

Viewfinder 5



The fifth Viewfinder provides an insight into a wide range of issues including views on the smoking ban to be introduced in Northern Ireland in 2007, childcare in the sector, a review of attitudes to the Year of the Volunteer, attitudes to local councils, attitudes to disability and an overview of the key issues likely to affect the sector in the next five years.

Key findings

- There is overwhelming support for the introduction of the **smoking ban** in Northern Ireland (**93%**).
- Only **14.4%** of respondents feel the sector is very good at providing **affordable and accessible childcare**.
- **71.6%** of respondents believe **volunteers are crucial to the running of their organisation**.
- **45.3%** of respondents believe **the outcome of the Review of Public Administration will give the sector a stronger voice in the local community**.
- **Changes to the Disability Discrimination Act (2004)** have had a **direct impact** on **83.9% of organisations**.
- **Funding, the RPA and whether we have an Assembly** are viewed to be the **most important** issues likely to affect the sector in the **next five years**.

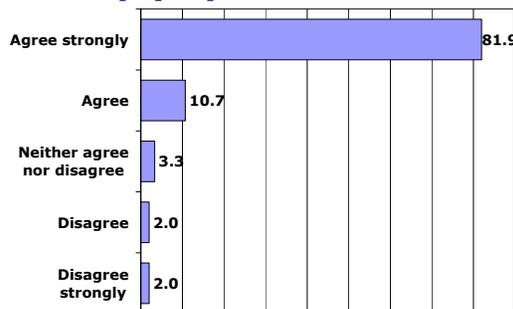
Stub it out

The announcement of the smoking ban in public places in Northern Ireland has attracted

much media attention. The smoking ban will come into effect in April 2007 and it will cover workplaces and enclosed public places, including bars and restaurants. There have been strong arguments made in the media for and against such a ban being introduced. At its core, this ban is being introduced as smoking is the greatest cause of ill health and preventable death in Northern Ireland. When Shaun Woodward, Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, announced the ban, he stated that the move would lead to the prevention of thousands of unnecessary deaths and smoking-related illnesses. *Viewfinder 4* was issued prior to this announcement and it questioned respondents on their attitude to the prospect of a future smoking ban in Northern Ireland. In June 2005 there was overwhelming support amongst respondents for a smoking ban in public places in Northern Ireland (84.6%) and 88.1% of

respondents believed that all organisations in the sector should be smoke-free. After the introduction of the smoking ban, *Viewfinder 5* examined if its introduction had changed attitudes. This survey has revealed a further growth in support of the smoking ban. 93% of individuals agreed or strongly agreed that its introduction is a positive development and 92.7% of individuals believe that all organisations in the sector should be smoke-free. In the past there have been a number of public campaigns designed to encourage smokers to give up, although only 29.6% of individuals feel they have been successful and over half (52.6%) of respondents do not hold an opinion. An overwhelming 93% of respondents believe that the smoking ban in public places will improve the health of people in this country.

Figure 1: A smoking ban in public places will improve the health of people in this country (%)



Who will love my children?

The notion of childcare provision as something of public interest and responsibility is an issue that brings to the surface contradictions in the changing nature of society. It focuses our attention on these contradictions particularly with regard to traditional views around responsibilities for caring. Furthermore, it directs our attention to the growing diversity of families, and to issues concerning the changing roles of women and men today.

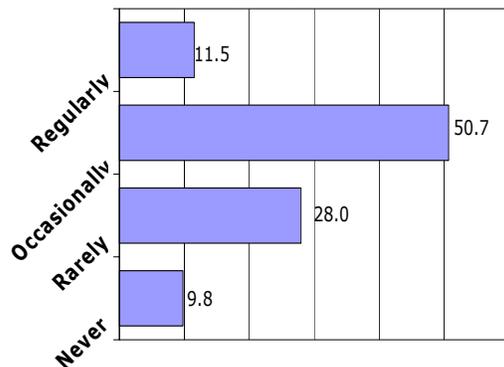
The availability of childcare provision can facilitate opportunities for promotion, access to full-time employment and access to career development opportunities. For this reason *Viewfinder 5* sought to examine the issue of childcare and support for childcare in the sector. 75% of organisations which responded to this survey have family friendly working hours in place, although only 14.4% of individuals feel the sector is very good at providing affordable and accessible childcare for employees and volunteers and only 19.9% of organisations provide employee support for childcare.

Employers for Childcare Vouchers offer a simple and

flexible way to help staff save on registered childcare costs. Companies which provide childcare vouchers for employees can save up to 12.8% on the value of vouchers through exemptions from national insurance contributions. *Viewfinder 5* found that only 6.3% of employers in the sector offer this voucher scheme to employees.

This survey found that problems with childcare impinge occasionally or regularly on almost two-thirds (62.2%) of individuals' working lives in the sector.

