



Committee Clerk
Room 144
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

13TH February 2015

Dear Sir/ Madam,

We are pleased to enclose our evidence to the Social Development Committee in relation to the Regeneration Bill. (See attached).

This follows on from a letter sent to the Committee dated 16th January 2015 on behalf of the Fermanagh Trust and other funded organisations about the transfer of funding available under the Community Investment Fund to local councils as part of the arrangements for the reform of Local Government.

We would welcome the opportunity to give evidence to the Committee in person as part of the scrutiny of the Regeneration Bill.

Yours sincerely,

Lauri McCusker

Director

Encl.

Mr Lauri McCusker - Director

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Fermanagh Trust

Regeneration Bill

Consultation response to the Social Development Bill

Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the draft Bill. The implications for the independent Community and Voluntary Sector are really significant. The challenge however is the Bill provides limited detail on the impact of the proposed Bill. We encourage the Social Development Committee to provide this scrutiny and examining

Key Issues which we encourage the committee to consider;

1. The Bill **fails to honour the Government's commitment** to work together as social partners to build a participative, peaceful and inclusive community in NI. Examining the **Concordat** between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the NI Government <http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/consultation-concordat-for-relationships-between-govt-vc-sector.pdf> it is clear the development of the Regeneration Bill and its implications does not even come near to meeting the Concordat principals of Partnership working.
2. **Lack of information** – There is a significant lack of information on the proposed transfer of resources between DSD and the new Councils – How much is being transferred? For what purposes? etc

What is critical in this process is any transfer documents (between DSD and Councils)

Have Transfer Documents been developed by DSD which are integral to the agreement on what will be transferred to councils from DSD including budget lines? Have these Transfer Documents become the discussion tool for the meetings with councils to agree, disagree or otherwise, on the contents? Are the transfer documents the legal document for councils - containing all the detail as to what elements from Government Departments would transfer. Do these documents exist? Are they available for scrutiny? Have these been discussed with the Community and Voluntary Sector in an open and transparent process? If not - why not?

3. **No joined up thinking** – this was addressed in a letter the Fermanagh Trust sent to the Committee on behalf of CIF funded organisations (see appendix 1 – copy of the letter). What has become even clearer in recent weeks is how the lack of connectedness in terms of regeneration exists within the Assembly. A

recent exchange at the Social Development Committee made this very clear (see appendix 2 below)

4. **Timing** – new Councils are not ready and in many instances will not be ready to fulfil the role and outcomes currently undertaken by the CIF funded organisations. Why risk so much without having a clear understanding of the implications? The Fermanagh Trust recommends the Transfer of resources only takes place if and when there is a clear direction of travel which honours the Concordat both in spirit and action. The laissez faire approach which is currently planned is totally unacceptable and will have major repercussions on the services and support provided.
5. What are the implications if the Community Investment Fund is transferred in April 2016?

The Fermanagh Trust working with its CIF funded partners conducted a comprehensive survey of the impact on the work of the CIF funded organisations.
(from 26 CIF funded organisations who responded within a tight timeframe)

Key Findings of our research

- **£1.5 million** will be lost to the community infrastructure organisations across NI directly (from 26 organisations who receive CIF funding)
- The transfer of CIF funding will result in at least **16 organisations closing their doors** if they lose CIF funding and are not core funded by Councils post April 2016. To date a number of those who will close without CIF core funding, understand from their Councils that the ‘CIF money’ will be used in house by the Councils. Closures and loss of independent umbrella organisations in communities across NI will be inevitable.
- CIF Core Funding has **levered in over 9 million into the Organisations** to deliver community projects **in 2014** (24 responses)
- CIF core funding **levered in £7.6 million to external organisations** in 2014 to deliver community projects (21 responses)
- The loss of core funding from CIF will lead to **over 70 redundancies immediately and may lead to an additional 56 job losses** (22 responses) Only 2 organisations will be able to sustain current employment levels.
- **60% of Organisations have engaged with their Councils to discuss transfer of CIF funding** (in only *1/4 of these cases* has these meetings been initiated by Councils, in other cases the Councils have not ‘been ready’ to discuss)

- **50% of respondents understand Councils will deliver in house** (25% will use a Service Level Agreement and 25% are considering tendering)

Appendix 3 outlines the feedback from 26 funded CIF projects in relation to;

- What services will be lost if CIF funding is transferred to Councils
- What are the implications for organisations across NI

The impact on service provision will be significant. Training, advice, support, information provision, community relations work will all be severely impacted. Support for Women, BME families and others will be severely affected. Independent voices and advocates will be significantly impacted

A Perfect Storm?

