

Ballymoney Community Resource Centre

For the community, by the community, with the community.



**Submission from Ballymoney Community
Resource Centre to the Call for Evidence by the
Social Development Committee in relation to the
Regeneration Bill**

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Background Information

Ballymoney Community Resource Centre (BCRC) is funded through the Community Investment Fund to provide a support network for community and voluntary groups; providing advice, guidance and information on community development issues, projects and funding; as well as focused support to areas of weak community infrastructure (Including three Small Pockets of Deprivation). BCRC is committed to promoting universal rights and addressing inequalities and also manages an Ethnic Minority and Migrant Workers Support Project for the Causeway Coast and Glens area, a CRC core funded Community relations Programme, a Reaching Out: Connecting Older People's project and a Disability Development Programme. BCRC organises events, seminars, conferences, and the website and newsletter promote the work of the local community and voluntary sector. Other services include needs analysis, research and evaluation, use of venue and office equipment etc. BCRC is particularly active in promoting cultural diversity and equality. As most of our area of influence is rural, we are also very active in addressing issues of rural isolation and inequality.

Ballymoney Community Resource Centre aims:

To articulate the voice of the community and voluntary sector and provide a link to policy and decision making at local and regional level;

To promote and facilitate relevant training and capacity building initiatives to the community and voluntary sector in the NE, in order to increase group capacity and sustainability;

To promote good relations and build social capital throughout the new Causeway Coast and Glens council district;

To promote a networking culture;

To manage and develop the Disability Programme;

To manage and develop the Ethnic Minority and Migrant Workers support programme;

To provide support and services to older people;

To provide relevant, accessible information to community and voluntary groups to aid the advancement of their community and work.

RESPONSE

Ballymoney Community Resource Centre (BCRC) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Call for Evidence by the Social Development Committee in relation to the Regeneration Bill and the transfer of powers to the new councils. Along with Causeway Rural and Urban Network (CRUN), Ballymoney Community Resource Centre is one of two independent CIF funded networks delivering effective, value for money services to the third sector in the Causeway Coast and Glens area and beyond.

The CIF funding allows both organisations to offer:

- Community Development Support for over 200 groups each
- Training and Capacity Building
- Support for groups to be sustainable – fundraising support
- Supporting groups to apply to the NI Charities Commission
- Mentoring Support
- Providing a voice for the community and facilitating consultations
- Research and evaluation – including community audits
- Strategic and Action Planning – village plans

In addition to these core community development activities and services, the existence of our organisational infrastructure has allowed us to lever additional funding from other statutory bodies and Trusts and Foundations to deliver a further range of cost effective services to address additional needs within our local communities. Our additional funders include CRC, OFMDFM, PHA, NHSCT, Big Lottery, BBC Children in Need, and local PCSPs, who support the following services:

- Causeway Locality Community Navigator for Older People
- Disability Development
- Drugs and Alcohol Education and Prevention – for community groups and health professionals
- Good relations and community cohesion projects
- MARA
- Migrant and Ethnic Minority Support
- OCN Accredited Training
- Rocking the Causeway Project
- Suicide and Mental Health Small Grant Programmes
- Health and Wellbeing Small Grants
- Support for Older People
- Social Enterprise Training
- Youth Inclusion – including the YEAR project

A recent survey conducted on behalf of all CIF funded organisations, and to which there was a response rate of over 90%, revealed that the CIF Core Funding allowed just 24 groups to lever in over 9 million pounds into their own organisations to deliver projects in 2014. Those same groups levered in at least a further £7.6 million to member groups and other organisations in 2014.

The advantages of maintaining the current infrastructure are manifold:

For Communities and Stakeholders	For Partners – including councils and funders	For the Community Development Networks
Access to more information both local and regional	One point of contact	Shared resources/courses/conferences etc
More expertise	Greater value for money	Avoids duplication and improves co-ordination of resources
Greater Resources	More opportunities and investment	Greater diversity of skills and experience
Services stay local and independent	More informed and better coordinated community sector creates a strong voice which can aid and influence decision makers	Working as a partnership enhances lobbying and understanding of operational functions by those at a strategic level
Stronger voice for lobbying (more effective and well informed)	Review of Public Administration - the Networks provide a tried and tested model to be rolled out across the region	Decreases fragmentation
Opportunities for sharing good practice and building relationships	Less liability with fewer contracts	Joint objectives - excludes 'silo' thinking
User friendly support		

However, should the CIF monies which support 26 independent organisations be transferred to councils without being ring-fenced - £1.5 million will be lost to the community and voluntary sector directly. The Fermanagh Trust survey also discovered that as many as 16 of the 26 organisations will close their doors if they lose CIF monies and are not core funded by Councils. It was also apparent from the survey that a number of those who will close without CIF core funding understand from their Councils that the 'CIF money' will be used in house. If this is the case they will close. The loss of core funding from CIF will lead to over 70 redundancies immediately and may lead to an additional 56 job losses (22responses) as other major funders question the capacity of groups such

as ourselves to maintain other projects without core funding. Only 2 of the 26 organisations will be able to sustain current employment levels.

Ballymoney Community Resource Centre and Causeway Rural and Urban Network (along with North Antrim Community Network, the DARD contracted rural support network) have engaged with their Councils on CIF and the community support infrastructure, but we are concerned that services to the community and voluntary sector will be severely compromised by proposed changes. Maintaining the status quo or deferring the transfer of funding until there can be a synchronisation with rural community development provision would further protect levels of service provision across the third sector.

BCRC further believes that in order to bring people and communities together and build stronger relationships founded on trust greater emphasis should be placed on developing and implementing plans to address the following:

Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling disadvantage. We have to demonstrate a real commitment to addressing the 'hard issues'. Tackling the 'multiple social issues effecting and entrenching community separation, exclusion and hate' is an area in which the community networks excel. This fits well with the theme of regeneration and 'community renewal' and is of particular importance in areas of relative deprivation. It is particularly important in times of recession that addressing social deprivation should continue to be a priority, to avoid even more 'protectionism', envy, fear and mistrust of other communities.

Encouraging shared neighbourhoods and reducing and eventually eliminating segregated services must be goals for the immediate future, resourcing segregated services cannot be sustained in times of recession.

