

# Written Ministerial Statement

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## Department for Communities

### **PUBLICATION OF THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR IN NI**

*Published on Thursday 17 July 2025.*

**Mr Lyons (The Minister for Communities):** I wish to update the Assembly on a significant development in the relationship between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland.

I am pleased to announce the formal adoption of a new Partnership Agreement between the NI Executive and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

The Partnership Agreement provides the foundation for a renewed relationship between NI public bodies and our Voluntary and Community Sector partners. It recognises the Voluntary and Community Sector's unique ability and contribution to supporting individuals and communities. The document reflects today's delivery environment and sets out our shared commitment to work in partnership to improve outcomes for people and communities.

In the spirit of collaboration, this Agreement has been developed by the Joint Forum between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector. I want to thank all those who contributed to the development of this document, particularly the Joint Forum members and our cross-sectoral partners who played a key role in its development.

Real impact comes not from a published document, but from trusting relationships, open and honest two-way communication, mutual understanding of challenges, and an ongoing commitment to collaboration. This is what drives lasting change - and it takes effort.

I am proud that my Department leads the way in supporting effective working relationships with our Voluntary and Community Sector through the work of the Joint Forum. We bring key Voluntary and Community Sector challenges to the Executive and Assembly, strive to embed fair funding principles in public services and showcase the positive impact of shared collaboration between Government and the Sector.

The Executive's endorsement of the Partnership Agreement means that all departments will join mine in making a shared commitment to strengthen and sustain shared relationships with Voluntary and Community Sector partners, in line with our Programme for Government commitments.

Our Voluntary and Community organisations will also use the shared values, fair funding principles and ways of working in the document to support and guide their work with NI public bodies.

The Partnership Agreement creates a strong basis for both sectors to engage in constructive challenge, deepen mutual understanding, and continuously improve how we work together.

There is a diverse range of Voluntary and Community Sector organisations that are making such a difference here in NI. This is the next step in our journey to ensure that government and the sector work together effectively, responsively, responsibly and fairly to meet the needs of our people and communities.

This is not the end of the journey, but a new beginning. I look forward to working with our partners across the Voluntary and Community Sector to help deliver real and lasting change for the communities that we serve.

**Gordon Lyons MLA**  
**Minister for Communities**