The Department of Social Development has the key lead responsibility for supporting the Community and Voluntary Sector. We would ask the Committee and the Department to **URGENTLY** take stock and time to listen to what is happening on the ground now and the direction of travel going forward. The loss of major independent funders, the challenges being faced by European funded organisations ie ESF funding, and now the apparent end of Neighbourhood Renewal, Community Investment Funding etc is and has the potential to decimate the work of tackling poverty and making an effective contribution to the lives of many communities across NI.

Conclusion

Sadly we are unable to comment on the actual wording of the Bill – our focus in this response has been the implications of the Bill if implemented and the transfer takes place from April 2016.

We encourage the Social Development Committee to take a lead role in ensuring the NI assembly and the Department of Social Development in particular honour the wording and the spirit of the Concordat between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Government. It is time for the Department to take stock – this submission has clearly outlined the potential implications of the Regeneration Bill alone. Add Neighbourhood Renewal, etc into the mix and the impact will

Appendix 1

19 January 2015

Mr Alex Maskey MLA
Chairperson
Social Development Committee
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr Maskey

I am writing on behalf of the 30 undersigned organisations. The organisations are currently funded by the Department of Social Development (DSD) through the Community Investment Fund and have, as invited by DSD, each submitted a 3-year proposal for further funding on which we await decisions. We are fully aware of the context of the request and the expectation that funding, if approved is envisaged for 2015/16.

Mindful of the draft Regeneration Bill which is currently before the Assembly and the challenges of the transfer of responsibilities and budget from DSD to the new councils the signatory organisations wish to make a proposal for consideration, which we believe will be of benefit to all stakeholders in the transition process.

We have set out below what we perceive as the key challenges identified:

- The Assembly needs to pass enabling legislation quickly but with sufficient opportunity for MLA's to consider all aspects of the legislation and provide informed consent. It is accepted this will not enable funds to be available to councils before 2016.
- The Department of Agriculture (DARD) is not in a position to consider any transfer of its Rural Development / Social Inclusion budget before 2020 and has not liaised with DSD on the impact of this reality. There is a clear lack of joined up thinking between the Department of Social Development, DARD and the new Councils and this will have a detrimental on the existing integrated community planning at Council level as a result.
- The transfer allocation to councils as outlined will alter the balance of finance away from urban areas including Belfast and Derry/ Londonderry to rural areas, and the necessary debate around this at assembly level may further delay agreement.
- DARD and DSD do not have a common definition of 'Rural' which may result in pockets of populations outside of Belfast falling between two timing processes.
- Local Councils need to strategically plan, cost, and resource and implement their community plans from April 2015.

In lights of these issues, we propose that, where DSD has satisfied itself in relation to funding organisations under CIF for 2015/16, this should be done for three years of

funding to 2017/18 as per the applications subject to the normal quality controls and annual review. That funded organisations should as a requirement of funding, also report on their outcomes to their local council against that councils community services strategy / community plan.

This arrangement would provide time to enable all elements of the transition process to be brought back into synergy, with departments enabled by legislation to synergise the transfer of duties and budgets, and also allow new council formations time to see how existing community provision might best inform their strategic plan for delivery when responsibility and budgets are transferred from departments in a more coherent manner than the piecemeal fashion which the present uncertainties create.

We would appreciate an opportunity to explore this proposal with you, and to that end have agreed a delegation to represent the signatories if a meeting can be arranged.

Yours Sincerely

Lauri McCusker

On behalf of:

ABC Community Network (Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon)

Ards Development Bureau and Community Network

Ashton Community Trust

Ballybeen Women's Centre

Ballymoney Community Resource Centre

Ballynafeigh Community Development Association

Causeway Rural and Urban Network

Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership

Chrysalis Women's Centre, Craigavon

Confederation of Community Groups, Newry

East Belfast Community Development Agency

Falls Community Council

First Steps Women's Centre, Dungannon

Focus, Omagh

Footprints Women's Centre

Foyle Women's Information Network

Greater Shantallow Area Partnership

Greenway Women's Centre, Belfast

Hollywood Family Trust

Larne Community Development Project

Magherafelt Women's Group Ltd

North Down Community Network

North West Community Network

South Tyrone Empowerment Programme

Strathfoyle Women's Activity Group Ltd

The Fermanagh Trust

The Women's Centre, Derry

Upper Andersonstown Community Forum

Waterside Women's Centre

Windsor Women's Centre

Appendix 2

.From DSD Committee 8th Jan

<http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/minutesofevidencereport.aspx?AgendaId=11271&eveID=6762>

The Chairperson (Mr Maskey): OK. Ian, my final point is this: because some of this will now transfer to the councils, there will be an expectation in rural and urban areas that work will be done around tackling social deprivation and how that may be defined. What kind of liaison is going on with, for example, DARD? I imagine that some work is being done through that Department as well in terms of rural development.

