
Written Ministerial Statement

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Social Development

Concordat between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Northern Ireland Government: Annual Report 2012

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Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): As you are aware, the Concordat between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Northern Ireland Government included an undertaking to report annually to the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly on issues impacting on the Sector. In accordance with the principles contained within the Concordat, I wish to present Assembly colleagues with the first report on the implementation of the Concordat. This report includes detail on issues impacting the Voluntary and Community Sector, the progress made against selected commitments contained within the Concordat and progress made against recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee in their report 'Creating Effective Partnerships between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector'.

The Concordat is the agreed structure of engagement between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector. It sets out their shared vision and contains the agreed values and principles that underpin this partnership. The infrastructure established for managing this engagement, the Joint Government/Voluntary and Community Sector Forum (Joint Forum), is responsible for overseeing implementation of and reporting on progress on the list of commitments set out within the Concordat. I have received the first report, which I am now bringing to the attention of Executive and Assembly colleagues.

The report, which covers the first six months of operation of the Concordat, details the issues impacting upon the Voluntary and Community Sector, progress made against the first set of commitments selected for action, and progress on relevant recommendations from the Public Accounts Committee report of January 2012.

Progress over the last six months has been substantial and I have been impressed by the commitment of representatives from the Public Sector and from the Voluntary and Community Sector to collaborative and partnership working on issues that have not proven easy to resolve. A great deal of energy and thought has gone into the design of structures and arrangements for working together to provide the roadmap for future action and bring effective and efficient results in the coming years.

Complex issues, such as bureaucracy, cocktail funding, and the need for partnership input into policy-making and the necessity for an outcomes approach to funding are all being addressed by a number of separate Concordat Action Teams and I look forward to future reports on all of these important issues.

The attached report shows progress made towards addressing these issues in a manner which has been robust, accountable and transparent. Significant progress has already been made against a number of Concordat commitments and this will continue over the coming year. New and refreshed structures of engagement, together with commitment from the highest levels of the Public Sector and the Voluntary and Community Sector, are helping to make a valuable contribution to people-centred public services and the development of a better civil society.

I am very pleased to commend this report to my Executive and Assembly colleagues and to endorse the progress made over the past six

months. The implementation of the Concordat commitments and the identification and resolution of issues affecting the Voluntary and Community Sector can only assist Government and Voluntary and Community Sector partnership working, which aims to better serve the people of Northern Ireland.

A copy of the report has been published on the DSD website and can be accessed from http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/voluntary_and_community/vc-publications.htm