

Network

UPDATE



FOR THE COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN THE NORTH-WEST

"Promoting equal citizenship, justice and equality of opportunity"

**AUTUMN
2011**

What Do You Really Mean When You Say...

The Community & Voluntary sector faces mounting pressure from a number of sources – and not only over funding. Our essential and inextricably linked roles as service providers and advocates seem to attract easy lipservice but increasingly struggle when it comes to sustaining the capacity to deliver on these roles.

There is also a respect deficit when ministers acknowledge and acclaim the socioeconomic contribution of community activity yet seem hardwired to follow this with "but we really cannot sustain 4500 Community & Voluntary groups." If everything is relative, what meaning is there behind the incessant reference to this number?

In practical terms, NICVA's CutswatchNI initiative demonstrates the extent to which resources are being pulled out of the sector and this is not even the whole story - many would-be accounts of funding lost are withheld through fear of repercussion.

As our economy, and seemingly that of the entire Eurozone, unravels and haemorrhages "confidence", the evidence mounts that the demand for the services provided by our sector will actually increase. It is important that we keep communicating this message powerfully and eloquently lest we become jointly culpable for allowing those already marginalised to become even more so. If the vulnerability of

those in disadvantage increases, it is a given that so too will their need for the services and advocacy provided by frontline community services.

And who is it that relies upon these services? Our citizens of course – citizens from all kinds of background, residents from all areas. In the context of the "One Plan", placing disadvantaged citizens at the centre cannot be depicted in any way as an original or recent emphasis. The Regeneration Plan rightfully has a commitment to delivering regeneration "targeted towards the most deprived groups in our communities." Community groups have been striving to do this for generations – why else are we here really?

The differential between the "One Plan" from the original Ilex Masterplan is that without social regeneration at the core, economic and physical interventions alone might not sufficiently benefit those in greatest need.

There is a need for a healthy dollop of sincerity and transparency in many quarters. If our senior politicians want to be taken in good faith, they must mind the gap between their often proud words and what translates into action on the ground. Similarly our political parties – some more than others – could be more helpful if they recognised that community activity happens for citizens and not removed from them.

Social Investment Fund – Consultation Launched

OFMDFM has now launched a 12 week consultation period on the Social Investment Fund.

The Fund consists of £80 million over a 4 year period and its strategic objectives are to support communities to:

- build pathways to employment;
- tackle the systemic issues linked to deprivation;
- increase community services; and
- address dereliction.

In launching the consultation, the First Minister said: “The Social Investment Fund aims to reduce poverty, unemployment and physical deterioration. The Fund will encourage communities, statutory agencies,

business and departments to work together in a co-ordinated way, reducing duplication, sharing best practice and enhancing existing provision for the benefits of those communities most in need.

The aim of the consultation is to seek the views of the public on the proposed operation of the Social Investment Fund, including options for applying to the Fund, how the Fund should be managed and the structures to support its delivery.” The consultation closes at 5pm on Friday, 23 Dec 2011. For more details visit:

<http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/index/equality/social-investment-fund.htm>

Creggan Enterprises and Holywell Trust Social Enterprise Online Questionnaire

Holywell Consultancy is working with Creggan Enterprises and Holywell Trust to engage with the community and voluntary and social economy sector in the wider Derry/Londonderry area to carry out a quick snapshot exercise of the assets held within the local community.

The findings from this research will be used to help to inform discussions on how the Acorn Fund, administered by Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, could be used to support the sector. They will also be used to help broaden the discussion about partnership building, joint working and support within the wider sector.

The rationale behind the research is ultimately to empower the local community to take ownership and positive steps towards sustaining their future by realising the scale and range

of assets held within community ownership.

The main element of the research is an online questionnaire. The questionnaire can be completed by visiting www.surveymonkey.com/s/NWCommunityAssets. The information collated from this questionnaire will be presented to representatives from the sector to help to deepen discussions.

The deadline for the completion of the survey is Friday 2nd December 2011.

We hope to receive a good response to the survey so that accurate information on the sector is collected.

If you require any other information please contact Gerard Deane (Holywell Consultancy) on 7126 7997 or email gerard@holywellconsultancy.com.

Interested In Recruiting New Committee Members?

Do You Want To Ensure That Volunteers On Your Board Are Being Involved Effectively And Making A Positive Contribution?