Mr Snowden: DARD is not actually transferring any of its rural development functions at the minute, except in so far as it would spend its money through local authorities and local action groups. Its money is all Europe-sourced, so it is not really suitable to be devolved. Those powers are specifically limited to urban areas. Because the remit of DSD is defined as being urban regeneration, we are able to spend money only in what are defined as urban areas. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) has defined that for the Executive. The new councils will be able to spend money wherever they like in relation to those powers as they see fit; there will be no geographical reduction to it. It will be up to the new councils to work through all that. We do not have particularly close links with DARD, although we meet officials occasionally to talk about the urban and rural interface and how things link up and where there may be gaps between the two. Over the coming 12 months, we will have to work quite closely with the new councils to work out how all that will be worked through and delivered.

The Chairperson (Mr Maskey): Would it not be appropriate to have a better relationship with DARD? I am thinking of some of that work.

Mr Snowden: It is always something that we strive for. I was in DARD before I came to DSD. **Since 1999**, it has been something that the two Departments have been attempting to come to a clear understanding on. The nature of what DARD funds under rural development with the European funding is quite a bit different from what we do with DSD's funding. We made several attempts to try to link the two, including coming up with a common approach to dealing with the settlements that tend to fall into the gaps. It has been a difficult enough process, but we attempt to work together as best we can.

	What services will be lost if CIF funding is transferred to councils?	What are the implications for the community and voluntary sector with the loss of CIF infrastructure support?
<p>Respondent</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Our ability to provide funding support, governance guidance, strategic support and our ability to both develop and run strategic initiatives for our community will be impacted</p> <p>Core strategic services, advocacy, capacity building and volunteer development.</p>	<p>The loss of Community Infrastructure support to a statutory provider will have important implications. The Councils across NI have run Community Support for many years - this has not helped build volunteerism or an effective community and voluntary sector in our area. Decision not evidence based.</p>
2	<p>Training, advice, support, information, networking events, inspirational women events, older women projects, health events, cross-community initiatives international women's day, summer scheme for women, summer school, signposting, information dissemination to 500+ groups / individuals.</p>	<p>Impact will be short, medium and longer term depending on how much new council understands and thus values the work and impact of the community and voluntary sector. If keeping rates low and reducing spend is the only priority then the impact could be catastrophic for people in need who are the ultimate beneficiaries of services the community and voluntary sector provides.</p> <p>Councils have an obligation to deliver on its strategy and if this can be done in house I feel that this is what they may do however they do not have the contact with disadvantaged urban or rural areas that our organisation would have - they also would not have the vision or innovation to devise and deliver projects which will enable and benefit women</p>
3	<p>If CIF funding is withdrawn 400 people (weekly) from disadvantaged communities will not have access to education & employment skills training. 400 people from disadvantaged communities will not have access to front-line support services. 150 community based childcare places will be lost to support women's access to education and training 40-50 women and families from BME communities will not have access to services and support to build a shared future (14 organisations). 116 people will not be able to access 1-1 counselling services and personal support. The organisation will not be able to support young mothers and school age mothers.</p>	<p>The uncertainty will create instability in disadvantaged communities where services and support are already threatened. Community infrastructure in disadvantaged communities will be weakened and in many areas lost completely. Progress towards women's equality and equality for the most excluded in society will be set back years. Marginalised people and families in disadvantaged communities will have less chance of social inclusion and employment. BME families will be further isolated and marginalised. Our Shared Future strategy will be jeopardised. People who live in disadvantaged communities may become more unstable and disappointed particularly young people who see no future for themselves.</p>
4	<p>If it is not a service level agreement to maintain post we will lose our financial management capacity, HR capacity and part of our community development capacity.</p>	<p>The current situation is unclear but it appears that the community developments budget will decrease. We are still not sure what the long term plans of the council are. For instance will they want to adopt projects and programmes as direct council initiatives or will they be happy to develop SLAs with independent Community organisations</p>
5		