Figure 2: Problems with childcare impinge on working lives in our organisation (%)



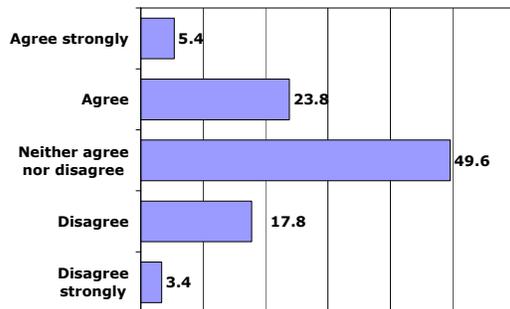
Childcare provision is not the only issue that requires attention; there is the wider issue of work-life balance. *Viewfinder 5* found that over half of individuals surveyed (54.4%) found it difficult to strike an appropriate work-life

balance while working in the sector.

Year of the Volunteer

The Year of the Volunteer in 2005 was designed to create awareness of, increase the opportunities for, and encourage more people to get involved in volunteering. At the end of 2005, *Viewfinder 5* examined the issue of volunteering. Almost three-quarters (71.6%) of individuals surveyed believe volunteers are crucial to the running of their organisations. Less than a quarter (22.9%) of organisations surveyed had organised special events in recognition of the Year of the Volunteer. Events which were organised included days out, award ceremonies and celebration dinners. *Viewfinder 5* sought to discover if the Year of the Volunteer had increased interest in volunteering in Northern Ireland.

Figure 3: Media interest in the Year of the Volunteer has increased interest in volunteering (%)



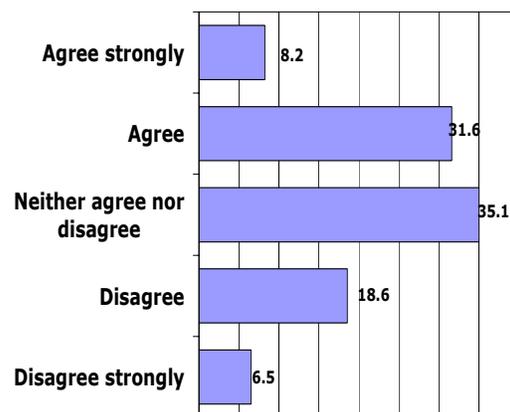
Less than three in every ten people surveyed believe that media interest in the Year of the Volunteer has increased interest in volunteering.

The voice of the people

Voluntary and community activity in Northern Ireland has a long history. Years of direct rule in Northern Ireland led to the sector participating in policy-making to a degree that is unusual elsewhere. The role of the sector in various aspects of policy-making is now well recognised. In addition funding arrangements have often required councils to work closely with the sector. The publication *Positive Steps (2005)* clearly states that effective partnerships between government and the sector can help government achieve its objectives. *Viewfinder 5* analysed relationships organisations in the sector have with their local councils. 40.6%

of respondents described their relationship as good or excellent, 39.2% described their relationship as okay and 20.2% of respondents described their relationship as poor or extremely poor. This survey also examined views on the role of local councillors.

Figure 4: Local councillors are actively involved in voluntary and community activity in our area (%)



Approximately four in every ten individuals surveyed feel that local councillors are actively involved in voluntary and community activity in their area. However a further three in ten individuals do not have an opinion on the role of local councillors in their local area and one in every ten individuals do not feel that local councillors are actively involved in voluntary and community work. 33.3% of *Viewfinder 5* respondents feel that their local council is open and accessible; however 40.9% of respondents

do not hold an opinion on this matter. 32.7% of respondents feel local councillors sideline the needs of the sector but 43.5% do not hold an opinion on this issue. It is interesting that this *Viewfinder* has found that a number of respondents did not hold an opinion on the operations of their local council. The Review of Public Administration (RPA) will lead to a reduced number of councils with a greater remit, including the introduction of community planning. The survey sought to discover if respondents to this survey feel that this change will give the sector a stronger voice in shaping the local community. 17.8% of respondents do not feel it will give the sector a stronger voice and a further 36.9% of respondents did not have an opinion on the matter. 45.3% of respondents are more positive and feel that it will give the community a stronger voice in shaping their local community. Until these changes are put in place the jury will remain out with regard to the affect on the sector. Regardless of the outcome of the reorganisation of local government, there will be a role for the sector in local planning and service delivery. This may require some partnership working to ensure the sector is effectively represented in future community planning.

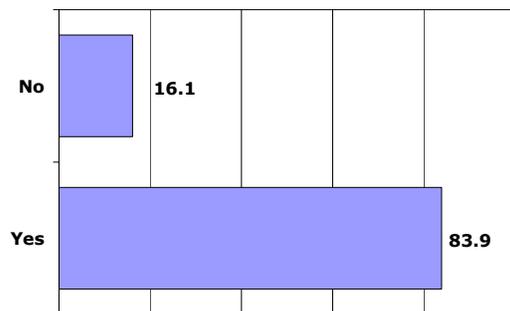
Disability: Moving beyond the label

Anti-discrimination work and legislation have a long history in Northern Ireland. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) introduced in 1995 in Northern Ireland gives disabled people rights in relation to employment, access to goods, facilities and services, and the management, buying or renting of property. Since 1 October 1999, employers have been required to make reasonable adjustments where any physical feature of premises or any arrangements made by or on behalf of the employer cause a substantial disadvantage to a disabled person.