Committee members play a vital role in overseeing an organisation's work by ensuring the proper procedures and policies are in place to manage a charity effectively. Good governance is essential but success is dependant on getting people with the right mix of skills and experience who are committed to the cause and who take their role seriously.

Yet some groups struggle to recruit committee members and when they do they don't always manage to keep them. Volunteer Now has secured funding through the Building Change Trust to raise the profile of organisations' need for committee volunteers, help them recruit the right people and then involve them effectively.

Having a committed group of committee volunteers with the right mix of skills and experience is a vital link in building

an organisation with strong strategic and operational effectiveness.

Volunteer Now will:

- Advertise for your committee volunteers through the Volunteer Now website, and help you to target your recruitment.
- Provide training for your new committee volunteers.
- Support you to identify gaps/areas of improvement with regards to the Code of Good Governance.

Your organisation will:

- Identify key staff members/volunteers to lead on this piece of work.
- Provide an outline of what you are looking for from committee volunteers.
- Commit to working alongside Volunteer Now in benchmarking your governance practices and supporting your new volunteers.

If you are interested in finding out more about this opportunity, contact: Sarah.McCully@Volunteernow.co.uk or 02890 232020.

BIHR: Human Rights Tour 'Making Human Rights Happen'

16 Rights | 16 Cities | 16 Weeks

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission is co-hosting a free all-day workshop in Belfast on Wednesday 23 November.

This event is part of the BIHR Human Rights Tour, which is visiting 16 cities across the UK from September to December 2011.

Participants will have the opportunity to:
Learn about human rights and how they work - Discuss how human rights, and

the Human Rights Act in particular, relate to the issues you work on or deal with - Consider inspiring examples of how human rights can be protected and promoted in Northern Ireland

The venue for the event is NICVA, 61 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast, BT15 2GB.

For further details, and to book a place* at this event, please visit: <http://www.bihar.org.uk>

Priority will be given to those who have not previously attended NIHR Introduction to Human Rights Training.

Will cuts change working in the Community & Voluntary sector?

There has been a lot of talk about how the Community & Voluntary sector is being affected by the recession and public spending cuts. The sector provides vital services, and cuts to these are and will affect people right across society. But cuts to the sector are also affecting those who work within it.

As with every part of the economy, jobs are being lost and becoming less secure. The sector has historically high rates of job satisfaction, but is there a risk that this will be eroded by job cuts, insecurity and increased workloads?

Recent research seems to suggest that job satisfaction in the Community & Voluntary sector, while still higher than average, is falling.

The Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC) regularly measures numbers, conditions and attitudes of people working in the Community & Voluntary sector. In the current climate, TSRC's researchers are asking how the sector can maintain and develop the best possible workforce. There is continual debate about pay in the sector, especially in times of cuts and austerity. But while some bemoan large salaries paid to charity executives, research shows that those at the top get paid far less than in the private sector, and pay gaps between those at the top and bottom as well as between men and women, are much lower.

These are arguably the kind of conditions that define the Community & Voluntary sector, that motivate people to work in it, and something the sector should protect.

It's worth remembering too that the recession hits different kinds of third sector organisations, in different parts of

the UK, very differently. Whilst charities doing 'trendy' things in popular urban areas can attract highly qualified graduates to work for free as interns, charities in areas of high unemployment can benefit from job centre schemes for the long term unemployed which fund 6 month placements.

These might both be benefits to the sector - but they are very different kinds of benefits. Statistical research shows that very real inequalities exist in the rates of volunteering and participation in different areas of the country. If reliance on volunteers is to increase, we must be careful about increasing inequalities in charity resources.

TSRC research asks: What should the priorities of organisations be in the face of funding cuts, how can they best plan for their future workforce, build the skills of their paid and Community & Voluntary staff? What type of volunteers can they expect to gain - is the recession boosting participation from older people, or certain types of younger people who wish to boost their CVs or gain marketable skills? Have job losses elsewhere in the economy opened up new sources of recruitment to the sector?

(Adapted from Third Sector Research Centre, a collaborative venture by the Universities of Birmingham and Southampton, with contributions from Middlesex and Kent. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, Office of the Third Sector and Barrow Cadbury Trust.