6	<p>Core Community Support Agency offering a range of capacity building/ technical assistance/social inclusion/ learning programmes/activities etc to 50+ local C/V groups, 20 nursery, primary and secondary schools and residents (population 26,000 +/-10,000 households) past 19 years and Loss of current contracts/SLAs with range of agencies including delivery of Family support Hub, secretariat to 6th largest Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership, Training and Employment Services, Essential skills programmes, Management of 2 extended school clusters, Early intervention projects such as ASPIRE, Talking To Our Babies Early Years Communication Project, FAST, Arts and Culture programmes and activities, the support/development of a range of capital infrastructure projects within the community and the loss of management staff to oversee a 3.2m SLF programme over the next 4 years.</p>	<p>We would hope that our agency and C/V sector in our area will be integral to the development and role out of the Community Planning process and we would anticipate that the Council will require our direct assistance, leadership, knowledge and experience to develop and/or manage the proposed new locality based planning process/structure and programme of activities for our area.</p>
7	<p>Information - advice - signposting - independent representation - advocacy - sectoral events - group support</p>	<p>New councils are simply not ready - whatever about willing - to adopt responsibility for Community Development and Urban Regeneration. There is no clear route map or strategic framework that instils confidence or clarity - this can only lead to confusion and information/resource/support gaps for groups in the area. Thankfully - in this area - proposals for a transitional approach to Grant Aid is shaping up though this may not be sustained as 2015-16 progresses. A range of supports continue to be needed (grant aid info, social enterprise opportunities, tendering skills etc.) that simply have no future without the above-mentioned structure being meticulously planned out.</p>
8	<p>Administration and fundraising services.</p>	<p>An important base and support for the sector will be removed.</p>
9	<p>This community will fall further into deprivation as key local services will be lost. This community will become dis-empowered and unemployment will rise.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
10	<p>Independent advice on governance; conflict resolution; understanding policy context & participation in consultation response; organisational mentoring; holding government to account; independent advice & support to BME and other excluded groups around which community tensions exist</p>	<p>Short & Long term - Independence; energy; flexibility and innovation of sector will be lost as will developed expertise and experience gained in the sector; Immediate - Jobs will be lost; longer term : skilled professionals will relocate from rural communities to cities to get jobs; spending power and skills and sustainability of communities lost to rural area Decreased Independent sustainability of communities.</p>
11	<p>Community based Education and Training Quality Affordable Childcare Family Support Services Health Programmes Young People's Peer Education Project</p>	<p>Closure of community organisations providing vital services.</p>

12	<p>Childcare Provision Youth Provision Care to Vulnerable Adults Community Development & Partnership working Delivery of statutory bodies strategic objectives</p> <p>Independent community development support, capacity building, effective engagement with statutory bodies.</p>	<p>Create uncertainty on service provision.</p> <p>Loss of effective lobbying process loss of independent advice & support reduced capacity reduction in funding (less applications and poorer quality) reduction in governance.</p>
13	<p>Support to 60/70 community groups in the borough.</p>	<p>Groups will not get the support they need to continue they will not be consulted groups will close down.</p>
14	<p>Community development support - charity registration support - governance review support - volunteer development, recruitment and management support - community development training - community development opinion forming meetings - responses to Govt policies - funding leverage (as described in 2) - funding management (as indicated in 3) - co-ordination of local forums</p>	<p>If council do not continue with similar support as is currently supported, it will be lost forever, never to return.</p>
15	<p>Independent support for groups, a voice for the community particularly the hard to reach. All of our additional services in relation to older people, community education, disability development, community relations and ethnic minority support will be put at risk.</p>	<p>The ability to engage hard to reach groups and individuals who are suspicious or lack confidence in statutory bodies will be compromised. An independent voice for grass roots development groups will be lost. Additional specialised services which have existed for years and cannot be easily replaced will be lost to communities and those most in need of support. A vast body of relationship building, knowledge and expertise in those specialist areas will also be lost not just to organisations but the communities they serve.</p>
16	<p>Shopmobility project Advocacy work for Travellers, LGB/T Community Community Representation on strategic Boards/Partnerships Vital Practical Resources Specific in-house Training.</p>	<p>The implications will be wide-reaching, stretching over the short-term and long-term and ultimately taking us back to the way things were in Mid-90's, where Council did not listen to voice of local community. Community Groups had to come together and unite in order to set up a Forum to identify and more structured and cohesive approach to dealing with the full range of Statutory and Voluntary agencies.</p>
17	<p>Coordinator post, admin post and financial administrator post lost. As childcare project will no longer be viable two childcare workers and childcare coordinator post will be lost, 25 volunteer placements will disappear. A comprehensive health, education and training programme will end, A childrens programme comprising a crech, afterschools project and young womens project will end. Counselling services will be lost, Cookery, Accredited ICT, Horticulture, Womens rights, Crafts, Health and Social care, First Aid courses</p>	<p>Social Isolation, removal of access to services for adults and children with physical and learning disability, loss of opportunity to access accredited training, skills development, childcare support and child development. An increased strain on all the health services including GPs, counselling, social services, Surestart. A decline in progression from access course to college course and ultimately employment. Access to advice on benefits and other issues removed. Increased reliance on benefits.</p>
18	<p>will be lost</p>	<p></p>

