meeting at NICVA means that there will be more space for community and voluntary organisations to come along and observe the committee's work. The full agenda will not be available until the week before the meeting but as part of the proceedings there will be a presentation on funding for the voluntary and community sector.

Seats for observers will be allocated on a first come first served basis - contact Cathy Breslin at cathy.breslin@nicva.org.



Having committed to a stakeholder-led service that is centred on the needs of patients, clients, carers and the wider population, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) recognised that existing systems for involving stakeholders will have to be strengthened. From this, a website – www.engage.hscni.net – has been developed to not only give useful advice and information but to facilitate e-networking and effective communication

amongst all those with an interest in user involvement issues and practice.

It is not being suggested that a website is the perfect medium to effect meaningful engagement but it will become a useful resource that will only be as strong as the usage it gets.

Visit the site, get a feel for what it offers, go through the simple registration process and you may well have found a useful new avenue for influencing policy on health & social care.

NWCN Membership Form 2008-09

To become a member of North-West Community Network for the year 2008/09, please complete the form below and return to the Network with your £10/€14 membership fee.

****Membership is only open to community/voluntary organisations****

Your Organisation:

Name Of Organisation:	_____
Named Contact(s) & Designation:	_____
Address:	_____

	Postcode: _____
Telephone:	_____
	Fax: _____
Email(s):	_____
Website:	_____
Brief Description Of Organisation's Role & Activities:	_____

Please make your cheque payable to North-West Community Network, or contact the Network if you wish to make payment in another way.

NWCN receives financial support from:



'Network Update' is produced by:

North-West Community Network

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Co-ordinator:
Colin Devine

Network Update is sent electronically to those groups for whom the Network has a reliable email address.

This supports the Network's sustainability efforts, both fiscal and environmental.

Please feel free to circulate the document and/or to encourage groups not currently in receipt of Network Update to contact us and therefore ensure future inclusion.

**NETWORK UPDATE
APRIL 2008**