There were a number of exemptions in the DDA (1995) and in recognition of this, significant changes to the employment provisions of the DDA were brought about by the Disability Discrimination (Amendment Northern Ireland) Regulations 2004 which came into effect on 1 October 2004. The Regulations introduce a new definition of discrimination into the DDA known as direct discrimination which is in addition to the existing two main forms of discrimination – less favourable treatment and failure to make a reasonable adjustment. The concept of discrimination in the Act reflects an understanding that it is often

environmental factors (such as the structure of a building) or an employer's working practices, rather than limitations arising from a person's disability, which unnecessarily restrict a disabled person's ability to participate fully in society. This principle underpins the duty to make reasonable adjustments. One of the major changes is the duty to make reasonable adjustments is being extended to cover any 'provision, criterion or practice' applied by or on behalf of an employer. This means that where a provision, criterion or practice applied by or on behalf of an employer places a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared to people who are not disabled, the employer will need to consider making reasonable adjustments. *Viewfinder 5* sought to determine the impact (if any) the changes made to DDA in 2004.

Figure 5: Changes to DDA in 2004 has had a direct impact on our organisation (%)



It is clear from Figure 5 that the changes to the DDA in 2004 have impacted on the sector in Northern Ireland. The majority of respondents stated that they have had to make changes to their physical premises. In addition a number of respondents stated that since the changes they have been providing disability awareness training as part of wider programmes provided.

There has also been the removal of the small employer exemption which means the DDA will apply to all employers irrespective of size including employment in private households. A number of occupations previously excluded in the DDA (1995) are now within the scope of the legislation including police officers, fire-fighters, prison officers, and those employed on ships, hovercrafts or aircraft. The regulations extend the DDA's coverage to include, partners in firms, barristers, office holders and those on work experience placements for the purposes of vocational training.

According to *Viewfinder 5*, there is a strong perception held by 83.9% of respondents that the changes to disability legislation have made a positive difference to the lives of disabled people in Northern Ireland. However the amendments to the DDA (2004) require far reaching changes.

Training is an important way to raise awareness of the changes required. However *Viewfinder 5* found that less than half (45.6%) of respondents had participated in disability training in the last year. Legislation will provide protection to disabled people, but will not provide a change in culture in society. This is a bigger challenge which requires the effort of each of us to truly work to move beyond the label and recognise equality to be a fundamental right of every individual in society.

The future is bright

Viewfinder 5 asked respondents to list the major issues most likely to affect the sector in the next five years. The table below outlines the top five issues listed to be things most likely to affect the sector. In addition to these, there were a number of other issues individuals felt would affect the sector which were as disparate as rising oil prices to a shortage of social housing.

Table: Top five issues likely to affect the sector in next five years

	Number
Funding	211
Review of Public Administration (RPA)	68
Assembly or lack of Assembly	42
Sustainability	27
Volunteers/lack of volunteers	24

Multiple responses 634

Unsurprisingly funding is considered to be the most important issue that is likely to affect the sector in the next five. As we come to the end of Peace II and the reality of the likelihood of a much smaller and focused Peace III comes to light, many groups in the sector are finding themselves asking what is next? The contribution of the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland is well recognised both within *Positive Steps* and the Review of Public Administration (RPA). For this reason it is hoped that the changes in funding arrangements will mark at most a repositioning of the sector rather than its retreat.

Interestingly the second ranked issue viewed to affect the sector is the Review of Public Administration (RPA). The RPA is designed to create an

effective government and administration in Northern Ireland. There is a clear commitment to the establishment of partnerships in the new arrangements. Partnerships will comprise of representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. There are still a number of questions such as will members of partnerships be selected or elected? As there are likely to be various types of partnerships with different purposes, no standard template exists for their composition. This will often depend on what the objectives of the partnership are and how it aims to achieve them. The outcomes of the RPA potentially will provide the voluntary and community sector with a stronger voice in decision-making.

The RPA was initially designed to operate under devolution. Work on the RPA continues under direct rule. However the existence or lack of Assembly is viewed to be the third most important issue affecting the sector in the next five years.

Sustainability is ranked as the fourth most important issue affecting the sector. This ties closely to the issue of

funding. It also raises the issue of the need for investment in organisational capacity in the sector. As the sector evolves in Northern Ireland it is important that it can keep up with the tide of change. This requires a real investment in organisational issues such as strategic planning, governance, finance and staff training.

The fifth ranked issue viewed to be important to the sector in the next five years is volunteering and lack of volunteers. In Northern Ireland many organisations in the sector grew from a volunteering base. The value of these individuals cannot be under estimated and partly in response to valuing their work 2005 was set aside as the Year of the Volunteer. Volunteering covers such a wide spectrum that this fear of a lack of volunteers in the future may be related to particular sections of volunteering.

The **Viewfinder 5** survey was circulated to 895 NICVA members during late 2005 – 33.5% responded.

If you would like further information about the survey or how to include questions in future *Viewfinders* contact Leeann Brady as follows:

tel: 028 9087 7777 or
email: leeann.brady@nicva.org

NICVA would like to thank everyone who took part in this survey. Your contribution is greatly appreciated