19	<p>We co-ordinate the existing activities within the Partnership and its member groups to promote collaboration and efficiency as a means to enhance long term sustainability. It assists local community groups to develop their capacity to deliver services which will create income streams and work to develop support mechanisms and structures for the local social economy sector. This will enhance local opportunities for training and employment and help promote inclusion and cohesion within the community. No other organisation delivers this in the Creggan community.</p>	<p>We co-ordinate the existing activities within the Partnership and its member groups to promote collaboration and efficiency as a means to enhance long term sustainability. It assists local community groups to develop their capacity to deliver services which will create income streams and work to develop support mechanisms and structures for the local social economy sector. This will enhance local opportunities for training and employment and help promote inclusion and cohesion within the community. No other organisation delivers this in the Creggan community.</p>
20	<p>Integrated training, non-accredited training, accredited training support, childcare, health promotion, older adult education, young women's support.</p>	<p>I honestly don't know.</p>
21	<p>Community Development Networking Centre housing 12 support organisations and many external support providers Management and support for 4 estate based community hubs. Numerous community based projects not supported No CD support across the entire Borough with relationships which has been built up over past 16 years with communities on the ground in disadvantaged areas. Numerous community infrastructure support projects PHA Funded programme OFMDFM Good Relations Project Peace Impact Projects Various other project activities.</p>	<p>Lack of support services on the ground in most disadvantaged communities Loss of capacity to deliver local services effectively. Lack of local support for 350 + local groups and organisations, Loss of training and employability programmes Local people not able to access services and gain appropriate information, advice, support and training Loss of jobs and employment opportunities created by the Learn to Earn Programme we deliver. Lack of access to services including debt advice, womens aid, linking generations, DARD funded MARA programme. PHA funded Health Inequalities programme and many more activities and support services currently accessed by all sections of the community on a daily basis. Footfall for Community Network Centre and 4 Community Hubs alone is 700+ per week.</p>
22	<p>We have on average 200 women per week accessing our services and 90 childcare places in our creche. This would be lost to the local community.</p>	<p>I believe a lot of the priorities would change and therefore the potential for accessing funding could be severely hampered.</p>
23	<p>The independent advice and lobbying services to the community sector. The 1 to 1 mentoring for community groups and individual activists. OCN accredited training at levels 1,2 & 3 on drug & alcohol, community development, active citizenship, event management and fundraising. Suicide prevention support. Youth intervention programmes, good relations training and support. Financial advice and support to community groups, Older peoples support & training.</p>	<p>There will be a huge gap in provision for the community sector as the network organisations have direct contact with the groups. The networks are also fully aware of the services and support that the groups require. Also the potential loss of services as stated in question 9.</p>
24	<p>Belfast City Council is currently planning to out source community development services. If this goes ahead as planned core community services should be retained however we will not know the reality until that happens.</p>	<p>This will depend on a number of factors including: Total budget that is transferred Councils terms of reference for allocation Method of tendering</p>

Appendix 4

Community Investment Fund - potential impact questionnaire

1. How much does your organisation receive in grant aid from the Community Investment Fund per annum?

2. Financial leverage of your C.I.F grant.

How much other revenue does your C.I.F core funding enable you to lever in directly to your organisation per annum (i.e 2014)?

3. Financial leverage of your C.I.F grant.

How much additional revenue does your C.I.F core funding enable your organisation to lever in directly to the wider community per annum (i.e 2014)?

4. Have you had discussions with your new Council regarding the proposed transfer of C.I.F funding?

Yes

No

5. Have you asked for/ been invited for discussions with your new Council re; core funding support post C.I.F?

Yes

No

Any comments

6. Which of the following is the likely scenario if C.I.F funding is transferred to the new Council (in your area)? Tick one.

The Council will utilise the money in house to delivery Community Infrastructure Support.

The Council will tender out Community Infrastructure Support and award funding to an external organisation.

The Council will enter into a Service Level Agreement with your organisation if C.I.F funding is transferred from DSD.

7. If C.I.F funding is transferred to Councils and delivered in house will your organisation remain open?

Yes

No

8. If C.I.F funding is transferred to Councils will staff in your organisation be made redundant?

Yes

No

If yes - How many?

9. If C.I.F funding is transferred to Councils what key services/ support will potentially be lost to the wider community which your organisation serves?

10. Will the proposed transfer of power from DSD to the new Councils have implications for the Community & Voluntary Sector in your area in the short/medium or long term?

Yes

No

If yes - please shared what are the potential implications

Done

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