<http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/Blog/tabid/504/EntryId/23/Will-cuts-change-working-in-the-Community-&Voluntary-sector.aspx>

Training & Learning Opportunities

Advice NI launches new training brochure

Advice NI has launched its latest training brochure which is packed with lots of new and exciting courses and training programmes.

Training is offered in the following areas: Debt/Money Advice, Case Recording, Age Awareness, Age Issues (eg Health, Care and Housing), Deaf Awareness, Sign Language Tendering, Benefits and Tax Credits, Equality Issues, Advice and Guidance (NVQ's), Customer Service (NVQ's), Assessment and Quality Assurance (TAQA), Tax and HMRC Products.

Training includes accredited and non-accredited courses delivered via face-to-face, blended learning and e-learning methods.

[Click for a full copy of the Advice NI training brochure, outlining all programmes, costs, accreditation options and dates](#)

Contact: Michelle McGreevy - 028 9064 5919 / training@adviceni.net

Community Places – Planning Update 2011

Thursday, 1 December 2011
11-12.30 (followed by lunch),
2 Downshire Place, Great Victoria Street, Belfast

Community Places is inviting all community groups to come along to an update on the planning system. This session is free and will give an overview of the many changes that have taken place this year, including:

- The new Planning Act;
- planning policy proposals;
- the new rural design guide; and
- changes to permitted development rights.

We will also provide information about the changes that we expect next year and the support that Community Places can offer to community groups to help them prepare for this.

To register for this event, please contact Elaine, tel: 9023 9444 / email: elaine@communityplaces.info.

“Planning What The Future Will Be”

11.00am - 1.00pm (followed by lunch)
Wednesday 7 December 2011
Rural Community Network, 38a Old Town Street, Cookstown

Free Training session (by Community Places and Rural Community Network).

The Planning Act agreed by the Assembly earlier this year provides for the transfer of planning from the D.O.E. to the new District Councils when they are set up. Some major changes to how planning operates have already been made. To help Community Groups understand these changes, Rural Community Network and Community

Places offer free training on the proposed new planning system and changes that have already been made as a result of planning reforms.

This session looks at some of the changes to be introduced including:

- Pre-application consultation on major planning applications
- Changes to the publication of planning applications
- Bigger fines on enforcement

To register, please contact Sarah at Rural Community Network:
T - 028 8676 6670
E - sarah@ruralcommunitynetwork.org.

Funding Opportunities

BIG offers funding advice on connecting older people programme

Northern Ireland organisations planning to apply for a grant from the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Out: Connecting Older People programme have been advised to get their project proposals in ASAP.

The £20million programme supports the most isolated and excluded older people across NI, including those affected by bereavement, disability or long term illness, or those who live in residential care or sheltered housing.

Organisations can apply for grants of up to £500,000 to help improve their lives by running activities such as physical and mental health projects, volunteering programmes or projects that bring isolated older people and young people together.

The Big Lottery Fund has advised that the closing date for organisations to send in the Outline Proposal Form for their project is 29 February 2012.

For more information go to: http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_reachingout_older_people.htm?regioncode=-uk&tab=2

For queries contact the Big Lottery Fund's Information team at 028 9055 1455 or at:

enquiries.ni@biglotteryfund.org.uk

PBNI - Community Development grants

The Probation Board NI invites applications for financial assistance in 2012/2013 from organisations offering services that seek to challenge and change attitudes and behaviour of offenders.

Funding is available for activities to be provided for adjudicated offenders in the following areas:

- personal development / mentoring / interpersonal skills / healthy lifestyles
- offending behaviour programmes supervision of offenders under a Community Service Order.

For more information including guidance and to download the Application Form visit <http://www.pbni.org.uk>.

Applications should be returned to:

Mr Brendan McDowell, Community Development Section, PBNI Headquarters, 80-90 North Street, Belfast, BT1 1LD

Email: CD@pbni.gsi.gov.uk

Closing Date: 25th of November 2011.

Epic awards - deadline extended: 5pm 30 Nov

The Epic Awards 2011 are an initiative of Voluntary Arts, the national development agency for arts participation. The awards are aimed at recognising voluntary artistic activity carried out by groups across the UK (which now includes NI and RoI).

