**MINUTES**

**JOINT FORUM BETWEEN GOVERNMENT and the VOLUNTARY and COMMUNITY SECTOR**

**MEETING 1/2019**

**JOINT FORUM MEETING, February 2019**

Date: Thursday 7 February 2019

Location: NICVA

ATTENDEES

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| Name | Organisation |
| Joanna McConway | Voluntary and Community Division, DfC |
| Annie McGowan | Department for Economy (DfE) |
| Ryan Black | SOLACE/Belfast City Council |
| Stephen McCourt | Department of Justice (DoJ) |
| Cathy Malone | DAERA |
| Glenda Davies | Sandy Row Community Forum |
| Jonny Currie | East Belfast Development Agency (EBCDA) |
| Ellen Finlay | Children in NI |
| Lorraine Griffin | COSTA |
| Denise Hayward | Volunteer Now |
| Clare Anne Magee | Carers NI |
| Anne Marie McClure | Start 360 |
| Siobhan McAlister | NICVA |
| Geoff Nuttall | NICVA |
| Craig McGuicken | NI Environment Link (NIEL) |
| Kevin Murphy | Voluntary Arts Ireland |
| Anne McVicker | Womens Resource and Development Agency |
| Kate Clifford | Rural Community Network |

Apologies:

Brendan Heaney Diabetes UK, Chris Quinn NI Youth Forum, David Smyth Evangelical Alliance, William Redpath DOJ, Angela Starkey DfI, Paul Doran DOJ, Brenard McClure DfI, Bryan Laverty DfE, Gabrielle Kerr DfI, Pauline Keegan DAERA, Rosie Drysdale DoH, Andy Cole TEO, Nick Cochrane DoF, Clare Mullen BCC, Marc Bailie DoH, Alison McCullagh NILGA

