

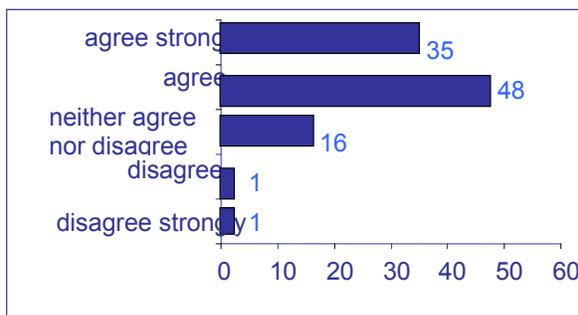
Viewfinder

The second viewfinder has been as thought provoking as the first, providing an insight into the views of the sector on issues like Community Relations; Taskforce; 60 Day Action Team and Civil Society

Community Relations

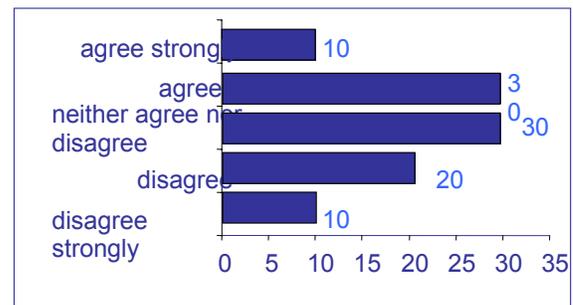
A society characterised by division has been the norm in Northern Ireland since the 1970s. Several government initiatives were set up to deal with this problem, eg Central Community Relations Unit in 1987 followed by the Community Relations Council which was set up in 1990. But is addressing division in society something that voluntary and community organisations should consider as part of their objectives? Viewfinder 2 revealed that the vast majority of respondents (96%) believed that the voluntary and community sector should have a role in community relations, in fact 84% of respondents were taking part in community relations work. Only 10% of respondents believed that they would not get involved in community relations due to the existence of specific community relations voluntary and community organisations. And as can be seen from Graph 1, the vast majority of respondents felt that the voluntary and community sector's recent work has had a positive effect on community relations.

Graph 1 The voluntary and community sector's recent work has had a positive effect on community relations %



Due to the divisions in society voluntary and community groups have developed organically in both protestant and catholic areas. As a consequence of these divisions resources have not been shared. Graph 2 shows that 40% of respondents felt that there was a duplication of resources. Clearly the voluntary and community sector must ask itself some serious questions about the allocation of resources and begin to establish a solution.

Graph 2 Due to divisions in the community, there is a duplication of community resources %



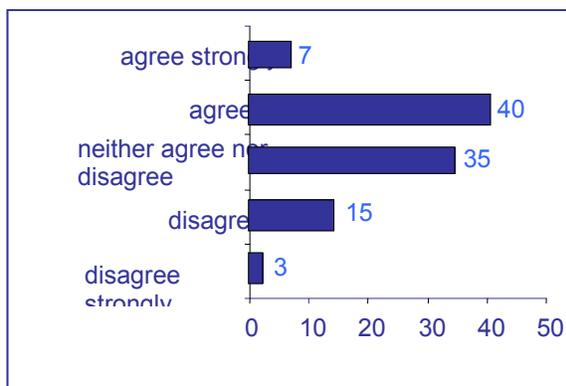
Results from Viewfinder 2 show that the voluntary and community sector is very good at promoting community relations among its own staff, with 85% of organisations stating they have taken part in this. Some of the initiatives established by organisations include developing community relations policies, team building, training, promoting an inclusive atmosphere, awareness raising and constant cross-community contact.

Task Force

The Task Force on Resourcing the Voluntary and Community Sector was established in February 2003 and has published a position paper - *Pathways for Change*. This paper has been published

to share thinking, to promote discussion and to prompt comment on issues around the future support of the voluntary and community sector. Asked if they were aware of the Task Force, 80% of respondents to Viewfinder 2 said they were. They were also equally aware of the actual position paper published by the Task Force, *Pathways for Change*. Less obvious to respondents has been the inner workings of the Task Force. Only half of respondents either agree or agree strongly that the Task Force has been working in an open and transparent way. As for seeking the views of the voluntary and community sector, only half of respondents believe that the Task Force has been effective. This shows that there is a greater need to establish a more efficient consultation process. Also only half believe that the voluntary and community sector has been adequately informed. Graph 4 shows that there is some disagreement among respondents regarding how easy it has been for the voluntary and community sector to put its views across. Just over a third of respondents neither agree nor disagree, while just under a half either agree or agree strongly that it has been easy.

Graph 4 The consultation process has made it easy for our organisation to put its views across %



As for the document *Pathways for Change*, only half felt that all the necessary issues were covered. The Task Force has a wide remit and will be actively working towards identifying a

series of actions and recommendations necessary to help deliver a sustainable voluntary and community sector in the medium and long term, but only half of respondents to Viewfinder 2 believe that they will make a difference in the long term. Whether this scepticism surrounding the future sustainability is a result of the nature of the voluntary and community sector or the work of the Task Force is something which needs to be addressed in future research.

60 Day Action Team

The 60 Day Action Team was set up in December 2003 by Ian Pearson, Minister for Finance and Personnel, to cut down on Peace II bureaucracy and red tape attached to the processing of applications. So after the first 60 days has it made any significant impact? Only one fifth of respondents were aware of the 60 Day Action Team, and even fewer, 15%, knew about the 47 proposed actions. Only a tenth of respondents felt that it had made a difference to the bureaucracy attached to Peace II. The majority, 69%, neither agreed nor disagreed, which can be attributed to lack of knowledge regarding the 60 Day Action Team. As for the future 16% agree or strongly agree that a difference will be made in the future to Peace II bureaucracy.

Civil Society

Table 1 Percentage of respondents who have either a great deal or quite a lot of confidence/trust in the following institutions

The churches	38%
Funders	58%
The press	28%
Television	22%
Labour unions	22%
The police	36%
Central government	25%
Local government	35%
Political parties in general	19%
Other voluntary organisations	69%
Major companies	18%
NICVA	71%

Table 1 shows that respondents to *Viewfinder* found that NICVA was the organisation that was trusted the most, followed by other voluntary organisations. This represents a cohesive voluntary and community sector, which respects the work of other organisations and trusts them to fulfil their role adequately. Confidence/trust is also high among respondents for funders, clear evidence that the voluntary and community sector respects and honours their decisions. Major companies and political parties are the organisations that respondents have the least confidence/trust in. One surprising aspect of the results was the difference between local government and central government. It was the latter in which respondents had the greatest confidence/trust.

Viewfinder 2 was circulated to 960 NICVA members during February 2004, 27% responded.

Also contained in *Viewfinder 2* were questions relating to telephone helplines. These questions have provided vital information to organisations working in this area within Northern Ireland.

If you would like any information about the survey or how to include questions in future *Viewfinders* contact Siobhan O' Hagan at NICVA.

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NICVA would like to thank all those individuals who took the time to complete this survey. Your contribution is most appreciated.