Each winning group will receive annual membership of Arts Development UK, worth £165, and the winner of each of the four categories also gets £250 worth of GreatArt gift vouchers. Any voluntary or amateur art and craft group / organisation in the UK or Republic of Ireland can enter that meets the following criteria:

- Arts and crafts activities that people undertake for self-improvement, social networking and leisure, but not primarily for payment.
- Groups that are self-organised. They may have support and guidance from a paid worker, particularly if there are support needs within the group, but generally the definition would be a group run by volunteers, and whose participants are volunteers.
- Not for profit community groups where arts and crafts make up a significant proportion if not the total sum of the group's activities.

For the full criteria and to download an entry form, visit <http://epicawards.co.uk>

Sector Updates

Northern Ireland Charity Commission

Work is still under way to properly define the public benefit test deeming a group charitable in the eyes of the new Charity Commission.

A Charities (Amendment) Bill has been tabled before the Assembly and its passage will be scrutinised by the Social Development Committee during October and November.

A record of the proceedings of the committee is available on the Assembly website and meetings of the committee are normally open to the public.

For further information on the work of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland visit:

charitycommissionni.org.uk/index.aspx

The Future of Cheques...

Community & Voluntary sector groups will be glad to hear that the Payments Council has revoked plans to scrap the cheque system by 2018. The Council recently announced that cheques will continue for as long as customers need them and the target for possible closure of the cheque clearing in 2018 has been cancelled. The Payments Council Board will focus on security, efficiency and encouraging innovation in all types of payments to ensure customers have options best suited to the 21st century.

The decision to withdraw the facility to guarantee a cheque using a plastic card stands. This was withdrawn at the end of June 2011 but you can of course still use a cheque and businesses can still choose to accept them.

Development Trust Model & Asset-led Regeneration

Thursday, 1 December, 10am – 12 pm

Lisburn Enterprise Centre, Lisburn BT28 2BP

Development Trusts are community owned and led, cultivate enterprise, develop community assets, and can transform communities for good. Development Trusts are community enterprises working to create wealth in communities and keep it there. They work from the premise that regeneration can only really work if those most affected by poverty and marginalisation are empowered to steer, participate and help deliver the transformation of their Community.

They are Community 'anchor' organisations, delivering services and facilities, finding solutions to local problems, and helping other organizations and initiatives succeed. Their trading profits are not for private benefit or gain; rather they are used to create a lasting impact on the renewal and improvement of their locality. In order to be financially sustainable, they

aim to avoid over-dependence on a single funder, and also aim to reduce dependence on long term grant aid.

The Development Trust have drawn together a range of experts from Scotland and England who have practical experience of working within communities as they become more sustainable and resilient, support better community services, and strengthen local accountability as they build an asset base. The Development Trust invites you to come meet with practitioners from within the Development Trust movement in England, the Asset Transfer Unit, local practitioners, civil servants and local government representatives to discover more about the Development Trust Model Community Asset Transfer and how The Development Trust tackle Social Justice through Enterprise.

Contact: T: 02892 669685 / E: info@dtni.org.uk / www.dtni.org.uk

NWCN – Annual General Meeting 2011

Open Invitation:

“Taking The North-West Forward”

12.30pm, 1 December 2011 (including lunch)

Conference Room
Ráth Mór, Bligh’s Lane, Creggan, Derry~Londonderry

Confirmed Speakers: Eamonn Deane, Holywell Trust & Walled City Community Partnership / Maureen Hetherington, The Junction / Conal McFeely, Creggan Enterprises Ltd & U4D / Gerard McCleave, Ilex URC

Themes to be addressed:

- The need for Social Enterprise**
- Statutory responsibility for continuing peace-building**
- Alternative models for sustaining community activism**
- Meeting the educational demands/rights of our young people**
- Delivering on Regeneration**

Please notify NWCN of your intention to attend as capacity is limited. All are welcome while only current NWCN members are entitled to vote on motions presented at the AGM. Membership can be quickly activated by returning the *pro forma* below, with your £10 / €13 subscription fee.

NWCN is always keen to promote diversity in its Executive Committee. There are opportunities for new nominations and co-options in the current year so if your organisation is interested in having representation, this form can be downloaded at: www.nwcn.org or contact the Network (028 71 279090 or info@nwcn.org).

Your Organisation:

Name Of Organisation: _____

Named Contact(s) & Designation: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax: _____

Email(s): _____

(feel free to submit multiple emails but identify primary contact address)

Website: _____

Brief Description Of Organisation’s Role & Activities: _____