MINUTES

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| Welcome & Introductions | Glenda welcomes everyone and did a round table of introductions. |
| Previous Minutes | It was highlighted that the minutes from Oct 2018 were too condensed and to ensure that minutes adequately reflected discussion. It was also highlighted that apologies need to be included. |
| Issues Table | The condensed issues table was presented. Glenda highlighted that it would be useful for the public sector to better engage with the issues table and to utilize it to highlight issues from public sector.  **Updates & Discussion points**  Inconsistency across government departments in relation to governance:  Work is on-going in relation to the issue of HMRC Employers’ Allowance and inconsistent approach across Departments. DfC are liaising with DoF to consider the issue in the context of individual Departmental responsibilities and the potential for NICS-wide guidance. It was also highlighted that this issue is on new DoF Perm Sec Sue Gray’s radar. Joanna hoping to get further information on this issue for the next meeting.  The point was raised that there is also an issue with auto-enrollment of pensions which is creating two tiers of workers on different pension contributions.  It was also highlighted that there is also an inconsistent approach in relation to full-cost recovery under funding and TUPE under procurement.  Joanna advised that she and Arthur Scott and are undertaking a scoping exercise about funding of the VCS.  It was agreed by VCS reps that Addressing Bureaucracy work that was undertaken a few years ago is slipping and this work should be revisited.  **Action Point 1: Convene a meeting to revisit Addressing Bureaucracy paper to highlight these slippages within departments.**  Community Planning  A number of plans have been published and organisations are having different experiences across different councils. SOLACE Joint Forum rep Ryan Black advised that the council are struggling with community planning and getting the sector to engage with this process. He highlighted that they are keen to get a discussion on how best to maximise participation. It was suggested that this would be the perfect subject matter for the Open Government network in terms of innovative types of engagement and participation  **Action Point 2: AskSOLACE rep Ryan Black to facilitate a presentation on this issue with the potential to involve OGN/Involve?**  Brexit:  It was highlighted that Brexit and no deal preparation was taking away resources and capacity from departments here with work on being impacted by the transfer of staff. Clare Ann Magee highlighted that an example of this was the Review of Adult social care- work had stalled on this until recently with the project board not meeting for a year due to staff in DoH moving to Brexit work.  Kevin Murphy also highlighted the paper from Theatre NI highlighting the impact on the arts. (Paper attached)  Geoff Nuttall also pointed to the work being undertaken by NICVA which can be seen in NICVA Brexit hub, includes case studies, reports and position paper.  It was also highlighted that there is little detail on the Shared Prosperity Fund which is the programme to replace EU structural funds. Kate Clifford had highlighted that the rural development programme may be wiped out as there is no mention of rural development in SPF.  The point was raised that there is no resource going into the voluntary and community sector for Brexit readiness. Organisations are spending thousands of pounds on Brexit engagement but are not being allocated any extra money or resources to do this.  Annie McGowan (DfE) highlighted that DfE are doing 4 draw-downs from Europe before end of March and this is taking up a lot of time in that department. Maeve Hamilton (DfE) is looking at SPF within the DfE and it is recognized that DfE need to link in with DfC on SPF. This department within DfE also risk losing staff who are ESF technical assistance.  **Action Point 3: Questions on how Joint Forum/VCS can influence the Shared Prosperity Fund? Can Maeve Hamilton provide an update?**  Policy and Practice:  Reflect on UK Civil Society strategy, Building Change Trust legacy, work of Open Government Network.  **Action Point 4: Seek an update on the gender equality strategy from DfC reps?**  **Action Point 5: Joint Forum members to submit their top 5 priority issues/presentations by Thursday 14 February.** |
| Delivering Outcomes Together (D.O.T) Update | Glenda highlighted that this new document recognizes the role, structure, collaboration and outcomes of the Joint Forum with a focus on culture and capacity in support of achieving the PfG outcomes.  It was highlighted that the both the sectors should retain their independence and maintain a challenge function in Joint Forum.  We also need to highlight in document why working collaboratively in partnership matters to people.  **Action Point 6: DOT to be updated to reflect these issues.** |
| Sub-Group updates  Drug & Alcohol misuse  Annual Reports | Glenda and Joanna met with representative from DoH who was interested in the mechanism of the Joint Forum to have a wider conversation on the strategy.  **Action Point 7: Convene meeting sector wide with all relevant people and organisations to feed into pre-consultation of strategy.**  Sub-group have not yet met. Agreed that one annual report would be sufficient for the two years.  Kate highlighted that it would be good to include a bio on Joint Forum reps and organisations in the Annual reports.  **Action Point 8: Siobhan to follow up with Susan Hunter to arrange a meeting.** |
| Marketing and promotion | Denise Hayward leading on this group. Clare Ann Magee and Siobhan to also be involved.  Joanna to push article on Joint Forum out to Permanent Secretaries. |
| Welfare Reform/Social Security discussion | Joanna gave an update on work in the department in relation to Universal Credit:  A Universal Credit Operation Forum with Advice Sector meets bi-monthly and comprises:  Kevin Higgins – Advice NI;  Patricia Lyons – Advice Space;  Pat Colton – Advice Space;  Jennifer Greenfield – Law Centre NI;  Owen McCloskey – Legal Centre NI;  Elizabeth Griffith - Law Centre NI.  The Universal Credit Programme also engage with the voluntary and community sector through a series of awareness events and interactive sessions with Customer Representative Group; Council Liaison Group; and a wide and varied range of those organisations that are held on the Universal Credit stakeholder list (circa 500 organisations). All events are open invitation and to date have been attended by over 2,000 people  Conversation around how we communicate of the stories and anecdotal evidence of the impact welfare reform is having on the voluntary and community sector and citizens.  In relation to rural issues, Kate Clifford highlighted that there is a UC migration pilot happening in England, RCN have written to the department monitor this pilot to find out the impact it is having in rural areas and to learn from this in order to influence the roll out in NI.  Kate outlined a number of stories of difficulties experienced by people in rural areas in relation to the rigid operation of universal credit process. Difficulties in rural areas include access to broadband & computers, sanctions, impact of rural transport, lack of advice services. The wider than VCS was also raised- GPs time being taken up redacting notes for PIP assessments- another unintended consequence.  It was highlighted that there is massive effort from the VCS to mitigate the unintended consequences of UC in terms of time, money, time, resources.    Joint Forum need to focus on issues that we can influence, possibly future mitigation?  **Action Point 9: Convene a separate discussion on the issue of Impacts of welfare reform. Joint Forum to submit a briefing note to highlight what the focus of this discussion will be.** |
| AOB | Charity Commission NI looking to appoint a chief commissioner, particularly interested in women applying.  Highlighted that NI is in the national action plan which can be accessed on.gov.uk website (cabinet office). This is being launched on Open Government week 11-17 March.  Highlighted that the Fresh Start women’s strategy going into next year but there has been not evaluation published for previous year, it would be good to find out where that evaluation is.  Childcare for All campaign conference in Riddel Hall on 11 March. Can register to attend via Employers for Childcare/WRDA.  Working Carers report published  Small capital grants programme opened up.  Date of next meeting 6 June. |

ACTIONS

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| Action | Owner |
| **Action Point 1: Convene a meeting to revisit Addressing Bureaucracy paper to highlight these slippages within departments.** | NICVA/DFC/Chairs |
| **Action Point 2: Asked SOLACE rep Ryan Black to facilitate a presentation on community planning with the potential to involve OGN/Involve?** |  |
| **Action Point 3: Questions on how Joint Forum/VCS can influence the Shared Prosperity Fund? Can Maeve Hamilton provide an update?** |  |
| **Action Point 4: Seek an update on the gender equality strategy from DfC reps?** | DfC |
| **Action Point 5: Joint Forum members to submit their top 5 priority issues/presentations by Thursday 14 February.** | All |
| **Action Point 6: DOT to be updated to reflect issues raised in DOT discussion.** | CAT team |
| **Action Point 7: Convene meeting sector wide with all relevant people and organisations to feed into pre-consultation of strategy.** | Alcohol and drugs sub-team. |
| **Action Point 8: Siobhan to follow up with Susan Hunter to arrange a meeting of Annual Reports sub-group.** | Siobhan |
| **Action Point 9: Convene a separate discussion on the issue of Impacts of welfare reform. Joint Forum to submit a briefing note to highlight what the focus of this discussion will be.** | NICVA/DfC/Chairs |
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