

TERMS OF REFERENCE

A REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR SUPPORTING THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

1. The Voluntary & Community/Third Sector (The Sector) makes an important contribution to all aspects of public and community life here in Northern Ireland. Within DSD, the Voluntary and Community Unit (VCU) plays a lead role in supporting an enterprising and sustainable sector. This relationship is formally reflected in the Concordat and there are also important linkages with the Urban Regeneration and Community Development Framework, Supporting Action 4 – ***'We will promote an effective and efficient Voluntary and Community Sector'***.

THE REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT PROGRAMME

2. The Regional Infrastructure Support Programme (RISP) administered by VCU is geared to ensure that, at a regional level, the sector has access to the important support it needs in order to function effectively and efficiently. RISP currently comprises the following key strands:
 - a) **Generic strand** a joint arrangement between DSD & DARD, geared to support The Sector in respect of representation, training board members, capacity building, handling governance issues, income generation;
 - (b) **Volunteering Support strand** geared to support, promote and maximise volunteering across NI;
 - (c) **Women in disadvantaged/rural areas strand** a joint programme between DSD & DARD, geared to maximise the ability of women living in disadvantaged/rural areas to contribute to their communities;
 - (d) **Faith based engagement strand** geared to maximise the contribution of faith communities in tackling poverty and disadvantage;
 - (f) **Generalist advice strand**, geared to support the generalist advice network in terms of, for example, training advisors, coordinating

management information, quality standards, complex casework, modernising the sector, support in implementing the planned welfare reforms etc.

3. The RISP has been in operation since October 2012, when the Generic, Faith and Generalist Advice strands came into effect. The two remaining strands: women in disadvantaged/rural areas and volunteering support came into effect in October 2013). A formal external evaluation of each of the strands is currently nearing completion and will be available shortly with funding mostly in place until 31 March 2016.

THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

4. Alongside the conclusions and recommendations from the evaluations, VCU recognises that the environment within which The Sector operates has substantially changed. A number of key drivers for change have been identified as follows:

- a need to focus more clearly on outcomes (a Concordat commitment);
- a more challenging budget environment, the need for efficiencies and the need for consideration/adoption of alternative funding mechanisms (a Concordat commitment);
- the need to focus regional support arrangements to better support and develop stability and sustainability in the sector;
- a need to signal leadership in respect of change and transformation in the sector;
- the Reform of Local Government and the need for regional support arrangements to 'dovetail' with the needs of the new councils;
- the need for more social innovation;
- a new PfG and Departmental structure reflecting changing priorities, and
- the Delivering Social Change Policy Framework.

REVIEW OF SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS

5. Taking account of all of the above, it is now proposed to initiate a formal review of infrastructure support with the key aim of ensuring that support arrangements are fit for purpose over the next 5-7 years. Linking in with the conclusions and recommendations from the RISP evaluations, VCU will lead the review, supported by a team appointed by the Strategic Investment Board.

CO-DESIGN AND INNOVATION

6. Taking account of the Concordat between the NI Government and the sector, the Department is keen to involve the sector in a partnership approach to the review. A **Co-design** approach will therefore be utilised to afford the sector an appropriate opportunity to be directly involved and contribute to the development of arrangements..
7. Public Sector Reform Division is leading on the Innovation lab concept. Innovation labs are an internationally recognised methodology offering a fresh, alternative approach to developing both strategic and tactical solutions to complex policy, operational and social problems. Each lab brings together a group of experts from academia, sectoral representatives, operational delivery, policy making and service users into a creative space to co-design and co-produce innovative solutions to an agreed challenge. Accordingly, the Northern Ireland Public Service Innovation Lab will also be used to offer a fresh approach to developing both strategic and tactical solutions linked to support arrangements

GENERALIST ADVICE

- 8 Given the linkages between generalist advice and the more broadly based specialist advice agenda across the NI Executive Departments, it is planned that a review of the way in which advice services are organised, supported and delivered will be conducted separately, linking in with the development of an action plan to support the delivery of the new generalist Advice Strategy

'Advising, Supporting, Empowering'. A review of arrangements for supporting the generalist advice network will not therefore form part of this TOR.

BROAD TIMESCALES FOR THE REVIEW

9. Broad timescales (subject to ongoing review) are set out as follows;

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| June 15 | - | Evaluations of existing support strands formally completed. |
| June – October 15 | - | Research, engagement and first phase co-design |
| October – Nov 15 | - | Innovation lab |
| November to December 15 | - | Second phase co design |
| January – March 16 | - | any formal consultation and Departmental response. |
| April 16 | - | move to implementation |

AIMS OF THE REVIEW

10. The overall aim of the review is to ***ensure that appropriate and effective arrangements are in place to support the important work of the sector, particularly in terms of transformation, sustainability and stability, over the next 5 to 7 years.*** In particular the review will:

- a) develop and make recommendations as regards the shape and form of arrangements for supporting the sector over the next 5-7 years;
- b) consider and make recommendations as regards delivery arrangements;
and
- c) oversee the implementation arrangements.