



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

Mr Lauri McCusker - Director

The Fermanagh Trust, Fermanagh House, Broadmeadow Place, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh. BT74 7HR
T: 028 663 20210 F: 028 663 20230 E: info@fermanaghtrust.org www.fermanaghtrust.org




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